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NATIONS IN AND AFTER TRAUMA

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NATIONS IN AND AFTER TRAUMA

A WORD FROM THE EDITORS

The latest issue of *AREI: Journal for Central and Eastern European History and Politics* delves into the intricate interplay of historical memory, trauma, and the reshaping of national identities in the aftermath of war and societal upheaval. This collection of interviews, articles, and reviews provides a multidisciplinary perspective on how communities grapple with their past, navigate present challenges, and envision their futures.

Our lead interview features Nikolay Koposov, whose reflections on Putin's actions and ideology underscore the global repercussions of memory politics and authoritarian governance, framing the issue within a broader context of historical and political transformation.

The articles section offers a diverse array of insights into how memory, identity, and culture evolve in the shadow of historical trauma. Darius Staliūnas and Rimantas Miknys explore the intersection of Polish national projects and their influence on Lithuania and Belarus in the early twentieth century, revealing how national movements contended with external pressures and internal aspirations. Nadiya Kiss, Liudmyla Pidkuimukha, and Yuliia Kolisnyk analyse the deconstruction of Russian imperialist narratives through Ukrainian pop culture amidst the ongoing war, while Lóránt Bódi and Hanna Mezei illuminate the fading and revival of Jewish memory in Hungary's synagogues. Dóra Pataricza and Mercédesz Czimbalmos examine Jewish–non-Jewish relations in post-war Szeged, focusing on the complexities of survival and rebuilding. Iryna Kashtalian, Yuri Radchenko, and Blanka Soukupová provide deeply researched accounts of Jewish experiences in Belarus, Ukraine, and the Czech lands, addressing Holocaust memory, survival strategies, and community dynamics in the years following the Second World War.

In our testimonies section, an exclusive interview with Zenon Pozniak offers a poignant exploration of resistance, identity, and the enduring challenges posed by Russian imperialism.

Finally, the reviews provide critical engagement with recent scholarship. Yana Prymachenko reviews Sergei Zhuk's *The KGB, Russian Academic Imperialism, Ukraine, and Western Academia, 1946–2024*, dissecting the mechanisms of Russian academic influence. Hennadii Yefimenko critically assesses recent studies on the numbers of Holodomor victims, contributing to ongoing debates on the historiography of genocidal policies.

This issue underscores the enduring power of history to shape identities, inform policies, and influence collective futures. Through its diverse contributions, it invites readers to reflect on the intersections of trauma, memory, and resilience in Central and Eastern Europe and beyond.

Managing Editor, YANA PRYMACHENKO

Interview with Nikolay Koposov
PUTIN'S ACTIONS AND IDEOLOGY ARE CHANGING THE WORLD, MAKING IT POTENTIALLY UNSAFE FOR EVERYONE FOR GENERATIONS TO COME

NIKOLAY KOPOSOV

Nikolay Koposov is a Distinguished Professor of Practice at the School of History and Sociology, Georgia Institute of Technology. Before joining Georgia Tech, he worked at Emory University, Johns Hopkins University, the University of Helsinki, and École des hautes études en sciences sociales in Paris. He was the Founding Dean of Smolny College, a joint venture between Saint Petersburg State University and Bard College, New York. Koposov specializes in modern European intellectual history, post-Soviet Russia, and the politics of historical memory. He has authored six books, including Memory Laws, Memory Wars: The Politics of the Past in Europe and Russia (2018), and *Pamjat' strogogo režima. Istorija i politika v Rossii* (2011). He has also contributed to international expert groups on memory politics.

Does the Russian Federation currently have a state ideology, and if so, what are its characteristics?[1]

– I think such an ideology has existed for quite some time. Ideology is a rather vague concept. Of course, Putinism does not reach the level of ideologies like Marxism or liberalism because of the absence of bright theoretical minds and the pragmatic tendency to subordinate ideology to propaganda. However, if we lower the bar and understand ideology somewhat broadly, it clearly exists in Russia. I would not call any system of beliefs or symbols an ideology. It is sometimes argued that anything with a symbolic dimension is an ideology. In my opinion, this definition is too broad. I prefer to understand ideology as located at an intermediate level between any system of beliefs and a theoretically grounded socio-political doctrine. Historians, in general, like vague concepts. Sometimes, they seem to correspond better to history itself.

In Russia, we see a set of purposefully promoted political attitudes that are contradictory and poorly articulated. These attitudes are inseparable from images, emotions, and symbols but sometimes entail simplified theoretical models. And the fact that dissent in Russia is punishable points to the existence of a state ideology.

In her book *Memory Makers: The Politics of the Past in Putin's Russia*,[2] Jade McGlynn argues that history politics has replaced ideology in Russia. When exactly do you think this happened, and what institutions were behind this process?

– I like her book, but she is not the only one who thinks so. We can probably agree with that if we understand ideology in the narrow sense we have just discussed. But I would rather talk about a shift from ideologies based on relatively articulated conceptions of global history to ideologies based on fragmented collective memories. There can also be ideologies based on economic theory, such as neoliberalism, which, unlike liberalism, does not need any consistent master narrative and relies on manipulated collective memories to make sense of the past.

When Putin came to power, influential segments of Russian ruling circles and society at large still shared a vague, fading, but essentially liberal ideology. Yeltsin's regime retained elements of liberalism until its very end, although it increasingly used nationalist motives, authoritarian tendencies, and elements of memory politics. However, it was still based

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[1]   The interview was recorded on 25 August 2023. AREI's editorial board might not share the interviewee's views or opinions.

[2]   Jade McGlynn, *Memory Makers: The Politics of the Past in Putin's Russia* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2023).

on a liberal narrative adapted to Russian conditions; recall, for example, the idea of a "liberal empire".[3]

In the first years of his rule, when Alexander Voloshin[4] was his chief of staff and the new team was not yet fully formed, Putin used some elements of liberal ideology. Relatively liberal economic reforms, prepared by Yeltsin's government in the 1990s, were implemented in the early 2000s, and Russia's "infiltration" into European and international organizations continued. The liberal ideology disappeared gradually. At some point, there remained no room for it in Russia's political and cultural environment. Only some elements of neoliberal economic theories – or, rather, recipes – remained, but not to such an extent that one could speak of a liberal ideology.

The transition from history-based ideologies to the politics of memory-based ideologies as the dominant form of legitimizing power relationships and social institutions is not a specifically Russian phenomenon; it is also noticeable in other countries. Moreover, in Russia and elsewhere, it began well before Putin. The cult of the Second World War became a central element of Soviet ideology in Brezhnev's USSR. As liberal ideas weakened in the 1990s and the 2000s, the Kremlin, unable or unwilling to rely on them, leaned increasingly toward a politics of memory, quite in line with global processes. However, as is often the case in Russia, this happened in a highly exaggerated form.

One of the first steps was changing the national anthem.[5] This was an attempt to seize the initiative from the opposition, particularly the Communist Party (KPRF), which had already become a national-populist party by then. The national-communist opposition had to be domesticated, and Putin's advisers succeeded in doing so during the first years of his rule. Of course, there was an element of memory politics in this.

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[3]   The concept of "liberal empire" refers to a concept that combines the ideas of liberalism and imperial ambitions. In Russia, the term was developed and actively used in political-intellectual circles in the early 2000s. The main promoter of this concept was Anatoly Chubais, who in 2003 came up with the idea of a "liberal empire" as a model for Russia's foreign policy and economic expansion. In this context, "empire" did not imply the traditional conquest of territories but more emphasized economic and cultural influence on neighbouring states. However, the term aroused much controversy and criticism. Some saw it as Russia's attempt to maintain control over the former republics of the Soviet Union, while others saw it as a manifestation of a hybrid policy that combines incompatible ideas of liberalism and imperialism.

[4]   Alexander Voloshin is a Russian politician. He was born on 3 March 1956 in Moscow. Voloshin was educated at the Moscow Institute of Transport Engineers (now the Russian University of Transport). In the 1990s, he began his career in politics and public administration, working on economic reforms. In 1999–2000, Voloshin was head of the Russian Presidential Administration under Boris Yeltsin and then continued his work under Vladimir Putin (until 2003). He played a significant role in the transfer of power from Yeltsin to Putin. He is considered one of the key figures who ensured a smooth political transition and consolidation of Putin's power at the beginning of his rule. After leaving government service, Voloshin went into business and was involved in major Russian companies and corporations.

[5]   After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, Mikhail Glinka's "Patriotic Song" became the anthem of the Russian Federation. Putin proposed bringing back the melody of the Soviet anthem, written by Alexander Alexandrov, but with a new text that would be relevant to post-Soviet Russia. The new text was developed by Sergei Mikhalkov, the author of the original text of the Soviet anthem. Vladimir Putin signed a decree changing the Russian anthem on 30 December 2000. The new anthem elicited mixed reactions: on the one hand, it was supported by many veterans and supporters of continuity; on the other hand, some saw the return of the Soviet anthem melody as a symbol of attempts to revive elements of the Soviet past.

The celebration of the 60th anniversary of the victory in the Second World War in 2005 was another decisive moment, although the rise of the war mythology had begun earlier: Putin created the Organizing Committee "Victory"[6] a month after coming to power, and huge funds were invested in this project. The large-scale propaganda campaign of 2004–2005 to prepare for the anniversary of the victory, as well as the strengthening of state control over business and society in general after the fall of Voloshin and the arrest of Khodorkovsky in 2003, contributed to the popularization of the cult of a strong state and the Second World War. Notably, Putin's ideology was created by people who were cynical but not stupid. Many of them were well-read, including Gleb Pavlovsky.[7]

As far as I know, Pavlovsky played a decisive role in Viktor Yanukovych's election campaign in 2004?

– Yes, Pavlovsky played on many "chess boards". Yanukovych's campaigns (especially in 2010) were saturated with Russian and Soviet patriotic motifs: the war cult was central to them. At the same time, an attempt was made to split Ukrainian society by contrasting the east and west of the country. War-related themes were also used here. This was essentially Pavlovsky's work, although not only his. Those people read a lot, although they did not always fully understand what they read. For example, they read the works of Pierre Nora and his followers, from which they borrowed the idea of the "age of memory". And we should not underestimate the contribution of pro-Russian Ukrainian politicians, who sometimes spoke like Russian nationalists.

Pavlovsky emphasized in his public speeches and articles that the politics of memory had become a winning ideological card. His article on memory, published in 2008, marked a critical moment when it

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[6] The Victory Committee was created in 2004 by Russian President Vladimir Putin to prepare the celebration of the 60th anniversary of the Victory in the Great Patriotic War of 1941–1945. The committee included representatives of various departments and public organizations, as well as heads of major Russian companies. The main task of the committee was to hold large-scale celebrations on 9 May 2005, as well as to prepare cultural and educational projects aimed at popularizing and preserving the memory of the victory over Nazism.

[7] Gleb Pavlovsky (1951–2023) was a Russian political analyst, publicist and political consultant who had a significant influence on Russian politics in the 1990s and 2000s.
Pavlovsky was born in Odessa and educated at Moscow State University (MSU), where he studied history. In 1974, he came to the attention of the KGB for reading banned literature, participating in the dissident movement, and editing the samizdat magazine Poiski. In 1982, he was arrested and sent into exile until 1985. In 1995, he founded the Foundation for Effective Politics (FEP), which focused on political consulting and information campaigns. He played an important role in Boris Yeltsin's 1996 election campaign and then was actively involved in shaping Vladimir Putin's image, helping him in the presidential campaigns of the 2000s. He was also involved in Viktor Yanukovych's election campaign in Ukraine in 2004. In 2011, Pavlovsky split with the Kremlin and began criticizing Putin's policies.

became clear that this was not just the theoretical musings of a lone intellectual.[8] The first major raid on St Petersburg's Memorial occurred almost simultaneously.[9] This showed that an important decision had been made at the highest level: to focus on the politics of memory and to persecute those who disagreed with the official interpretation of the past.

2007–2008 were critical: a temporary transfer of power from Putin to Medvedev was being prepared, mass demonstrations and public protests were taking place, and the system seemed cracking. It was then that a harsh crackdown on dissent began, including the aforementioned attack on Memorial and the preparation of the first memory law. This also coincided with the sharp deterioration of relations with the West after Putin's Munich Speech in 2007 and especially the armed conflict with Georgia in 2008.

At this time, the politics of memory finally took center stage in the state ideology. But let me repeat that this tendency emerged much earlier. This was a long process in which it was difficult to identify a single turning point. The suppression of the 2011 mass protests and the annexation of Crimea in 2014 marked the following stages of this development.

To what extent do you think the processes taking place in Ukraine at that time could have influenced Russia's domestic policy?

– There is a direct connection here because, in 2004 and 2010, there were elections in Ukraine. Russia's intervention in them was prepared ideologically with the help of the war cult.

Who do you think shaped Putin's historical views?

– What is needed here is insider information, of which very little comes from the Kremlin. If we ever learn about that, it will be much later – just as we began to learn about what Stalin read decades after his death. Recent research into Stalin's library is very interesting – about the books he read and his notes in the margins. It helps us understand how Stalin

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[8]   Gleb Pavlovsky's article on the politics of memory is seen as an important moment in the debate about the role of historical memory in Russian politics. Pavlovsky, a political technologist and one of the key architects of Putin's ideology in the early years of his rule, addressed in this article the use of historical memory to consolidate power and legitimize the state.
He argued that the politics of memory plays a central role in shaping a nation's identity and thus in supporting the political system. In his speeches and articles, Pavlovsky emphasized that control over collective memory is an important tool for power to manage perceptions of the past and thus influence the future. In 2008, this discourse became particularly relevant given the increasing state intervention in the interpretation of historical events such the Second World War and the collapse of the Soviet Union.
See more: Vladimir Tol'c, 'Slovo i delo: ataka na "Memorial"', *Radio Svoboda*, 13 December 2008 <https://www.svoboda.org/a/476949.html> [accessed on 11 November 2024].

[9]   In December 2008, Russian law enforcement officers raided the office of the St Petersburg branch of the Memorial Society. The main purpose of the raid was to seize archival materials devoted to political repression of the Soviet period, in particular files relating to the activities of the NKVD and repressed citizens. The raid resonated widely in Russia and abroad as Memorial was known for its work in investigating the crimes of the totalitarian regime. Many perceived these actions as an attempt to suppress independent research work and limit access to the truth about the past.

worked with historical materials. As for Putin, he certainly has some basic education in history.

Do you mean training as part of the official Soviet school curriculum?

– Yes, of course, but Putin also graduated from the Leningrad University School of Law. In addition to the history of the CPSU, his university curriculum included several legal history disciplines, such as the history of state and law and the history of political theories. This is already some training, although we do not know how well he performed in those courses.

How good was the education provided by Leningrad University at that time?

– The university provided basic training. However, Putin's interests were far from science. He was a KGB officer and a mafioso, not a scientist or a practicing lawyer. When Putin came to power, first as vice-mayor of St Petersburg and then as a prominent figure in the Yeltsin administration, he was minimally interested in history. He did not come to power alone but with a team of people who, like him, had a Soviet education and Soviet ideas about history. These ideas were based partly on Marxism but mostly on patriotic claims because, in Soviet times, the CPSU history course was quite patriotic. And its Marxist component was quickly forgotten by post-Soviet rulers and politicians, including communists.

Later, in 2004, with the intensification of memory politics, the Putin administration began to be influenced by people like Dugin,[10] Yuriev,[11] and other ultra-nationalist, semi-fascist, or even openly fascist "theorists". These people appealed to the same ideas that Putin and his entourage had, especially nationalist ones; after all, they were also products of the Soviet education system. They created an ultra-nationalist, state-centered version of history for Putin and his team, with some elements of fascist ideology. Putin has been actively reproducing this ideology ever since, as Dina Khapaeva has shown in a recent book.[12]

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[10] Alexander Dugin (born 7 January 1962) is a Russian philosopher, political scientist, sociologist, writer and public figure known for his nationalist and Eurasianist views. He is one of the leading ideologists of modern Russian Neo-Eurasianism and the author of the concept of the "Fourth Political Theory". He is the author of numerous books, including Foundations of Geopolitics (1997), which outlines his ideas on Russia's role as a Eurasian superpower. His views include calls for Russian-led integration of the post-Soviet space and opposition to Western liberalism.

[11] Mikhail Yuryev (1959–2019) was a Russian politician, businessman, publicist and writer. He was educated at Moscow State University, graduating from the Faculty of Biology. He was an active participant in Russian political life in the 1990s. In 1996–1997, he served as Deputy Chairman of the Russian State Duma. He is also known as a publicist and writer, being the author of The Third Empire, a utopian novel about a hypothetical future of Russia as a superpower. He is known for his nationalist and conservative views.

[12] Dina Khapaeva, *Putin's Dark Ages Political Neomedievalism and Re-Stalinization in Russia* (London: Routledge, 2023). A Russian translation of her book, entitled Terror and Memory: Medievalism and Stalinism in Putin's Historical Politics, is forthcoming and will soon be in the public domain.

Has Dugin specifically influenced Putin's historical worldview? On the one hand, Dugin heads a department at Moscow State University, where he develops his theories, but do they have any real weight in state policy?

– It's hard to say anything definite here because many things happen behind closed doors. But I do not think Dugin or any other individual "theorist" has had a decisive influence. There was a whole circle of similar people who, at some point, began to actively promote ultra-nationalist ideas to the top, where there was growing interest in them.

Sometimes, these people sent their writings to the Presidential Administration. Many officials from the Administration and the Ministry of Culture joined the club, as well as political technologists and others who just "hung around". Some acted out of personal ambition and career considerations, others, perhaps, out of ideas. Together, they created an atmosphere where ideas were "brewing," gradually becoming part of state policy.

Much of this "literature" emerged from behind-the-scenes conversations, memos, and reports. This work continued for over twenty years. Officials who submit memos to the president's desk always have influence, but they know their influence depends on how much the president likes their ideas.

Who then oversees historical policy: the Ministry of Culture? On the one hand, there is Vladimir Medinsky,[13] who directly stated that historical myth is much more important than historical accuracy; on the other hand, there is the Administration of the President of the Russian Federation.

– Virtually all major government agencies have departments and strategies for implementing memory politics. For example, Shoigu started to deal with this topic when he was head of the Ministry of Emergency Situations. His ministry's website had an extensive section devoted to history, which is funny – where is the Ministry of Emergency Situations, and where is history politics?

I studied this issue in the context of the so-called memory laws. In 2009, Shoigu played a key role in promoting the first version of the memory law, which was adopted in 2014.[14] He spoke at various meetings, including the Organizing Committee "Victory" and meetings with veterans,

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[13]   Vladimir Medinsky (born 18 July 1970) is a Russian politician. He is one of the leading ideologists of Russian state cultural policy. From 2012 to 2020, he headed the Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation. Medinsky was born in Smila, Ukraine; then he moved to Russia, where he graduated from the Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO). In the 1990s, he worked in public relations and became involved in political activities. In the 2000s, Medinsky became a deputy to the State Duma from the United Russia party and chaired the Culture Committee. As Minister of Culture, Medinsky actively supported projects related to the revival of historical memory, popularization of patriotism, and strengthening of Russian cultural identity and traditional values.

[14]   This law, which criminalizes the dissemination of knowingly false information about Soviet policy during the Second World War, was passed in 2014.

proving the need for such a law. In late January 2009, it was announced that such a law would be adopted, and even earlier, a working group for its preparation was created under the leadership of Konstantin Zatulin.[15] Zatulin was Luzhkov's man[16] but simultaneously had contact with various "patriotic" political forces.

Of course, the military and the law enforcement structures also supported the war cult because they have always been involved in patriotic education. When Shoigu became the head of the Ministry of Defence, this cult received a new impetus there. Since the 1990s, this Ministry's political propaganda department has been reorganized several times. Its history goes back to the 1917 Revolution, Trotsky, and the Red Army, but it was not disbanded after the fall of the USSR, even during the liberal reforms. The people who ran the propaganda institutions adapted to new conditions and then again to even newer ones. As a result, Soviet propaganda did not disappear, and the country plunged back into military-patriotic work. The government introduced new "historical" remembrance days, increased veterans' privileges, and so on. This began in the mid-1990s.

The Foreign Ministry also actively promoted Putin's commemorative agenda, not just Lavrov, although he spoke out most on the subject. All Russian embassies monitored historical memory-related events in the Czech Republic, Poland, Ukraine, and other countries, provoking diplomatic scandals, such as in Latvia and Estonia.[17]

[15]   Konstantin Zatulin (born 7 September 1958) is a Russian politician, State Duma deputy, public figure and political scientist. He graduated from the Faculty of History of Moscow State University. In the 1990s, he became known as an expert on relations with the former Soviet republics. Co-founder and director of the Institute of CIS countries. Takes conservative positions. Criticizes the West and its policy towards Russia.

[16]   Yuri Luzhkov (1936–2019) was a Russian politician, mayor of Moscow from 1992 to 2010. He was born on 21 September 1936 in Moscow. He graduated from the Moscow Institute of Petrochemical and Gas Industry. Luzhkov began his political career in the 1970s, holding various positions in the government system. In 1992, he was appointed mayor of Moscow by decree of President Boris Yeltsin and was subsequently re-elected to the position. Luzhkov was known as a conservative politician, a supporter of strong presidential power and strengthening state institutions. In 2010, Luzhkov was dismissed by a decree of President Dmitry Medvedev, which caused a great public outcry. He died on 10 December 2019 in Munich.

[17]   A scandal involving the demolition of Soviet monuments in Estonia in 2007 involved the relocation of the Bronze Soldier, a monument to Soviet soldiers erected in the centre of Tallinn. The monument symbolized the Soviet Union's victory in the Second World War, but for many Estonians it was also a symbol of the Soviet occupation. The Estonian government decided to move the monument from Tõnismägi Square to a military cemetery in Tallinn, which sparked mass protests among Estonia's Russian-speaking population and led to a diplomatic crisis between Russia and Estonia. Events came to a head in April 2007, when the protests culminated in riots and clashes with the police, known as "Bronze Night". The riots lasted several days, damaged buildings and cars, injured dozens of people and killed one. Russia sharply condemned Estonia's actions, calling the relocation of the monument an insult to the memory of those who died in the Second World War. Russian authorities said Estonia was violating the rights of the Russian-speaking minority and trying to rewrite history. Russia responded to the events in Tallinn with protests outside Estonian diplomatic offices, and cyberattacks on Estonian government websites and banks caused major infrastructure disruptions. The incident strained relations between Russia and Estonia and became a symbol of a broader conflict over historical memory and attitudes toward the Soviet past in the Baltic States and other former Soviet republics.

The statements of the Russian Ambassador to Poland, Sergey Andreev, are worth mentioning![18]

– Exactly. Of course, the Foreign Ministry was actively involved in all of this. I'm afraid one cannot be a successful diplomat in present-day Russia without accusing other nations of "Russophobia". The Ministry of Culture and Medinsky himself did the same. One should not forget his activities in the field of education either. The players in this field also include the State Duma, the Council of the Federation, the Presidential Administration, and the Russian Academy of Sciences (RAS), not to mention the *Russky Mir* ("Russian World") organization.

As far as I know, Chubaryan[19] has been involved in this at the Russian Academy of Sciences for quite some time?

– Yes, that's right. I sympathized with him at first. He was a relatively liberal Soviet academic administrator, and in the 1990s, he supported the Russian "branch" of the *Annales* School and such historians as Bessmertny,[20] Gurevich,[21] and Batkin.[22] He played quite a positive role then. But later, he became a Putinist – an apparatchik is an apparatchik. Chubaryan is said to have been involved in preparing Putin's history-related speeches and articles and developing new history curricula and textbooks.

Many historians working for major universities and research institutes have participated in this ideological work and have never tried to hide it. Of course, some universities and institutes resisted the government, but they were gradually brought under control or closed. Today, there are no independent educational institutions in Russia. It is hard to name

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18   Russian Ambassador to Poland Sergey Andreyev has repeatedly made scandalous statements about Poland's role in the Second World War. In September 2015, Andreyev was summoned to the Polish MFA following an interview in which he claimed that Poland was responsible for the start of the war, thereby causing outrage on the Polish side. In April 2016, in an interview with Onet.pl, Andreyev stated that "being a Russophobe in Poland gets you benefits", which also drew criticism. These and other remarks by the ambassador have contributed to the deterioration of Russian-Polish relations. See 'Posol RF v Pol'še vyzvan v MID iz-za ocenok Vtoroj mirovoj vojny', *TASS.ru*, 28 September 2015 <https://tass.ru/politika/2295833> [accessed on 11 November 2024]; Katarzyna Szewczuk, 'Ambasador Siergiej Andriejew: bycie rusofobem w Polsce bardzo się opłaca', *Wiadomości Onet*, 14 April 2016 <https://wiadomosci.onet.pl/tylko-w-onecie/ambasador-siergiej-andriejew-bycie-rusofobem-w-polsce-bardzo-sie-oplaca/nxn1x5?utm_source=chatgpt.com_viasg_wiadomosci&utm_medium=referal&utm_campaign=leo_automatic&srcc=undefined&utm_v=2> [accessed on 11 November 2024].

19   Alexander Chubaryan (born 1931) is a Russian historian, academician of the Russian Academy of Sciences (RAS), a specialist in the history of international relations and modern history. For a long time he headed the Institute of General History of the Russian Academy of Sciences. He actively participated in international scientific projects aimed at preserving historical memory and often acted as a consultant on historical policy and education.

20   Yuri Bessmertny (1923–2000) was a Soviet and Russian historian, specialist in the history of medieval Western Europe, Doctor of Historical Sciences, Professor. He worked at the Institute of General History of the Russian Academy of Sciences and made a significant contribution to the development of Russian historical research.

21   Aron Gurevich (1924–2006) was a prominent Soviet and Russian historian, a specialist in medieval history and mentality. Gurevich is considered one of the founders of the school of historical anthropology in Russia, which investigated the mental structures and worldviews of the people of medieval Europe.

22   Leonid Batkin (1932–2016) was a Soviet and Russian historian, culturologist and philosopher, a specialist on the Renaissance, an active participant in the political life of the perestroika era, and the initiator of the Moscow Tribune political club.

a Russian educational or research institution with no history of participating in such matters.

It turns out that every university in Russia has been an actor of historical policy in one form or another.

– Yes, independent institutions and associations such as Memorial have gradually been replaced by state-owned or ostensibly independent ones fully controlled by the authorities: the Russian Historical Society,[23] the Russian Military Historical Society,[24] and the Historical Memory Foundation.[25] It suffices to look at the people who head these organizations: Patrushev,[26] Naryshkin,[27] Medinsky, and so on. Or take the Institute for Scientific Information on Social Sciences of the Russian Academy of Science. Academician Pivovarov,[28] considered a liberal, had long headed it, yet a team of nationalistically minded historians linked to Medinsky's Military Historical Society also formed there. Another example is one of the leading

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[23] The Russian Historical Society (RHS) is a public organization founded to promote the study and popularization of Russian history. It was originally founded in 1866 and existed until 1917. In 2012, the organization was reconstituted by a state initiative. The main purpose of RIO, according to its charter, is to promote the study of Russian and world history, support historical research and the preservation of historical memory, and promote educational initiatives in the field of history. In practice, RIO has become a tool for promoting state history policy. Since its re-establishment, RIO has been chaired by Sergei Naryshkin, who also heads the Russian Foreign Intelligence Service.

[24] The Russian Military Historical Society (RVIO) is a public organization founded in 2012 on the initiative of the Russian Ministry of Culture and with the support of President Vladimir Putin. The main goal of the RVIO is the study, popularization and preservation of Russia's military-historical heritage. The Society organizes historical reenactments, exhibitions, conferences and educational projects dedicated to Russian military history. RVIO also participates in the publication of scientific and educational materials, as well as in the restoration of monuments and memorials related to Russian military history. The Chairman of the Russian Military Historical Society is the Minister of Culture of the Russian Federation, which emphasizes RVIO's close connection with government structures and its role in shaping historical policy.

[25] The Historical Memory Foundation is a Russian non-profit organization founded to study and popularize history, with a special focus on the events of the Second World War, Stalinist repressions and historical memory. The Foundation was established in 2008 to support research aimed at preserving the historical truth about the tragic events of the twentieth century and to counter attempts to rewrite history. The Foundation also promotes international contacts in the field of historical memory and actively participates in public debates on history and its interpretation. It maintains close ties with state structures and plays an important role in shaping and promoting Russian historical policy. The Director of the Foundation is the Russian historian Alexander Dyukov, who is known for his imperial views.

[26] Nikolai Patrushev (born 11 July 1951) is a Russian politician, Army General, Secretary of the Security Council of the Russian Federation (2008–2024). Patrushev is a key figure in Russian politics and is a member of Putin's inner circle. He was born in Leningrad (now St Petersburg) and graduated from the Leningrad Shipbuilding Institute and later from the USSR KGB Higher School. In 1975, he began his career in the state security agencies, where he worked his way up from an operative to the head. From 1999 to 2008, Patrushev headed the Federal Security Service (FSB), succeeding Vladimir Putin. In 2008, Patrushev was appointed Secretary of the Russian Security Council, remaining an influential figure in defence, national security, and foreign policy. Patrushev is also known for his conservative views and support for increased state control in various spheres of society.

[27] Sergey Naryshkin (born 27 October 1954) is a Russian politician and Director of the Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR) since 2016. He is a key figure in Russian politics and national security and is a member of Putin's inner circle. He was born in Leningrad (now St Petersburg) and graduated from the Leningrad Mechanical Institute and then from the USSR KGB Higher School, which was the beginning of his security career. In the 1990s, he worked in various positions in the Russian administration, dealing with economic and foreign economic issues. From 2004 to 2008, he served as Deputy Chief of Staff of the Russian Government. From 2008 to 2011, he was Head of the Russian Presidential Administration, and from 2011 to 2016, he was Chairman of the State Duma. In 2016, he was appointed director of the Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR). Naryshkin is also an active participant in a number of state commissions and committees related to Russia's national security and foreign policy.

[28] Yuri Pivovarov (born 1950) is a Russian historian and political scientist, Doctor of Historical Sciences, Academician of the Russian Academy of Sciences. He is a specialist in the history of political doctrines, Russian history, and comparative politics. For a long time, he headed the Institute of Scientific Information on Social Sciences (INION) of the Russian Academy of Sciences. He actively participates in public debates and criticizes authoritarian tendencies in contemporary Russian politics.

Russian historians in the field of memory politics, Alexei Miller,[29] who formerly worked for this institute. He recently created the Centre for the Study of Historical Memory at the European University in St Petersburg. This university was one of Russia's most innovative and independent academic institutions for two decades, but this is no longer true. According to Miller, Russia's history politics is just a reaction to the anti-Russian politics pursued by the West and the East European countries. This is precisely what Pavlovsky claimed in his 2008 article and what "Putin understanders" worldwide say. Also, Miller is very critical of the so-called cosmopolitan memory, or the memory of the Holocaust, which has been central to Western memory politics since the 1980s and was designed to suppress national narratives. However, this politics, Miller argues, has failed because national narratives cannot be suppressed. Miller refers here to left-leaning Western historians critical of the cosmopolitan memory, which they view as an instrument of Western hegemony. Indeed, Western critics of Western narratives have proven useful to the Russian authorities, not for the first time in history. Nationalistically minded Russian scholars and propagandists actively use their ideas.[30]

Can this turn be said to be a reaction to globalization caused by the fear of losing cultural identity? To what extent do Eastern Europeans fear "dissolving" into the EU, and how does this relate to the Soviet past and the desire to build nation-states?

– Let us consider how similar things worked in the past. The USSR and the Warsaw Bloc countries had a Marxist ideology diluted with elements of identity politics, especially nationalism. These elements could not fully develop within the communist system and often became the basis of oppositional ideology. The collapse of the Soviet Bloc occurred largely because of the conflict between particularistic national narratives and the global Soviet narrative. In addition, many East European cultures were more in tune with European traditions than Russia was.

I suspect that Ukrainians understand the idea of "national particularity" better than I do because of my Russian experience. Yet, I think the universalist and humanist ideal of European integration fuelled this idea. Liberal nationalists in Eastern Europe often claim that "we are a Western nation".

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29   Alexei Miller (born 1959) is a Russian historian, Doctor of History, leading researcher at the Institute of Scientific Information on Social Sciences (INION) of the Russian Academy of Sciences, a specialist in the history of Eastern Europe and the national question in the twentieth century. Miller is widely known for his research on the national policy of the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union, as well as Russian historical politics.

30   For more on the Kremlin's use of Western narratives, see Sergei Zhuk, *The KGB, Russian Academic Imperialism, Ukraine, and Western Academia, 1946–2024* (Lexington, 2024).

Why, despite the memory of the horrors of the Second World War the wars in Afghanistan and Chechnya, does Russian society support the war against Ukraine? Witnesses and veterans of those conflicts are still alive, but this memory has not become a kind of "inoculation" for society, just like the popular line from a Soviet song: "as long as there is no war".

– It is difficult to determine precisely what attitudes prevail in Russian society. Is it the real "support," as some sociologists claim, or is it more of a desire to ignore what is happening? As in other authoritarian societies, a reliable assessment of public opinion is complicated.

If we step back from the data of sociological polls, we can note that there have been no mass protests of Russians against the war.

– No genuine mass protests were even against the pension reform, which affected millions of Russians. And in France, for example, large-scale demonstrations against a similar reform led to a deep political crisis. There have been almost no protests against mobilization in Russia either.

We could see people bringing flowers to Prigozhin's improvised memorial. It is hard to imagine what different ideological constructs are combined in the heads of these people.

– Let's try to explain this. Even though Putin has not been in prison, he is as much a representative of the criminal milieu as Prigozhin. Stalin's regime was criminal not only because of its crimes against humanity, but also because the country was run by real criminals led by Soso, a specialist in bank robbery. We see something similar now: the KGB-FSB, closely linked to the Russian mafia, is a criminal structure organized on the model of a mafia group.

Part of Russian society accepts this kind of "politics". For people who are not critical thinkers and who were poor for a long time, Putin's regime has brought some improvement. This has not been to Putin's credit; it is just that oil prices rose sharply at the beginning of his rule. However, ordinary Russians see much richer people around them and envy them, especially since their fortunes are very recent. How did they get rich? They stole! In most cases, this is true. So, the Russian makes an unambiguous conclusion: if he, too, wants to succeed, he must steal and resort to violence because, in his opinion, that's what everyone does. For example, Russian soldiers send loot from Ukraine back home to their families, who unhesitatingly use stolen washing machines as legitimate "trophies of our troops".

A quarter of a century under the rule of a criminal regime has led to severe degradation of moral values in a society that had already been

prepared for this by the Soviet regime (although the communist ideology had humanistic motives, albeit hypocritical and perverse, which to some extent affected the norms of behaviour). The attitudes formed in the environment of the KGB and mafia have contributed to the blurring of the concepts of good and evil, blurring their clear boundaries in the public consciousness.

Can we say that KGB/FSB officers, acting within their system, may not perceive their actions as crimes?

−I think they believe that the world lacks universal moral criteria, and those that exist serve only as a tool to promote private interests. This is a simplified Marxism for criminals. Millions of people have grown up in this atmosphere, and millions recognize only violence and robbery as the way the world is. It is hard to argue that such attitudes are inherent in the majority, but they are, I believe, widespread, and the minority that promotes them has considerable influence. This minority has educated millions whose views are based on such simple ideas. The general moral decay of society creates the ground on which specific propaganda imposed by television can motivate aggression and hatred.

"Average" Russian people often display anger, envy, and a tendency to steal. Beautiful words about the "good-natured" Russian people are just part of the positive image that every nation wants to have. However, the reality is that up to 80% of Russia's population were still serfs 150 years ago. Then, the country lived under the rule of a terrorist regime for another seventy years, albeit it softened in the last decades of its existence. Serfdom did not improve people, no matter how much Russian writers praised all sorts of Gerasims, Khoreys, and Kalinychs.[31]

After the events of 2014, we organized a screening of the excellent film *Winter on Fire*[32] about the Maidan revolution in Ukraine at Emory University. About two hundred people came. Afterward, we discussed it with the audience, and one of the key questions was: why is there no resistance in Russia while there is resistance in Ukraine? One of the reasons we discussed is that in Russia, serfdom existed from the late sixteenth century to 1861, while in Ukraine, it was introduced at the end of the eighteenth century. In the case of Russia, this is eight or nine generations; in the case of Ukraine, it is just two or three. This is a significant difference. In Russia, national pride often manifests in bitterness, compensating for centuries of internal humiliation. In Ukraine, on the contrary,

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31   These are characters in Russian literature that represent peasants.
32   Documentary film directed by Eugene Afineevsky about the events of the Ukrainian Revolution of Dignity in the winter of 2013−2014, also known as Euromaidan.

this pride, in many cases, manifests itself in freedom-loving behaviour. At least, I hope it does.

In the past, the source of morality was religion, which formed moral guidelines for new generations. In modern secular societies, this role is partly fulfilled by history – *Historia est Magistra Vitae*. But does it really influence the formation of moral values?

I'm afraid I disagree that history today is mainly used for moral education due to the decline of religion. History has had this purpose since antiquity.

However, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, historians began to avoid discussing moral issues with the general decline of religion. This position gradually triumphed with the formation of professional historiography. Over time, the motto of historians became "to understand but not to judge". Moral issues were taken out of the scope of their research. Modern historiography was formed in this spirit in Germany, France, and the United States, the countries that succeeded each other as its leaders. Only very recently, as part of the so-called ethical turn in historiography, historians began discussing the need to bring moral discourse back into historical research.

The role of the professional historian and public attitudes towards his work have also changed. A classic example is Le Roy Ladurie's book *Montaillou, an Occitan Village*,[33] published in 1975. Although it is about the fourteenth century, it sold 150 thousand copies. Tens or hundreds of thousands bought academic books on history in the 1970s and 1980s! Today, selling even a thousand copies is a success.

The relationship between the reading public, intellectuals, and universities has also changed. In the 1950s and 1970s, the number of universities in Europe and the United States increased dramatically. Many graduates continued to keep in touch with their alma mater, hoping someday to return and continue their academic careers as old universities expanded and new ones continued to be created. Throughout their lives, they remained part of the university's intellectual culture to some extent. In contrast, now that there are too many universities and too many students, most simply cannot maintain that connection. And there are fewer incentives – the proletarianization of academia is taking place, after all. Most students and graduates of European and American universities are hardly bearers of academic culture anymore: they rarely read scholarly books and are not interested in the internal life of their universities.

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[33]   Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, *Montaillou, village occitan de 1294 à 1324* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1975).

Richard Pipes remarked in an interview that in his time universities were a source of enlightenment and professional knowledge. Today, he says, universities are more like social institutions where people interact on a social level rather than studying in the former sense.

– This is indeed true: the figure of the scholar, the university professor, is no longer an attractive role model for students.

Under current conditions, historians are increasingly involved in new forms of cultural politics. This is due, among other things, to the decline of the historical profession's public role. Collective representations of the past, and occasionally even the historians' research agenda, are defined today primarily by politicians and the media. The autonomy of the academic milieu has largely been lost.

We have discussed the views of Russian politicians representing the regime. Is the Russian opposition ready to revise Russia's historical relations with the peoples of central and eastern Europe?

– The Russian opposition currently consists of disparate groups, often in conflict with each other and expressing very different views. Some in the opposition realize that the regime is using manipulative memory politics. However, many—perhaps most—still believe in the basic imperial myths on which this politics is based. Therefore, it is difficult to speak of a willingness to revise the history of Russia's relations with neighbouring nations.

So, if the opposition comes to power, we should not expect a revision of historical policy, de-imperialization of Russia, or at least a symbolic farewell to the imperial past?

– Revision can begin if the opposition comes to power, which is unlikely. However, Russian culture is imperial. Take Brodsky's poem "On the Independence of Ukraine"[34] or Bulgakov's "The White Guard". The imperial component is also inherent in many other national cultures.

Even if a liberal government led by pro-Western politicians suddenly came to power in Russia, complete de-imperialization is unlikely – at least, it will take a very long time.

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[34]   Iosif Brodsky – On the Independence of Ukraine (1992), see Elvis Presley, *Iosif Brodskij – Na nezavisimost' Ukrainy (1992)*, online video recording, YouTube, 9 April 2015 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=grFRNnPePJw> [accessed on 11 November 2024].

Could a conventional reformer like Khrushchev in Stalin's circle emerge in Putin's milieu?

– I don't think the inner circles of those dictators are comparable. Stalinism was an attempt to realize the communist project, at least at the level of ideology. Putin's regime lacks such a project and a "general party line". "United Russia" is not an analogue of the CPSU: it does not rule or lead the country to the "future". It is an instrument used for propaganda and mobilization – and, of course, for simulating the democratic process.

Reforming Putin's regime from within is not impossible but with certain reservations. People in his inner circle know they can be removed from power at any moment. Periodic – albeit very selective – purges of the state apparatus could create the motivation to dismantle the existing system. Yet Putin's regime does not practice repression against its inner circle. Prigozhin was an exceptional case, and key figures in leadership positions feel relatively safe, if not for their careers, at least for their lives and property. So, their motivation to end the terror and reform the regime to save themselves, which Khrushchev and the company had, is much weaker.

Public discontent will unlikely reach the level necessary to initiate reforms without a significant military defeat or economic crisis. Another possible scenario is if Putin dies or goes missing, and a power struggle among his associates begins.

Putin's regime is stable today thanks, among other things, to the instrumentalization of Russian culture. How important is cultural identity for the retention of power?

– Russian culture is highly contradictory – I think, more so than most other national cultures, due to the extreme and long-standing despotism of several consecutive political regimes. On the one hand, this culture is closely connected with the imperial component; on the other hand, it includes a robust tradition of struggle against it. Often, these opposites coexist in the work of the same author. This raises the thorny question of how to evaluate a particular cultural figure. For example, Dostoevsky, for all his talent and humanistic pathos, was an anti-Semite, a monarchist, and a gambler. Brodsky, despite his anti-Soviet views, wrote terrible things about Ukraine.

The question arises: does talent alone matter? Is it possible to read and honour Dostoevsky and Brodsky today? Is Tchaikovsky worth performing if his music is associated with imperial culture? These questions should be approached on a case-by-case basis. Some works of Russian

culture that have become part of the world's heritage cannot be expunged. Today, there is no rational reason not to perform, for example, Tchaikovsky's "Eugene Onegin," but it will probably be inappropriate to perform "Mazepa" for some time.

It is essential to maintain a balance: we should not label all Russian culture as exclusively imperial, but we should not idealize it. As for contemporary artists who support Putin's policies while enjoying the benefits of Western society, they should, in my opinion, be boycotted and deprived of earning opportunities and a comfortable life in the West. This part of Russian culture is dangerous, not only for Ukraine but for the whole world.

Putin's actions and ideology are changing the world, making it potentially unsafe for everyone for generations to come. Putin's regime has already caused many tragedies, including famine in Africa. It is a global evil that is spreading around the world, and Russian imperialism is a common problem that goes far beyond the war in Ukraine, even if this war is our focus right now. That is why this war requires a global solution, and Ukraine – as some, including in America, say – is today the first line of defense of the free world.

In the 90s, many believed that liberalism had triumphed in Russia, but the political situation began to unfold differently. How do you see Russia's future now?

– There is no clarity about Russia's future at this point. At the beginning of the war, it seemed that it wouldn't last long and the regime would fall… That all turned out to be naive. There's a sense of confusion in intellectual circles because too many hopes were pinned on what didn't come to pass. Unfortunately, I don't believe in the imminent collapse of Putin's regime, but I would be glad to be proven wrong.

Interview conducted by YANA PRYMACHENKO

Darius Staliūnas
THE RUSSIAN VIEW OF POLISH INFLUENCES IN LITHUANIA AND BELARUS IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY

ABSTRACT

This article analyses the attitude of officials in the Russian Empire towards the role of Poles in Lithuania and Belarus at the beginning of the twentieth century, focusing mainly on the period after the 1905 revolution. In this article I argue that the tsarist authorities were unable to compete with the Polish influences in the Northwestern Region, specifically in Belarus, and their actions show that they were aware of this reality. This was why no higher education institution was established in the Northwestern Region, the 'Lithuanian' governorates had no zemstvos, and the Polish-speaking residents of the western districts of the Grodno governorate could not learn Polish in primary schools.

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From a Russian point of view, nineteenth-century Lithuania and Belarus were a meeting point of two cultures: Russian and Polish.[1] In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the ruling and intellectual elite of the Russian empire regarded the Lithuanian and, to a lesser extent, the Belarusian national movement as a problem of a lower taxonomic order. The 'Jewish question' affected the entire empire, or at least the Jewish Pale of Settlement and Congress Poland, but it also caused the tsarist authorities fewer problems.

This article analyses the attitude of officials in the Russian Empire towards the role of Poles in Lithuania and Belarus at the beginning of the twentieth century, focusing mainly on the period after the 1905 revolution.[2] In order to analyse this problem, we must not only discuss the tsarist officials' assessment of the Polish influence but above all explain which ideological constructs led to this verdict on the role of Poles in the region. The article focuses not only and not so much on the official interpretation and rhetoric but more on the tsarist officials' actions. Such an analysis has more to say about the tsarist authorities' approach to the problems of the so-called Northwestern Region (Severo-zapadnyi krai) than a simple discussion of the official, even confidential rhetoric.

Let us begin by stating that the tsarist officials, especially those who served in the Northwestern Region, were aware that it was not homogeneous. The ethnic and religious makeup of the population of Lithuania contrasted starkly with that of Belarus. The geographical borders of Lithuania and Belarus could be viewed variously: in the 'historical' sense (in which case, the Lithuanian governorates were Vilna, Kovno and Grodno, while the Belarusian ones were Minsk, Vitebsk and Mogilev) or the ethnolinguistic sense (with the whole of the Kovno and part of the Vilna governorates in Lithuanian territory, and the remainder in Belarus). This ethnolinguistic approach is more important in this article. The majority of the population of Belarus were indigenous Belarusians who, according to official thinking, formed an integral part of the tripartite Russian nation, thus the territory was perceived not only as the property of the Romanov Empire, but also as Russian 'national territory'.[3] Although the name

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[1] Lithuania and Belarus, or the historical lands of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, were known in nineteenth-century Russian discourse as the Northwestern Region/Krai (Russia/Ruthenia). In the early twentieth century, this name applied to the Vilna, Kovno, Grodno, Minsk, Vitebsk and Mogilev governorates.

[2] Historians have been less interested in the period after the 1905 revolution. Henryk Głębocki, Stanisław Wiech, Daniel Beauvois, Andrzej Nowak, Mikhail Dolbilov, Leonid Gorizontov and others have written about the tsarist authorities' attitude towards Poles in earlier periods, including in other regions of the empire.

[3] For more on this notion, see Alexei Miller, 'Shaping Russian and Ukrainian Identities in the Russian Empire During the Nineteenth Century: Some Methodological Remarks', *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, 49.2 (2001), 257–63 (p. 258); Aleksej Miller, 'Imperija i nacija v voobraženii russkogo nacionalizma. Zametki na poljach odnoj stat'i A. N. Pypina', in *Rossijskaja imperija v sravnitel'noj perspektive*, ed. by Marina Batalina and Aleksej Miller (Moskva: Novoe izdatel'stvo, 2004), pp. 265–70; Alexei Miller, 'Between Local and Inter-Imperial. Russian Imperial History in Search of Scope and Paradigm', *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, 5.1 (2004), 7–26 (p. 23); *Nationalizing Empires*, ed. by Stefan Berger and Alexei Miller (Budapest and New York: CEU Press, 2015).

Northwestern Region (Krai – Russia/Ruthenia) assumed that everything 'belonged' to the Russians, under both the official discourse and the practices of nationality politics the lands where indigenous Lithuanians comprised the majority did not form part of the Russian 'national territory'.[4] The Russian *mental map* is the first important ideological construct that can help to explain the (different) verdict on the role of Poles in these areas. We should also remember that the officials were not a uniform mass and, especially after the 1905 revolution, various visions of the empire emerged, with differing types of nationality policy,[5] one of which I have previously identified as *imperial*. For supporters of the *imperial* national policy, its most important objective was to ensure subjects' loyalty. The advocates of this approach were characterised by the idea that the reason for the disloyalty of non-dominant national groups, including Poles, was the authorities' discriminatory and repressive policy. For example, the Russian education minister, Ivan Tolstoy, one of the most consistent proponents of this policy, argued that primitive attempts to "transform one nationality into another", i.e., assimilation, only gave rise to anger and irredentism.[6] Avoiding discrimination and repression and satisfying the cultural needs of the non-dominant ethnic groups could secure the loyalty of Poles, Lithuanians or other national groups. Advocates of the *nationalist* vision believed that loyalty towards the Russian Empire was closely linked to subjects' ethnic and cultural identification, meaning that only Russians could be trusted, while the non-dominant ethnical groups were disloyal, or at least potentially disloyal. According to the governor of Kovno, Nikolai Gryazev (1912–1917), the Lithuanians, "like the Poles, Jews and aliens [*inorodtsy*], are natural enemies of Russian statehood".[7] The proponents of this policy therefore backed assimilation and acculturation wherever they thought it was possible (regarding the Belarusians and Lithuanians); whenever they encountered stronger national cultures (Poles, Jews), they favoured a segregationist policy. The ideal for supporters of the *nationalist* policy was a *nationalising empire*.

The term 'nationalising state' is often used in analysis of the discourses or nationality policies promoted by nation-states. Rogers Brubaker identified five elements characteristic of this kind of discourse: 1) the idea that a state has a core nation determined by ethnocultural markers that

4   Darius Staliūnas, 'Poland or Russia? Lithuania on the Russian Mental Map', in *Spatial Concepts of Lithuania in the Long Nineteenth Century*, ed. by Darius Staliūnas (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2016), pp. 23–95.
5   Darius Staliūnas, 'Challenges to Imperial Authorities' Nationality Policy in the Northwest Region, 1905–1915', in *The Tsar, the Empire, and the Nation. Dilemmas of Nationalization in Russia's Western Borderlands, 1905–1915*, ed. by Darius Staliūnas and Yoko Aoshima (Budapest and New York: CEU Press, 2021), pp. 33–66.
6   *Memuary grafa I. I. Tolstogo* (Moskva: Indrik, 2002), p. 188.
7   Report of the governor of Kovno to the minister of internal affairs from 28 April and 18 May 1913, 28 December 1914, Rossijskij gosudarstvennyj istoričeskij arhiv (Russian State Historical Archives; hereafter RGIA), f. 821, op. 128, d. 44, l. 634.

differs from the rest of the population; 2) the state belongs to the core nation, or at least it must have the dominant position; 3) this nation is weak; 4) the state must strengthen it; 5) such efforts by the state are essential as this nation has previously experienced injustice and discrimination.[8] In recent times, historical literature has referred not only to nationalising nation-states but also empires.[9]

Another important set of coordinates that influenced officials' thinking about specific national groups was the *imagined hierarchy of enemies of the empire*. A particular group's place in this hierarchy depended on three criteria: political loyalty, place in the social hierarchy, and proximity to the Great Russians.[10] The Poles, especially after the uprisings of 1830 and 1863, were public enemy number one not only in the empire's western borderlands, but also on the scale of the entire empire. The fact that in the eyes of officials Poles in the Northwestern Region belonged to the social elite (landed classes, Catholic clergy, bourgeoisie) gave grounds for considering them as potential supporters of the tsarist regime, but the aforementioned political disloyalty meant that members of this group *in corpore* were regarded as unreliable and thus deserving of discrimination.[11] Sources from this time frequently recorded situations in which the ethnonym 'Pole' became synonymous with a disloyal person.[12] Polish culture in the eyes of tsarist officials was of course independent, so theoretically it should have merited significantly greater autonomy compared to Belarusian or Ukrainian culture. At the same time, Poles were Slavs (albeit not eastern), meaning that they could have a telling impact on 'Russians' (Belarusians and Ukrainians) and were thus much more dangerous than, for example, Jews.

These ideological constructs (*mental map*, *differing visions of nationality policy* and *place of the ethnic group in the imagined hierarchy of enemies*) were interlinked. Some were rather static; others were dynamic. Lithuania's and Belarus's place on the Russian *mental map* at the beginning of the twentieth century was somewhat stable.

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8   Rogers Brubaker, 'Nationalizing States Revisited: Projects and Processes of Nationalization in Post-Soviet States', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 34.11 (2011), 1785–91 (p. 1786).

9   Anton Kotenko, 'An Inconsistently Nationalizing State: The Romanov Empire and the Ukrainian National Movement', in *The Tsar, the Empire, and the Nation*, pp. 17–31.

10   Andreas Kappeler, 'Mazepincy, malorossy, chochly: ukraincy v ètničeskoj ierarchii Rossijskoj imperii', in *Rossija-Ukraina: istorija vzaimootnošenij*, ed. by Alexei Miller, Vladimir Reprincev, and Boris Florja (Moskva: škola «Jazyki russkoj kul'tury», 1997), pp. 125–44.

11   On the identification practices employed by the authorities, as well as the concept of "people of Polish origin" in the Russian discourse, see Michail Dolbilov, 'Poljak v imperskom političeskom leksikone', in *Ponjatija o Rossii. K istoričeskoj semantike imperskogo perioda*, ed. by Aleksej Miller and Ingrid Širle, II (Moskva: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2012), pp. 292–339; Roman Jurkowski, 'Czy każdy katolik to Polak? – kresowe, narodowo-religijne dylematy rosyjskiej biurokracji w dokumencie Ministerstwa Spraw Wewnętrznych z 1910 roku', *Studia z Dziejów Rosji i Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej*, 52.2 (2017), 223–39; Darius Staliūnas, 'The Identification of Subjects According to Nationality in the Western Region of the Russian Empire in 1905–1915', *Ab Imperio*, 3 (2020), 33–68.

12   Dolbilov, 'Poljak v imperskom političeskom leksikone', p. 292; Charles Steinwedel, 'To Make a Difference: The Category of Ethnicity in Late Imperial Russian Politics, 1861–1917', in *Russian Modernity*, ed. by David L. Hoffmann and Yanni Kotsonis (New York: Macmillan, 2000), pp. 76–94 (p. 76).

While the Lithuanian ethnocultural sphere could still be disregarded in the mid-nineteenth century, towards the end of the empire all tsarist officials understood that the Kovno governorate, part of the Vilna governorate, and also much of the Suwałki governorate, which belonged to Congress Poland, were areas dominated by Lithuanians.

At the same time, in 1905–1915 we observe distinct competition between the *imperial* and *nationalist visions* of policies. During the revolution, the proponents of the *imperial* nationality policy strengthened their influences markedly, but the number of them in leadership positions subsequently dwindled with every passing year, as did their influence. The position of Poles in the hierarchy of enemies of the empire also changed. At the beginning of the twentieth century, especially in 1904–1905, an increasing number of high-ranking tsarist officials asserted that the greatest threat to the stability of the social order in the northwest of the state was posed by new social movements, sometimes noticing that there were numerous Jewish participants, whereas Polish society contained conservative elements with which the tsarist authorities could collaborate.[13] The same conclusion was reached in 1905 by the Committee of Ministers, which in spring discussed the changes in nationality policy in the Western Krai: "The chairman and 19 members could not fail to notice that circumstances have changed significantly since the 1860s. Now the Russian state has no cause for concern about the integrity of its territory, which the Polish rebellion sought to violate; on the other hand, the existing social system has another enemy here – the spreading of harmful teachings, the aspiration to social equality of people of all classes, and radical democratisation".[14]

At this time, the hierarchy of enemies of the empire also changed on its western frontier. Here it was not 'the Polish question' that caused the greatest concern among tsarist officials, but social groups following socialist ideas.[15] Yet the view of Poles as a group with a lesser impact on the stability of the empire did not dominate for long. Just a few years after the revolution, Poles again became the most important problem in the hierarchy of enemies of the empire. In the next part of the article, I shall focus on the assessment of the role of Poles in Lithuania and Belarus among the tsarist administration, in which the *nationalist* vision was dominant.

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[13]   Staliūnas, 'Challenges to Imperial Authorities', pp. 39–40, 43–44.
[14]   Journal of meetings of the Committee of Ministers, 15, 22, and 23 March 1905, in *Rossija. Komitet ministrov. Žurnaly Komiteta ministrov po ispolneniju ukaza 12 dekabrja 1904 g.* (Sankt-Peterburg: Kanceljarija Komiteta ministrov, 1905), p. 323.
[15]   Mal'te Rolf, *Pol'skie zemli pod vlast'ju Peterburga. Ot venskogo kongressa do Pervoj Mirovoj* (Moskva: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2020), pp. 436–44.

The proponents of the *nationalist* vision of the empire promoted a discourse characteristic of the vision of a *nationalising state*, which was presented briefly above. This discourse was particularly distinct in the case of Belarus. From the mid-nineteenth century onwards, the tsarist government made intensive use of national statistical data and ethnographic descriptions to prove that most of the residents of the Northwestern Region were indigenous Russians. As noted earlier, Belarusians, like Ukrainians, were regarded as an integral part of the tripartite Russian nation. Among the arguments given for the rights of this numerically dominant national group were historical ones stating that the Grand Duchy of Lithuania was one more Russian state: Western Rus'.[16] Based on this idea, they could claim that the Russians from the Northwestern Region were "the rightful heirs to the former rulers of the region".[17] An increasing tendency in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries viewed the Romanov Empire increasingly as a country 'belonging' to the Russians. This kind of conceptualisation can also be discerned in the story of the unveiling (1898) of a monument to the governor-general of Vilna, Mikhail Muravev (1863–1865). A certain Grigori Kulzhinsky sent a greeting that concluded with the slogan "Russia above all for the Russians, hurrah!"[18] The opinion was expressed in official documents that certain actions in nationality policy should be taken "in the interest of the state and nation".[19]

According to various officials, the Russian nation in the Northwestern Region was weak. One of the most radical assessments of this weakness was that of the Vilna governor-general, Konstanty Krzhyvitskiy, who claimed that the Belarusians in the Grodno and Vilna governorates "in terms of language and customs are something between native Russians and Poles. [...] The northwestern Belarusian equally easily becomes both a Russian and a Pole, leaning culturally more towards the latter since Lithuania and White Russia were for several centuries in a state union with Poland, which left a profound imprint in many areas of local life".[20]

Vilna governor Pyotr Veryovkin (1912–1916) stated that in this situation it was the duty of the state and Russian civic activists to "use all possible means to promote the preservation and further development in the Belarusian masses of awareness of the bonds of kinship and

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16   Staliūnas, 'Poland or Russia?', pp. 23–95.
17   Sermon of the Orthodox Kyiv metropolitan Platon prepared after receiving permission to collect money for a monument to Mikhail Muravev in Vilna, RGIA, f. 797, ap. 61, 2 otd., 2 stol., b. 249, l. 3–12.
18   Aleksandr Vinogradov, *Kak sozdalsja v g. Vil'ne pamjatnik Grafu M.N. Murav'evu* (Vil'na: Kom. po sooruženiju pamjatnika, 1898), pp. 37–38.
19   Top-secret report of the governor of Minsk, Girs, on the measures to strengthen Belarusians' self-awareness and counteract Polonisation of them in the Minsk governorate, RGIA, f. 821, op. 150, d. 167, l. 32.
20   Draft report of the Vilna governor-general of 20 August 1906 to Stolypin, *Lietuvos valstybės istorijos archyvas* (Lithuanian state historical archives; hereafter LVIA), f. 378, BS, 1906 m., b. 412, l. 4.

cultural-historical proximity with Russia".[21] State intervention was necessary as a counterbalance to the actions of hostile forces.

These hostile forces were Poles. A long-nurtured narrative told of the persecution of Russians in this region. One of the most striking examples was the idea of a new history textbook for the schools of the Northwestern Region outlined by the aforementioned Muravev. Teaching of history was to focus on:

> the fate of the Russian nation in the Northwestern Region, its efforts to defend Orthodox Christianity, its language and Russian national customs from the claims of Polish-Catholic propaganda; the incessant struggle with the Polish nobility, which has imposed its alien customs on the local population; this country's marvellous Orthodox Christian historical figures, who in every possible way have resisted the oppression of Polish-Catholic propaganda and methods of coercion and ultimately had to fall victim to the struggle for the Russian Faith and tongue, defeated by the power and influence of the hostile Polish element, which took into its hands all domains of life and the intellectual development of the local population.[22]

The problem from the authorities' point of view was that these Polish injustices were not only in the past but also continuing in the present.[23] The tsarist officials thought that the Poles were seeking to "artificially turn Orthodox Christian Belarusians gravitating towards Russia into an independent alien ethnographic unit, while also, in the case of the revival of national awareness among Belarusian Catholics, tearing them away from the rest of the Russian nation".[24] The Catholic Church and school were the two centres of public life that, according to the tsarist officials, most continued to 'Polonise' the Northwestern Region's population, mainly Belarusians and, to a lesser extent, Lithuanians.

I will now discuss cases that demonstrate the tsarist authorities' attitude to the potential, aspirations, efforts and results of the actions of Poles in the Northwestern Region, but particularly that part of it regarded as Russian *national territory*, i.e., Belarus. At the same time, the assessment of the role of Poles will also show how the Russian authorities perceived

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[21]   Draft report of the minister of internal affairs to the governors of Vilna and Grodno, May (no date) 1912, RGIA, f. 821, ap. 150, b. 167, l. 1-2.
[22]   See the document "On the textbook for teaching the history of Russian for the educational institutions of the Northwestern Region", LVIA, f. 378, BS, 1864 m., b. 1672, l. 1–2.
[23]   Letter of the interim governor of Grodno on the Polonisation of Belarusians in the Grodno governorate, 11 September 1913, RGIA, f. 821, ap. 150, b. 167, l. 8.
[24]   Document prepared at the Ministry of Internal Affairs, RGIA, f. 821, ap. 150, b. 167, l. 66.

their cultural potential, and not only in this region. I will begin with ex-amples associated with the actual rivalry of Poles and Russians in certain areas of public life, then I will tackle the tsarist authorities' efforts to pre-vent such rivalry.

TEACHING OF CATHOLIC RELIGION IN SCHOOLS

Among the terms of the Decree of Tolerance of 17 April 1905 was the re-quirement that the non-Orthodox religion be taught in schools in pu-pils' "mother tongue".[25] The decree, of course, did not envisage procedures defining this language, so this issue was resolved by further legislation. On 22 February 1906, the education ministry issued temporary provisions whereby pupils' "mother tongue" was to be defined in a written statement by their parents or guardians. Six years later (1912), the education minister issued a circular amending the existing procedure and ruling that school headteachers should determine pupils' mother tongue, if necessary after speaking to the parents. These laws were produced and implemented amid a bitter struggle between the local civic administration and the Catholic clergy. The majority of disputes and conflicts surrounded the language in which Belarusian Catholics were to be taught religion.

Local officials, especially those who supported the *nationalist* vision of the empire, insisted that (mainly Belarusian) pupils' mother tongue should be determined by the language used at home, taking ethnographic arguments into account, with the decision made by education ministry officials. The Catholic Church hierarchy argued that religion should be taught in the same language as the one in which pupils prayed, with par-ents having the final say. The former group wanted Belarusian Catholics to learn religion at school in Russian, while the latter thought it should be in Polish.

Upon publication of the Decree of Tolerance, without waiting for in-structions from the civil authorities, the Bishop of Vilna, Eduard von der Ropp (1903–1907), issued a circular instructing priests to teach religion in the pupils' mother tongue. Of course, the Catholic clergy understood the bishop's order as it was intended and switched to Polish. Despite de-mands from the local administration, the bishop did not withdraw the cir-cular. In his next publication of 22 August 1905, he emphasised that reli-gion should be taught in the language in which children prayed at home.

25   Aleksandr Bendin, *Problemy veroterpimosti v Severo-Zapadnom krae Rossijskoj imperii (1863–1914 gg.)* (Minsk: BGU, 2010), pp. 344–56.; Vytautas Merkys, *Tautiniai santykiai Vilniaus vyskupijoje 1798–1918 m.* (Vilnius: Versus Aureus, 2006), pp. 221–32; Darius Staliūnas, 'Challenges to Imperial Authorities' Nationality Policy in the Northwest Region, 1905–1915', in *The Tsar, the Empire, and the Nation*, pp. 33–66 (pp. 60–63).

Following Ropp's dismissal by the tsarist authorities, his replacement, Kazimierz Michalkiewicz, the apostolic administrator of the diocese, continued to oppose the teaching of the Catholic faith in Russian. He responded to a circular from the education minister in 1912 with his own circular, in which he 'reminded' priests that they knew better what pupils' mother tongue was. In this battle for the 'souls' of Belarusian Catholics, the Catholic clergy fared better.

In 1908, the superintendent of the Vilna Education District admitted that Belarusian Catholics were not taught religion in Russian anywhere in the district and that where lessons took place, it was only in Polish.[26] Officials at various levels could easily explain that Belarusians were forced to obey priests or landowners.[27] In terms of influencing Belarusian Catholics, the power of the tsarist administration proved to be lesser than that of the Catholic clergy, hence the issuing of said circular from 1912, although this soon turned out not to guarantee the tsarist authorities success. Since the education officials' objective stated in the circular was to teach Belarusian Catholics in Russian, in many places, especially in the Vilna governorate, priests simply stopped going to schools, while more than half of all schools were not allocated religion teachers – besides which, most Catholic children did not attend state schools and learned religion at home.[28]

In this struggle, therefore, the tsarist officials observed the consistent efforts of the Catholic clergy to maintain influence over Belarusian Catholics and became convinced that the Catholic Church hierarchy could openly oppose the orders of the authorities. The fact that study of religion in 1906–1912 took place not in Russian but in Polish – as well as the later sabotage of this subject – should have made it clear to officials that Poles held the upper hand.

[26]   Report of the superintendent of the Vilna Education District from 18 December 1908 to the education minister, RGIA, f. 733, op. 173, d. 29, l. 72–73.
[27]   Aleksandr Milovidov, *O jazyke prepodavanija v narodnych školach Severo-Zapadnago Kraja. (Po povodu zaprosa v Gosud. Dumu)* (Vil'na: Tipografija «Russkij Počin», 1912), p. 9.; Letter of the teacher-inspector of class 4 of Bykov municipal school to the director of people's schools of the Mogilev governorate, 17 March 1906, LVIA, f. 567, ap. 12, d. 6385, l. 368; Report of the Department of People's Education of the Ministry of Education to the minister of internal affairs, 9 July 1909, RGIA, f. 821, op. 10, d. 514, l. 216.
[28]   Letter of the director of people's schools of the Vilna governorate to the superintendent of the Education District, 11 April 1914, LVIA, f. 567, ap. 26, b. 999, l. 10–11. In Lithuanian-majority districts, teaching of Catholic religion in state schools was not halted. See also: Merkys, *Tautiniai santykiai Vilniaus vyskupijoje*, p. 232.

CHANGING DENOMINATION

The Decree of Tolerance announced one more innovation that was even greater than the procedure for teaching religion.[29] Henceforth, Orthodox Christian tsarist subjects had the right to change denomination. This drastic step surprised not only local administration officials in the western parts of the empire, but also the central apparatus of power. The circular envisaging a temporary procedure for change in denomination was announced by the central government only on 18 August 1905. Under this procedure, a future convert from Orthodox Christianity to another Christian denomination should apply to the local governor, who would act as a mediator between the two Churches and within a month inform the leadership of the other (non-Orthodox) Church about the new member. This month was supposed to give the Orthodox Church time to persuade the individual to change their mind.

The problem encountered by the civil authorities was the swift reaction of the Catholic Church hierarchy in the Russian Empire, especially Ropp, the Bishop of Vilna. Immediately following the publication of the Decree of Tolerance on 21 April 1905, Ropp issued his own circular stating that those who wanted to convert to the Catholic faith had to make a request to the bishop in writing, and the process would conclude with a decree of the consistory, after which that person would be listed in the congregation of the relevant parish. Soon afterwards, similar circulars were issued by other hierarchs of the Catholic Church.

The Decree of Tolerance enabled thousands of Orthodox Christians to change denomination. In 1905 alone, more than 20,000 converted to Catholicism in the so-called Lithuanian governorates (16,286 in the Vilna administration, 3,625 in Grodno, and 900 in Kovno).[30] Perhaps future research will help us to answer the question of how many of those or their family members who coverted from Orthodox Christianity in the 1860s were counted in the Orthodox denomination by force, when the tsarist authorities even resorted to coercive measures to increase the numbers of Orthodox subjects. In the Vilna governorate in 1863–1867, some 18,775 people converted to Orthodox Christianity, i.e., practically the same number as those who left in 1905.[31] The Catholic Church enjoyed less success[32] in the Grodno governorate, but in general both representatives of

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[29] Pol Vert, 'Trudnyj put' k katolicizmu. Veroispovednaja prinadležnost' i graždanskoe sostojanie posle 1905 goda', *Lietuvių katalikų mokslo akademijos metraštis*, 26 (2005), 447–74; Bendin, *Problemy veroterpimosti v Severo-Zapadnom krae Rossijskoj imperii*, pp. 221–320; Vilma Žaltauskaitė, 'Interconfessional Rivalry in Lithuania after the Decree of Tolerance', in *The Tsar, the Empire, and the Nation*, pp. 113–39.

[30] Žaltauskaitė, Interconfessional Rivalry, p. 121.

[31] Darius Staliūnas, *Making Russians. Meaning and Practice of Russification in Lithuania and Belarus after 1863* (Amsterdam–New York, NY: Rodopi, 2007), p. 133.

[32] In 1863–1867, 16,262 Orthodox Christians became Catholics in this governorate: ibid.

the Orthodox Church and local officials saw the mass conversion from Orthodox Christianity to Catholicism as a disaster.

Both officials and local Russian community activists blamed the mass conversion to Catholicism mainly on Catholic priests, who had supposedly tried to 'woo' as many Orthodox Christians as they could using illegal measures. For a long time (until 1908), the Catholic Church hierarchy did not recognise the procedure established by a decree of 18 August 1908, which provided an additional excuse for accusing Poles of actions against the Orthodox Church and the Russian Empire. Whereas in 1905, on the eve of or during the revolution, some tsarist officials might have thought that the socialist movement posed the greatest threat, the Catholic clergy's sudden and consistent use of the opportunities offered by the Decree of Tolerance 'reminded' the civil authorities of the danger represented by this group, which was widely seen as defending the interests of Poles.

The implementation of the Decree of Tolerance (in terms of both catechesis and changing denomination) made it clear to the tsarist authorities that Poles, especially the Catholic clergy, had the same aspirations as previously, which the tsarist officials called Polonisation. Moreover, it became clear that the civil authorities could not compete with the Poles without employing administrative measures, especially when the rivalry concerned influences on Belarusian Catholics. Aware of their own weakness and the Poles' greater potential, the tsarist authorities took measures that simply prevented Poles from competing with the tsarist administration.

HIGHER EDUCATION

In the early twentieth century, there was much discussion about setting up a higher education institution in Vilna or another city in the Northwestern Region.[33] The most initiative was shown by Vilna's local government institution – the duma – while other local institutions also got involved, including civil society organisations, often presenting themselves as representing ethnic groups living in the country. The discussions covered the idea of setting up a university or another type of higher education institution.

Laying the groundwork for such an institution was no easy task. Significant funds were needed, with various interests having to be coordinated. In 1906–1908, the committee appointed on the initiative of

[33]   Darius Staliūnas, *Visuomenė be universiteto? (Aukštosios mokyklos atkūrimo problema Lietuvoje: XIX a. vidurys – XX a. pradžia)* (Vilnius: LII, 2000).

the Vilna duma ceased to operate "owing to the minimal hope of a satisfactory outcome".[34] The many hurdles that had to be overcome before a higher education institution could be established were cited in the discussions of officials and representatives of society, or in official documents: a lack of funds, the need to set up such institutions in many different cities of the Russian Empire, etc. Such reasoning may have had a certain influence but it could not conceal the real cause, which became apparent in the geography of higher education on the western fringes of the empire. Institutions of this kind operated in the Baltic governorates, Congress Poland, and the Southwestern Region (Ukraine), but not in the Northwestern Region. The first two of these regions were perceived on the Russian mental map as foreign, so a higher education institution there was less dangerous, whereas right-bank Ukraine, like the Northwestern Region, was seen as Russian 'national territory', much more integrated with the empire and more Russian.[35] Lithuania and particularly Belarus were the weakest links in this part of the Russian 'national territory', therefore a university or similar institution of higher education could be dangerous here as Polish students could have a negative influence on others. Based on such arguments, the tsarist authorities did not set up higher education institutions in this region in the second half of the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries.

INTRODUCTION OF SELF-GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS (ZEMSTVOS)

Local self-government institutions known as zemstvos were introduced in the Russian Empire in 1864, but not on its western frontiers as they would have fallen into non-Russian hands (German in the Baltic governorates, Polish in Congress Poland and the Western Krai).[36] Debates took place in the corridors of government surrounding the introduction of local governmental institutions in these territories too, until zemstvos were introduced in the Ukrainian and Belarusian governorates of the Western Krai in 1911. Elections to zemstvos were to take place in curias, to which voters were to be allocated depending on their nationality. This is the most obvious

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[34]   Draft letter from the head of the People's Education Committee of Vilna Municipal Council to A. Lagori, 23 May 1911, LVIA, f. 938, ap. 6, b. 312, l. 306.

[35]   Darjus Staljunas, 'Ėtničeskaja ierarchija gubernij na zapadnych okrainach Rossijskoj imperii (načalo XX v.)', in *Rossijskaja imperija meždu reformami i revoljucijami, 1906–1916*, ed. by Aleksej Miller and Kirill Solov'ev (Moskva: Kvadriga, 2021), pp. 302–18.

[36]   Aron Avrech, 'Vopros o zapadnom zemstve i bankrotstvo Stolypina', *Istoričeskie zapiski*, 70 (1961), 61–112; Theodore R. Weeks, *Nation and State in Late Imperial Russia. Nationalism and Russification on the Western Frontier, 1863–1914* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois Press, 1996), pp. 131–51; Michail Dolbilov and Aleksej Miller, *Zapadnye okrainy Rossijskoj imperii* (Moskva: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2006), pp. 271–75, 378–81; Staliūnas, 'Challenges to Imperial Authorities', pp. 33–66.

evidence of the fact that the tsarist authorities saw the Polish potential in this region as stronger than the Russian one.

The Russian perception of the Polish potential saw it as even greater in the so-called Lithuanian governorates, where zemstvos were not introduced at all due to the weakness of the Russian landed classes there. The Grodno governorate also had no zemstvos, despite having considerably more Orthodox Christians than Catholics. The official explanation that the same institutions were to operate throughout territory that was subordinate to the governor-general of Vilna seems unconvincing, because in parallel with the introduction of zemstvos there were plans to abolish the Vilna governorate-general, which were implemented in 1912.[37] The likelier reason for the failure to introduce zemstvos in the Grodno governorate is the tsarist authorities' fears of excessive Polish influence on the rather numerous Belarusian Catholics living there.

POLISH AS A PRIMARY SCHOOL SUBJECT

The tsarist authorities readily agreed to teaching of Polish in high schools in the Northwestern Region, but the situation in primary schools was entirely different. On 22 April 1906, a decree was issued stating that in the part of the territory of the Grodno governorate neighbouring with Congress Poland, where there was a large population of Poles in state primary schools, including one-class schools, not only could Polish be taught as a subject, but other subjects could also be taught in this language, with the exception of Russian. In 1906, the local administration, which, especially in the education ministry, included many influential advocates of the *imperial* national policy, took steps to implement this decree. It organised consultations and collected information, ultimately recommending that the decree could be implemented in nine districts (six in Bielsk county and three in Białystok county). This recommendation satisfied neither proponents of the *imperial* national policy, headed by Boris Wolf, overseer of the Vilna Education District, nor supporters of the *nationalist* policy, including Grodno governor Viktor Borzenko. The former group believed that the wishes of the population should be followed, increasing the area where Polish could be learnt. Belarusian Catholics also had the right to learn Polish if they wanted. The latter group prioritised 'ethnographic' criteria and sought to restrict this area. As this group grew in strength in the tsarist administration (Wolff left the position of overseer of the Vilna

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[37]   The Vilna governorate-general consisted of the Vilna, Kovno and Grodno governorates.

Education District in 1908), the part of the decree referring to the possibility of learning Polish in the Grodno governorate ultimately remained unfulfilled. Applications from those who wanted to learn Polish were rejected, with the argument that in 1906 it was impossible to precisely define the area dominated by Polish speakers or because the applicants were Belarusians.[38] It is evident that at least part of this reasoning was only a pretext (e.g., the unclear Polish-speaking area). One unnamed but very likely reason was the fact that allowing Polish to be taught in primary schools would mean, in the officials' view, that this area would be dominated numerically by Poles, making it their *national territory*. This conclusion (that part of the Northwestern Region was Polish territory) was not accepted by the tsarist officials, especially supporters of the *nationalist* vision. Another reason was officials' reluctance to allow those identifying as native Belarusians to learn Polish.

By failing to implement the decree of 22 April, in effect the tsarist officials admitted that they were unable to persuade Belarusian Catholics that they were Russians and did not need Polish. The authorities thereby accepted that Polish culture and language had a greater potential than its Russian counterpart in the western part of the Grodno governorate, even if the latter could count on the support of the civic administration.

CONCLUSION

In spring 1914, high-ranking tsarist officials met in Saint Petersburg to discuss initiatives "to counter Polish influences in the Northwestern Region". The participants in the meetings familiarised themselves with various documents, including a report from the Vilna governorate in which the governor, Dmitri Lubimov, gave a positive assessment of the struggle against various ethnic groups there and more broadly throughout the Northwestern Region: "Everything comes down to the fact that at first glance the sad picture of the national struggle tearing the Northwestern Region apart has its positive aspects as well as its dark sides. Slowly but inexorably, it is weakening the Polish domination in the region, which is starting to understand the complete historical illegality of this domination. It is therefore unnecessary for the government to interfere in this struggle.

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[38]   Correspondence with the governor-general of the Northwestern Region and landed district marshals on permission to teach Polish and Lithuanian in the Northwestern Region. Directory of the ethnographic makeup of the governorate's population by districts, 1906–1919, Nacyjanaľny histaryčny archiŭ Belarusi ŭ h. Hrodna (National Historical Archives of Belarus in Grodno), f. 1, op. 18, d. 1097; On determining ethnographic boundaries following the request of the Supreme Command of 22 April 1906 regarding permission for the Polish language in primary schools in the Grodno governorate, LVIA, f. 567, ap. 13, b. 1301; Permission to teach Polish in primary schools in the Grodno governorate, LVIA, f. 567, ap. 13, b. 1369.

Its consequences can be foreseen: the surging storm will undoubtedly pave the way for the Russian cause on the western frontiers".[39]

In early 1914, the Ministry of Internal Affairs noted that "[...] the Polish National Democratic Party has recently stepped up its efforts to subjugate the local Belarusians by submitting them to Polish-Catholic influences".[40] The central authorities responded to this assessment by holding a meeting in Saint Petersburg to discuss various nationality policy measures. Some of these can be called repressive, or at least bearing the hallmarks of repression (regulating the national composition of the hierarchs, consistories, and seminary members of the Catholic Church; providing Belarusian Catholics with additional services and teaching religion in schools in Russian; restricting the building of Catholic churches; regulating religious processions; supervision of transactions of purchase and sales of land; stricter control of the operation of civic organisations etc.). More affirmative action included strengthening of the influence of the Orthodox Church; support for purchase of land by Russians; financial subvention for a newspaper that supported government policy in the Northwestern Region, etc.[41] Yet there were far fewer affirmative measures than repressive ones, and in this respect the plan of action prepared by the conference in 1914 was continuation of the policy pursued by the tsarist authorities in the second half of the nineteenth century. Affirmative action measures required skills, implementers and funding. Early in the twentieth century, the tsarist administration lacked all these elements, so priority was given to administrative means, since otherwise the tsarist authorities would not have been able to compete with the Polish influences in the Northwestern Region, and specifically Belarus, and their actions discussed above show that the tsarist officials were aware of this reality. This was why no higher education institution was established in the Northwestern Region, the 'Lithuanian' governorates had no zemstvos, and the Polish-speaking residents of the western districts of the Grodno governorate could not learn Polish in primary schools.

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[39]   Extract from the Vilna governorate report of 1910, RGIA, f. 821, op. 150, d. 172, l. 213.
[40]   Quoted from a letter from the Vilna governor to the superintendent of the Vilna Educational District, 10 January 1914, LVIA, f. 567, ap. 26, b. 999, l. 1.
[41]   List of measures for countering Polonisation in the Northwestern Region prepared during the meetings that took place on 17, 18, 20, 22, 24, 25 and 26 April, RGIA, f. 821, op. 150, d. 172, l. 71–72.

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Rimantas Miknys
THE POLISH NATIONAL PROJECT IN THE PROCESS OF THE REVIVAL OF THE LITHUANIAN NATION IN THE CONTEXT OF LITHUANIAN RESEARCH

ABSTRACT

The article shows that three phases can be identified in the process of the emergence of the modern Polish nation: 1) the post-partition phase, i.e., Romanticism, which was based on the tradition of noble identity (1795–1863); 2) the phase of redefinition of the Polish political nation towards a "triune" nature (1864–1869); 3) the phase of flourishing nationalism (1890–1918). Based on this thesis, the article uses analysis of Lithuanian historiography to show what influence the Polish national project had in each phase in the process of formation of a modern Lithuanian nation. The article concludes that the positive influence of the Polish national project, which also inspired other nations, is noticeable in the first two phases of the development of the modern nation. In the first phase, Polish Romanticism, a romantic version of the Polish nation, had the greatest impact on the crystallisation of the national-cultural interests of these societies, specifically on the production of distinguishing national-cultural features (books, publications on ethnographic themes, folklore, history etc.). The idea of the statehood of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, on which the Polish national project was based until the January Uprising, was very important for Lithuanians. After the January Uprising, when the dominant choice of the nation was based on the nationalist principle and political forces formed on this basis prevailed, the Polish national project rivalled the Lithuanian one. Tensions grew in the early twentieth century, when the Lithuanian national movement formed independent political objectives in relation to the Polish project. During the First World War, this led to open conflict between Lithuanians and Poles.

KEYWORDS:
modern Lithuanian nation, Lithuanian national movement, Polish national project, the statehood of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, Lithuanian-Polish conflict

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The new project for reforming the Polish nation (especially the Constitution of 3 Mary 1791) that emerged during the Age of Enlightenment and in the late eighteenth century was instrumental in helping Poles to survive as a society. For Poland as a state, as a variant of an independent civilisation, this project was one of the fundamental factors that inspired its formation and revival. The same project also helped other modern nations in the territory of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, namely Lithuania, Belarus, and Ukrainian, to shape their own national consciousness.

Polish historiography[1] distinguishes three phases in the process of the formation of the modern Polish nation:

1.   The post-partition phase: Romanticism – based on the tradition of noble identity (1795–1863)
2.   The phase of redefinition of the Polish political nation towards a 'triune' nature (1864–1869)
3.   The phase of flourishing nationalism (1890–1918)

What impact did the Polish national project have in each phase in the process of formation of the modern Lithuanian nation? This is the question that will be explored in this article.

1. THE POST-PARTITION PHASE: ROMANTICISM – BASED ON THE TRADITION OF NOBLE IDENTITY (1795–1863)

As both Polish and Lithuanian[2] historiographical research shows, in this period the Lithuanian national movement, like most other national

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1   Tomasz Kizwalter, *O nowoczesności narodu. Przypadek Polski* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe: Semper, 1999), pp. 168–322; Andrzej Walicki, *Naród, nacjonalizm, patriotyzm. Prace wybrany*, vol. 1 (Kraków: Universitas, 2009), pp. 184–262, 263–339, 343–97; Timothy Snyder, *Rekonstrukcja narodów. Polska, Ukraina, Litwa i Białoruś 1569–1999* (Sejny: Pogranicza, 2006), pp. 13–75, 136–59 ff.
2   Egidijus Aleksandravičius, *Lietuvių atgimimo kultūra. Humanitarinių mokslų istorijos krypties habilituoto daktaro disertacijos tezės* (Vilnius: Lietuvos istorijos institutas, 1994), pp. 3–18; Egidijus Aleksandravičius and Antanas Kulakauskas, *Pod władzą carów. Litwa w XIX wieku* (Kraków: Universitas, 2003), pp. 11–26, 163–217; Egidijus Aleksandravičius and Antanas Kulakauskas, 'Nuo amžių slenksčio: Naujausia Lietuvos XIX amžiaus istoriografija', *Darbai ir dienos*, 28 (2001), 3–27; Pranas Čepėnas, *Naujųjų laikų Lietuvos istorija*, vol. 1 (Vilnius: Lituanus, 1992), pp. 263–27; *Historia Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej*, ed. Jerzy Kłoczowski, vol. 2 (Lublin: Instytut Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej, 2000), pp. 159–61; Mirosław Hroch, *Małe narody Europy. Perspektywa historyczna* (Wrocław–Warszawa–Kraków: Zakład Narodowy Imienia Ossolińskich, 2003), pp. 35–36; Antanas Kulakauskas, 'Apie tautinio atgimimo sąvoką, tautinių sąjūdžių epochą ir lietuvių tautinį atgimimą', *Lietuvių atgimimo istorijos studijos*, ed. by Egidijus Aleksandravičius and others, vol. 1 (Vilnius: Sietynas, 1990), pp. 132–42; Rimantas Miknys, 'Lietuvos Didžiosios kunigaikštystės valstybingumo tradicija lietuvių tautinio judėjimo politinėje programoje: teorinis ir praktinis aspektai', *Lietuvos Didžiosios Kunigaikštijos tradicija ir tautiniai naratyvai* (Vilnius: Vilniaus universitetas, 2009), pp. 117–43; *Lietuvių nacionalinio išsivadavimo judėjimas: ligi 1904 metų*, ed. by Vytautas Merkys (Vilnius: Mokslas, 1987), pp. 71–82; Rimantas Miknys and Darius Staliūnas, 'The "Old" and "New" Lithuanians: Collective Identity Types in Lithuania at the Turn of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries', in *Forgotten Pages in Baltic History. Diversity and Inclusion*, ed. by Martin Housden and David J. Smith (Amsterdam–New York: Rodopi, 2011), pp. 35–48; Jerzy Ochmański, *Litewski ruch narodowo-kulturalny w XIX wieku* (Białystok: Białostockie Towarzystwo Naukowe, 1965), p. 202; Michał Römer, *Litwa. Studyum o odrodzeniu narodu litewskiego* (Lwów: Polskie Towarzystwo Nakładowe, 1908), pp. 1–75; Michał Römer, *Stosunki etnograficzno-kulturalne na Litwie* (Kraków: Krytyka, 1906), p. 20; Vincas Trumpa, *Lietuva XIX-tame amžiuje* (Chicago: AM & M Publications, 1989), pp. 7–61; Rimantas Vėbra, *Lietuvių tautinis atgimimas XIX amžiuje* (Kaunas: Šviesa, 1992), pp. 9–65, 17–45, 89–110, 143–62, 174–85.

movements in Central and Eastern Europe, was experiencing a cultural phase in which an active role was played by the former elites, i.e., representatives of the Lithuanian nobility. Meanwhile, before the abolition of serfdom in 1861, peasants – a fundamental part of society – essentially had no rights and privileges in the estate society and were the most culturally isolated and passive social group.

Despite not having access to elite culture, peasants managed – without conscious effort, through collective memory, customs, traditions and language – to preserve the treasures of their ethnic culture. Meanwhile, the majority of the local nobility, whose culture and political interests resulted in their voluntary Polonisation, ignored and even scorned the values of the Lithuanian people. By the second decade of the nineteenth century, however, influenced by the ideas of the Enlightenment – spread thanks to Vilnius University – the educated elements of the nobility began to search for the roots of their national identity. These educated noble classes traced their origins to the medium and minor nobility, which had not cut ties with the countryside and were often bilingual (Polish and Lithuanian). It was this noble intelligentsia that became the main organiser of the first stage of the Lithuanian national revival. It is noted in historiography[3] that this class went from contempt for folk traditions and language to recognising, collecting, studying and exalting them. In 1822, university graduates from the Samogitian medium and minor nobility founded the Samogitian Students Society at Saint Petersburg University, fostering the organisation of cultural and educational activity, a contributing factor to the emergence of the so-called Samogitian nobility ethno-cultural movement (Simonas Daukantas (Szymon Dowkont), Dionizas Poška (Dionizy Poszka), Jurgis Pliateris (Jerzy Plater), Simonas Stanevičius (Szymon Staniewicz), Motiejus Valančius (Maciej Wołonczewski) et al.).[4] It was at this time that literature, religious writings, primers, service books, liturgical books and handbooks for daily use all began to be printed in Lithuanian and were read by the rural population as they became increasingly educated. It is worth noting that even in the late eighteenth century, Lithuanian language and folklore were of interest to European philologists. Specialists in Indo-European studies recognised Lithuanian as "one of the oldest Indo-European languages" (Antoine Meyer).[5] Yet this was not reflected in the self-image of most participants of the Samogitian noble ethnocultural movement, who still saw themselves as citizens of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. In fact, most members of

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3   Antanas Kulakauskas, 'Lietuvos bajorija ir lietuvių tautinis bei valstybinis atbudimas', *Literatūros teorijos ir ryšių problemos. Etnosocialinė ir kultūrinė situacija XIX a. Lietuvoje* (Vilnius: Lietuvių literatūros ir tautosakos instiuta,1989), pp. 9–24; Römer, *Litwa*, pp. 13–39; Römer, *Stosunki etnograficzno-kulturalne na Litwie*, p. 3; Aleksandravičius, *Lietuvių atgimimo kultūra*, pp. 10–37.

4   For more, see Egidijus Aleksandravičius, *Kultūrinis sąjūdis Lietuvoje 1831–1863 metais: organizaciniai kultūros ugdymo aspektai* (Vilnius: Mokslas, 1989), p. 135; Aleksandravičius, Kulakauskas, *Pod władzą carów*, pp. 45–48.

5   Antanas Salys, 'Prof. A. Meillet ir jo santykiai su Lietuva', *Naujoji Romuva*, 36 (1936).

the nobility called themselves "Lithuanians". Yet this was an ethnopolitical Lithuanianness rather than an ethnocultural one, or even more ethnolinguistic. It was based mainly on origin and history. The cultural assimilation (Polonisation) of the Lithuanian nobility took place not by coercion but voluntarily. Meanwhile, the objective of Lithuania's union with Poland – that was the aim of the Lithuanian nobility – was to retain statehood with Poland's participation. At least until the failure of the January Uprising, however, this did not mean abandoning the idea of the "old homeland" – the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (GDL). In this or another form, it was also expressed in the aspirations of the nineteenth-century uprisings against Russia.[6] Although most of the Lithuanian nobility were detached from the ethnic values and language, the cultural community of the GDL's nobility was clearly visible and distinct from that of the Polish nobility. For this reason, the Lithuanian nobility, although Polonised, was not a "foreign body" in the society of Lithuania, as prewar and Soviet historiography often claimed, but rather an organic part of it. As Michał Römer, one of the first scholars of the Lithuanian national movement, noted:

> The Lithuanian Polonised elements – the nobility and bourgeois Catholics – cannot be regarded as foreigners, newcomers, or still less colonists, like the German barons in Latvia or Estonia, because most of them 'historically grew out of' the same ethnic trunk as most of the country's inhabitants. Their 'Polishness' is the result of a historical process that affected the various social strata of the Lithuanian nation to unequal degrees, dividing the nation into various cultural groups.[7]

The proximity of the nobility to the people was demonstrated in the period of the November Uprising (1830–1831), when the peasants not only supported the nobility's efforts to rebuild the common state with the Polish Crown but also identified with it.

During the uprising, the rebels were familiar with the *Song of the Samogitians*, a folk song performed as a variant of *Dąbrowski's Mazurka*: "Poland is not yet lost as long as the Samogitians live! [...]".[8] It is worth emphasising that the Lithuanian version refers not to Poland but to Poles. Samogitian patriotism is not contradictory with a sense of unity with the Samogitians, Lithuanians and Poles. It is obvious that historical

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[6]   For more, see Feliksas Sliesoriūnas, *1830 – 1831 m. Sukilimas Lietuvoje* (Vilnius: Mintis, 1974), pp. 394–416, 441; Egidijus Aleksandravičius, '1863 m. Sukilimas ir lietuvių nacionalinio judėjimo politinė programa', *XIX amžiaus profiliai* (Vilnius: Lietuvos rašytojų sąjungos leidykla, 1993), pp. 95–100.
[7]   Römer, *Stosunki etnograficzno-kulturalne na Litwie*, p. 27.
[8]   For more, see Jan Jurkiewicz, '"Jeszcze Polska nie zginęła póki żmudzini żyją!" (Kilka uwag o Pieśni Żmudzinów z 1831 r.)', *Praeities baruose: skiriama akademikui Vytautui Merkiui 70-ies metų jubiliejaus proga*, ed. by Vytautas Merkys and Antanas Tyla (Vilnius: Žara, 1999), pp. 171–81; Dioniza Wawrzykowska- -Wierciochowa, *Mazurek Dąbrowskiego. Dzieje polskiego hymnu narodowego*, 2nd edn (Warszawa: Ministerstwo Obrony Narodowej, 1982), pp. 160–61, 267–68.

tradition at the time, equally with religion and ethnicity, had major significance in the peasant-folk self-consciousness as well as that of the nobility. This phenomenon continued until the failure of the January Uprising.

After the uprising, the situation changed somewhat. In 1855, Eustachy and Konstanty Tyszkiewicz, Teodor Narbutt, Ludwik Jucewicz and others launched the Vilnius Archaeological Commission and Museum of Antiquity.[9] They did not know Lithuanian and were culturally closer to the folk ethnicity. They continued to publish Lithuanian and Belarusian books aimed at the people, although they used Polish when producing academic literature or books targeted at educated individuals. Even at this time, a certain connection was visible between the noble and democratic culture, Lithuanianness and Polishness, though their contents were different.

Daukantas and Narbutt thereby formed the basis for the concept of the "modern Lithuanian nation". Daukantas placed the nation – the Lithuanian-speaking peasantry – first, using the terms 'native' and 'foreign' to draw a contrast between 'Lithuanians' and 'Poles'. Both authors contributed to the disappearance of the idea of historical Lithuania as the notion of a completely new Lithuania began to form. Later ideologues, including Jonas Basanavičius, Jonas Šliūpas and Vincas Kudirkam, made use of these authors' texts, adopting and expanding their arguments.

The actions of Motiejus Valančius (Maciej Wołonczewski) brought about sociocultural activity among peasants. It is worth noting that the beginnings of his ministry fell in the period of the Church's revival, and his work was therefore a manifestation of this process. The Church's interest in the democratisation of society and the ensuing concern for internal pastoral work, education and the religious press, missions, jubilee actions, the 'neglected' peripheral non-noble classes of Catholics, met the needs of Lithuanian society at the time. As we know, it was then that the social and economic significance of the people, the Lithuanian peasantry, was growing. The idea of abolishing serfdom was becoming increasingly prevalent. To meet these needs, Valančius engaged in pastoral work and conducted reforms concerning administration of the diocese. Furthermore, he reformed the system of religious instruction of the people as well as the education system. He particularly emphasised so-called "Valančius schools" – parish schools that taught children to write and about religious truths. He also ensured that books were published that taught the people to understand the harmony between humans and nature.[10] The system of moral and religious education of the people also included Valančius's mass

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[9]   For more, see *Kova dėl istorijos: Vilniaus senienų muziejus (1855-1915)*, ed. by Reda Griškaitė and Žygintas Būčys (Vilnius: Lietuvos nacionalinis muziejus, 2015).
[10] Vytautas Merkys, *Motiejus Valančius: tarp katalikiškojo universalizmo ir tautiškumo* (Vilnius: Mintis, 1999), pp. 257–333.

sobriety movement, whose roots were in Western Europe.[11] The bishop and his subordinate priests managed to combine Catholic pastoral objectives with "the social and national expectations of the people".[12] Thanks to parish schools, illiteracy levels among the peasantry fell, thus peasants became more conscious members of society as well as a stronghold of Catholicism. On the other hand, the folk education organised with the participation of the Church and the spreading of universal moral norms among the faithful disrupted the social estate system, leading to the development of more democratic relations in society.

On the other hand, the anti-Catholic elements in this policy encouraged Valančius to focus the Church's attention not on the nobility and landowners as much as the lower social strata, on which hopes were pinned for Lithuania's societal development.

2. THE PHASE OF REDEFINITION OF THE POLISH POLITICAL NATION TOWARDS A "TRIUNE" NATURE (1864–1889)

The January Uprising, and especially its quelling, showed that attention to the lower social strata was the correct choice. Neither before the uprising nor after its failure did Bishop Valančius see himself as hostile to the historical Lithuanian nation and its political vision, namely Lithuania's union with Poland. In his view, Catholicism was a component of the culture of this "nation" – its spirituality.[13] Unable to operate legally after the failure of the uprising, Valančius embarked on clandestine pro-Lithuanian pastoral and cultural activity. He set up a secret Lithuanian press and wrote fictional works, religious-political pamphlets and religious books, which he published at his own cost within so-called Lithuania Minor (the territory belonging to Prussia, where in 1867–1869 alone around 19,000 Lithuanian books were published). He also founded the first book distribution organisation, which delivered press throughout so-called Lithuania Major and supported the formation of clandestine schools.[14]

The January Uprising is the last clear example of a situation in which the Lithuanian ethnic-cultural movement which emerged in the late 1820s and early 1830s as an essentially democratic movement adopted the form of noble culture and invoked the idea of rebuilding the former statehood of the "union"

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[11]   Merkys, *Motiejus Valančius: tarp katalikiškojo universalizmo ir tautiškumo*, p. 336; Ieva Šenavičienė, 'Tautos budimas ir blaivybės sąjūdis', *Istorija*, 40 (1999), 3–11; Egidijus Aleksandravičius, *Blaivybė Lietuvoje XIX amžiuje* (Vilnius: Sietynas, 1990), pp. 7–125; Egidijus Aleksandravičius and Antanas Kulakauskas, *Carų valdžioje: Lietuva XIX amžiuje* (Vilnius: Baltos lankos, 1996), pp. 163–95, 308–18.

[12]   Merkys, *Motiejus Valančius: tarp katalikiškojo universalizmo ir tautiškumo*, pp. 777–78; Šenavičienė, 'Tautos budimas ir blaivybės sąjūdis', pp. 10–11.

[13]   Merkys, *Motiejus Valančius: tarp katalikiškojo universalizmo ir tautiškumo*, pp. 781–82.

[14]   Ibid., pp. 705–54, 783.

Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. It was an element of the common resistance of the former partners, signatories of the Polish-Lithuanian Union, against Russian rule.[15] Among the people, it was also known as "the Polish uprising" or "Polish war" because for the community at that time "Pole" was a synonym for a citizen of the union state.[16] The uprising contributed to awakening peasant civic awareness, since for the first time it was the result of the action of all social classes in Lithuania. As had been the case 30 years previously, however, it was headed by representatives of the nobility.

The union tradition of the former Commonwealth continued to dominate as its society was still seen as noble, albeit accepting of people from other classes. The slogans of political freedom were not alien to some of the peasants involved in the uprising, although the main factor leading them to participate was land, as was also the case with peasants from the Polish lands.

Following the abolition of serfdom in 1861 and the suppression of the January Uprising, the tsarist authorities took steps to isolate the nobility living in the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania, nurturing ideas of rebuilding the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and detaching the nobility from the democratic movement (mainly Lithuanians and Belarusians), forcing them to feel subordinate to Russia. To this end, the Russian administration took ownership of all editions of the Lithuanian press printed in Russian script.[17]

In general terms, the post-Uprising period was characterised by efforts by the Lithuanian Polish-speaking elite to oppose the developing national movements – Lithuanian, Belarusian and Ukrainian. The intention was to prevent the people from being aware of civic traditions and understanding what the political nation of the former GDL was; it was also intended to 'push' them towards Russian statehood, giving them citizenship and pursuing Russification. Whereas a two-tier ethnic order had previously existed (peasants speaking Lithuanian or Belarusian and Polish-speaking elites), in the nineteenth century in the former lands of the GDL a three-tier system was formed (ethnic plebeian community – dominant nation or Polish-speaking elites – ruling nation or representatives of the Russian administrative apparatus). In these conditions, the ideologies of the dominant and ruling nation cancelled each other out. A new alternative emerged: a national, not civic, consciousness, and, with the passing years, reflection on ethnic distinctness.

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15 Aleksandravičius, '1863 m. sukilimas ir lietuvių nacionalinio judėjimo programa', pp. 93–103.
16 For more, see Darius Staliūnas, *Savas ar svetimas paveldas? 1863–1864 m. sukilimas kaip lietuvių atminties vieta* (Vilnius: Mintis, 2008), pp. 14–15.
17 Darius Staliūnas, *Making Russians: Meaning and Practice of Russification in Lithuania and Belarus after 1863* (Amsterdam–New York: Rodopi, 2007), pp. 299–301.

After the collapse of the January Uprising in Lithuania, the local clergy which headed the Lithuanian national revival movement held an analogous position to Bishop Valančius until 1883.[18] The reasons for this were both the movement's unique relationship with the government ("Power comes from God") and the discriminatory policy of the Russian authorities, particularly the ban it introduced on the use of Latin – and thus Lithuanian – script in printing. The clergy were opposed to forced Russification, especially the imposition of Orthodox Christianity, as were the nobility and the people. When the local nobility lost its previous role in society following the failure of the January Uprising, hopes increasingly began to be pinned on the peasantry for defending Lithuanianness. Such moods were characteristic of the generation of the "post-Valančius" clergy, which was actively engaged in the national movement. However, the Catholic Church, especially its authorities within the borders of Lithuania at the time, remained a Polish-speaking institution until 1890.[19]

Nevertheless, until the last decade of the nineteenth century, the position of the Polish language was very strong in the Church and in society in general. A reason for this was the status of Polish as the language of the upper classes. Furthermore, for a long time, for purely practical reasons, religious teaching of society took place in Polish, while most Catholic publications were also available in this language. It was seen as more pragmatic to teach in Polish than in Lithuanian, let alone Belarusian. This was also because of tradition and the incomparably higher social status of Polish. The campaign to spread Orthodox Christianity made it necessary to defend its position as the main language of the Catholic faith. The Church authorities, especially the leadership of seminaries, for some time also emphasised defending Polish as one of the ways of preserving Catholicism.[20]

In the late 1880s and early 1890s, the Lithuanian national movement began to be joined en masse by representatives of the first generation of lay Lithuanians of peasant origin who had completed or were completing their studies. The main representative of this new generation was Jonas Basanavičius (Jan Basanowicz), the founder of the newspaper *Aušra* (1883–1886). Basanavičius was also the main contributor to this publication, writing around 70 articles. These promoted ethnographic values (language, folklore, history) and supported the formation of a Lithuanian national consciousness. He presented the political-cultural perspectives of the modern Lithuanian nation that dominated in Lithuanians' everyday political life until the loss of

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[18] Merkys, *Motiejus Valančius. Tarp katalikiškojo universalizmo ir tautiškumo*, p. 781.
[19] Vytautas Merkys, *Tautiniai santykiai Vilniaus vyskupijoje 1798–1918 m.* (Vilnius: Versus Aureus, 2006), p. 450.
[20] Merkys, *Tautiniai santykiai Vilniaus vyskupijoje 1798–1918 m.*, p. 451; *Krikščionybės Lietuvoje istorija*, ed. by Vytautas Ališauskas (Vilnius: Aidai, 2006), pp. 375–77; Algimantas Katilius, *Katalikų dvasininkų rengimas Seinų kunigų seminarijoje (XIX a.–XX a. pradžia)* (Vilnius: Lietuvos istorijos institutas, 2009), pp. 35–39, 448–50.

statehood in 1940. Basanavičius's publications advanced the idea that not only the January Uprising but also Lithuania's historical union with Poland were errors and that all traditions of the union should be abandoned, especially the Polish language. At the same time, he expressed the hope that ending opposition to Russia would lead its authorities to end the ban on use of the Latin alphabet in the Lithuanian language. Basanavičius also expressed these views in the official Russian press, both before and after the launch of *Aušra*. His articles were published by periodicals including *Peterburgskie Vedomosti* and *Novoye Vremya* ("Po povodu polskich radostei", 1883; "Polyaki v Litve", 1883).[21] Basanavičius publicly accused Poles, the Polonised nobility, of the denationalisation and Polonisation of Lithuanian, while demonstrating to the Russian authorities the disadvantageous nature of the prohibition of the press. He proposed something of a compromise to Russia: Lithuania would abandon its traditional ties with Poland and become an obedient part of the Empire in exchange for the Russian authorities' consent to the development of Lithuanian ethnic culture stemming from the people. Basanavičius thus proved to be a proponent of a political orientation supporting the nascent Lithuanian nationalism, seeking to neutralise both Polish influences and efforts to stifle the traditions of any political separateness for Lithuania.

3. THE PHASE OF FLOURISHING NATIONALISM (1890–1918)

As the Lithuanian national movement developed, the Lithuanian and Polish languages, which had hitherto operated on different levels, began to compete and, therefore, to influence specific entities which faced the choice of which of the modern nations – Polish or Lithuanian – better suited them.

Antanas Baranauskas (Antoni Baranowski), born near Anykščiai (Onikszty) and of peasant origin, was inspired in his youth by the beauty of Lithuania's nature described in Adam Mickiewicz's epic poem *Pan Tadeusz* (*Sir Thaddeus*). This led him to produce a similar work, *Anykščių šilelis* (*The Forest of Anykščiai*), demonstrating the remarkable possibilities offered by the Lithuanian language. Yet the priestly career he had chosen (he became the bishop of Sejny) influenced his views – he began to distance himself from the Lithuanian national movement as it caused a split in the previously common Catholic front.[22]

21 For more, see Rimantas Miknys, 'Jonas Basanavičius', *VLE.LT*, [n.d.] <https://www.vle.lt/straipsnis/jonas-basanavicius/> [accessed onon 11 November 2023]; 'Basanavičius', *šaltiniai.info*, [n.d.] <http://www.xn--altiniai-4wb.info/index/details/1035> [accessed on 11 November 2023]; Algirdas Grigaravičius, *Atsiskyrėlis iš Suvalkijos. Jono Basanavičiaus gyvenimas ir darbai. II dalis. Žodis ir veiksmas* (Vilnius: Naujosios Romuvos fondas, 2019), pp. 12–96.
22 For more, see Paulius Subačius, *Antanas Baranauskas. Gyvenimo tekstai ir tekstas gyvenimui* (Vilnius: Aidai, 2010); Regina Mikšytė, *Antanas Baranauskas* (Vilnius: Šviesa, 1993).

Conversely, many of the Polonised leaders of the Lithuanian national movement chose Lithuanianness only during their studies. Examples include the Biržiškos brothers, who came from the Samogitian medium nobility, and Vincas Kudirka, who was of peasant origins and was influenced by Polish ideas almost until the end of his medical studies at the University of Warsaw. Yet he later became one of the most famous leaders and the ideologue of the Lithuanian national movement, and he later authored the music and words of the Lithuanian national anthem *Lietuva tėvynė mūsų*, a paraphrase of Mickiewicz's words.

In 1889–1905, the circles at the forefront of the national movement, grouped around the magazine *Varpas*, began to discern the negative effects of the Polish-Lithuanian Union for the statehood of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania even more plainly than *Aušra*, recognising the ties with Poland as the reason for the loss of the GDL's statehood. On this basis, they constructed a division in the national movement between "native" and "foreign". An issue of *Varpas* from 1902 stated bluntly: "This union pushed Lithuania onto new tracks, engendering new cultural and political conditions in which freedom and actions were disrupted and hindered. Before unification with the Poles, Lithuanians defended what was pleasant for them, and next they should have defended what was foreign and unpleasant for them. At this time, the political conditions have changed; Poles, leading Lithuanians on the path of progress, were themselves denied freedom, and such a fate fell to the Lithuanians".[23]

In the last decade of the nineteenth century, the Lithuanian national movement became politicised. An important moment in this process was the formation of the first political party, the Social Democratic Party of Lithuania (LPS), and compilation of its programme in 1896. The first and most important point of this document defined the future statehood of Lithuania, clearly based on a version of the former 'union' statehood of the GDL. This point of the programme enshrined a reference to an "Independent Federative Republic consisting of a voluntarily united Lithuania, Poland, Latvia, Belarus, Ukraine".[24] The LSDP's 1896 programme shows distinct traces of the old state thinking, which reached the Lithuanian Social Democrats Party from the nobility throughout the times of the November and January uprisings. The main authors of the programme were two activists of noble origins, Andrius Domaševičius and Alfons Morawski.

Meanwhile, the Democratic Party of Lithuanians (from 1905 the Lithuanian Democratic Party, LPD), founded in 1902 among the *Varpas* community, made radical changes in its programme to the direction of the political aspirations of the Lithuanian national movement. The party's programme

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23   Š-s, 'Šis-tas apie uniją su lenkais', *Varpas*, 2 (1902), p. 28.
24   *Programas Lietuviškos social-demokratiškos partijos* ([Tilžė] 1896), pp. 8–9.

from 1902 referred to a goal of independence within the borders of ethnic Lithuania. It stated: "[...] In saying 'Lithuania' to Lithuanians, we are striving to establish a practical system for our nation in which Lithuanians can govern themselves, without being subordinate to foreigners, and their cultural growth will not be restricted. This can happen only after Lithuania has regained complete autonomy, independent from foreign nations *within its ethnographic borders* [my emphasis]".[25]

As the core of the political movement's programme, this programme was cited in the Resolution on the autonomy of Lithuania within its ethnographic borders, issued by the Great Seimas of Vilnius in 1905.

It is worth noting that between 1906 and 1905, the official Russian policy leaders attempted, following the principle of "divide and rule", firstly to deepen the cultural divide between Lithuanians and Poles, and secondly to give more protection to the national and cultural activity of the weaker Lithuanians. They treated the former GDL as a long-held Russian territory (*iskonno ruskije ziemli*) and were therefore interested in supporting the conflict between Lithuanians and Poles to make it easier to pursue plans of Russification and colonisation. Essentially, the tsarist authorities were favourable to the national-cultural activity of the Lithuanian right (activists from the nationalist and Christian democrat community), wishing to support it as a counterbalance to the Poles. They regarded Poles as Russia's biggest enemies in Lithuania given their links with Poland, which might in future stake a claim to Lithuania. The Russian authorities' policy corresponded with ethnic Lithuania's plans for Russification, including Orthodox colonisation implemented through the "Peasant Bank". The links created between Russianness and Orthodox Christianity were to be targeted against Lithuanians as well as their favoured Christian and national democrats. A group of Lithuanian right-wing political forces, characterised by an openly anti-Polish approach and seeking to bolster the Lithuanian cultural position, pursued this policy in an attempt to show loyalty, not hostility, to the tsarist authorities. The left wing of the Lithuanian national movement (democrats, social democrats) was strongly opposed and critical of what it saw as damaging tactics from the right wing and did not abandon its objective of forming a civic and democratic society in the territory of ethnic Lithuania.[26] The change in the sociopolitical situation established an open confrontation between the Lithuanians and Poles. In the press and churches, a struggle for the Polishness or Lithuanianness of Vilnius began. The words of Ludwik Abramowicz, a participant in this conflict, reveal how bitter and uncompromising it was: "Without Jews and Russians, Vilna

25   "Programas Lietuvių demokratų partijos (projektas)", *Varpas*, 12 (1902), p. 258.
26   For more, see Rimantas Miknys, *Lietuvos demokratų partija 1902–1915 metais* Series 'Lietuvių atgimimo istorijos studijos', vol. 10 (Vilnius: A. Varno personalinė įmonė, 1995), pp. 150–53.

is a purely Polish city [...]. Lithuanians want to see Vilna in the centre of their homeland and cannot reconcile themselves with the changes that time has brought [...] would it not be better, rather than platitudes, to collect statistical materials on Poles in Lithuania. After all, these numbers say a great deal [...]".[27] A characteristic response to such observations from the Lithuanian side was given by the thoughts of the famous Lithuanian activist Antanas Smetona:

> Vilnius is the centre of life of the Lithuanians, so much that it can be a centre of life for the Belarusians. We will not fight with the Belarusians for Vilnius; we can fit in there together as we do not have aggressive intentions, unlike some others. The Poles are a different matter: they were and are aggressors. They cast Lithuanian out of the churches, and when Lithuanians demand church services in their own language, they call them chauvinists and imperialists.[28]

Vilnius, Smetona argued, was above all heritage demonstrating the tradition of Lithuanian statehood. "Vilnius is a dear reminder of our fabled past and heritage. Each bygone monument, each hill sadly reminds us of whose it was [...]".[29] Until the First World War, in both official (the Russian Duma) and unofficial circles (freemasons – the Grand Orient of Russia's Peoples), Lithuanian politicians stuck to the statehood project of ethnic Lithuania.[30]

During the First World War, leading politicians of the Lithuanian national movement ultimately abandoned plans to recreate the statehood tradition of the GDL, and thus also of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, in discussions with not Belarusians but Poles. The countries' leaders found the ties between Lithuania and Poland envisaged in the GDL statehood tradition to be particularly dangerous due to their cultural proximity, which was expressed in the GDL version of Polish civilisation and complicated the setting of boundaries between "native" and "foreign", as was so important for shaping a new national identity. The vehicle ("Trojan horse") for this proximity in the emerging modern society of Lithuania – or rather Lithuanian society – was the Polonised nobility, Polonised cities, and the Church, which retained very close connections with Polishness. This closeness endangered the foundations of the Lithuanianness of the nascent society, hence the attempts to thwart this tendency to avoid rebuilding the state ties between Poland and Lithuania.

These efforts are conveyed most succinctly by the "memorandum" battle waged in 1916–1917 between "Poles in Lithuania" and Lithuanians,

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[27] Ludwik Abramowicz, 'Wolne glosy w sprawie litewskiej', *Kwestya litewska w prasie polskiej* (Warszawa, 1905), pp. 47–48.

[28] Antanas Smetona, *Rinktiniai raštai*, 2nd edn (Kaunas: Menta, 1990), p. 325.

[29] Antanas Smetona, 'Vilnius – Lietuvos širdis', *Viltis*, programme issue (1907), 3–4.

[30] Miknys, *Lietuvos demokratų partija 1902–1915 metais*, pp. 164–67.

who competed to send these documents to the German authorities. One example is "Memorandum 44" (from 25 May 1917), addressed to Georg von Hertling, Chancellor of the German Empire, which justified the domination of the Polish element, associated with the former elites of Lithuania, in the country's culture, economy and politics, and requested that Lithuania and Poland be combined into one state.[31] A small group of Lithuanian politicians headed by Smetona hit back with its own memorandum of 10 July 1917, also addressed to Hertling, refuting the claims made in the Polish one and arguing that the Lithuanian element was capable of creating a social organism without the participation of the former Polonised elites and exposing their aggressive intentions: "[...] Lithuanians do not mimic the predatory Polish policy; on the contrary, they have no aspiration to reclaim the lands of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania; they do not wish for the entirety of this territory, which is currently occupied by the Germans. The Lithuanians do not encroach either on the area densely populated by Poles, or that inhabited by Belarusians".[32]

CONCLUSIONS

1. The positive influence of the Polish national project, which inspired other nations, can be discerned in the first two phases of development of the modern nation. In the first phase, it was Polish Romanticism, a romantic version of the Polish nation, that had the greatest impact on the crystallisation of the na tional-cultural interests of these societies, and specifically on the production of national-cultural distinguishing features (books, publications on ethnographic themes, folklore, history etc.). Very important for Lithuanians was the idea of the statehood of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, upon which the project of the Polish nation was based until the January Uprising.

2. After the January Uprising, when the nation based on the nationalist principle became the dominant choice and the political forces professing this principle prevailed, the Polish national project competed with the Lithuanian one.

3. Tensions grew in the early twentieth century, when the Lithuanian national movement formed independent political objectives in relation to the Polish project. Durin g the First World War, this led to open conflict between Lithuanians and Poles.

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[31] Petras Klimas, *Iš mano atsiminimų* (Vilnius: Lietuvos Biblijos draugija, 1990), pp. 93, 96.
[32] Klimas, *Iš mano atsiminimų*, pp. 139–47.

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RESISTANCE THROUGH POP CULTURE AND THE IDEOLOGY OF THE "RUSSIAN WORLD": ON DECONSTRUCTION IN TIMES OF WAR

ABSTRACT

The article analyses the main trends in pop culture since the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine. In particular, the paper investigates which tools and elements of ethnic culture have been used to construct the image of Ukraine and new Ukrainian heroes. Moreover, the image of Ukrainians in the global arena and in modern Western pop culture is presented. In contrast, the article demonstrates how the imperialist ideology of the "Russian world" has been deconstructed in contemporary Ukrainian pop culture. The data for the research consists of memes, caricatures, songs, cartoons, merch, and graffiti that have mainly been created since 24 February 2022. The investigation is informed by multimodal discourse analysis (MDA) involving analysis of verbal and non-verbal semiotic sources as well as of discourse and sociocultural practice.

KEYWORDS:

pop culture, full-scale invasion of Ukraine, self-image, "Russian World", resistance

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INTRODUCTION

On 24 February 2022, the world woke up to terrible news: Russia had invaded Ukraine. Since then, Ukraine has become the focus of world news and Ukraine was more highly searched in February 2022 than at any point in Google Trends history. With every day of the war, new images of heroes appeared and started to circulate via pop culture channels in Ukraine and abroad. Heroes such as President Volodymyr Zelenskyi and General Valeriy Zaluzhnyi came not only from political elites but also from below, including soldiers, volunteers, ordinary citizens, and children. The need for heroes is especially crucial during military conflicts since it assists in uniting people and bringing hope for the better in the dark times of war. On the other hand, it helps to combat enemies on symbolic and discursive battlefields with representations of humour, resilience, and societal power.

War discourse has already been in the focus of research since 2014; for instance, Kusse analysed patterns of argumentation and aggression in different genres of Russian and Ukrainian texts and images.[1] In the collective monograph *Language of Conflict: Discourses of Ukrainian Crisis*, the rhetoric of the conflict is highlighted from various angles and perspectives: in parliamentary debates,

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[1]   See for details Holger Kusse, *Agression und Argumentation: mit Beispielen aus dem russisch-ukrainische Konflikt* (Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz Verlag, 2019).

presidents' speeches, online media, and TV shows.[2] Moreover, Semotiuk examined the terminological and discursive dimensions of the Russian-Ukrainian military conflict.[3] However, with the full-scale invasion, both political rhetoric and popular beliefs – in other words, top-down and bottom-up cultural movements – are in the process of thoroughgoing transformation and consequently need more attention from researchers.

The opposition between "us" and "them" becomes especially vivid during wartime. Therefore, the Ukrainian people's resistance stems from national culture (by national culture, we understand elements of art, customs and behaviour that are traditional for a nation) and involves elements of Western global trends, but at the same time it is a response to Russian imperialist ideology and actions.

To highlight the main trends in the popular discourse of the war, we will attempt to answer these research questions:

1.   How is the self-image of Ukrainians constructed during the full-
-scale war?
2.   What elements of national culture (artifacts, persons, traditions) are used in the popular discourse of the war to create new images of heroes?
3.   How does Western globalized culture respond to Russia's war in Ukraine and how are national and Western elements intertwined in popular discourse?
4.   How does Ukrainian resistance deconstruct the ideology of "russki mir", and what messages and images in contemporary Ukrainian pop culture stand against the Russian imperialist ideology?

Answering these questions will provide a depiction of the rhetoric of Ukrainian resistance in wartime and will display directions for further research. In this article, we will focus on highlighting the main trends, the most popular memes, songs, images, and other elements of pop culture. Analysing the whole spectrum of contemporary Ukrainian pop culture goes far beyond the scale of this article and needs further research and reflection.

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[2]   For an overview of different approaches towards conflict analysis, see Natalia Knoblock (ed.), *Language of conflict: discourses of the Ukrainian crisis* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2020).
[3]   Orest Semotiuk. 'Russian-Ukrainian Military Conflict: Terminological and Discursive Dimension', *Visnyk Lvivskoho Universytetu. Seija Zhurnalistyky*, 51(2022), 96–105.

METHODOLOGY OF THE RESEARCH

The linguistics of pop culture is an emerging field that combines sociolinguistics, stylistics, and cultural studies.[4] Moody defines three main features of popular culture: its circulation in mass media, its consumer-oriented nature, and its connection to globalization.[5] Moreover, there are two channels through which language ideologies disseminate via pop culture: performative (language choice) and affiliative (reception and reactions toward language). For researchers, it is important to take both of them into account: "These two channels do not represent competing methods to examine language ideologies in popular culture; language ideologies in any particular instance of pop culture discourse can and should be examined simultaneously in both the performative and affiliative channels".[6] In this article, we consider both these channels.

Moreover, globalization influences popular culture to a great extent, and analysis of pop culture artifacts could be applied as a tool for a deeper understanding of global trends and movements: "...new technologies and communications are enabling immense and complex flows of people, signs, sounds, and images across multiple borders in multiple directions. If we accept the view of popular culture as a crucial site of identity and desire, it is hard to see how we can proceed with any study of language and globalization without dealing comprehensively with popular culture".[7] Therefore, globalization and pop culture are tightly interconnected. However, for researchers, it is challenging to analyse artifacts of popular culture since this field is very dynamic – always changing and instantly reacting to social and cultural transformations.

Pop culture is the opposite of both high culture and folklore, but its recent forms interact with both.[8] Pennycook underlines that a very broad range of different creative works is represented under the umbrella of pop culture.[9] Werner described the differing natures of popular culture and pop culture. On the one hand, popular culture is close to folklore, demonstrating grassroots responses from below and spontaneous reactions of people to sociocultural events. On the other hand, pop culture is

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[4]   See for details Valentin Werner, 'Linguistics and Pop Culture: Setting the Scene(s)', in id. (ed.), The Language of Pop Culture, Routledge Studies in Linguistics (Routledge: 2018), pp. 3–26.; Joe Trotta, 'Pop Culture and Linguistics – Is That Like a Thing Now?', in Werner (ed.), The Language of Pop Culture, pp. 27–53.

[5]   Andrew Moody, 'Language Ideology in the Discourse of Popular Culture', in: The Encyclopedia of Applied Linguistics, ed. by C.A. Chapelle (Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), p. 1 <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781405198431.wbeal0626>.

[6]   Ibid.

[7]   Alastair Pennycook, 'Nationalism, Identity and Popular Culture', in Sociolinguistics and Language Education, ed. by Nancy H. Horberger and Sandra Lee McKay (Bristol–Buffalo–Toronto: Multilingual Matters, 2010), p. 65.

[8]   Mela Sarkar and Bronwen Low, *Multilingualism and popular culture. The Routledge handbook of multilingualism* (Routledge, 2012), p. 405.

[9]   Pennycook, 'Nationalism, Identity and Popular Culture', p. 78.

a top-down commercial product in consumer society.[10] In this article, we analyse both top-down and bottom-up perspectives and the interactions between them.

Furthermore, examining contemporary Ukrainian pop culture, Bilaniuk points out that it represents a crucial area for depicting interactions between different social groups: "A focus on popular culture encompasses institutionally produced and individual forms of expression in which political, artistic, and economic forces intersect, and it is an arena that allows a broad involvement of people from various social strata".[11] Artifacts of popular culture are mostly written or visual materials[12] but also audial, therefore we use Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA) to examine our data (memes, caricatures, songs, graffiti, cartoons, merch) as MDA "extends the study of language per se to the study of language in combination with other resources, such as images, scientific symbolism, gesture, action, music and sound".[13]

In our research, we applied Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA) to examine both linguistic (verbal) and non-linguistic (visual, auditory, etc.) semiotic resources, considering each as equally important in conveying a message.[14] This paper ascertains how visual and visual-audial products of pop culture are intentionally created to express and disseminate ideas, views, beliefs, and identities in mass media and social media. This study will enhance our understanding of how various semiotic resources – such as verbal, visual, auditory, and kinetic – are utilized in popular culture genres to achieve social goals like explanation and persuasion. In this article, we use a qualitative approach since our goal is to highlight the main trends in contemporary war discourse, therefore we refer to the most popular and widespread artifacts of contemporary Ukrainian and Western pop culture in social media. Russia's war in Ukraine is ongoing, and new memes, songs, poems, films, and posters emerge daily as responses to the trauma experienced by Ukrainian society. Therefore, quantitative research needs more observation and data collection; moreover, there are already researchers who are working on depicting the material of war discourse.[15]

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10   Werner, 'Linguistics and Pop Culture'.
11   Laada Bilaniuk, 'Purism and Pluralism: Language Use Trends in Popular Culture in Ukraine since Independence', Harvard Ukrainian Studies, 35.1/4: Battle for Ukrainian. A Comparative Perspective (2017–2018), 293–309.
12   Chandra Mukerji and Michael Schudson, 'Popular culture', Annual Review of Sociology, (1986), 47–66 (p. 48).
13   Kay L. O'Halloran, 'Multimodal discourse analysis', in K. Hyland and B. Paltridge (eds), The Continuum Companion to Discourse Analysis (London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2011), p. 121.
14   Michael O'Toole, The Language of Displayed Art (London: Leicester University Press, 1994); Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen, Reading Images (London: Routledge, 2006).
15   See for details Orest Semotiuk, 'Russian-Ukrainian Military Conflict in American, German, and Ukrainian Political Cartoons: Quantitative and Qualitative Analysis', Visnyk Lvivskoho Universytetu. Seija Zhurnalistyky 45 (2019), 280–90.

BE BRAVE LIKE UKRAINE – TRADITIONAL ETHNIC ELEMENTS IN THE POP CULTURE RESISTANCE

On 24 February 2022, the very first day of the full-scale war, one of the most powerful memes of the war discourse appeared: *Russian warship, go f*ck yourself!* This was a reply by the Ukrainian border guard Roman Hrybov to a Russian soldier's proposal from the cruiser "Moscow" to surrender. The phrase immediately became a meme, a basis for numerous artworks, social media shares, Western newspaper headlines and definitions in *Urban Dictionary.* Later the Moscow cruiser was sunk after an attack by the Ukrainian army, which caused even more memes and artwork. For instance, the scene twice appeared on the *Ukrposhta* postage stamp, which became extremely popular and sold out immediately.[16] Concerning language choice, *Ukrposhta* softened the verbal aggression and shortened the phrase to *Russian warship, go...* (see ills 1 and 2). Language changes naturally occur when a bottom-up interacts with a top-down perspective, therefore folk artifacts can become part of the official discourse. Reflecting on satire during wartime, Semkiv noticed that with this Ukrainian border guard's phrase the period of mocking the enemies and black humour started, and it is still ongoing. Moreover, Semkiv concluded that humour assists Ukrainian society in overcoming trauma during wartime.[17]

Ill. 1[18]

Ill. 2[19]

During the very first months of the full-scale war, new heroes were especially badly needed to overcome the shock of this new traumatic social experience. Ukrainians mostly heroised simple persons: a tractor driver or a Roma who stole Russian tanks, a woman who knocked down a Russian drone with a can of pickled vegetables (see ills 3 and 4), and so on. Therefore,

16 Dana Hordijchuk, *"Ruskij vojennyj korabl' ... vs'o..."*: *Ukrpošta anonsuvala prodaž novoji seriji marok, Ukraijinska pravda*, May 2022, https://www.epravda.com.ua/news/2022/05/19/687212/ [accessed on 19 January 2023].
17 Rostyslav Semkiv, 'Contemporary war in Ukraine, and the birth of a new Ukrainian satire', online video recording, YouTube, December 2022, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fbga8ZvxamE [accessed on 19 January 2023].
18 Source: https://fakty.ua/399975-ne-bolshe-30-shtuk-v-odni-ruki-ukrainskaya-pochtovaya-marka-s-poslannym-russkim-korablem-stala-raritetom, 18 April 2022 [accessed on 27 January 2023].
19 Source: https://www.epravda.com.ua/news/2022/05/19/687212/ [accessed on 27 January 2023].

a bottom-up perspective prevailed in war discourse during the first months of the full-scale conflict. These images not only circulated in Ukrainian online and social media but also reached Western audiences. For instance, the following phrase and definition appeared in the popular online *Urban dictionary*: "Ukrainian Tractor Pull. The act of stealing a main battle tank by towing it behind a standard farm tractor. *We can defend our homeland by organizing a Ukrainian Tractor Pull* (by NerdyShenanigans, 5 March 2022).

Moreover, in April 2022, a public campaign began that could be considered as a visual branding of the country: *Be brave like Ukraine*. It underlined the bravery of the Ukrainian people and delivered this message to Ukrainian and Western audiences. The campaign was launched by the creative agency *Banda* together with the Office of the President of Ukraine, the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, the Minister of Culture and Information Policy, and the Ministry of Digital Transformation, therefore it was mostly top-down by its nature. The initiators and developers of the campaign claimed that its main messages and goals are as follows:"...first of all to maintain fighting spirit of all Ukrainians; secondly, to not let the world to forget what is happening in Ukraine; and thirdly, to associate bravery with Ukrainian people".[20]

Ill. 3. *In the field a tractor says – dyr-dyr-dyr* (a line from the Ukrainian poet Pavlo Tychyna's poem)[21]

Ill. 4. *Good evening, we are from Ukraine* (famous phrase the author of phrase is Marko Halanevych, leader of originating from contemporary Ukrainian; music Dakha Brakha band). The phrase became very popular and often used by politicians[22]

20   I. Berezhanskyi, 'Be brave like Ukraine: svit zapolonyly bilbordy z reklamoju smilyvosti ukrajintsiv' TSN, April 2022, https://tsn.ua/ato/be-brave-like-ukraine-svit-zapolonili-bilbordi-z-reklamoyu-smilivosti-ukrayinciv-2040436.html [accessed on 19 January 2023].
21   Source: https://agroelita.info/zapustyly-telegram-kanal-ahrarnyy-desant-pro-vklad-ahrariiv-u-peremohu-ukraini-u-viyni/, 12 March 2022 [accessed on 27 January 2023].
22   Source: https://life.liga.net/istoriyi/article/et o-byli-pomidory-ligalife-nashla-kievlyanku-sbivshuyu-vrajeskiy-dron-bankoy-konservatsii [accessed on 27 January 2023].

Thanks to this campaign, whose main slogan was *Bravery made in Ukraine*, posters with messages about the bravery of Ukrainian people appeared in many European and American cities and in such symbols of global culture, such as Times Square in New York (see ill. 5). Moreover, several Ukrainian fashion brands, such as *Braska, Diadia, One by One, keepstyle, Dodo socks, Siyai, Aviatsija Halychyny, Starberry.ua*, and *Gepur*[23] (ill. 6) produced patriotic collections of clothes. Some of these brands' profits are donated to the Ukrainian Armed Forces. National colours – blue and yellow – were dominant in visual representations of bravery and solidarity. This could be compared with the protest symbols of Euromaidan (2013–2014), when protesters refused to promote political parties' symbols and mostly used national flags while protesting on the main squares of Ukrainian cities.

Ill. 5[24].

Ill. 6[25].

The Ukrainian resistance is also transmitted via traditional songs. A video of a 4-year-old boy called Leo singing *The Red Viburnum in the Meadow*, which was one of the main songs of the Ukrainian Sich archers at the beginning of the twentieth century, subsequently went viral and attracted a million views on YouTube.[26] Leo was displaced with his parents to the Transcarpathia region because his home city of Irpin was occupied and heavily damaged during the very first days of the full-scale invasion. Leo sang a version of the song that was performed in the very first

23   I. Samosvat, '"Dobroho večora, my z Ukrajiny". 8 brendiv, ščo stvorjujut' patriotyčni kolekciji j dopomahajut' ZSU', Scho tam, April 2022, https://shotam.info/dobroho-vechora-my-z-ukrainy-8-brendiv-shcho-stvoriuiut-patriotychni-kolektsii-y-dopomahaiut-zsu/ [accessed on 19 January 2023].
24   Source: https://www.instagram.com/p/CcfEW3eB8ps/?utm_source=ig_embed&ig_rid=79f4988c-c93c-4c18-bc74-70f80bb9dbe2 [accessed on 27 January 2023].
25   Source: https://shotam.info/dobroho-vechora-my-z-ukrainy-8-brendiv-shcho-stvoriuiut-patriotychni-kolektsii-y-dopomahaiut-zsu/ [accessed on 27 January 2023].
26   'Ukrajins'kyj chlopčyk spivaje "Oj u luzi červona kalyna"', online video recording, YouTube, March 2022, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cIJiM1jKyOE [accessed on 19 January 2023].

days of the war by the Ukrainian singer Andriy Khlyvniuk, who joined the Ukrainian Armed Forces immediately after Russia's full-scale invasion. Leo's performance of the song provoked flash-mobs among Ukrainian kids, who recorded videos of themselves singing this song and posted them on the social media. The words of the song, originally written at the beginning of the twentieth century, contain symbols relevant to the current wartime Ukraine:

> In the meadow there a red viburnum bent down low,
> For some reason our glorious Ukraine has been worried so.
> And we'll take that red viburnum and we will raise it up,
> And we, our glorious Ukraine, shall, hey-hey, cheer up – and rejoice!

Besides, Ukrainian schoolchildren sing the national anthem in shelters, hiding from bomb attacks during school lessons. We could also draw parallels with Euromaidan, when protesters sang the national anthem as a symbol of solidarity almost every hour while standing in frosty weather at Independence Square in Kyiv.

Another resistance song is *Stefania*, performed by the rap-folk band *Kalush Orchestra*, winning first place at Eurovision 2022 in Turin, Italy.[27] The name of the song and its verbal and audial components stem from ethnic traditions. Written long before the full-scale invasion as an "ode to mother", the song has taken on a special meaning during these times of war:

> Stefania mum mum Stefania
> The field blooms, but she is turning grey
> Sing me a lullaby mum
> I want to hear your native word.

The song was performed at Eurovision in a modest manner: the members of the band were wearing national vyshyvanka costumes from the Prykarpattya region (the band's name *Kalush* is the name of a town in that region). Also elements of Ukrainian mythology and artifacts were used when creating the costumes; for example, traditional prints of Ukrainian Hutsul carpets were applied to create an image of a *Kylymman* dancer. As regards the language choices, local dialect words were used along with standard Ukrainian language in the text of the song. During the performance, a video of an old crying woman was displayed behind the singers.

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[27] 'Kalush Orchestra – Stefania – LIVE – Ukraine – Grandfinal – Eurovision 2022', online video recording, YouTube, May 2022, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F1fl60ypdLs&list=RDMMF1fl60ypdLs&start_radio=1 [accessed on 19 January 2023].

This combination of audial and visual elements – and to some extent the contrast between the lyrics and war scenes – brought the band success at Eurovision. Moreover, many other participants supported Ukraine, wearing blue-yellow ribbons or flags during their performances. At the end of the performance, Oleg Psiuk made a political statement, asking people to support the Ukrainian cities of Mariupol and Azovstal. Despite the fact that this was against the rules of the Eurovision song contest, the band won. Google searches for the words *Mariupol* and *Azovstal* were extremely frequent immediately after the contest, thus showing that the message had reached and influenced the Western audience. The pink hat worn by Oleg Psiuk, the leader of the band, became the prototype for fashionable accessories for kids and adults not only in Ukraine but also abroad. Illustrations 7 and 8 demonstrate how the pink hat image was used for posters by popular Ukrainian artists, such as *Grekhov* and *Inzhyr*.

Ill. 7. *Stefania mum Stefania!*[28]

Ill. 8. *Stefania mum mum Stefania*
The field blooms, but she is turning grey
Sing me a lullaby mum
I want to hear your native word[29]

Moreover, Ukrainian mobile operators and banking applications use the image of a pink hat as part of their logotypes. So, we can see how national elements, both visual and audial, are intertwined with Western pop culture and the reactions they elicit among Ukrainian citizens, artists and corporations.

The need for heroes also involved looking in the past, back to the roots of national identity. Therefore, people who had struggled for Ukrainian language, culture, and identity in various periods of entangled

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28   Source: https://nv.ua/ukr/lifestyle/kalush-orchestra-peremogli-na-yevrobachenni-reakciya-socmerezh-50242252.html [accessed on 19 January 2023].
29   Ibid.

Ukrainian history became again revitalized in the field of pop culture, especially with the beginning of the full-scale war. One example is Taras Shevchenko, one of the founders of the standard Ukrainian language and literature. Rostyslav Semkiv explained the popularity of this person during wartime by the fact that he always was a symbol of protest against Russian tsarist imperialism.[30] The image of Taras Shevchenko and citing his poems were also popular at the Maidan events. During the full-scale invasion, a video of Ukrainian soldiers removing a Russian flag with the statement *We are one nation* and revealing a poem by Taras Shevchenko under it went viral and was shared many times on social media.[31] Moreover, the top-down perspective borrowed from this bottom-up discourse when President Zelenskyi used a fragment of this video in his 2023 New Year speech. Lines from Shevchenko poems are also used by contemporary artists, such as *Oleksandr Grekhov* and *@bright.arts* for their ironic war posters (see ills 9 and 10).

Ill. 9. *The dawn has come,*
The sky's edge bursts ablaze;
In shady glades the artillery meets orcs[32]

Ill. 10. *A little orchard by the dwelling,*
F*cking sirens are wailing[33]

Concerning Taras Shevchenko, he has always been described and perceived positively in Ukrainian society, even during the Soviet times. Hence, people whose activities were described as controversial and triggered international discussions among scholars also appeared in war memes. For instance, a bunch of memes with an image of the historical Figure Stepan Bandera, a leader and organizer of the Ukrainian nationalistic movement,

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30   Semkiv, 'Contemporary war'.
31   'Proroči slova Ševčenka na bilbordi u zvilnenij Balakliji', online video recording, YouTube, October 2022, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HD8s2Xv7Cn0 [accessed on 27 January 2023].
32   Source: https://anekdot.kozaku.in.ua/karukatu/viyskovuh/6503-arta-orkiv-zustrichaie.html [accessed on 27 January 2023].
33   Source: https://www.pinterest.com/pin/26669822784264682/ [accessed on 27 January 2023].

appeared after a statement by Ramsan Kadyrov, Head of the Chechen Republic, that Bandera "is the main enemy of the Russian nation" and that *kadyrovtsi* (Kadyrov's army) "very soon will deal with him and later with all other Nazi activities".[34] In these humoristic memes, Bandera is depicted on Red Square in Moscow with a warning about a special operation on Kremlin leaders (ill. 10) or on a religious icon (ill. 11). In one anecdote it is stated that Bandera is hiding in the Lviv metro to underline the absurdity of Kadyrov's statement (there is no metro in Lviv and Bandera died back in 1959). The image of Bandera is also mentioned in Ukrainian resistance songs. For instance, Lesia Nikitiuk and Stepan Giga made a remix of Giga's hit song *Cej son* (*This dream*).[35] In the remix, they describe a grotesque situation after the Ukrainian victory, in particular there are the lines *in Mausoleum Bandera lays and "Red Viburnum" sounds…*
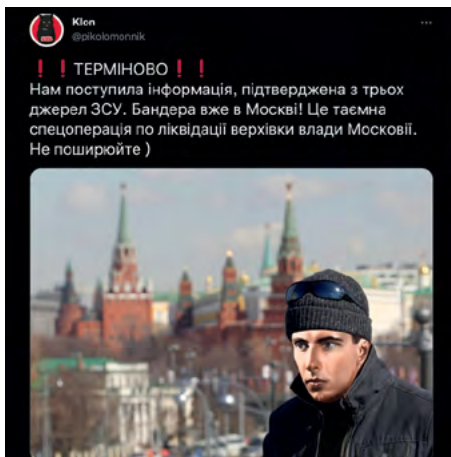
Ill. 11. *Urgent! We received information, confirmed by three sources in the Ukrainian Armed Forces. Bandera is already in Moscow! This is a secret special operation to liquidate top authorities of Muscovy. Do not share*[36]

Ill. 12. *That you actually did not know*[37]

Bandera's popularity in popular culture could be also explained by an increase in positive attitudes to this historical figure, especially during the full-scale war. According to sociological group *Rating*, this change in the positive perception of Bandera is tremendous: from 22% in 2012 to

34   D. Bondarenko, 'Socmereži zapolonyly memy pro Stepanu Banderu, jakoho "oživyv" Kadyrov', Sajt mista Ternopolia, March 2022, https://www.0352.ua/news/3351885/socmerezi-zapolonili-memi-pro-stepana-banderu-akogo-oziviv-kadirov-foto-video-18 [accessed on 19 January 2023].
35   Lesia Nikitiuk and Stepan Giga, 'Cej son, cej son', online video recording, YouTube, June 2022, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x8DOfGW86sQ&list=RDx8DOfGW86sQ&start_radio=1 [accessed on 27 January 2023]
36   Source: https://www.0352.ua/news/3351885/socmerezi-zapolonili-memi-pro-stepana-banderu-akogo-oziviv-kadirov-foto-video-18 [accessed on 27 January 2023].
37   Ibid.

74% in 2022.[38] Different variations of the song *Batko nash Bandera, Ukrajina maty* (Our father is Bandera, Ukraine is our mother), based on a folk song *Oj u lisi, lisi zelenomu*, also belong to the popular culture of resistance. The song appeared in 2019 and later became popular on social media. In 2021, a flashmob started after teenagers from Lviv uploaded a short video with this song on TikTok. The flashmob was joined by students, teenagers, famous singers such as Andriy Khlyvniuk and Verka Sierdiuchka, and even national deputies.[39] Therefore, images of different historical figures are used as a part of the Ukrainian resistance. In this article we demonstrate this trend using the examples of Taras Shevchenko and Stepan Bandera, but the whole spectrum of the historic personalities needs further research.

WHAT IS YOUR SUPERPOWER? I AM UKRAINIAN – ELEMENTS OF WESTERN POP CULTURE IN THE WAR DISCOURSE

It is possible to assume that the need for superheroes is an eternal infantile attraction to the elder, which remains with us regardless of experience due to the subjection of human nature to fate. From this point of view, reliance on superpowers is actually an escape from deep powerlessness. It is noteworthy that during the global exhaustion of recent years, a country that has been unfairly little visible during history has appeared to be that exact 'elder' for the same world. An adult who you can admire, who you can rely on, and, let us be frank, an adult whose problems you don't care too much about, but who you know is strong, intelligent, and will somehow pull through. And since the beginning of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, we have observed an interesting phenomenon in Western pop culture: the maturity and mastery with which Ukrainians resist the Russian onslaught is literally turning Ukraine into a new superhero. Slogans like *What is your superpower? I am Ukrainian* and *Be brave like Ukraine*, so widespread in mass culture, testify to the recognition of Ukraine at least as a world idol. This trend is noticeable in many areas – from thoughtless merch to works of art.

After the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by Russian military troops, pro-Ukrainian merch has become a significant element of Western culture. Patriotic goods with various slogans about Ukraine and Ukrainians,

[38]   Violetta Orlova, 'Na shodi ta pivdni Ukrajiny pokraščylos stavlennja do Stepana Bandery', *Unian*, May 2022, https://www.unian.ua/society/na-shodi-ukrajini-perevazhaye-pozitivne-stavlennya-do-stepana-banderi-opituvannya-novini-ukrajini-11812350.html [accessed on 27 January 2023].
[39]   'Bandera, flešmob i rosijski ZMI. Jak video lvivskykh školjarok stvorylo trend ta obroslo fejkamy', *New Voice*, October 2021. https://nv.ua/ukr/ukraine/events/batko-nash-bandera-ukrajina-mati-yak-ukrajinskiy-tiktok-trend-oburiv-zmi-video-50190872.html [accessed on 27 January 2023].

blue and yellow colours of clothes, accessories, stationery, books, toys, and even food products testify to the support for the Ukrainian nation, but on the other hand these are just following the global trend. Patriotic goods with various slogans about Ukraine and Ukrainians have flooded stores worldwide. Clothes, accessories, stationery, books, toys, and even food products – everyone is now trying to wear blue and yellow tones or verbally testify support for the superhero of the current year. Currently, *Amazon*, *AliExpress*, and many other retailers offer this type of product (see ills 13–16).

Ill. 13[40]

Ill. 14[41]

40   Source: https://ibackukraine.com/products/president-zelensky-superhero-stickers [accessed on 30 January 2023].
41   Source: https://www.redbubble.com/de/i/t-shirt/Was-ist-Ihre-Supermacht-Ich-bin-Ukrainer-stehe-zur-Ukraine-H%C3%A4nde-weg-von-der-Ukraine-von-rattob/104027017.NL9AC [accessed on 30 January 2023].
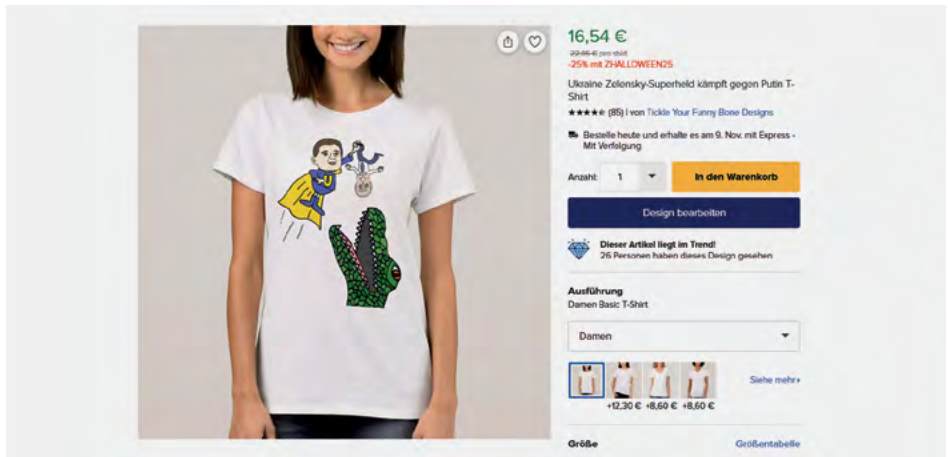
Ill. 15[42]
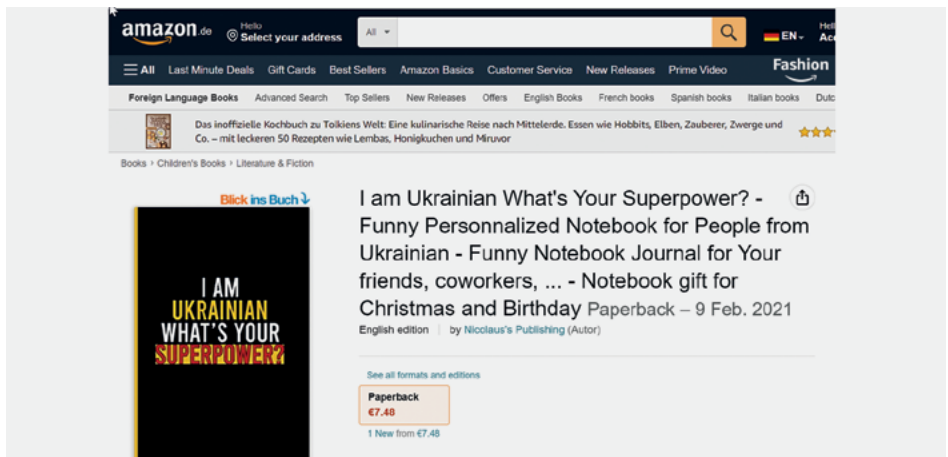
Ill. 16[43]

In the context of the war in Ukraine, memes as a special modern type of reflection in the public information space reached their apogee in the image of NAFO. The North Atlantic Fellas Organization is a wordplay on NATO that can be considered sarcastic and ironic at the same time. NAFO itself is a social media movement dedicated to countering Russian propaganda and disinformation about the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine. The main visual symbol of this phenomenon is the *Shiba Inu dog*, which has been known for many years as the most meme-like breed on the internet (see ill. 17). Additionally, in the months since the invasion, many war-related meme channels have sprung up online, such as *Saint Javelin, Ukrainian Memes Forces*.

Ill. 17[44]

Users involved in the NAFO community, the so-called *fellas*, actively troll Russian politicians and propagandists and also organize fundraising campaigns to help Ukraine. The movement has gained such scale that it has even been recognized by the Ukrainian authorities on Twitter. In August 2022, the official account of the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine published its thanks and respect to NAFO with a humorous military image of a *Fella* (see ill. 18). Furthermore, a few days later, high-ranking military and civil officials in Ukraine and NATO countries, including the Minister of Defence of Ukraine, Oleksii Reznikov, changed their Twitter avatars to a Fella. It should be mentioned the Minister's avatar was created by the community and commissioned in his honour (see ill. 19).

Ill. 18[45]
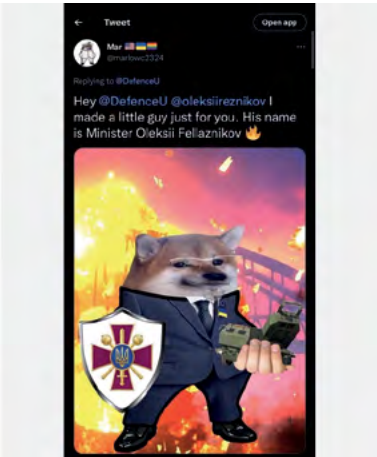
Ill. 19[46]

One of the most powerful references in pop culture is the noble gesture of 'Star Wars' actor Mark Hamill, better known by the name of his character Luke Skywalker. He has been leading Nowadays, a campaign to gather an army of 500 drones for the war. No doubt, his popularity has contributed to the success of this campaign (see ill. 20).

Ill. 20 @U24_gov_ua: Our ambassador, @MarkHamill, talked to the world media about his fundraiser for 10 RQ-35 Heidrun drones: "They are the eyes in the sky and protect the borders and the people of Ukraine"[47]

Ill. 21 @Gerashchenko_en: May the 4th be with Ukraine Poster is dedicated to the International Star Wars Day on the 4th of May #StandWithUkraine[48]

Also, world famous singers, especially pop or rock stars, have recently shown a deep interest in collaborating with Ukrainian artists or introducing Ukrainian motifs into their own work. In the spring of 2022, the chart-topping English singer Ed Sheeran re-released the famous track *2step* in collaboration with the band *Antytila*, whose members have been fighting as members of the Ukrainian resistance. A new section of the song is written in the Ukrainian language and conveys the message of loved ones holding on to hope during separation in wartime. In addition, some parts of video for this version were filmed in and around Kyiv in places recently destroyed or damaged by Russian missiles. Another notable collaboration was the release of *Kalush* (Ukraine) and *The Rasmus* (Finland). The outstanding track *In The Shadows of Ukraine* is a remastered version of *The Rasmus'* hit.

One of the most unexpected releases and an undeniable hit in the first months of the full-scale war was the collaboration of the legendary band *Pink Floyd* with Ukrainian singer and defender Andriy Khlyvnyuk. The release description on *Pink Floyd's* official YouTube account reads,

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[47]   Source: https://twitter.com/U24_gov_ua [accessed on 30 January 2023].
[48]   Source: https://twitter.com/Gerashchenko_en [accessed on 30 January 2023].

"Hey, Hey Rise Up', released in support of the people of Ukraine [...] This is the first new original music that they have recorded together as a band since 1994 The Division Bell. The track uses Andriy's vocals taken from his Instagram post of him in Kyiv's Sofiyska Square singing 'The Red Viburnum In The Meadow', a rousing Ukrainian protest song written during the first world war. The title of the Pink Floyd track is taken from the last line of the song, which translates as 'Hey, hey, rise up and rejoice". Other iconic songs 'Harry'[49] and 'Warriors of Light'[50] by *Lyapis Trubetskoy*, well-known since the Revolution of Dignity, were also performed in Ukrainian in 2022. The lyrics were translated by prominent Ukrainian poet, musician, and volunteer Serhiy Zhadan. Both music videos were presented on the official YouTube channels of the band. It is worth adding that the Belarusian band *Lyapis Trubetskoy* and, in particular, its frontman Serhiy Mikhalok have been supporting the Ukrainian resistance since the Revolution of Dignity. They have been living in Ukraine since 2015, and since the invasion they have been touring Europe raising money for volunteer purposes.

In 2018, UKRMAN, the first modern Ukrainian superhero in the world of comics, was introduced – the first project of its kind in Ukraine. At that time, the authors of UKRMAN wanted to create a hero with whom every Ukrainian could associate himself in the context of the centuries-old history of nation-building. From the perspective of 2022, it seems that UKRMAN is each of us, at least that's what we and many people around the world want to be. At the same time, one can simply say, 'I am Ukrainian', or, to be more precise, 'I am UKRWOMAN'. Thanks to Ukrainians – the general public, the army, volunteers, activists, and politicians – a superhero epic is being created before our eyes. For example, one inspiring legend from the first months of the invasion soon became the basis for a manga by Japanese author Matsuda Juko, an author who specializes in military comics. This manga is about the so-called 'ghost of Kyiv', who allegedly brought down roughly 40 Russian planes during the invasion. In fact, a whole team of professional pilots was behind this. However, the beautiful legend inspired a whole comic book which was immediately was translated and published in Ukraine after its release in Japan. The conflict in the comic book starts with an episode where the Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu disgruntledly informs the command about the failure of the offensive operation and the complete frustration of the Russian troops due to the unexpectedly powerful air defence of Kyiv.

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49   Liapis Trubetskoi, 'Harry', online video recording, YouTube, November 2022 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aY_of4RrUlY>.
50   Liapis Trubetskoi, 'Vojiny Svitla', online video recording, YouTube, July 2022 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ayDNTDcZok8>.

Also, one of the dialogues emphasizes that Russia was not ready for such support for Ukraine from the West.

Also, on 27 November 2022, the Bleeding Cool website reported that DC Comics' superhero team Stormguard (an imaginary organization of superheroes that seeks to protect the Earth from alien threats) would be joined by Core hero Pavlo Stupka, a new Ukrainian character. Actually, such glorification of Ukrainian soldiers began long before the full-scale Russian invasion. Ukrainian society began to metaphorize the defenders as superhumans from the very beginning of the war. Thus, in 2014, the participants of Donetsk airport defence (all of them volunteers) began to be called cyborgs, which literally means a fantastic creature, half-man and half-machine, with mechanical and electronic components that replace its organs and body parts. Today, not only Ukrainian warriors but also civilians who demonstrate resilience and perseverance in the fight against the enemy are rightly considered to have superpowers.

Another manifestation of Western pop culture is street art. Many war-themed murals have appeared in such different European capitals as Vienna, London, Berlin, Paris, and Warsaw. In November 2022, the English artist Banksy, whose graffiti is known all over the world, produced works in Ukrainian settlements in the Kyiv region, directly on the walls of buildings that had been subjected to rocket attacks. Banksy brought his signature art into the war environment, and then his artworks immediately integrated into this environment, which instantly recognized them as its own and as a means of strengthening its own discursive position. This is predictable as the social context always dictates the places for Banksy's new works. At the same time, this kind of global recognition constitutes an unconditional added value to the murals. Banksy's first artwork on the ruins of a flat building destroyed by a Russian missile depicts an old man serenely washing in the bathroom and rubbing his back with a large brush (see ill. 23). Black and white paints, usual for Banksy, give a special semantic load to this picture as they depict the measured everyday life of Ukrainians 'before'. Another of Banksy's works also appeals to the military routine of Ukrainian civilians. A woman is dressed in bath clothes and a gas mask, holding a fire extinguisher. Literally, this is the next stage of getting used to war: acceptance, but also constant readiness to defend oneself (see ill. 24).

Ill. 23[51]

Ill. 24[52]

It is noteworthy that the next piece of graffiti depicts children. If you look at it from the point of view of the eternal infantile attraction to the elder which was discussed above, it can be interpreted as a recognition of the incredible strength of those who are considered weak, i.e., us, Ukrainians. We are not looking for an 'elder' – we act like adults. Children playing on anti-tank hedgehogs in the centre of Kyiv is our new 'carefree' reality, aptly captured by Banksy (see ill. 25).

Ill. 25[53]
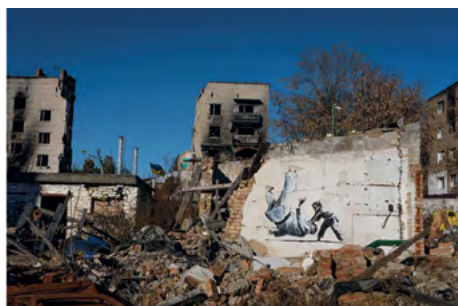
Ill. 26[54]

The final in the series of Ukrainian works by this artist was graffiti of a duel between a little boy and Putin, where the latter is obviously defeated. A very transparent and eloquent allusion (see ill. 26).

Just like in fairy tales and various fantastic stories, recently in Ukraine an actor-comedian suddenly became a superhero for the world. It is worth noting that such a perception and depiction of President Zelensky is more typical of the Western world than of Ukraine. In December 2022, *Time* magazine even named him and the spirit of Ukraine the Person of the Year 2022.

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51   Source: https://www.theartnewspaper.com/2022/11/14/banksy-in-ukraine-seven-new-works-appear-in-war-torn-sites [accessed on 30 January 2023].
52   Source: https://www.theartnewspaper.com/2022/11/14/banksy-in-ukraine-seven-new-works-appear-in-war-torn-sites [accessed on 30 January 2023].
53   Source: https://www.theartnewspaper.com/2022/11/14/banksy-in-ukraine-seven-new-works-appear-in-war-torn-sites [accessed on 30 January 2023].
54   Source: https://www.theartnewspaper.com/2022/11/14/banksy-in-ukraine-seven-new-works-appear-in-war-torn-sites [accessed on 30 January 2023].

Ill. 27[55]

Ill. 28[56]

On the internet you can find countless piece of fan art, posters, and other creativity about Zelensky in the image of a superhero (see ills 27–28). We might dare to assume that such popularity among the people plays a role not only in Mr Zelensky's firm state position during the war but also in the absolute absence of a political past, which in a certain way distances him from typical political elites and brings him closer to the people. Moreover, his superhero image refers to him more as a military figure, defender of the nation, than as just a politician.

It is also worth mentioning General Valeriy Zaluzhnyi, who has earned international recognition as Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of Ukraine. He quickly became quite a public Figure who constantly communicates with the people and gives interviews to the world media. He also became the face on the October 2022 cover of *Time* magazine and is included in *Time's* 100 most influential people of 2022. *Politico* magazine in turn called him the 'iron general' who is a hero but not a star (see ills 29–30). Not only Ukraine's military leaders have been heroized, but also Western politicians who support Ukraine. For instance, Boris Johnson, a British politician who is well-known for his consistent support of Ukraine, coined the phrase *Dobryi den everybody*, which became a meme and is often used on memes and merch.

Beyond all the above examples, and perhaps above all, in the context of pop culture in times of war, it is worth mentioning the euphemisms that Ukrainians use to call the enemy. Ukrainians mean Russians when they say 'orcs', and they mean Russia when they say 'Mordor'. These names, as it is well known, are taken directly from Western culture, the cult of the epic *Lord of the Rings*. This opens up another perspective of the image of Volodymyr Zelenskyy: a young adult who is supposed to save the world. It is valuable that such images, meanings, metaphors, and fantasies are produced in both Western and Ukrainian communities very explicitly. This probably shows that pop culture is an excellent tool for reflection and therapy at all times, especially in times of war.

THE "RUSSIAN WORLD" AS A QUASI-IDEOLOGY OF THE RESTORATION OF "IMPERIAL GREATNESS"

The concept of "russkii mir" or "Russian world"[59] was at first conceptualized by the quasi-philosophical doctrine of Petro Shchedrovytskyi, since when it has laid the ideological foundations of a new neo-imperial geopolitical doctrine. The main components of the "Russian World" are the Russian language and culture, Orthodox faith, common historical past, and common memory. According to Laruelle, "the concept of the "Russian World" is a geopolitical imagining, "a fuzzy mental atlas [...] on which different regions of the world and their different links to Russia can be articulated

fluidly. This blurriness is structural to the concept and allows it to be re-interpreted within multiple contexts".[60]

The myth of three fraternal peoples – Ukrainian, Belarussian, and Russian – as the "unity of all-Russian people" is key to the "russkii mir" ideology. The aforementioned trinity is clearly stated in the official documents and speeches of the main actors: Vladimir Putin, Patriarch Kirill, Dmitrij Peskov, Dmitrij Medvedev, and many others. Russian state mythology claims that these three nations are united not just by territory but also by history, culture, and spirit, creating a unique civilization. A Russian historian, one of the founders of the "Russian world" concept, Valerij Tishkov, emphasizes that the "Russian language, as well as Russian-speaking Russian or Soviet culture together with historical memory, unite and construct this world".[61] The concept of the "Russian world" is an attempt to create a utopian Russian-centric East Slavic "civilizational field" as an alternative to Europe. The ideology of the Russian civilization's uniqueness is reflected in the *National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation* (further referred to as the *Strategy*) and the *Decree of the President of the Russian Federation "On Approval of the Concept of the Humanitarian Policy of the Russian Federation Abroad"* (further referred to as the *Concept*). The *Strategy* highlights the protection of Russia's traditional spiritual, moral, cultural, and historical memory. Furthermore, the Strategy underlines the destructive effects of the globalization of culture and technology on traditional culture and values. The United States and its partners, multinational corporations, foreign nonprofits, and non-governmental, extremist, and terrorist organizations are directly accused of attacking Russia's traditional spiritual, moral, and cultural-historical values.[62] In the *Concept*, the Russian Federation goes further and outlines ways of transmitting the "Russian world" globally. The national interests of the Russian Federation in the humanitarian sphere abroad are seen in the "protection of traditional Russian spiritual and moral values" (13.1), "protection, preservation, and promotion of traditions and ideals inherent in the Russian world" (15.2), and "strengthening the role, importance, and competitiveness of the Russian language in the modern world" (15.4).[63]

As the second pillar of the "Russian World" doctrine, the Russian Orthodox Church has become one of the most significant institutes for

60   Marlene Laruelle, *The "Russian World": Russia's Soft Power and Geopolitical Imagination* (Washington: Center on Global Interests, 2015), p. 1.
61   Valerii Tiškov, 'Russkij mir: smysl i strategii', Russkijmir.ru, December 2017, https://m.rusmir. media/2007/12/01/strategia [accessed on 19 January 2023].
62   'Stratehija nacional'noj bezopasnosti Rossijskoj Federacii', *Kremlin*, July 2022 http://static.kremlin.ru/ media/events/files/ru/QZw6hSk5z9gWqoplD1ZzmR5cER0g5tZC.pdf [accessed on 19 January 2023].
63   'Ukaz Prezidenta Rossijskoj Federacii ot 05.09.2022 № 611 „Ob utverždenii Koncepcii gumanitarnoj politiki Rossijskoj Federacii za rubežom"', Official internet portal of legal information. <http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/Document/View/0001202209050019> [accessed on 19 January 2023].

preserving the unity of the "Russian World" civilization. On 4 November 2022, Patriarch Kirill in his propaganda speech 'About the revival of the lost internal integrity of our Fatherland' repeated like a mantra his artificial ideological clichés about the "single historical space of Holy Rus" and once again quoted his favourite slogan "Ukraine, Russia, Belarus – together we are Holy Rus".[64] Polegkyi and Bushuyev argue that Patriarch Kirill has begun "to pose not just as the head of the Orthodox Church of Russia but as a supranational spiritual leader of 'Holy Rus', which purports to include Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, and – on a broader scale – all Orthodox Christians. From this perspective, Moscow views itself as the 'Third Rome' and the only legal inheritor of the Byzantine Empire – in contrast to the 'false Rome' of Washington".[65] Moreover, the Russian Orthodox Church has become "the moral foundation for the Russo-Ukrainian war"[66] and Patriarch Kirill has praised the Russian occupiers for "defending the Russian world": "Today, Donbas is the front line of defence of the Russian world. And the Russian world is not only Russia but is anywhere where people live and have been brought up in the traditions of Orthodoxy and Russian morality".[67] Since 2014, the "Russian world" ideology has turned into a justification for direct military aggression against Ukraine "to protect the Russian and Russian-speaking population" and the genocidal policy of the Russian Federation against Ukraine in the ongoing full-scale war. The awareness that the "Russian world" brings death, tears, and devastation encourages Ukrainians to distance themselves from this ideology by any means. The deconstruction of the "Russian world" also occurs in modern pop culture, particularly in songs, memes, caricatures, and anecdotes. In this research, the words "deconstruction" and "to deconstruct" are used in a much general meaning: *deconstruction* as synonymous with the destruction of an idea or a truth claim, and *to deconstruct* as synonymous with "to dismantle", e.g., to show that a claim, statement or explanation is not true or correct since the "Russian world" is "a quasi-ideology that contains exclusively declarative elements of supremacy, without philosophy or rationalization".[68]

64 'Patriaršeje slovo po slučaju Dnja narodnogo edinstva', Official website of the Moscow Patriarchate, November 2022, http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/5973837.html [accessed on 19 January 2023].
65 Oleksii Polegkyi and Dmytro Bushuyev, 'Russian foreign policy and the origins of the "Russian World"', *Forum for Ukrainian Studies*, September 2022, https://ukrainian-studies.ca/2022/09/06/russian-foreign-policy-and-the-origins-of-the-russian-world/#4 [accessed on 19 January 2023].
66 Katherine Kelaidis, 'The Russian Patriarch just gave his most dangerous speech yet – and almost no one in the West has noticed', *Religion Dispatches*, April 2022, https://religiondispatches.org/the-russian-patriarch-just-gave-his-most-dangerous-speech-yet-and-almost-no-one-in-the-west-has-noticed/?fbclid=IwAR2cfewG hXlCSyBqAvMg8ONB24DKhzNynaqOpnNsS9BAaAONVaQXmwvePoY [accessed on 19 January 2023].
67 'Patriarkh Kirill nazval Donbass "perednej linijej oborony Russkoho mira"', *TASS*, December 2022, https://tass.ru/obschestvo/16475189 [accessed on 19 January 2023].
68 Artem Bidenko, 'Jak vrjatuvaty svit vid Rosiji', Ukrajinska pravda, May 2022, https://www.pravda.com.ua/columns/2022/05/27/7348914/ [accessed on 19 January 2023].

In Ukrainian discourse, the concept of "russkii mir" itself is ridiculed. For example, the anecdote below gained popularity in social media. Its humour makes it possible to reduce Russia's pseudo-greatness and emphasize the negative features of Russian society. In this fragment, Russia's desire to transmit its imperialist ideology globally is also treated with contempt.
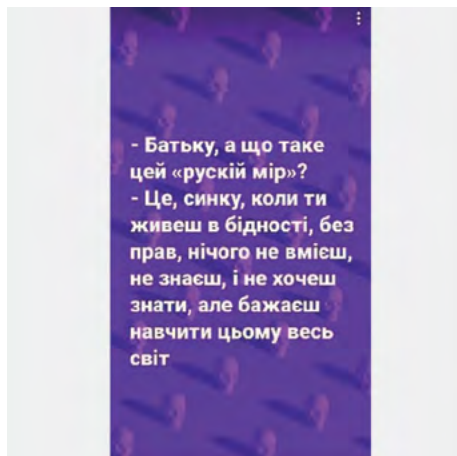
Ill. 31 – *Dad, what is that "russkii mir"?*
– That is, son, when ones live in poverty, has no rights,
cannot do anything and knows nothing, and doesn't want
to know anything but wants to teach the whole world[69]

"NE SESTRY": HOW UKRAINIAN POP CULTURE DISMANTLES IMPERIAL MYTH OF "FRATERNAL PEOPLES"

In mass culture, Ukrainians' first attempts to distance themselves from Russian imperial ideology appeared in 2014, immediately after the occupation of Crimea. In March 2014, Ukrainian poet Anastasiia Dmytruk wrote the poem *We will never be brothers!*[70] as a reaction to the Russian annexation of Crimea. The poem had significant resonance and gained more than 3 million views on YouTube. To support Ukraine, Lithuanian musicians, together with the choir of the Klaipėda Music Theatre, created a song based on this poem which had considerable success on YouTube and reached 22 million views.[71] The aforementioned poem starts with the following words:

69   Source: https://www.facebook.com/avelykyy, 15 November 15 2022, 19.31 [accessed on 20 November 2022]
70   Anastasiia Dmytruk, 'Nikohda my ne budem brat'jami!' (pesnja Anastasiji Dmytruk), online video recording, YouTube, March 2014, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qv97YeC563Y [accessed on 19 January 2023].
71   Anastasiia Dmytruk, 'Nikohda my ne budem brat'jami!' (pesnja Anastasiji Dmytruk), online video recording, YouTube, April 2014, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jj1MTTArzPI [accessed on 19 January 2023].

> We will never be brothers!
> Neither by country nor by mother.
> You don't have the spirit to be free,
> So we can't even become stepbrothers with you.
> You called yourself "elder" –
> we could be younger, but not yours [...]
> You have the Tsar, we have Democracy.
> We will never be brothers.[72]

Later, in August 2014, Vadym Dubovskyi, the so-called "singing truck driver", performed the song "Farewell March", in which he also tried to deconstruct the myths about "brotherhood between nations", starting with similar words:

> We have never been brothers.
> The virus of slavery has entered your souls.
> You always showered curses
> on Our faith, freedom, and language.[73]

The deconstruction of the "Russian world" and the debunking of the myth about the kinship of peoples are based on categorical oppositions: *freedom – slavery*, *tsar – democracy*, etc. In these poems, different values and ideological differences have become a key marker for distinguishing peoples which Russian propaganda stubbornly calls "fraternal", or even "one nation". Moreover, Anastasiia Dmytruk points out that the Russian nation proclaims itself "elder" brother – *you called yourself "elder"*. The fact that the Russians have proclaimed themselves as "bigger and elder" is also mentioned in the song *Not brothers but executioners* by Amelika Ocean.[74] Since the full-scale invasion, it has no longer been possible to see the statement about "brotherhood" as anything but illegal and false. The war crimes of the Russian army in Bucha, Irpin, Izium, Kherson, and other cities give reason to call them executioners and to draw an even thicker line of distinction between peoples.

> The others have come,
> They say that they are bigger,
> They say that they are elder,
> And they pulled the trigger.

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72   Dmytruk, Nikohda my ne budem brat'jami!, March 2014.
73   Vadym Dubovskyi, 'Proščal'nyj marš', online video recording, YouTube, August 2014, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vzKp-Yjc7hQ [accessed on 19 January 2023].
74   Amelika Ocean, *Ne braty, a katy*, online video recording, YouTube, March 2022 [accessed on 19 January 2023].

> They cut off, took away.
> [...]
> Your heart is a stone
> Not brothers, but executioners
> And executioners![75]

Masenko contends that the "cradle of three fraternal peoples" is on the verge of becoming a coffin due to one of the "fraternal peoples"; like a kleptoparasitic bird, they are doing everything to throw the true owners out of the nest and replace them. In addition, the image of a "common cradle" is a failed concept since no sane person would put as many as three children in one cradle: these children should be triplets.[76] However, according to the official ideology, the Russian brother – who, together with his two younger brothers, found himself, for some reason, in the same cradle – was proclaimed the eldest. Vadym Dubovskyi underlines that Russia never accepted or recognised the Ukrainian "faith, freedom, and language",[77] emphasizing Moscow's imperial ambitions. By distorting its language and spreading false and manipulative notions about Ukraine's history and culture, the Kremlin attempts to justify its full-scale and brutal invasion of Ukraine.

There are attempts to legitimize the war against Ukraine in the so-called "LPR" (Luhansk Public Republic), which is run by terrorist groups controlled by Russia. In May 2022, "LPR" released the cartoon *The Three Sisters* about a quarrel between siblings, based on Russia's propaganda narratives. Allegedly, the reason for this quarrel was foreign suitors – NATO and the EU – which "began to rule the roost in Ukraine and demanded that she bring her sister to serve them".[78] According to the "creators" of *The Three Sisters*, "Russia went to save the sister". The fact that the Russian Federation itself unleashed a bloody war against Ukraine was not mentioned in the cartoon. In this way, Russian propaganda aims to influence children by providing them with false information and appealing to their emotions.

The song *Ne sestry* (Not Sisters) by Jerry Heil & Liudmyla Shemajeva[79] has become a kind of response to the propagandistic statements about the "sisterhood of nations". "Russians often throw out the idea that we are brothers and sisters, but it is obvious that next of kin do not behave like that", says Jerry Heil in an interview. This music video is an example of combining different modalities (audio, verbal, visual) to convey an idea.

75   Ibid.
76   Larysa Masenko, 'Ukrajina i Rosija. Knjaz' Volodymyr i pochodžennja ukrajins'koji movy', Radio Svoboda, November 2016, https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/28111096.html [accessed on 19 January 2023].
77   Dubovskyi, Proščal'nyj marš.
78   'Mulfilm "Tri sestry"', online video recording, YouTube, May 2022, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=crGkoX_oJjk [accessed on 19 January 2023].
79   Jerry Heil, 'Ne sestry', September 2022, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=paMlNnxMuGQ [accessed on 19 January 2023].

The video was based on the cartoon "Nedokolysana" (Eng. Uncradled) (1989) and supplemented with a number of other videos from de-occupied territories to demonstrate how people meet the Ukrainian Armed Forces and rejoice at liberation from the "Russian world". As for the arrangement, the motive of the song *Oi na dubovi ta i hilky vjutsia* (On the oak tree, the branches are curling) has been used to make it sound folkloric.

At the very beginning of the song, the authors distance themselves from "family ties" with Russia and note that these "girls" were not siblings but stepsisters who were forced to live in the same house:

> Two little girls lived in the room,
> Stepsisters in the same house.[80]

Ideological differences, basic moral and ethical values, and the ability to love have become key factors for dividing Ukrainian and Russian peoples in modern Ukrainian poems and songs:

> How can you be called a sister
> one who never knew how to love?
> The one who never knew how to love
> neither strangers nor relatives; neither alive nor murdered?[81]

The song *Not Sisters* is based on oppositions of good and bad, hardworking and lazy, sincere and envious, beautiful and indecorous, etc., giving the possibility not only to indicate the absence of "blood" ties or kinship between Ukrainians and Russians but also to make it possible to outline the line between "us" and "them". The dichotomy of "self" and "other" is considered a crucial element that ascertains the structure and mentality of a particular group and outlines its moral and ethical boundaries. Furthermore, identity construction during war differs significantly from peacetime identities: "A dichotomous, zero-sum way of constructing a boundary between 'me' / 'us' and 'them' is, indeed characteristic of situations of extreme conflict and war in which the individual's fate is perceived, at least by hegemonic discourses of identity, to be closely bound with their membership of a particular collectivity".[82]

While in songs and poems authors try to demonstrate existential differences between peoples to debunk the myth of "brotherly nations", in memes there is no further explanation. Ill. 32 clearly shows that anyone with

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80   Heil, 'Ne sestry'.
81   Ibid.
82   Nira Yuval-Davis, 'Theorizing identity: beyond the "us" and "them" dichotomy', Patterns of Prejudice, 44.3 (2010), 261–80.

an imperial mindset is the enemy. Meanwhile, ill. 33 illustrates the desire of Ukrainians to keep their distance from Russian manipulative narratives.
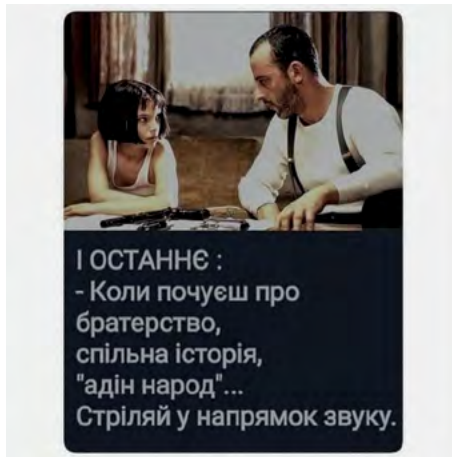
Ill. 32. *And one last thing… Once you hear something about "two brotherly peoples" and "our common history" – just shoot toward the sound*[83]

Ill. 33. *Animals:*
– Brothers!
– One nation!
– To save!
Cossack:
– F*ck off!
Bright Arts[84]

THE UKRAINIAN LANGUAGE AGAINST THE BULLETS: HOW UKRAINE BREAKS "VIELIKII I MOHUCHII"

The Russian language and Russian culture are key elements in constructing and transmitting "russkii mir". To continue instilling this ideology in Ukraine and allegedly "protect the Russian-speaking population", Russia "intervened" in Donbas in 2014 and subsequently started the full-scale invasion in February 2022. Ill. 34 illustrates that the "Russian world" ideology brings death and devastation, and behind "angelic" promises of protection and salvation hides cynicism and cruelty (ill. 35). These caricatures are made in a satirical and allegorical style since the image and the text do not correlate. The appeal "Speak Russian! We will come and protect you!!!" must be read as "Do not speak Russian if you do not want the Russian army 'to protect you'".

[83]   Source: https://twitter.com/olex_scherba/status/1579954412256382976 [accessed on 17 November 2022].
[84]   Source: https://ukrainer.net/illustrators-about-war-2/ [accessed on 15 December 2022].

Political caricature by Oleksii Kustovskyi

Ill. 34. Left: *Speak Russian! We will come and protect you!!!*
         Right: *We were forced to protect the Russian-speaking population in the Donbas region.*
         Bottom: *Russian world*[85]

Political caricature by Oleksiy Kustovskyi

Ill. 35. Top: *Speak Russian! We will come and protect you!!!*
         Bottom: *Russian world*[86]

Political caricature by Oleksii Kustovskyi

Ill. 36. *Language is a weapon.*
         The last bridge[87]

Political caricature by Oleksiy Kustovskyi

Ill. 37. *Our language is our weapon.*
         Palianytsia [loaf][88]

Since February 2022, language has started being perceived as a weapon in the destruction of the "Russian world", and this is also reflected in memes and caricatures (ills 36, 37). Moreover, language has also become a means of distinguishing between friends and enemies. For example, to refer to saboteurs Ukrainian militants use the code word "palianytsia", which Russian-speaking people cannot pronounce due to the peculiarities of articulation (ill. 37). This fact has given impetus to create countless memes and jokes demonstrating the differences between the languages.[89] The code word "palianytsia" is also mentioned in the book "One hundred maps about Ukraine and the war" (2022), which has been recently published in Ukrainian, German, and English by the German publishing house "Catapult".[90]

Some of these memes call to respect the language and switch to Ukrainian since contempt for the Ukrainian language is a manifestation of collaboration (ill. 38) as well as a gesture of support for the occupiers

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[85] Source: https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/28099029.html [accessed on 9 November 2022].
[86] Source: https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/28082746.html [accessed on 19 November 2022].
[87] https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/28665835.html
[88] https://durdom.in.ua/uk/main/photo/photo_id/89789.phtm
[89] H. Šumycka, L. Pidkujmucha, N. Kiss, 'Mova jak "bajraktar", mova jak kod: do juvileju sociolinhvistky', Radio Svoboda, November 2022, https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/larysa-masenko-ukrayinska-mova/32126052.html [accessed on 19 January 2023].
[90] Source: https://www.amazon.de/100-maps-about-Ukraine-war/dp/3948923485 [accessed on 12 December 2022].

(ill. 39). As Kulyk underlines, "to protest, people no longer use Ukrainian only where it is required by law, but also where they have a free choice. Until now, this choice mostly fell to the Russian language, but now Russian is rejected as the language of the enemy".[91] Moreover, the letter "Ï" (ill. 39) has become a tool of resistance and a symbol of self-affirmation since it distinguishes the Ukrainian alphabet from the Russian one. The letter "Ï" is drawn on fences and sidewalks, on monuments and the walls of buildings in the temporarily occupied territories.[92] As the Ukrainian writer Dmytro Kapranov emphasizes, "this is a letter that within its appearance loudly declares its Ukrainianness. That is why it has become such a symbol".[93]

Drawing by the artist Oleksii Kustovskyi

Ill. 38. *Disrespect for the official language is a manifestation of collaboration*[94]

Ill. 39 Top: *Do not support the occupier:* Bottom: *Speak Ukrainian!*[95]

QUASI-RELIGION AS A BASIS FOR QUASI-IDEOLOGY: UKRAINE PUTS A CROSS ON THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

The Russian Orthodox Church, as one of the pillars of the "Russian world" and mouthpiece of the Kremlin, is also being deconstructed in the Ukrainian discourse. The caricatures below emphasize the connection between the Russian Church and "russkii mir". Ill. 40 illustrates that priests of the Moscow Patriarchate support and bless the war, as is also evidenced by such attributes of war as a machine gun and a grenade instead

91   Volodymyr Kulyk, 'Die Sprache des Widerstands. Der Krieg und der Aufschwung des Ukrainischen', *Osteuropa*, 6–8: *Widerstand. Ukrainische Kultur in Zeiten des Krieges*, (2022), 248.
92   Rostyslav Chotyn, 'Ji, Ji, Ji… Ukrajins'ke pidpillja literoju «Ji» boret'sja z Rosijeju na okupovanych terytorijach', Radio Svoboda, October 2022, https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/ukrayina-rosiya-viyna-okupatsiya-mova-litera-yi/32083789.html [accessed on 19 January 2023].
93   Ibid.
94   Source: https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/29498980.html [accessed on 14 December 2022].
95   Source: https://www.facebook.com/UkrayinskiyFeysbuk/posts/2651643745117981/?paipv= 0&eav=Afaj8FibKbsDTysztkIvkzzKBKx_vvZWgl1f6cteJLWe9BWlnHlyjZuZftDGQ Qc2lfI&_rdr [accessed on 21 December 2022].

of a cross. In this way, Volodymyr Solonko emphasizes that in fact there is nothing sacred in the ideology of the Moscow Church. Moreover, Patriarch Kirill is seen as a locomotive pulling the "Russian world" and Soviet past, including the KGB (lit. Committee for State Security) as well as the FSB (lit. Federal Security Service) (ill. 41).

Caricature by Volodymyr Solonko

Ill. 40. *Let's build "russkii mir"* [96]   Ill. 41. *For "russkii mir", USSR, KGB, FSB* [97]
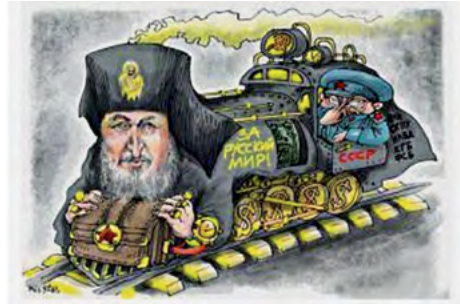
Particular attention is focused on the Figure of Patriarch Kirill as one of the main ideologists of the "Russian world". In particular, his ambition to destroy and bury Ukraine (ill. 42) and his false statements about his desire for peace, as evidenced by a bloodied white dove (ill. 43), have been depicted. The tentacles of the octopus symbolize the aggressive attitude of Kirill and the Kremlin toward the Ukrainian Orthodox Church and the appetite to control it (ill. 44). Ill. 45 illustrates that the Russian Federation, as well as the Russian Orthodox Church, aims to appropriate the history of Kyivan Rus, proclaiming itself its successor. Snyder points out that "in his first address to the Russian parliament as president in 2012, Putin described his place in the Russian timescale as the fulfilment of an eternal cycle: as the return of an ancient lord of Kyiv, whom Russians call Vladimir. The politics of eternity requires points in the past to which the present can return, demonstrating the innocence of the country, the leader's right to rule, and "the pointlessness of thinking about the future".[98] Numerous monuments, fiction films, documentaries, and animated movies are intended to establish the view that Prince Volodymyr is a Russian hero, and Putin is continuing his work to unite the lands.[99]

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[96]   Source: https://www.volyn.com.ua/news/215590-moskovskyi-patriarkhat-zasudyv-ne-putina-i-kirila-a-zvynuvatyv-u-viini-poroshenka-ta-ptsu [accessed on 11 December 2022].

[97]   Source: https://pravyysektor.info/poglyad-cerkva/moskovskyy-patriarhat-zagroza-dlya-krayiny [accessed on 02 December 2022].

[98]   Timothy Snyder, *The road to unfreedom: Russia, Europe, America* (New York: Tim Duggan Books, 2018), p. 55.

[99]   L. Pidkuimukha, 'Myths and Myth-Making in Current Kremlin Ideology', in A. Giannakopoulos (ed.), Politics of Memory and War. From Russia to the Middle East, ed. by Angelos Giannakopoulos, Series Research Papers 11 (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University – The S. Daniel Abraham Center for International and Regional Studies, 2022), pp. 38–53.

Oleksandr Grekhov

Ill. 42.[100]   Ill. 43.[101]   Ill. 44.[102]
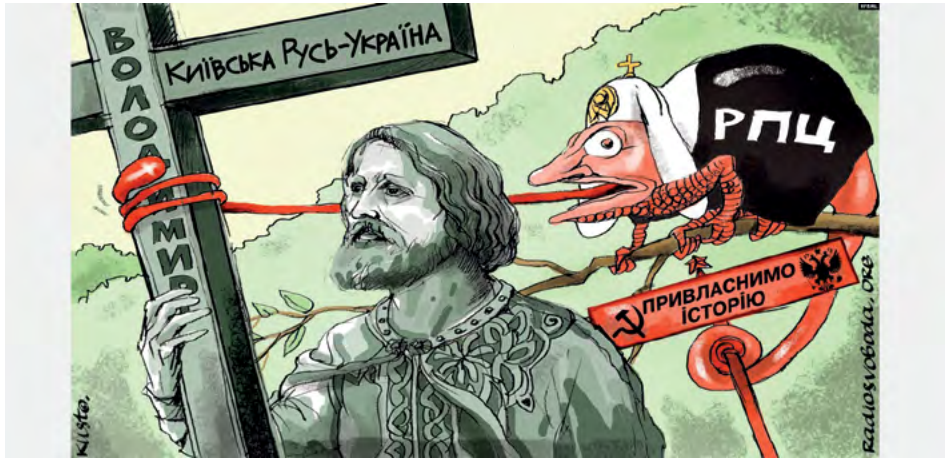
Political caricature by Oleksii Kustovskyi

Ill. 45.[103]

In autumn, the Security Service of Ukraine began searching for indicators of pro-Russian activities in the churches of the Moscow Patriarchate. According to law enforcement officers, these searches are carried out to "prevent the use of religious communities as a centre of the 'Russian world' and to protect people from provocations and terrorist acts".[104]

For example, on the territory of St Cyril and Methodius Convent of Mukachevo Diocese of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (MP) in Zakarpattia, the Security Service of Ukraine found a large number of propaganda materials. Most of the literature is authored by Russian figures and published by Russian printers. The law enforcement officers discovered books of xenophobic content with offensive fiction about other nationalities and religions. In the pamphlets found, Ukraine's right to independence is denied, and it is emphasized that Russia, Ukraine, and

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[100] Source: https://ukrnationalism.com/publications/2611-diialnist-moskovskoho-patriarkhatu-iak-zahroza-natsionalnii-bezpetsi-ukrainskoi-derzhavy.html [accessed on 18 December 2022].
[101] Source: https://ua.boell.org/uk/2022/04/19/tretiy-rym-abo-yak-rosiyska-pravoslavna-tserkva-stala-zbroyeyu-russkoho-mira-ta [accessed on 3 December 2022].
[102] Source: https://ua.krymr.com/a/28618885.html [accessed on 4 December 2022].
[103] Source: https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/28642802.html [accessed on 9 December 2022].
[104] 'SBU provodyt' bezpekovi zachody na ob'jektach UPC (MP) u dev'jaty oblastjach Ukrajiny', Security Service of Ukraine, December 2022, https://ssu.gov.ua/novyny/sbu-provodyt-bezpekovi-zakhody-na-obiektakh-upts-mp-u-deviaty-oblastiakh-ukrainy [accessed on 19 January 2023].

Belarus "cannot be divided".[105] Moreover, since the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine, parishes of the Moscow Patriarchate have been joining the Orthodox Church of Ukraine to distance themselves from Russia and its false ideology.[106] Ukrainian popular culture, in particular memes and caricatures, reacts to all these processes in society and depicts the desire of Ukrainians to separate from this Kremlin-controlled church. Being a member of the Russian Orthodox Church is characterized as a bad habit, along with such habits as nail biting or nose picking (ill. 46). Patriarch Kirill is depicted as a mole that has been insidiously "digging holes" under the Ukrainian Orthodox Church and has finally been exposed. Moreover, in espionage jargon, a mole is a long-term spy (espionage agent), so this metaphor is not accidental since Kirill is a former KGB agent (ill. 48). One meme (ill. 47) is based on the characters of the well-known Turkish TV series "Roksolana", where Sultan Suleiman supports the Ukrainians' desire to expel the Moscow Patriarchate with the well-known slogan "Glory to Ukraine".

Yulia Vasyuk

Ill. 46. Top: *Disgusting habits that you should get rid of*
Left: *Picking your nose*
Right: *Biting your nails*
Bottom: *Going to the church of the Moscow Patriarchate*[105]
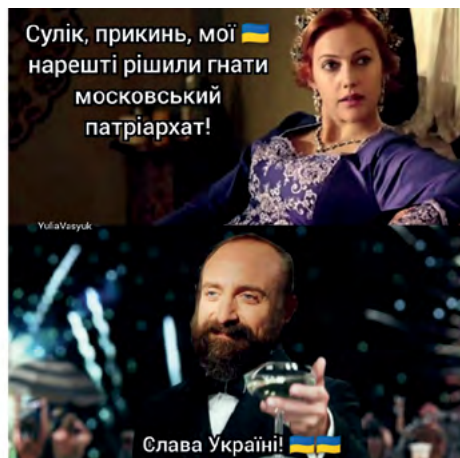
Yulia Vasyuk

Ill. 47. *Sulik, guess what, my (Ukrainians – L.P.) have finally decided to expel the Moscow Patriarchate. Glory to Ukraine!* [108]

105 'SBU pereviryla monastyr UPC (MP) na Zakarpatti, de černyci zaklykaly do «probuždenyja matušky-Rusy»', Telegram Channel of Security Service of Ukraine, December 2022, https://t.me/SBUkr/6000 [accessed on 19 January 2023].

106 'Moskovs'kyj patriarchat: skil'ky chramiv zalyšylos' na Chmel'nyččyni', Spiritual Front of Ukraine, November 2022, https://df.news/2022/11/13/moskovskyj-patriarkhat-skilky-khramiv-zalyshylos-na-khmelnychchyni/ [accessed on 19 January 2023].

107 Source: https://mobile.twitter.com/sava260509 [accessed on 10 January 2023].

108 Source: https://33kanal.com/news/175987.html [accessed on 21 December 2022].

Political caricature by Oleksii Kustovskyi

Ill. 48.[109]

Therefore, in Ukraine the ideology of the "Russian world" is being deconstructed, in particular its main components: history, language, and religion. In memes, caricatures, and songs, authors refute and ridicule the imperialist myth about the "cradle of three fraternal peoples", showing the true cruel face of the Russian world, exposing the true intentions of the Russian Orthodox Church and its role in spreading the Kremlin's narratives, and supporting the desire of Ukrainians to distance themselves from this imperialist ideology.

CONCLUSION

Pop culture plays a crucial role in Ukrainian resistance against Russian aggression. The numerous memes, images, cartoons, caricatures, and pieces of graffiti that have appeared during the full-scale invasion help to maintain the spirit of the Ukrainian people. The visual components of these new artifacts are often based on elements of national culture, such as national colours, images of national heroes, such as Cossacks, traditional Ukrainian clothes (vyshyvankas) and so on. Audial components often refer to traditional Ukrainian songs, ballads, and folklore, at the same time intertwining them with modern interpretations. Textual elements involve a lot of humorous content, in particular black humour and political satire that mocks the enemies. Concerning language choice, local dialects are used to underline national and regional identity. Verbal aggression, which naturally occurs in wartime, is more presented

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[109]   Source: https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/27706340.html [accessed on 17 December 2022].

in bottom-up texts and is softened in official discourses. Contemporary Ukrainian culture has influenced Western global trends, since on the global arena Ukrainians – politicians, soldiers, but also civilians – are perceived as superheroes. Famous world-known artists and Hollywood actors have visited Ukraine to perform in support of the Ukrainian people. This intertwining of global trends and the war context brings a special artistic perspective.

Deconstruction of "russki mir" ideology in pop culture involves several levels: historical myths about the unity of nations, the authenticity of the Ukrainian language, and the Ukrainian's right to their own orthodox religion. In the times of the ongoing full-scale war, Ukrainians have created their own identity by distancing themselves from the Russian cultural and linguistic space, dissociating themselves from the Russian Orthodox Church, and refuting myths about the "triune nation" and "fraternal peoples". The Russian language, as one of the pillars of the Russian world, is no longer playing a significant role in Ukraine as it is perceived as the language of the enemy and the occupier.

Represented in various genres, this deconstruction has formed both the self-image of Ukrainians as brave, kind, noble people, and the image of the enemy as cruel, stupid and fanatic. The combination of audial, visual and textual elements in the artefacts of deconstruction enables the creation of powerful messages that reach not only Ukrainian but also Western audiences.

Therefore, the article opens a discussion about the role of pop culture in times of war. This article aims to outline the main trends in pop culture during the full-scale Russo-Ukrainian war. There are several directions in which pop culture of resistance could be investigated further: focusing on a specific genre, topic, historic or contemporary public figure, or on repetitive patterns and themes; a comparison of pop culture from the beginning of the Russo-Ukrainian war (2014) and current artefacts, or comparison with cultures of resistance in other countries.

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A SIGN OF THE PAST: THE UNTOLD STORY OF HUNGARY'S SYNAGOGUES AND THE MEMORY OF DISAPPEARED COMMUNITIES, 1945–2024

ABSTRACT

After the Second World War, the situation of synagogues in Hungary was unique compared to other countries in Central and Eastern Europe. While in Poland, Czechoslovakia or Germany a large number of synagogues were demolished, in Hungary – with the exception of a few cases – such destruction did not take place. Nevertheless, as a result of the demographic catastrophe caused by the Holocaust and the ensuing internal migration and emigration, most of the synagogues in the countryside were gradually abandoned and fell into disrepair. After the 1956 revolution, the National Association of Hungarian Israelites, for various reasons (such as economic considerations, political pressure, etc.), decided in the 1960s and 1970s to sell some 60–70 synagogues to the state or local companies. The authorities then used either the building or the land, intentionally or unintentionally erasing the memory of the once thriving Jewish community. Thus, the transfer of ownership of synagogues during the Kádár era became a widespread phenomenon and even a general policy in the interaction between the state and Jewish representatives. The problem of abandoned synagogues has been on the agenda in Hungary ever since, and various attempts have been made to address the issue over the past seven decades. Based on archival material and oral history interviews, this paper outlines the historical context in which the sale of synagogues took place and analyses how the policy of dealing with the material heritage of the former Jewish communities during the Kádár era and since has been shaped as an act of remembrance

KEYWORDS:
memory of the Holocaust, state socialism, Central Eastern Europe, memory politics, built heritage

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After the Second World War, as a result of the demographic catastrophe caused by the Holocaust and the ensuing internal and external migration, the vast majority of communities in rural Hungary gradually disappeared, and the buildings and properties of these communities (synagogues, schools, houses, cemeteries) were slowly abandoned and later fell into disrepair.[1] Compared to other countries in Central and Eastern Europe, however, Jewish life didn't vanish entirely, and synagogues had a special status: while in Poland,[2] Czechoslovakia[3] or Germany[4] a large number of synagogues were demolished, in Hungary – with only a few exceptions – no such destruction took place.

After the 1956 revolution and the dictatorial ecclesiastical and 'Jewish policies' of the Stalinist Rákosi era (1949–1953), the new administration led by General Secretary János Kádár showed some continuity with its predecessor but shifted away from these repressive methods towards administrative and surveillance techniques.[5] Accordingly, the status of the synagogues changed dramatically: for various reasons (dissolution of congregations, political pressure, financial hardship) an estimated 60–70 synagogues were sold by the National Association of Hungarian Israelites (MIOK) to municipalities and local companies throughout the country. The synagogues were sold according to local needs, and the new proprietors

1   András Kovács and Aletta Forrás-Bíró, *Zsidó élet Magyarországon: Eredmények, kihívások és célok a kommunista rendszer bukása óta* (London: Institute for Jewish Policy Research, 2011), pp. 7–8.
2   James E. Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (New Haven, CT: Yale Univ. Press, 2000); Michael Meng, *Shattered Spaces Encountering Jewish Ruins in Postwar Germany and Poland* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011); Carol Herselle Krinsky, *Europas Synagogen Architektur, Geschichte, Bedeutung* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1988); Iwona Irwin-Zarecka, *Frames of Remembrance: The Dynamics of Collective Memory* (New Brunswick – London: Routledge, 1994).
3   Jacob Ari Labendz, 'Synagogues for sale: Jewish-State mutuality in the communist Czech lands, 1945–1970', *Jewish Culture and History*, 18 (2017), 54–78.
4   Meng, *Shattered Spaces Encountering Jewish Ruins in Postwar Germany and Poland.*
5   *Communism's Jewish Question*, ed. by András Kovács (Oldenbourg: De Gruyter, 2017), pp. 1–15.

used either the building or the land for different purposes (as storehous-es for poison, fruit, or furniture; sports halls, cultural centres etc.), thus intentionally or unintentionally erasing the memory of the once-thriving Jewish communities. This radical change in the use of synagogue build-ings was accompanied by the removal of their Jewish signs and symbols and the de-Judaization of these formerly sacred spaces. A synagogue is not a temple in the strict sense of the word: originally, the first and second sanc-tuaries in Jerusalem were called temples; after the destruction of the sec-ond temple in 70 AD, the synagogue as an institution became the centre of Jewish religious life. In the traditional sense, a synagogue is a place of not only worship and prayer, but also learning, teaching and communi-ty gathering – a place where the affairs of the community are discussed.[6] The former synagogue buildings were integrated (and thus disappeared) into the changing urban landscape as if they had never been there. Thus, the transfer of ownerships during the Kádár era became a widespread phe-nomenon and even a general policy of the interaction between the state and Jewish representatives. Still, the problem of abandoned synagogues has been on the agenda in Hungary ever since, and various attempts have been made to address the issue over the past seven decades.

The political transition of 1989 brought major changes in the lives of Jewish people and organizations in Hungary. The most important change in terms of leadership and organization was the dissolution of MIOK in 1990 and the establishment of MAZSIHISZ (Association of Jewish Com-munities in Hungary).[7] In the new democratic Hungary, however, the emer-gence of freedom of speech also allowed the anti-Semitic voices that had been restrained during the Kádár era. As the Jews' situation changed with the regime change, so too did attitudes towards the cultural heritage of Hungarian Jewry. The 1990s, especially the early part of the decade, was marked by an emerging interest in synagogues and an increased number of synagogue renovations. However, the new millennium did not bring a radical change in the situation of built heritage. In 2004, Hungary be-came one of ten Eastern European countries to join the European Union; this had a major impact on the social integration of Holocaust remem-brance and the preservation of the built Jewish heritage because the latter was like a "soft condition" of EU membership.[8] Since 2010, with the estab-lishment of Orbán's government, a new politics of memory has emerged

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6   *The New Jewish Encyclopedia*, ed. by David Bridger and Samuel Wolk (New York: Berman House, 1976), p. 469; Lee Shai Weissbach, 'Buildings Fraught with Meaning: An Introduction to a Special Issue on Synagogue Architecture in Context', *Jewish History*, 25 (2011), 1–11 (pp. 1–2).

7   Viktória Bányai, and Szonja Ráhel Komoróczy, 'Magyarországi zsidó vallási szervezetek, intézmények emlékezetpolitikája', *Regio*, 24 (2016), 38–58 (p. 45).

8   Claus Leggewie (translated by Simon Garnett), 'Equally Criminal? Totalitarian Experience and European Memory', *IWM* <https://www.iwm.at/transit-online/equally-criminal-totalitarian-experience-and-european-memory> [accessed on 10 April 2024].

that is heavily based on the memory of the Horthy era and its revisionist ideas, within which the memory of the Holocaust hasn't been left untouched. Despite the erection of a contradictory monument (but never officially unveiled), the Hungarian government has attempted to present itself as supportive of Hungarian Jewry. Furthermore, the government has consistently denied any accusations of anti-Semitism, presenting itself as a "natural" ally of the Hungarian and European Jewish communities, which it claims are facing an "anti-Semitic challenge" from Islamic migrants. Concurrently, the government has established a new relationship with Hungarian Jewish communities that appears to favour the (ultra) orthodox Lubovitsch denomination and its organization, the Egységes Megyarországi Izraelita Hitközség (United Hungarian Jewish Community, EMIH).[9] This has resulted in financial support and the return of several synagogues with great symbolic value to the EMIH. However, it is not only the government's new modus operandi that has somehow affected the status of the synagogues, but also the radical dismantling of the preservation of the built heritage – both formally (as an institution) and in policy. Surprisingly, despite the aforementioned emergence of a new politics of memory and the dismantling of the politics of preservation, the status of synagogues in Hungary has remained largely unchanged over the past 14 years. The fate of many buildings remains undecided, and many are abandoned and desperate.

This also the reason why this paper goes through a historical overview with special focuses on the situation of the Jewish community and institutional conditions after the Second World War, specifically addressing the halakhic issues (religious law) of non-religious synagogue use and the change of ownership during this time. After the general section, case studies will be used to illustrate how local communities reacted to a complex set of challenges (how to maintain and use their buildings without the former communities, political pressure, laicisation), and the diversity and variety of responses to these historical circumstances. We present four case studies that cover four different aspects of the fate of synagogues during and after the period of state socialism.

Memory and space/place – the past and the spatial legacy of annihilated Jewry – are interdisciplinary fields that have already produced a considerable amount of literature. However, research on the post-war history of Hungarian Jewry, particularly in the context of the fate of deserted

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9   Canaan Lidor, 'In Hungary, Orthodox Jews fight over a Chabad bailout some see as a "Trojan horse"', *The Times of Israel*, August 2023 <https://www.timesofisrael.com/in-hungary-orthodox-jews-fight-over-chabad-bailout-some-see-as-a-trojan-horse> [accessed on 10 April 2024].

synagogues and religious buildings, is lacking.[10] Most studies have focused on the artistic and architectural value of these buildings as Jewish-Hungarian heritage, and the mapping of missing communities.[11] Some have discussed the challenges of abandoned synagogues for local and national representatives of Hungarian Jewry. However, there has been no study on the fate of these buildings in the context of Jewish and Holocaust memory over the long durée. This paper aims to fill a small gap in the research field. The following subsection examines the concepts of key authors who provide an interpretive framework for the later discussion of the case studies and the situation of Hungarian Jewry.

According to Aleida Assman, places also play an important role in memory, also because the memory of places is longer-lived than the memory of individuals, eras and cultures, which is short-term.[12] She distinguishes between several types of memory sites (*Gedächtnisorten*). One type is the *Generationenorte* (generational site/place),[13] which maintains a stable long-term link with family history or the history of a community, with a continuous chain of generations linked to a place. This creates a close link between people and a geographical place, shaping their way of life and their experiences, and imbuing the place with their traditions and history.[14] A further type of memory site is the *Gedenkorten* (memorial place), which are best understood in relation to "generational places". In contrast, memorial sites are characterised by discontinuity – by a marked difference between the past and the present. In memorial sites, a certain history is not continued but more or less violently interrupted.[15] The case studies in this article will provide examples of both types. There are some cases where the generational link between the community and the building is preserved, and there are other cases where it is broken permanently and the place functions as only a memory of the community. For generational places, the binding force is the chain of generations, while for memorial places it is the narrative that is restored and passed on.[16]

In his research, the French historian Pierre Nora says that sites are the bearers of memory. He has described places of memory as having

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10   *Communism's Jewish Question.*
11   Viktor Cseh, *Zsidó Örökség – Vidéki zsidó hitközségek Magyarországon* (Budapest: MAZSIKE, 2021); Rudolf Klein, *Zsinagógák Magyarországon 1782–1918* (Budapest: TERC, 2011); Zsuzsanna Toronyi, 'Források a magyar zsidó kulturális örökségről 1945–1960', in *Zsidó közösségek öröksége*, ed. by Zsuzsanna Toronyi (Budapest: Magyar Zsidó Levéltár, 2010), pp. 7–27; Zsuzsanna Toronyi, 'Mivé lettek az egykori magyar zsidó imaházak? – Bútorraktár vívóterem, galéria… – zsinagógák a mai Magyarországon', *MúzeumCafé*, 4.2 <http://muzeumcafe.hu/hu/mive-lettek-az-egykori-magyar-zsido-imahazak> [accessed on 10 April 2024].
12   Aleida Assmann, *Erinnerungsräume. Formen und Wandlungen des kulturellen Gedächtnisses* (München: C.H. Beck Verlag, 1999), pp. 298–99.
13   Both translations exist because in German "Ort" refers not only to a physical place but a virtual or symbolic space.
14   Assmann, '*Erinnerungsräume*', p. 301.
15   Ibid., p. 309.
16   Ibid., pp. 337–38.

three characteristics: concrete, symbolic, functional. According to him, it is in these places that memory is represented and "places of memory [*lieux de mémoire*] can exist because memory no longer has a real milieu [*milieux de mémoire*]".[17] After the disappearance of the media of memory, it is the sites of memory that remind us today of significant moments in history. Pierre Nora, who basically studies French history and culture from this point of view, cites the French peasantry as an example of a lost community of memory, but in many ways this is also true of Hungarian rural Jews.[18] Synagogues can be places of memory in Hungary, where there is no longer a community, as our case studies will illustrate. After the Second World War, Europe as a whole was characterized by a concentration of places of remembrance (*Erinnerungsorte*). While the French historian Pierre Nora sees modernization, Aleida Assmann sees the dictatorial and violent rule of the Nazis and the mass exterminations they committed as the main driving forces behind the development of "places of memory"; however, these two concepts are obviously not identical. In the aftermath of the Holocaust, places of remembrance and sites of commemoration were established at sites of Nazi violence, such as ghettos. These sites had previously served as generational centres of Jewish tradition for centuries.[19]

Michael Meng's approach is another relevant perspective for our research and study as he comparatively researches the fate of the Jews. His concept is that the history of Jewish places (sites) is presented through the dynamics of "clearing Jewish rubble", "erasing the Jewish past", "restoring Jewish ruins", and "reconstructing the Jewish past", thus representing different time periods of Jewish properties from the Holocaust to the 2000s.[20] These methods can also be observed in the situation of synagogues in Hungary. Michael Meng presents a complex view of the history and built heritage of Jews in Central and Eastern Europe in the light of the politics of memory and architecture and urban planning, and the post-Holocaust situation of Jewish buildings.

Last but not least, this article uses case studies as a method of exploring meanings and meaning-making processes,[21] which is an interpretive and understanding method of research and "a methodological tool that also points towards generalization, combining empirical data collection with theory building".[22] Thus, in-depth knowledge of the fate, situation and role

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[17] Pierre Nora, *Realms of Memory* (Columbia: Columbia University Press, 1996–1998) (Hungarian version, 2010, p. 13.)
[18] Ibid.
[19] Assmann, *Erinnerungsräume*, p. 339.
[20] Meng, *Shattered Spaces*, pp. 256–66.
[21] Earl Babbie, *The Practice of Social Research* (Boston: Wadsworth, 2013), pp. 90–93.
[22] Flóra Takács, 'Az esettanulmány mint módszertan a szociológiában', *Szociológiai Szemle*, 27 (2017), 126–32 (p. 127).

of particular cases, i.e., individual synagogues, contributes to the general picture of the situation of synagogues in Hungary. Processes, aspects and interpretations may emerge that can help us to understand what has happened and is happening to synagogues in Hungary beyond the fate of specific buildings. In the last part of the article, we present four case studies that cover four different aspects of the fate of synagogues during and after the period of state socialism and the developments in this regard since the political transition.

In addition to the usual sources used in historical texts (literature, public discourses, archival materials), our case studies also draw on interviews conducted by one of the authors. Two types of interviews can be distinguished. An 'expert' interview is one that involves interviewing people, such as local authority officials, architects, community leaders, local historians, etc., who have an influence on or specific information about the situation of a particular synagogue. An 'in-depth' interview involves members of the local Jewish community, the new owners of a building, new users, people living in the synagogue's neighbourhood, etc., i.e., people whose attitudes, opinions, and interpretations of a synagogue can help to understand its role.

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW – FROM 1945 UNTIL THE REGIME CHANGE

Hungary's wartime losses were 950,000–1,000,000 people, of which an estimated 569,507 were Jews (69% of the Jewish population of Hungary in 1944) who perished by violence, atrocities, forced labour, deportation, concentration camps, or the Arrow Cross terror, according to the World Jewish Congress.[23] Rural Jewry suffered by far the greatest losses: out of 216,507 people, only 47,124 survived the devastation of the Holocaust. In addition to the demographic catastrophe, the age composition of the survivors was also disproportionate. Furthermore, the number of people of Jewish origin who remained after the war was estimated at 220,000–260,000.[24]

Following the devastation caused by the Holocaust, the National Office of Hungarian Jews (MIOI) lost most of its members, and its organizational and religious framework was dissolved. Therefore, the MIOI faced immediate legal, religious and economic challenges in assisting survivors

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[23]   A Zsidó Világkongresszus (Magyarországi Képviselete) statisztikai osztályának közleményei, ed. by Zsigmond Pál Pach (Budapest: 1947–1949); Zsigmond Pál Pach, 'A magyarországi zsidóság mai statisztikájának szembetűnő jelenségei', in *Maradék zsidóság. A magyarországi zsidóság 1945–1946-ban*, ed. by Imre Benoschofsky (Budapest: A Budai Izraelita Aggok és Árvák Menházegyesülete, 1946), pp. 22–33.

[24]   Tamás Stark, 'A magyar zsidóság a vészkorszakban és a második világháború után', *Regio*, 4 (1993), 140–50 (pp. 144–45).

and maintaining the remaining institutional staff: the status of displaced persons, the difficulties of repatriation and relief, and the loss of institutional and physical facilities for religious life and education. Of the 74 rabbis who worked in post-Trianon Hungary, only 14 returned home.[25] The vast majority of synagogues – another important institution of faith and community life – also suffered massive damage.[26] It is important to note that the possibility of maintaining Jewish religious life became increasingly difficult immediately after the German occupation of Hungary.[27] During the war, empty synagogues were often taken over by military troops and used as warehouses (for deported goods), horse stables, shelters, sometimes as ghetto sites, and sometimes also by the local population. After the war, some damaged buildings were demolished, as in the case of the synagogue in Balassagyarmat, which was blown up after the war. Sometimes demolition was carried out at the request of the city (e.g., Debrecen, Kaposvár) during the wartime clearance of ruins. In settlements where the community had been destroyed, such as Cece and Kisbér, where the National Office had no capacity, the synagogues were expropriated by the local population and used for public purposes. Not only synagogues suffered irreparable damage: their interiors (stalls, pews, benches, etc.) were also destroyed, or their furnishings were taken away by the local population. After the war, a nationwide survey of religious objects was carried out with the support of the community, which showed that there were hardly any communities in the country where religious objects, Torah scrolls and Chevra books had survived intact.

After 1945, it seemed that the struggle for restitution and for the Hungarian state to be held accountable might be successful; however, with the exception of the assistance provided by JOINT and other Jewish organizations, the Hungarian state did not meet the material rehabilitation demands and expectations of the Jewish people. The Hungarian state acted on symbolic legislation (discriminatory laws were repealed) but not on aid. Many Jews decided to leave the country within the framework of the Zionist movement and emigrate (*aliyah*) to Palestine. The main challenge was the Orthodox denomination, whose adherents were only able to maintain the strict conditions of existence and religious life required by Orthodoxy to a limited extent. As a result, a large number of emigrants came from this denomination.

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[25] Ernő Munkácsi, 'Hitközségek és templomok', ed. by Benoschofsky Imre, *Maradék zsidóság* (Budapest: A Budai Izraelita Aggok és Árvák Menházegyesülete, 1947), pp. 67–69.
[26] Toronyi, 'Források a magyar zsidó kulturális örökségről', p. 19.
[27] Viktória Bányai, 'The Impact of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee's Aid Strategy on the Lives of Jewish Families in Hungary, 1945–1949', in *Jewish and Romani. Families in the Holocaust and Its Aftermath*, ed. by Eliyana R. Adler and Kateřina Čapkova (New Jersey: Rutgers, 2021), pp. 115–26.

At first there was no agreement on the fate of the synagogues; the solution seemed to be for a government commission to transfer the synagogues, along with the other abandoned properties, to the newly created "Jewish Fund". However, this was rejected on the grounds that the Fund's task was not to provide denominational aid, while the synagogues were part of denominational affairs.[28] According to a government decree and Jewish religious law (Halacha), if properties were large enough, the local congregation had the right to decide their fate), but in reality the national organization was stronger and decided what would happen to synagogues. The general rule was that if a congregation consisted of 250 or more members who paid church taxes, it was free to decide the fate of its property. The proceeds of the sale could only be used for the revival and maintenance of religious life, the renovation of additional synagogues, and the purchase of torahs. If there were no survivors, the National Office was responsible for the properties. As a result, 24 out of 25 rural communities were given the right of free disposal. According to Ernő Munkácsi's report, the MIOI spent part of the subsidies from JOINT, the Hungarian branch of the International Committee of the Red Cross (Société de Secour), to ensure the operating conditions of the synagogues and repair them temporarily. After the Holocaust, the dissolution of the religious framework led to a number of religious and halakhic issues, such as the remarriage of widows and the sale of synagogues.

In the aftermath of the Holocaust, the changed demographic, political and social situation also created a need for the national rabbinical community to provide answers to emerging problems with religious (halakhic) legal significance that affected the Jewish community.[29] It was up to the rabbis to decide on the halakhic issues that arose; however, due to the great shortage of rabbis, the National Rabbinical Association (ORE) established a central Beth Din.[30] In their first proclamation, the members of the Beth Din emphasized that its halakhic answers would be based on the ancient law but would have to adapt to the challenges of the post-persecution period. One of the most pressing issues was how to deal with apostasies that occurred during and after the Second World War. ORE specified that if the formal framework of apostasy was not in place (there was no witness), the person was still considered part of the Jewish community. The situation

28   Borbála Klacsmann, 'Az Elhagyott Javak Kormánybiztossága és a holokauszt túlélőinek kárpótlása Magyarországon 1945–1948', in *Tanulmányok a holokausztról*, ed. by Randolph L. Braham (Budapest: Múlt és Jövő Alapítvány, 2018), IX, pp. 297–340.
29   Toronyi, 'Források a magyar zsidó kulturális örökségről 1945–1960'.
30   Jewish tribunal, a body that reviewed questions of religious law. Dr Ernő Róth, 'Központi Béth Din a rabbi nélküli hittestvéreink számára. Kényszerkitértek ügye', *Rabbiegyesület, 6* (1947), 21–22.

of abandoned synagogues without a congregation and the regulation of religious law were also pressing issues.[31]

Since the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 AD, synagogues have been the centre of Jewish religious and community life. The interiors and exteriors of synagogue buildings have changed over the centuries according to the needs of the community, but their basic function as the main centre of community life has remained unchanged.[32] Throughout the 2,600-year history of the synagogue, not only its interior and exterior design but also its liturgy has changed, although its basic elements and functions have remained fundamentally the same.[33] The sanctity of the synagogue is given by the Torah it contains, so the synagogue space in the building is a "sacred space", but this sanctity cannot be understood in Christian terminology. In this sense, synagogues have always had a specific and symbolic value in the Jewish community. ORE's position on the post-war situation of synagogues was published by Dr Ernő Róth in the Bulletin of the National Rabbinical Association. On the basis of the Sulchan Aruch, ORE examined four questions concerning the sale of synagogues:[34] Can a synagogue be sold? Under what circumstances can it be sold? Who is competent to do this? What can the proceeds be used for? According to Ernő Róth's definition, a synagogue has a certain sanctity (rabbinic), although this sanctity can be changed according to the wishes of the rabbi or the community.[35] The disuse of a synagogue does not in itself mean that its sanctity ceases because a *michvah*[36] used to take place there. The above questions were further broken down into three sub-questions. How many synagogues does the community have? What is their occupancy rate? Who is the seller? ORE decided as follows on the questions raised: if the community owns a synagogue and prayers are held there regularly, it should not be sold unless it serves a higher sanctity,[37] in which case it is not the synagogue sold that becomes holy but its equivalent value. If the synagogue is not used for regular prayer, minyan, but there is a chance that this will change in the near future, the building cannot be sold. If the elders and the community decide to sell the synagogue, the money received can be used for profane purposes. Ernő Róth, following the guidance of the Talmud, believes that the community has the right to decide whether it needs

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31 Dr Ernő Róth, 'Elárvult templomokról', *Rabbiegyesület*, 6 (1947), 31–37.
32 János Oláh, 'A zsinagógáról és szokásairól', *Yerusha online*, [n.d.] <https://yerushaonline.com/content/?v=di11pla34> [accessed on 17 May 2023].
33 Rudolf Klein, *Zsinagógák Magyarországon 1782–1918. Fejlődéstörténet, tipológia, és építészeti jelentőség* (Budapest: Terc Kiadó, 2011), pp. 40–41; Anikó Gazda, *Zsinagógák és zsidó közösségek Magyarországon. Térképek, rajzok, adatok* (Budapest: MTA Judaisztikai Kutatócsoport, 1991).
34 In the sixteenth century, Rabbi Joseph Karo compiled the major religious laws of Judaism into 4 volumes. (Shulchan Aruch means a set table).
35 Róth quotes a Talmudic passage: "The Temple is one of the most important institutions of Judaism; it is the substitute for the Holy Temple (I Megillah 29a)".
36 Holy blessing, the right path.
37 Buying Torah, helping those who study the holy teaching.

a synagogue as a place of worship or not. It follows that the community should have the right to decide, despite the dramatic decline in the number of worshippers. However, it should also be added that it is also necessary to supervise a higher national office since the local community is not directly interested in sales. This issue is incomprehensible in the context of synagogue sales since the late 1950s, when it was the MIO and BIH that decided the fate of synagogues, and in most cases only the national offices shared in the proceeds of the sales. Ernő Róth also mentions that leaving a former synagogue and moving to a smaller building is only allowed if the new building is ready to accommodate the community, otherwise the community may be left without a building.

As will be seen, the problems listed and detailed here were not considered normative by the community leadership in the 1950s. ORE lost its autonomy in 1950 due to centralization and denominational mergers, and it continued its activities as a religious department with diminishing influence as part of the MIOI.

With its 'autonomous' policy in the first half of the coalition period, which proved to be transitional, the Community had already demonstrated its intention to establish a supportive, even subordinate, relationship with the country's new political leadership, culminating, among other things, in the 1948 Agreement.

STATE SOCIALISM

Following the communist takeover in 1949, a new constitution was adopted in Hungary that established a new political system that separated the state from the church. While the constitution guaranteed freedom of conscience and religion to citizens, in practice this was not upheld. According to Soviet ideological policies, religion and churches were some of the main targets of communist politics.[38] This was due to indirect and direct repression of churches, including surveillance, blackmail, nationalization, and imprisonment of priests who opposed church policy, who were later recruited as agents. In May 1951, the Állami Egyházügyi Hivatal (State Office for Church Affairs, ÁEH) was established as the governmental body responsible for formulating and implementing policies regarding the Church and various Christian denominations. ÁEH operated under the direct supervision of the Council of Ministers.[39] Its responsibilities can be summarized as

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38   Peter Kenez, 'The Hungarian Communist Party and the Catholic Church, 1945–1948', *The Journal of Modern History*, 75.4 (2003), 864–89 <https://doi.org/10.1086/383356>.
39   Bócz Edit Köpeczi, *Az Állami Egyházügyi Hivatal tevékenysége. Haszonélvezők és kárvallottak* (Budapest: Akadémia Kiadó, 2004).

follows: to ensure and monitor the agreements and conventions concluded between the state and the churches, and to control the religious activities and personnel of the churches. ÁEH's principal focus was on Christian churches. ÁEH collaborated with the internal affairs services to control church life, individuals and groups.[40] ÁEH was operational throughout the state socialist period, from its inception in 1951 until 1989.

During the period of state socialism, the position and political status of the Jewish "Church" differed significantly from that of Christian denominations. While the latter were the primary targets of church policy, the state authorities had a different relationship with the Jewish denomination, which was a small but sensitive issue in terms of size, number of believers, anti-Semitism, and the heritage of the Holocaust. For structural and historical reasons, Jewish religious communities were divided and differently exposed to the new political leadership of the country.[41]

The guidelines on religious law issued by ORE in the post-war years allowed the sale of synagogues with some restrictions, but these directives could be seen as a response to the hardships of the post-Holocaust situation; however, the new leadership of the community that had formed after the 1956 revolution did not consider it valid. In 1956 (shortly before the revolution), in a proposal sent to Lajos Heves, the President of MIOK, the rabbi Dr Henrik Fisch[42] expressed a perspective that was similar to other post-war opinions. Even though Henrik Fisch's proposals were never implemented, his individual point of view and arguments outlined a different strategy from the synagogue sales policy pursued after 1956 and, to some extent, the earlier decision of the Rabbinical Council. The proposal was written in connection with a specific case, namely the conversion of the synagogue in Csongrád[43]) into a cinema and the religious decision on the matter. The Rabbinical Council's earlier decision in this regard was summarised by Fisch as follows:

> The best course of action was not to sell the buildings but to terminate their operation by demolition and to sell the remaining building materials. In cases where there was state interest in the sale, the municipality could sell under three conditions: the building could not be sold to another denomination; it could not be used as a place of entertainment, such as a cinema or a theatre; it could be

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40   András Jobbágy, 'Religious Policy and Dissent in Socialist Hungary: The Case of the Bokor Movement', *Journal of Church and State*, 58.3 (2016), 508–28 <https://www.jstor.org/stable/45176895> [accessed on 10 April 2024].
41   Állami Egyházügyi Hivatal TÜK iratok. A zsidó egyház. MNL XIX-21-d (20.d.); Az izraelita egyház operatív helyzetéről (1961. szeptember 4.) ÁBTL 3.1.5.0-17169.
42   A member of the Rabbinical Council and from 1959 chief rabbi of the Dohány Street Synagogue.
43   Close to Szeged, in which still – after Budapest – the second biggest Jewish community had been living.

sold for cultural purposes (archives, library) or for storage, the latter only if the confessional character of the building was abolished.[44]

Henrik Fisch objected that the Department of Religious Affairs had merely copied a relevant passage from the *Sulchan Aruch*, which states that a building may be sold and the proceeds used for a profane purpose if the community and seven delegates from the community agree to the sale. However, Fisch said that this passage obviously applies to cases where there is a responsible congregation and community, which was not the case after the Holocaust (*vészkorszak*). It is important to underline that the Holocaust has never been openly referenced in connection with the sale of synagogues: "[...] In no way is our case dealt with in the Jewish code. There is no judge, no audience; they were murdered, exterminated", as Henrik Fisch stated.

As Fisch continued, he also evaluated the issue from a legal-philosophical point of view:

> According to the laws of the Jewish religion, I believe that we are not even heirs to these temples. Therefore, we are not religiously heirs, and we cannot imagine ourselves in the jurisdiction of the seven judges, much less in the jurisdiction of the slain masses. Our legal relationship with these churches was granted to us by the Hungarian state, and we are bound by it.

Referring also to the problematic nature of the profane use of space resulting from a particular sale, he concludes the paragraph with the following:

> Should we not think of not giving the bastards who lustfully participated in fascism the opportunity to complete their pleasure that they not only helped to exterminate the Jews but now can have fun in our sacred space, the temple?

Fisch's thoughts, quoted at length, stand in striking contrast to the *halachic* decisions of ORE. The rabbi used the progressive concept of normative inheritance, in line with Jewish tradition. Its ethical basis is that heirs do not have the right to dispose of heritage left by the deceased but that it should be preserved and maintained in memory of the deceased and for future generations. Buildings have value not because of

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44   The following quotes are all taken from this document, HU HU HJA VI: MIOK Gazdasági Iratok B5.

their grandeur or their importance in architectural history but because of the unintentional legacy of the deceased. Although a synagogue has ceased to be a synagogue, its symbolism remains in part because of the community who built it and were destroyed, the former community.

The importance of the halachic question also stems from the fact that after 1956 the social structure of the Jewish community changed radically. A significant number of the young and middle generation of religious Jews left the country, thus the social background and support of Jewish organizations and religious communities, which were exclusively religious denominations, were significantly reduced. Since the majority of the remaining Hungarian Jews were not religious anyway, the rural Jewish communities virtually disappeared. This meant that even fewer synagogues were needed by the communities, and even more were taken out of religious use.[45]

CHANGE OF OWNERSHIP OF SYNAGOGUES DURING THE KÁDÁR ERA

After the 1956 revolution, in 1957 a new council was elected under the leadership of Endre Sós, who repeatedly raised the possibility of selling synagogues. For Sós, the issue of synagogues was a pragmatic one. The 1956 revolution plunged the Hungarian Jewry into a new demographic crisis, with some 20,000–30,000 Jews leaving the country – a significant increase compared to the period between 1945 and 1948. The drastic reduction in the number of believers threatened the survival of religious life in many places. Endre Sós justified the sale of synagogues in the countryside and in Budapest on the grounds of dwindling tax revenues and the generally poor financial situation of the community. To this end, MIOK and BIH drew up a list of synagogues, specifying their location, dimensions, and the price for which they were to be sold.[46] Not only was the revenue generated important, but the community also wanted to dispose of the buildings as they were in need of maintenance and preservation.[47] The latter aspect led to the sale of not only smaller synagogues but also larger, more-representative synagogues, preferably in better condition.[48] In many cases, the state itself, companies and municipalities applied to purchase or renovate synagogues.

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[45]   András Kovács, *Kádár-rendszer és a zsidók* (Budapest: Corvina Kiadó, 2019), pp. 34–35.
[46]   MZSL – HU HU HJA III – 1964/672; MZSL – HU HU HJA VI – 1961/Vári.
[47]   "In MIOK, property sales play an important role in securing the future of the denomination. But every year it becomes more difficult to sell properties. We are confident that we will be able to sell the synagogues in Szolnok and Győr, which are unused and in need of major renovation. It has been revealed that the area in Szolnok where the synagogue is situated is to be razed as part of the municipality's new urban development plan. So, nobody wants to buy the synagogue. [...]", MZSL – HU HU HJA III – 1964/725.
[48]   This is how the representative synagogues of the great synagogue architect Lipót Baumhorn (Dózsa György út, Gyöngyös, Cegléd, Esztergom) had been sold.

ÁEH supervised the sales, mediated between the parties and, at the request of Endre Sós, often sought buyers for individual buildings, as in the case of the synagogues on Bocskai Street, Rumbach Sebestyén Street and Dózsa György Street. It is evident that these sales were not without inherent difficulties.[49] The operating congregations tried to thwart the intentions of the central leadership, but they rarely succeeded, or sometimes only temporarily. When a request for the purchase of a particular synagogue was sent to ÁEH, it was passed on to the congregation, which in all cases complied. As Endre Sós, writing under the agent pseudonym 'Sipos', put it:

> I elected as the new president Ernő Gisztler, a city councillor, district secretary of KISOSZ and an anti-Zionist with progressive views. After the election, in agreement with the new council, we offered the large, old synagogue building to the town of Békéscsaba at a very moderate price. The smaller Orthodox church is sufficient for the small community. In two and a half years, we have sold about 15 synagogues: some to the state, some to the town, and some to the community. We always made sure that the interests of the state were taken into account. In several cases we had to fight hard to break the resistance of the communities.[50]

The synagogue sales took place mainly during the presidency of Endre Sós (1957–1966), but this does not mean that there were no later sales (one case study dates from 1974). The synagogues were sold below their market value; in order to resolve this legally, ÁEH and MIOK issued an internal decree in 1959 which, in addition to the MIOK architect, served to involve a state expert in the survey and valuation of properties.

To which Pál Veres, the chief foreman of ÁEH, replied as follows:

The Jewish temples that are no longer in use are neglected; they have been completely ruined in the course of time, and their materials have become unusable. When the councils call for their restoration, the most they do is to ask for state aid for the restoration. Local parishes cling to their empty, abandoned churches. This situation is intolerable. Therefore, in 1959, the National Council of Hungarian Israelites passed a law allowing the National Office to

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49   On several occasions, Endre Sós received anonymous letters trying to compromise him. One case was handled by ÁEH itself. In an internal memo, they summed up their position on Sós as follows: "However, it is our duty to protect faith leaders who are loyal to us from slanderers", MNL – ÁEH XIX-A-21-a 10/C M-6-39.
50   János Gadó, '"Új Elnöknek G.Ernőt Választottam Meg…"', *Szombat*, 1 (2001), 16–17.

sell rural churches and use the money for public church purposes. This provision within the Church makes it possible to buy abandoned churches cheaply, because the Church considers the opinion of state experts when assessing the value of these buildings.[51]

Pál Veres's letter is illustrated by the sale of a small synagogue in the countryside in Abaújszántó. Initially, the MIOK architect set the price at 264,000 forints. However, an expert from BIK (Budapest Real Estate Company) valued the building at half the original price, i.e. 130,000 forints. The architect considered this price to be too low and indicated that the company had the option to sell the building for 143,000 Forints. Subsequently, a note from Pál Veres to Károly Olt, the head of ÁEH, attests that the company ultimately purchased the synagogue for 150,000 Forints. An ÁEH memorandum from 1959 indicated that synagogues could be utilized for cultural purposes. Nevertheless, in the majority of instances the synagogues were not utilized for this purpose, despite the justification for the purchase including a cultural purpose. A much more realistic picture is painted by the following memo from 1975:

> [...] The established practice is that the majority of the synagogues sold are purchased by government institutions and cooperatives. Either they are demolished or, in the case of monuments or historical buildings, they are used for cultic [*kultikus*] purposes (library, archive, museum, cultural centre, sports hall, etc.). The State Ecclesiastical Office ensures that the synagogues sold are used for purposes that do not offend the sensibilities of the faithful.[52]

Just as in the 1956 example, neither the Religious Affairs Department nor the community leadership showed any resistance to the undignified use of the synagogues; therefore, the state, councils and companies did not care how much the conversion of a synagogue into a sports hall, a warehouse or a temple offended the Jewish community.

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[51]   MNL – ÁEH XIX-A-21-a 10/C M-8-4.
[52]   'Prés Alatt [Válogatás Az ÁEH Dokumentumaiból – 1974: Cenzúrázott Hitközségi Sajtó]', *Szombat (2000)*, 3–4.

FROM REGIME CHANGE UNTIL THE PRESENT

After the fall of communism, the renovation of synagogues accelerated: many in Budapest and in the countryside were renovated; there were direct state funds, but municipalities could also apply for public funds. In many places, charity events were organized, such as concerts for the renovation of synagogues. In addition, support from Hungarian-Americans was an important source of funding.

As the Jews' situation changed with the regime change, so did attitudes toward synagogues. The early part of the 1990s were marked by increased interest in synagogues and an increased number of synagogue renovations: both the renovation of disused synagogues and the search for their new function, and the renovation of synagogues in community use. Although synagogues received more attention as Jewish cultural life boomed, there was no planning, except to a certain extent for synagogues in religious use, while synagogues no longer in religious use only received appropriate treatment and function when local actors and foundations took up the project of doing so. The fate of many synagogues of architectural and artistic historical importance was not settled during this period either, and they continued to be destroyed or remained in unworthy use.

Before the change of regime, Hungarian Jewry was generally isolated from Western and Israeli influences, both religiously and organizationally. Also, relations with Israel, which had been determined by Soviet foreign policy, were revived.[53]

Meanwhile, in the new democratic Hungary, however, the emergence of freedom of speech also strengthened the anti-Semitic voices that had mostly been kept in check during the Kádár era. Although anti-Semitism was not openly tolerated, several politicians appeared in Hungarian public life who professed anti-Semitic beliefs and appealed to anti-Semitic sentiments. This led to the paradoxical situation that although Hungarian Jews were finally free to practice their religion after state socialism, they had to face a simultaneous rise in anti-Semitism.[54] The attitudes of the majority of society toward Jews are difficult to measure, but one aspect that has been studied is anti-Semitism. One piece of research from this era shows that xenophobia, including anti-Semitism, increased between 1990 and 1995 and that traditional prejudices such as anti-Semitism and Antigypsyism

[53]   Miklós Szalai, 'Zsidóság a rendszerváltásban, rendszerváltás a zsidóságban, *Szombat* (2000) <https://www.szombat.org/politika/zsidosag-a-rendszervaltasban-rendszervaltas-a-zsidosagban> [accessed on 17 May 2023].
[54]   Szalai, 'Zsidóság'; Randolph L. Braham, 'Magyarország: hadjárat a holokauszt történelmi emlékezete ellen', in *A holokauszt Magyarországon hetven év múltán. Történelem és emlékezet*, ed. by Randolph L. Braham and András Kovács (Budapest: Múlt és Jövő Alapítvány, 2015), pp. 229–78 (pp. 236–37).

have a strong social base in Hungary. The reasons for this are not fully understood, but the social tensions and emotions aroused by the transformation played an important role. In the mid-1990s, research saw a change in this trend. Researchers saw a correlation between political preference and anti-Semitism: traditionally left-wing voters were less likely to have anti-Jewish sentiments, while right-wing voters were most likely to agree with anti-Semitic political statements.[55] In András Kovács' research, we see similar trends for this period as in Fábián-Sík's research. Kovács puts the proportion of strongly anti-Semitic people at 10–15% in the 1990s.[56]

As Henrik Fisch pointed out decades earlier, this issue could escalate if far-right anti-Jewish groups started to use Jewish spaces. After the fall of communism, there were several cases in Hungary, such as the synagogues in Esztergom and Kecskemét, where far-right parties or music groups wanted to use former synagogues for events. In all cases, this was prevented by the objections of the local rabbi or the central Jewish community. But even in less-radical cases, the transformation and use of synagogue spaces is an act of reinterpretation that can lead to a clash between the use of secular and profane spaces.[57] The case studies that will be subsequently discussed provide examples of this.

At the same time, public spaces and forums were opened to talk about the Holocaust and commemorate its victims; however, compared to the modern Western canon of Holocaust remembrance that emerged in the 1980s and 1990s, Eastern Europe and Hungary "lagged behind".[58] It is important to note that places of commemoration for Holocaust victims are often synagogues or community cemeteries, and in many cases memorial plaques have been placed at these sites. Memorials were erected at different times after the regime change, but it is typical that the anniversaries of the Holocaust (1994, 2004, 2014) were marked by a revival of

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55   Zoltán Fábián and Endre Sík, 'Előítéletesség és tekintélyelvűség', *Társadalmi Riport 1996*, ed. by Rudolf Andorka, Tamás Kolosi, and György Vukovich (Budapest: TÁRKI, Századvég, 1996), pp. 381–413.
56   András Kovács, 'Antisemitic prejudice and political antisemitism in present-day Hungary', *Journal For The Study of Antisemitism*, 4 (2012), 443–67.
57   'Lefújták az egykori zsinagógába tervezett Hungarica-koncertet', *ORIGO*, 15 November 2010 <https://www.origo.hu/itthon/20101115-nem-adhatott-koncertet-a-hungarica-a-kecskemeti-zsinagogaban.html> [accessed on 1 May 2023]; 'Nem engedik be a Jobbikot az egykori zsinagógába', *ORIGO*, 22 January 2010 <https://www.origo.hu/itthon/20100122-jobbik-lakossagi-forum-esztergom-korabbi-zsinagoga-helyszinvaltozas.html> [accessed on 1 May 2023]; 'Zsinagógában gyűlne a Jobbik', *Index.hu*, 30 January 2014 <https://index.hu/belfold/2014/01/30/jobbik_esztergomi_zsinagoga> [accessed on 1 May 2023]; Gergely Tóth, 'A Mi Hazánk a zalaegerszegi zsinagógában tartott volna kampányrendezvényt, a Mazsihisz tiltakozására a városvezetés visszavonta a bérleti szerződést', *Telex.hu*, 18 February 2022 <https://telex.hu/valasztas-2022/2022/02/18/a-mi-hazank-egykori-zsinagogaban-tart-kampanyrendezvenyt-a-mazsihisz-tiltakozik> [accessed on 1 May 2023].
58   Máté Zombory, *Traumatársadalom* (Budapest: Kijárat, 2019).

memorials and plaques.[59] Most of the memorials were unveiled in 2004, on the occasion of the 60th anniversary, thanks to increased political and media attention and academic research.[60]

The last two decades have seen some organizational changes in the Jewish community in Hungary as well. The Hungarian Orthodox Israelite Congregation (MOIH) became an independent historic church in 2012, but still within the framework of MAZSIHISZ; however, after a series of disagreements it left MAZSIHISZ and is now incorporated by the Chabad-Lubavitch movement.[61] The Chabad-Lubavitch movement has been present and growing since the regime change and has become a relevant religious and political actor. This movement was founded by Rabbi Baruch Oberlander in Hungary, who has Hungarian roots, but it has no historical antecedents in Hungary. Its organization was officially established in 2004, and in 2010 it became one of three registered Jewish communities under the name of the United Hungarian Israelite Congregation (EMIH). Its members see themselves as heirs to the earlier Status Quo Ante movement, and the group has established a growing number of synagogue congregations in both the capital and the countryside.[62]

The new millennium did not bring any radical change in the situation of synagogues. Synagogue renovations in recent decades have been funded mainly from two sources: EU grants and public funds, both of which increased in the 2000s. The state has always played a role in the renovation and management of synagogues, but in some periods it has been more pronounced. In the framework of the Holocaust Memorial Year 2014, the government decided to establish a synagogue renovation program, with a special focus on the renovation of three large synagogues in Hungary: the Miskolc, Szeged and Rumbach Street synagogues.[63] There have been several cases where EU and state funds were used together.

The state has always played a role in the renovation and management of synagogues. The protection and heritage management of synagogues has been complicated by the ever-changing system of heritage protection and legislation

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[59] The case of the exhibition (Elfeledett szomszédaink / Forgotten Neighbours) held in a former synagogue in Pápa eloquently demonstrated that, despite the great scholarly success and the number of visitors, the memory of the Holocaust has not been successfully integrated into the local memory.
Gergely Miklós Nagy, 'Gyökértelen fakén élt, amíg nem látta ezt a katartikus kiállítást', *24.hu*, 26 January 2020 <https://24.hu/belfold/2020/01/26/papa-onkormanyzat-zsido-kiallitas-zsinagoga-tarlat-gyekiczki-an-dras/?fbclid=IwZXh0bgNhZW0CMTEAAR3Bb-G6yZoihrPISUhHzRvVIjZQG1k1K_vCI4RqBmR8zMTrl-HLZRLhigCk_aem_AWp_Rp1Na5rTc6Hvf_dsmBqacLsi9ZtxmCVsgDkmyv6L5e9jvWyYza4sjIY7aSWGU0Po-Pr6X12Ksm9YHiagWyYE> [accessed on 17 May 2023].
[60] András Szécsényi, *Kőbe zárt emlékezet. Holokauszt emlékművek a Kárpát-medencében* (Budapest: Holocaust Dokumentációs Központ és Emlékgyűjtemény Közalapítvány, 2018), p. 9.
[61] Bányai and Komoróczy, *Magyarországi zsidó*, p. 45.
[62] Géza Komoróczy, *A zsidók története Magyarországon* (Budapest: Kalligram Kiadó, 2012), pp. 1086–87.
[63] Miniszterelnökség, 'Megemlékezések – emlékezésformák, *2015-2019.kormány.hu*, 1 June 2015 <https://2015-2019.kormany.hu/hu/miniszterelnokseg/hirek/megemlekezesek-emlekezesformak> [accessed on 17 May 2023].

in recent decades.[64] After a series of changes in management in 2016, the government's background institution dealing with heritage management became inconvenient for the government, so it was finally abolished on 1 January 2017, citing bureaucracy reduction, and some of its tasks were transferred to the Prime Minister's Office, while the scientific work was partly carried out by the Hungarian Museum of Architecture and Monument Protection Documentation Centre (MPDC), which operates under the auspices of the Hungarian Academy of Arts. The collections, plans, and photographs of the former KÖH are kept at MPDC. Due to constant changes, it is not clear which institution to turn to in the case of monuments, what help to expect, and who is responsible in each specific case. Contrary to these developments, in 2023 the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (HAS) issued a document containing an opinion on the draft law "on the order of public construction investments", and a proposal for a "Hungarian architecture law", as well as a position paper on the protection of Hungarian monuments. In this, HAS proposed the creation of a unified central organization due to the fragmentation of tasks or loss of competences as a result of a series of restructuring processes.[65]

The tables below also show that most former synagogues are still in secular, non-cultural use, but the number of synagogues that have been reverted to religious use and those in cultural use has increased significantly in the decades since the regime change. In terms of synagogue renovation, EU funding has been a great help; in recent years since and in the context of the Holocaust Memorial Year 2014, there has been a revival of public attention and support. It is important, however, that renovations are accompanied by new functions as this will ensure that the condition of the buildings is maintained. The protection of synagogues is an area where there could be unity of action. Meanwhile, in recent years there has been a slow but steady increase in the number of synagogues listed as historical monuments. In 1994, 44 synagogues and prayer houses were protected, a small proportion compared to the 243 synagogues and prayer houses in Hungary at that time.[66] According to Zsuzsanna Toronyi's collection, 60 synagogues were protected in 2010.[67] This is 45% of the 132 synagogues in Hungary, and some

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64   From 1992, the National Office for the Protection of Monuments and Sites was responsible for all Hungarian monuments; from 2001, this task fell under the auspices of the Cultural Heritage Protection Office (KÖH). In 2011, the tasks of the heritage protection and archaeological authorities of KÖH were transferred to government offices, with one designated district office in each county and two in Budapest, typically under the direction of political appointees who are loyal to the government. With the abolition of KÖH in 2012, the newly established Gyula Forster National Heritage Protection and Property Management Centre took over heritage registration and supervision. Pál Lővei, 'A műemlékvédelem', *Ars Hungarica*, 39.4 (2013), 469–77.
65   MTA – Műemléki Munkacsoport: Állásfoglalás a műemlékügyről (2023).
66   In his work, Anikó Gazda mentions 132 synagogues and 95 prayer houses (i.e., a total of 227 buildings) which were still standing at the time of the regime change (Gazda, *Zsinagógák*, pp. 13–14). András Román, on the other hand, also referring to Anikó Gazda, mentions a total of 243 synagogues and prayer houses.
67   Zsuzsanna Toronyi, 'Mivé lettek az egykori magyar zsidó imaházak? – Bútorraktár vívóterem, galéria… – zsinagógák a mai Magyarországon', *MúzeumCafé*, 4 (2010) <http://muzeumcafe.hu/hu/mive-lettek-az-egykori-magyar-zsido-imahazak/> [accessed on 17 May 2023].

experts say that more synagogues need to be protected. A more important question, however, is whether the protected synagogues are being treated in accordance with their special architectural and monumental significance. Many of the protected synagogues have been renovated in recent decades, but this is not the case for many of the listed synagogues.

1. Functions of synagogues in Hungary (Hanna Mezei's calculation)

	SURVEY OF ANIKÓ GAZDA 1980–1987	SURVEY OF THE HEBREW UNIVERSITY IN JERUSALEM 2018–2019
out of use	15.9% (21)	8.6% (14)
profane, cultural function	18.9% (25)	29.0% (47)
profane, non-cultural function	46.0% (61)	33.9% (55)
continued use in a religious function	18.0% (25)	24.0% (39)
use by other religion	–	3.7% (6)
memorial use	–	0.6% (1)

2. Spreadsheet: Current cultural function (47) – own calculation based on the survey of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem

museum	36% (17)
cultural centre	23% (11)
library	14% (7)
school	12% (6)
concert hall	8% (4)
village house	2% (1)
cinema	2% (1)

3. Current non-cultural function (55) – own calculation based on the survey of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem

economical use	45% (25)
residential house	36% (20)
other	18% (10)

CASE STUDIES

In the last section of this paper, we present four different case studies. The first presents an interesting continuing relationship between the local Jewish and non-Jewish inhabitants (Gentiles). The second case shows how intriguing the path of an abandoned synagogue can be in terms of its history of use, and how a new function can be confronted with the original function of the building. The third case shows how a synagogue is rebuilt on the initiative of citizens and communities, and how, independently of this, a non-local but local Jewish community is formed. The fourth and final case is about resistance and architectural modernism; how a community confronted the socialist state and religious leaders around a modernist synagogue.

CONTINUATION – JEWS AND GENTILES: KISKUNHALAS

The Jewish community in Kiskunhalas has a long history. The settlement of Jews began in the middle of the eighteenth century. The synagogue was built in 1861, followed by other community buildings: the rabbi's house, the school, the mikveh and the slaughterhouse. On 17 June 1944, people were packed into wagons at the railway station and transported to the Szeged ghetto. From there, the Jews of Kiskunhalas were sent in different directions: only a small number were sent to Auschwitz; the majority went to the Strasshof concentration and distribution camp, from where they were sent in small groups to various work camps.[68] According to the research of the local historian István Végső, 270–290 local Jewish people died in the Holocaust, including the victims of the labour service. The total number of survivors in Kiskunhalas was 442, which is very high compared to the number of Jews in rural Hungary.[69] The reorganization of the community began in the spring of 1945. After 1949, however, many religious Jewish families left the country.[70] In 1998, Sándor Reinhold, who had held the post since 1985, died and was succeeded by András Raáb, who was president of the community until his death in 2022. Before the Holocaust, Kiskunhalas was characterized by the separation of Jews and non-Jews, and mixed Christian-Jewish marriages were very rare. This segregation was reinforced during the decades of anti-religious socialism.[71] With the change

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[68]   István Végső and Balázs Simko, *Zsidósors Kiskunhalason – kisvárosi út a holokauszthoz* (Budapest: L'Harmattan, 2007), pp. 178–80.
[69]   Ibid., p. 234.
[70]   Ibid., pp. 259–62.
[71]   Ibid., pp. 145–46.

of regime came a shift to reunite the non-Jewish residents of the town with the Jewish community and to extend the memory of the Holocaust beyond the synagogue walls

Since 1946, the community has organized an annual Holocaust memorial service, the first of which was held for the city's non-Jewish members with the presence of the city administration in the synagogue in 1991.[72] The main site of Holocaust commemoration is the synagogue and the plaque on the synagogue wall. In March 1949, a plaque commemorating the victims of the Holocaust in Kiskunhalas was unveiled on the wall of the synagogue, but this has also been combined on several occasions, for example in 1994, with a commemoration in front of the plaque at the railway station. This commemorates the workers killed at the station on 11 October 1944. The plaque, which can still be seen today, was unveiled in 1988. The victims listed are not from Kiskunhalas, but the plaque is an important part of local Holocaust remembrance.[73] The Holocaust commemoration is always held on the second Sunday in June, in memory of the local deportation. In addition to the local religious community, representatives of the local government and, since 2010, the pastor of the local Reformed Church and representatives of the Roma minority community are also present. Non-Jewish residents and Jews from Kiskunhalas also participate in these commemorations. There is no Holocaust memorial in the town, but the Second World War memorial also commemorates the victims of the Holocaust. In 1990, the local press began to write about the memorial, which had been planned for years by a local teacher but could only be realized after the change of regime in the liberating atmosphere of remembrance. The article written at the time said that the monument was a memorial to all the victims of the Second World War, including the Jewish victims. "And the Jewish community has promised financial support, as the plaque will of course also bear the names of the victims of the concentration camps", wrote Bács-Kiskun Megyei Népújság (local newspaper) at the time.[74] The unveiling took place on 1 November 1991, on All Souls' Day. Halasi Tükör (a local newspaper) reported that the monument was unveiled during an ecumenical service and that the president of the Jewish community spoke at the ceremony, along with representatives of other religions.[75] In his inaugural speech, the mayor commemorated those who had died for different reasons ("There were people who lived, loved, worked, became heroes, who were deported

[72] Ágnes Fésüsné Bakos, 'A kiskunhalasi zsidók krónikája 1945–2001', in *Legyen Világosság* (*Emlékkönyv a Kiskunhalasi Izraelita Hitközség múltja és jelene*), ed. by Aurél Szakál (Kiskunhalas, Kiskunhalasi Izraelita Hitközség – Thorma János Múzeum, 2011), p. 134.

[73] István Végső, 'Tragédia 1944. október 11-én a kiskunhalasi vasútállomáson', in *Legyen Világosság* , p. 110.

[74] 'Emlékmű a II. világháború halasi áldozatainak', *Bács Kiskun Megyei Népújság*, 4 (1991), p. 1.

[75] 'Felavatták Halason a II. világháborús emlékművet', *Bács Kiskun Megyei Népújság*, 46 (1991), p. 3; 'Emlékmű avatás', Halasi Tükör, 5 (1991), p. 1.

and brutally murdered, who were victims of occupation and bombing") and called on the community to reconcile.[76] At the time, the intention of the city and the people who erected the memorial was clear and important: the city should also commemorate the victims of the Holocaust through a joint Second World War memorial. However, based on my interviews so far, no one except the local historian knew that the city's Second World War memorial included Jewish names and that the original intention was to commemorate the victims of the Holocaust. Thus, the memorial failed to fulfil its original purpose, which is a testimony to the fragmentation of memory that is typical of Hungary. Another form of remembrance in the city is the stumbling stones, five of which were laid in Kiskunhalas on 19 June 2007. They are the work of German artist Gunter Demnig, who inscribed the names of Holocaust victims, their birth and deportation dates and places of death on a copper plaque fixed to a concrete block. In Germany, there are tens of thousands of these stumbling stones, but in Hungary there are also many in several cities. The stumbling stones in Kiskunhalas were among the first in Hungary.[77]

In addition to religious services, the congregation organizes various cultural events in the community. Both of my community interviewees often mentioned the Jewish children's camp and their Jewish summer festival. The Jewish Summer Festival has been held since 2005[78] and the children's camp since 2011, both annually.[79] While the Jewish children's camp is a closed program, the Jewish Summer Festival is an open event (not only for Jews); according to the president of the Jewish community, usually 300-400 people come, not only from Kiskunhalas. In addition to these programs, the community sometimes organizes programs open to all interested people to celebrate the anniversary of the founding of Israel.

> The synagogue in Kiskunhalas, on the one hand, we are proud of it because it has a living community [...] So the synagogue in Kiskunhalas has remained a synagogue. And that is so good! I am so happy that this miracle happened here! So, on the other hand, there is a functioning community, a Jewish community. (Károly Palásti, local high school teacher)

From the community's point of view, the synagogue is a symbol of community unity, linked to the community that has been worshipping in this building for more than a century. In my conversations with

76   'Emlékművet avattunk', *Halasi Tükör*, p. 1.
77   'Botlatókövek', Mazsike, [n.d.] <https://mazsike.hu/projektek/botlatokovek/> [accessed on 17 May 2023].
     Five people are commemorated, Ignác Schwarz, a parish magistrate, Áron Frank, a dentist, his wife,
     Borbála Holländer, Antal Grósz, a photographer, and László Winter, an actor.
78   István Végső, 'A Kiskunhalasi Izraelita Hitközség krónikája 2001–2011', in *Legyen Világosság*, p. 150.
79   Ibid.

the congregation, this is expressed repeatedly: the fact that the synagogue stands means that "we are still here", that the continuity of Judaism is ever-lasting.

An important moment of communal Jewish-non-Jewish unity occurred when, in January 1993, Sándor Reinhold, the president of the Jewish community, appealed to the citizens of Halas, as well as to Jews at home and abroad, to support financially the renovation of the synagogue, which was in a very poor state of repair.[80] Throughout the year, the president of the community used every opportunity to keep the renovation of the synagogue on the agenda.[81] After the work was completed, a plaque was erected in honour of the donors, and the inscription on the plaque gives an idea of who, in addition to those already mentioned, contributed to the renovation of the synagogue. A total of 30 donors are listed on the plaque. Those of Jewish origin are from Kiskunhalas, Budapest or abroad. Three of these five persons belonged to former or present important Jewish families of Kiskunhalas. Nine of the donors were definitely businessmen from Bács-Kiskun County, and three were probably local businessmen.

Local (non-Jewish) entrepreneurs and businesses make up about half or almost half of the donors. An interesting question is what could have motivated these entrepreneurs and other non-Jewish residents of Kishunhalas and the surrounding area to donate. Certainly, the aforementioned activities of the then-President and the serious local media coverage that the collection for the synagogue received may have played a role. In addition, the local and national significance of the building must have been a major motivation for many to support its renovation. It is also likely that the general mood after the change of regime contributed to the success of the fundraising campaign for the renovation of the synagogue in Kiskunhalas, as after years of state socialism people were keen to get involved in solving social issues and felt they 'should' be involved in achieving community goals.[82]

A significant change from the period of political transition is that although the community has had to renovate the synagogue since then, there has been no question of turning to the municipal community. The openness of the Jewish community and the joint commemoration of the Holocaust remained, but the fact that the Jewish community's concerns should be so much a matter for the wider community remained a unique case. The vestiges of the Jewish–non-Jewish distinction I mentioned earlier still linger in the minds of many – Jews and non-Jews alike.

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80   Fésűsné, 'A Kiskunhalasi', p. 135.
81   Sándor Reinhold, 'A mártírünnepség szombaton nem lehetett', *Petőfi Népe*, 48 (1993), 7; Sándor Reinhold, 'A kiskunhalasi zsinagógáért', *Petőfi Népe*, 48 (1993), 7.
82   Ágnes Czakó and others, *Lakossági adományok és önkéntes munka* (Budapest: Nonprofit Kutatócsoport – Központi Statisztikai Hivatal, 1995), p. 30.

A related theoretical framework can be found in the concepts outlined in Indian-American anthropologist Arjun Appadurai's *The Creation of Locality*. Locality, in Appadurai's interpretation, is not really about spatiality or degrees, but rather about relationships and contexts; neighbourhoods, in his interpretation, are "tangible communities characterized by their reality, whether spatial or virtual, and their capacity for social reproduction".[83] The production of neighbourhood as a practice of power is used by Appadurai in a colonial context, but it can also be interpreted in the context of the Jews. This act has long defined, and continues to define, the relationship between Jews and non-Jews, as knowledge is preserved about who lived where, what shop was where. In a more peaceful setting, this model of neighbourhood can also be applied since, according to Appadurai's theory, neighbourhoods are always imagined in relation to something, always require context, cannot stand alone, so the term neighbourhood can be used to spatially describe the Jewish–non-Jewish relationship and to map possible sites of memory.[84]

I noticed a discrepancy between congregants and non-congregants as regards the openness of the synagogue. The Jewish community is open to visitors, and much of its programming is open to the non-Jewish population as it seeks to adapt to a changing world. In fact, the synagogue itself hosts programs that are not traditionally part of it – programs that would not be held in a synagogue, such as concerts and theatre performances. But many non-Jews still regard local Jews as a closed community. In this regard, András Raáb, former president of the community, said, "You have to open it up. So it shouldn't be a mystical thing that there's a synagogue there – oh I don't know what's there. Inside, outside, I don't know what they do. Because we're no different from other people. It's very well resolved there in the form of a conversation".

CULT-HISTORICAL CHALLENGES AND THE QUESTION OF IDOLTRY: TATA[85]

> John Knox, the Calvinists also smashed the statues because they could not bear them, because it offended their souls that they were so beautiful. The Jews, too, have always been great enemies of statues: but I do not belong to any of these categories; I think that hardly anything ennobles the taste more than the art of sculpture,

83   Arjun Appadurai, *The production of locality. In Modernity in Large* (Minneapolis, Public Worlds, 2009), p. 179.
84   Ibid., pp. 185–89.
85   This case study is built on the following publication: Lóránt Bódi, 'A tatai zsinagóga esete a kádári emlékezetpolitika tükrében', *Új Forrás*, 42 (2010), 45–56.

and that the most beautiful monuments of sculpture are of great
archaeological and aesthetic importance. (Ferenc Pulszky)[86]

Tata, a small town of 23,000 inhabitants about 60 km from Budapest, is
a place where it is also difficult to find traces of the former Jewish pop-
ulation that once flourished and played an important role in the life of
the town.[87] From the records of a famous philosophical rabbi, Izidor Gold-
berger (who also tragically died in the Holocaust), it is known that the pres-
ence of Jews in the settlement was uninterrupted from the so-called Árpád
period (845–907) until the Second World War.[88] However, the eighteenth
and nineteenth centuries were a period of development and prosperity for
Tata and its Jewish inhabitants, and it was during this period that the Ro-
manesque-style synagogue was opened in 1861.[89]

        During the Holocaust, in 1944, 650 Jews were deported to Auschwitz,
of whom 10–20 returned home. The community disintegrated, although
religious life did not cease completely. The synagogue was open on High
Holidays, and the prayer house next to the synagogue was a small but busy
place of Jewish worship. With the temporary help of the Reformed minister
of Tata, the Talmud school was able to start. The cemetery and the synagogue
were maintained by György Vámosi, the chairman of the community, and
his son. At the end of the 1960s, Vámosi was forced to resign from the pres-
idency due to illness, and a new president was appointed. The Romanesque
synagogue has housed a museum since 1977 (it was in the process of being
closed at the time of writing), soon after the building had been purchased
by the County Council from the Central Jewish Community in 1976 (the
community, which had dwindled to a few, had no legal control over the build-
ing). Then, contrary to the original plans (the site was to be used for an ex-
tension of the neighbouring hospital), the synagogue was rebuilt internally
(the building was stripped of its denominational features, de-Judaized) and
a museum was established under the name of the Museum of Greco-Roman
Sculpture. The exhibits came from the sculpture collection of the Museum
of Fine Arts, part of which was deposited in the new museum. The sculp-
ture collection was founded in the second half of the nineteenth century on
the initiative of Ferenc Pulszky in a late *philhellenic*[90] spirit – as we can read

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86   Ferenc Pulszky (1814–1897) was a writer, politician and elected member of the Hungarian Diet. This
      quotation was delivered during a diet debate on the establishment and specific role of the Hungarian
      National Museum in 1872. Quoted by Edit Szentesi, 'A szobortörténeti másolatgyűjtemény a Magyar
      Nemzeti Múzeumban a 19. század utolsó harmadában', *Művészettörténeti Értesítő*, 55 (2006), 1–95.
87   László Gyüszi, 'A zsidóság helyzete a tatai Esterházy-uradalomban (XVIII–XIX. század)', in *Tata Barátainak
      Köre, Évkönyv* (Tata: FBK 1994), pp. 19–31.
88   Izidor Goldberger, *A tatatóvárosi zsidóság története* (Budapest: Neuwald, 1938), pp. 1–18.
89   Géza Körmendi, *Tata És Környéke* (Tata: Escort, 2007).
90   Péter György, *Múzeum, a Tanulóház* (Budapest: Szépművészeti Múzeum, 2013); Martin Vöhler, Stella Alekou,
      and Miltos Pechlivanos, *Concepts and Functions of Philhellenism: Aspects of a Transcultural Movement* (Berlin:
      De Gruyter, 2021), pp. 1–9.

above –with educational and cultural aims (the first sculpture collections were founded in the first half of the nineteenth century) and due to the lack of original antique sculptures for the National Museum, which moved to its own building in 1831. After several decades of decay, it was moved in a dilapidated state to Tata and neighbouring Komárom as the property of the Museum of Fine Arts (at the same time, the so-called Renaissance pieces of the sculpture collection were moved to the synagogue in Kecskemét, which had been converted into the House of Technology).[91] The opening of the museum was achieved at considerable expense, with the restoration of the neglected building and the ruined collection.[92] The original pedagogical and educational function of the collection was reproduced in a new state-socialist context in an abandoned synagogue building.

In 1994, on the initiative of the mayor, Katalin Kerti, representing the liberal party of SZDSZ (Alliance of Free Democrats), a granite block was placed in the garden of the synagogue to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the deportations.[93] Ten years later, in 2004, almost 40 years after the opening of the museum, the synagogue building was completely renovated to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the deportations, and the tablets of stone were returned to their original place in the form of replicas with the help of Katalin Kerti and József Lendik, a Socialist municipal representative. At the same time, a group of six sculptures by the sculptor Mária Lugossy, entitled In Memory of the Martyrs of All Times, was inaugurated. The sculptures were placed in the garden of the synagogue (on the left side of the building), which was declared a memorial park. Particularly curious was the symbolic juxtaposition of the stylized tablets of the Law on the roof of the synagogue, proclaiming God's commandment against idolatry, and the presence of real 'idols' inside the building. The restored exterior of the synagogue building (the interior is still dominated by concrete slabs, blue paint and linoleum) and the replicas of ancient statues inside the building offer at the same time a curious historical-cultural parallel. Consider Hanukkah, the "Festival of Lights", which is linked to the Maccabean wars, in which the Jews had to convert under the Greek emperor Antiochus. Among other things, they desecrated the Temple Square in Jerusalem and established the cult of Zeus there, erecting an altar to Zeus and other statues inside the Temple. Hanukkah celebrates the victory of the Maccabees over their enemy ruler, the divine miracle and the subsequent religious 'revival'. The Maccabean wars are

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[91]   Szentesi, 'A szobortörténeti', pp. 39–42.
[92]   In the 1980s the museum became, along with other museums and collections, a branch of the local Kuny Domonkos Museum.
[93]   Interview with Katalin Kerti, February 2010.

a powerful example of the conflict between the imposition of idols in temples and the strong Jewish prohibition against idolatry.

In 2010, an article by Lóránt Bódi appeared in the local cultural journal, *Új Forrás*, criticizing former director Endre Bíró and his insistence on placing the Greco-Roman sculptures in the synagogue for the first time as a 'desecrating act'.[94] The article sparked a public debate; a letter was sent by Sarolta Szatmári (1941–2018), cultural politician, also a former director of the museum and Bíró's wife, who criticized Bódi's position and defended the decision, saying: "As a medieval archaeologist, I defend and praise all architectural monuments, and I'm convinced that the existence and survival of buildings depends on their use. So any use is better than standing empty".[95] Bódi replied to the letter by referring to the historical controversy of the current situation, which dates back to the Maccabean Wars.[96]

In 2016, at a press conference, the Christian Democrat mayor of Tata, József Michl, and the director of the National Museum, László Báan, announced the future fate of the collections, which would be renovated and displayed in the Star Fort of Komárom (10 km from Tata); at the same time, the mayor also touched upon the reuse of the synagogue building: "It will house the Bible Exhibition, which will show the influence of the Bible on the world throughout history".[97] Finally, in the summer of 2016, the statues "came out" of the synagogue building. This process was filmed by the artistic duo Technica Schweiz, who had meanwhile taken over the space for an artistic intervention with the involvement of ceramic design students.[98] The duo set up a temporary porcelain factory to produce replicas of the sculptures, in reference both to one of Tata's most famous Jews, Mór Fischer, the founder and reviver of the Herend Porcelain Manufactory, and also to the didactic function of the former collection. Accompanied by a film, the artworks were exhibited in the synagogue in the summer of 2017 and have been shown in many other places since then. However, as the synagogue has been unoccupied for the past six years, various other plans have been made, but nothing has come of them, and the website of the Kuny Domonkos Museum still states that the "Former Synagogue Exhibition Room" ("Volt Zsinagóga Kiállítóhely") is closed and will remain so until a new permanent exhibition is completed.[99]

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[94]   Bódi, 'A tatai zsinagóga', pp. 45–56.
[95]   Sarolta Szatmári, 'Reflexiók A tatai zsinagóga esete a kádári emlékezetpolitika tükrében című Bódi Lóránt tanulmányra', *Új Forrás*, 43 (2011), 106–08.
[96]   Lóránt Bódi, 'Válasz Szatmári Saroltának', *Új Forrás*, 43 (2011), p. 109–10.
[97]   Ágnes Ábrahám, 'Komáromba költözik a Görög-Római Szobormásolatok Kiállítása', *arhiv.tata.hu*, 18 November 2016 <https://arhiv.tata.hu/16110/komaromba_koltozik_a_gorog_romai_szobormasolatok_kiallitasa> [accessed on 30 April 2023].
[98]   László Gergelyand Péter Rákosi, *A kék terem / The Blue Room – A Tehnica Schweiz projektje* (Berlin: Archive Books, 2021).
[99]   <https://kunymuzeum.hu/en/former-synagogue-exhibition> [accessed on 30 April 2023]. Also numerous emails were sent by Lóránt Bódi to the museum director about the future plans for the synagogue building and the proposed exhibition, but no replies were received.

REVIVAL WITHOUT ROOTS: TOKAJ

The history of the Tokaj community goes back a long way. Jews first set-tled in Tokaj in the eighteenth century, but the settlement began to grow at the turn of the nineteenth century. The largest number of Jews (1,161) and the highest proportion of Jews in Tokaj was recorded in the 1880 census, when they made up 25.9% of the population.[100] Before the Holocaust, the Jewish community in Tokaj had an extensive infrastructure and insti-tutional system. The community had a rabbi, a mashgiach, a cantor, a *mo-hel*, a *cheder* (primary school) with a teacher, a yeshiva, two kosher butchers, and a Passover bakery.[101] On 16 April 1944, the Jewish population of Tokaj was forced into a ghetto set up in the courtyard of the synagogue. The Jews of Zemplén region were gathered in the Sátoraljaújhely ghetto and deport-ed from there to Auschwitz on 16 May.[102] Few survived the Holocaust, and although religious life was partially reorganized in the wave of emigration after 1956, most of Tokaj's Jews left the country. There are no exact figures on the number of those who were deported or those who escaped. Together with other local residents, István Zelenák, a local historian, compiled a list of the deceased, which was constantly expanded; according to an interview with a local historian, about 950 Tokaj Jews may have died in the Holo-caust.[103] After 1945, the community had three presidents; the death of the last president, József Lőwy, in 1981 marked the end of religious life in Tokaj.[104]

In 1982, the synagogue was still intact but in a very dilapidated state; the interior decoration was still visible but is now lost. Nevertheless, af-ter the synagogue was purchased by a farmers' cooperative in 1983, for rea-sons unknown they wanted to set up a bottling plant and convert the build-ing accordingly. The condition of the building deteriorated and the interior decoration and furnishings were completely destroyed. In the 1980s there were occasional reports in the local press about the damage to the syna-gogue and its reuse; however, these concerned not the building's former cultural and social role or its Jewish past but its artistic and historical value, and there was no question of using the building as a memorial to the Jewish community of the past.[105]

János Májer, who had been chairman of the council since 1987, felt it was important to save the synagogue, and it was on his initiative that the synagogue was bought back from the local farmers' cooperative.

He then lobbied the President of the County Council for the renovation of the synagogue, and the County Council finally issued a grant for the restoration of the roof structure and conservation. In 1987, a state-owned company commissioned an architect to draw up plans for the restoration and use of the synagogue. János Máyer, the mayor, had already envisaged a cultural function for the building.[106] Work began in 1988. The renovation included restoration of the parapet, rebuilding of the concrete canopy that held the building together, and reconstruction of the steel donga roof. Pál Farkas, the architect and his colleagues found doors and windows from the synagogue in the nearby local farmers' cooperative in Szerencs and used them as models for the exterior restoration. In 1991, several events were held in the synagogue and the exterior reconstruction continued; also in this year, a fundraising campaign was organized to continue the restoration of the synagogue.[107]

On 4 September 1999, the synagogue was burnt down in an arson attack. The building was badly damaged and 90% of the new roof structure was destroyed.[108] At a subsequent general meeting, the Tokaj community voted to restore the synagogue.[109] Funding for the renovation was applied for under the PHARE Territorial Development Program 2002–2003, one of the pre-accession programs of the European Union. The renovation started in October 2005 and was completed in August 2006.[110] The work involved both external and internal renovation of the synagogue. The four-storey structure was completed, with the basement housing a mechanical room, cloakroom and water closet. The ground floor and women's gallery are used for events and conferences, while the attic is used for exhibitions.

After 1981, there was no religious life for decades; only Lajos Lőwy, the son of the president of the Jewish community, kept up the Jewish traditions and welcomed pilgrims until his death in 2011.[111] The situation changed in the early 2000s, when the former Hasidic prayer room was renovated and a Torah was purchased in 2003 thanks to money collected by the former Tokaj rabbi, Kálmán Berkovits, and his son, Mordche. The Orthodox Jewish Autonomous Community of Tokaj was also re-established under the leadership of the Berkovits family, with Miklós Kalmanovits as its president. Under the leadership of Mordechai Berkovits, the descendants of the Jewish community gather in Tokaj every year for a Sabbath. However, the permanent Jewish population of Tokaj has now disappeared.

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[106] János Májer, *Huszonhét év Tokajért. Szolgálatom története* (Bíbor Kiadó, Tokaj, 2019), pp. 55–56.
[107] 'Adományok a tokaji zsinagógára', *Kelet-Magyarország*, 48 (1991), 2.; Paula Volenszky, *Zsidó eseménytár 1992*.
[108] 'Kiégett a tokaji zsinagóga tetőszerkezete', *Észak-Magyarország*, 55 (1999), 1.
[109] 'A biztosító a tények mérlegelésére vár', *Észak-Magyarország*, 55 (1999), 1.
[110] 'Zsinagógafelújítás Tokajban', *Kultúrpont*, 10 May 2007 <http://kulturpont.hu/content.php?hle_id=13286> [accessed on 17 May 2023].
[111] Zelenák, *Tokaji*, 135.

In the late 1980s, there were two Jewish families living in Tokaj, and today there are only three Jewish men living in the town.[112]

> Not everyone lives here. But he has agreed to be a member of this community, and if there is an event he can attend, he will of course come. So in Tokaj, those who live here, who live here, there are not ten of us. (Miklós Kalmanovits, leader of the community)

The community has established an association, the Tokaj-Hegyalja Jewish Heritage Association, which aims to preserve the Jewish traditions of the past and to create the conditions for religious life in Tokaj (prayer books, maintenance of prayer houses) and for the education and training of religious Jewish youth.[113] The president of the community pointed out that students from the Orthodox school in Budapest are regularly hosted for a weekend, usually twice a year. However, the involvement of the local non-Jewish community in these events is not common. I found one such example: in 2004, Miklós Kalmanovits, who had participated in the Holocaust commemoration at the local Tokaj grammar school, spoke on behalf of the association about the history of Tokaj Jewry.[114]

The synagogue's commemorative role was strengthened after the local government placed a plaque on its wall in 1994. The renovation of the synagogue and the ceremony surrounding the plaque brought the synagogue and the community's Jewish past back to the minds of the majority of Tokaj's population. In many towns the place of Holocaust remembrance is the cemetery, but in Tokaj the synagogue became the place of remembrance, and in 2014 a memorial with the names of the deceased was erected next to the synagogue, not in the cemetery. The place of collective memory is therefore the synagogue. The fact that, despite its new cultural function, it is still referred to as a synagogue by local residents and the local press shows how much the building's past is still in the minds of the people of Tokaj.

MODERNISATION AND RESISTANCE: ÚJBUDA

The problem of maintaining synagogues that were considered 'too big' for the size of the community was as much a problem in the capital as in rural communities. As mentioned earlier, MIOK and BIH deliberately sought to make up the financial shortfall in their budgets by selling representative

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112   Interview with Gábor Glück, a local Jewish man.
113   'Tokaj-Hegyaljai Zsidó Hagyományőrző Egyesület', *Régi Sófár*, 28 May 2006 <https://regi.sofar.hu/weblink/tokaj-hegyaljai-zsido-hagyomanyorzo-egyesulet/> [accessed on 17 May 2023].
114   Interview with Miklós Kalmanovits.

synagogues in good condition.[115]At the same time, the community leaders clearly recognized the property needs of the newly established Kádár administration and acted accordingly.[116] A striking example of this was the change of ownership of the last representative modernist synagogue built during the authoritarian Horthy era in Hungary (two other examples are the synagogue in Dózsa György út and the temple in Rákoshegy), just two years before the first anti-Jewish law in 1936. However, the sale of the synagogue in Bocskai Street is noteworthy from another point of view: here, resistance to the central policy was expressed from several directions, mainly from the community (the central community also faced resistance when it sold the synagogue in Gyöngyös, the third largest temple in Hungary).

The synagogue of Bocskai út was built to eliminate the fragmented order of the large Jewish population of Lágymányos (four synagogues).[117] The architects of the synagogue were Ede Novák and István Hamburger (Hámor) Novák, who worked together for the first time.[118] It was planned from the beginning that the building would occupy a valuable central location in the district, so it was no coincidence that the land, which still belonged to the city, was given to the congregation only on condition that it would be used exclusively for the construction of a synagogue, and that if this did not happen or if the building was not used for a year, the land and its superstructure would revert to the city.[119] The synagogue building was inaugurated on 13 September 1936 in a grand ceremony attended by the capital's religious and secular leaders.[120] The construction of the synagogue was not only a prestigious achievement for the Jews of Buda, but also a professional success for the two architects.

This success was reinforced by the fact that *Tér és Forma*, one of the most important modern architecture magazines of the time, published an illustrated article on the building, praising its clear modern forms, its ribbed reinforced concrete structure, and the large interior space of the synagogue. The synagogue was built at the beginning of a wider urban program for South Buda (Lágymányos).[121] Contrary to the opinion of the architectural historian Ilona P. Brestyánszky, the building can hardly

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[115] As the deputy president Dr Géza Seifert summarized: "So far, the sale of the churches has covered the expenses necessary to maintain the life of faith. The sales are necessary because these synagogues are unused or oversized for religious needs, are in a constant state of disrepair, and would destroy our community [...]", MZSL – HU HU HJA II – 1964/1316.
[116] MZSL – HU HU HJA III – 1962/1713, MZSL – HU HU HJA III – 1964/725, MZSL – HU HU HJA III – 1964/1316.
[117] Tibor Barcza, 'A fôváros adta, az állam elvette', *Múlt és Jövő*, 4 (2001), 85–88.
[118] Ede Novák is the better known of the two architects, having built several important apartment buildings, schools and villas, including the so-called Georgia Apartment House and the residential building on the Bauhaus model site in Napraforgó Street.
[119] MZSL – HU HU HJA III – 1961/178/Pro memoria.
[120] Speeches were given by the Deputy Mayor of Budapest, Károly Lamotter, the President of the Buda Community, Adolf Kriszhaber, the future Chief Rabbi of the synagogue, Imre Benesofsky, etc. 'The inauguration of the Jewish temple in Szentimreváros', *Pesti Hírlap*, 15 September 1936, p. 12.
[121] 'Új lágymányosi templom', *Tér és Forma*, 12 (1936), 354–56.

be called a prominent public building of the Hungarian Bauhaus, which could be more applied to the rabbi's house planned next to the synagogue and the later unrealized school complex.[122] The unadorned simplicity of the building, its block-like forms and the architectural techniques used do indeed associate it with similar formal features of Bauhaus buildings, but these prominent features are also stylistic features of not only Bauhaus but also more general modern architecture (e.g., New Building). The sacred character of the building was indicated by just a few external features: the tablets of the Law on the roof of the prayer house, the Stars of David on the pronouncedly rounded entrance windows (repeated on the window panes running vertically along the entire side of the building), and the Old Testament scenes on the large side windows.[123] The main hall of the synagogue had 644 seats on the ground floor and 306 seats on the upper floor.[124]

During the siege of Budapest in late 1944, the synagogue was used as a horse stable by the German army. After the war, despite the devastation of the Holocaust, the Lágymányos community was able to recover. In addition to the main hall, services were also held in the smaller foyer, to where the dwindling congregation had retreated. During the 1956 revolution, the building was damaged but soon restored with government help.[125]

The fate of the synagogue after the revolution of 1956 is well documented in a memorandum addressed to Károly Olt, president of ÁEH, and signed by the secretary of MIOK and the president, Endre Sós, on 23 July 1961.[126] The memo states that the issue of the synagogue's transfer to the local council had been on the agenda since 1957, mainly because "[...] the church is squeezed between the District Party House, the Council House, the Police Station and the Fire Station". However, District Council XI's request to purchase the building had to be turned down by BIH this time due to community protests, which also were repeated two years later, in 1959. According to historian Attila Novák, the community's rabbi, László Hochberger, protested the sale of the synagogue and quickly managed to enlist the support of the community.[127] The protest was joined by Dr Arhur Geyer, a rabbi from Old Buda, who gave an inflammatory speech in the synagogue on Dohány Street, questioning religious freedom. The central leadership, in agreement with the General Assembly, immediately responded to the dissident demonstrations by threatening to transfer the two rabbis, which led

122   Ilona P. Brestyánszky, *Budapest zsinagógái* (Budapest: Ciceró, 1998), pp. 143–44.
123   Barcza, 'A fôváros adta', pp. 85–88.
124   For comparison, the Dohány Street Synagogue is the second largest synagogue in the world and seats around 3,000 people.
125   MZSL VI. MIOK iratai, 1960, in *Zsidó közösségek öröksége*.
126   MZSL – HU HU HJA III – 1961/178/Pro memoria.
127   Attila Novák, '"…Lázítottak a templom eladás ellen"', *Szombat*, 5 April 2020 <https://www.szombat.org/tortenelem/lazitottak-a-templom-eladas-ellen> [accessed on 10 Aprils 2023].

to a protest by the community at the BIH General Assembly against this. Károly Olt, the head of ÁEH, saw the protests as an anti-state plot and gave Endre Sós, a religious community leader who was also acting as an agent, further authority to settle the matter. The protests did not stop, however, and spread to the rabbis. Eventually Hochberger was transferred, but this did not end the community's protest and he was later blamed by the state.

In accordance with the documents, the process that led to the alienation of the synagogue began in 1960. The Congregation asked for 4 million forints for the building because of its good condition and its huge dimensions (12,750 cubic meters), but the administrative department of the Council considered 2–2.5 million forints to be realistic; however, the parallel purchase of another building and the survival of local religious life should have been addressed before the building was sold. At a general meeting held on the 28 May 1961, the leaders and delegates of the community decided to accept the transfer of the ownership of the synagogue. It was clear from the document that their intention was to use the proceeds of the sale to finance the community. The memo concluded with a request to the President of ÁEH to press for the transfer to improve the financial situation of the Congregation and to avoid rejection of the offer, which would be a serious loss of prestige for the Presidency. In November of the same year, the congregation reached an agreement with the Trade Union of Commercial, Financial and Hospitality Workers (TUF)[128] and the transfer contract was drawn up, but there were objections to the removal of elements relating to religious worship (which also became a problem later).[129] In addition to the contractual objections, the Executive Committee of the Metropolitan Council did not agree to the transfer of land owned by the capital to the TUF, and the transfer of the property was blocked. On 23 December, the Municipality decided to take over the building and to compensate the community with 2.5 million HUF for giving up the building. The municipality also agreed to purchase an additional building for a prayer house.[130] The agreement specified that the conditions it set out could only be met if the purchase of a property for religious life was successful. It also specified that the Congregation would remove all signs of religious worship at its own expense only if the removal did not cause major damage to the building. The only problem was that the administration did not have the power to choose the location of the prayer room to ensure the continuity of religious life, since "[...] the location of the prayer room does not in any way

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128   MZSL – HU HU HJA III – 1961/178/4625.
129   MZSL – HU HU HJA III – 1961/178/4264.
130   MZSL – HU HU HJA III – 1961/178/53.158/2/1961/III.

constitute an important public use, even if it is inseparable from the actual public use of the property at 6 Bocskai Street XI". Then it continued: "Paragraph 4§ – /2/ of the Government Decree provides an option if it can be classified as an economically important public facility and the facility cannot be otherwise or economically solved". The decision was that only the purchase of a private property was possible. In June 1962, having found a suitable building at 5 Károli Gáspár Square, District XI, BIH informed the President of the Council of their plans; the building was finally handed over on 31 March, and its operation as a synagogue ended.[131]

The building was extensively rebuilt and modernized and became the home of TIT Természettudományi Stúdió (*TIT Természettudományi Stúdió*).[132] TIT was established on the Soviet model, but its origins date back to 1841, when the first scientific society dedicated to the dissemination of knowledge was founded in Hungary. The press greeted the opening of the studio with great enthusiasm, describing the interior as a kind of sci-fi set, without mentioning the building's original function:

> It's like being on the set of a science fiction film. Comfortable leather chairs, wood panelling on the walls, multilingual interpreters in the lecture theatres, mini air conditioners under every seat. The well-equipped experimental laboratories are the envy of any university.[133]

In the meantime, as a result of the surrender of the Jewish symbols, the synagogue on Bocskai Street was de-Judaized. However, the building itself reflects the complex relationship between socialist and modern architecture as an "architectural chronology".[134] After the period of socialist realist architecture, which ended in the early 1950s, there was an opportunity to realise the architectural ideas of CIRPAC (Farkas Molnár, József Fischer, etc.), a group that was partly influenced by *Neue Bauen* and its social ideas.[135] However, the realization of the program of architectural modernism in the socialist context could only prove to be a utopian dream. Partly due to a lack of housing, and partly due to a lack of will and opportunity, socialist architecture adopted the functionalism and pragmatism of modern architecture, but not, or only partially, its architectural aesthetics.[136] Subsequently, the synagogue on Bocskai Street was converted

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131   The Congregation's intention was approved by the Council, and the Congregation of Lágymányos is currently located there, "operating" under the name of Beit Shalom.
132   Society for Dissemination of Scientific Knowledge.
133   'Megnyílt a TIT Természettudományi Stúdiója', *Esti Hírlap*, 1969, p. 2; 'Több mint egy millió hallgató a budapesti TIT-rendezvényeken', *Magyar Hírlap*, 2 July 1969, p. 9; 'Felavatták a TIT Természettudományi Stúdióját', *Magyar Hírlap*, 206, 20 December 1969, p. 9.
134   Endre Prakfalvi, *Szocreál* (Budapest: Városháza, 1999).
135   Anna M. Eifert-Körnig, *Die kompromittierte Moderne. Staatliche Bauproduktion und oppositionelle Tendenzen in der Nachkriegsarchitektur Ungarns* (Budapest-Berlin: Új Művészet-Reimer 1994), p. 50.
136   Ibid., p. 51.

into a three-story building, breaking up the building's distinctive window panes as if to hide the building's subtle, clean modernist features with a kind of 'squaring' reductionism. This is a good example of what remains of the architectural modernism discussed above. At present, the only evidence of the building's former status as a synagogue is the menorah motifs on the fence that surrounds the site. However, the building served as the TIT's Natural Science Studio, a community and cultural centre, until 2020, when it was officially decided that the temple would be taken over and reopened as a synagogue by the Lubavitch denomination, EMIH. The building is currently under construction, but the original structures and styles of the synagogue are unrecoverable due to the severe alterations made to the building in the late 1960s.[137]

CONCLUSION

After the Second World War and the Holocaust, the demographic picture of Hungary changed dramatically. Under the impact of the Holocaust, many rural Jewish communities disappeared and the buildings and properties of these communities (synagogues, schools, houses, cemeteries) were slowly abandoned and later fell into disrepair. After the 1956 revolution in the new Kádár administration, the situation of the official leaders of Jewry was essentially characterized by the need to establish good relations with the state and the authorities. Endre Sós's "cultural Jew" (*kultúrzsidó*) programme defined Judaism as a culture that was both independent and part of Hungarian culture; furthermore, this programme also demonstrated complete dedication to the state, paradoxically expecting safety and stability from the very state that had previously deprived it of its rights. It was mainly during this period that many synagogues were sold by the National Association of Hungarian Israelites (MIOK) to local communities and companies throughout the country for various reasons (dissolution of congregations, political pressure, financial hardship).

    The political changes of 1989 brought great shifts in the life of Hungarian Jewry and the situation of synagogues. In 2004, Hungary became one of ten Eastern European countries to join the European Union, which also had a major effect on Holocaust remembrance and its public and social presence as a "soft condition" of EU membership. In this context, joining to the EU also had an important effect on the preservation of built Jewish

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[137]   Dániel Kovács, 'Nyolcvan év után visszakapja eredeti funkcióját Újbuda zsinagógája', *Építészfórum*, 13 October 2020 <https://epiteszforum.hu/nyolcvan-ev-utan-visszakapja-eredeti-funkciojat-ujbuda-zsinagogaja> [accessed on 10 April 2023].

heritage. The status, use and legal ownership of synagogues has been a topic of discussion in Hungary since the post-war period; over the past seven decades, there have been numerous attempts to address these issues by religious communities, civilians, and the state.

The case studies show the complexity and diversity of the situation of synagogues in Hungary. As we can see, the conditions and legal statuses of the synagogues vary greatly, so it may not even be possible to treat them in a uniform way. The distinctive nature of the situation of synagogues in Hungary cannot be adequately conveyed by a single factor; rather, it is a heterogeneous phenomenon that encompasses the sale of synagogues during the Kádár era – with all its consequences – the gradual destruction of the synagogue stock, and the remarkable renovation of some buildings, all occurring simultaneously. At present, however, community and public relations with former synagogues can be divided into four categories, resulting in different management practices: the local level (non-Jewish religious communities, cultural heritage and private initiatives, etc.); the state level, related to more historically valuable synagogues supported by state funds. Moreover, a significant number of synagogue buildings have been "re-Judaized" in recent years by the Lubovitch movement (Óbuda, Bocskai Street Synagogue, etc.). However, the ownership of former Jewish properties could still be confused: local Jewish communities, Jewish denominations (MAZSIHISZ, EMIH), different levels of local administration (counties, municipalities), private owners (companies, religious denominations, individuals, private foundations). Of course, as a fourth category, there is an even larger number of buildings that are still abandoned and neglected.

The relationship between the surviving Jewish community, its built heritage, and the non-Jewish population in each settlement is still strongly influenced by the past, local conditions and politics, but they can be connected through remembrance or a synagogue that is seen as a common asset. As we have already seen in the immediate aftermath of the war, synagogues (and cemeteries) became reminders of once-thriving Jewish communities, therefore the traumatic past of the Holocaust became deeply associated with these former temples, not only for the existing Jewish communities or people of Jewish heritage, but often for the general public as well; these buildings became unintended monuments to the missing Jewish community and the Holocaust. At present, however, the role of the synagogues is still unclear as it falls between preserving them as valuable buildings of cultural heritage and at the same time finding an appropriate function for them and/or reflecting on the fate of these former communities. More generally, it is unclear what role these buildings could play in Hungarian Holocaust remembrance and Hungarian cultural heritage in the future.

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MZSL – HU HU HJA III:

      1961/178/

      4264

      4625

      53.158/2/1961/III

      Pro memoria

      1962/1713

      1964

      1316

      672

      725

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Dóra Pataricza, Mercédesz Czimbalmos
"WE REALLY DID NOT EXPECT TO SEE YOU AGAIN": A CASE STUDY ON JEWISH–NON-JEWISH RELATIONS IN POST-WAR SZEGED[*]

ABSTRACT

The Jewish Community of Szeged, Hungary, has a rich cultural and historical heritage dating back two centuries. Like most Jewish cities in Europe, much of Szeged's Jewish population was destroyed in the Holocaust. It was the main deportation centre for Csongrád County (southern Hungarian settlements) and parts of current northern Serbia (Bačka region). It was also the main deportation centre for southern Hungary. At the end of June 1944, three trains departed from Szeged, deporting the Jewish population from this city and the surrounding villages, totalling 8,617 people in only three days. Approximately half of the deportees were taken to Auschwitz, where most were killed upon arrival; partly unintentionally, the other half ended up at the Strasshof Labour Camp near Vienna, where most people survived. This resulted in Szeged's Jewry having an exceptionally high rate of survival (an estimated 60%), including children and the elderly. What was the nature of the relationship between Jewish survivors and their non-Jewish neighbours upon their return to Szeged, and what factors contributed to the development of these relationships? What were the experiences of Jewish survivors in attempting to retrieve their confiscated property, and what factors facilitated or hindered their efforts? How did Jewish survivors cope with the challenges of rebuilding their lives in Szeged after the war, and what role did their relationships with non-Jewish neighbours play in this process? The proposed paper presents and analyses the survivors' fates upon their return to Szeged and their relationships with their non-Jewish neighbours. These narratives include the non-Jewish local population's reaction to the return of Jews, accounts of attempts to recover looted property, and the depiction of life in Szeged immediately after the war.

KEYWORDS:
Szeged, Jewry, Holocaust, confiscated property, neighbourly relations, restitution

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Previous scientific research has already studied neighbourly relations[1] between Jewish and non-Jewish residents of various countries in various eras.[2] Many articles in Holocaust research have shown that returnees very often faced a number of difficulties in the countries to which they returned after the horrors of the Second World War. Such works have addressed the "second-lives" of objects that were appropriated by non-Jews after the Shoah,[3] regardless of whether their owners returned. Of course, several studies have also focused on returnees or their reception.[4]

This study aims to briefly introduce the history of the Jews of Szeged, give an overview of certain aspects of antisemitic sentiments in the region, and describe the relations between Jews and non-Jewish society during and after the Second World War. Moreover, it examines survivors' relationships

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[1] Our definition of neighbours is individuals who live in close physical proximity to another individual, such as someone who resides in the same building, on the same street, or in the same neighbourhood. In our understanding, in the broad sense 'neighbour' also refers to a member of the same community or town. It is important to emphasize that this definition extends to include local policemen and authorities who were often involved in the deportations of Jewish residents, despite potentially having been neighbours before.

[2] For further reading: Dov Levin, 'On the relations between the Baltic peoples and their Jewish neighbours before, during and after World War II', *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, 5.1 (1990), 53–66 <https://doi.org/10.1093/hgs/5.1.53>; *Mediating Polish-Jewish Relations after the Holocaust*, ed. by Dorota Glowacka and Joanna Zylinska (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2007); Omer Bartov, 'Wartime Lies and Other Testimonies: Jewish-Christian Relations in Buczacz, 1939–1944', *East European Politics and Societies*, 25.3 (2011), 486–511 <https://doi.org/10.1177/0888325411398918>.

[3] Magdalena Waligórska and Ina Sorkina, 'The Second Life of Jewish Belongings – Jewish Personal Objects and Their Afterlives in the Polish and Belarusian Post-Holocaust Shtetls', *Holocaust Studies* ahead-of-print, (2022), pp. 1–22 <https://doi.org/10.1080/17504902.2022.2047292>.

[4] Dienke Hondius, 'A Cold Reception: Holocaust Survivors in the Netherlands and Their Return', *Patterns of Prejudice*, 28.1 (1994), 47–65 <https://doi.org/10.1080/0031322X.1994.9970119>; Monika Vrzgulova, 'The Memory of the Return of Slovak Holocaust Survivors in Jewish and Non-Jewish Testimonies', *Judaica Bohemiae*, 53.2 (2018); Dan Michman, 'Commonalities and Peculiarities of the Return to Life of Holocaust Survivors in Their Home Countries: The Dutch and Greek Cases in Context', *Historein*, 18 (2019) <https://doi.org/10.12681/historein.14321>.

with their non-Jewish neighbours, including narratives of the reactions of the local non-Jewish population to Jewish returnees; it also describes accounts of attempts to get back confiscated property and depicts life immediately after the war in Szeged.

The viewpoint for the research for this study was primarily historical, supplemented with an overview of the Jewish history of Szeged. The documents of the Szeged Jewish Community Archive (SzJCA), including letters and requests from survivors, served as the primary source for this contribution. To complement this source material, along with testimonies from interviews conducted by the USC Shoah Foundation and the National Committee for Attending Deportees (DEGOB), local newspaper articles from 1944 and 1945 were also used.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE JEWRY OF SZEGED

Szeged's Jewish community in Hungary was established over two centuries ago and has a rich cultural and historical heritage. Besides the interruption that the Holocaust imposed on the community between the end of June and October 1944, the Szeged Jewish Community is one of the congregations of rural Hungary that has continued its operations since Jewish religious life could start again in the autumn of 1944. This is probably one of the reasons why many documents in the archive of the congregation, as well as some material goods, still remain in the possession of the Community.

The written history of the Jewry of Szeged starts in 1785, although there were probably Jews who temporarily stayed in the town before this date.[5] The highest number of members in the community was in 1920: according to the census of that year, there were 6,954 Jews residing in Szeged.[6] In 1930, this number decreased to 5,560 people. Despite this decrease, the third-biggest Jewish community in the territory of the Kingdom of Hungary lived in Szeged.

At the turn of the twentieth century, Hungary ensured complete legal and religious equality for Jews living in the country, thus resulting in the Hungarian Jewry becoming strongly assimilated. Before the Second World War, some rights previously given to Jewry were gradually taken back. As a result of the anti-Jewish laws passed between 1920 and 1941, the former emancipation was overturned, Hungarian Jews became persecuted, and their social status was reduced.[7]

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[5]   Immánuel Löw and Zsigmond Kulinyi, *A szegedi zsidók 1785-től 1885-ig* (Szeged: Traub, 1885), pp. XVI–XVII.
[6]   *A Magyar Királyi Kormány 1919–22. évi működéséről és az ország közállapotairól szóló jelentés és statisztikai évkönyv* (Budapest: Atheneum, 1926), p. 11.
[7]   Andrea Ritter, 'Escape from Traumas: Emigration and Hungarian Jewish Identity After the Holocaust', *The American Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 79.4 (2019), 577–93 (p. 579) <https://doi.org/10.1057/s11231-019-09223-0>.

It is necessary to mention that the origins of fascism in Hungary can be traced back to Szeged in 1919, when right-wing radicals developed the Szeged Idea (Hun. *Szegedi gondolat*), which centred around the belief that Hungary had been betrayed in the First World War by communists and Jews. The Szeged Idea called for a war against these perceived traitors, while also promoting Hungarian nationalism, an economic "third way", and a strong state. Led by Gyula Gömbös, its followers endorsed violence as a legitimate tool of statecraft and adopted fascist policies, including corporatism and racial doctrines. The Szeged Idea aimed to promote a national awakening and a Christian discourse. The idea supported the passage of further anti-Jewish laws and was the driving force behind the *numerus clausus*, which restricted the number of Jews admitted to higher education.[8] Jewish students at the University of Szeged experienced a wave of antisemitism during the 1930s and 1940s. Moreover, after 1941 members of the university's faculties were targeted due to their Jewish background. Calls for "cleansing", thus introducing *numerus nullus* at the University of Szeged, were made in the press and at student gatherings, resulting in the decision of the University Council in June 1942 not to admit Jewish students into the institution in the following academic year.[9] This decision aimed to achieve "complete de-Judaization of the university" within three years.[10] Finally, this whole process accumulated in the horrors of the Second World War and its events in Hungary.

Similarly to other Jewish populations in Europe, thousands of Jewish citizens from Szeged were killed during the Holocaust. On 19 March 1944, the Germans occupied Hungary. As Tim Cole points out, this occupation was unusual, given that it amounted to the occupation of an ally. From mid-April of the same year, Jews were forced to wear a yellow star; ghettos were established in the major Hungarian towns and villages, and from mid-May the deportation of Hungarian Jewry began.[11] As a major regional town in southern Hungary, Szeged was the main deportation centre for the surrounding towns and villages, parts of current northern Serbia, and the Bačka region, at that time under Hungarian occupation. Approximately 2,000 Jews living near Novi Sad in Bačka were transported via Szeged to Auschwitz or Strasshof between 6 April and May 1944. In June 1944, 8,617 people, including all the Jews from the surrounding settlements and villages, were deported from Szeged in only three days.

8   József Vonyó, 'Gömbös Gyula és a hatalom. Egy politikussá lett katonatiszt', PhD thesis, Pécs, 2015, p. 132.
9   'Az egyetemi ifjuság lapja a szegedi egyetem zsidótlanitásáról', *Délmagyarország*, 26 June 1942, p. 5.
10   Victor Karady, 'The restructuring of the academic marketplace in Hungary', in *The numerus clausus in Hungary. Studies on the First Anti-Jewish Law and Academic Anti-Semitism in Modern Central Europe*, ed. by Victor Karady and Peter Tibor Nagy (Research Reports on Central European History; vol 1.), pp. 112–23.
11   Tim Cole, 'Writing "Bystanders" into Holocaust History in More Active Ways: "Non-Jewish" Engagement with Ghettoisation, Hungary 1944', *Holocaust Studies*, 11 (2005), 62–63 <https://doi.org/10.1080/17504902.2005.11087139>.

The first train went to Auschwitz, with most victims being murdered. Due to administrative mistakes during the deportations, the second train ended up being uncoupled, with half going to Auschwitz and half to Strasshof, a labour camp north of Vienna,[12] while the third train was also sent to Strasshof, with most of the Jews surviving. A group of sixty-six people were taken to Budapest. The set-up of the deporting trains is one of the reasons why the Jewry of Szeged was one of the most intact Jewish communities in the Hungarian countryside after the Holocaust, with an exceptionally high survival rate of approximately 60%.[13] This rate also included infants, children, and the elderly, and due to the high number of child survivors, many testimonies and memoirs were written. The case of Szeged is unique in the history of the Hungarian Holocaust because in only a couple of weeks the Hungarian authorities deported 437,000 people who were considered Jewish.[14] In many instances, no records survived of the deportation, either on the Hungarian side or at the destination, which in most cases was Auschwitz. Most of the deported were killed within twenty-four hours of arrival, and no records were kept of their fates.[15] However, the fact that Szeged had a higher rate of survivors does not mean that the dynamics of post-Second World War relations between Jewish returnees and their non-Jewish neighbours were significantly different from elsewhere in Hungary,[16] except for Budapest.[17] Instead, this suggests that the situation in Szeged mirrored the broader trends observed across Hungary, only better documented.

It is essential to mention that antisemitic attitudes and sentiments were present and expressed by non-Jewish residents, who facilitated and accelerated all phases of the extermination. Non-Jews living in Europe and Hungary were active agents for the deportations.[18] It was with the active help of the non-Jewish citizens of Szeged – by definition, neighbours, policemen, gendarmerie, midwives and doctors, carpenters, drivers, and railmen – that the deportation of the local Jews took less than a couple of

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[12]   Judit Molnár, 'Embermentés vagy árulás? A Kasztner-akció szegedi vonatkozásai' and Judit Molnár, 'Véletlenek. 15 ezer főnyi "munkaerő-szállítmány" sorsa 1944 júniusában', in *Szeged – Strasshof – Szeged. Tények és emlékek a Bécsben és környékén „jégre tett" szegedi deportáltakról 1944–1947*, ed. by Kinga Frojimovics and Judit Molnár (Szeged: SZTE ÁJTK Politológiai Tanszék – Szegedi Magyar-Izraeli Baráti Társaság, 2021).

[13]   The JDCArchives, *JDC Archives Fellowship Lecture – Dóra Pataricza*, online video recording, YouTube, 5 May 2021 <https://youtu.be/jmgAdeLAOU4?si=M2kt-mxS7AbjDS0Y> [accessed on 11 November 2023].

[14]   *A magyarországi holokauszt földrajzi enciklopédiája*, ed. by Randolph L. Braham and Zoltán Tibori Szabó, 3 vols (Budapest: Park, 2007), I, pp. 7–92.

[15]   Laurence Rees, *The Holocaust. A new history* (London: Viking, 2017), p. 392.

[16]   See e.g., Borbála Klacsmann, 'Abandoned, confiscated, and stolen property: Jewish-Gentile relations in Hungary as reflected in restitution letters', *Holocaust Studies*, 23 (2016), 133–48 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/17504902.2016.1209836>.

[17]   As the deportations started in the Hungarian countryside and were eventually stopped in early July, the majority of the Jewry of Budapest survived the Shoah.

[18]   Cole, 'Writing "Bystanders"', p. 55.

weeks. Testimonies of Hungarian Holocaust survivors also reveal that those under deportation often "did not hear a German word until the border".[19]

As historian Omer Bartov explains, testimonies are valuable sources for several reasons, one of which is that they provide otherwise undocumented or unknown details of historical events. Naturally, as testimonies are based on memories and are often said to be subjective accounts of certain events, certain historians tend to avoid using them. Nevertheless, in Bartov's words, "there is no reason to believe that official contemporary documents written by gestapo, SS, Wehrmacht, or German administrative officials are any more accurate or objective, or any less subjective and biased, than accounts given by those they were trying to kill".[20] It is clear that, in a number of testimonies, victims hold non-Jewish society, "neighbours", accountable for at least some of the losses they suffered after their return to their homes. Undeniably, however, non-Jewish individuals (as well as Jewish ones) acted in different ways during and after the deportations, including looting or confiscating properties, items, and even businesses of Jewish individuals – often when the deportations had just begun.

RELATIONS BETWEEN JEWS AND NON-JEWS DURING THE GHETTOIZATION AND DEPORTATION

There were several points of contact between Jews and non-Jews during the ghettoization. Many non-Jewish neighbours played distinct roles, mainly as either bystanders or perpetrators in this process. Confiscating Jewish property in Hungary during the Holocaust was a multi-stage process. Historians have identified three major phases, with non-Jewish neighbours playing an active role in the second. The first phase occurred before the German invasion of Hungary in March 1944 and continued afterwards. During this time, the Sztójay government issued a decree (1.600/1944. M.E.) that required Jews to declare their valuables for confiscation.[21] The second phase began with the ghettoization of Hungarian Jews in April 1944, during which they were allowed to bring only 50 kg of personal belongings to the ghettos. Authorities seized any remaining property and labelled it as "abandoned" property, which was then disposed of by the state, being either used for

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[19]   E.g., in the testimony of Mrs Ferenc Klein: "We were handed over to the Germans in Magyaróvár", degob testimony no. 1792 <http://degob.hu/index.php?showjk=1792> [accessed on 11 November 2023].
[20]   Bartov, 'Wartime lies', p. 488.
[21]   It is important to mention that between 29 March and 15 October 1944, the Sztójay government issued over 100 decrees concerning Jews. Such decrees included banning Jews from employing non-Jews in Jewish households (1.200/1944.M.E.), obligatory reporting of Jewish citizens' phones, cars, and radios (1.300/1944.M.E.), and forcing Jewish citizens to take housing designated to them (1.610/1944.M.E.).

public purposes or given to non-Jews.[22] As a result of this almost exhaustive state-mandated seizure, so much furniture was accumulated that the storage space allocated for it could no longer accommodate more, and new storage facilities had to be created. While furniture was stored in the Landesberg warehouse in Bocskay Street, large quantities of textiles (bedding and clothing) taken from Jews were stored in the brick factory collection centre.[23] Furniture, carpets, curtains, and other everyday equipment, along with shoes and clothes, were kept at the synagogue, which was never bombed. The final phase of confiscation took place during deportations to Auschwitz-Birkenau. Hungarian gendarmerie, police, and German forces robbed Jewish victims of their last valuables. Many abandoned belongings or real estate became state property or were distributed among or looted by non-Jews.

The so-far unpublished archival documents in the Szeged Jewish Community's Archives offer a new insight into the experiences of survivors. The importance of being locally rooted has always been an important consideration since the establishment of the Archive as its material is essential for the self-awareness and identity of the local community. The historical records in the archive suggest that while some non-Jewish individuals actively took advantage of the opportunity to claim Jewish property during the period of Jewish persecution, others were passive bystanders who simply watched as Jews were subjected to persecution and forced to relinquish their property. The many claim letters and accounts of non-Jewish individuals that can be found in the Szeged Jewish Archive show that they took advantage of their privileged position to discriminate against Jews. Reports indicate that non-Jewish residents had already requested Jews' real estate before the deportation.[24] Furthermore, Jews were forced to bear the costs of their relocation, and the Council of the Jewish Community was responsible for covering the expenses of relocating Christians who had to temporarily vacate their homes within the area designated for the ghetto.[25]

Periodical sources from Szeged, such as the daily newspaper, *Szegedi Uj Nemzedék* (which was a right-wing medium of the time), expressed particular sentiments opposing the ghettoization; the reasons behind this opposition were, however, not connected to the ghettoization *per se* but rather the districts in which the ghetto was to be located.[26] An article

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22   Klacsmann, 'Abandoned, confiscated, and stolen property', pp. 3–4. Borbála Klacsmann has written several articles in Hungarian and English on confiscated Jewish property and an extensive case study on the fate of these objects and their owners in Újpest and Monor.

23   László Marjanucz, 'A szegedi zsidó polgárság műértékeinek sorsa a deportálások idején', *A Móra Ferenc Múzeum Évkönyve: Studia Historica*, 1 (1995), 243. On the fate of the most valuable looted properties of Hungarian Jewry, see Gábor Kádár and Zoltán Vági, *Aranyvonat: Fejezetek a Zsidó Vagyon Történetéből.* (Budapest: Osiris, 2001).

24   Szeged sz. Kir. város polgármesterétől. File number: 27273/1944; written on 26 May 1944. Subject: Decision about the Jewish houses. SzJCA, documents of 1945, indexing in progress.

25   Ibid. File number: 44877/1944 III-a sz. Subject: Reimbursement of expenses of Christians who have moved out of the territory of the ghetto. SzJCA, SzJCA, documents of 1945, indexing in progress.

26   [*Vásárhelyi*] *Népújság*, 8 May 1944, p. 3., and *Szegedi Uj Nemzedek*, 3 May 1944; 5 May 1944.

written in May 1944 provides a glimpse into the ghettoization of Jews in Szeged during the Holocaust. The writer asserts that the only absolute solution to the Jewish question is to eliminate the Jews entirely, but in his opinion such a solution was not feasible at that time. The city authorities attempted to implement the solution which they thought was most effective: relocate the Jews from the city centre to designated barracks, hoping to minimize the harm inflicted upon the Christian (non-Jewish) Hungarian population. However, this could not be implemented. The same article expressed empathy for all those opposing the compromise of locating the ghetto in the middle of the town but encouraged its readers to take a long-term perspective on the situation and reminded them that the situation was only temporary: "Our most feared internal enemies have now been fully cornered. So, we must not bemoan or complain about specific regulations that uphold Hungarian interests. The best opportunity is to gather our opponents into a closed, well-demarcated place. We need self-discipline, regardless of a little self-denial or discomfort, to achieve our great goals".[27]

In addition to the audacity of this, Jewish women were also subjected to the humiliating processes of body searches, with the claims that they may be hiding things when moving to the brick factory. They were forced to undress in front of men, and midwives carried out a body cavity search on them with dirty, ungloved hands. In mid-June, Bishop Hamvas made an urgent appeal to the county governor (Hun. *főispán*) Aladár Magyary-Kossa, asking him to intervene on behalf of the Jews of Szeged, who were about to be transferred to the local brick factory for wagoning and deportation. Two weeks after the deportation had taken place, in mid-July, Hamvas reported the events in the synagogues of Makó and Szeged to Primate Jusztinián Serédi with indignation: "And another atrocity happened here in Szeged and Makó. There was also a further incident in Szeged, where Jewish women were stripped naked and subjected to carnal searches (per inspectionem vaginae) by midwives and doctors in the presence of men. What is this but a perverted trampling on women's dignity and modesty?"[28] The body searches[29] were often carried out by neighbours and midwives who had previously encountered the women in question. In the case of a survivor, Irma Spuller (Budapest, 1920 – Budapest, 2018), the midwife who searched her was the same woman who had delivered her daughter

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[27]   *Szegedi Uj Nemzedék*, 5 May 1944, p. 4., Quoted by Cole, Writing 'Bystanders', pp. 64–65.

[28]   'Hamvas levele Serédihez', in *Vádirat a Nácizmus Ellen: Dokumentumok a Magyarországi Zsidóüldözés Történetéhez. 1944. Május 26.–1944. Október 15: A Budapesti Zsidóság Deportálásának Felfüggesztése*, ed. by Elek Karsai and Ilona Benoschofsky (Budapest: A Magyar Izraeliták Országos Képviselete, 1967), III, pp. 206–07.

[29]   Lauren Cantillon, 'Dis-covering Overlooked Narratives of Sexual(ised) Violence: Jewish Women's Stories of 'Body Searches' in the Ghetto Spaces of Occupied Hungary During the Holocaust', Conference paper at *Precarious Archives, Precarious Voices: Expanding Jewish Narratives from the Margins*, Simon Wiesenthal Institut, Vienna, Austria, 17–19 November 2021.

ten months earlier. In Irma's case, however, as she explained, the midwife was relatively humane, and Irma convinced her to foster their dog, which she had to bring to the inspection.[30]

Other examples of the nature of these neighbouring relations were connected to non-Jewish locals, who in many instances aimed to obtain Jewish belongings as soon as the deportation ended. Most members of the public were interested in the distribution of Jewish (mainly movable) property according to the so-called "social criteria". Many people felt that a historical injustice was being remedied by confiscating foreign property, which was given away for free, and that the easy acquisition of furniture, clothing or even a house would resolve hitherto unsolvable situations and lead to material and social security that previously had seemed impossible to achieve. It occurred to very few people that a social order cannot be deemed stable if it attempts to balance the commonly recognized inequality of wealth with a program that is inhumane towards another group of people (i.e., the Jews) and therefore should be considered sinful according to Christian values. In comparison, the activities of the Szeged Public Supply Office (*Szeged város Közellátási Hivatala*), which distributed food and "perishable goods" found among Jews, were merely a symptomatic treatment of personal feelings and the social-psychological condition of the masses. First, the distribution of "perishable goods" (food, flour, fat, potatoes, etc.) was planned, followed by the distribution of furniture and furnishings from Jewish property that many non-Jews had claimed.[31]

While the confiscated money and jewellery ended up under the authority of the City of Szeged in order to supplement the financial resources necessary for the continuation of the (by then completely) senseless war, some other movables, such as clothes, furniture and food, were distributed for free via sympathy-generating, tension-relieving social distribution. Other Jewish objects taken into inventory in the ghetto were placed under strict police custody until they were removed, thus preventing them being spontaneously taken.

Even though the houses in the ghetto were locked and under supervision, there must have been attempts to loot them, such as happened in one case in July 1944, when an assistant tile setter was caught after a burglary:

> At the police station, the burglar confessed that he had been watching the abandoned Jewish house for some time; when he noticed that no one was ever in the house, he decided to break in. In the burglar's suitcase, the police found many stolen goods, mainly clothing. After interrogation, the poor assistant tile setter was taken to the pros-

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[30]   Irma Bognár, *Adjanak hálát a sorsnak*, (Budapest: Sík, 2004), p. 13
[31]   Marjanucz, 'A szegedi zsidó polgárság műértékeinek sorsa', p. 250.

ecutor's office. According to our information received on Tuesday, Ferenc Zemanovits would be brought to martial law in a few days to receive the punishment he deserves.

Finally, it is worth mentioning the role of local churches as their officials – nuns and priests – can be regarded as neighbours too. According to József Schindler, chief rabbi of Szeged in 1960 (1918, Óbuda – 1963, Szeged), a few nuns went to the brick factory to bring food to the Catholic Jews who were detained there. Undeniably, certain church representatives did try to help those in need. However, these attempts were limited and small in scale.[32]

RETURN TO SZEGED

"We returned to our flat, rang the doorbell politely, and said we had just come back from deportation, saying we used to live here. 'Now we live here'. they said, and *bang*, they slammed the door shut. Then we left. Well, what could we have done? That flat had already been rented out to them, or maybe the landlord had rented it out. We did not even know what we had a right to after they had completely excluded us. We had been expelled, they had tried to kill us but failed, and now we dare to come back?"[33]

This excerpt from the memoires of Vera Szöllős, aged 8[34] at the time of her return to Szeged, highlights many aspects of post-war Jewish-gentile relations and the difficulties of restarting life. Vera's family refrained from reclaiming their flat after the war due to people's still-prevalent fear and sense of uncertainty, as suggested by their statement:

[We did not try to take it back because] I think there was still a great fear in people, and they did not feel how long their freedom would last. After all, when they left, the surroundings were hostile; so, as far as I understand, they did not try to get the apartment back. There could even have been a sentimental feeling that they had been chased out of their apartment. Thus, they could not chase anybody else out.[35]

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32   Dóra Pataricza and Mercédesz Czimbalmos, 'Post-war narratives of the conversion in the shadow of death – A case study from Szeged, Hungary', in *The Churches in Eastern and Southeastern Europe and the "Jewish Question" during the First Half of the 20th Century. Thematic Issue* in *Eastern Church Identities*, ed. by Marian Pătru (Brill, forthcoming).

33   Testimony of Veronika Szöllős: 'Szöllős Veronika', *Centropa*, [n.d.] <https://www.centropa.org/hu/biography/szollos-veronika> [accessed on 24 January 2025].

34   It is important to note that survivors who were children at the time of the Holocaust may not remember every detail or have understood the complexity at a very young age. Yet, their testimonies are essential (Boaz Cohen and Rita Horváth, 'Young Witnesses in the DP camps: Children's Holocaust testimony in context', *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies*, 11 (2012), 103–25 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14725886.2012.646704>). In the case of Veronika Szöllős, she was in psychotherapy in her fifties, which helped to bring back her memories (<https://www.centropa.org/hu/biography/szollos-veronika>).

35   Testimony of Vera Szöllős, USC Shoah Foundation, interview ID: 50591, segment 43–44.

Previous studies have shown that after the horrors of the Holocaust the returnees faced several hardships in the countries to which they returned. Of course, those who attempted to flee or were deported could not take their belongings with them. As Edith Molnár, a survivor from Szeged, explained, people tried to give some of their belongings and valuables to their friends and acquaintances in the hope that they would get them back after their return.[36]

For many survivors of the Holocaust, returning to their old homes after the war was, of course, also an extremely difficult emotional experience. While some were able to return to their homes and communities relatively quickly, others found that their belongings had new owners, or their homes had been destroyed, rebuilt, or taken over by new residents. Several testimonies describe this phenomenon in detail. As Lukasz Krzyzanowski points out when discussing Polish returnees, "the returning Jews were in no condition to counteract the results of the two powerful processes taking place before their eyes: the transfer of Jewish property into non-Jewish hands, and the surrender of private property to the state".[37] This was, of course, very similar in the case of other Jewish communities and other countries, including Hungary and Szeged.

The Soviet army reached Szeged from the south on 11 Octobe 1944,[38] effectively putting the end to a killing campaign of the remaining Jews in the region by the Hungarian Arrow Cross Party.[39] This meant that Szeged was a safe place for Jews after the liberation, and the first Jews – men who were in forced labour in the region and managed to escape – could return to Szeged as early as October 1944. A local survivor, Leó Dénes (born Leó Rottman) (1897, Mohora – 1977, Budapest), must have also played a significant role in protecting Jewish property after October 1944. He was a member of the Szeged Jewish Community and served in forced labour near Szeged until October 1944, when he managed to flee. In the same month, he was appointed as a deputy mayor's secretary. One of the first things he did was abolish delegitimizing Jewish laws and decrees.[40] In November 1944, he became a councillor, then in January 1945, the deputy mayor of Szeged;[41] thus, he could and did function as a connection between the re-established Szeged Jewish Community (early November 1944) and Szeged City. As a comparison, it is important to note that other parts of the country, including Budapest,

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[36] Testimony of Edith Molnár, USC Shoah Foundation, interview ID: 22798, segment 224.
[37] Lukasz Krzyzanowski, *Ghost Citizens: Jewish Return to a Postwar City* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2020), p. 264.
[38] György Pálfy, 'A városházán', *Délmagyarország*, 11 October 1969, p. 5.
[39] The Arrow Cross Party was a far-right Hungarian ultranationalist party led by Ferenc Szálasi.
[40] István Sárközi, 'Adalékok Dénes Leó munkásmozgalmi és közéleti tevékenységéhez (1919–1977)', *Móra Ferenc Múzeum* Évkönyve, 1 (1980–1981), 330; and 'Dénes Leó Szeged polgármestere', in *Szegedi Népszava*, 23 August 1945, p. 1.
[41] Entry: 'Dénes Leó', in *Magyar Életrajzi Lexikon*, ed. by Ágnes Kenyeres and Sándor Bortnyik (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1967).

were at the same time occupied by the Hungarian Arrow Cross Party after Regent Horthy's unsuccessful attempt to achieve an armistice.[42]

Ill. 1. Béla Liebmann, soldier in front of the synagogue (January 1945), copyright: Móra Ferenc Museum, Szeged

In December 1944, Miklós Béla de Dálnok was appointed the acting Prime Minister of Hungary in Debrecen, liberated by the Soviets, and he established the Government Commission for Abandoned Property in March 1945 (decree no. 727/1945). Its primary goal was to identify, secure, and manage abandoned property left behind by Jews who had been deported or killed during the Holocaust.[43] The commission collected and catalogued abandoned Jewish property, including real estate, household goods, and personal belongings. It also dealt with issues related to inheritance and legal ownership. The commission played a vital role in the post-war reconstruction of Hungary as it was tasked with redistributing abandoned property for public use and aiding in the country's economic recovery.[44]

[42] Krisztián Ungváry, *Magyarország a második világháborúban* (Budapest: Kossuth, 2010). For more, see id., *Kiugrás a történelemből – Horthy Miklós a világpolitika színpadán* (Budapest: Open Books, 2022).
[43] Borbála Klacsmann, 'Elhanyagolt kárpótlás: Az Elhagyott Javak Kormánybiztossága és a magyar zsidók kapcsolata (1945–1948)', *Századok*, (2019), 718–21.
[44] Borbála Klacsmann, 'Neglected Restitution: The Relations of the Government Commission for Abandoned Property and the Hungarian Jews, 1945–1948', *Hungarian Historical Review*, 9.3 (2020), 513–20. In our article we are not dealing with the long-term effects of the confiscations at all, for which see, e.g., Ágnes Peresztegi, 'Reparation and Compensation in Hungary 1945–2003', in *The Holocaust in Hungary: A European Perspective*, ed. by Judit Molnár (Budapest: Balassi Kiadó, 2005), pp. 677–84. Nor do we investigate the fate of valuables (gold, paintings etc.) on the so-called Golden train (Hun. Aranyvonat), which has been extensively analysed by Gábor Kádár and Zoltán Vági: Aranyvonat: Fejezetek a zsido vagyon történetéből [Golden train: Chapters from the History of Jewish Wealth] and Hullarablás. A Magyar zsidók gazdasági megsemmisítése [Robbing the Dead. The Economic Annihilation of Hungarian Jews].

Deported Jews started arriving back in Szeged in May 1945. The National Committee for Attending Deportees (*Deportáltakat Gondozó Országos Bizottság*) informed the Szeged Jewish Community in April 1945 that many deportees from Vienna had survived,[45] thus the city and the community had some time to prepare for their arrival. In April 1945, the leaders of the Szeged Jewish Community were aware that survivors were already on their way to their homes, thus stating that items previously given to non-Jewish residents of Szeged could be requested back. The process of the return can be traced with the help of the Szeged Jewish Community's Archives as it has – among many other documents – records of correspondence with the local institute, other Jewish communities, survivors' requests, and lists of items handed over to the local (non-Jewish) population. In most cases, these objects were given to non-Jews, but in some cases they were Jews who had returned to Szeged earlier or who had been, for some reason, exempt from deportation. The archives also include correspondence documenting these processes. In mid-April, the leadership asked for items back from forty-two people, but only nineteen of them fulfilled the request. Seven of those who complied were Jewish.[46]

As a form of reparation, the city organised social movements in partnership with local parties and churches[47] to help the survivors.[48] Despite these efforts and the excellent cooperation, thanks to Leó Dénes, between the Szeged Jewish Community – representing the needs and wishes of the survivors – and the city leaders, and despite the relatively good circumstances regarding the number of survivors as well as the high rate of saved objects, Szeged also faced problems upon the arrival of survivors. There were, for example, many conflicts between returnees and other residents. Testimonies provide us with a detailed account of these matters. György Kármán, a survivor, describes his experiences before and after the Holocaust:

> In April [1944], we had to put on the yellow Star [of David]. Me too. [...] [The events] followed each other: we had to turn over radios, bicycles – those who had one – they gradually took away our belongings [...] they took my grandfather's paintings; financial officers came and created lists. Needless to say, until this very day, we have not got anything back – no compensation [either].[49]

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45 SzJCA 1945/262.
46 SzJCA 1945/118, 1945/119 and 1945/120.
47 On how the church failed to efficiently help the local Jews, see Pataricza and Czimbalmos, 'Post-war narratives of the conversion'.
48 *Délmagyarország*, 20 April 1945, p. 3; 31 May 1945, p. 2. Quoted in Frojimovics and Molnár, 'Szeged – Strasshof – Szeged', p. 193 and p. 197.
49 Testimony of György Kármán, USC Shoah Foundation, interview ID: 50645.

The shocking realisation that their neighbours had taken Jewish properties hit the survivors upon their return.[50] In her account, Irma Spuller, a young female survivor who had been deported from Szeged, describes how she went from one office to another to regain her family's apartment. She eventually made a deal with the elderly couple living there, allowing them to stay in one room while she and her family used the other rooms. They had no furniture, so she searched for their belongings that had been left behind in the ghetto:

> I managed to find out who had been given my wardrobe, and I took it home. Then I travelled to a farm near Szeged, where a couple supposedly had a whole crate of our bedding, but they said the Russians had taken it. I did not believe them and upon visiting them, I had not even entered the house when I saw their blankets tucked into my duvet cover, and the table was covered with a tablecloth crocheted by my mother. Then they brought out some of my things. The most honest was Nátli, the butcher's wife, who kept my Grandmother's ring with brilliants, a copper drink cart, and some beautiful porcelain figurines.[51]
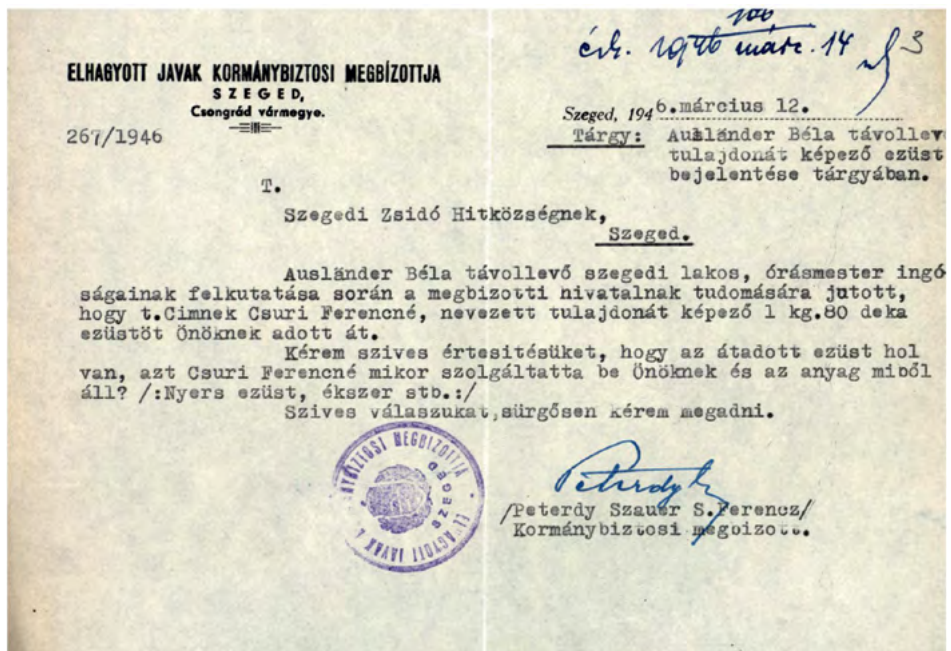
Ill. 2. SzZsHA request, copyright: Szeged Jewish Community's Archive

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50 One of the most well-known depictions of this phenomenon is the movie "1945" (2017), directed by Ferenc Török), which portrays the shame, guilt, and denial of the locals in a small Hungarian village as they try to confront the truth of their actions in taking and never returning the property of Hungarian Jews during and after the Second World War.
51 Memoir of Mrs Ferenc Bognár, née Irma Spuller (unpublished manuscript), p. 20.

Another survivor, Mrs György Landesberg (born Ilona Schiller), spent the first few weeks back in Szeged searching for her belongings, such as her Singer sewing machine and Persian rug.[52] Löw Teri, another female returnee recalled, "…of course, we did not get our apartment back. If I remember correctly, my parents did not want to get a family with a small child evicted from there", reflecting on the conscious steps survivors would have needed to take to gain their properties back. Instead of returning their property to them automatically, which would have been a responsible action by the authorities, they needed to take steps which often ended with no success.

While positive examples exist, many testimonies account for the negative behaviour of those who awaited the survivors upon their return to Szeged. One such case was described by Jenő Ligeti (1875, Zenta – 1969, Budapest), an elderly journalist who survived the deportation. In his testimony, he explains how their hopes of restarting life had been dashed and how they were disappointed in the lack of justice:

> [Upon our return to Szeged] we slept on straw bags on the parquet floor in hotel Bors, but we did not sleep badly because we hoped that we would finally say goodbye to straw bags and other hard, makeshift beds. We were wrong, however, because the welcome we received back home was nothing like what we had hoped for. I should not be unfair, since we were received with great joy by old friends and acquaintances. However, when we wanted to move into our flat and take up our old, abandoned position, it turned out they were not happy to see us back. They even seemed to take it badly that we had survived […]. And there are hundreds of people who are forced to do without stolen furniture, clothes, dishes and other essential necessities of life.[53]

In the aftermath of the Holocaust, Jewish–non-Jewish relations in Szeged were marked by a mixture of tension and cooperation, as exemplified by the positive example of a non-Jewish timber assistant who was willing to testify on behalf of a Jewish survivor seeking the return of his property. This survivor, from whose workshop wood had been stolen to build the ghetto walls in 1944, sought to reclaim his materials in order to re-establish his livelihood.[54] Recognising the injustice of the situation, the non-Jewish assistant offered his support as a witness to this survivor's

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52 Pál Lányi, 'Szegedi gettóládánk kifosztása' (Budapest, 2022) (unpublished manuscript).
53 Deportáltakat Gondozó Országos Bizottság, "Jegyzőkönyv 3555" [Testimony of Jenő Ligeti (no. 3555)]. <http://degob.hu/?showjk=3555> [accessed on 29 March 2023]. The same narrative is given by Arnold Kármán (b. 1880, Temesvár) in another DEGOB testimony (no. 3576); all of his property was taken away when he returned.
54 SzJCA, letter written 24 May 1945, uncatalogued documents from Szeged city, 1945.

claim. This act of solidarity between these two individuals is a poignant example of how post-Holocaust relations between Jews and non-Jews were shaped by a complex interplay of trauma, memory, and the desire for justice and reconciliation. However, cases of non-Jewish individuals' willingness to support Jewish survivors in their quest for restitution remained scarce and exceptional.

It is essential to mention that confiscation of the Hungarian Jewry's valuables and property during this period did not start with the Nazis. The responsibility of Hungarian authorities has to be addressed as the process that stripped Jewish citizens of their rights, property, and eventually their lives began well before the Nazi occupation. Moreover, it is also important to recognize that the post-war political situation further contributed to the confiscation of certain goods and properties, including remaining Jewish belongings, this time in the form of nationalization.[55] Some of the losses experienced during this period were also associated with the emotional impact of the missing objects, as these absences made it more difficult for survivors to reestablish themselves and their lives. This phenomenon also decreased their hopes of gaining justice. It is clear that the victims faced tremendous loss in terms of emotional and material aspects of their lives, but what do the sources tell us about their neighbours' feelings about the situation?

The available sources suggest that discussions around the returnees were filled with antisemitism and indifference towards them and their loss(es). When asked by an interviewer about how he was received by his non-Jewish neighbours, William Farenci, a Holocaust survivor from Szeged, said, "Oh... one was the biggest *sváb* [Swabian], you know; [...] she was the biggest bitch antisemite and wanted to hug and kiss me, and bla-bla. [...] Otherwise, the answer is mixed. Half and half. Some of them said 'There are more of you who came back than went away!'"[56]

Another example that demonstrates this is an article from April 1946 in a local newspaper, *Szeged Népszava*. The article tells the story of a dog which found its owners, who had been sent to Germany "where they make excellent soap from them".[57] The sole fact that a text of this sort could be published gives a clear description of the general public's attitude concerning the situation.

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55   See more Ronald W. Zweig, *The Gold Train: The Destruction of the Jews and the Looting of Hungary* (New York: Morrow, 2002).
56   Testimony of William Farenci. USC Shoah foundation, interview ID: 18631, segment 28.
57   e.k., 'Beszéljünk másról', *Szegedi Népszava*, 2 April 1946, p. 4.

Ill. 3. Dog advertisement picture, copyright: Arcanum

Ágnes Szigeti (née Weiss, b. 1925, Szeged) recounted her experience of returning to Szeged after the war when an interviewer asked how they were welcomed back, stating:

> Rather badly. They wondered why we were alive; they did not want to admit that we had left our things with them, and they did not want to help us in any way. It was such a bizarre feeling that somehow we had not found the old surroundings that we had left; we were looking for [the life] that we had left, and it was not there anymore. [...] It was not the same people we had left living in that house, [...] it was completely strange people living there; they did not even know us. In one of the flats, for example, a writer was living there; he was surprised, saying that he thought that all the Jews had been exterminated or killed, that he was surprised that we had come back at all. The tenants with whom we were living were doing everything they could to get us out of there as quickly as possible, but we just could not leave.[58]

Of course, there were also examples of Jewish survivors having problems with both the Jewish and non-Jewish populations. It is worth quoting from a letter written by Alfréd Aczél in July 1945 to the Jewish Community, in which he demands justice from the Jewish community:

> You are probably aware that by the time the deportees came home, my daughters had found nothing of my belongings left behind except a sideboard, the removal of which – because of financial

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[58]   Testimony of Ágnes Szigeti, USC Shoah Foundation, interview code 51018, segment 71–72.

> hardship at the moment – is currently not possible. The current tenant refuses to leave my flat. I also found a white wardrobe, which Mrs Sarolta Fischhof declared to be hers and took away, and a sewing machine, of which my ownership was acknowledged, but it has not been released to me with the statement "she does not need it".[59]

There are documented cases where enforcement had to be ordered because non-Jewish tenants refused to vacate properties previously owned by Jews who had returned from deportation. This suggests that not all members of the non-Jewish population were willing to adhere to the legal and moral imperatives of the time.[60] In all cases, the rules for the allocation of housing were administered by the Jewish Community. In April 1945, in cooperation with the city administration, guidelines were drawn up to help returnees find housing as quickly as possible. According to these guidelines, applications would be processed without delay, all appeals from temporary (non-Jewish) owners or residents would be declined, and the city authorities would use all means to facilitate occupancy (i.e., non-Jewish tenants could be evicted by force). Non-Jewish tenants were not allowed to delay by appealing. At the same time, ten people were issued official housing inspector cards and provided with official documents allowing them to proceed in these cases.[61]

Not only adults had to face abandonment by the non-Jewish residents of Szeged.[62] Vera Pick, born in 1933 in Vienna, is the granddaughter of Márk Pick, the founder of the Pick Salami factory. She was deported with her parents and lost her father in Bergen Belsen in February 1945. At the time of her return to Szeged, she was 12 years old – old enough to remember the bitter realisation that her family's flat had been occupied by others who openly stated that their return was not at all expected or celebrated:

> My mother came back six weeks later with swollen legs, weighing 46 kilos, and very weak, but with a strong will to survive. We got back, this time on a proper train to Budapest, Hungary, and a few days later back to where we had started from, namely Szeged. That was on 22 June 1945. People looked at us in amazement and declared,

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[59] SzJCA 1945/429.
[60] The cases of Béla Szabó and Mrs Izsó Szécsi in the SzJCA records from 1945, the documents of Dr Dénes Návai, a lawyer from Szeged. In the latter case, József Várhelyi attempted to pressure the staff of the Szeged Jewish Community to allow him to remain in a property that a Jewish survivor, Izsóné Szécsi, rightfully owned. However, the Jewish Community refused to comply with his demand as they were committed to upholding the property rights of Jewish survivors who had been unjustly deprived of their possessions during the Holocaust.
[61] Város iratai 1945. Április 21.
[62] For children's accounts of the deportation, see Dóra Pataricza, '"The first time I saw my father cry" – Children's accounts of the deportations from Szeged', *Jewish Culture and History*, 24.2: *The Usage of Ego-Documents in Jewish Historical Research* <doi:10.1080/1462169x.2023.2202085> (under publication).

> "We really did not expect to see you again". What a great greeting
> that was! Once again, going back to our home, we found nothing but
> the four walls – not a chair, not a bed, no cutlery, no plates. We had
> to start all over finding the basics, and at that time we had no mon-
> ey. Some things were piled up in the schoolyard and the synagogue,
> and a man distributed the necessities to people. I remember that
> my mother burned the wooden pillars of our bunker for firewood.[63]

Even items of small value were often taken and kept by non-Jewish
individuals, who may have seen them as an opportunity to enrich them-
selves. This phenomenon is reflected in the requests kept in the Szeged
Jewish Archive. The requests in many cases were formulated by non-Jews
who asked for everyday items like clothing and household goods, but also
larger items like homes, jewellery and businesses. In several cases, non-Jew-
ish individuals refused to return items of even small value. Edith Molnár,
for example, recalled that her father asked a non-Jewish "friend" of his to
safeguard a ring with a small diamond in it. When Edith returned and
requested the ring back, the man told her that the Germans had taken it,
while she could see it on his finger. She also described a sense of post-war
apathy among fellow Jewish survivors, whose struggles and trauma over-
shadowed their ability to provide support and empathy to their relatives.
The enormity of the trauma they had experienced seemed to have left them
feeling emotionally depleted and overwhelmed, making it challenging for
them to assist others, even their family members.[64]

The fact that people were permitted to enter the homes of their neigh-
bours and remove their belongings, and the government has never inves-
tigated how widely the enormous wealth and quantity of items of over
400,000 Jews were dispersed – these have had a long-lasting effect on Hun-
garian society. The failure to return confiscated property to Jewish owners
after the war was a significant injustice, one that compounded the trau-
ma and loss experienced by survivors and inhibited reconciliation with
the local non-Jewish society. Appropriating Jewish belongings was a trans-
national phenomenon in several countries under German occupation.[65]

The Szeged Jewish Community kept extensive records of non-Jewish
individuals who borrowed items and were required to return them upon
the request of their owners. These documents reveal the tensions that ex-
isted between Jewish owners and those non-Jewish locals who took from

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63   Vera Gara, *Least-Expected Heroes of the Holocaust: Personal Memories* (Ottawa: Vera Gara, 2011), pp. 19–20.
64   Testimony of Edith Molnár. USC Shoah Foundation, interview ID: 22798, segment 35–37.
65   Auslander 'Coming home'; Anna Wylegała, 'The Void Communities: Towards a New Approach to the Early
      Post-war in Poland and Ukraine', *East European Politics and Societies*, 35.2 (2019), 407–36 <https://doi.
      org/10.1177/0888325420914972>; Waligórska, Sorkina, 'The Second Life of Jewish Belongings', p. 2.

them, such as in the case of a local non-Jewish resident who repainted a piece of unspecified "Jewish furniture" (Hun. *zsidóbútor*) and took away a piano. The records also show that bomb victims and other residents received some of these 'borrowed' items, including items that by no means can be regarded as essential, such as a cake utensil set, a mirror, and silver candlesticks. The fact that non-essential items were taken from Jewish owners undermines the argument that only essential items were taken from them.

Starting from November 1944, newspapers were full of announcements by which survivors tried to get and, in some cases, repurchase their properties. Occasionally, the objects they longed for did not even have monetary value: Sándor Reis, a dentist from Szeged, offered 500 *pengő* to get the photographic films of his family back.[66] A couple of months earlier, he had attempted to get his clothes back: "I ask all those who took my winter coat, overcoat, bed linen and covers with the initials B. S. and R. S. from the apartment on the first floor of the ghetto at 10 Korona Street 1st floor, as well as my children's and my wife's belongings, to bring them back to Dr Sándor Reis, dentist, at 61 Tisza Lajos Boulevard ".[67]

Ill. 4. Reis family, passport picture, copyright: Reisz family

As briefly indicated before, there were also positive stories in the immediate post-war period in Szeged regarding relations between Jewish survivors and their non-Jewish neighbours. We know of a few instances when Jewish survivors returned to their homes and were met with kindness and assistance from fellow citizens who were eager to help them rebuild their lives. This support was a significant departure from the wartime period, when Jews in Hungary were subjected to persecution and discrimination. The willingness of non-Jewish residents to extend a helping hand demonstrated a sense of compassion and empathy towards their fellow citizens.

66   *Délmagyarország*, 26 August 1945, p. 6.
67   *Délmagyarország*, 22 February 1945, p. 4.

Béla Seifmann's return to Szeged in early 1945 after months of forced labour was marked by mixed reactions from his neighbours. As a young Jewish man, he encountered both helpful and unhelpful neighbours in his community. He remembered the first days of his return and the relations with the old network upon returning. He stayed with an old friend of his, a young girl, Emmy Feuer, who was exempt from deportation because she had a Christian mother:

> I'm staying at Emmy's place for ten days and [getting] complete rest. I get nothing from Aunt Kenderesi. Aunt Raffai has some things for me, plus 200 pengő. No one responds to my newspaper advertisement either.[68] I get an allowance from Joint.[69] I am not working yet. [...] I have good, cheap meals at Aunt Kati's. I brought a few pieces of furniture from the ghetto and [as a result I got] reported for theft.[70]
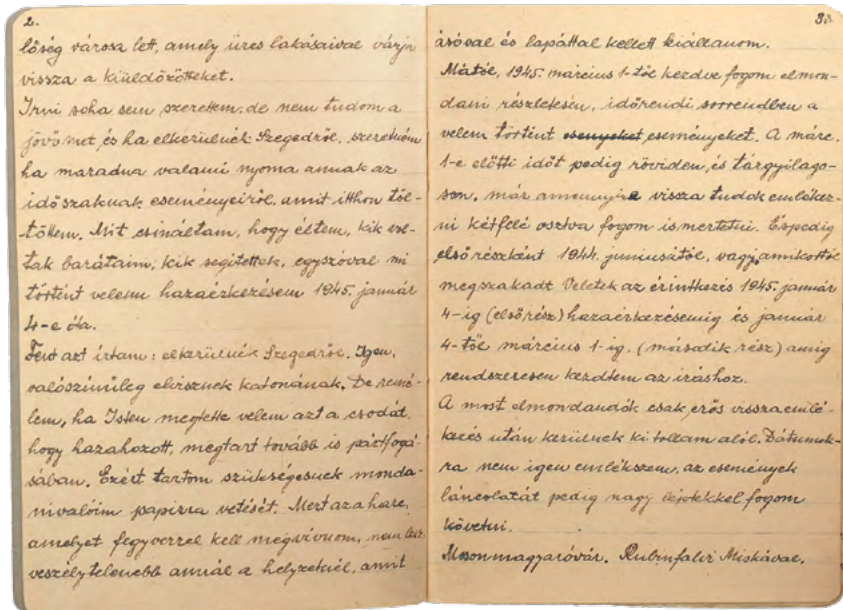
Illustration 5. A page of the diary of Béla Seifmann, copyright: Szeged Jewish Community's Archive

68 Béla Seifmann placed the following advertisement in the *Délmagyarország* newspaper on 1 March 1945: Anyone who has taken clothing or anything of value from widow Mrs József Seifmann or my sister Józsa for safekeeping, please report to Béla Seifmann, Tömörkény u. 8, between 12–2 noon or Lajta u. 6 within five days.

69 For the Joint's [short for American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee] activities in Szeged, see Pataricza, Dóra: "'Please give me back my nightstand lamp' – The Joint's activity in Szeged in the aftermath of the Holocaust", *JDC Archives Webinar*, Ruth and David Musher Fellowship, 28 April 2021 (online). Available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jmgAdeLAOU4&t=320s.

70 *Seifmann Béla visszaemlékezése. Egy munkaszolgálatos naplója*, ed. by Dóra Pataricza and András Lénárt (Budapest: HDKE, 2023), pp. 38–39.

Amidst the turmoil and devastation of the Holocaust, many Jews found themselves in complete despair, stripped of their homes, possessions, and even their loved ones. When reflecting on the harsh months after the Holocaust, Teri Löw, aged 14, granddaughter of chief rabbi Immánuel Löw (1854, Szeged – 1944, Budapest), highlights the crucial role played by Joint in ensuring their survival: "We owe it to Joint that they provided us with food during the first few months. I remember receiving packages from abroad, which contained clothing, food, Hershey's chocolate and cocoa".[71]

HOLDING THE LOOTERS ACCOUNTABLE?

After the war, cases of attempts to hide assets involving non-Jewish neighbours came to light. In one such case, a merchant named Béla Iritz from Szeged hid his valuable jewellery in a jar before his deportation and asked an acquaintance to keep it in a safe place. However, when he returned home, he discovered that the jar had been removed from the coal cellar where it was hidden, and its contents worth around half a million pengős were missing. A group of detectives conducted a thorough investigation, which led to the suspicion that the haulier who removed the coal and his workers had discovered the jewellery and kept it. One of the haulier's employees, János Liptai, eventually reported himself as an "honest finder" and returned several pieces of jewellery. However, the victim claimed that this was only some of the contents of the jar, and the police continued to detain Liptai and search for the missing jewellery and his possible accomplices.[72]

Legal disputes arose after the Second World War in attempts to punish those who had betrayed their Jewish neighbours in 1944. When the Germans entered the country in the spring of 1944, even experienced Gestapo leaders were surprised by the enormous number of denunciations and reports flooding their desks. An article written in September 1945 regarding the Szeged People's Court revealed the overwhelming number of reports and denunciations that had inundated German authorities' desks during the spring of 1944. In one case, Mr József Kopasz, aged 69, was held accountable for her extensive report to the Gestapo. She complained to the German authorities about her neighbours for the "crime" of hiding Jewish property. A witness stated that the accused's hatred had contaminated the air of the entire house, and she had been plotting against the Jewish residents for years.[73]

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[71]   Email correspondence between the author and Mrs János Horváth, née Teréz Löw, 19 May 2021.
[72]   *Szegedi Népszava*, 9 June 1945, p. 2.
[73]   'Besúgók napja a szegedi népbíróságon', *Szegedi Népszava*, 22 September 1945, p. 2.

It is essential to point out that while in some cases the "infrastructure" that may have allowed confiscated and looted possessions and properties to be returned to their Jewish owners – in addition to practical aspects, such as being in need of elementary everyday items – the post-traumatic experiences of the war cannot be overlooked in these processes. Victims were not only heavily burdened by their emotional trauma but were also struggling with a loss of trust in those they had considered their friends before the Second World War. Lacking such trust and fearing the potential results of inquiring about their lost possessions and properties may often have led them to give up on claiming their objects back, thus contributing to inhibited reconciliation with the local non-Jewish society. These instances also highlight that there were no systematic investigations into looted goods and there was a lack of organized efforts to achieve recovery and compensation.

CONCLUSION

This study on Jewish–non-Jewish relations in Szeged provides a glimpse into the complex dynamics that emerged between these two communities during and after the Second World War. What is particularly interesting about the Szeged case is the high number of survivors of all ages, which – with the help of documents in the archives of the Szeged Jewish Community – enables extensive exploration of these relations through personal accounts. In this study, the authors have aimed to give a comprehensive overview of the history of the Jews in Szeged and briefly present the roots of antisemitic sentiments in the region, the relationship between Jews and non-Jewish society, and the experiences of the survivors upon returning.

Through a wealth of primary sources such as letters, requests, testimonies from survivors, and newspaper articles, this study vividly illustrates the challenges faced by Jewish survivors during and after their repatriation to Szeged. It highlights that the confiscation and looting of property were not only conducted by the German army but also involved Hungarian authorities and the broader population, underscoring the collective responsibility in discussing the Holocaust in Hungary.

The loss of property and family members and the trauma of the Holocaust created a challenging environment that required immense resilience and perseverance to overcome. Survivors in Szeged, similarly to everywhere else, had to face several challenges, including struggles to reclaim confiscated property and efforts to reintegrate into the community with their pre-war neighbours, who – in many cases – not only abandoned them but actively persecuted them.

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Iryna Kashtalian
MINSK JEWS AFTER THE HOLOCAUST IN THE LAST DECADE OF STALIN'S RULE (1944–1953)

ABSTRACT

This article discusses the challenges faced by Jews in the capital of Belarus after the end of the Nazi occupation. On one hand, Jews struggled to adapt to peaceful life in places marked by their personal tragedies during the Holocaust. On the other hand, they suffered antisemitism in the late Stalinist period, facing restrictions from both the state and discrimination from ordinary city residents who believed the Soviet propaganda. Jews sought different survival strategies to become "their own" in society. Some chose to "wear a mask", while others remained committed to their Jewish identity.

KEYWORDS:

Stalinism, antisemitism, daily life, identity, cosmopolitanism, Holocaust

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INTRODUCTION

Jews have long lived in the Belarusian territories, with the first mentions of them dating back to the fourteenth century. Due to the Pale of Settlement that was established in the Russian Empire, many Jews settled in the towns and cities of Belarus. The tragic events of the twentieth century drastically affected their population, and today the Jewish minority constitutes less than 1% of the population. In conversations with Belarusian schoolchildren today, one can often notice that they are unaware of the rich multicultural history of Belarus before the Second World War, and it is unusual for them to hear the Jewish names of world-famous figures who originated from these lands. Minsk, as the capital, is no exception, and its example reflects broader trends. It symbolically illustrates the path to the current situation, showing how Jewish life continued in the last decade of Stalin's rule, and how it was possible to live on after the Holocaust.

According to the first Soviet census of 1926, Jews made up 40.8% of Minsk's population, ranking second after Belarusians (42.4%). By 1939, Belarusians became the majority (54.8%), while the percentage of Jews (30.8%) decreased due to migration to rural areas and industrial regions of the Soviet Union. The percentage of Russians remained almost unchanged during these years (9.8%).[1] However, by the 1959 census Jews accounted for 14% of the population in Minsk (38,800), with these considering Yiddish their native language. Gradually, the culture and literature in this language, along with the schools and scientific institutions where it was used, disappeared.[2] These were the consequences of the Holocaust and the antisemitic policies pursued by the Soviet state, as well as denunciations from "ordinary citizens" who supported the official policy and could significantly complicate the lives of Jews who sought to maintain their identity. Witness Natalya Kabakova recalled:

> After the war, we lived in a communal apartment. My mother was even afraid to speak Yiddish with us because there was this bully of a neighbour I remember. Anna Fyodorovna. A completely illiterate woman, she was a Party member. She worked at the Officers' Club, not even as a cashier but as a ticket collector... And she would say in the kitchen, 'I'm suffocating among the Jews.' You see, no one could argue with her.[3]

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1   Thomas Bohn, '*Minski fenomen*'. *Haradskoe planavanne i ŭrbanizacyja ŭ Saveckim Sajuze paslja 1945 g.* (Minsk: Zmicer Kolas, 2016), p. 90.
2   Èlissa Bemporad, *Prevraščenie v sovetskich evreev: Bol'ševistskij èksperiment v Minske* (Moskva: Političeskaja ènciklopedija, 2016), p. 277.
3   Nataliia Kabakova, 25 April 1996, Brooklyn, USA, videotaped interview by the USC Shoah Foundation, 14665.

Before the Second World War, Belarusians and Jews were part of the same social space. The tragedy of the Shoah significantly changed the national composition of Belarus. According to official data from the Extraordinary State Commission for the Investigation of Crimes Committed by the German-Fascist Invaders, more than 2.2 million people in the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic (BSSR) were killed during the war, which means almost every fourth resident perished.[4] Among them, Jewish losses were particularly severe: up to 720,000 (72.7%) of the 990,000 Jews[5] who were residents of Belarus at that time (approximately 10% of the BSSR population).[6] More than half of those killed were so-called "Western Jews" from the territories illegally annexed by the Soviet Union in September 1939 according to the secret protocol of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact.[7]

In Minsk alone, about 327,000 people were killed, but it is not known how many of them were native residents and how many were voluntary or forced migrants who happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time.[8] We do not know the exact number of those who survived the Minsk Ghetto,[9] nor do we know how many of them remained in the city where their loved ones were murdered after 1944–1945. How did those Jews from the Belarusian capital who survived the Holocaust feel?

In an attempt to ease the pain of trauma, they could move to other regions of the USSR (for example, to Moscow or Leningrad). Former prisoner of the Minsk Ghetto, Alena Drapkina, recalled:

> Peaceful life was quickly being restored in Minsk, and I had a good job. But it was very difficult for me to walk through the streets of the city where my parents, my little brother (all my relatives) had been killed. My mother's sister, Aunt Manya (even more than a sister: my mother's twin), lived with her family in Leningrad and survived the blockade. I moved to Leningrad and enrolled in dental school.[10]

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4   Jaŭhen Novik, Henadz' Marcul', Ihar Kačalaŭ, *Historyja Belarusi ŭ 2 častkach. Č. 2. Ljuty 1917–2004 h.* (Minsk: Vyšèjšaja škola, 2006), p. 280.
5   Including the Białystok region, which was part of the BSSR before the war, the number rises to 894 thousand. *Cholokost v Belarusi: tragedija i pamjat': dokumenty i materialy*, ed. by Vjačeslav Selemenev (Minsk: Kolorgrad, 2022), p. 26.
6   Evgenij Rozenblat and Irina Elenskaja, 'Dinamika čislennosti i rasselenija belorusskich evreev v XX veke', *Diaspory*, 4 (2002), 27–52.
7   Oleg Budnickij, 'Sliškom poljaki dlja Sovetov, sliškom evrei dlja poljakov: pol'skie evrei v SSSR v 1939–1945', *Ab Imperio*, 4 (2015), 213–36 (pp. 213–14).
8   Bohn, *Minski fenomen*, p. 92.
9   According to researchers, up to 80 thousand local Jews were in the ghetto. Leonid Smilovickij, 'Sud'ba Minskogo getto', in *Evrei Belarusi v gody Cholokosta (1941–1944 gg.): Sbornik izbrannych statej* (Tel Aviv: Izdanie Tel Aviva, 5782/2021), p. 212. The number of survivors is mostly estimated by former prisoners, who mention figures of up to 10 thousand people. CityDog, '«Rebenok zaplakal ot goloda – i ego zadušili». Minčane vspominajut pro svoe strašnoe detstvo v getto', *CityDog.io* [n.d.] <https://citydog.io/post/ghetto-deti/> [accessed on 12 June 2024]. But these numbers are not confirmed by precise documentary evidence.
10 Pamjat, 'Alena Drapkina', *Centropa* [n.d.] <https://pamjat.centropa.org/by/bijahrafija/alena-drapkina-blr/> [accessed on 12 June 2024].

At the same time, several thousand Jewish families who had survived the Nazi occupation in nearby towns resettled in Minsk. A certain number of Jews also returned from evacuation.

STRANGERS AMONG THEIR OWN

The city of Minsk, as the capital of the BSSR, was a prestigious city to where people from all over the republic sought to move, and the situation there became indicative of the official attitude toward Jews. The concentration of those who believed Soviet propaganda was higher here than in other parts of Belarus at the time.

Soviet authorities treated Jews in accordance with the antisemitic policies that became particularly evident after the establishment of the independent state of Israel in 1948 and the assassination in Minsk of Solomon Mikhoels, the chairman of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee (JAFC). Official authorities actively restricted Jews in both public and religious life. It was convenient to officially blame Jews for all misfortunes and failures. Jewish nationalists and saboteurs were "discovered" everywhere. Under the guise of protecting the interests of the Belarusian people, repressions were carried out against doctors, geneticists, and the Party bureaucracy to remove Jews from medicine, trade, and leadership positions. Minsk, as the centre of republican institutions where people from all over Belarus gathered, witnessed the largest 'purges' of Jews.

In the late 1940s, Jews played a noticeable role in the economy, education, scientific research, culture, and arts of the BSSR. As of 1946, Jews made up 6.1% of the managerial staff in the BSSR: 279 people out of 4,569 (with Russians and Belarusians in the majority). By 1949, this number decreased to 240 people out of 4,420 (5.4%).[11] In 1947, among the nomenklatura in the Voroshilov district of Minsk, there were 748 Jews out of 3,438 individuals. In the Belarusian Academy of Sciences, the 429 scientific staff members included only 63 Jews.[12]

Starting in 1947, purges began in ministries and departments, including the Ministry of State Security (MGB), where Jews were removed from many significant positions. Witness Syamyon Shkolnik recalled:

[11] *Istorija mogilevskogo evrejstva: Dokumenty i ljudi: nauč.-populjar. očerki i žizneopisanija*, ed. by Aleksandr Litin and Ida Šenderovič (Mahilëŭ: AmelijaPrint, 2011), II, III, p. 23.
[12] Leonid Smilovickij, 'Delo vračej', in *Evrei Belorussii: do i posle Cholokosta: Sbornik izbrannych statej* (Jerusalem: Jerusalem Institute, 5781/2020), p. 140.

I was dismissed in 1953 due to staff reductions. I was left without a job. At that time, there was only one reason: nationality. They dismissed the entire design bureau, which mostly consisted of Jews. My friend Kaplan, the chief engineer, the factory director Pulbyansky, and Yudzelevich were all dismissed due to staff reductions. I was the last one because they needed me until the station went into production.[13]

The MGB of the BSSR, among other things, uncovered and eliminated an "anti-Soviet Jewish nationalist" organization that had allegedly carried out sabotage in the republic's healthcare system. Shneidman, the head of the Main Pharmaceutical Directorate of the BSSR, was declared the leader of this organization. He was accused of creating a network of collaborators who worked in pharmacies across the republic, stealing medications and other scarce items. More than 140 pharmaceutical workers were allegedly involved in the scheme. According to Nikolai Gusarov, the Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Belarus, and Lavrentiy Tsanava, the Minister of State Security of the BSSR, these people met and conducted anti-Soviet agitation, slandering the Communist Party. The accused believed that Jews were being treated negatively both in the Soviet Union as a whole and in the BSSR in particular, and that Soviet leadership was encouraging antisemitism.[14]

The notorious "case of the JAFC" primarily targeted active Jewish figures, particularly intellectuals, leading to a significant number of Jews from various institutions being accused of espionage and anti-Soviet nationalist activities, arrested, sentenced, and even executed. The MGB created other cases that similarly punished a number of Jewish intellectuals. Some of the names of repressed Jews in Belarus included soil scientist Elizary Magoram, historians Moisei Potash and Yefim Shlosberg, and poets Isaac Platner and Moisei Teif.[15] For lesser-known figures, administrative measures were often used (dismissal from work, obstacles in finding employment, expulsion from the Party, denial of admission to higher education institutions, etc.), but only rarely did they face arrest.[16]

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13   Semen Shkol'nik, 3 July 1996, Herzlya, Israel, videotaped interview by the USC Shoah Foundation, 18011.
14   Report to Panceljaimon Panamarenka, Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party (b) of Belarus, and Viktor Abakumov, Minister of State Security of the USSR, from Lavrentiy Tsanava, Minister of State Security of the BSSR, 7.10.1946, National Archive of the Republic of Belarus (hereafter NARB), Minsk, Fund 4, Inventory 29, File 574, p. 49; Report to Panceljaimon Panamarenka, Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Belarus, from Lavrentiy Tsanava, Minister of State Security of the BSSR, 12.10.1946, NARB, Minsk, Fund 4, Inventory 29, File 574, pp. 64–65.
15   *Vozvraščennye imena: Sotrudniki AN Belarusi, postradavshie v period stalinskich repressij*, ed. by Aleksandr Machnač and Nikolaj Tokarev (Minsk: Nauka i technika, 1992), pp. 70, 89–90, 113–14.
16   Gennadij Kostyrčenko, 'Ideologičeskie čistki vtoroj poloviny 40-ch godov: psevdopatrioty protiv psevdokosmopolitov', in *Sovetskoe obščestvo: vozniknovenie, razvitie, istoričeskij final: in two volumes*, ed. by Jurij Afanas'ev, (Moscow, 1997), II, pp. 125–26.

The main accusation against the intelligentsia was cosmopolitanism. Antisemitism was a central aspect of the fight against cosmopolitanism, although this was not officially mentioned. The term "cosmopolitan" was vague and thus became extremely flexible. Teachers were particularly vulnerable and could be sent to "courts of honour", which were most common in 1947 and were dissolved in 1949. The search for cosmopolitans led to increased scrutiny of Jewish employees in various organizations and departments. These actions were not widely known to the general population, but intellectuals, especially those in the humanities, suffered most from the anti-cosmopolitan campaign.[17]

The use of repressive measures against so-called "untrustworthy" individuals also aimed to brand them as violators of the socialist legal system. For this reason, criminal or formal pretexts were sought to restrict the rights of Jews. For example, under the guise of democratic procedures, a Jewish teacher with extensive professional experience was denied an award during a university's anniversary celebrations. The department head had included her in the list of potential honourees, but the Party and the union arranged the vote in such a way that the decision was negative. Publicly, this was presented as a "resolution of the department".[18]

An example of how Jewish employees were purged in the BSSR was the case of Faddee-Feifel Ioffe, a lecturer in the Department of Theory and Practice of Soviet Journalism at Belarusian State University (BSU) and head of the Propaganda Department at the newspaper *Sovietskaya Belorussia*.[19] He was publicly criticized at Party organization meetings of various levels and was given a severe Party reprimand, in addition to being dismissed from his teaching position at BSU. In response to his appeal to the Central Committee of the Communist Party, it was stated that Ioffe had been justifiably criticized and had been dismissed from his position at BSU for not having an academic degree and for being primarily employed at *Sovietskaya Belorussia*. This reason for his dismissal was questionable as there was a shortage of qualified staff in Belarusian higher education institutions after the war. As of 1947, 1,325 scientific workers were employed by Belarusian universities, of whom over 1,000 had no academic degree, including 131 department heads and even three out of seven professors.[20]

17   Ibid.
18   Valjancina Chejnman, born in 1922, 25 March 2009, Minsk, Belarusian Oral History Archive (hereafter BOHA), 2(2)–67–203.
19   Report from Stepin, Head of the Propaganda and Agitation Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Bolsheviks of Belorussia to the Propaganda and Agitation Department of the Central Committee of the VKP (Bolsheviks) on the results of the verification of the claim of Faddee-Feifel Ioffe, Head of the Propaganda Department of the editorial office of the newspaper "Sovetskaya Belorussia", 8.8.49, NARB, Minsk, Fund 4, Inventory 62, File 1, pp. 221–25.
20   Georgij Korzenko, *Nauchnaja intelligencija Belorussii v 1944–1990 gg.* (Minsk: Fico A-SKAD, 1995), p. 34.

The Personnel Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Belarus (CP(b)B) collected information on the composition of students studying and graduating from higher educational institutions, monitoring the number of Jews among them. In June 1947, a report was submitted to Nikolai Gusarov regarding the "abnormal" staffing of the Belarusian Law Institute, the Belarusian Polytechnic Institute, the Minsk State Medical Institute, and the Institute of National Economy of the BSSR. For example, it was reported that the Belarusian Law Institute was poorly staffed with Belarusian national cadres: out of 26 scientific staff members, only 7 (26.9%) were Belarusians, while 17 were Jews (65.9%) and 2 were Russians (7.69%). There were no Belarusian teachers in the Department of Marxism-Leninism. A similar situation was observed among students: out of 467 students, 169 were Belarusians (36.18%), 198 were Jews (42.40%), and 90 were Russians (19.27%). From this, it was concluded that the Belarusian Law Institute was experiencing a decrease in the number of Belarusian national cadres among both the teaching staff and the student body. It was emphasized that the administration did not understand, and did not want to understand, the political importance of training Belarusian national cadres.[21]

At the same time, the Central Committee of the CP(b)B was not concerned that Russians predominated among students in the Belarusian Agricultural Institute (452 out of 813 – 55.6%), the Belarusian Veterinary Institute (204 out of 382 – 53.4%), the Brest Teachers' Institute (88 out of 201 – 43.7%), and the Belarusian Theatre Institute (32 out of 69 – 46.4%).[22]

The fight against cosmopolitans could be used by interested parties to free up positions for other more "reliable" cadres. This was the case, for example, at the Faculty of Philology at Belarusian State University (BSU). A group of Jewish lecturers was opposed by another group with more official support, led by Ivan Gutarov, the head of the Department of Russian Literature and a "partisan" professor. Gradually, the positions held by Jewish lecturers were taken by people considered more "suitable".

Lev Barag, who taught ancient Russian literature and folklore, was one of the affected educators. His folklore theory was publicly criticized

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[21] Reference about "abnormal" staffing of the Belarusian Law, Polytechnic, Medical Institutes and the Institute of National Economy of the BSSR for the Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party (b) of Belarus Nikolai Gusarov from the instructor of the propaganda and agitation department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party (b) of Belarus M. Karol, 21.6.1947, NARB, Minsk, Fund 4, Inventory 29, File 571, pp. 34–36.
[22] Summary table on the composition of students of higher education institutions of the Byelorussian SSR, 20.10.1947, NARB, Minsk, Fund 4, Inventory 29, File 571, p. 168; Summary table on the composition of students graduating from universities of the Belarusian SSR in 1948, 20.10.1947, NARB, Minsk, Fund 4, Inventory 29, File 571, p. 169.

in a lead article in the newspaper *Literature and Art* on 13 March 1948.[23] In the same year, the BSU Academic Council removed Lev Barag from teaching courses and then dismissed him for making "serious political errors" and refusing to correct them. It was claimed that he "himself admitted at the Academic Council that for 15 years he had been promoting bourgeois objectivism and frivolity".[24]

At the same time, in interviews conducted by this article's author, two former students of Barag who graduated in 1953 had a different opinion of him. For them, Barag was "a gifted teacher by the grace of God":[25]

> As a lecturer, he was simply excellent. When he delivered his lecture, it was as if he hypnotized the entire course. His listeners. In appearance, you wouldn't say he was very attractive. Tall, thin, with a big nose and lips. A typical Jew. But as a lecturer, he was exceptional. Everything was in his head. He would pull a small card from his pocket to support his ideas... and quote something... During a two-hour lecture, he would transfer about 10 or 20 of these cards from one pocket to the other [Laughs]... Barag also never sat down; he stood the whole time. He was so emotional that it seemed he might fall over at any moment. And this passion was passed on to the students. They would all sit there with their mouths open, as they say. That was his special power... his influence over the audience.[26]

Despite potential consequences, some people tried to hire Jewish professionals.[27] Exceptions could be made for specialists with highly sought-after skills. An example of this is the story of respondent Natalia P., who was the head of a department at the Minsk Polytechnic Institute:

> And what I could do, I did; I still managed to get Jews hired quietly. For example, I hired Galya Ivkina. There were five Party committee meetings because of this!... Galina Yevseyevna was Jewish... she graduated from BSU, a PhD. I wanted to hire her – but it was not allowed! I couldn't hire Galya Ivkina because of the 'fifth point' [the section in personal forms indicating nationality]. So I said:

23   Report to Nikolai Gusarov, Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Belarus "About the article by V. Galperin 'about the vestiges of bourgeois nationalism in Belarusian literary studies', published in the 'Literaturnaya gazeta' on 12 May 1948" from Ivan Gutorov, Head of the Literature and Art Department of the Propaganda and Agitation Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Belarus, 18.5.48, NARB, Minsk, Fund 4, Inventory 29, File 651, p. 76.
24   Ibid., p. 78.
25   Valjancina A., born in 1930, 28 February 2009, Minsk, BOHA, 2(2)–54–136, 138.
26   Uladzimir Damaševič, born in 1928, 22 March 2009, Minsk, BOHA, 2(2)–62–174–176.
27   Shkol'nik, 3 July 1996, Herzlya, Israel, USC Shoah Foundation, 18011.

'Oh, she has such a unique specialty. You know, she is very much needed for [the institute]... We don't have such a [specialist]... and we consult the entire institute, all the special departments. What do you mean?' In general, the Party committee met five times because of this issue. They summoned me, scolded me, reproached me, and everything you can think of, but I stood my ground: 'I want to hire her and that's it.' And so, they hired her. Do you think as a lecturer? No, as a lab assistant! 'If you want her so badly, you can take her as a lab assistant.' But then I could easily assign her any task as a lab assistant, so I asked her to give lectures. And she taught well, and then the students were on our side, you see? So, it was easy to get her into a teaching position later. But there were five meetings! Just to hire a PhD as a lab assistant!"[28]

Attempts to fight against the virtually legalized antisemitism could be punished. Altschuler, the head of the investigative department of the district prosecutor's office in Minsk, closed a case against a woman named A., claiming that it was initiated solely because she was "Jewish by nationality". His actions were later deemed a violation of the Party members' code of conduct.[29]

At the beginning of 1953, the persecution of Jews continued with the notorious "Doctors' Plot", which "exposed" a conspiracy by Kremlin doctors against the Party and state leaders.[30] In Belarus, Jews were also removed from medical practice. Jewish medical professionals frequently experienced antisemitic attacks from some of their patients.[31] Historian Leanid Smilavitsky studied the reaction of workers to the "Doctors' Plot", which reflected the attitudes towards Jews in the Sovietized part of society. People, brainwashed by propaganda, went so far as to claim that the death of Mikhoels was evidence of Jewish guilt, believing that Jews had killed him themselves to hide his exposure as an enemy of the people.[32] Some even accused Jews of being responsible for the Holocaust itself, alleging that they were passive, did not resist the enemy, and were traitors. They argued that after the victory Jews forgot the role of the Soviet state, which had supposedly saved them from total annihilation. In a culmination of

[28]   Natallja P., born in 1917, 15 March 2009, Minsk, BOHA, 2(2)–84–296.
[29]   Report to the Representative of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks Lopukhov from Lavrentiy Tsanava, Minister of State Security of the BSSR, 14.11.1946, NARB, Minsk, Fund 4, Inventory 29, File 574, p. 33.
[30]   Elena Zubkova, *Poslevoennoe sovetskoe obščestvo: politika i povsednevnost'. 1945–1953* (Moscow: ROSSPÈN, 1999), pp. 206–07.
[31]   Sarra Leyenson, 20 October 1997, Queens New York, USA, videotaped interview by the USC Shoah Foundation, 35029.
[32]   Smilovickij, 'Delo vračej', p. 154.

accusations, some people called for the deportation of Jews, and there were even demands for their execution.[33]

Nevertheless, in general, if there were no direct conflicts nor specific ideological pressure, the situation in work collectives was somewhat better.[34] However, individuals with a "Jewish" appearance or Jewish names could still become targets of persecution.

The negative image of Jews that was being created often led others to use them as "scapegoats" for accusations. Such antisemitism was more prevalent among poorly educated urban groups who believed state propaganda, or among individuals interested in harming a specific Jew professionally or in gaining advantages in property disputes. For example, A. Siamenchanka, the chairman of the regional court, was accused of bribery. Later, he claimed in a letter to Mikhail Zimyanin, Secretary of the Central Committee of the CP(b)B, that he had been slandered by Jews who profited from bribes.[35]

PRESERVING IDENTITY

The return to normal life after the war was difficult for Jews, who, under the influence of the Holocaust, did not feel sufficiently protected and accepted as "their own" in society. They had legitimate fears of poor treatment and possible violence against them. Witness Sofia Vaingauz, for example, was afraid to say she was Jewish after the war because she had heard about Jewish families killed by partisans.[36] She thought they might use violence against her, and she was scared. Another witness recalled her return to Minsk:

> We were brought to the city of Minsk, where I was born. And to my great regret, what I heard when we were unloaded at Vakzalnaja Square, and there were a lot of people. And everyone went their own way. And what was the first thing we heard? 'Look, look,' someone said, 'they were killing them, but didn't kill them all...' It was so frightening, so painful. We thought we were returning home to our place. But, unfortunately, that didn't happen. And it didn't happen later either.[37]

33   Ibid., pp. 160–61, 163–64.
34   Mariia Gil'movskaia, 24 January 1997, Brooklyn, USA, videotaped interview by the USC Shoah Foundation, 25311; Chejnman, 25 March 2009, Minsk, BOHA, 2(2)–67–203.
35   Letter from A. Sjamenchanka, chairman of the regional court, to Mikhail Zimjanin, secretary of the CP(b)B Central Committee, 30.12.47, NARB, Minsk, Fund 4, Inventory 29, File 686, p. 14.
36   Sofia Vaingauz, 12 January 1998, Brooklyn, USA, videotaped interview by the USC Shoah Foundation, 38099.
37   Raisa Shkol'nik, 3 July 1996, Herzliya, Israel, videotaped interview by the USC Shoah Foundation, 18012.

Efforts to reclaim Jewish property that had been taken during the war also strained relations between Jews and local non-Jews, who, in the difficult post-war poverty, might not have wanted to acknowledge this appropriation and displayed individual antisemitism.[38] Attempts to reclaim housing occupied by others were especially contentious. A number of Jewish apartments and houses were occupied by officials of republican and regional organizations. Not everyone was willing to let Jews return to their previous apartments. People who fought for objective consideration of their cases could become victims of repression.

David-Khaim Kisel, a prosecutor of the Voroshilov district of Minsk, was expelled from the Party and arrested in April 1949 for exceeding his official powers in returning housing to demobilized soldiers and their families. Despite the intervention of the prosecutor of the BSSR and his heroic wartime activities, he was forced to sign statements that, due to his nationalist views, he had illegally evicted many Soviet citizens, including families of servicemen, from apartments and settled Jews in these apartments using fictitious documents and false witnesses.[39] Kisel was sentenced to ten years in prison; in 1955, he was rehabilitated on the political charges but was left with a conviction for abuse of power.[40]

For Jews who survived the Holocaust in Belarus, life was difficult because they were automatically classified as those who had remained under occupation, which was suspicious to the authorities. After the war, collaboration with the Germans was the most common accusation, and investigative bodies targeted those who survived the ghetto, especially if they had not managed to join the partisan detachments.[41] A notable case involved Polish Jews, employees of a radio factory moved to Minsk from Vilnius before the war. Since they were not evacuated, they ended up in the Minsk Ghetto. Only a few miraculously survived, but then they were persecuted by security agencies as "traitors" and sent to the Gulag.[42]

Survivors of the ghetto who stayed in the BSSR and later contributed their testimonies to the Shoah Foundation Archive in California recalled the distrust they faced from the repressive authorities. Those who had endured the trials of the Holocaust had to justify their survival.[43] For instance, Galina Kulchaeva recalled: "In the 1950s, I was summoned to

[38] Franziska Exeler, *Ghosts of War. Nazi Occupation and Its Aftermath in Soviet Belarus* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2022), pp. 194–195, 199.

[39] Report to Panceljaimon Panamarenka, 7.10.1946, NARB, Minsk, Fund 4, Inventory 29, File 574, p. 57.

[40] Leonid Smilovickij, 'Bor'ba evreev Belorussii za vozvrat svoego imuščestva i žilišč v pervoe poslevoennoe desjatiletie. 1944–1954 gg.', *Belarus' u XX stahoddzi*, 1 (2002), 161–82 (p. 176).

[41] Exeler, *Ghosts of War*, p. 171.

[42] Veniamin Pumpjanskij, '«Evrejskaja» istorija odnogo belorusskogo zavoda: Vospominanija Veniamina Natanoviča Pumpjanskogo', *Tsaytshrift, Časopis dlja dasledavannja jaŭrėjskaj historyi, dèmagrafii i èkanomiki, litaratury, movy i ètnagrafii*, 7.2 (2012), 128–44.

[43] Mariya Zamostina, 9 February 1996, Brooklyn, USA, videotaped interview by the USC Shoah Foundation, 11915.

the KGB...They asked: 'Tell us, how did you manage to stay alive?' I replied: 'Is it bad that I survived? Is that a bad thing?' 'No, just tell us'".[44] In addition to the threat of criminal prosecution, former prisoners faced problems obtaining passports, housing, work, and other necessities. The situation became even more complicated when there was no one to verify a person's identity. Such people were often suspected of treason.

Another nuance that drew more attention from the authorities was being in Nazi camps outside the Soviet Union. This may have been due to officials' concerns about the "influence of Western intelligence services" and the potentially unfavourable comparisons with life in Western countries for those who were uninformed.[45] Proving one's innocence was incredibly difficult for a Jew who had survived a German concentration camp. Knowing the Nazis' attitude towards Jews, the Soviet authorities doubly suspected them. Anna Gurevich recalled the story of her mother:

> She fled on foot like all the refugees. She came to Minsk. Of course, she had to cross the border. They questioned her. The KGB [then the NKGB] asked everything at the border, who she was. And here [in Minsk], they didn't believe her either. My mother needed to work. She needed documents – a passport. And they didn't believe her – they called her a spy again. How many times could she be accused of being a spy? 'Jews cannot survive in a concentration camp in Germany, no way, no way at all.' And my mother did not work for a long time.[46]

It is therefore not surprising that survivors might conceal their time in camps and ghettos or their work in the resistance, especially during this last decade of Stalin's rule, which they considered the most dangerous period in terms of the threat of repressions; the level of fear of suffering from them was extremely high.[47] Not only could former ghetto prisoners be suspected of "betrayal", but also their rescuers.

In the early postwar years, there were illusions that the authorities would not interfere with the restoration of Jewish life, but this proved to be untrue. Although there were initially positive developments – a synagogue reopened in Minsk, books by Hirsch Smolyar about the Minsk Ghetto were

44   Galina Kul'chaeva, 7 January 1998, Nalchik, Russia, videotaped interview by the USC Shoah Foundation, 38625.
45   Wladimir S., Interview aus dem Archiv Zwangsarbeit 1939–1945, Belarus – RWTH Aachen, za0009, Transkript.
46   Anna Gurevich, 10 September 1997, Minsk, Belarus, videotaped interview by the USC Shoah Foundation, 41691.
47   Gil'movskaia, 24 January 1997, Brooklyn, USA, USC Shoah Foundation, 25311; Kul'chaeva, 7 January 1998, Nalchik, Russia, USC Shoah Foundation, 38625.

published in Yiddish and Russian,[48] and in August 1946, at the initiative of Jewish believers, a Black Obelisk was erected at Yama to commemorate the victims of the 2–3 March 1942,[49] pogrom in the Minsk Ghetto – a request to the first secretary of the Central Committee of the CP(b)B, Pancelajmon Panamarenka, by Jewish cultural figures to reopen Jewish schools in the BSSR was rejected as "Zionist propaganda".[50]

After the war, some of the Jewish population experienced a religious revival. Believers began petitioning for the creation of religious associations and the reopening of synagogues. Before the war, most of the synagogues had been converted into cultural and educational institutions, and the few remaining ones were destroyed and burned during the German occupation.[51] Stalin's antisemitic policies did not allow the broad registration of Jewish communities or the opening of synagogues. The authorities explained their refusals to open synagogues by claiming that most of the Jews' requests were motivated by the desire to promote nationalist views. From 1944 to 1953, only two synagogues operated continuously under the threat of closure in the BSSR: one in Minsk and one in the district centre of Kalinkavichy in the Palesse region.[52] Other synagogues, like the one in Babruisk, if officially functioning, did so only briefly.

The Jewish community in Minsk was registered in June 1946 and was granted part of the building of the Cold Synagogue on Niamiha Street. It was headed by Rabbi Yaakov-Yosef Berger, a native of Kaunas, until 1956. In 1964, the synagogue was closed, and the building was demolished to make way for a new house.[53]

Most Jews in Minsk had distanced themselves from religion and identified as Soviet citizens, often marrying non-Jews.[54] However, there were those who secretly preserved their traditions. The observance of rituals depended on the family and how willing they were to endure hardships for the sake of their Jewishness. For safety reasons, children were often not raised in religious traditions and were not taught Yiddish. Witness Natalya Kabakova recalled:

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48   Hersh Smolar, פון מינסקער געטאָ (*Fun Minsker geto*) (Moskve: Melukhe-farlag "Der Emes", 1946); Hersh Smolar, *Mstiteli getto* (Moscow: OGIZ – Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo «Der Èmes», 1947).
49   Uladzimir Navicki, 'Partyjna-dzjaržaŭnaja palityka da rèligii ŭ pasljavaenny čas', in *Kanfesii na Belarusi (k. XVIII–XX st.)*, ed. by Navicki Uladzimir (Minsk, 1998), pp. 260–61.
50   Bemporad, *Prevraščenie v sovetskich*, p. 277.
51   Aljaksandra Veraščagina and Aljaksandr Gurko, *Historyja kanfesij na Belarusi ŭ druhoj palove XX st.* (Minsk: ISPD, 1999), p. 30.
52   More than 10 synagogues and houses of worship before the war. Bemporad, *Prevraščenie v sovetskich*, pp. 274–75.
53   Navicki, 'Partyjna-dzjaržaŭnaja palityka, pp. 234–63, 260.
54   Bemporad, *Prevraščenie v sovetskich*, p. 273.

Of course, I understand a little Yiddish because it's somewhat similar to German. I studied German in school. I only remember that… when my mother and aunt wanted us not to understand, they would speak Yiddish to each other.[55]

In everyday life, religiosity in the context of living in the Soviet state was a form of preserving identity and, at the same time, an additional factor of potential persecution for Jews. Therefore, adherence to rituals was kept secret to minimize risks, and informal information exchange was very important. Celebrating major religious holidays at home was the most common way to maintain religious observance, as opposed to community involvement or attending synagogue. It was especially the older generation that adhered to the traditions. For Passover, matzah was made secretly, and Jewish New Year, Yom Kippur, Sukkot, and other holidays were celebrated. For those who kept the traditions, it was important to find a ritual slaughterer and ensure kosher compliance.[56] One witness recalled how traditions were maintained:

We didn't observe any holidays. Although I remember that when it was Passover, matzah would somehow appear at home. I remember it well. And I remember vividly from my childhood memory that, for a long time, someone would periodically visit us [possibly an active member of the Jewish community?]. And I think it was on Jewish New Year, when a memorial prayer – Yizkor or Kaddish [author's note – Yizkor is a memorial prayer recited four times a year in the synagogue; Kaddish is a prayer about the aspiration for ultimate redemption and salvation] – was being recited. My mother would pay him to say it for someone; I don't know for whom. He would visit for a long, long time, and then he disappeared. I think he passed away. Later, when it became more relaxed, we still had matzah at home.[57]

In this case, it was fortunate that certain practices in the family were preserved until the end of the Soviet Union, allowing for their revival later.[58] Overall, with the passing of the older generation, the transmission

55   Kabakova, 25 April 1996, Brooklyn, USA, USC Shoah Foundation, 14665.
56   CityDog, 'Minskie diaspory: evrei (Minsk diasporas: Jews)', *CityDog.io*, [n.d.] <https://citydog.by/long/diaspory-jews/> [accessed on 12 June 2024].
57   Kabakova, 25 April 1996, Brooklyn, USA, USC Shoah Foundation, 14665.
58   Grigori Ch., Interview aus dem Archiv Zwangsarbeit 1939–1945, Belarus – IBB Minsk, za034, Transkript; Sarra Kossperskaia, 27 September 1997, Osipovichi, Belarus, videotaped interview by the USC Shoah Foundation, 44150.

of information on the topic of religion often ceased, and the younger generation knew nothing about Judaism.

For many Jews, the pressure to renounce their identity after the war became an additional severe trauma. The so-called "fifth column" (mandatory indication of nationality in a personal form) closed off certain professional and educational opportunities.[59] Jews were considered people of questionable loyalty and potential enemies of the state. To avoid conflicts with higher management, those responsible for staffing often did not hire Jews even if they were the most qualified candidates.[60] They were not told they didn't get the job because they were Jewish, but the refusal was explained with "any [legal] reason" without clear criteria.[61]

Jews were acutely aware of the discrimination they faced due to their nationality and employed various means to overcome this negative practice and, if possible, to help other Jews.[62] When they could, they tried to support others in gaining admission to educational institutions or obtaining employment where they had influence.[63] To keep their positions, Jewish professionals tried to be the best and indispensable.[64] Others sought to avoid discrimination by changing their names, for example, to their spouse's surname. Some continued to use names they had adopted during the war to avoid being identified as Jews by the German occupation authorities.[65] For instance, witness Yanina S. recalled:

> There was a girl in my school, a class younger than me; her name
> was Rachel Rozberg. She was saved, rescued by Russians here. And
> after the war, we met, and she started hugging me... There were
> many people around, and she hugged me and whispered in my ear:
> 'My name is Nina, they call me Nina now'... I said, 'I know, I know.'
> So I wouldn't say that she was Rachel Rozberg.[66]

After the war, such behaviour could have negative consequences because there were people who tried to expose Jews who hid their true identity.[67] This period was also difficult for Jewish children of school age,

59   Chejnman, 25 March 2009, Minsk, BOHA, 2(2)–67–203.
60   Natallja P., 15 March 2009, Minsk, BOHA, 2(2)–84–296.
61   Chejnman, 25 March 2009, Minsk, BOHA, 2(2)–67–203.
62   Mariia Berlina, 10 August 1997, St Petersburg, Russia, videotaped interview by the USC Shoah Foundation, 35003; Efim Ioffe, 13 November 1995, Kiriat Motzkin, Israel, videotaped interview by the USC Shoah Foundation, 5749.
63   Mariia Aizenshtat, 11 January 1998, Qiryat Gat, Israel, videotaped interview by the USC Shoah Foundation, 39742; Gil'movskaia, 24 January 1997, Brooklyn, USA, USC Shoah Foundation, 25311.
64   Chejnman, 25 March 2009, Minsk, BOHA, 2(2)–67–203.
65   Sofiia Chernina, 2 May 1997, Yekaterinburg, USA, videotaped interview by the USC Shoah Foundation, 30952; Aleksandr Shmyrkin, 29 December 1997, Kiryat Gat, Israel, videotaped interview by the USC Shoah Foundation, 39401.
66   Janina S., born in 1922, 24 February 2009, Minsk, BOHA, 2(2)–92–336–339.
67   Lilija Č., born in 1927, 16 March 2009, Minsk, BOHA, 2(2)–59–155–157.

who might encounter harsh antisemitic stereotypes and insults repeated by their classmates.[68]

Here is how one witness, Safija Chernina, explained why her close relatives registered as Belarusians:

> First of all, the Germans were very hard on us. To survive after such a horrible life... Second, there was a terrible stigma after the war. [Speaks quietly] People didn't like Jews. That 'nationality' column [in the personal form] was a problem. And I have to say, now that I'm older, I look more Jewish – my nose has grown longer. But when I was younger, no one took me for a Jew. People even shared things with me, saying, 'That's not our brother. That's a Jew.' Third, we had nothing left of Jewish culture. No language, no literature. Because Israel as such didn't exist... There was a bloody war there, which we learned about from newspapers. So, there was no way to learn or find anything, no matter how much we wanted to.[69]

On the other hand, those who wanted to reclaim their original names might face a lack of understanding from officials. Witness Raisa Doel recalled:

> When I went to get my passport, I made a birth certificate... They asked me my nationality. I said, 'I am Jewish.' And they replied: 'You mean you're not Russian?' They would have written me down as Russian... I should have said I was Russian. Then at least my children could have written that down on their job applications. Later, I realized that this antisemitism [was present], despite everything I had been through. I thought that when the Soviet authorities came, things would be different. But it was even worse.[70]

Nevertheless, despite the difficulties in asserting their rights, some Jews protested against the atmosphere of antisemitism created by the state and refused to hide their Jewish identity, even confronting others over their antisemitic statements.[71] Therefore, our respondent Valancina Heynman, who could have changed her clearly Jewish maiden name to her Slavic husband's surname to have fewer daily problems, consciously chose not

68   Roman Kaplan, 5 September 1998, Minsk, Belarus, videotaped interview by the USC Shoah Foundation, 49254.
69   Chernina, 2 May 1997, Yekaterinburg, USA, USC Shoah Foundation, 30952.
70   Raisa Deuel', 22 July Brooklyn, USA, videotaped interview by the USC Shoah Foundation, 31184.
71   Fania Aksel'rod, 11 April 1997, Des Plaines, USA, videotaped interview by the USC Shoah Foundation, 28207; Aleksandra Utevskaia, 5 July 1997, Osipovichi, Belarus, videotaped interview by the USC Shoah Foundation, 34546.

to do so: "As for me personally, I could have easily changed my last name. But I didn't want to. I said: 'Why should I? Let them know right away who they're dealing with [laughs]'".[72]

Another witness, Barys Yalavitzar, recalled: "The Russians made me a nationalist. Not the government, but the people. You get on a tram, and they say: 'Jew, give up your seat, a person needs to sit down'".[73] Thus, antisemitism could become a significant factor in preserving Jewish identity, even in the absence of Jewish cultural and religious organizations.[74]

CONCLUSION

In the first post-war decade, Jews in Minsk who had survived the Holocaust were freed from the immediate threat of death but did not automatically become an integrated part of society. There were illusions that the Soviet authorities would not hinder the restoration of Jewish life and contacts with relatives outside the Soviet Union, but this proved to be untrue and led to disappointment among Jews.[75] The Soviet authorities implemented an antisemitic policy against those who remained: essentially anti-Zionist, provoked by the emergence of the independent Jewish state of Israel on the international stage.[76] Jews were restricted in both public and religious life.

People with "Jewish" appearances or names often became targets of persecution. The propaganda-led negative image of Jews as enemies often led to them being blamed for all misfortunes. Many Jews were dismissed, or they were demoted if they held high or medium positions, particularly in the medical field. Everyday antisemitism was more common among the less-educated residents of the capital who believed in state propaganda, or among people interested in harming a specific Jew professionally or in gaining an advantage in property disputes, such as in reclaiming housing occupied by others before the war. In general, if there were no direct conflicts and propaganda played a lesser role, the situation in work collectives was more tolerant towards Jews. The changing composition of the city's population, with many people arriving from other areas – often more loyal supporters of the Soviet system – also influenced the situation. These individuals were often more susceptible to believing Soviet antisemitic propaganda.

[72]   Chejnman, 25 March 2009, Minsk, BOHA, 2(2)–67–203.
[73]   Boris Yalovitser, 26 August 1996, Brooklyn, USA, videotaped interview by the USC Shoah Foundation, 18963.
[74]   Bemporad, *Prevraščenie v sovetskich*, p. 278.
[75]   Litin and Šenderovič, *Istorija mogilevskogo evrejstva*, p. 20.
[76]   Kostyrčenko, *Tajnaja politika Stalina*, p. 693.

Nevertheless, oral history evidence shows that witnesses of the time generally did not recall local residents as particularly antisemitic. Even Jews believed that if antisemitism existed, it was felt much less at work, among friends, and in the family. Those who lived in Minsk during the war empathized with the loss of Jewish life and emphasized how it changed the city. They also recalled Jewish friends, mutual willingness to help each other, and noted that Jews, like any other group of people, varied from person to person. Respondents shared both positive and negative Jewish stereotypes.[77]

Knowing about discrimination due to their "nationality", Jews used various means to overcome it and, if possible, helped other Jews to enter educational institutions or find a job. Jewish specialists tried to be better and indispensable. Some changed their names to non-Jewish ones, took their spouse's surname, or continued to use names adopted for survival during the war. People often consciously avoided maintaining relationships with relatives in Israel due to the fear of persecution, which was a real threat.[78] Traumatized by the repressions of the 1930s, the Holocaust during the war, and trying to avoid the negative consequences of the postwar official antisemitic policies on their lives, many chose to "live behind the mask of another identity". This was only overcome in the early 1990s, and mass emigration from their homeland became a form of protest against feeling like outsiders in society.

The Jewish community in Minsk is currently the largest in Belarus (about 5,000 people). The city has two synagogues and a general Jewish organization, the "Union of Belarusian Jewish Public Associations and Communities". Unfortunately, the trend of decreasing numbers in the Jewish minority in Belarus continues. Following the events of 2020 and the start of Russia's full-scale aggression in Ukraine in 2022, the flow of repatriation to Israel from Belarus has increased.

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[77]   Valjancina V., born in 1927, 23, 27 March 2009, Minsk, BOHA, 2(2)–97–358-359; Klara S., born in 1924, 17 June 2008, Minsk, BOHA, 2(2)–90–323; Chejnman, 25 March 2009, Minsk, BOHA, 2(2)–67–203; Feigina Raisa, 19 February 1996, Toronto, Kanada, videotaped interview by the USC Shoah Foundation, 12207.
[78]   Shkol'nik, 3 July 1996, Herzlya, Israel, USC Shoah Foundation, 18011.

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Yuri Radchenko
"THE GERMANS EQUATED THE KARAITES AND THE JEWS": THE SHOAH AND THE KARAITE POLICY IN MELITOPOL' DISTRICT (1941–1943)

ABSTRACT

This article explores the Holocaust, German Karaite Policy, and Jewish–Karaite relations in Melitopol' region during the Nazi occupation. The author uses unpublished sources from Ukrainian, Israeli, German, and Lithuanians archives, as well as oral history testimonies from his private collection to demonstrate that Jews in Melitopol' were murdered by the Germans and their collaborators throughout the entire period of occupation, with the culmination of this policy occurring in the first days of the Wehrmacht's arrival in Melitopol'. The property of the murdered Jews was confiscated by the local administration and handed over to the German army. Jews who concealed their nationality and went into hiding in Melitopol' or nearby villages were persecuted by the Germans and their collaborators throughout the entire period of occupation. Local Karaite activists, with the support of local self-government officials, managed to convince the employees of SK 10A that the local Karaites had nothing in common with the Jews and were in fact a Turkic people professing "their own religion". Close examination of the archival materials reveals that the Karaite narrative in Melitopol' had already fallen under the strong influence of Karaite Turkic nationalism in the pre-war period. Within this narrative, there was an attempt to eliminate any Jewish elements from the everyday culture of local Karaites. The Holocaust is mentioned in this narrative only in general terms, most often in the context of the fact that the Germans sought to eliminate the Karaites, but the latter managed to convince the former that they were a separate ethnic group altogether. The research demonstrates that the subject of the Holocaust is practically absent from the postwar trials of collaborators in Melitopol', as evidenced by the trials of members of the local self-government, Andrei Putov and Vasilii Perepletchikov. The documents prove that representatives of the Melitopol' local administration participated in the looting of Jewish property after the first mass executions. However, the role of the local government in the first and bloodiest Aktion remains unclear. The Ilarion Kurylo (Krymchak) trial highlights the role that members of the rural self-government played in not only the persecution but also the rescue of Jews, as well as attempts to influence the local administration of OUN (b) and OUN (m).

KEYWORDS:

Holocaust, German Karaite Policy, Jewish-Karaite relations, Melitopol', Karaite Turkic nationalism

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According to the First General Census of the Population of the Russian Empire from 1897, the city of Melitopol' had a population of nearly 15,500. In terms of demographic composition, Russians were the largest group (6,630), followed by Jews (6,214) and Ukrainians (1,366).[1] The census did not provide data on the Karaite population which appeared in the city after the Crimean War, but the local census data from 1865 indicated that 194 Karaites resided in the city at that time. A subsequent Soviet-era Census of 1939 recorded 336 Karaites in Melitopol', and by the time of the Nazi occupation there were about 130 Karaites living there.[2] The period of German occupation from 1941 to 1943 altered the city's demographics drastically. Despite the fact that later on, during the period of independent Ukraine, Ukrainians and Russians became the dominant groups in the city and remained so at the time of the full-scale invasion by the Russian Federation on 24 February 2022, Melitopol' became a symbol of local multiculturalism.[3] This was particularly true following the resettlement of Crimean Tatars in the city after the occupation of Crimea in 2014.[4]

In recent years, scholars have increasingly emphasized the importance of viewing the events of the Shoah and the Nazi occupation through the lens of multiculturalism.[5] This perspective is particularly relevant in regions like southern Ukraine. We know that Karaites were executed alongside Ashkenazi Jews in some locations, such as Krasnodar.[6] In other areas, such as Crimea, the Germans and their allies left the Karaite

1   *Pervaja Vseobščaja perepis' naselenija Rossijskoj Imperii 1897 g. Tablica XIII. Raspredelenie naselenija po rodnomu jazyku*, 50 vols (Sankt-Peterburg, 1903–1905) <http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/census_types.php?ct=7> [accessed on 10 September 2021].
2   Nikolaj Krylov, 'Karaimy v Melitopol'e (istoričeskij očerk)', in *V surovye gody Velikoj Otečestvennoj vojny, Karaimy Melitopol'ja* (Melitopol'': Dolja, 2004), p. 12.
3   Natal'ja Djatkova, 'Šest' gorodov učatsja u Melitopol'ja interkul'turnosti', *Mestnye Vesti - Melitopol'*, 25 November 2010 <https://misto.zp.ua/article/partners/shest-gorodov-uchatsya-u-Melitopol'ya-interkulturnostii_6473.html> [accessed on 28 June 2022].
4   Bogdan Gubernskij, 'Krymskie tatary Melitopol'ja: sochranjaja tradicii', *Krym.Realii. Radio Svoboda*, 17 May 2018 <https://ru.krymr.com/p/5612.html> [accessed on 25 July 2022].
5   Juri Radchenko, 'Novi perspektyvy doslidžennja Holokostu v Ukrajini z pozyciji mul'tykul'turalizmu', *The Ideology and Politics Journal*, 21 (2022), 89–109.
6   Mikhail Kizilov, *The Sons of Scripture. The Karaites in Poland and Lithuania in the Twentieth Century* (Warsaw: De Gruyter, 2015), p. 306.

population unharmed.[7] Contemporary studies of the Nazi's Karaite poli-
cy in Ukraine reveal that the final decision on whether the local Karaite
population would survive was often made by *Einsatzgruppen* commanders
"on the ground", similarly to the approach taken in regards to the local
Romani population.[8] Notably, even prominent Holocaust historian Andrej
Angrick does not mention the "Karaite issue" in his research on the crimes
of Einsatzgruppe D in Melitopol', Mariupol, Krasnodar, Novorossiysk, and
other locations.[9]

What was the attitude of the German occupation authorities towards
the local Karaites in the context of the murders of Jews in Melitopol', one
of the largest Karaite population centres in mainland Ukraine at the be-
ginning of the Soviet-German war? An important issue studied by contem-
porary scholars is the relationship between the Karaites and the Rabbinic
Jews during the Shoah. Contemporary research shows that the range of
these relationships was quite broad. For example, Karaites, who at some
points in time were considered a Turkic ethnic group, sometimes served
in collaborationist structures and even contributed to the murders of
Jews. On the other hand, Karaites could help Jews survive by providing
them with fake Karaite documents, hiding them, etc.[10] What were the re-
lationships between Jews and Karaites before and during the war? How
did they change in the context of the genocide of the Jewish people? What
were the sentiments among the Karaites during the occupation? How were
these moods reflected in post-war narratives? All these issues are particu-
larly interesting in light of the spread of Turkic Karaite nationalism among
the Melitopol' Karaites.[11]

The subject of representation of Karaite and Jewish issues of the oc-
cupation period within the Soviet official discourse remains understudied.
In this context, it is interesting to examine how Soviet investigative agen-
cies approached the inquiry into the specifics of Nazi and collaborators'
policies towards the Jews and Karaites in the occupied USSR, particularly

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7   Ibid.
8   Juri Radchenko, 'Okkupacija, kategorizacija naselenija i izbiratel'nost' genocida: slučaj karaimov
     Char'kova (1941–1943 gg.)', *Ab Imperio*, 3 (2022), 131–60.
9   Andrej Angrick, *Besatzungspolitik und Massenmord. Die Einsatzgruppe D in der südlichen Sowjetunion 1941–1943*
     (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2003), pp. 307–23.
10   On the subject of these proceedings, see Kizilov, *The Sons of Scripture*, pp. 350–68; Kiril Feferman,
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11   On the subject of Turkish Karaite nationalism, see Mikhail Kizilov, 'National Inventions: The Imperial
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in Melitopol'. What aspects draw their attention? What did they overlook? In recent decades, researchers have primarily focused on archival judicial and investigative cases that had long remained inaccessible in the archives of the former KGB.[12] Among other questions raised by contemporary historians is the role of local urban and rural self-government in the Shoah at the grassroots level.[13] Just how these processes took shape in Melitopol' and its surroundings remains unclear. Local historians have touched upon these issues very superficially and descriptively, without delving into this aspect of the local history of the Shoa,

> In the Melitopol' region, a Gebietskomissariat[14] was headed by Georg Heinisch, while the city mayor was the German colonist D. D. Klassen, who died in December 1942. Shortly thereafter, a certain E. Goronovsky was appointed to this position. Starting 10 March 1943, a former director of the local museum, the elder of the Voznesenka village, "Professor" I. P. Kurylo-Krymchak (the second part of his surname is a pseudonym), assumed this role. During the Nazi occupation, local workers and the German administration managed to put into operation a power station (directed by Stamboli), an OGPU[15] plant, a malleable iron plant, and an oil mill. In the city centre, markets and shops resumed trading, shopkeepers appeared, and bakeries became operational (on Pochtovaya-Sverdlova Street). Only primary schools were in operation, with textbooks undergoing strict scrutiny – many pages were either ripped or blotted out. The city housed a Ukrainian Drama Theater, a cinema (Deutsche Lichtspiele), a variety show, restaurants, and so forth.[16]

[12] Tanja Penter, 'Collaboration on Trial: New Source Material on Soviet Postwar Trials against Collaborators', *Slavic Review*, 64 (2005), 782–90.

[13] Markus Ajkel', 'Sposobstvuja provedeniju Cholokosta: organy mestnogo samoupravlenija v okkupirovannoj nemcami central'noj i vostočnoj Ukraine (1941–1944)', *Holokost i sučasnist'*, 1 (2009), 9–26; Yuri Radchenko, 'Accomplices to Extermination: Municipal Government and the Holocaust in Kharkiv (1941–1942)', *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, 27 (2013), 443–63.

[14] The term 'Gebietskommissar' was used during the Nazi era during the Second World War as an official title for civil servants who headed the administration of a district or regional commissariat. They were roughly equal in rank to district administrators or NSDAP district leaders in the German Reich. Chief commissioners ranked above them. Regional commissioners were appointed in Norway from 1940 after the military attack on Norway and Denmark and in 1941 after the military attack on Russia in the civil administrations of the occupied eastern territories in the Reich Commissariat Ostland and Reich Commissariat Ukraine.

[15] The Joint State Political Directorate (Russian: Объединённое государственное политическое управление), abbreviated as OGPU (Russian: ОГПУ), was the secret police of the Soviet Union from November 1923 to July 1934, succeeding the State Political Directorate (GPU). Responsible to the Council of People's Commissars, the OGPU was headed by Felix Dzerzhinsky until 1926, then by Vyacheslav Menzhinsky until replaced by the Main Directorate of State Security (GUGB) within the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs (NKVD).

[16] Boris Michajlov, *Melitopol': priroda, archeologija, istorija* (Zaporož'e: Dikoe Pole, 2002), pp. 20–35 <https://vMelitopol'e.ru/istoriya/Melitopol'-v-velikoj-otechestvennoj-vojne-1941-1943/gitlerovskaya-okkupatsiya>.

The relationships between local collaborators and the Karaites during the nearly two years of the Nazi occupation remain largely understudied.[17] We know that activists from OUN(b) and OUN(m) sent their cadres to southern and eastern Ukraine with the aim of gaining positions in the self-government and police during the Nazi occupation. These people were tasked with creating elements of a pro-German Ukrainian statehood "on the ground". There are some biased studies about the activities of one of Melitopol''s mayors, Illarion Kurylo-Krymchak,[18] but the question of the strength of the influence imparted by OUN(b) and OUN(m) on these authorities remains open. This is particularly relevant in the context of studying the biographies of OUN party members who served in the *Einsatzgruppen*, *Abwehr*, police, self-government, and propaganda agencies in the occupied territories of Ukraine.[19] Additionally, little is known about the ideological influence of these parties on the Shoah and the Karaite policy in the region. In this article, I will consider all these questions.

THE SHOAH IN MELITOPOL' AND ITS ENVIRONS (1941–1943)

In the pre-war period, Melitopol' and its environs were part of the Zaporizhia oblast of the Ukrainian SSR. In 1939, some 43,321 Jews lived in this region of Soviet Ukraine, the majority of whom (35,744) resided in Zaporizhia and Melitopol'. With the arrival of the Nazis, the oblast became divided: most of it was incorporated into the General District of Dnipropetrovsk (German: Generalbezirk Dnjepropetrowsk), while the Melitopol' district became part of the General District of Crimea (Taurida; Generalbezirk Krim/Teilbezirk Taurien), which for some time was called the General District of Melitopol' (Generalbezirk Melitopol').

The killings of the Jews in Zaporizhia oblast were carried out by the 1st SS Motor Brigade, as well as *Sonderkommando* 6, 10a, and 12 of Einsatzgruppen D. The murders of Jews began in all locations where they had lived from the very start of the occupation. For instance, several waves of shootings started in Zaporizhia in November 1941. Most of the Jews in Zaporizhia oblast, about 10,000 people, had been killed by the end of

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17   Per A. Rudling, 'The OUN, the UPA and the Holocaust: A Study in the Manufacturing of Historical Myths', *Carl Beck Papers. The in Russian & East European Studies*, 2107 (2011), 1–72; Grzegorz Rossoliński-Liebe, *Stepan Bandera: The Life and Afterlife of a Ukrainian Nationalist. Fascism, Genocide, and Cult* (Stuttgart: ibidem, 2014); John-Paul Himka, *Ukrainian Nationalists and the Holocaust: OUN and UPA's Participation in the Destruction of Ukrainian Jewry, 1941–1944* (Stuttgart: ibidem, 2021).
18   Jurij Ščur, *Žyttja i borot'ba Ilariona Kuryla-Krymčaka* (Toronto: Litopys UPA, 2016).
19   On this subject, see Yuri Radchenko, 'The Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (Mel'nyk Faction) and the Holocaust: The Case of Ivan Iuriiv', *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, 31 (2017), 215–39; Yuri Radchenko, 'The Biography of the OUN(m) Activist Oleksa Babii in the Light of his "Memoirs on Escaping Execution" (1942)', *Journal of Soviet and Post-Soviet Politics and Society*, 6 (2020), 239–79.

March 1942. In Zaporizhia proper, most Jews had been killed by the end of March 1942 as well.[20]

Overall, the situation in Zaporizhia oblast largely reflects the pattern seen in many parts of eastern Ukraine, where the Einsatzgruppen, supported by the Wehrmacht, local police, and self-government, conducted operations to kill the majority of the local Jewish population by the end of spring 1942. Afterward, throughout the entire occupation period, the Germans, their allies, and collaborators continued their "hunt" for Jews, who had to conceal their identity. In the southern Zaporizhia oblast, specifically in the Melitopol' district, the situation resembled what occurred in Kyiv and other cities in northern Ukraine, where the Germans killed the majority of the local Jewish population extremely quickly, within less than two weeks of their arrival. According to the 1939 census, there were 6,040 Jews in Melitopol'.[21] The city was occupied on 6 October 1941, and three days later, on 9 October, Sonderkommando 10A (SK 10A) arrived, led by SS *Obersturmbannführer* Heinz Seetzen.[22] Similarly to many other cities, like Kyiv, posters were circulated summoning Jews to "register", ostensibly for "resettlement". The Germans and collaborators appointed a Jewish Council of Elders (*Judenrat*), whose exact composition was unknown but likely included high-profile Jews known from pre-war period. The Judenrat compiled lists of Melitopol' Jews' names and addresses.

Subsequently, the Jews were ordered by the Germans to gather in a local school. Members of SK 10A searched the homes of those Jews who did not go to the school voluntarily, taking them there by force. At the school, the Jews had to leave their belongings, money, and valuables. Starting 11 October 1941, they were taken in groups of 100 a few kilometres away from Melitopol', to an anti-tank trench located between the villages of Kostiantynivka and Voznesenka, where they were shot. Those condemned to death had to wait about 500 meters away from the trench, with their outer clothing removed. Then, in groups of 30, they were forced into the trench, where they were ordered to lie down on the ground. They were shot by SS men who were standing two meters behind them. As the post-war investigations demonstrate, the Jews were shot in rounds of fire on the command given by Seetzen. The next group of victims had to lie on the bodies of those just murdered. When the pile of corpses reached a certain height, the SS men would move further along. On the first day of the shootings, at least 1,000 Jews from Melitopol' were killed. The killings of Jewish civilians

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[20]   *Cholokost na territorii SSSR: Ènciklopedija*, ed. by Il'ja Al'tman (Moskva: ROSSPÈN, 2011), p. 326.
[21]   Ibid., p. 578.
[22]   Aleksandr Kruglov, *Bez žalosti i somnenija. Dokumenty o prestuplenijach operativnych grupp i komand policii bezopasnosti i SD na vremenno okkupirovannoj territorii SSSR v 1941–1944 gg.*, 4 vols (Dnepropetrovsk: Lira, 2010), IV, p. 44.

continued the following day.[23] As noted by Andrej Angrick, the shootings on 11–12 October became an important example for SK 10A of how to carry out their work efficiently and systematically in other locations, such as Berdiansk, Mariupol, and Krasnodar.[24]

An OUN(m) activist, *SS-Untersturmführer* Ivan Iuriiv, was among the staff of SK 10A who participated in the killings of Melitopol' Jews.[25] It is not clear what specific functions he performed at that time, but there is information that he participated in shootings and torture at other locations. For instance, Adolf Raile, a native of the village Chervonyi Khutir in the Shyriayevsky district of the Odesa oblast, who was 22 years old at the start of the German-Soviet war, reported the following in his testimony on 21 October,

> Among the officers in our team, I also recall Obersturmführer (senior lieutenant) Winkelthau and Untersturmführers Pfeifer, Bonn, Iuriiv, and Hertz. Whether the duties were divided among these officers, I do not know. What I do know is that all of them took an active part in the interrogation and mass shootings of Soviet citizens of Jewish nationality in the cities of Mariupol and Taganrog.[26]

The anti-tank trench between Kostiantynivka and Voznesenka also became a grave for Red Army Jewish prisoners of war. On 10 and 15 October, respectively, 49 and 26 people were murdered there. They were probably brought from some prisoner concentration sites located nearby, but not from Melitopol' itself. A few days later, on 12 October 54 more Jewish prisoners were sent from Army POW Camp No. 12 in Melitopol' to the site where Jewish civilians had been shot.[27] It seems that executions continued periodically at this location, but these anti-tank trenches were not the only places where civilians and prisoners of war were killed during the Nazi occupation. In total, about 2,000 people were murdered between the villages of Kostiantynivka and Voznesenka.[28]

An analysis of the recollections of non-Jewish residents of Melitopol' proves that the shootings of Jews became known immediately after they occurred. The Germans and their collaborators did not conceal this fact from the local Christian and Muslim population of Eastern Europe, and Melitopol' was no exception. In the post-war testimonies for

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[23]   Ibid., pp. 215–16.
[24]   Angrick, *Besatzungspolitik und Massenmord*, pp. 310–12.
[25]   Staatsarchiv München (hereafter SM) 35308/7, Bl. 1553.
[26]   SM 35308/32, Bl. 87.
[27]   Kruglov, *Bez žalosti i somnenija*, p. 129.
[28]   *Cholokost na territorii SSSR*, p. 578.

the Extraordinary State Commission (ChGK)[29] that took place in the first months after the end of the German occupation, Polish woman Eugenia Ponizovskaya and Karaite woman Aza Stamboli reported that such actions by the occupation authorities caused shock and fear,

> ...The first orders required the Jews to register and wear six-pointed stars. No one understood what this was for or why it was necessary. People went to register, not knowing they were heading to a terrible, cruel death. Neighbours and acquaintances started to worry why the people who had gone with their entire families for registration were not returning. We learned the horrible truth, which defied human comprehension: six to seven thousand peaceful, innocent civilians had been shot there, beyond the Berdiansk Bridge, in the anti-tank trenches. The elderly, women, and children were executed...[30]

The significantly inflated number of victims was likely caused by Aza Stamboli's stress and psychological trauma. It is also significant that she, herself a Karaite, was under the threat of being killed.

Other recollections of Melitopol' Karaites that were recorded after the collapse of the USSR describe attempts to execute Karaites as a Jewish group. At the same time, references to the shootings and persecution of Jews in the city are mentioned only in passing. Here is what sisters Larisa and Raisa Irtlach relate on the rescue of Melitopol' Karaites,

> War is a trial for every person and the entire nation alike. In 1941, Melitopol' was occupied by the Germans. At that time, around 130 Karaites lived in the city. Many Karaite families could not evacuate and were in mortal danger. The Germans equated the Karaites with the Jews and therefore wanted to murder them along with the Jews.[31]

By and large, this perspective can be explained by the strong impact that Turkic Karaite nationalism and the ideas of Seraya Shapshal imparted on Melitopol' Karaites. These influences intensified in the 1990s, just when these recollections were recorded.

29 The Extraordinary State Commission for the Establishment and Investigation of the Atrocities of the German Fascist Invaders and Their Accomplices and the Damage They Caused to Citizens, Collective Farms, Public Organizations, State Enterprises and Institutions of the USSR (ChGK) was the state commission of the USSR during the Great Patriotic War (also known as the Eastern Front of the Second World War). The commission was formed by the decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR on 2 November 1942.
30 Gosudarstvennyj archiv Rossijskoj Federacii (hereafter GARF), f. 7021, op. 61, d. 17, l. 40–40-ob.
31 Iz vospominanij L[arisa] [lyinichna] and R[aisa] I[lyinichna] Irtlač, in *V surovye gody Velikoj Otečestvennoj vojny, Karaimy Melitopol'ja* (Melitopol'': Dolja, 2004), p. 27.

After the murder of the majority of the Jewish population in October 1941, the occupation authorities continued to search for Jews who had concealed their identity and moved to various villages in the Melitopol′ district. The police and Melitopol′ SD (*Sicherheitsdienst*, or Security Service), whose members were appointed by the leaders of SK 10a,[32] the local administration, actively participated in the raids and the killings of Jews. Much of what happened in the Melitopol′ district between winter 1941 and autumn 1943 mirrored the situation in the military administration zone, where the second phase of the Shoah began in the spring of 1942, with a 2- or 3-month delay.

According to many sources – such as the verdict of the 1st Senate for Criminal Cases of the Karl-Marx-Stadt District Court dated 11 June 1976 in the case of the former SS Sonderkommando 10A Oberscharführer and driver Johannes Kinder – those Melitopol′ Jews who did not go to a school as ordered by the Germans or concealed their identity hid in the nearby villages during the winter of 1941–1942. If discovered, these people were killed. Most often, the executions were carried out by members of SK 10a, SD, and the local police,

> During Sonderkommando's stay in Melitopol′, on its way to Simferopol from October to December 1941, the team (with the involvement of collaborators) was very active in identifying party and state functionaries, youth organization officials, and other citizens loyal to the Soviet state. The capture of citizens of Jewish nationality who had escaped the massacre in Melitopol′ and fled to the villages was constantly on the agenda... In Astrakhanka, a Jewish woman who had fled here from Melitopol′ was murdered.[33]

Evdokiya Bochkova, a cleaner at the SD prison in Melitopol′, reported that after the executions of the Jewish families (presumably referring to the shootings that took place in October 1941), "individuals who had been hiding in villages and hamlets began to arrive".[34] One such recorded case took place in March 1942 and was carried out by SK 10A in Melitopol′.[35] We do not know for sure whether these were local Jews who had been hiding in the city and its environs, or Jews who had been brought from neighbouring regions.

In December 1941, the Nazis in Melitopol′ started rounding up and killing children of mixed Jewish-Slavic marriage. By February 1942,

32   Kruglov, *Bez žalosti i somnenija*, p. 46.
33   Ibid., pp. 224–25.
34   GARF, f. 7021, op. 61, d. 12, l. 18.
35   Kruglov, *Bez žalosti i somnenija*, p. 139.

the executions had only intensified.[36] Bochkova recalled that the SD prison, not just the previously mentioned anti-tank trench, became the killing site for this category of the local population. This location likely refers to the place where Melitopol' Jews had been shot in October 1941. Often, during such *Aktionen*, the Slavic parents of these children were also murdered. For Jewish parents, the murders of children from mixed families became a form of humiliation and moral oppression prior to their own execution,

> Sometime in late February 1942, children from families where the father was Jewish and the mother was Russian started arriving at the prison. These children came in large groups of 30 or more, ranging in age from one year to fifteen. Their mothers also came to the prison. The mothers were put in a separate room where they were told that their children would be sent to a camp where they would be provided for, and the mothers were offered work. The mothers refused to leave their children and asked to be taken along to care for them. The next group of children arrived without their mothers, who were not let inside the prison. The children were kept in the prison for about 56 days to determine their Russian heritage. Once large groups of children had been assembled, they would be shot along with their mothers in the prison. Later on, they started transporting them by truck and killing them in the anti-tank trench. Jewish men in the prison were forced to transport the dead bodies of their children and wives. Infants held by their mothers were put to sleep by holding something close to their mouths to inhale; afterwards, the mothers were shot. Some mothers who managed to convince the executioners that their children were not Jewish were released... Parcels from parents were accepted, but the children never received them.
>
> All these atrocities in the prison were carried out by German officers from the SS gendarmerie...[37]

Although the main wave of raids and killings of children from mixed Jewish-Slavic marriages occurred in February 1942, this policy continued throughout the occupation. For instance, on 9 October 1942 Maria, the Slavic wife of a local Jewish man named Trachtenberg, was arrested by the security police and the SD in Melitopol'. She was taken to prison with

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36   Ibid., p. 138. As we will demonstrate further in this article, similar persecutions took place as early as December 1943.
37   GARF, f. 7021, op. 61, d. 12, l. 18–18-ob.

her child, where both were killed.[38] In the same month, the Germans arrested the Matukhnov family – the husband, Viktor, was Russian, while his wife, Anna, was Jewish. The couple had three daughters: 15-year-old Lydia, thirteen-year-old Olga, and four-year-old Tamara. Anna was six months pregnant at the time of the arrest. The SD took the entire family to prison; Viktor was eventually released, while the rest of the family members were killed.[39] One should note that the search for and killings of children from mixed marriages in Melitopol' began only six to seven weeks after the first mass shootings of the Jewish population. In contrast, in neighbouring Mariupol, this category of the population began to be persecuted a year later, in December 1943.[40]

Melitopol' region was a hub for various Einsatzgruppen. For instance, SK 11B was based in Melitopol' from February to April 1943, while SD teams from Ukraine and various cities in the North Caucasus were stationed in the village of Lichtenau[41] in the spring of the same year.[42] The presence of these units worsened the situation for Jews who had concealed their real identities. The situation was also intimidating for the local Karaites, whose status could be "reconsidered" at any moment.

THE RESCUE OF MELITOPOL' KARAITES: HISTORY AND NARRATIVES

The Nazi regime's policy towards the Karaites from 1933 to 1945 was contradictory and chaotic. Some Nazi "experts on racial questions" viewed Turkic-speaking Eastern European Karaites with suspicion or even outright hostility up until the spring of 1945. After the Nuremberg Race Laws had been enacted in Germany in 1935, its small Karaite community of just over a dozen people, primarily former Russian prisoners of the First World War, was subjected to discrimination. Mikhail-Mussa (Moshe) Kovshanly, the leader of the German Karaite community, mentioned in a letter in 1943 to the spiritual leader of the Karaites, Gaham (Gahan) Seraya Shapshal, that from 1933 to 1939 the Karaites had faced harassment, humiliation, and physical violence from the German police. Gestapo officers and

38   GARF, f. 7021, op. 61, d. 12, l. 98.
39   GARF, f. 7021, op. 61, d. 12, l. 103.
40   SM 35308/43, Bl.32.
41   Now – Svitlodolins'ke, Melitopol' rayon, Zaporizhsk'ka oblast'.
42   Kruglov, *Bez žalosti i somnenija*, pp. 179, 232.

some White émigrés collaborating with the Nazis mistook Karaite names for Jewish ones.[43]

Under these circumstances, the Karaite community repeatedly appealed to the German authorities to exempt them from the Nuremberg legislation, citing their legal status in the Russian Empire. They were also supported by the head of the Karaite community in Paris, Semen (Serge) Duvan.[44] As a result, in 1939 the Imperial Genealogical Office granted this request. Later, this decision was extended to some 200 Karaites in occupied France. The Karaite question was actively discussed within various Nazi agencies throughout the German–Soviet war. In Trakai, Lithuania, in August 1941, German authorities consulted Seraya Shapshal, one of the most active proponents of Karaite nationalism in the interwar period. Consequently, on 25 September 1941 a directive was issued in the *Reichskommissariat Ostland* that prohibited the "equation of Karaites with Jews". On 1 October 1941 it was approved by the political department of the Ministry for the Occupied Eastern Territories. A decision was made to refrain from "harsh measures" against the Karaites.[45]

By October 1941, it seemed that the Karaite question had been resolved at the highest levels, and all lower-ranking authorities were supposed to follow the state policy. Surprisingly, however, the local occupation authorities acted as if no centralized clarifications or instructions had ever existed. The Nazi authorities were less interested in Karaite non-Rabbinical Judaism and more focused on the racial classification of the members of Karaite communities. For example, in Lithuania and Ukraine, German officials and local collaborators consulted various "experts" to determine the status of Karaites on a case-by-case basis.

The case of the Karaite community in Melitopol' was quite indicative of this tendency. As previously mentioned, by the time German troops and SK 10A entered Melitopol', civil administration in parts of the occupied USSR had already issued instructions prohibiting the treatment of Karaites as Jews. However, at that time there were no specific instructions coming from the SS leadership. On 5–8 December 1941, when SS Reichsführer Heinrich Himmler made a decision not to persecute Karaites alongside the Jews, the directive was not publicly announced,[46] therefore it was unclear whether it would be promptly communicated to all Einsatzgruppen

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43   To the Hakham of the Karaites, Hadji Seraya-Bey Shapshal. A report on the situation of the Karaites during the existence of the National Socialist regime in Germany and during the war, from 1939 to the present time in the countries occupied by Germany in the West and the East. Lietuvos mokslų akademijos Vrublevskių biblioteka (hereafter LMAVB), f. 143, 1053, p. 5–6.

44   Kizilov, *The Sons of Scripture*, pp. 297–99.

45   *Cholokost na territorii SSSR*, p. 386.

46   Feferman, *The Holocaust in the Crimea and the North Caucasus*, p. 272.

and SK commanders. Even after this decision, SK 4A executed about two dozen Karaites in Kharkiv.[47]

In light of all this, it is evident that between October 1941 and January 1942 some members of the Einsatzgruppen as well as many other German and collaborationist agencies were not particularly interested in the specifics of the Karaite question. For the Nazis, Jews were the "anti-race", subject to immediate extermination. The local non-Jewish population, except for *Volksdeutsche* (ethnic Germans), was considered second-class, and their deaths were not seen as a significant issue or tragedy.

Concurrently, Melitopol' Karaites managed to create a semblance of a community from among the activists and former Karaite clergy. These people would protect Karaite interests vis-a-vis the occupation authorities, as was done in Kyiv, Crimea, and many other places. One of the leaders of this community was Heliy (Hillel) Yalpachik. On 10–13 October 1941, together with his friends and a former hazzan Semen (Shimon) Budun, at the request of SK 10a, he compiled the *Brief Historical and Ethnographic Reference on the Karaites*. The original of this document has been lost. The *Reference* was written under the direct threat of execution. Similarly to the Jews a few days prior to it, the local Karaites were gathered by the Germans in a separate building while their identity and fate were being determined.[48]

The exact argument that Yalpachek, Budun, and others used while preparing the *Reference* text is not known. For example, it is unclear whether any anti-Jewish rhetoric was used in it, as was the case with Kyiv Karaites and their letter to the Kyiv collaborationist administration in October 1941.[49] We can say with certainty that Melitopol' Karaites portrayed themselves as a Turkic people who, both ethnically and religiously, felt "far from Jews". In his memoirs written in the early 1990s, Yalpachek emphasized the assistance provided by the Head of the Melitopol' City Administration, Vasilii Perepletchikov, who stood up for the Karaites by proving their "non-Jewish status" to SK 10A officials,

> The Germans considered Karaites a special category of Jews... They gathered more than a hundred of us and asked, 'Who are you, what kind of a nation?' I explained that we were like Old Believers

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47 On this subject, see the following articles: Radchenko, Yuri, "…prosymo… zabezpechyty karaimiv vid nezasluhovanykh obraz…": karaimske naselennia, OUN (m) ta Holokost u Kyievi, Ukraina Moderna, chyslo 34, 2023, 262–291; Yuri Radchenko, 'Okkupatsiya, kategorizatsiya naseleniya i izbiratelnost genotsida: sluchai karaimov Kharkova (1941–1943 gg.)', Ab Imperio, 3 (2022), 131–60.

48 'Jalpačik Gelij Semënovič (1912–1993)', *Oficial'nyj sajt krymskich karaimov (karaimy, krymskie karaimy, karaimy tjurki)*, n.d. <https://karai.crimea.ru/183-jalpachik-gelijj-semjonovich-1912-1993.html> [accessed on 25 July 2024].

49 See more: Radchenko, Yuri, "…prosymo… zabezpečyty karajimiv vid nezasluhovanych obraz…": karajims'ke naselennja, OUN (m) ta Holokost u Kyjevi, *Ukraina Moderna*, 34 (2023), 262–291.

adhering to the Old Testament, that we had our own Turkic language, our own religion, our own traditions... And Perepletchikov... came to the Gestapo to protect us. He said he knew for sure that in the Tsarist times the Karaites had the same rights as Russians and served in the army...[50]

Although this strategy worked for the Karaites in Melitopol' and they were released after a few days, the fear of the Germans changing their mind remained strong throughout the entire occupation period. This fear was exacerbated by rumours that Germans and collaborators had shot Karaites along with Jews in some parts of the USSR. Evgenia Ponizovskaya and Aza Stamboli reported the following to the ChGK,

People barely had time to recover from the horror of the shootings of six to seven thousand Soviet citizens (Jews – note by the author) when a new threat loomed over the city: the Karaites were called in for registration. Their ethnicity was not seen as separate from the Jews, and they faced the same fate. One could see mortal fear in the eyes of loved ones; children looking into the eyes of adults, not understanding what was happening to their relatives; adults averting their gaze from the inquisitive eyes of children who were facing a terrible death. For two and a half years, the fear of death never left the Karaites. There were reports that the Karaites were being murdered as well in many occupied regions. It happened in Krasnodar and in the Kuban region. At a certain nefarious Simferopol newspaper, someone's blood-thirsty mouth demanded the same fate for the Karaites as for the Jews. It is terrifying to recall just how many Karaite families close to us, in the city of Melitopol', were expected to die at any hour, for two years; all the while they longed to live to see liberation, to once again breathe freely and say that the terrible nightmare had passed and would never return.[51]

In the memoirs and interviews of Melitopol' Karaites recounting their escape from the shootings, one observes a noticeable conscious distancing from the Jews, which might be linked to the active spread of Karaite nationalism since the early 1990s (especially through various articles and pamphlets by Seraya Shapshal). In this context, an interview with Hillel's daughter, Sofia Yalpachik, is particularly interesting. In the Yalpachik

50   Gelij Jalpačik, 'Nas spasali dobryj ljudi (zapisano so slov v 1992 godu)', in *V surovye gody Velikoj Otečestvennoj vojny Karaimy Melitopol'ja* (Melitopol'': Dolja, 2004), p. 35.
51   GARF, f. 7021, op. 61, d. 17, l. 40–40-ob.

family, both before and after the Second World War, no religious traditions were observed – Hillel did not pray or keep kosher. This was largely due to the fact that "there was no longer a *kenasa*". In the courtyard where the Yalpachiks lived alongside Slavic families (Ukrainians and Russians), they kept a pig, which was later slaughtered, and Hillel and his relatives would eat pork.[52]

At the same time, Sofia Yalpachik emphasized that she always – "since my childhood" – considered herself a Karaite, and "people similar to us" were prohibited to marry Tatars and Jews. In this Karaite narrative, mixed marriages with Jews and Tatars led to misfortune: in the case of a Jewish–Karaite marriage, one might suffer during the Shoah; in the casethe Second World War of a Tatar–Karaite marriage, one might suffer during the deportations of May 1944. One should note that Sofia, like most Melitopol' Karaites during the post-Soviet era, was far from being religious and had almost no knowledge of the Karaite *ḥalacha*. Nevertheless, according to Karaite Turkic Nationalism, a genuine full-fledged Karaite is considered to be someone whose parents are both Karaites, which corresponds to the halachic rules of Karaism.[53] With that being said, Sofia references not some religious authority but her father, who acts as a kind of a bearer of "folk Karaism".[54] In the practice of "folk Karaism", the important identity markers are constructs such as "Karaim language",[55] "our own faith", and "Karaite cuisine". With the decline of religious life, the food construct ("Karaite pie") often comes to the forefront as a primary marker of identity,[56]

> Since my childhood, I felt like a Karaite... I knew that Karaites existed; it was a separate ethnicity. They had their own language, their own faith, their own food... It was complicated. Karaite marriages were highly respected, and efforts were made to avoid Jewish-Karaite and Karaite-Tatar marriages because these nations had something in common. [It was important] to show that it was a distinct ethnic group... One group that is close [to us] in terms of language is the Tatar, even though the Karaite language exists as a separate language. And the second group (the Jews – note by the author) [follow] the Old Testament. And us – we follow the Old Testament,

52 Interview with Sofia Yalpachik, 17 June 2021. Private collection of the author.
53 On the subject of the Karaite halacha, see Michael Corinaldi, *Ha-maʿamād hā-ʾīšī šel ḥaq-qārāʾīm* [In Hebrew: *The Personal Status of the Karaites*] (Jerusalem: Rubin Mass, 1984).
54 On the phenomenon and practice of "folk Judaism" and how it differs from normative Judaism, see Idei bez granic, 'Marija Kaspina. Narodnyj iudaizm v SSSR', online video recording, YouTube, 24 November 2016 <https://youtu.be/GNkP17tRRmw?si=PohMWtjDFtBaTpeB> [accessed on 25 August 2022].
55 Centr Sèfer, 'M. Gammal «Drugie evrejskie jazyki» #2 «Karaimskij jazyk»', online video recording, YouTube, 7 April 2022 <https://youtu.be/iRfzrfxKBFk?si=j-jPOHqtMetCGEmw> [accessed on 25 August 2022].
56 Irina Levčenko, 'Karaimskie recepty v stichach rasskazyvaet Sofija Jalpačik', online video recording, YouTube, 5 December 2018 <https://youtu.be/ZW6vkMeWvoo?si=mSqcVPz6t4jDUikx> [accessed on 10 July 2022].

but without the Talmud. [Karaites] do not recognize [the authority of] the Talmud. Are they Crimean Jews or Jewish Tatars? Aunt Fania was married to a Tatar man, and she was deported in 1944... My dad said that a Karaite was someone whose father and mother were Karaites.[57]

In the Karaite Melitopol' narrative, which has undergone almost complete de-Judaization under the influence of Karaite nationalism, a person who caused the Germans to doubt the Turkic status of the local Karaites was a member of the community who was married to a Rabbinic Jewess. As Sofia Yalpachik reported, she heard such story in the early 1990s,

In Melitopol', one of the Karaites was married to a Jewess. And when his family was taken away, he started saying, 'Take me together with my wife!' – 'No! We do not touch the Karaites'. – 'Please, take me! How can she manage without me? We are so close [Jews and Karaites – note by the author]!' And he came to the courtyard, a big Karaite courtyard. And he said, 'Forgive me, but you all might also be taken away and shot. Because I wanted to stay with my family, I just blurted it out'.[58]

It is important to mention that as far as the Karaite rescue narrative in Melitopol' is concerned, the library of Budun, a former *hazzan*, played a significant role as it allegedly contained some "ancient books" on the "Turkic past" of the Karaites. Clearly, while the Karaite leaders in Melitopol' were preparing the report for the Germans, they used not the "ancient Karaite books" but rather pamphlets by Shapshal and similar authors. Concurrently, in the memories of the carriers of Turkic–Karaite identity, one reads that Budun "would always seclude himself and pray, reading the prayers in his own manner (!)".[59] Thus, this hazzan's praying in Hebrew, not in Turkic, as was sometimes practiced in the 1920s–1930s (as well as nowadays), made him a "stranger".

An important element in memories regarding the rescue of the Karaites is the idea that while the Jews could not be helped directly, the Karaites contributed to the survival of abandoned Jewish infants,

They summoned the Karaites. There were about 90 of them at that time. In short, they were given a deadline... A week or so. They had

to write a historical explanatory note about who they were. And then… one of the educated ones [Hillel Yalpachik], who lived next to Budun [the former hazzan] and who had a lot of old Karaite literature… Several educated Karaite families wrote this note for the local German authorities… Local Karaite, auntie Shura Makarova – her mother… The headman of Melitopol' was married to a German woman. And this German woman was friends with a Karaite grandmother. She went to her and said, 'Look, here are the photographs – Karaites in the Tsarist army, the Russian army. Jews were not conscripted into the army. Clearly, it's a completely different ethnicity. Not because…' Later, I told my dad, 'How could you ask just like that? Those poor people were shot, and we were left [to live]. How is that possible?' – 'Well, you see, I couldn't help them.' Still, when the Jews were being led to be shot, this one woman came to me. Her grandmother… Two Jewish children were abandoned right in the courtyard of the Karaites, the Khadji family. Precisely because of their appearances. And she saved them, and then gave them to an orphanage. So, we always coexisted amicably with the Jews, but tried to never undermine the distinctiveness of our two groups.[60]

The Karaites were also extremely frightened by the shootings of about a hundred Roma (we do not know exactly whether they were nomadic or settled) in Melitopol' in January 1942.[61] In many ways, such actions by the occupiers led the Karaites to wonder whether their "question" might be reconsidered,

It was January 1942. Gypsies, up to 100 people, are being escorted through the streets of the city. Among them there are few men, only women and children. The children are small and dark-eyed – trembling with life… In the morning, the residents of the village of Kostiantynivka reported a new atrocity against the Gypsies. The entire group had been shot. For what? Why? After all, Gypsies are Christians by religion, and all the Germans have 'God is with us' written on their belts. They say that the Gypsies allegedly handed out the nails during the crucifixion of Christ 62…[63]

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60   Ibid.
61   *Peresliduvannja ta vbyvstva romiv na terenach Ukrajiny u časy Druhoji svitovoji vijny: Zbirnyk dokumentiv, materialiv ta spohadiv*, ed. by Mychajlo Tjahlyj (Kyjiv: Ukrajins'kyj centr vyvčennja istoriji Holokostu, 2013), p. 200.
62   A different version of this Romaphobic legend suggests that a Romani blacksmith forged the nails used to crucify Jesus, Aleksej Gorškov, 'Gvozdi dlja raspjatija Christa', *Proza.ru*, 16 February 2015 <https://proza.ru/2015/02/16/1385> [accessed on 20 June 2022].
63   GARF, f. 7021, op. 61, d. 17, l. 40-40-ob.

This fear was sustained by the fact that the executions of Roma continued throughout the entire occupation of Melitopol'. For instance, on 9 April 1942, *Ortskommandantur* No. 882 in the city of Mykhailivka reported the transfer of "40 Gypsies" to the SD in Melitopol'; they were subsequently shot.[64]

Within these narratives, the story of rescue is intertwined with the assumption that the Karaites in Melitopol' and other locations did not collaborate with the Germans in any shape or form. However, as we will argue later in the article, this was not so. Often in these stories we come across the date of the Karaites' "investigation" being moved forward by one month, to November 1941. For example, sisters Raisa and Larisa Irtlach recalled in the 1990s,

> The Germans equated the Karaites with the Jews, so they wanted to execute them together with the Jews. On 20 November 1941, by order of the German occupation authorities, the Karaites were gathered by the mill (where the kenesa used to be) to determine their origins. With the help of encyclopaedias, historical materials, and the latest scientific data, representatives of the Karaite community (S[emen] M[arkovich] Kumysh, Budun, I.S. Irtlach, and H[illel] S[emenovich] Yalpachik) managed to prove that the Karaites were an independent ethnicity of Turkic origin and had nothing in common with the Jews. The mayor of the city, Vasilii Demyanovich Perepletchikov, who was familiar with the history of the Karaites, also spoke in their defence. Thus, the Karaites of Melitopol' were saved. None of the Karaites, including those from Melitopol', collaborated with the Germans, and no one became a traitor...[65]

It is telling that such demonstrative loyalty to the Soviet power was mirrored by the Karaites in their interactions with the occupying authorities and collaborators in Kyiv. In October 1941, Kyiv's Karaite community reported in a statement to Alexander Ogloblin, the Head of the City Administration, that "not a single" Karaite was a member of the VKP(b) or served in the punitive organs of Soviet power,

> The political stance of the Karaites is easily revealed by the fact that in twenty-three years [of Soviet power – Y.R.], not a single one of them became a communist or a commissar. Also, prior to the entry of German troops into Kyiv, not one Karaite evacuated from Kyiv".[66]

64   Kruglov, *Bez žalosti i somnenija*, p. 141.
65   From the memoirs of L[arisa] I[lyinichna] and R[aisa] I[lyinichna] Irtlach, in *V surovye gody Velikoj Otečestvennoj vojny, Karaimy Melitopol'ja* (Melitopol'': Dolja, 2004), p. 27.
66   Deržavnyj archiv Kyjivs'koji oblasti (hereafter DAKO), f. 2412, op. 2, spr. 261, Ark. 2-2-zv.

Within the Karaite narrative, the events of October 1941 in Melitopol' are often intertwined and juxtaposed with what had happened there almost two years later. In late September–October 1943, while facing the advancing Red Army, the Germans began evacuation – essentially, expulsion of the city's population. During that time, Melitopol' Karaites made themselves scarce and tried to return home to their cities at the first opportunity,

> The last months of the occupation (September–October 1943) further united the Karaite families. In September, the population was driven out onto an open steppe. Several Karaite families banded together and settled on the steppe together: the family of Ilya Semenovich Yalpachik, six people; the family of Ilya Savelyevich Irtlach, five people; Sofia Ilyinichna Gabay with her daughter Shura; Savelii Markovich Raffe with his wife, Raisa Abramovna; Naum Moiseyevich Choref with his wife Stella Savelyevna and their niece Nadia. Having occupied three sections of an anti-tank trench, they made a shelter to protect themselves from rain and wind. They lived in such manner for 35 days, under bombing and shelling. They went to a well far from our 'camp' for water and would often come under fire.
>
> Among them, the oldest one was Naum Moiseyevich Choref (the Germans paid less attention to elderly persons); he was the only one who went into the city and brought back the remaining food from the apartments of those who stayed at this 'camp'. They cooked dumplings and porridge for everyone from these provisions.
>
> In the last days, when the fighting had reached the city, they moved to a small hut in Novyi Melitopol', and that's where they were met by the Soviet Army.[67]

It so happened that some Karaite families bonded with their Slavic neighbours, with whom they were friends during the pre-war and war periods. For instance, the Karaite family of Stamboli and the Polish family of Ponizovsky, along with other six people (Ukrainians and Russians), were hiding for a while in Melitopol', in the Stambolis' house, as well as in gardens in the city area known as Chervona Hirka. However, after two weeks, the Germans found them and forced them to relocate to the village of Mykolaivka. Along the way, the families escaped and returned to Chervona Hirka. They were caught a second time and, along with a group

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[67]   From the memoirs of L[arisa] I[lyinichna] and R[aisa] I[lyinichna] Irtlach, in *V surovye gody Velikoj Otečestvennoj vojny, Karaimy Melitopol'ja* (Melitopol'': Dolja, 2004), p. 27.

of people, were then marched under the supervision of policemen and Cossacks. On the way, they managed to find work at a German military unit. When the German retreat began, they remained there until the Red Army's advance in late October 1943.[68]

In the Karaite narratives about the events of September–October 1943 in Melitopol' and the surrounding area, it is often stated that when the Germans drove the families out of the city "onto the steppe", they could "mistakenly be taken for Jews" and shot because of their appearance ("black eyes").[69] Some of the expelled Karaites did not return to Melitopol' but moved to Crimea, where they met the arrival of the Red Army and the deportation of the Crimean Tatars in May 1944. Only then would they return to Melitopol' in the summer of 1944. For example, the Yalpachik family was helped to flee towards Crimea by a certain Russian or Ukrainian "volunteer" from some Wehrmacht or SS units. Thus, the Yalpachiks went to Bakhchisarai and later returned to their native Melitopol'.[70]

The fact that the Karaite community of Melitopol' was not exterminated by SK 10A or other units within Einsatzgruppe D is of great historical interest. SK 10a, which left Melitopol' immediately after the execution of the Jews and the permission for the Karaites to return home, subsequently killed the Karaites along with the Jews in several other places. A few days later in Berdiansk, subordinates of Seetzen shot about 700 local Jews.[71] Among those killed in Merlikov Gulch, there was at least one Karaite: Solomon Akav.[72] It is possible that he was married to a Jewish woman. We know of a Karaite woman being killed together with her husband in December 1941 in Kharkiv.[73] Elsewhere, in August 1942 in Krasnodar, SK 10 shot almost fifty local Karaites along with Jews.[74] The indictment by the KGB Directorate of the Krasnodar region, dated 18 June 1963, in the case against Alois Weich and eight other collaborators, provided details of that execution,

> In Krasnodar, the SS repeated their provocation of gathering the Jewish population for relocation to other settlements by posting announcements throughout the city, urging Jews to report to the assembly points. When hundreds of families arrived, SS Sonderkommando members transported the Jews out of the city over the course

68   GARF, f. 7021, op. 61, d. 17, l. 44-44-ob.
69   Interview with Sofia Yalpachik, 17 June 2021. Private collection of the author.
70   Ibid.
71   Kruglov, *Bez žalosti i somnenija*, p. 210.
72   Sergej Šajtanov, 'Spisok ubitych i zamučennych karaimov v gody vojny', *karaims.com*, n.d. <http://www.karaims.com/page.php?cod=ru&page=225&node=&p=288> [accessed on 5 June 2022].
73   Grigorii Ganzburg interviewing Aleksandra Ganzburg, 10 July 2022. Private collection of Grigorii Ganzburg.
74   Šajtanov, 'Spisok ubitych i zamučennych karaimov v gody vojny'.

of two or three days to the area of sovkhoz [state farm] No. 1, near the Electromechanical Plant, and shot them in an anti-tank trench.[75]

Within the Karaite narrative, it was common to blame the Jewish leaders in Krasnodar for allegedly "informing" the Germans about the religious traits that Jews and Karaites shared. For example, one of the Karaite leaders, Boris Kokenai, accused a certain Tarnovsky, a Jewish leader of Krasnodar, of this.[76] The narrative from Krasnodar overlaps somewhat with the Karaite narrative from Melitopol'. The latter implied that the reason the Melitopol' Karaites underwent "Jewish identity verification" was a certain Karaite married to a Jewish woman, who had informed the Germans that Jews and Karaites were "closely connected".

Most likely, this motif was related to the differing approaches of SK 10A members towards the Karaites in different locations. The Karaites were not perceived as a homogeneous community. SK 10A individually assessed the "degree of Jewishness" of the Karaites in each separate locality, assuming that the Karaites in a particular area could be Jewish. In the case of Melitopol', it is possible that the fact that the Sonderkommando left the city relatively quickly played a role, leading to a hasty decision not to engage the local Karaites.

Subsequently, it became evident that the occupation authorities represented by the Wehrmacht were generally uninterested in the Karaite question in Melitopol', as well as throughout mainland Ukraine. For instance, in the report of Group IV Wi[77] dated 28 October 1941, there was no mention of a story about the rescue of Karaites. Instead, the report focused on the execution of Jews and a number of Volksdeutsche present in the city at that moment,

> Melitopol', located in Eastern Ukraine on the Molochna River, is a city of 85,000 residents; currently, it has approximately 40,000 residents, including 215 Volksdeutsche who have been issued certificates. The administrative and party organs fled on 28 September 1941. 1 Red Army soldier, 24 suspicious individuals, and 2,000 Jews were handed over to the SD. Allegedly, there are 600 party members in the city.[78]

Jewish-Karaite Relations in Melitopol' against the Backdrop of the Shoah As we have previously mentioned, an important element

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[75]   Kruglov, *Bez žalosti i somnenija*, p. 147.
[76]   Kizilov, *The Sons of Scripture*, p. 355.
[77]   Group IV Wi – a secret name of the headquarters of the Chief Procurement Officer of the 11th Army.
[78]   Kruglov, *Bez žalosti i somnenija*, p. 50.

of the contemporary Karaite narrative in Melitopol' involves not only a complete distancing from the Jews but also an emphasis on the assumption that the Karaites did not collaborate with the Germans during the occupation, and that they saved Jewish children. This narrative is not confined to Melitopol' alone. For example, a popular story recounts how a captured Jew, Yakov Rys, was helped by a certain Karaite "Uncle Yefim", who taught him a few Karaite words, thus saving his life.[79]

Various sources document instances of Karaites helping Jews in Melitopol' in 1943. The assistance was often provided jointly by Karaites and Slavs. Notably, the Karaites held certain positions in the occupational administration. In January 1943, the German civil administration arrived in Melitopol', and the aforementioned Evgenia Ponizovskaya was appointed an attorney at the city's Legal Advisory Office, while Aza Stamboli, a Karaite, worked there as a secretary. Her husband, Fyodor (Efraim?) Suleymanovich (Solomonovich) Stamboli, worked as the chief engineer of Melitopol' power station during the occupation.[80] Nina Demidova, also of Karaite background, participated in the rescue of Jews in the city,

> Buraya was also a Karaite... Or perhaps, half-Karaite. Her son was so handsome. But when she presumably died, he lived in poverty, one might say. Aunt Tanya constantly helped him. They would help him, but he would still keep on begging... They would say to him, 'Don't disgrace Karaites'... This family was also related to the Karaite community.[81]

Ponizovskaya, Stamboli, and Buraya provided assistance to several Jewish women in Melitopol' in 1943. This assistance often involved forging documents, offering shelter, and providing opportunities to move to an area where nobody knew them. Such help was typically extended to women and children and was often successful. For example, in the case of the rescue of Sarra Tsipper, a fake passport was prepared for her and people were found who were willing to "confirm" that she had been born into a Russian family and adopted by Jews.[82] Ponizovskaya and Stamboli later recalled,

> We experienced so much anxiety... regarding the fate of the young woman, a Komsomol member, a Jewess Sarra Tsipper, who sought

79   Phone interview with Sofia Yalpachik, 9 January 2021. Personal collection of the author.
80   GARF, f. 7021, op. 61, d. 17, l. 42-06-43.
81   Phone interview with Sofia Yalpachik, 9 January 2021. Personal collection of the author.
82   According to information received from the ChGK, the entire family of Sarra Tsipper was killed by the Germans in October 1941, "... the entire family of S.V. Tsipper, a worker at the Pump and Compressor Plant who resided at 14 Tolstoy St., was captured and exterminated over a two-year period. This included her mother, brothers, grandmother, and others – a total of 19 people, including 8 children aged from one to thirteen years" (GARF, f. 7021, op. 61, d. 12, l. 42).

our protection and help. We had to change her last name from Tsipper to Tsistrova, and her first name from Sarra to Alexandra. Then we found people who confirmed that she had come from an orphanage and was Russian. Thanks to this, Komsomol member Sarra Tsipper lived to see the day of liberation from the Nazi beasts.[83]

Sarra Tsipper herself recounted the details of her rescue to the Soviet investigators on 16 November 1943,

> We found people who agreed to confirm that my father and mother were Russian – my mother presumably had died in childbirth, and my father had decided to put me in an orphanage in the city of Zaporizhia. 89-year-old Filimon Petrovich Kolosov, who worked as a doorman at School No. 11, where I had studied for seven years, turned out to be my saviour during the occupation. He confirmed that my father, Vladimir Melnichuk, a Russian, served with him in the navy in Sevastopol. After my mother – Darya Yakovlevna, also a Russian – died, my father and Filimon Petrovich went to Zaporizhia and put me in an orphanage. Four hours later my father left for Sevastopol, while Filimon Petrovich remained in Zaporizhzhia. He came across a certain Jewish man, Vladimir Tsipper, who told him that he had a good life but unfortunately was childless. Filimon Petrovich advised him to take the little girl Alexandra from the orphanage, explaining that she was Russian. Together with Filimon Petrovich, Vladimir Tsipper went to the orphanage and adopted this girl Alexandra. They held a christening ceremony in the canteen and then parted ways.[84]

A number of people, including Sarra's classmate Klavdia Shcherbina, her mother Ulyana Kalmykova, as well as Alexander Dragunov, the owner of the house where Sarra had lived, reported that the girl's adoptive mother Bertha did not acknowledge her Jewish identity, regularly beat her, and called her "*katsapka*" (a derogatory term for Russians). All these sworn "testimonies" were submitted to the Melitopol' police along with a statement. The local police took a long time to investigate and eventually handed the case over to the SD (*Sicherheitsdienst*). Subsequently, Sarra was called in by the SD, who subjected her to harassment and "racial examinations". However, in the end she was released and quietly lived in

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83   GARF, f. 7021, op. 61, d. 17, l. 42.
84   GARF, f. 7021, op. 61, d. 12, l. 14-ob.

Melitopol' with her Slavic husband and their son, periodically bartering clothes for food in the villages,

> The police investigated for a long time, tormenting me at the SS and SD. The SD took me in for verification, that is, at the SD they stripped me naked, measured my nose, forehead, torso, took blood tests. The SD confirmed that I was Russian. The gendarmerie tormented me as well, finally issuing a Russian passport. I stopped going to the city centre and went to the villages instead, bartering clothes. My husband did not have any work for two years. We lived in great hardship. Often, the whole family – me, my husband, and our son – stayed in the villages.[85]

However, sometimes the rescuers were out of luck, and they themselves could become victims of the occupation regime,

> In December 1943, two Jewish women came to us (to Ponizovskaya and Stamboli – note by the author). [At the time], we lived as two families at 41 Chernyshevsky Street. The women were Sarra Zakharovna Pushkar, the wife of Fyodor Antonovich Pushkar, an employee of the power station, and Sofia Grigoryevna Viktorova, the sister of Vitikhin's wife, who hid L[azar] M[oiseyevich] Kaganovich during the revolution. Sofia Grigoryevna Viktorova and her 12-year-old daughter Galochka did not register and went into hiding for some time, living with Nina Demidovna Buraya... The two women came asking for documents to prove Viktorova's Russian background. Using the stamp and seal of the Melitopol' Legal Consultation, which I, Ponizovskaya, had kept, we prepared the documents stating that Sofia Grigoryevna Viktorova had sought help before the war, in 1941, to obtain a certificate from the registry office regarding her birth from Russian parents. However, the registry office's books for that particular year were missing, and the statement could not be mailed. Instead, an inquiry was issued to get a passport at the regional police station.
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> With this document, Viktorova was supposed to hide in the village, but one day before her departure, she and Buraya were betrayed and then captured by the SD. After being released from prison, Buraya told Sarra Zakharovna Pushkar that she had been tortured; her back had been burned to force to admit

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85   GARF, f. 7021, op. 61, d. 12, l. 14-ob.-15.

that Viktorova was Jewish. They also wanted her to reveal the source of Viktorova's document. Despite the torture, Buraya did not confess that Viktorova was Jewish, and neither did she disclose the source of the document. Buraya did not manage to convince SD of the authenticity of the document; as a result, Viktorova was shot along with her child.[86]

This group also helped Jewish men, often involving Ukrainians and Russians in the rescue efforts. In the summer of 1943, a Jewish man from Sevastopol hid for about two weeks in the office premises "until he received a passport through comrades Anna Nikolayevna Poliatskaya and Tatiana Ovsiannikova". Aza Stamboli brought along the necessary document. The women rescuers collectively gathered funds for this man's journey, and he was "safely sent away".[87] It is likely that he survived.

In another instance, Ponizovskaya and Stamboli were approached by people seeking to save their Jewish employees. For example, in the summer of 1943, the head of the children's playground, Anna Semenovna Miliukova, requested help with "obtaining a passport for the playground's watchman, who was Jewish. He had stayed in hiding but had been identified by a policeman".[88] Through their contacts, "comrades Poliatskaya and Ovsiannikova, Ponizovskaya and Stamboli secured a passport belonging to Petr Sibilev".[89] Furthermore, Ponizovskaya and Stamboli reported to the ChGK investigators,

> The passport was altered to match the age of the person in need and handed over to Miliukova for the Jewish man in hiding. Comrade Stamboli obtained a pass in the name of Petr Sibilev, and this individual was safely sent out of Melitopol'. He is currently alive and well, residing in the Donbas region.[90]

The Ponizovskaya-Stamboli group was involved not only in rescuing Jews but also in preventing the deportation of city residents to work in Germany. They managed to save Savelii Irtlach, a Karaite, from being sent to Germany for forced labour.[91]

Members of the Stamboli family themselves faced Nazi persecution in the spring of 1942. However, it is likely that their Karaite origin and the support they had given to the Jews did not play a significant role in

86   GARF, f. 7021, op. 61, d. 17, l. 42-42-ob.
87   GARF, f. 7021, op. 61, d. 17, l. 43.
88   GARF, f. 7021, op. 61, d. 17, l. 43-ob.
89   GARF, f. 7021, op. 61, d. 17, l. 43-ob.
90   GARF, f. 7021, op. 61, d. 17, l. 43-ob.
91   Yad Vashem Archives, RG M. 37, F.N.1178, P.2.

these arrests. The probable cause for the arrests was the trading of flammable materials from the power station rather than any connection to the Soviet partisans, as reported to Soviet investigators by Ponizovskaya and Stamboli,

> In April 1942, Fyodor Solomonovich Stamboli, the chief engineer of the power station, was arrested on charges of squandering fuel materials, which were in short supply at the station. Stamboli was associated with two partisans: Konstantin Peremet, who worked at the railways, and his brother Ivan Peremet, who worked at the power station. It was alleged that per agreement with the partisans, the fuel was deliberately misused. Furthermore, Stamboli was repeatedly summoned by SD because a certain party member named Kislov, who was purged by the Germans and sent to hard labour in Crimea, had worked at the station. Stamboli was placed in a death cell, and all his property was confiscated by the German Schutzpolizei. His family, consisting of of his wife, Aza Markovna Stamboli, their two sons aged 9 and 11, his 80-year-old mother, and his 65-year-old aunt were taken under guard to the village of Priazovye and abandoned in an empty house without any means of subsistence. Severely ill Aza Markovna Stamboli, suffering from a heart condition and a hernia, supported the entire family through hard work at the former collective farm called Second Five-Year Plan. She maintained regular contact with me, Ponizovskaya, receiving the news of the Red Army's victories and the German defeats. Aza Markovna Stamboli shared this information with the collective farm workers, instilling in them hope for victory and the final defeat of the fascist scoundrels.[92]

Information about Fyodor Stamboli's arrest can be found in another testimony from Melitopol' by resident Petr Timofeyev. Timofeyev, who was persecuted by the occupation authorities as a communist, received help from Fyodor and Aza Stamboli,

> The Stamboli family was purged by the Germans. Fyodor Solomonovich Stamboli was under arrest for four months, while the Stamboli family's property was confiscated.[93]

Subsequently, it became clear that the Stamboli family (primarily, Fyodor) was not persecuted by the occupation authorities for their

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92 GARF, f. 7021, op. 61, d. 17, l. 44.
93 GARF, f. 7021, op. 61, d. 17, l. 49.

activities, nor because they were Karaites. For instance, they were able to freely move around Melitopol' and its environs during the occupation, receiving a certificate from the police of the Priazovye district in Zaporizhia oblast on 24 June 1942,

> This certificate is presented to citizen Aza Markovna Stamboli, a resident of Melitopol', permitting her to travel with her family of five to Melitopol' for treatment.[94]

THE SHOAH AND KARAITE POLICY: POST-WAR REFLECTIONS IN JUDICIAL MATERIALS

Some essential documents for studying the history of the Second World War (the Shoah, collaboration, etc.) in Ukraine are judicial and investigative case files from the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU) Archives. For the most part, these sources contain testimonies of the accused and witnesses. The documents date back to the final years of the war up until the late 1980s. It is highly likely that the accused gave their testimonies under torture or severe psychological pressure. Collaborators sought to hide as many crimes as possible from the investigation, portraying themselves as people who simply were not given any other choice. During this period, the Soviet authorities were not always interested in publicizing information about the collaboration of Soviet citizens with the German occupiers.

When public trials took place during the war, the floor was most often given to a German who testified about the crimes of the Wehrmacht, SS, SD, and similar agencies. For instance, at the Kharkiv trial in December 1943, a former Gebietskomissar of Melitopol', Hans Heinisch, was interrogated. He stated that between 1 and 14 September 1942 some 4,000 people had been killed in Melitopol', without specifying their ethnicity or origin.[95] The crimes committed by the local administration and police, however, were not mentioned.

In this context, one cannot but agree with John-Paul Himka's view that Soviet investigators and defendants were often invested in attributing numerous crimes to the Germans.[96] Still, the archival sources help us study

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94   GARF, f. 7021, op. 61, d. 17, l. 57.
95   Voennyj Tribunal 4-go Ukrainskogo Fronta, *Sudebnyj process o zverstvach nemecko-fašistskich zachvatčikov na territorii gor. Char'kova i Char'kovskoj oblasti v period ich vremennoj okkupacii* (Moskva: Gospolitizdat, 1943), p. 54.
96   John-Paul Himka, 'The Ukrainian Insurgent Army and the Holocaust. Paper prepared for the forty-first national convention of the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies, Boston, 12–15 November 2009', *Academia.edu*, n.d. <http://ualberta.academia.edu/JohnPaulHimka/Papers/1123498/The_Ukrainian_Insurgent_Army_UPA_and_the_Holocaust> [accessed on 25 June 2022].

the history of the Shoah and the occupation at a micro-level, providing an understanding of the perpetrators' personality and motivations. At the same time, it is evident that information obtained from such documents should be cross-referenced with other sources and contemporary research.

An important aspect of this process is related to how the Soviet investigative authorities described the occupying forces' policy regarding the Karaites, namely which aspects had been documented and which were omitted, consciously or subconsciously. These documents largely reflect the official stance of the Soviet authorities on the "Karaite question". Based on my personal experience working with these documents since 2009, I can ascertain that the Karaite theme is extremely rare within the SBU archival materials throughout Ukraine. In particular, in the Kharkiv SBU Archive, the Karaite subject is mentioned in only one case involving a Kharkiv police officer, Semen Loktev. In this particular instance, an Ashkenazi Jew, who was being led to execution, claimed to be a Karaite in an attempt to save himself.[97]

The largest known case from the archives of the former KGB is the trial of a former collaborator from Crimea, Viktor Beletskii. The files were kept at the Archive of the SBU Main Directorate in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea until 2014, and a copy can now be viewed at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archive.[98] The trial took place immediately after the war, in 1946–1947. Although the case consists of only one volume, like most similar documents of the time it contains rather detailed and interesting information about the Karaite policy of the Nazis and their collaborators in Crimea in the years 1941–1944. The file includes interrogations of three Karaite women who had lived in Crimea during the occupation. Soviet investigating agencies used various documents and reference books for the duration of the case. For instance, the Beletskii case contains copies of articles from the *Great Soviet Encyclopaedia*, as well as from the pre-revolutionary *Brockhaus and Efron Encyclopaedic Dictionary*.[99] Having obtained these articles from the main public library in Yevpatoria, Beletskii studied them while preparing a report on the Karaites for the occupying authorities in December 1941.

Cases of collaborators serving in the local administration during the war years shed light on the Shoah and the Karaite policy in the Melitopol′ region. Among them is the case of Vasyl Perepliotchikov, the first burgomaster of Melitopol′ during the German occupation. Born in 1882 in Chernihiv governorate, Perepliotchikov received a 10-year prison sentence

97   Archiv Charkivs′koho oblasnoho upravlinnja Služby bezpeky Ukrajiny (hereafter AChOUSBU), Spr. 30508.
98   Archiv Holovnoho upravlinnja Služby bezpeky Ukrajiny v Avtonomnij respublici Krym (AHUSBUARK), Spr. 10153, Ark. 94-zv. (copy from USHMM, RG-31.018M, Reel 10).
99   AHUSBUARK, Spr. 10153, Ark. 195-198.

in 1946 for collaborating with the Germans. He held his position of a bur-gomaster from October 1941 to 1 February 1942, during the peak of the Sho-ah in the region, when the fate of the local Karaims was being decided. Subsequently, he was dismissed and managed the city's economic affairs until July 1943.[100]

Perepliotchikov obtained the position of burgomaster through the pa-tronage of SK 10A members. On 7 October 1941, he was summoned to the SD, where an officer (possibly Seetzen) offered him the task of restor-ing the pipeline system in the building of the former *zemstvo*[101] hospi-tal, where German soldiers had been treated. Perepliotchikov agreed to help, and the work was completed the same day. The next day, 8 October, with his assistance, an officer of SK 10A convened a "meeting of a narrow circle of Melitopol' intelligentsia", where Perepliotchikov was appointed a burgomaster.[102]

The Shoah is rarely mentioned in Perepliotchikov's case. For exam-ple, there is no information about his or the city administration's role in the killings of the local Jews. It is only noted that he engaged in loot-ing, ordering the collection of warm clothes from the murdered Jews for the German army during the winter of 1941–1942.[103] In his testimony from October 8, 1945 Perepliotchikov remarked,

> Under my direction, warm cloths of Soviet citizens were collected
> for the German army, while items belonging to executed Soviet cit-
> izens were distributed to the Germans returning from Germany.[104]

In the case of another Melitopol' collaborator, Andrei Putov, a na-tive of Vladimir governorate, who was 54 years old at the beginning of the war, the theme of the Shoah is mentioned in passing in the context of the Germans' attitude towards the Karaites. From 15 October 1941 to July 1942, Putov was the director of the 11th secondary school, while also holding the posts of advisor to the burgomaster and chairman of the bud-get commission of the city administration. From July 1942 to August 1943, he worked as the director of a technical school for training personnel in metalworking. After the Red Army liberated Melitopol' in the fall of 1943,

[100] Archiv Zaporiz'koho oblasnoho upravlinnja Služby Bezpeky Ukrajiny (hereafter AZOUSBU), Spr. 5472, Ark. 99.
[101] A zemstvo (Russian: земство, IPA: [ˈzʲɛmstvə], pl. земства, zemstva)[a] was an institution of local government set up during the emancipation reform of 1861 carried out in Imperial Russia by Emperor Alexander II of Russia. Nikolay Milyutin elaborated the idea of the zemstvo, and the first zemstvo laws went into effect in 1864. After the October Revolution, the zemstvo system was shut down by the Bolsheviks and replaced with a multilevel system of workers' and peasants' councils ("soviets").
[102] AZOUSBU, Spr. 5472, Ark. 24.
[103] Ibid., Akr. 100.
[104] Ibid., Akr. 59-zv.

Putov moved to Kyiv, where in 1946 he was arrested, tried, and sentenced to eight years in prison.[105]

The case file contains testimonies of the two previously mentioned Karaites: Hillel Yalpachik and Fyodor Stamboli. During his interrogation on 5 April 1946, Yalpachik stated that he had known Putov since 1932, and that Putov taught at the Melitopol' Institute of Agriculture and interacted with Yalpachik "as a teacher would normally do".[106] Yalpachik reported that at his request Putov intervened on behalf of the Karaites, emphasizing the threat of the Germans possible decision to address the "Karaite question" in the same way as with the "Jewish" and "Roma" ones. Based on the questions that were asked, it is evident that the investigator had a general understanding of Karaite nationalism. It appears that the Soviet official might have familiarized himself with these ideas through interactions with Yalpachik or by reading Soviet encyclopaedias of the 1920s–1930s, in which Karaites were described as a "distinct Turkic ethnicity". The investigator was interested in the particularities of the "Karaite policy" in Melitopol' as well as the role Putov played in these processes. The investigator also seemed aware of the differing attitudes of the occupiers and collaborators towards the Karaites in the occupied USSR,

> Question: Was there a situation when you personally, during the German occupation, approached Andrei Yevgrafyevich Putov with a request that if the German authorities were to ask him about the Karaites, he would explain that the Karaite ethnicity was a distinct ethnicity?
> Answer: Yes, there was such a situation when, approximately in October or November 1941, I ran into Putov on a street in Melitopol' and asked him about this. He responded along the lines of, 'Okay, if they ask, I will say the following...' or simply say 'Okay'".
>
> The phrasing of such a question to Putov was due to the fact that the Germans tended to equate the Karaites with the Jews or Roma, who were subject to extermination during the German occupation.[107]

The investigator posed similar questions to Fyodor Stamboli on 1 April 1946, as he did to Yalpachik. The investigator was interested in Putov's attitude towards the "Karaite question" and his participation in rescuing the Karaites of Melitopol'. One could clearly deduce from Stamboli's

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[105]   Ibid., Spr. 1678, Ark. 158-159.
[106]   Ibid., Ark. 54.
[107]   Ibid.

replies that Putov did not have unequivocally good, "serene" relations with the Karaites during the occupation. Not all Karaites at that time had an idea about Putov's role in their rescue. Most likely, the narrative about his actions was spread by Yalpachik, Budun, and other Karaite activists in the post-war years, becoming well-known only after the collapse of the USSR. It is evident from the interrogation that Putov tried to use the theme of the Karaite rescue to shield himself from the Soviet purges after the return of Soviet power to Melitopol',

> Question: Do you know Andrei Yevgrafovich Putov, and how would you describe your relationship?
> Answer: I have known Putov since 1932, when I was a student at the Melitopol' Institute of Agricultural Engineering. Putov was the Head of the Academic Department of the Melitopol' Institute. My relationship with him was ordinary; we had no personal conflicts.
> Question: What do you know about Putov's collaboration activities with the Germans during the occupation of Melitopol'?
> Answer: Regarding Putov's collaboration activities during the German occupation, I only know that Putov worked as an advisor to the burgomaster...
> Question: Was there an instance when you, an engineer at the Melitopol' power station during the German occupation, approached Putov for advice on what to do with the oil that the power station had concealed from the German authorities?
> Answer: Regarding the oil that had been concealed from the Germans – no, I did not seek such advice from Putov. However, there was an instance when I stopped by the City Administration and saw Putov. He asked me if the rumours he had heard were true, that I was trading oil and exchanging it for food. I told Putov that this was untrue, and even if it were true, it was being done with permission of the German authorities. I did not have any further discussions with Putov on this topic.
> Question: Did you approach Putov for consultation on the legal status of the Karaites during the German occupation, particularly when the Germans raised the issue of the Karaites' connection to the Jews?
> Answer: I never had any discussions with Putov on the issue of the Karaites, and I never consulted him on this matter (emphasis appears in the original text – note by the author).
> Question: Then why does Putov claim that you approached him with these questions?

> Answer: After the Red Army entered Melitopol' in 1943, I ran into Putov. He told me to mention, if the subject ever comes up, that he supposedly knew I had been trading oil but he, Putov, never informed the Germans.[108]

Of great interest is the case of a Crimean Tatar Ilarion Kurylo, a native of the Melitopol' region, who was 38 years old at the onset of the Soviet-German war. During the German occupation, he held several positions in the region: the headman of Voznesenka village(from 6 October 1941 to 15 March 1943) and burgomaster of Melitopol' (March 1943 to 18 September 1943). After the war, Kurylo was sentenced to death for his collaboration with the Germans.[109]

Kurylo's fate is particularly intriguing in the context of his collaboration with the Ukrainian nationalists (members of the Bandera and Melnyk factions), who arrived in the Melitopol' region from the West between 1941 and 1943. We know that during the Nazi occupation of eastern Ukraine, members of the OUN-B and OUN-M attempted to infiltrate the police and local self-government or recruit Ukrainians already working there.[110] At times, members of the Melnyk faction would arrive in Melitopol' as part of the Einsatzgruppen. For example, OUN-M activist Ivan Iuriiv was part of SK 10A in Melitopol'.[111]

In late October 1941, two members of the Bandera faction – Mykhailo Vyntoniv and Ivan (whose surname Kurylo could not recall during the trial) – arrived in Voznesenka. They were sheltered by Kurylo and began their propaganda activities. A month later, in November 1941, with the support of a headman, a meeting of OUN-B activists with the local intelligentsia took place on the premises of Voznesenka secondary school.[112] In the first weeks of the occupation, the Bandera faction succeeded in effectively organizing the propaganda through posters, leaflets, and appeals in various districts of the Melitopol' region. During his trial, Kurylo recalled the following,

> From the very first days of the German occupation of Melitopol' district, alongside German posters, announcements, and orders, some leaflets began to appear on various buildings, street corners, and

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108   Ibid., Ark. 48–49.
109   Ibid., Ark. 437–38.
110   On this subject, see Yuri Radchenko, '"Joho čoboty ta esesivs'ka forma buly zabryzkani krov 'ju…": tajemna pol'ova policija, policija bezpeky ta SD, dopomižna policija u terori ščodo jevrejiv Charkova (1941–1943 rr.)', *Holokost i sučasnist'. Studiji v Ukrajini i sviti*, 10 (2011), 46–86; Yuri Radchenko, 'Ukrajins'ka policija ta Holokost na Donbasi', *Ukrajina Moderna*, 24 (2017), 64–121; Yuri Radchenko, '"We fired all cartridges at them": Ukrainische Hilfspolizei and the Holocaust on the territory of the Generalbezirk Kharkiv, 1941–1943', *Yad Vashem Studies*, 41 (2013), 63–98; Jurij Radczenko, 'Niemcy znaleźli u nich zrabowane żydowskie rzeczy i dlatego ich rozstrzelali": Kureń Bukowiński, Holocaust w Kijowie i świadectwo Marty Zybaczynskiej', *Zagłada Żydów. Studia i Materiały*, 14 (2018), 580–617.
111   Radchenko, 'The Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (Mel'nyk Faction) and the Holocaust'.
112   AZOUSBU, Spr. 1678, Ark. 437–38.

other prominent locations. These leaflets, addressed to the Ukrainian people, stated that a Ukrainian national government led by Stepan Bandera had already been established and called for the consolidation of Ukrainian forces to organize an independent Ukrainian state. The leaflets also expressed gratitude to the German government for 'liberating' the Ukrainian people from the yoke of communism.[113]

With the onset of German repressions against the OUN-B in the fall of 1941, the military administration, having learned of Kurylo's connections with the Banderites, decided to "deal with him accordingly" and forbade him from maintaining contact with Ukrainian nationalists. The former headman of Voznesenka recalled during his trial,

> In late November 1941, a representative of the Ortskommandantur, Hess, who had previously appointed me a headman, came to the village council. During our conversation, he stated that the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists was interfering with the German command's objectives and was therefore severely persecuted.[114]

Apparently, after this intervention Kurylo refrained from openly communicating with the Banderites. Still, the "preventive conversation" did not entirely sever these connections. Later on, another OUN-B activist named Mykola Bureviy arrived in Voznesenka, likely in late 1942 or early 1943. He discussed with Kurylo specifics of the relationship between the OUN-B and the Germans, the formation of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA), and other events in Volhynia and Galicia. The emissary emphasized that "Germany will be defeated in this war, while the Soviet Union will be weakened".[115]

During the occupation, Kurylo was in touch with at least one member of OUN-M. In August–September 1942, a gendarmerie officer named Khabalyk visited the police in Voznesenka. It is likely that he, like Iuriiv, served as an interpreter for some German agency (such as the *Geheime Feldpolizei*, or Secret Field Police). While at the agency, he met the headman and mentioned that he was a member of Andriy Melnyk's party, conducting political agitation and spreading information about the "leader of the OUN".[116] After Khabalyk's departure from the village, there is no further information about OUN-M activities in Voznesenka during the German occupation.

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[113]   AZOUSBU, Spr. 13885, Ark. 44–44v.
[114]   Ibid., Ark. 59.
[115]   Ibid., Ark. 45–48.
[116]   Ibid., Ark. 51.

Knowing the anti-Semitic stance of OUN-B and OUN-M during the war, one might question what Kurylo's attitude towards the Jews was at the time. The materials from his trial indicate that, at least in one report to the Germans dated 8 December 1941, he employed anti-Semitic rhetoric. In that report, he described the "poor situation" with personnel in the local administration, pointing out among other things that one of the school principals, Vladimir Grechishkin, was not only a communist but also a Jew,

> I am well aware of all the activities in the Melitopol' district, and I must inform you that strong leadership in the district is lacking; the community leaders do not understand the importance and seriousness of their duties, nor do they assume responsibility for their work. As a result, former communist activists have found opportunities to infiltrate the administration and act according to their own agenda.
>
> Vladimir Grechishkin (a Jew, communist, activist, employee of the District Committee of the Communist Party), currently a principal of the seven-year school in the village of Semenovka, previously a school principal in Novo-Filipovka, often discusses defence matters with the village head, a certain Minko, in Filipovka. Citizen Duka from Filipovka can confirm that Minko is an NKVD agent.[117]

In the realities of the Nazi occupation, being a member of the Communist Party (VKP(b)) did not necessarily entail immediate death. There are known cases in which former members of the Communist Party and even NKVD officers served in collaborationist administrations and police forces. However, being a Jew did mean a certain death.

Later on, in February 1942, after the Congress of the Village Headmen of the Melitopol' district, Kurylo, along with other members of the Congress Presidium (Perepliotchikov, Klassen, and Smikhanovsky), sent a telegram to Hitler. In it, using anti-Semitic rhetoric, the local collaborators congratulated the leader of the Third Reich on the 9th anniversary of his rise to power on behalf of the administration of the Melitopol' district, "We rejoice and thank the German people for liberating the Ukrainians from the Jewish-Communist yoke".[118]

At the post-war trial, Kurylo reiterated that he had always helped the Jews whenever possible. During the interrogation on 12 June 1946, he stated that he had saved two people, a female pharmacist and a male paramedic, in the autumn of 1941. These testimonies are used by the authors

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[117] Ibid., Ark. 458.
[118] Ibid.

of a hagiographic biography of Kurylo-Krymchak, where he is depicted sole-ly as a hero and a patriot of Ukraine.[119] In these actions of aiding the Jews, Kurylo was reportedly assisted by his secretary, a Ukrainian man named Bondarenko, as well as a Greek man named Kefal, a chief physician at a village hospital,

> [...] in early November 1941, a citizen named Onishchenko (I do not know her first name or her patronymic), who at that time worked as a nurse in the village of Voznesenka, personally handed me a written statement regarding a pharmacist from the same hospital, a Jew-ish woman whose last name, first name, and patronymic I do not remember. The mentioned statement was handed to me by Onish-chenko in my personal office at the office of the village administra-tion, where my secretary, Hryhoriy Semenovych Bondarenko, was also present. As far as I can recall, the statement indicated that the pharmacist, a Jewish woman, allegedly during a quarrel with On-ishchenko, had threatened that Onishchenko would have to answer for everything when the Bolsheviks return.
>
> Based on this statement, I summoned the pharmacist through a messenger and asked her if the fact mentioned in the statement was true. She confirmed that the incident had indeed took place. Therefore, I warned her that this statement could end badly. I then issued the pharmacist a document stating that she had worked at the hospital before the war and was still working there at that time. The document was signed by me and my secretary, Bondaren-ko. I tore up the statement in Bondarenko's presence.
>
> Approximately a week later, the pharmacist left the village and went somewhere, and nothing more was known about her, but the written statement against her was not acted upon.
>
> [...]
>
> In October 1941, during the registration of the Jewish pop-ulation, a paramedic of Voznesenka hospital (I don't remember his name), a Jew, approached me and asked me to issue him a docu-ment stating that he belonged to a different ethnicity. I discussed the matter with the chief physician of the hospital, Kefal, and to-gether we signed and issued a document to the paramedic, stating that he was of Moldovan ethnicity.[120]

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119   Ščur, *Žyttja i borot'ba Ilariona Kuryla-Krymčaka.*
120   AZOUSBU, Spr. 13885, Ark. 31-31-zv., 33.

Were these testimonies an attempt to save himself, or did Kurylo genuinely help Jews during the Nazi occupation? The following case of assistance to a mixed Jewish-Slavic couple in the winter of 1941 suggests that his help to Jews was likely genuine. During the trial, Kurylo stated,

> Around December 1941, the priest of Voznesenka, Volodymyr Ivanovych Tykhanovych, approached me with a request to help rescue the children of his daughter, who were living in Melitopol' at the time and whose father was Jewish. I instructed my coachman, Ivan Skoryk, to transport Tykhanovych's daughter and her children from Melitopol' to Voznesensk, and he did that.[121]

These testimonies are corroborated by a report from 23 January 1946, presented to ChGK by Volodymyr Tykhanovych himself. The report stated that in Melitopol', children from mixed marriages began to be persecuted as early as December 1941, and that Kurylo assisted with this process,

> Later on, they started persecuting children from mixed marriages. I was forced to move from Melitopol' to Voznesenka because my daughter had been married to a Jew but was now widowed with two children. When I saw what was happening under the orders of the German authorities, the way they were persecuting children from mixed marriages, I had to take action to save my children. The parishioners of Voznesenka invited me to come over, and I agreed to move there. Starting November, I lived in Voznesenka. I moved all my belongings and stayed there.[122]

Evidently, Kurylo – despite his antisemitic rhetoric that may have been politically motivated at the time, as well as his betrayal of at least one Jewish communist – still provided assistance to the Jews of Melitopol' district during the Nazi occupation. Notably, the investigator directly questioned him about the mass murder of Jews, likely already aware of the full picture from the ChGK materials,

> Question: Tell us about your participation in the mass execution of the Jewish population.
> Answer: I did not participate in any arrests or executions of the Jewish population, as there were only two people of Jewish ethnicity in the entire village. Those two worked in the hospital, and I provided

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121   Ibid., Ark. 31-31-zv., 33-33-zv.
122   Yad Vashem Archives, M 53, 103, P. 71.

them with documents, as I already explained in detail during the previous interrogation.[123]

What happened to Ilarion Kurylo bears some resemblance to the case of OUN-B activist Fedir Vovk, who was Head of the Agricultural Department of the Nikopol District Administration. Before the war, Vovk and his wife, Yelyzaveta Shkandel, taught at a school in Nikopol. The city was occupied by the Germans on 17 August 1941, and a massacre of Jews was carried out on 3 and 5 October of the same year. Sara Bakst, also a teacher by profession, was married to a Ukrainian and was the mother of two young children. She was a friend of Vovk and his wife. Concerned about her fate, Vovk contacted Sara's husband and learned from him that Sara had survived the Aktion and was hiding with her mother, Yelyzaveta Bakst, and her two-year-old nephew, Volodymyr. Vovk and his wife decided to help Sara and her relatives.

First, they took Sara's older son, Viktor, into their home. Then they reached out to their friend Maria Mizina, who agreed to shelter Sara in her time of need. Then Vovk obtained fake papers for Yelyzaveta Bakst and sent her to his friends in the village of Varvarivka, where she worked as a cleaner at a school throughout the German occupation. No one knew that she was Jewish. Little Volodymyr lived in the same village, and the family that looked after him was also unaware of his Jewish descent. Meanwhile, Sara remained in hiding at Mizina's for three months. During the day, she stayed in the basement; at night she would come upstairs to get a warm bath. Eventually, Vovk managed to secure fake documents for Sara, helping her leave Nikopol for a rural area. Sara settled in a remote village, and only Vovk and his wife knew her whereabouts. Once she had settled, Vovk brought her son Viktor to her. Sara's younger son, Oleksandr, stayed with his Ukrainian father in another location throughout the occupation. After the liberation on 8 February 1944, the survivors returned to Nikopol and continued to maintain contact with their rescuers for many years. Only after the collapse of the Soviet Union on 12 July 1998 did *Yad Vashem* award Fedir Vovk, his wife Yelyzaveta Shkandel, and Maria Mizina the title of Righteous Among the Nations.[124] However, there have been no attempts to bestow such a title upon Ilarion Kurylo-Krymchak.

We know that OUN(B) and OUN(M) activists participated in pogroms against the Jewish population in the summer of 1941 in the regions of Galicia, Volhynia, and Bukovyna. They were also involved in the anti-Jewish

123   AZOUSBU, Spr. 13885, Ark. 37-zv.-38.
124   Yad Vashem, Vovk Fedor & Shkandel Yelizaveta, Yad Vashem, n.d. <https://righteous.
      yadvashem.org/?search=%D0%92%D0%BE%D0%B2%D0%BA&searchType=righteous_
      only&language=en&itemId=4045141&ind=0> [accessed on 25 June 2022].

Aktion in the fall of 1941 in the central, eastern, and southern parts of Ukraine. Some members of these parties served in the police and local administration during the occupation, thus contributing to the Shoah. Ukrainian partisan groups led by Bandera, Melnyk, and Bulba[125] appeared and gradually strengthened in the spring of 1943. Despite their resistance, the Germans continued killing Jews who had been hiding in the forests. Furthermore, the propaganda originating from these three partisan groups between 1941 and 1945 was rife with anti-Semitic slogans.[126] In this atmosphere, the activities of individuals like Kurylo-Krymchak or Vovk were exceptions rather than the rule. These actions were taken on their own initiative, of which their organization's leadership was likely unaware, and which they probably would not have supported had they known about them. The cases of Kurylo and Vovk differ in that there is no evidence to suggest that Vovk disseminated anti-Semitic rhetoric or betrayed those Jews he found disagreeable to the Germans.

The Karaite question does not appear in Kurylo's case. This can be explained by the fact that in Voznesenka, where Kurylo was a headman, this issue did not arise due to the absence of a Karaite population. By the time Kurylo-Krymchak took the position of a mayor of Melitopol' (March 1943), there had been no clear attempts to "reexamine" the non-Jewish status of Melitopol' Karaites. Overall, when analysing archival judicial and investigative cases, one notices that the Jewish question was of little interest to the Soviet investigators as they did not specifically investigate Holocaust-related crimes. More often than not, the persecution and murder of Jews were bundled with other charges, such as service in the police and local administration, deportation of non-Jewish populations for forced labour in Germany, etc. The Karaite issue rarely surfaced; if it did, it was only in regards to cities where the Karaite population exceeded a few thousand people. Most likely, Soviet investigators in Kharkiv who were studying collaborators' crimes were unaware of who the Karaites were and had no general understanding of the specifics of the Germans' policy towards them. Up until now, not a single collaborator (policeman, member of the local administration, etc.) from mainland Ukraine has been known to be convicted for persecution of Karaites.

[125] Taras Dmytrovych Borovets (Ukrainian: Тарас Дмитрович Боровéць; 9 March 1908 – 15 May 1981) was a Ukrainian resistance leader during the Second World War. He is better known as Taras Bulba-Borovets after his nom de guerre "Taras Bulba".

[126] Yuri Radchenko, 'Stavlennja OUN do jevrejiv: dyskusija bez «spil'nych deklaracij». Častyna 1', *Historians. in.ua*, 3 July 2016 <http://www.historians.in.ua/index.php/en/dyskusiya/1932-yurii-radchenko-stavlennia-oun-do-ievreiv-dyskusiia-bez-spilnykh-deklaratsii-chastyna-1> [accessed on 20 July 2022]; id., 'Stavlennja OUN do jevrejiv: dyskusija bez «spil'nych deklaracij». Častyna 2', *Historians.in.ua*, 5 July 2016 <http://www. historians.in.ua/index.php/en/ dyskusiya/1935-yurii-radchenko-stavlennia-oun-do-ievreiv-dyskusiia-bez-spilnykh-deklaratsii-chastyna-2> [accessed on 22 June 2023].

CONCLUSION

On 12 August 2020, a Holocaust memorial monument titled *Weeping for the Unborn* was unveiled in Melitopol'. This monument, envisioned by the project's lead sculptor Oleksandr Diachenko, symbolizes an entire generation of unborn children who never had a chance to come into the world due to the tragedy of the Holocaust.[127] The unveiling ceremony was attended by representatives from all ethnic communities in Melitopol', including Bulgarians, Germans, Greeks, and Crimean Tatars, among whom were also representatives of the Karaite community.[128]

The fates of Jews and Karaites in Melitopol' during the Nazi occupation were often closely intertwined. On the eve of the Nazi occupation, both groups represented a highly assimilated element within Soviet Ukrainian society. In Melitopol', throughout the entire occupation period Jews were systematically killed by the Nazis and their collaborators, with the culmination occurring in the first days after the Wehrmacht's arrival in Melitopol'. Within just a couple of days, SK 10A swiftly registered, gathered, deported, and executed the local Jews in the suburbs of Melitopol'. The property (primarily, warm cloths) of the murdered Jews was confiscated by the local administration and transferred to the German army. Those Jews who concealed their identity and hid in the district centre or nearby villages were pursued by the Nazis and collaborators throughout the occupation. The local administration (mayors and village headmen) played a crucial role in identifying these individuals and handing them over to the Melitopol' SD.

Approximately two months into the occupation of Melitopol', persecutions targeting people of mixed ethnic background, primarily children, began in the city and its environs. The SD prison in the district centre became one of the execution sites for these individuals. It is likely that the local SD initiated these purges. The Aktion aimed at murdering people of Jewish-Slavic descent began in Melitopol' nearly a year earlier than in other cities nearby. Indirect evidence suggests that this was connected to the local administration, whose representatives, under Himmler's authority, sought to "cleanse" the territory of the remaining Jewish population as quickly as possible.

The Karaite population of the city faced a serious threat of execution in late October 1941. Local Karaite activists, with the support of local self-government officials known from the pre-war period, managed to

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[127] Karta "Evrei Ukrainy", 'Memorial žertvam Cholokosta g. Melitopol'', *U-Jew.com.ua*, n.d. <https://ujew.com.ua/objects/zaporozhskaya-oblast/Melitopol'/memoriala-zhertvam-xolokos   ta-g.-Melitopol'> [accessed on 14 June 2022].

[128] Phone interview with Yelena Arabadzhi, 20 July 2022, private collection of the author.

convince members of SK 10A that the local Karaites had nothing in common with the Jews and were, in fact, a Turkic people following their own distinct religion. Paradoxically, this same Sonderkommando later executed Karaites alongside Jews in Berdiansk and Krasnodar. This was due to the fact that Seetzen's subordinates selectively assessed each Karaite community within the occupied Soviet territories, carrying out a "verification process" for each one individually.

Against the backdrop of an almost fully secularized society, the Karaite narrative in Melitopol' had already come under the strong influence of the Karaite Turkic nationalism of the pre-war period. This influence intensified during the occupation (for obvious reasons, there was a need to distance themselves as much as possible from the persecuted Jews) and continued into the post-war period. This narrative reflects an attempt to eliminate all Jewish elements from the everyday culture of the local Karaites. The Holocaust is mentioned by Melitopol' Karaites in general terms, often in the context of a statement that the Germans almost succeeded with executing the Karaites as well but let themselves be convinced that Karaites were a "different people". Melitopol' Karaites' stories express empathy towards the persecuted Jews. A popular story, for example, describes how a Jewish woman on her way to execution gives her child to a Karaite family, thereby saving that child.

Our research confirms that this narrative is not just a story. In fact, the evidence demonstrates that Melitopol' Karaites, such as Aza Stamboli, together with the local Poles, Ukrainians, and Russians, helped save Melitopol' Jews, as well as those arriving from other locations. This assistance included providing shelter, food, fake documents, and helping people relocate to safer places. It is worth mentioning that Jews were always provided with "Slavic" passports, while their names and ethnicities were "corrected" in existing documents. There has never been a case of a fake Karaite document being issued, unlike in other parts of Eastern Europe. Karaites themselves lived in constant fear that their "non-Jewish" status could be "revised" by the military administration, collaborators, or SK 10a, which could return to the city at any time. This fear was compounded by instances of local Karaite administration officials being arrested for economic crimes, and by the fact that SK 10A had executed Karaites in other locations.

Soviet investigators conducted thorough research into the Holocaust during the war and post-war periods, making archival judicial-investigative cases from the former KGB archives a valuable and often indispensable source for studying the persecution, robberies, and murders of the Jews in the occupied USSR. However, the subject of Nazi policy towards the Karaites

is poorly represented in these documents. The situation is different with cases involving former collaborators from the Melitopol' region, where the Holocaust is scarcely mentioned, as evidenced by the cases of Andrei Putov and Vasilii Perepliotchikov. These cases demonstrate that the Melitopol' self-government was involved in the looting of Jewish property after the first mass executions. However, the exact role of these agencies in the first, bloodiest Aktion remains unknown. The case of Ilarion Kurylo-Krymchak illustrates the role that members of the local self-government could play in both the persecution and rescue of Jews. It also shows the attempts by Bandera and Melnyk supporters to influence the local administration.

One promising area of study is the extent of the influence that OUN(B) and OUN(M) members imparted on the apparatus that exterminated the Jews in the region. For instance, what role did the Melnyk supporter Ivan Iuriiv[129] play in the Holocaust in Melitopol' and in the "solution of the Karaite question" in October 1941? Additionally, the attitudes of Romanian troops, who were also present in the region, towards Jews and Karaites remain completely unexplored. It is also important to research the attitudes of the Crimean Tatar population who lived in Melitopol' towards Jews and Karaites during the German occupation. Further study of the archival judicial-investigative cases from the former KGB archives as well as private Ukrainian, Jewish, Karaite, and Tatar archives from various parts of the world would contribute to this research.

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[129]   On Ivan Iuriiv, see Radchenko, 'The Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (Mel'nyk Faction) and the Holocaust'.

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Blanka Soukupová
JEWS IN THE CZECH LANDS IN YEAR ONE[*]: IN THE JEWISH COMMUNITY, IN THE STATE, AND AMONG NEIGHBOURS. A RETURN TO THE FIRST REPUBLIC OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA?

ABSTRACT

After the Second World War, the fraction of the Jewish population in the Czech lands that survived the Shoah coped with this tragedy in various ways. This text addresses the main minority strategies: emigration (primarily to Palestine/State of Israel), engagement with the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, unconditional assimilation into the Czech nation (intentional departure from Judaism), the reconstruction of Jewish religious communities and Jewish life in general, and seeking solace in faith (especially typical of those repatriating from Carpathian Ruthenia/Transcarpathian Ukraine). It also analyses the perspectives of these life strategies, the manners in which they were pursued, and both their successes and failures in relation to the previous attitudes of survivors and their situation following the liberation of Czechoslovakia in May of 1945 (loss of relatives, property, confrontation with the anti-Semitism of individuals as well as the rise of state anti-Semitism). Various rituals, organized by Jewish religious communities in cooperation with state authorities, were often used as a particular way to cope collectively with the Shoah (celebrations, the unveiling of monuments and memorials to deceased and fallen members of the Jewish minority, and Shoah-themed exhibitions).

KEYWORDS:
Jews, Czech Lands, Czechoslovakia, Shoah

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[*] "Year One" does not designate an exact point in time (such as the year of 1945 to 1946). It is a metaphor expressing an entirely new beginning of life for the Jewish minority under entirely different socio-political circumstances. The corresponding temporal period stretches roughly from the liberation of Czechoslovakia (May 1945) to the February Coup (1948). Year One means we are talking about "lived history".

PERSECUTION OF THE JEWISH POPULACE IN THE PROTECTORATE OF BOHEMIA AND MORAVIA

When the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia was declared on 16 March 1939, approximately 135,000 Jews and "half-breeds" lived in these areas and from June of that year became subject to the Nuremberg Race Laws.[1] However, the first anti-Semitic regulations had already been issued on 15 March, the day that the rest of Czechoslovakia was occupied by German soldiers.[2] The persecution of the Jewish populace began with the issue of new documents and professional liquidation.[3] By mid-July 1939, the Central Office for Jewish Emigration had been established in Prague.[4] In the summer of the same year, Jews were excluded from all German schools. At the same time, they were prevented from entering associations, hospitals, pubs and restaurants, parks, baths and swimming pools.[5] From autumn 1939, there was a curfew preventing them going out after 8 pm. At the same time, Jews had their radio receivers confiscated.[6] From the following year on, Jews could not dispose of their property and were entirely excluded from public life.[7] Their movement was restricted and they were evicted from their apartments. On 7 August 1940, it was decided that Jewish children could not attend Czech schools.[8] From 5 October 1941, Jews over the age of six had to be marked with a Jewish star.[9] Then, the deportations began to concentration and extermination camps (KL Terezín, KL Auschwitz, KL Treblinka, KL Majdanek and others). KL Terezín, which was set up by the Nazis in 1941, began in November of that year to function as a collection and transit camp.[10] Up until its liberation, 75,000 former Czechoslovak citizens passed through here (8,500 of whom lived to see the liberation of KL Terezín). Roughly 60,000 Protectorate Jews were deported from KL Terezín to extermination camps. Approximately 1,100 people managed to hide during the Protectorate.[11]

[1]   Tomáš Pěkný, *Historie Židů v Čechách a na Moravě* (Prague: Sefer, 2001), p. 341.
[2]   Helena Petrův, *Právní postavení židů v Protektorátu Čechy a Morava (1939–1941)* (Prague: Sefer), p. 74; Miroslav Kárný, 'Konečné řešení židovské otázky v Čechách a na Moravě', in *Stín šoa nad Evropou*, ed. by Miloš Pojar (Prague: Židovské muzeum v Praze, 2001), pp. 46–56 (p. 17). Also see Miroslav Kárný, *Konečné řešení: genocida českých židů v německé protektorátní politice* (Prague: Academia, 1991).
[3]   Petrův, *Právní postavení židů*, pp. 74–76.
[4]   Ibid., pp. 77–80.
[5]   Ibid., pp. 80–83.
[6]   Ibid., p. 83.
[7]   Ibid., pp. 84–107.
[8]   Ibid., pp. 109, 110–11.
[9]   Ibid., pp. 122–23.
[10]   Pěkný, *Historie Židů v Čechách a na Moravě*, pp. 342, 345–46.
[11]   Ibid., p. 346.

PERSECUTION OF THE JEWISH POPULACE IN SLOVAKIA

Following the declaration of national independence (14 March 1939), numerous anti-Semitic regulations were issued in Slovakia,[12] which were ultimately compiled into a "Jewish Code" with 270 paragraphs (9 September 1941)[13]. Young Jews were demobilized in 1940 and organized into labour units (6th battalion, 1940–1943). Slovak Jews were deported to collection and labour camps from March to October 1942, and again after the defeat of the Slovak National Uprising (August 1944).[14] The Slovak government paid Nazi Germany for these deportations. Specifically, 5,000 Slovak crowns were paid for each deported (murdered) person.[15]

THE SOCIAL SITUATION FOLLOWING THE SECOND WORLD WAR

> ... belief in returning; the image of the Vltava River with its old stone bridge lined with statues of saints, the cathedral and the castle high above. There our flag should fly and will fly again... The future therefore meant returning in the actual and figurative sense. To no longer be outcast, cursed, an exile. But from another perspective, the future was equal to the past. The closed gate of paradise opened once again, and in the meantime emptiness. It sounds strange but it is literally true: although they all knew that their former possessions had been sold and stolen, scattered to the winds, they still thought they would find everything as they left it. They did not know that they would have to enter a fundamentally different and changed world, that hard times would await even in the best of cases, full of worry.

These are the words used in 1947 by Emil Utitz (1883 Roztoky – 1956 Jena), practical philosopher, psychologist, and head of the KL Terezín concentration camp library during his internment there, characterizing the completely unrealistic notions of Jewish prisoners about returning home after

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[12] Ľudovít Hallon, *Kronika Slovenského štátu* (Prague: Ottovo nakladatelství, s. r. o., 2019), pp. 43, 46, 61, 62, 72, 89, 148, 167, 173, 176, 181, 184, 186, 192, 193, 197, 200, 202, 206, 209, 219, 224–25, 232, 234, 237, 240, 243, 249, 254, 255, 256; Eduard Nižňanský and Ivan Kamenec, *Holocaust na Slovensku 2. Prezident, vláda, Snem SR a Štátna rada o židovskej otázke (1939–1945)* (Bratislava: Nadácia Milana Šimečku, Židovská náboženská obec Bratislava, 2003), pp. 14–16. On the Holocaust in Slovakia see Eduard Nižňanský nad Ján Hlavinka, *Arizácia* (Bratislava: Stimul, 2010).

[13] Hallon, *Kronika Slovenského štátu*, p. 180; Katarína Hradská and Ivan Kamenec, *Slovenská republika 1939–1945* (Bratislava: Veda, 2015), p. 213; Nižňanský and Kamenec, *Holocaust na Slovensku 2*, p. 9; Ivan Kamenec, *Po stopách tragedie* (Bratislava: Archa, 1991), pp. 125–32.

[14] Peter Salner, *Prežili holokaust* (Bratislava: Veda, 1997), p. 41, 51, 55; Hradská and Kamenec, *Slovenská republika*, pp. 218, 222.

[15] Hradská and Kamenec, *Slovenská republika*, p. 218; Nižňanský and Kamenec, *Holocaust na Slovensku 2.*, p. 10; Kamenec, *Po stopách tragedie*, p. 198.

the end of the Second World War.[16] People naively believed that they would not only return to their apartment or house, but even to their job and, above all, to their families and the first democratic republic of Czechoslovakia. On the one hand, the Terezín prisoners' idealized remembrances of home that we encounter in a number of sources[17] undoubtedly helped people endure incarceration; however, these completely unrealistic expectations complicated the return of survivors to a Czechoslovakia entirely different than they remembered. The surviving Jews found themselves in a country forced to come to terms with its past: the reverberations of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia and the Slovak State, the demoralization of part of society, as well as general post-war shortages.

In the initial period after the Second World War, from 9 May 1945 (the liberation of Czechoslovakia) up to 26 May 1946 (the last democratic election before the Velvet Revolution in 1989), Czech society experienced a moment of optimism and consensus with respect to land reform, nationalization, and the expulsion of Germans and Hungarians. The state sought guarantees of its security from both the East and the West. Jews fell in line with the desire to punish the native Germans, but their main interest turned to reconstruction of Jewish life. The renewed Jewish Religious Community in Prague became a distinguished partner of the Prague magistrate. At the same time, however, there were differences of opinion within the Jewish community. The Jewish minority had to face renewed instances of anti-Semitism in terms of verbal slanders and the first post-war pogrom. The second period (up to February 1948) was marked by the continuing reconstruction of Jewish life, but this took place against the background of a radicalizing society. The Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, relying on the post-war rise in importance of the Soviet Union and leftist movements in Europe, was moving towards totalitarian forms of government. During the Partisan Congress in Bratislava (2–5 August 1946), anti-Semitic demonstrations occurred in a number of Slovak cities. However, anti-Semitism was also growing in the Czech lands.[18]

The majority of Jews, however, did not return to their homes. According to the December 1945 Bulletin of the Jewish Religious Community in Prague, the "privilege of survival" was enjoyed in the Czech lands by a mere 10,000 Jews who self-identified by faith, and by 5,000 persons

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[16]   Emil Utitz, *Psychologie života v terezínském koncentračním táboře* (Prague: Dělnické nakladatelství, 1947), pp. 22, 24.

[17]   Cf. eg. Irma Semecká, *Terezínské korso/Terezín Korso* (Prague: Ant. Vlasák, 1946), p. 31.

[18]   A detailed description of the situation after the Second World War in both Czech and Jewish society is given in Blanka Soukupová, *Židé v českých zemích po šoa. Identita poraněné paměti* (Bratislava: Marenčin PT, 2016), pp. 51–104. For more on the situation of the Jewish populace after the Second World War, see also Jan Láníček, *Czechs, Slovaks and the Jews, 1938-48: Beyond Idealisation and Condemnation* (Basingstoke–New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); Kateřina Čapková, 'Periferie a centrum: Židé v českých zemích od roku 1945 do současnosti', in *Židé v českých zemích: společná cesta dějinami*, ed. by Kateřina Čapková and Hillel J. Kieval (Prague: NLN, 2022), pp. 293–306.

who were understood to be Jews based on the Nuremberg Laws. After the war, the Jewish Religious Community took care of its members (Jews by faith) as well as those who were not members before the war but were persecuted based on the Nuremberg Laws (in the Czech lands, this was about 5,000 people). According to these laws, anyone with three Jewish grandparents was considered a Jew. Then there were the "half-breeds", people who were members of the Jewish Religious Community, or children of a Jew born after 15 September 1935. The people returning included not only Jews who survived the concentration camps, but also emigres returning after the war (this amounted to 26,111 people from the Czech lands[19]).[20]

In Slovakia, there were 20,000 Jews of faith and 8,000 other persecuted persons based on the Nuremberg Laws[21]. Tomáš Pěkný, a Czech publishing editor and columnist, estimated 40,000 survivors (including, of course, emigrants) and 80,000 perished Jews from the Czech lands.,[22] The number of Jewish losses was particularly tragic with respect to pre-war numbers. In 1921, 79,777 people in Bohemia declared Jewish faith and 11,251 declared Jewish nationality. In Moravia and Silesia, 37,989 and 7,317 persons professed the Jewish faith, with 15,335 and 3,681 claiming Jewish nationality, respectively. In the second Czechoslovak census in 1930, there were 76,301 Jews by faith and 15,697 by nationality in Bohemia. In Moravia and Silesia, there were 41,250 Jews by faith and 21,396 by nationality.[23] In 1938, there were about 117,000 Jews in Bohemia and Moravia and about 137,000 Jews in Slovakia, according to their faith. About 30,000 Jews from Bohemia and Moravia managed to emigrate.[24] In addition, after the Second World War, most of the Jewish religious communities virtually disappeared. Between 1945 and 1950, some 25,000 Jews emigrated from Czechoslovakia. Most of them headed for Palestine/the State of Israel.[25] When Jewish leaders surveyed the Jewish wartime tragedy, they considered this an unprecedented event of the Second World War. This was the conclusion drawn, for example, by Arnošt Frischer (1887 Heřmanův Městec – 1954 London), from September 1945 the chairman of the Union of Jewish Religious Communities in Historical Lands, and by Otto Muneles (1894 Prague – 1967 Prague), Hebraist, Judaist and classical philologist.[26] The legendary

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[19]   2,803 people were not deported. Eva Schmidtová-Hartmannová, 'Ztráty československého židovského obyvatelstva 1938–1945', in *Osud Židů v protektorátu 1939–1945*, ed. by Milan Šimečka and Milena Janišová (Prague: Trizonia for the Institute of Jewish Studies of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences, 2001), pp. 81–116 (pp. 95, 104).
[20]   Saul Friedländer, *Das Dritte Reich und die Juden* (München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 2008), pp. 159–60.
[21]   'U pana presidenta', *Bulletin of the Jewish Religious Community in Prague*, 7.4 (1945), 26–27 (p. 26).
[22]   Pěkný, *Historie Židů v Čechách a na Moravě*, p. 143. See also Soukupová, *Židé v českých zemích po šoa*, p. 24.
[23]   Jana Machačová and Jiří Matějček, *Sociální pozice národnostních menšin v českých zemích 1918–1938* (Opava: Silesian Institute of the Silesian Museum, 1999), p. 116.
[24]   'U pana presidenta', p. 26.
[25]   Soukupová, *Židé v českých zemích po šoa*, pp. 26–29; Pěkný, *Historie Židů v Čechách a na Moravě*, p. 143.
[26]   "There is no community in the world from which the war and the Nazi regime exacted greater sacrifices than the Jewish people", Frischer believed, see Arnošt Frischer, 'Přežili jsme', *Bulletin of the Jewish Religious Community in Prague*, VII (1945), 1. Cf. also id., 'S tribuny sjezdu', *Bulletin of the Jewish Religious Community in Prague*, 7.2 (1945), 10–12 (p. 10). Summarized in Soukupová, *Židé v českých zemích po šoa*, pp. 16–17, 19.

Czech-Jewish rabbi Richard Feder (1875 Václavice u Benešova – 1970 Brno) could not even find any genocide in the history of mankind which was comparable to the Jewish tragedy.[27] Awareness of the Jewish catastrophe shaped the post-war fate of the Czech Germans, who were humiliated and subsequently displaced. The generalized anti-German sentiment that had been whipped up was characteristic not only of the Jewish minority, but also of the majority of Czech society. For Jewish survivors, the defeat of Nazi Germany was understandably exceptionally satisfying. Jewish leaders devoted considerable attention to this, interpreting it as yet another of the many victories achieved by Jews over the three thousand years of their history. Acceptance of this narrative would help Jews come to terms with the loss of friends and family and to regain their collective self-confidence. Part of this strategy included emphasizing the fact that the Germans had been humiliated and punished after the war.[28]

> No more impudent Nazis walking the streets of our cities. They are defeated and humiliated as no vile caste has ever been defeated. With a sense of shame, they carry their 'N' on their breasts and backs as, weakened, they are led through the streets. We have survived them. While it is true that few of us have lived to see this day, we must take the following view:
>
> Judaism survived... We are here – and where are they...? They have not been sufficiently punished for their atrocities, and there is no punishment in this world severe enough for what they have done... conceited with the notion that humanity is ranked according to the blood of nations, and that they stand at the top of this scale with the Jewish people at the bottom; the German people are hated, despised and justly punished and humiliated by the whole world... Once again, the world has witnessed a titanic struggle between paganism and barbarism on the one hand, and faith in God and the equality of mankind before Him on the other",

wrote Arnost Frischer in the first issue of the Minority Bulletin.[29] However, in that triumphant and confidence-inspiring we survived statement, rather than joy we find many question marks about returning home. "We are still in Germany, but we are nearing our liberated homeland. The final kilometres are ahead of us; soon the border will appear and we will be in Czechoslovakia, then Prague and soon home. But again, the nagging thought: home?

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27   Soukupová, *Židé v českých zemích po šoa*, pp. 21–22.
28   Ibid., pp. 52–53.
29   Frischer, 'Přežili jsme', p. 1.

Where is our shattered home? This was the question Hana Posseltová-Ledererová (1919 Mladá Boleslav – 1977?), a Czech of Jewish descent who was liberated together with her mother from KL Bergen-Belsen, asked herself on the journey from KL Buchenwald to Prague.[30] The experience of returning to liberated Czechoslovakia was from the beginning shaped by the activity of Jewish leaders, the politics of the liberated state, and the neighbours of the returnees. Let us look at all three of these factors in turn.

FIRST JEWISH IMPRESSIONS UPON RETURNING HOME

"At the Czech-German border we stopped for an inspection. Everyone climbed down from the truck, quietly gathered, and began earnestly singing the Czech hymn 'Where My Home Is'. Suddenly, although I was also taken with the excitement, a feeling came over me: that's not me, I'm not Czech, I don't belong here, and although the words of the song say it, the 'Czech lands' are not my home". These thoughts accompanied the first moments on liberated Czechoslovak soil of Prague Zionist Ruth Bondyová (1923 Prague – 2017 Ramat Gan), later an Israeli publicist, writer and translator.[31] Already before the First World War, the Zionist press and Zionist associations were forming a relationship with the fatherland/motherland, which they perceived as their ancestral home in Palestine. It was sometimes referred to as the Old Country. After the rise of the Hitler regime in Germany (January 1933), the question of returning to this Land became increasingly urgent. Nazi anti-Semitism understood Zionism as evidence of failed assimilation. General support for the future Jewish state was expressed in the diaspora.[32] For this reason, emigration to Palestine after the Second World War was a logical strategy for many Jews who had lost their relatives and were disappointed with the attitude of the majority of the population during and after the war.

On the other hand, Czech Jews experienced intense emotion upon their immediate return from concentration camps or emigration to their liberated homeland. "Sixteen days after liberation, twelve days after the end of the war. In clean clothes, hand sewn from SS sheets, with a full stomach, in a second-class compartment of a passenger train... the platform at Wilson Station... I'm standing by the window with great hot tears streaming down my cheeks. Tears of joy and happiness. Finally Prague, at long last Prague. Finally home", wrote Helga Hošková (1929 Prague), later the painter

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30 Hana Posseltová-Ledererová, *Máma a já (Terezínský deník)* (Prague: G plus G, 1997), p. 139.
31 Ruth Bondyová, *Víc štěstí než rozumu* (Prague: Argo, 2005), p. 126.
32 Blanka Soukupová, *Identita intenzivní naděje. Čeští Židé v první Československé republika* (Bratislava: Marenčin PT, 2021), pp. 103, 112–13, 147–48.

Hošková-Weiss, when describing her emotions on the night of 21 May 1945.[33] For many members of the Jewish minority, however, their joy was tempered by news of their family's tragic fate.

> And then we finally found ourselves over Prague. Almost untouched by bombs, looking sleepy in the midday haze, Prague was beautiful, with not two but hundreds of towers rising to the sky. And so many bridges, all intact, not like those on the Rhine – arched over the Vltava... And towering above it all was Prague Castle, magnificent as ever. My heart overflowed with pride and emotion. This was the capital of my country. Finally, I was home again... I had often dreamed of this moment, but in my dreams my mom and dad were waiting for me... Time buried all my dreams and now I had to face reality. Yet I still could not imagine a future or a home without them,

said Vera Gissing, née Diamantová (1928 Čelákovice – 2022?), one of Winton's Children,[34] recalling her arrival from England.[35] Líza Scheuerová, a Varnsdorf native whose family had to flee to Prague after Munich, decided to voluntarily follow her husband from KL Terezín to KL Auschwitz. The news of his death reached her in Prague on 20 May 1945, after her return from KL Mauthausen. She commented bitterly on her initial emotions: "This is what my happy return looks like! Exhausted, the mother of a dead child, a homeless beggar, and now I finally learn that I don't even have a husband".[36] After the war, Zdenka Fantlová (1922 Blatná – 2022?), an actress and writer from a Czech-Jewish family who lived in exile (Sweden, Australia, England), laconically described her return: "No one survived. No one came back. My family disappeared. My home disappeared".[37]

    The first impressions of returning to Czechoslovakia, however, could also be spoiled by an indifferent social system. All returnees had to go through the repatriation office in the Prague Medical House. While former prisoners understood this regulation, they also perceived it as an additional obstacle impeding their journey home. However, they were afraid to circumvent the regulation.

[33] Helga Weissová, *Deník 1938–1945. Příběh dívky, která přežila holocaust* (Brno: Jota, 2012), p. 174.
[34] These were the 669 mostly Jewish children saved by Nicholas Winton (1909–2015), a philanthropist and stockbroker of Jewish origin who found adoptive families for them in the UK. These children left Czechoslovakia/the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia in several transports on 14 March 1939, in June and on 2 August 1939. The last transport (1 September 1939) was turned back due to the outbreak of war. https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/kindertransport-organizer-nicholas-winton-dies-106-32152995.
[35] Věra Gissingová, *Perličky dětství* (Prague: Odeon, 1992), p. 125.
[36] Líza Scheuerová, *O smrti, která se nedostavila* (Prague: Sefer, 1994), p. 141.
[37] Zdenka Fantlová, *Klid je síla, řek' tatínek* (Prague: Primus, 1996), p. 262.

The Medical House in Vinohrady. There is a de-worming station there (they say it is a quarantine station), which everyone returning from a concentration camp has to go through... The regulation made sense, but why didn't they also provide accommodation...? ... We hobbled to some room in the Medical House and waited there... Most of the other former prisoners slowly disappeared. Suddenly, I realized I was alone with my mother and still nobody was paying attention to us... afraid that we were committing some offense in liberated Prague, we simply left. Without the paper... My mother went bravely... and I was afraid that we wouldn't make it, that they would send us back to the de-worming station, or that we might be sent back to Bergen-Belsen because of this,

recalled Hana Posseltová-Ledererová.[38] Helena Lewisová (1916 Trutnov – 2009?), a promising Prague dancer from a German-Jewish family, as well as Ruth Bondyová[39] had to spend the night at Wilson Railway Station (now Hlavní nádraží) after their return.

At midnight we arrived in Prague, at Wilson Station. We literally staggered off the train and with the last of our strength managed to find the Red Cross centre in the station. We asked the nurse on night duty for tea, but she was about to leave and told us she didn't have any at this time. We tried to persuade her and explained where we were coming from. 'How long have you been in the camp?' 'Three years.' 'If you've been there for three years, you'll survive one more night without tea,' she said, and closed the door. We couldn't go into town anymore because there was a curfew, so we stayed in the station and slept on the stone floor",

recounted Lewisová, recalling her "first night home" on 4 June 1945.[40]

THE JEWISH RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY AS A LIFESAVER

"The Jews who have returned from the concentration camps have found their community again and have found support and help again". This assessment was written in the autumn of 1945 by lawyer Kurt Wehle (1907 Jablonec nad Nisou – 1995 USA), senior secretary of the Jewish Religious

38   Posseltová-Ledererová, *Máma a já*, p. 141.
39   Bondyová, *Víc štěstí než rozumu*, pp. 165–66.
40   Helena Lewisová, *Přišel čas promluvit* (Brno: Barrister & Principal, 1999), pp. 101–02.

Community in Prague, and from September 1945 to February 1948 secretary of the Council of Jewish Religious Communities in the Lands of Bohemia and Moravia-Silesia, the umbrella minority body.[41] The decision to rebuild the Jewish Religious Community was made as early as 8 May 1945, when the National Committee began liquidating the Protectorate Jewish Council of Elders. The Jewish religious community in Prague was forced to formally assume jurisdiction over the Protectorate's Jewish religious communities from the spring of 1940. In doing so, it was forced to arrange for the deportation of the Jewish population to concentration camps. It was completely subordinated to the Zentralstelle für jüdische Auswanderung in Prague and the SS Sicherheitsdienst in Brno.[42] In March 1942, the regional Jewish religious communities were disbanded. In January 1943, even the Jewish Religious Community in Prague was abolished and replaced with the Jewish Council of Elders in Prague (Ältestenrat der Juden in Prag). It was tasked with carrying out deportations.[43] After the liberation of Czechoslovakia, it was liquidated.

The community assisted repatriated Jews (and Jews according to the Nuremberg Laws) with financial, material and legal support (especially with regard to retaining Czechoslovak citizenship). It tried to secure property that remained in KL Terezín,[44] provided kosher food, and actively opposed anti-Semitism. Jewish leaders tried to confront anti-Semitism actively: they publicly commemorated the high percentage of Jewish soldiers fighting on all fronts of the Second World War. In December 1945, the idea arose to establish an institution to map anti-Semitic excesses. Jewish functionaries (such as Arnošt Frischer) then informed representatives of the Czechoslovak government on the situation of the Jewish minority.[45]

The registration department compiled lists of survivors; the registry office mainly issued death certificates of deceased KL Terezín prisoners, legalized their marriages, and provided information on the fate of relatives and acquaintances. The Worship Department took care of religious services (services returned to the Old New Synagogue[46] in Prague 3 and

41   Kurt Wehle, 'Židovská náboženská obec za okupace a po osvobození ČSR', *Bulletin of the Jewish Religious Community in Prague*, 7.1 (1945), 2–4 (p. 3). In the summer of 1945, preparations were made for a congress of delegates of the preparatory committees of Jewish religious communities. This congress was held in Prague in early September, 1945, with the participation of 46 Jewish religious communities. The organizing body was the Council of Jewish Religious Communities in the Czech and Moravian-Silesian lands. It consisted of a 15-member committee and an eight-member board of directors. It endeavored to ensure that assimilationists, Zionists and Orthodox Jews were represented in proportion to their number of survivors. It was not until after the February Coup that the Council's activities were restricted by the state (especially in terms of financing) in connection with the Church Laws (1949). Soukupová, *Židé v českých zemích po šoa*, p. 116–27.
42   These problems are examined in detail by Livia Rothkirchenová, 'Osud Židů v Čechách a na Moravě v letech 1939–1945', in *Osud Židů v protektorátu 1939–1945*, ed. by Milena Janišová (Prague: Trizonia, 1991), pp. 17–80; and Miroslav Kárný, *Konečné řešení: genocida českých židů v německé protektorátní politice* (Prague: Academia, 1991).
43   Pěkný, *Historie Židů v Čechách a na Moravě*, pp. 346–47.
44   Wehle, 'Židovská náboženská obec', pp. 3, 4.
45   Soukupová, *Židé v českých zemích po šoa*, pp. 58, 69–71, 74.
46   Frischer, 'Přežili jsme', p. 1.

the Skořepka[47] synagogue in Brno no later than September 1945), arranged weddings, and distributed ritual objects.[48] On 13 March 1946, the first Day of Mourning for Czechoslovak Jews was held in the Spanish Synagogue with about 3,000 people in attendance, commemorating the murder of the entire family camp at Auschwitz on the night of 8–9 March 1944.[49]

Jewish officials worked on rebuilding the community, regardless of ideological disagreements before the war. In addition to Frischer, who served in the Czechoslovak State Council in Benešov during the war, attorney Emil Kafka (1880 Nový Bydžov – 1948 Prague), the last pre-war chairman of the Jewish Religious Community in Prague, was also involved in the community. He too had returned from England. Military rabbi Hanuš Rebenwurzel/Rezek (1902 Strážnice – 1948 Greece), a lawyer from Vsetín, was an active Zionist who fought on the Western Front and served as a worship official of the Council until his tragic death in December 1948. Engineer František Fuchs, who became vice-chairman, and lawyer Karel Stein, head of the rural department of the Prague community in 1939–1943 and chairman of the Jewish Religious Community in Prague from September 1945, both survived the concentration camps. Active members of the community included Judaist, Hebraist and classical philologist Otto Muneles (1894 Prague – 1967 Prague) and Rabbi Vojtěch (Benjamin Béla Vojtech) Gottschall (1907 Szeged – 1978 Australia).[50] All hese figures helped make former prisoners' adaptation to post-war conditions less painful. The community became a surrogate for murdered families and broken homes. In March 1946, it organized a Purim celebration with the participation of 1,400 (!) people. On 15 April of the same year, the Seder brought together 240 people.[51] Nevertheless, the community was accused by some repatriates of having collaborated with the Nazis during the war.[52] All members of the community employed under the Protectorate therefore had to appear before a Court of Honor.[53] Since the Jewish Religious Community was forced during the war to impose Nazi regulations concerning Jews and carry out Nazi orders to deport the Jewish populace to concentration camps, it was suspected of collaboration. As part of the restoration of the community after the war, in the autumn of 1945 it established a Court of Honor to investigate claims brought against employees and functionaries

47   'Zprávy z obcí', *Bulletin of the Jewish Religious Community in Prague*, 7.1 (1945), 8.
48   'Zpráva sekretariátu Židovské náboženské obce', *Bulletin of the Jewish Religious Community in Prague*, 7.1 (1945), 5.
49   'Nechť živí slyší hlas mrtvých', *Bulletin of the Jewish Religious Community in Prague*, 8.2 (1946), 12; ''Z kroniky ŽNO pražské', *Bulletin of the Jewish Religious Community in Prague*, 8.3 (1946), no. 3, p. 22.
50   Blanka Soukupová, 'Životní světy českých židů po šoa – kompenzace ztracených jistot. Několik poznámek k životním strategiím ŽNO a židovské menšiny v bezprostředně poválečném období', in *První pražský seminář. Dopady holocaustu na českou a slovenskou společnost v druhé polovině 20. století*, ed. by Helena Machačová (Prague: Varius Praha s. r. o., Spolek akademiků - Židů o. s., 2008), pp. 47–64 (p. 48).
51   'Kronika', *Bulletin of the Jewish Religious Community in Prague*, 8.4–5 (1946), 39. 'Chanukové oslavy', *Bulletin of the Jewish Religious Community in Prague*, 9.2 (1947), 19.
52   Wehle, 'Židovská náboženská obec', p. 3.
53   'Vyhláška', *Bulletin of the Jewish Religious Community in Prague*, 7.2 (1945), 15.

working in the Jewish Religious Community during the war. The Chairman of the Court of Honor was Hanuš Rebenwurzel, J.D. (Rezek).[54] From July 1945, some Jewish religious communities in the regions were also reconstituted. By September 1945, there were already 51 to 52 of them in the Czech lands,[55] and by the beginning of November there were 59 in the Czech lands and 105 in Slovakia.[56] From the end of 1945, assimilationist, Zionist, and Orthodox Jewish associations were also re-established under the auspices of the Prague Jewish religious community.[57] A list drawn up on 16 April 1951 mentions 47 of them.[58] A new association, Agudat Yisroel, was founded with the aim of not only educating young Jews in Torah Judaism but also teaching them crafts and agricultural skills that they could apply in Palestine.[59]

The Prague community's agenda included caring for abandoned rural cemeteries and synagogues. Most of the synagogues had to be rented out (sometimes repeatedly) or possibly sold.[60] At the beginning of 1946, the community also began caring for Jewish refugees from Poland who were passing through Czechoslovakia.[61] Their number increased after the Kielce pogrom.[62] In conclusion, we may state that the Jewish religious community in Prague, housed in the Jewish Town Hall, did indeed become the centre of Jewish life again after the Second World War.

THE STATE AS AN INTEGRATING FORCE?

In the Jewish milieu, the state was deemed to have mostly failed to help survivors adapt to post-war conditions. Former concentration camp prisoners mainly ran up against bureaucratic walls. In particular, they had problems obtaining housing, getting documents[63] and obtaining citizenship, which in turn was required for any restitution[64]. These problems often resulted in human tragedy. The most famous case is that of Dr. Markéta Ungerová, a native of Katowice, a German of Jewish faith, who studied at the German University in Prague in the second half of the 1930s. During

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54   Soukupová, *Židé v českých zemích po šoa*, p. 57.
55   Pěkný, *Historie Židů v Čechách a na Moravě*, pp. 657, 638; and 'K novému životu!', *Bulletin of the Jewish Religious Community in Prague*, 7.1 (1945), 14.
56   'U pana presidenta', p. 26.
57   'Obnovení židovských spolků', *Bulletin of the Jewish Religious Community in Prague*, 7.4 (1945), 31.
58   'Výzvy', *Bulletin of the Jewish Religious Community in Prague*, 8.1 (1946), 8.
59   Seznam židovských spolků, Prague City Archives, Police Presidium Fund (PP) SK XXII/761.
60   Soukupová, *Židé v českých zemích po šoa*, pp. 359–444.
61   Howard M. Sachar, *Dějiny Státu Izrael* (Prague: Regia 1998), pp. 218–19; Jiří Friedl, *Do domu, ku wolności. Rola Czechosłowacji w migracji ludności polskiej w latach 1945–1948* (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo IPN, 2023), pp. 315–37.
62   Robert rev. Smith, 'Židovský vlak z Náchoda', *Bulletin of the Jewish Religious Community in Prague*, 8.11 (1946), 95.
63   'Doklady, doklady...', *Bulletin of the Jewish Religious Community in Prague*, 8.15 (1946), 141.
64   Post-war restitution should have applied to 20,000–25,000 people. In the end, 16,000 applications were submitted. Drahomír Jančík, Eduard Kubů and Jan Kuklík Jr., *"Arizace" a restituce židovského majetku v českých zemích (1939–2000)* (Prague: Charles University in Prague, 2003), p. 58.

the war she treated fellow prisoners in the KL Terezín concentration camp, and after the war she worked at the hospital at Bulovka. Nevertheless, she was unable to obtain citizenship because she was accused by the District Council for Prague VIII of indifference to the Czech language and the Czech nation.[65]

The restitution of Jewish property had its legal basis in Presidential Decree No. 5/1945 Coll. of 19 May 1945 "on the Invalidity of Certain Property-related Acts Effected in the Period of 'Non-freedom' and concerning the National Administration of the Properties of Germans, Hungarians, Traitors and Collaborators and Certain Organizations and Institutes". However, if an owner was an "unreliable person" with regard to the state, the property was placed under national administration. People who declared their German or Hungarian nationality in the 1930 census fell into the category of "unreliable" citizens. An exception was made for those who had taken an active part in the struggle to preserve the integrity and restoration of the state. Unreliable Germans and Hungarians were subject to Presidential Decree No. 108/1945 on the Confiscation of Enemy Property and the National Renewal Funds.[66] In certain cases, it was not possible to demonstrate one's loyalty to the nation and state (old Jewish émigrés, like concentration camp prisoners, could hardly have fought fascism with a gun in their hands). Jewish applicants found their position particularly difficult because of the national committees, which in many cases perceived Aryanized property to be German property. Some 1,500 to 2,000 people faced problems from the decrees,[67] which allowed for restitution on the grounds of racial persecution, but applicants had to prove their national and state "reliability". In addition, property that had been Aryanized was often perceived as German property.[68] Thus, it often remained in the hands of the "new Aryanizer", i.e., municipalities and the state.

Offenses were often proved in a comical way. Václav Nosek, Minister of the Interior, authored instructions on how to accuse applicants of Germanizing the Czech nation. His instructions were then given to lower state administrative offices.[69] The National Committee in Ostrava ordered Jewish repatriates applying to have their citizenship restored to work 100 hours for free as part of the *Building Ostrava* campaign.[70] A second wave of restitution

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65   'Jedna "zbytečná" demonstrace a dvě tiché, které jí předcházely', *Bulletin of the Jewish Religious Community in Prague*, 10.9 (1947), 121–22. See also Jana Svobodová, 'Zdroje a projevy antisemitismu v českých zemích 1949–1992', in *Emancipácia Židov – antisemitizmus – prenasledovanie v Nemecku, Rakúsku-Uhorsku, v českých zemiach a na Slovensku*, ed. by Jörg K. Hoensch, Stanislav Biman, and Ľubomír Lipták (Bratislava: Veda, 1999), pp. 191–205 (p. 193); Láníček, *Czechs, Slovaks and the Jews*, p. 149.
66   Jančík, Kubů and Kuklík ml., *"Arizace"*, pp. 49–50, 52.
67   Ibid., pp. 54, 56.
68   Ibid., pp. 49–50, 52, 54, 56, 61.
69   Šárka Nepalová, 'Židé v Českých zemích v letech 1945-1949', *Dějiny a současnost*, 21 (1999), pp. 54–55.
70   Gabriela Vjačková, 'Osudy Židovské náboženské obce v Ostravě v letech 1945–1962', *Silesian Proceedings*, 104 (2006), 292–306, (p. 301).

began in April 1946. However, Arnošt Frischer characterized it as nation-alization with elements of socialization.[71] Restitutions were also coming to a standstill because of the effective slander of applicants, who were accused of not only Germanizing the Czech nation, but also of bourgeois origins and anti-social behaviour.

> Ten out of a hundred returning victims of Nazi cruelty do not find even their most modest possessions in their homeland. Any real estate has been Aryanized, placed into German hands, or trans-ferred to national administrations. In vain does the hotelier demand the return of his hotel, which the partisans have taken over from the Aryanizer. The owner of a small electrical shop in Prague which was taken over by a German and then by his head worker, who dis-played a pogrom flag in the shop window, has no recourse to have his meagre property returned to him. The owner of a workshop with 25 workers refuses to hand over the plant to the previous owner, who has returned as a foreign soldier. The only reason is the work-ers' claim that the boss was anti-social during the First Republic",

said Karel Kučera, explaining these practices.[72]

The most well-known case was the unsuccessful restitution claim of factory owner Emil Beer, who, after returning from emigration to Britain in November 1945, demanded the return of his business, which he had been forced to sell to the Reich Germans in 1939.[73] In 1947, however, the Commu-nist Party of Czechoslovakia, with the help of the trade unions,[74] launched a struggle for industrial confiscation (taking over small and medium-sized enterprises under national administration that were not subject to nation-alization).[75] Beer was eventually successfully accused of Germanization and anti-socialism. His restitution claim was rejected.[76] Even more complicat-ed, however, was the situation in Slovakia, where the government was still

[71] Arnošt Frischer, 'Rok osvobození', *Bulletin of the Jewish Religious Community in Prague*, 8.4–5 (1946), 25–29 (p. 26).

[72] Karel Kučera, 'Masky antisemitismu', *Bulletin of the Jewish Religious Community in Prague*, 8.6 (1946), 45–46 (p. 46).

[73] Summary of the Pěkný case, Pěkný, Historie Židů v Čechách a na Moravě, pp. 372–74; Jančík, Kubů, and Kuklík Jr., *"Arizace"*, pp. 63–64; Karel Kaplan, *Československo v letech 1945–1948* (Prague: Státní pedagogické nakladatelství, 1991), pp. 65–66. See also 'Varnsdorf: genius loci', *Bulletin of the Jewish Religious Community in Prague*, 9.6 (1947), no. 6, pp. 70–71; 'Dvě prohlášení', *Bulletin of the Jewish Religious Community in Prague*, 9.7 (1947), p. 95.

[74] Report of the Minister of the Interior on the investigation of the Varnsdorf case National Archives (Prague), Archives of the Institute of the History of the Communist Party in Prague, fund 83, sign. 209, XLVIII. Jančík, Kubů, and Kuklík Jr., *"Arizace"*, pp. 66–67.

[75] Jančík, Kubů and Kuklík Jr., *"Arizace"*, pp. 62, 65; Helena Krejčová, 'Čechy na úsvitu nové doby: český antisemitismus 1945–1948', in *Antisemitismus v posttotalitní Evropě* (Prague: F. Kafka Publishing House, 1993), pp. 103–10 (p. 105).

[76] Jančík, Kubů, and Kuklík Jr., *"Arizace"*, pp. 63–64. Also Šárka Nepalová, 'Židovská menšina v Čechách a na Moravě v letech 1945–1948', in *Terezínské studie a dokumenty*, ed. by Miroslav Kárný and Eva Lorencová (Prague: Academia, Terezín Initiative Foundation, 1999), pp. 314–37.

administrated by people associated with the clerical fascist Slovak State, a satellite of Nazi Germany. The number of collaborators who became government administrators after the war in Slovakia is unknown. However, from numerous sources (complaints from the Jewish public) we may surmise that this was not an isolated phenomenon. Similarly, members of the Hlinka Guard who carried out the deportations of Jews were not even punished.

> To this day, all those 'confiscations' of Jewish property by the Slovak state have not been declared null and void... Thousands and thousands of people are still squatting land, shops, and houses that were taken away from Jews by the fascist Slovak regime, in violation of the laws of the republic... Slovak kingpins transported 60,000 Jews to Poland to be murdered. The Germans were paid 4,000 K per deported [i.e., murdered] person. These unfortunates were transported by the Hlinka Guards with all the cruelties seen in the Nazis. To this day – years after liberation – no one has been punished for these transports. Apparently, none of the guardsmen who raped Jewish girls, beat old Jewish men, robbed and stole have been identified either. But that's not all! Many of those who created the system still sit in the offices today; these same people refuse Jewish applications for the return of business licenses and make life difficult for Jews wherever they can,

stated Arnošt Frischer in May 1946.[77]

The greatest absurdity, however, is the inclusion of Jews who declared German nationality in the last census in the deportation.[78] German Jews in Ústí nad Labem even had to wear a discriminatory white armband as alleged Germans.[79] Many of them were sent to internment camps for Germans. For example, Ela Fischerová (1902–1950), mother of Anita Franková, archivist and historian, was interned in a camp in Prague-Motol after her return from a concentration camp in February 1946.

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[77]   Frischer, 'Rok osvobození', pp. 27–28. 57,752 people were deported in the first wave of deportations. The price per person was 5,000 Slovak crowns. Hradská and Kamenec, *Slovenská republika 1939–1945*, p. 218; Kamenec, *Po stopách tragedie*, p. 198.
[78]   For a summary of the position of German Jews, cf. Reuven Assor, '"Deutsche Juden" in der Tschechoslowakei 1945–1948'", in *Odsun – Die Vertreibung der Sudetendeutschen*, ed. by Jörg Kudlich and others (München: Sudetendeutsches Archiv, 1995), pp. 299–304; Tomáš Staněk, 'Němečtí Židé v Československu 1945–1948', *Dějiny a současnost*, 5 (1991), 42–46; Tomáš Staněk, *Odsun Němců z Československa 1945–1947* (Prague: Academia, Naše vojsko/Our Army, 1991), pp. 339–44.
[79]   'Malá legenda', *Bulletin of the Jewish Religious Community in Prague*, 7.3 (1945), 20.

I was herded under German, Russian and finally Czechoslovak bayonets", she recalled.[80] "It seems incredible to us that applications recommended for rejection by the Ministry of the Interior include persons of Jewish faith or origin, or members of their families. This rumour seems simply incredible to us, and we therefore respectfully request that before making such recommendations, consideration be given to whether such a course of action would be consistent with the spirit and tradition of the leaders of our capital and the intent of the legislator. Note that we are far from defending persons who actively Germanized or committed crimes under the occupation, and we are far from opposing the removal of Germans. We do not, however, consider it compatible with the spirit of the Decree and with the democratic character of the Republic that a Jew or a person of Jewish origin who suffered under Nazi persecution and who declared himself to be of German nationality in 1930, according to his mother tongue, should be regarded as having failed to remain loyal to the Republic or as having committed an offense against the Czech and Slovak nation. Equally incredible to us are the rumours according to which persons whose applications are recommended for rejection are to be deported or put into detention camps before the Ministry of the Interior issues a decision. It does not seem possible to us that persons who miraculously survived the horrors of the concentration camps should now find themselves through no fault in a camp again",

said Arnošt Frischer in April 1946 in a letter addressed to Václav Vacek, the Communist mayor of Prague.[81]

The exemption for persons of German and Jewish nationality of "Jewish origin" who "had not committed Germanization or Hungarianization in Slavic countries" was not granted until 10 September 1946,[82] when the displacement of the German and Hungarian population had already practically been completed. German Jews also often had problems in the liberated state because of their poorer knowledge of the Czech language or their

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[80]　Ela Fischerová, 'Dopis přítelkyni', in *Svět bez lidských dimenzí. Čtyři ženy vzpomínají* (Prague: State Jewish Museum, 1991), p. 37.
[81]　National Archives (Prague), Fund 88, Václav Vacek, box no. 20, sign. 241, in Prague, date 12. IV. /19/46.
[82]　These persons retained their Czechoslovak citizenship and property and were exempted from deportation, or their voluntary move was facilitated. Josef Šebestík and Zdeněk Lukeš, 'Přehled předpisů o Němcích a osobách považovaných za Němce', in *Příručky pro národní výbory* (Prague: Státní tiskárna v Praze, 1946), X, pp. 16, 55–57. See also 'Aby pravda zvítězila', *Bulletin of the Jewish Religious Community in Prague*, 8.11 (1946), 90.

German-sounding names.[83] Many people therefore replaced their "German" names with "Czech" names (between 1945 and 1946, the City of Prague recorded 349 changes of names and surnames; another 76 applications were pending).[84] The state also failed to allocate flats. The authorities gave priority to those who were able to offer a bribe. This situation was eloquently described by Heda Margoliová-Kovályová (1919 Prague – 2010 Prague), wife of Rudolf Margolius, Deputy Minister of Foreign Trade, who was executed as a result of the Slánský Trial (1952):

> The biggest concern of all those who have returned is apartments. And so partisans from the forests, widows of the executed who have slept for years on a piece of mattress on a floor somewhere, and sick concentration camp survivors stand on aching legs in endless queues outside the housing offices, while butchers and grocers walk straight into the office through the back door. They all have good apartments, but now they're richer and want better and nicely furnished ones since there are plenty left over from the Germans, and they supplied the lords of the town hall with meat and flour all through the war.[85]

SURVIVING JEWS, THEIR NEIGHBOURS, ACQUAINTANCES AND FRIENDS

In the declamation of Hanuš Koldovský at the end of 1945, there was the bitter observation that the few Jews who had managed to survive the concentration camps were usually met with a cold reception in their homeland after the war. Many even had to stomach caustic remarks that too many Jews had returned.[86]

Survivor memoirs are full of stories of Jewish apartments and homes occupied by new tenants who were disappointed that the original inhabitants had returned, or stories of property that Jews had hidden with supposed friends before being deported, only to have these people deny the fact or directly refuse to return the property. "My mother and I had nowhere to go; my father never returned and our former apartment was occupied. I was fifteen and a half years old and had to make up the lost school

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83   Jan Osers, 'Jak jsem přežil', *Židovská ročenka/The Jewish Year* of 5756 (1995–1996), 60, 96. See also the fate of Jewish doctor Klara Fischer-Pollak from Karlovy Vary. Monika Hanková, 'Klara Fischer-Pollak (1899–1970). (Po)válečné osudy židovské lékařky z Karlových Varů', in *Židé v Čechách 2/Jews in Bohemia 2*, ed. by Vlastimila Hamáčková, Monika Hanková, and Markéta Lhotová (Prague: Jewish Museum in Prague, 2009), pp. 61–64.
84   'Z činnosti ústřední matriky', *Bulletin of the Jewish Religious Community in Prague*, 8.11 (1946), 97.
85   Heda Margoliová-Kovályová, *Na vlastní kůži* (Prague: Academia, 1992), p. 59.
86   Hanuš Koldovský, 'Po šesti letech....!', *Bulletin of the Jewish Religious Community in Prague*, 7.4 (1945), 31.

years", Helga Weissová stated.[87] "It took me a long time before I resolved to go to Huť. Huť was as much a home for me as Prague, maybe more so... I rang the bell, and a moment later a fat, unshaven man answered the door, glared at me and yelled, 'So you're back, well that's a fine how-do-you-do!'", said Heda Margoliová-Kovályová, recalling her return home.[88] "On their faces I saw an expression I was forced to slowly get used to; an expression I feared, an expression that clearly screamed, 'Why did my Jew have to come back?'", commented Věra Gissingová on the behaviour of the "friends" with whom her mother had hidden her property.[89] Some were allowed to enter their house but were overwhelmed by the memories of their dead family members and preferred to leave.[90] "I looked at my family home only from a distance and saw it hadn't been ruined. But I didn't dare go any further – I didn't even go near it during the subsequent years I spent in Opava", recalled Heinz H. Hermann (1921 Opava – 1993 ?), who came from a family of assimilated German-speaking Jews.[91] "I didn't even think to file a request for my parents' apartment, I didn't even want to know if it was available or not. I didn't go near Ruská Street, where we had lived – my mental equilibrium was too fragile to bear a direct confrontation with the past", said Ruth Bondyová.[92] Rudolf Roden (1923 Prague – 2015 Montreal), later a successful psychiatrist, gave up trying to acquire the family property after anti-Semitic remarks by family friends:

> I felt strange and hesitant to visit many of my parents' former Czech friends because many of them had behaved quite horribly during the war... I didn't make any particular effort to get back the clothes, paintings, carpets, china or small jewellery that my parents had left with these people because, after trying several times, each time I learned how the Germans had come and found everything, or how they had gotten rid of it all out of fear, all the while standing there looking at my father's suit. Then one day, after hearing one complain that 'six million of those Jews died, and mine is the one who had to come back', I just gave up".[93]

Nearly everyone encountered verbal anti-Semitism such as 'it's a pity Hitler didn't finish his work, the Jews are coming back like rats'.[94] Many

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[87]   Weissová, *Deník 1938–1945*, pp. 11, 174.
[88]   Margoliová–Kovályová, *Na vlastní kůži*, pp. 53–54.
[89]   Gissingová, *Perličky dětství*, p. 135.
[90]   Ibid., p. 132.
[91]   Heinz J. Herrmann, *Můj boj proti konečnému řešení. Z Opavy a Prostějova přes Terezín, Osvětim-Birkenau a Dachau do Izraele* (Brno: Barrister & Principal, 2008), pp. 16–17.
[92]   Bondyová, *Víc štěstí než rozumu*, p. 158.
[93]   Eva Rodenová and Rudolf Roden, *Životy ve vypůjčeném čase* (Prague: Academia, 2009), p. 181.
[94]   See also e.g. Gissingová, *Perličky dětství*, pp. 148–49; Adolf Hermann, *Mých prvních pět životů* (Prague: Triáda, G plus G, 2000), pp. 191, 193, 204–05; Margoliová-Kovályová, *Na vlastní kůži*, pp. 53–54.

even had to explain the fact that it was they who survived.[95] However, the slander of the Jewish population also lead to tragedy, as was the case of the first post-war pogrom on 24 September 1945, in Topoľčany.[96] Aside from the accusation that a Jewish doctor who had vaccinated children against typhus had been trying to poison them, other factors also came into play. For six years, Slovakia had been a clerical fascist anti-Semitic state, and there was no denazification after the war. In addition, Slovak historian Ivan Kamenec has pointed out that former Aryanizers still held influential positions in Slovakia, and that there was also an aversion to Germans and Hungarians, with whom Jews were traditionally associated.[97]

The general feeling of Jewish survivors was sadness for their dead relatives, disillusionment with the inhumane behaviour of mankind, and a sense of emptiness.[98] "...there was no continuation, no family, nothing left of previous certainties, plans and life prospects – only broken shards", recalled historian Toman Brod (1929, Prague) upon his return from Terezín, Auschwitz and Gross-Rosen.[99] Young people could no longer rely on the help of their own family and when starting their "new life" (getting an education, a job, acquiring property, health problems) – they were left to fend for themselves. "We were constantly searching. We looked for surviving relatives, we looked for apartments to make new homes, we looked for employment to begin a new life, to be able to support ourselves. Most of us did not yet have a profession – we wanted to learn, to study, we wanted to start families, to dress, to learn to shop; most difficult of all, we wanted to integrate into society". This was how the situation of the returnees was described by Ruth Elias (1922–2008), an Ostrava Jew with a Zionist upbringing who was forced to put her newborn to death in Auschwitz.[100]

In such a situation, any insensitive remark could lead to a major tragedy. On 16 March 1947, at a meeting of the local organization of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in Teplice-Šanova, Václav Kopecký (1897 Kosmonosy – 1961 Prague), the Minister of Information (1945–1953), referred to the Jewish Optants from Transcarpathian Ukraine (formerly Subcarpathian Rus[101]) as bearded Solomons fleeing from the socialist regime.[102] He further accused them of joining the army only when the Red Army

95   Helena Epsteinová, *Nalezená minulost* (Prague: Rybka Publishers, 2000), p. 275.
96   'Topoľčany', *Bulletin of the Jewish Religious Community in Prague*, 7.3 (1945), 20–21.
97   Ivan Kamenec, 'Protižidovský pogrom v Topoľčanoch v septembri 1945', in *Study of Nitra History VIII* (1999), ed. by Eduard Nižňanský (Nitra: University of Constantine the Philosopher, 2000), pp. 85–99 (pp. 86–89). See also Soukupová, *Židé v českých zemích po šoa*, pp. 71–75.
98   Hermann, *Mých prvních pět životů*, pp. 206–07.
99   Toman Brod, *Ještě že člověk neví, co ho čeká. Života běh mezi roky 1929–1989* (Prague: Academia, 2007), p. 208.
100   Ruth Elias, *Naděje mi pomohla přežít* (Ostrava: Sfinga, 1994), p. 283.
101   See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rusyns.
102   Petr Brod, 'Židé v poválečném Československu', in *Židé v novodobých dějinách*, ed. by Václav Veber (Prague: Univerzita Karlova, Nakladatelství Karolinum, 1997), pp. 147–62 (p. 154); Kurt Wehle, 'The Jews in Bohemia and Moravia: 1945–1948', in *The Jews of Czechoslovakia. Historical Studies and Surveys III* (New York, Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1984), pp. 499–530 (pp. 522–23); Soukupová, *Židé v českých zemích po šoa*, pp. 90–93.

had already decided the outcome of the war.[103] As a direct consequence of Kopecký's slurs, Staff Sergeant Ejsik Weiss of the Liberation Army committed suicide.[104] His funeral became a rallying cry against anti-Semitism; it was attended by more than 1,000 people, soldiers from foreign armies, domestic Jewish leaders, and the American Joint and World Jewish Congress.[105]

However, it appears that expressions of anti-Semitism were balanced with expressions of solidarity and aid. Eva Erbenová (1930 Děčín), an assimilated Czech Jew, was taken in by a Czech family in Postřekov after escaping a death march.[106] Miloš Pick (1926 Libáň u Jičína – 2011?), later an economist, found his sense of home in the villa of the Hájek family in Spořilov, who had joined the resistance during the war.[107] Genuine friends also helped many other survivors.[108] Rudolf Roden recalled his visit to his high school three days after his liberation from a death march. The principal and his class teacher, moved by his story, presented him with a full high school diploma.[109] Many people returned the property they had kept without being asked to do so.[110] Germanist Pavel Eisner therefore exhorted the survivors: "Do not lament an unreturned fur coat... Above all remember one thing: Czech maids, servants, housekeepers, Czech friends and employees gave their lives to harbour Jewish people".[111]

CONCLUSION

Jewish survivors of the Shoah returned home with hopes of experiencing the dawn of "a Czechoslovak era", an era of freedom and justice.[112] Unfortunately, these hopes proved fleeting in the harsh post-war era. The first post-war months passed in the spirit of the unified opinion of Jewish citizens. However, their collective and individual fear ("the awareness of a joint tragic fate" and the awareness of personal misfortune) was worsened by the intensity of the bureaucracy when acquiring documents or someplace to live and during restitutions at the time. German Jews even found it very difficult to re-obtain citizenship. Many survivors also suffered serious medical issues as well as a sense of the loss of their home, which they had

103 Hb. (Jiří Hrbas), 'A co říkají jiní', *Právo lidu*, 50.71 (1947), 3.
104 'Tragická příhoda', *Bulletin of the Jewish Religious Community in Prague*, 9.8 (1947), 101–02.
105 Dr. I. (Rudolf Iltis), 'Pohřeb Ejsika Weisse', *Bulletin of the Jewish Religious Community in Prague*, 9.8 (1947), 103.
106 Eva Erbenová, *Sen* (Prague: G plus G, 2001), p. 72.
107 Miloš Pick, *Naděje se vzdát neumím* (Brno: Doplněk, 2010), p. 74.
108 Gissingová, *Perličky dětství*, pp. 132–34, 136–38; Oldřich Stránský, *Není spravedlnosti na zemi* (Středokluky: Zdeněk Susa, 2002), pp. 100–01; Pick, *Naděje se vzdát neumím*, pp. 76–77; Margoliová-Kovályová, *Na vlastní kůži*, p. 55.
109 Rudolf Roden, *Paměť naruby* (Prague: Academia, 2003), p. 44.
110 Gissingová, *Perličky dětství*, pp. 134–36, Heda Kaufmannová, *Léta 1938/1945. Válečné vzpomínky* (Prague: Ústav pro soudobé dějiny AV ČR, 1999), p. 192–93, Stránský, *Není spravedlnosti na zemi*, p. 100.
111 Pavel Eisner, 'Vita nova', *Bulletin of the Jewish Religious Community in Prague*, 8.4–5 (1946), no. 4–5, pp. 34–35 (p. 34).
112 Bedřich Zimmer, 'Židovská náboženská obec chce pomoci', *Bulletin of the Jewish Religious Community in Prague*, 8.2 (1946), 13.

clung to during their imprisonment or emigration. A feverish search for relations, accommodations, jobs…, and also lost time, became the leitmotiv of their post-war lives. The importance of religious holy days receded in relation to the significance of the Day of Mourning for Czechoslovak Jews, held in memory of the extermination of the concentration camp in KL Auschwitz. It was very difficult for people to face new anti-Semitism cases…

Although the Jewish community provided all kinds of assistance to the survivors, mitigating the consequences of the slow or hostile actions of the state bureaucracy, it could not replace the family members who perished. The state failed in many ways, primarily because it did not take into account the specifics of the Jewish tragedy and did not deal more forcefully with the legacy of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia and the Slovak state.

The situation was further complicated by the rapid rise of the new totalitarian regime. The behaviour towards Jews of neighbours and acquaintances cannot be assessed in a blanket way. Some people made it difficult for Jews to return, while others showed their humanity and helped effectively. Bedřich Zimmer believed that during the Protectorate, the Czechs secretly sympathized with the Jews because German Nazism was a common enemy. After 9 May 1945, however, indifference allegedly set in. "We are living in a revolutionary age; in such times people are not happy and content", he concluded.[113]

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[113]   Zimmer, 'Židovská náboženská obec chce pomoci', p. 13.

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Interview with Zianon Pazniak
THE IDEA OF BEING A PROPHET NEVER CROSSED MY MIND.
I SIMPLY KNEW THE RUSSIANS

ZIANON PAZNIAK

(born 24 April 1944) is a prominent Belarusian politician, archaeologist, one of the founders of the Belarusian National Front (BNF), and from 1990 to 1996 a member of the parliament of the Belarusian SSR and later the Republic of Belarus. He is best known for exposing the mass graves of Stalin's victims in Kurapaty in 1988, which was a key event in sparking the Belarusian national revival movement. Pazniak has been a tireless advocate of Belarusian independence and the preservation of Belarusian culture and language. In 1996, following Alexander Lukashenko's tightening of authoritarian control over the country, Pazniak fled Belarus and lived in exile, where he remains active in the struggle for Belarusian sovereignty and democracy.

Did you feel like a prophet in your own country, one that the majority didn't want to listen to? I ask because you are a Belarusian politician and intellectual who has consistently warned for over thirty years about the danger from Russia, particularly from its special services. At the same time, in the eyes of many Belarusian opposition circles, you had the reputation of a radical.[1]

– No. The idea of being a prophet never crossed my mind. I simply knew the Russians, Moscow, their behaviour, and their aggressive policies very well. Communism was a form of Russian imperialism. Everything was predictable here. Communist propaganda didn't affect me. Meanwhile, Soviet citizens watched Soviet television and were under the influence of Soviet propaganda. Lies seemed like reality to them. Living by lies, they couldn't know the truth and were unable to perceive it. And when you told them something simple (and contrary to their illusions) that later came true, their worldview was turned upside down, and the truth seemed like prophecy.

The essence of Russian communism, the nature of Russian people and the Muscovian occupation were known to me from the start. You don't need to be a prophet when you see the reality of Russian occupation every day. I grew up in Vilnius Region [which is now divided between

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1   Interview was conducted on 20 August 2024.

Lithuania and Belarus – Łukasz Adamski] in an anti-Soviet environment. We didn't like those Muscovites – boors, drunkards, and communists. My whole family fought against the Russian aggressors and their occupation policies. My grandfather, Jan Pazniak, the leader of the Belarusian Christian Democratic Party in Western Belarus and editor of the Belarusian newspaper *Krynica*, was executed by the Russians as a Belarusian activist in 1939.[2] I understood and knew from experience and observation what to expect from Russian banditry policies. As for being called a 'radical', even speaking Belarusian was considered 'radicalism' for people raised by colonizers and Belarus-haters. In short, those who spoke of radicalism in my work didn't understand or know the meaning of what I was doing. This ignorance came from Belarusians who hadn't broken ties with the Soviets and Moscow and repeated fantasies about a 'democratic Russia', which is fundamentally impossible.

> **Please tell me, is your anti-Soviet and anti-Russian stance, for which you are known as a politician and intellectual, something inherent to you? Is it a result of the values and atmosphere in which you grew up, or did you come to it later in life?**

– From the beginning, I understood what the 'Soviets' were. But the later experiences of education work among Belarusians and the fight for a free Belarus, as well as Muscovian-KGB repressions against Belarusians, taught us a lot, especially in a practical sense.

> **You were born in Subotniki, in the historical Vilnius Region. Certainly, there were comparisons of what it was like 'under the Poles', 'under the Germans', and 'under the Soviets'. How did this atmosphere differ from that of Minsk or other cities, and indeed whole regions of eastern Belarus which came under Soviet rule after the First World War?**

– There was a difference. People in the historical Vilnius Region, in Hrodna and Brest Regions (areas of Western Belarus), had private property, owned their land, worked it, and were its masters until 1950 (when the Soviets set up collective farms). But then, in 1949–1950, the Russians took land, horses, ploughs, harnesses, livestock, and even houses from the Belarusians and forced them into collective farms, and that's what caused the greatest hatred and rejection of the occupiers, which I saw and personally experienced.

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2   Jan Paźniak, known also under the Polonized name Poźniak (1887–1940), was a Belarusian political and cultural activist, publicist, and key figure in the Belarusian national movement in Vilnius. He served as chairman of the Belarusian National Committee and played an important role in the Belarusian Christian Democratic movement. Poźniak was arrested by Soviet authorities in 1939 and is believed to have been executed by the NKVD during the Katyn Massacre in 1940.

In Eastern Belarus, the Soviets plundered the people as early as the 1930s, with hundreds of thousands of Belarusians executed, deported to Siberia, to the steppes of Kazakhstan, to the so-called "GULAG". As a result, the mindset of society in Eastern Belarus was already shaped by a generation that, from the beginning, had no property (it had been taken from their parents) and did not work on their own land. This generation was more passive and more heavily influenced by the occupying communist propaganda.

How would you describe the hopes and moods of the people in Belarus during the Perestroika period? When you spoke to your compatriots, first as a dissident, then as a politician, about the non-Soviet traditions of Belarus and its national past, did it feel like reminding them of a history and culture that couldn't be openly discussed under the Soviets? Or was it more like passing on information they didn't know until then?

– Gorbachev's 'Perestroika', like all other initiatives of communist Moscow, wasn't taken seriously in Belarus (even by the nomenklatura). However, the national intelligentsia tried to use it to open up the truth about Belarusian history, the repressions of the 1920s–1950s, the war, Belarusian culture, and more. Partially, this succeeded. Dissidents and national revival activists emerged. The Soviet authorities persecuted them, but the GULAG no longer existed. There was limited freedom of manoeuvre.

As for knowledge of Belarusian national history, which had been effectively banned and falsified – especially the history of Belarusian statehood and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (as Belarus was formerly known) – the intelligentsia, who had secretly known much, now embraced the newly available information about the Grand Duchy and Belarusian history with great enthusiasm, and they increased this knowledge. The masses of ordinary people, who had been cut off from history, also welcomed it favourably as something new (about which they had previously been unaware), and with satisfaction because they subconsciously felt an elevation of their self-esteem. In short, the revelation of the truth unfolded in society as a positive national process. However, the Soviets and the communist nomenklatura approached it with caution and apprehension as they sensed that this process of democratizing people's thinking could threaten Soviet power.

How did the Soviet Belarusian nomenklatura react to your activities and to the creation of the Belarusian National Front?

– Oh! Very negatively, hostile, and, I would even say, on the verge of hysteria. They even prepared several lawsuits against me, but nothing

came of it. Once, thousands of people came to protest at the courthouse in support of me (this was in 1988). The court panicked and cancelled the session. So, I wasn't convicted at that time. The communists were already acting uncertainly then.

And how did the Russian elites react to your activities? The secret service? Presumably unfavourably. Did they have time to deal with you, and if so, what kind of actions were taken? Or did they leave that to the Belarusian post-Soviet nomenklatura?

– At first (1988–1991), Moscow relied on the repressive apparatus in the BSSR. In Moscow, they probably thought I could be suppressed here without their involvement. Later (from 1992), the presence of Moscow special forces became more noticeable. They were particularly stirred up in early 1994 after my meeting with U.S. President Bill Clinton at Kurapaty and the publication in January 1994 of my programmatic article (in Russian) titled 'On Russian Imperialism and its Danger'. Under pressure from Moscow, the Prosecutor General opened a criminal case against me because of this article. But unexpectedly for the Muscovites, the communist Supreme Soviet refused to strip me of parliamentary immunity. (Only 110 deputies out of 345 voted for it). Why did this happen in a parliament where 90% of the deputies were communists? I believe that after the collapse of the USSR and the creation of the Republic of Belarus, some of these communists felt more Belarusian and subconsciously understood Moscow's harmful policies. I also believe that many of them had enough human decency not to put a parliamentarian on trial for an article in a newspaper, especially their opponent.

And what did you write there, in that article?

– I asserted that Russia could not become a democratic country because it is an imperialist great power with a tradition of seizing foreign lands and committing violence against people. Aggression and an attempt to territorially restore the Soviet Union should be expected. Moreover, any government seated in the Kremlin will pursue such an imperial policy.

At that time, for post-Soviet people (who were living under the illusions of Yeltsin), hearing such things was unusual. Russian propaganda was outraged, demanding punishment for the author.

Was there collaboration between Belarusian national activists and the Ukrainian 'Rukh'³? Between you and Vyacheslav Chornovil,⁴ the leader of that movement, for example?

– There were very warm and cordial relations with the Ukrainian 'Rukh'. I developed a friendly relationship with Vyacheslav Chornovil. We invited each other to congresses, had joint projects (for example, the construction of the Baltic-Black Sea oil pipeline, the creation of the Baltic-Black Sea community of states of Ukraine, Belarus, the Baltics, etc.), and participated in joint rallies, conferences, and more.

What was your cooperation with Polish elites from the anti-communist opposition? Who, from your perspective, was particularly interested in Belarus? Who cooperated with you?

– In the early 1990s, we had contacts with the 'Confederation of Independent Poland' (Konfederacja Polski Niepodległej), led by Leszek Moczulski,⁵ and partly with 'Fighting Solidarity'⁶ (Solidarność Walcząca), including Kornel Morawiecki,⁷ Piotr Hlebowicz,⁸ Jadwiga Chmielowska,⁹ Robert Bodnar,¹⁰ and others. There were ongoing contacts and relations between the Belarusian National Front and myself with Poland's first General Consul in Belarus, Tadeusz Myślik,¹¹ and later with Poland's first Ambassador to Belarus, Elżbieta Smułkowa.¹² In the early 1990s, during the visit of the President of Poland, Lech Wałęsa, to Belarus, I had two meetings with him, one of which took place in Kurapaty near the Polish memorial cross.

Good relations were also established in exile (in 1996, I emigrated to Poland and later to the USA), and there were mutually supportive contacts

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3   Rukh ("Narodny Rukh Ukrainy", People's Movement of Ukraine) was a prominent opposition political movement formed in 1989 during the late Soviet period. Initially established as a democratic pro-reform organization advocating for Ukrainian independence, Rukh played a significant role in mobilizing public support for Ukraine's sovereignty, which it achieved in 1991. The movement united intellectuals, activists, and reform-minded politicians, eventually becoming a political party. Its legacy includes promoting Ukrainian nationalism, cultural revival, and democratic values. Rukh's influence declined in the 2000s as various factions splintered from the movement.

4   Vyacheslav Chornovil (1937–1999) – a prominent Ukrainian politician and dissident, leader of the Ukrainian national movement 'Rukh', and an advocate for Ukrainian independence.

5   Leszek Moczulski (1930–2024) – Polish historian, writer, and politician, founder of the Confederation of Independent Poland (KPN), an underground political party that opposed communist rule in Poland.

6   Fighting Solidarity was a radical anti-communist organization in Poland, founded in 1982 by Kornel Morawiecki. It emerged as a splinter group from the Solidarity (Solidarność) movement, advocating for more aggressive methods of resistance against the communist regime. Unlike mainstream Solidarity, it rejected any negotiations with the authorities, aiming for the complete overthrow of communism.

7   Kornel Morawiecki (1941–2019) – Polish politician and physicist, founder of "Fighting Solidarity", a radical anti-communist organization in Poland of the 1980s.

8   Piotr Hlebowicz (born in 1963), Polish writer, a prominent member of Fighting Solidarity.

9   Jadwiga Chmielowska (born in 1954) – Polish journalist and political activist, a member of Fighting Solidarity and supporter of Belarusian independence movements.

10 Robert Bodnar (1967–2005), Polish archaeologist, anti-communist opposition activist.

11 Tadeusz Myślik (1927–2011) – Polish diplomat, Poland's first General Consul in Belarus after the fall of communism.

12 Elżbieta Smułkowa (born in 1931) – Polish diplomat and scholar, Poland's first ambassador to Belarus.

with the "Movement for the Reconstruction of Poland"[13] (Ruch Odbudowy Polski [ROP]), led by former Prime Minister Jan Olszewski[14] and others. In particular, the activities of Poland's first ambassador to Belarus, Elżbieta Smułkowa, contributed to strengthening Polish-Belarusian relations. In the second half of the 1990s and the early 2000s, the Belarusian National Front, together with members of the Polish "Fighting Solidarity", established a joint organization called "Poland-Belarus in the name of General Stanisław Bułak-Bałachowicz". We organized joint actions in Krakow and Warsaw. The organization was led alternately by Piotr Hlebowicz and me (your interlocutor). We cooperated with ROP and Jan Olszewski.

What difficulties did you encounter when speaking with Western politicians in the 1990s?

– I would divide them into U.S. politicians and European politicians. The level was different. Americans are professionals, well-informed, with rational thinking. I had conversations with various politicians and congressmen in the so-called "American Committee", with Zbigniew Brzeziński, General Alexander Haig,[15] and with the staff of Senator Joe Biden (currently the President of the United States in 2024). As for Europe, there were meetings with politicians in Brussels (European Parliament), in London, in the Czech Republic, and especially in Paris (late 1990s), where, during a conversation with a deputy foreign minister, I saw that he didn't understand at all how Lukashenko could be a nominee of Russia. Knowledge about Belarus was non-existent, as it was for most European politicians, and there was a notable infantilism in discussions about Russia. The difference between them and Americans was palpable. And nothing has changed over time. I got the impression that the European Union is a giant bureaucratic monster, where bureaucracy has replaced democracy and lives in its own bureaucratic ecosystem according to principles that don't change. But this is just an opinion – perhaps it's subjective.

The year 1994 saw the first presidential elections in Belarus's history, which resulted in Alexander Lukashenko coming to power. Given the social mood at the time, the economic crisis, post-Soviet nostalgia, and the high level of Russification, was this outcome inevitable? Apart from Lukashenko and

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13   The Movement for the Reconstruction of Poland ("Ruch Odbudowy Polski", ROP) was a conservative political party in Poland, founded in 1995 by former Prime Minister Jan Olszewski. The party advocated for strong national sovereignty, a break from communist influences, and closer ties with NATO and Western Europe. ROP played a significant role in the political landscape during the 1990s, particularly among patriotic and anti-communist circles.

14   Jan Olszewski (1930–2019) – Polish lawyer, defender in political trials during the communist period, and politician; served as Prime Minister of Poland (1991–1992).

15   Alexander Haig (1924–2010) – American General and politician, served as U.S. Secretary of State 1981–1982, and NATO Supreme Allied Commander (1974–1979).

the then-Prime Minister Vyacheslav Kebich,[16] who appealed to a similar electorate as Lukashenko, you and the then-speaker of parliament, Stanislav Shushkevich, also ran. However, the two of you came in third and fourth places, respectively, even though the ideas of a European and national Belarus were close to both of you. The combined votes you received were 22%, more than what Kebich received, who advanced to the second round but lost to Lukashenko. Perhaps it would have been worth joining forces with Shushkevich?

– There's a lot of propaganda claims in this statement which float on the surface but have nothing to do with reality. Such statements usually came from Muscovites, from the KGB, and from people far removed from politics.

The first thing to know, as has been proven in documents (for example, the written testimonies of Prime Minister Kebich and his memoirs), is that Lukashenko and Kebich's election campaigns were entirely managed by Moscow's FSB and its agents in the Belarusian KGB. Both Kebich and Lukashenko acted together against the BPF candidate, Zianon Pazniak (me). The goal was to prevent me from gaining power. Kebich was put forward as a target for criticism that was favourable to Lukashenko to win points with the people, who hated Kebich and saw him as the cause of the economic downturn and declining living standards.

To ensure Lukashenko's victory, Moscow and the KGB planned to bring both Lukashenko and Kebich to the second round of elections (under no circumstances was Pazniak to be in the second round). But in reality (as we later learned), Kebich came in fourth. Zianon Pazniak (me) came in second with more than 22%, and Shushkevich came in third. For Moscow, this was nearly a disaster, but the Soviet administrative falsification machine was ready. As a result of the falsification, 10% of the votes were taken from me and given to Kebich. This combination allowed Moscow to "win" the elections.

I'll add that Lukashenko didn't even have an electoral program. Apart from an excellent program of political and economic reforms, I already had a government formed from the nation's elite, consisting of 50 people. Moreover, my presence in the second round (and Kebich's absence) would have deprived Lukashenko of his main propaganda argument: criticizing Kebich as the cause of all evil. Winning the second round would have been very difficult for Lukashenko. But in the end, Moscow achieved what it wanted.

16   Vyacheslav Kebich (1936–2020) was a Belarusian politician and economist who served as the Prime Minister of Belarus from 1991 to 1994. He played a key role in Belarus's early post-Soviet transition but lost the 1994 presidential election to Alexander Lukashenko.

The thesis that Shushkevich and I hindered each other in the elections is artificially invented by amateurs. Pazniak and Shushkevich had different electorates. Shushkevich was supported mainly by Russian-speaking, pro-Moscow democrats; Pazniak was supported by the entire nationally conscious Belarusian democratic spectrum. Undoubtedly, the behaviour of the post-Soviet Belarusian electorate was influenced by the economic downturn, inflation, and Moscow's propaganda. The main Soviet mass of voters fell for populist promises. However, I would have had the opportunity to reverse all these sentiments in the second round, where Lukashenko would have been deprived of his imaginary opponent, Kebich, and would have faced a real one. Moscow worked professionally here but, as always, treacherously.

In 1995, Lukashenko called a referendum to restore the Russian language's status as an official language and replace the flag and coat of arms of Belarus, which referred to the traditions of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, with modified symbols of Soviet Belarus. At that time, as a deputy, you and several other deputies – colleagues from the Belarusian National Front – led a hunger strike, pointing out that the questions posed contradicted Belarus' constitution. However, the referendum took place, and 83% of Belarusians voted for Lukashenko's language proposal, and 75% for the flag and coat of arms.

Was the referendum fair? How reliable are these results? What percentage of Belarusians, in your observation, actually supported these slogans?

– Before adopting the decision to hold an unconstitutional referendum (1995), Lukashenko, under Moscow's pressure, brought the military into parliament (600 armed men from the KGB "Alpha" unit and special forces of the internal troops). The military beat the BPF opposition deputies, who protested the unconstitutional decision and forcefully expelled them from parliament. This was an anti-state crime and a coup. Lukashenko should have been brought to trial, but the junta that seized power already had strength, and the trial never took place. The unconstitutional referendum was held in violation of the law, and its results were falsified. The question about the flag, for example, was formulated in such a way that people voting for the "new flag" thought it referred to the White-Red-White Flag, which was indeed a new one. The final stage of Lukashenko's coup (the illegal adoption of the constitution of dictatorship as a result of the referendum) took place in November 1996 with the direct involvement

and influence of senior Russian officials (Viktor Chernomyrdin,[17] Yegor Stroyev,[18] Gennady Seleznev[19]).

> **In 1996, you left Belarus after learning of a planned assassination attempt against you. If that was the case, by leaving you avoided the fate of several of Lukashenko's opponents who disappeared – and were in fact murdered – in 1999. However, naturally, you may have had less impact on the situation in Belarus from abroad. Finally, one last question: What do you consider your greatest success as a politician, and what do you consider your biggest failure?**

– The greatest success is the independence of Belarus. It was the dream and the meaning of my life from the very beginning of my conscious existence. It was worth fighting for an independent homeland.

The greatest failure (which led to the occupational dictatorship) is that in 1994 we were objectively unable to prevent the introduction of the presidential system in parliament in Belarus. Moscow cleverly supported both Kebich and Lukashenko simultaneously. The communists, the KGB, and Belarusophobes united in parliament and the system of power as one. They wanted to return to the USSR, to strong power, and to be with Russia. Except for us, the members of the Front, it seemed no one understood what awaited Belarus and what it would soon become.

Interview was conducted by ŁUKASZ ADAMSKI

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17   Viktor Chernomyrdin (1938–2010) – Russian politician, served as Prime Minister of Russia (1992–1998); known for his involvement in shaping post-Soviet Russian policies towards neighbouring states.
18   Yegor Stroyev (born in 1937) – Russian politician, served as the Chairman of the Federation Council of Russia 1996–2001.
19   Gennady Seleznev (1947–2015) – Russian politician, Speaker of the State Duma of Russia (1996–2003).

Yana Prymachenko
RUSSIAN ACADEMIC IMPERIALISM: HOW DEEP DOES THE RABBIT HOLE GO?

Book Review: Sergei I. Zhuk, *The KGB, Russian Academic Imperialism, Ukraine, and Western Academia, 1946–2024* (Lanham MD: Lexington Books, 2024)

Sergei Zhuk, an American scholar of Ukrainian descent, has published a book that exposes how Russian academic imperialism has burrowed its way into Western universities and think tanks. His account sheds light on the involvement of the KGB/FSB in shaping pro-Russian discourse within Western academia and the problem of the perception of Ukraine and other former Soviet republics through the Russian lens. Zhuk's book not only elucidates the causes of such a state of affairs in Western Soviet/Slavic studies but also examines how the KGB/FSB has exploited and continues to exploit Western academia to promote pro-Russian views. The author names many prominent American researchers of Russian descent who come from families of the Soviet political elite and have close ties to the KGB. Not only have these scholars shaped Western academia's distorted view of Ukraine, but some of them have not yet condemned Russia's aggression against Ukraine openly, and some of them continue to collaborate with Putin's regime. Additionally, the author explores American scholars' fascination with Russian culture, which leads to the promotion of Russian propaganda and support for Putin's policies toward Ukraine. The author focuses on Ukraine as a critical factor in Russian academic imperialism and a game changer for Western academia.

The book consists of seven chapters, including an introduction and an epilogue. In the introduction, Zhuk provides modern accounts of Russian influence in American academic institutions and think tanks that were made possible by the enduring intervention of the KGB, which used Soviet Americanists as its primary influencers. The book is based on a large volume of archival sources and numerous interviews with Soviet/Russian Americanists and former KGB officers conducted by the author over the years. While reading the book, one can't resist the feeling of being immersed in a backward world that could be compared to Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*, or the Wachowski sisters' cult movie *The Matrix* (1999). The latter has rich metaphorical language, and its multiple layers make it a research object in many humanities fields. Not surprisingly, this movie

can be seen as relevant to the epistemological problems that Sergei Zhuk's book raises.

The Matrix's pivotal point is when Neo, the main protagonist, chooses between a blue and a red pill. At first glance, this implies a choice between fiction and reality. However, careful following of the plot reveals that there is no such choice. Instead, the red pill, which is supposed to be the way out to reality, allows Neo to stay in "Wonderland" and see "how deep the rabbit hole goes".

Metaphorically, the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022, should have become the "red pill" for Western academia, finally raising the question about the relevance of Western Slavic/Soviet studies, which perceive not only Ukraine but the whole region of Central and Eastern Europe through the prism of Russia's "sphere of influence". The Russian war in Ukraine has revealed inaccurate assessments of political developments in the post-Soviet space and initiated a dialogue about changes in academic programs and approaches to the Easten European region.

The last two conferences of the Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies (ASEEES), the leading academic forum for American Slavic scholars, focused on the issue of decolonizing Western Slavic/ Soviet studies – specifically, on decentring Russia. However, this radical change hasn't happened. There are still many scholars in the field of Slavic and Soviet studies who continue to adhere to Russocentric approaches, ignoring or denying Ukrainian agency and applying the imperial paradigm to Central and Eastern Europe. Consequently, it seems that the "red pill" didn't work. This is precisely the question that Zhuk raises in his book, but he takes the Revolution of Dignity as the point of departure:

> The international humanities and social sciences community experienced a real epistemological shock and overall cultural division after the Euromaidan Revolution in 2013–2014. Not only experts in Slavic studies [...] but also specialists in American and European studies [...] became divided on the issue of accepting the Ukrainian War of Independence against Russian aggression, especially after [...] Russia annexed Crimea and invaded Ukraine's Donbas.
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> Paradoxically, an influential part of this international community demonstrated obvious "Russo-centrism" (or Russophilia) and outraged Ukrainophobia, trying to justify Putin's politics in Ukraine and criticizing Ukraine and Ukrainians. To this day, many Western and Russian scholars still do not want to face the "inconvenient truth" about direct Russia's military aggression and interfer-

ence in the domestic politics of independent Ukraine long before its full-scale invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022. Why does this happen? What are the reasons for the rise of such pro-Russian and anti-Ukrainian sentiments among so many Western and post-Soviet academics? Are these Russophile feelings connected to the significant epistemological and geopolitical changes affecting the humanities? (pp. 125–26).

The author addresses the problem of the discourse of power that has shaped our visions and perceptions of reality. Slavoj Zizek exposed this epistemological trap in his documentary *The Pervert's Guide to Cinema (2006)*. Zizek points out that when we confine ourselves to the "Matrix", a metaphor for the imposed discourse of power, there is no actual choice between illusion and reality because fiction has already structured our reality. According to Zizek, if we remove from our reality the symbolic fiction that regulated it, we lose reality itself. At that point, we need a "third pill" that "would enable people to perceive not the reality behind the illusion but the reality in the illusion itself".[1] This is precisely what Zhuk does in his book, showing how Russian academic imperialism has distorted the perception of Ukraine and the whole area of East European and Eurasian studies, thus making us hostages of this distortion.

The first chapter covers the period from 1946 to 1960, describing how the KGB "mastered" the first American Sovietology centres using Russian emigrants and various types of "leftists" as "agents of influence". Both the KGB and the CIA couldn't resist the temptation to use the potential of displaced Soviet persons (DPs) living in Germany. The CIA even funded the Institute for the Study of History and Culture of the USSR in Munich. The author pinpoints that "both the CIA and the KGB officers who monitored the activities of this institute stressed Russian-Ukrainian conflict even between anti-Soviet emigrants who American supervisors employed" (p. 6). Zhuk emphasizes that the KGB was always obsessed with "the threat of Ukrainian nationalism to the integrity of Soviet Ukraine" and was happy to know that American experts were misled and believed that "nationality was a minor issue in the USSR" (p. 7).

The establishment of academic exchange programs in 1958 provided another opportunity for the KGB to infiltrate Western academia with its agents. The author pinpoints that exchange programs led to the establishment of personal ties between American and Soviet scholars that the KGB

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1   Red Psicoanalítica de Atención, 'The pervert's guide to cinema – Matrix', online video recording, YouTube, 10 February 2019 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LAf0iAkJ3Z0 > [accessed on 11 November 2024].

used for their "active measures". He also mentions the critical shift that happened in the 1970s:

> If, before the 1970s, major participants of Soviet programs of academic exchange with America were predominately scientists and engineers who were connected to the KGB and were engaged mainly in industrial and technological espionage in the US [...], during the 1970s, more and more Soviet exchange scholars who travelled to the US, the UK, and Canada represented humanities and social science, especially fields like American Studies". (p. 12).

Thus, this switch showed that the KGB's strategy changed in the late Soviet period. It started to "implement" potential influencers in Western academia, while so-called Soviet "cultural diplomacy" evolved to a new level from active measures to formation of academic and, in turn, political discourse.

The second chapter focuses on the creation of research institutes at the USSR Academy of Sciences, under the KGB's patronage, to promote Soviet discourse in the West. These institutions fostered academic family dynasties. For instance, Ilia Miller, a former officer of the SMERSH group,[2] became the head of the Institute of Slavic Studies and Balkan Studies of the USSR Academy of Science, which was created in 1947. His son, Alexei Miller, is a famous Russian historian who supports Putin's politics.[3]

However, the author draws attention to the Institute of World Economy and International Relations, which became a place of employment for KGB and GRU retirees, and the Institute for the USA and Canada. Today, graduates of these Soviet institutions hold prominent positions in American universities, shaping academic and political discourse and remaining major promoters of Russian academic imperialism.

In the third chapter, Zhuk details how, through academic exchange programs, Soviet Americanists supported by the KGB established personal networks that effectively promoted pro-Russian positions in American academia. The FSB inherited these networks and continued to use them to advance "Russian academic imperialism, Russian cultural values, and Russian political interests in the American academic community, influencing American foreign policy" (p. 65).

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[2] SMERSH is of People's Commisariat of Defense of the Soviet Union department that fought against German spies and Nazi collaborators during the Second World War. The name itself is derived from Russian words: *smert' špionam – death to the spies.*
[3] Alexei Miller (born 1959) is a Russian historian, Doctor of History, leading researcher at the Institute of Scientific Information on Social Sciences (INION) of the Russian Academy of Sciences, and a specialist in the history of Eastern Europe and the national question in the twentieth century. Miller is widely known for his research on the national policy of the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union, as well as Russian historical politics.

The fourth chapter is devoted to KGB "illegals" and "sleeper cells". The author emphasizes that this category of Soviet agents survived the collapse of the Soviet Union and continues to operate in the West, but now in Russia's interests. Special attention is given to the "illegal" couple Andrey Bezrukov and Yelena Vavilova, exposed by the FBI in 2010. Their story became the basis for the popular television series The Americans, unintentionally creating a positive image of Russian spies. The author emphasizes "that such international fascination with this American TV show fits Putin's propaganda in both Russia and the West, and his cult of the Russian intelligence service" (p. 85). Unfortunately, there is a lack of understanding of the potential danger of Russian weaponization of pop culture for promoting Russian cultural imperialism in the West. According to Bezrukov, the main task of "illegals" is "to understand what your opponent will be thinking about tomorrow, and not what he was thinking about yesterday" (p. 83). The FSB's task seems much more ambitious: to shape the opponent's thinking about tomorrow.

Zhuk also emphasizes how Soviet/Russian "sleeper cells" targeted "historically black colleges and universities", especially in Washington, DC. Particularly, the KGB disseminated disinformation among African American students "portraying all American Ukrainians as "militant anti-Afro-American and Neo-Nazi groups' that were 'a real threat to all Afro-Americans and Jews'" in the United States (p. 79–80). The same pattern is used in the countries of the Global South to discredit the Ukrainian fight for independence.

One of Zhuk's interviewees, a retired Ukrainian KGB officer, mentions that the tradition "of targeting Western educational institutions survived the collapse of the Soviet Union and is still obvious in the domination of the so-called KGB mindset over Russian cultural diplomacy" (p. 71). The most recent example is the arrest of Viacheslav Morozov, a Russian scholar and professor at Tartu University by Estonian security services. It turned out that the GRU, the Main Directorate of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation, recruited Morozov when he was a student.[4]

The fifth chapter is dedicated to the Ukrainian diaspora, whose activities attracted concern and scrutiny from the KGB. The KGB involved "Soviet Ukrainian scholars in the process of "academic dialogue" with Ukrainian Americans". The author focuses on historian Arnold Shlepakov and journalist Vitaly Korotych, both of whom collaborated with the KGB

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4   Alexander Martin, 'Estonia sentences Russian professor to six years in prison for espionage', *The Record*, 18 June 2024 <https://therecord.media/estonia-sentences-russian-professor-espionage> [accessed on 11 November 2024].

and were highly effective and popular among American Ukrainians. Shlepakov started his academic career as a Soviet Americanist in the 1950s, while Korotych became known as a Soviet Ukrainian writer in the 1960s. In 1978, Shlepakov founded and led the Institute of Socio-Economic Problems of Foreign Countries at the Institute of History of the Ukrainian SSR Academy of Science, while the KGB used Korotych within the framework of so-called Soviet cultural diplomacy to promote a positive image of Soviet Ukraine. Both participated in the KGB's "active measures" aimed at weakening "Ukrainian nationalists". In Shlepakov's case, this was a two-way road. His interaction with representatives of the Ukrainian diaspora made him rediscover his Ukrainian national identity and master the Ukrainian language, which "became instrumental for promoting his own career in Soviet academia" (p. 96). At the end of his career, however, Shlepakov adopted a conservative ideological position, criticizing perestroika. In stark contrast, Korotych praised the ideological changes in the Soviet Union, but he was always famous for his "open-minded and democratically oriented" views, which made him popular "not only among the politically left American Ukrainians but also among moderate representatives of the Ukrainian diaspora" in the 1960s (p. 103).

Zhuk also analyses the Ukrainian diaspora's mistakes in countering Russian influence in the US and Canada after the USSR's collapse, particularly its inability to identify potential Russian agents. Since the 1990s, the FSB has "mainly involved academic refugees from post-Soviet Ukraine". Unfortunately, Ukrainian studies centres funded them despite their suspicious connections to "the Soviet political hierarchy" (p. 113).

The gradual narrative of the previous chapters explains the KGB/FSB's curated institution structures and the methods behind Russian academic imperialism in the West. However, the author addresses the main epistemological challenge in the sixth chapter.

In this chapter, Zhuk shares his own experience, first as a Soviet Americanist and later as a Slavic/Russian studies scholar in Western academia. He recalls his first encounter with the Russian imperialism of his Moscow colleagues: Americanists, who treated him, a native Russian-language speaker, as "another annoying provincial Ukrainian scholar" (p. 126). Such an attitude is rooted in the non-official hierarchy of nationalities in the Soviet Union, where Russians enjoy the privileged position of being "first among equals", or it might be better to say, "an imperial nation". In contrast, other nationalities – even Ukrainian and Belarussian Slavs, who are considered "younger brothers" – are treated as second-class people.

According to the author's observation, the strong feeling of "Soviet nostalgia" came hand in hand with blaming Ukrainians "for betraying East

Slavic unity, destroying the Soviet Union, and voting in 1991 for Ukraine's independence" (p. 127). Apparently, these implicit accusations of Ukrainian "betrayal" revived Ukrainophobia in Russian society.

Recently, Jade McGlynn addressed this in her book *Russia's War* (2023). She doesn't define Ukrainophobia, instead focusing on the empirical manifestation of this approach that is expressed by the following narratives:

– Decentring Ukraine from the war by claiming that Russia fights against the West to liberate Ukrainians from Anglo-Saxons and nationalists;
– Denying Ukraine's agency;
– Claiming that Ukraine doesn't exist by appropriating Ukrainian history and culture;
– Vilifying Ukraine by claiming Ukrainians are Nazis.[5]

Sergey Zhuk doesn't elaborate on the notion of Ukrainophobia, but he shows that the Russian academic community uses all the narratives mentioned above to disgrace the idea of an independent Ukraine. Furthermore, the Russian academic diaspora has contributed to the ostracizing of Ukraine. According to Zhuk, "the 'silence about Ukraine' approach is typical of almost all representatives of Russian academic elites who have settled in the West and are now teaching Russian and Soviet history/studies there" (p. 138).

Focusing on the methodological paradigm of "historiographic Soviet nostalgia", the author emphasizes the significance of the theoretical framework developed by a Soviet émigré from Leningrad, anthropologist Alexei Yurchak. This was the first "theoretical justification for the new paradigmatic shift in the direction of conformist, non-confrontational, non-conflict approaches for American studies of Soviet society during the Cold War" (p. 131). This approach to Soviet post-war society and culture ignored a number of problems, including "the growth of Russian nationalism and anti-Semitism and the exclusive position of Muscovites in the Soviet cultural hierarchy, which are the psychological foundations of Soviet Russian imperialism" (p. 134). Thus, such an approach created an idealized image of the late Soviet period as a "golden age". This has had dangerous epistemological and methodological consequences, as many American Sovietologists continue to deny Soviet/Russian imperialist policies and, consequently, Ukraine's agency.

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5   Jade McGlynn, *Russia's War* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2023), pp. 137–58.

Zhuk concludes that Ukrainophobia in both Western and post-Soviet Russian academia is embedded in a "Russian and Soviet imperialist epistemological complex" that has been reinforced by the feeling of "Soviet nostalgia" among Western and post-Soviet academics. Since the existence of independent Ukraine threatens "the imperialist complex", they vigorously deny Ukraine's agency.

However, other works have been created beyond the paradigm of "Soviet nostalgia" that have contributed to excluding the "inconvenient truth" about Soviet national politics. According to Larysa Yakubova and Oleksandr Rubl'ov, Ukrainian scholars who work in the field of Soviet studies, a book that set up a dangerous theoretical framework and misled Western academia was Terry Martin's *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923–1939* (2001).[6]

Martin transforms the concept of "the USSR is an evil empire" into "the USSR is the world's first affirmative action empire", creating a positive image of the Bolsheviks. However, what Martin doesn't take into account is that Soviet society was deprived of the right to private property, removed from the actual political process, and deprived of free will and the right of self-determination. Ignoring the real socio-economic context, Martin creates a refined sociological scheme that has little to do with historical truth.[7] However, citing Martin's book (as well as Yurchak's) has become practically obligatory in recent Soviet studies in the West.

The final chapter addresses the issue of Russian oligarchs close to the Kremlin that fund American Slavic studies centres and promote researchers with connections to the FSB and GRU into prominent positions. This influence allows them to shape political discourse and control academic research grant distribution.

In the epilogue, Zhuk focuses on the legacy of the KGB and the failure of Russia's "Westernization". He shows that the Russian elite and society have enjoyed the material comforts and cultural products of the capitalist world while never understanding or accepting the rules of the democratic system. The author emphasizes that the Russian academic diaspora in the West has eagerly joined Putin's anti-American propaganda campaign and remains a promoter of Russian imperialism, presenting a serious challenge to the democratic world. According to Zhuk, the paradox of this situation is that Putin's supporters are "Americanized Russian representatives

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6   Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923–1939* (Cornell University Press, 2001).

7   Oleksandr Rubl'ov and Larysa Yakubova, 'Pro "Imperiju pozytyvnoji diji" Teri Martyna', *Historians.in.ua*, 1 August 2013 <http://www.historians.in.ua/index.php/en/dyskusiya/796-oleksandr-rublov-larysa-yakubovapro-imperiiu-> [accessed on 11 November 2024].

of a former Soviet civilization, who emigrated to avoid being part of Soviet civilization. This leads the author to conclude:

> Tragically, today, this Russian diaspora in Western academia is engaged by Putin's genocidal regime and its intelligence in the Russian war against "imperialist America" and "Americanized Ukraine" in a war which looks like the Nazi regime's military campaign of 1938, which used the German diaspora, engaging it in promoting pro-Nazi politics in Europe. (p. 197)

References to Hitler's regime are not new when we are talking about Putin's Russia. The first mention of Russia's Weimar syndrome dates back to the beginning of the 2000s, when opinion polls started to show the strong resentment of Russian society regarding the dissolution of the Soviet Union. However, this bitterness became mainstream Russian policy in 2007, the starting point being Putin's Munich speech. The so-called "conservative turn" in Russia has found much support in Russian society, even among those who consider themselves liberal and democratic. Putin's Russia Weimer syndrome has taken the form of double Soviet and Russian patriotism, while neo-Stalinism has become a symbol of a virtual return to the USSR. The instrumentalization of nostalgia for imperial greatness has become a unifying Russian national idea.[8] Thus, Russian academic imperialism is only one dimension of Weimer syndrome, albeit the most dangerous one.

The author does not explain why Putin's propaganda has found a broadly positive response among the Russian diaspora in Western academia. The close ties with the KGB/FSB are mentioned in Zhuk's research, but they are not enough to explain Russian scholars' loyalty to Russian imperial discourse in Western academia. However, explaining this phenomenon is not the aim of Zhuk's book. The author implicitly refers to this issue by mentioning that the Russian diaspora in Western academia represents a former Soviet civilization. This is a key factor in explaining this phenomenon.

According to Levada Center analysts, Soviet civilization shaped *Homo Soveticus*, a person who is prone to imperial syndrome and has survived the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The jealous and chronically anxious nature of *Homo Soveticus* provokes a "mixture of frustration, aggression, and asthenia" as a reaction to any state of uncertainty or

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8   Yana Prymachenko, 'Istoryčna polityka RF ta jiji vlyv na terytoriji pivdenno-schidnoji Ukrajiny ta AR Krym v konteksti «russkoho myra»', *Rehional'na istorija Ukrajiny: Zbirnyk naukovych statej*, 11 (2017), 101–32.

complication, thus tending to cause him to shift the blame for his condition to the "other".[9]

Maybe part of the problem is that "very Americanized" Russian representatives in Western academia are very Soviet people beneath the surface. That's why they are engaged with Putin's genocidal regime in the war against "Americanized Ukraine", producing non-conflicting "Soviet nostalgia" discourses.

Sergei Zhuk's book elucidates the mechanisms of how Russian academic imperialism is supported and promoted by the KGB/FSB, which has lulled Western society. Zhuk's research serves as a "third pill", revealing not only "how deep the rabbit hole goes", but also showing the reality in the illusion.

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[9]   'Slabost' graždanskogo obščestva v postsovetskoj Rossii i problema "sovetskogo čeloveka"', in *Postsovetskij čelovek i graždanskoe obščestvo*, ed. by Lev Gudkov, Boris Dubin, and Natalija Zorkaja (Moskva: Moskovskaja škola političeskich issledovanij, 2008) p. 8.

Hennadii Yefimenko
ON THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE ORIGIN OF THE FIGURE OF 3.5 MILLION DEATHS FROM THE FAMINE OF 1921–1923 IN THE UKRAINIAN SSR: A SOURCE ANALYSIS.

Book Review: *The Genocide of Ukrainians in 1932–1933 Based on Pre-Trial Investigation Materials*, ed. Oleksandr Petryšyn, Mykola Herasymenko, and Olesja Stasjuk (Kyiv–Kharkiv: Pravo, 2022)

In September 2021, the book *The Genocide of Ukrainians in 1932–1933 Based on Pre-Trial Investigation Materials* (edited by O. Petryshyn, M. Herasymenko, and O. Stasiuk. Kyiv: Marko Melnyk Publishing House, 2021, hereinafter referred to as *The Genocide of Ukrainians*) was presented at an international forum in Kyiv entitled *Mass Artificial Famines: We Remember, We Honor*. It was a solemn affair. The editors positioned the book as an "academic publication" and an "academic collection" which included "selected materials from criminal case No. 220190000000030,[1] as well as some other documents".[2] Based on the figures formally documented in this criminal case, the main "achievement" of this publication was "scientifically substantiated" *new* figures regarding Ukrainians' demographic losses as a result of the Holodomor (10.5 million Ukrainian deaths, of which 9.1 million were in the Ukrainian SSR) and the mass famines of 1921–1923 (3.5 million deaths) and 1946–1947 (1.5 million deaths). These figures are significantly higher than those substantiated in scholarly research. The state awards (from the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine)

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[1] The thesis about 7 million deaths due to the Holodomor gained traction among the Ukrainian diaspora and, after 1991, in Ukraine. However, scientifically grounded estimates suggest lower numbers. In particular, calculations by Ukrainian demographers indicate 3.9 million losses. In an effort to assert a figure exceeding 7 million and to give it legal and scientific justification, the leadership of the National Museum of the Holodomor-Genocide, following prior agreement with Mykola Herasymenko (advisor to the head of the Security Service of Ukraine, as the main initiator), appealed to the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU) in October 2019 to initiate a criminal case.

This appeal led to the opening of criminal case 220190000000030. The 'experts' in this criminal case on the issue of losses from the Holodomor, as well as the famines of 1921–1923 and 1946–1947, were primarily employees of the Museum, representing the same side that initiated the proceedings. Their ideologically motivated and scientifically weak, if not outright falsified, 'conclusions' became the core content of the reviewed book, which its editors are promoting as a 'scientific publication'. Based on this claim, they are attempting to spread these 'new loss figures' within educational and academic circles.

[2] *Henocyd ukrajinciv 1932–1933 za materialamy dosudovych rozsliduvan'*, ed. by Oleksandr Petryšyn, Mykola Herasymenko, and Olesja Stasjuk (Kyjiv: Mark Mel'nyk Publishing, 2021), p. 2.

presented to the book's editors and its "expert" authors during this presentation indicated an intent to make these figures official.

It soon became evident that the conclusions of this criminal case, registered on 21 October 2019 following the review of a report by the National Museum of the Holodomor-Genocide of the Ministry of Culture of Ukraine on the commission of a crime,[3] and the materials presented on pages 236–511 of this book are not only far removed from scientific and legal standards (particularly since the appointed "experts" were representatives of the side that requested the case), but are also filled with blatantly false statements about our past. The most significant issues were found in the following three documents.

Firstly, the *Conclusion of the Forensic Historical and Source Study Examination of 3 September 2020, No. 302/207-1* (pp. 304–29) provides a historical overview and indicates the number of losses from the mass famines of 1921–1923 and 1946–1947. Secondly, the *Conclusion of the Comprehensive Forensic Statistical and Criminalistics Examination dated 3 December 2020, No. 957* (pp. 333–72) addresses the question of the number of losses "during the commission of the crime of genocide in 1932–1933" and discusses the history of this issue. Thirdly, the so-called *Conclusion of the Comprehensive Forensic Historical and Criminalistics Examination dated 10 December 2020, No. 979* (pp. 376–511) combines the conclusions of these examinations and, above all, duplicates all the flaws of the examinations regarding the number of losses from the mass famine of 1921–1923 and the Holodomor-genocide of 1932–1933. Since this document does not have any independent value, we are not going to analyse it.

Given the title of the book and its main objective, namely to alter both the scientifically substantiated and legally established number of losses from the Holodomor (in the decision of the Kyiv Court of Appeals from 13 January 2010, it was stated that Kremlin leaders "intentionally organized the genocide of part of the Ukrainian national group, resulting in the death of **3.941 million people**"[4]), it was only logical that, following the publication of *The Genocide of Ukrainians*, scholars focused their attention on the part of the book related to the Holodomor.

In November 2021, several publications appeared in the media pointing out the absolute discrepancy between certain statements in the *Conclusion* on the Holodomor and the actual content of the sources cited in

[3]   Ibid., p. 239.
[4]   'Tekst postanovy Apeljacijnoho sudu m. Kyjeva u kryminal'nij spravi za faktom včynennja henocydu v Ukrajini v 1932–1933 rokiv', in *Henocyd v Ukrajini 1932–1933 pp. za materialamy kryminal'noji spravy № 475*, ed. by Mykola Herasymenko and Valerij Udovyčenko (Kyjiv: NAN Ukrajiny, 2014), p. 444. Here and further in the article, the emphasis is by the author.

the book. Specifically, first the domestic press[5] and later the foreign media[6] exposed the complete fabrication of the so-called Asatkin Formula – a calculation that was based on the results of the 1937 census by the Head of the People's Economic Accounting Administration of the Ukrainian SSR (UNGO URSR), where Oleksandr Asatkin revealed a population deficit of 7.1 million people. It was also clearly demonstrated that the first known scientific estimate of Holodomor losses,[7] provided by Stepan Sosnovyi in his article *The Truth About the Famine in Ukraine in 1932–1933*, published in November 1942, had been falsified.[8]

The harsh criticism of the blatantly false statements and incorrect data presented in *The Genocide of Ukrainians*, particularly regarding the calculation of losses, was echoed in a series of other publications, interviews, as well as scientific conferences and press briefings on the topic held in November 2021. This criticism was summarized (with references to texts and videos) in an *Open Letter from Scholars and the Public Regarding Falsifications in the Study and Dissemination of Information about the Holodomor-Genocide of the Ukrainian People*, signed by a number of leading scholars and published on 1 December 2021. This document emphasized that "the inflation of the number of Holodomor victims without sufficient thorough and factual research or verification of the results inflicts irreparable harm on the restoration and preservation of the national memory of the Ukrainian people".[9]

In the fall of 2023, two scholarly articles were published in the *Ukrainian Historical Journal* examining the aforementioned *Conclusion of the Comprehensive Forensic Statistical and Criminalistics Examination dated 3 December 2020, No. 957*. One of these articles analysed the use of Soviet propaganda publications from 1932–1933 as the basis for calculating Holodomor losses in *The Genocide of Ukrainians*, pointing out the unscientific and objectively anti-Ukrainian nature of such an approach.[10] In the other article, the authors – professional demographers – conducted a thorough analysis and highlighted the undeniable flaws in the sources and methodology used to calculate the Holodomor losses in the referenced *Conclusion*.[11]

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[5]   Hennadii Yefimenko, '"Formula Asatkina": manipuljacija navkolo čysel'nosti žertv Holodomoru', *Istoryčna Pravda*, 4 November 2021 <https://www.istpravda.com.ua/articles/2021/11/4/160412> [accessed on 8 April 2024].

[6]   Hennadii Yefimenko, '"Formula Asatkina": vyhadky i realiji', *Svoboda: bazeta ukrajins'koji hromady v Ameryci*, 47 (19 November 2021).

[7]   Hennadii Yefimenko, 'Fal'šuvannja dorobku Stepana Sosnovoho', *Istoryčna Pravda*, 19 November 2021 <https://www.istpravda.com.ua/articles/2021/11/19/160518> [accessed on 8 April 2024].

[8]   Stepan Sosnovyj, 'Pravda pro holod na Ukrajini v 1932–1933 rokach', *Nova Ukrajina (Charkiv)*, 8 November 1942.

[9]   'Vidkrytyj lyst naukovciv ta hromads'kosti ščodo fal'syfikacij u sferi doslidžennja ta pošyrennja informaciji pro Holodomor–henocyd Ukrajins'koho narodu', *Istoryčna Pravda*, 1 December 2021 <https://www.istpravda.com.ua/columns/2021/12/1/160581> [accessed on 8 April 2024].

[10] Hennadii Yefimenko, 'Demohrafija periodu Holodomoru očyma ukrajins'kych fachivciv 1930-ch rr.: dosjahnennja, problemy ta možlyvosti vykorystannja u sučasnych doslidžennjach', *Ukrajins'kyj istoryčnyj žurnal*, 5 (2023), 50–68.

[11] Oleksandr Hladun, Natalija Levčuk, and Oleh Volovyna, 'Šče raz pro kil'kist' vtrat unaslidok Holodomoru: ekspertna ocinka', *Ukrajins'kyj istoryčnyj žurnal*, 5 (2023), 93–118.

This was how the scholars promptly provided and later thoroughly substantiated a negative evaluation of the results reached by the *Conclusion of the Comprehensive Forensic Statistical and Criminalistics Examination of 3 December 2020, No. 957* concerning the losses from the Holodomor. In contrast, the *Conclusion of the Forensic Historical and Source Study Examination of 3 September 2020, No. 302/207-1*, which, among other things, discussed the losses from the famine of 1921–1923, initially remained outside the focus of the researchers' attention. Given that the book itself emphasized the losses from the Holodomor, this approach was entirely logical.

It would seem that after December 2021 the examples of source falsification and inaccuracies in the calculation of Holodomor losses would have been sufficient to preclude further consideration of *The Genocide of Ukrainians* as a credible source on the subject. However, the editors of this book thought otherwise. After a period of relative quiet due to the onset of Russia's full-scale aggression, they intensified their activities and, at the end of 2022, published **a second, expanded edition of their *opus magnum*** (subsequent citations will refer to this edition).[12] Notably, the republished book retained all information previously proven to be false. This fact suggests that the false information comprised not merely errors but intentional falsifications, a suspicion further reinforced by the persistent promotion of this book by its editors and "expert" authors.

In contrast to the issue of the Holodomor, the *Conclusion of the Forensic Historical and Source Study Examination of 3 September 2020, No. 302/207-1* (hereinafter referred to as the *Conclusion*), which dealt with the famine of 1921–1923, received little attention in reviews of *The Genocide of Ukrainians*. However, in response to the publication of the **second edition** of the book, a scholarly review by Hennadii Yefimenko specifically addressing the ***Conclusion*** was posted on the website of the Institute of History of Ukraine. This review highlighted numerous examples of distortions and falsifications of sources within the 1921–1923 famine narrative. It also emphasized the lack of references to primary sources in regards to the figure of 3.5 million deaths from this famine. Furthermore, the author of the article noted that the unsubstantiated newspaper article that was cited in the *Conclusion* as allegedly decisive evidence did not qualify as a reliable source.[13]

Despite all the aforementioned issues, the *Conclusion* was endorsed by the signatures of five individuals identified as "experts". Four of them

[12] *Henocyd ukrajinciv 1932–1933 za materialamy dosudovych rozsliduvan'*, ed. by Oleksandr Petryšyn, Mykola Herasymenko and Olesja Stasjuk, 2nd edn (Kyjiv: Nac. akad. prav. nauk Ukrajiny, 2022).
[13] Hennadii Yefimenko, 'Fal'syfikuvaty ne možna vidklykaty abo čy je v Ukrajini cinnistju naukova dobročesnist' ta reputacija naukovcja?', *Istoryčna pravda*, 6 April 2023 <https://www.istpravda.com.ua/articles/2023/04/6/162557/> [accessed on 8 April 2024].

(Svitlana Markova, Volodymyr Vasylenko, Olha Movchan, and Vasyl' Marochko) represented the National Museum of the Holodomor-Genocide, which had commissioned the examination. The fifth person, Heorhiy Papakin, represented the M.S. Hrushevsky Institute of Ukrainian Archaeography and Source Studies of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, of which he is the director.

It is important to note that *The Genocide of Ukrainians* made public the resolution issued by the senior investigator O. Malynovsky, in which he tasked the examination with determining the number of losses from the mass famines of 1921–1923 and 1946–1947. Out of this resolution's five points, two directly involved the M. S. Hrushevsky Institute of Ukrainian Archaeography and Source Studies as an institution under the leadership of Heorhiy Papakin and highlighted the Institute's leading role in this "examination":

1. "To appoint a forensic historical and source study examination in the criminal case **to be carried out by the M.S. Hrushevsky Institute of Ukrainian Archaeography and Source Studies of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine** and a branch of the National Museum of the Holodomor-Genocide, the Holodomor Research Institute.
    [...]
5. A copy of this order is **to be sent for execution to the M.S. Hrushevsky Institute of Ukrainian Archaeography and Source Studies of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine**, as well as to the branch of the National Museum of the Holodomor-Genocide, the Holodomor Research Institute".[14]

Based on the outer design of the book, these points had been fully implemented: the publication bears the imprint of the M.S. Hrushevsky Institute of Ukrainian Archaeography and Source Studies of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine (which signals that the publication has been recommended for printing by the Academic Council of the Institute). Additionally, the first page of the *Conclusion* in the book appears to be printed on the letterhead of this Institute. To illustrate this, I provide a screenshot of the first page of the *Conclusion*.[15]

14   *Henocyd ukrajinciv*, 2nd edn, pp. 410–11.
15   Ibid., p. 412.

Ill. 1. Conclusion of the Forensic Historical and Source Study Examination of 3 September 2020, No. 302/207-1

To clarify the circumstances surrounding the review of the *Conclusion* at the meeting of the Academic Council of the M.S. Hrushevsky Institute of Ukrainian Archaeography and Source Studies of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine (and based on the date that appears on the first page of this *Conclusion*, i.e., 3 September 2020), in early April 2024, I officially requested an excerpt from the relevant meeting minutes of the Academic Council. In doing so, I noted that the book *The Genocide of Ukrainians* turned out to be "not just far from scientific standards but filled with blatant falsifications of our nation's history", and I urged the Academic Council of the Institute to retract its approval of the book's publication.[16]

The response I received from Heorhiy Papakin was quite unexpected as it stated that "**neither the manuscript of the publication nor the results of the examination were reviewed or discussed by the members of the Academic Council of the Institute**. Therefore, it is impossible to provide access to the meeting minutes of the Academic Council on this

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[16]   Hennadii Yefimenko, Pro rekomendaciju Včenoju radoju Instytutu ukrajins'koji archeohrafiji ta džereloznavstva im. M.S. Hruševs'koho NAN Ukrajiny do druku vydannja *Henocyd ukrajinciv 1932–1933 za materialamy dosudovych rozsliduvan'*, ed. by O. Petryšyn, M. Herasymenko, and O. Stasjuk. Kyjiv: Mark Mel'nyk Publishing, 2021. *Source*: Private archive of Hennadii Yefimenko (https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1hKTlVIaL9ZGG7RWoNEvTpLI26nkDh65l)

issue, or to withdraw its approval for publication or the conclusion [that the manuscript has been reviewed or discussed]"[17].

This response suggests that the order by the senior investigator O. Malynovsky that is mentioned in *The Genocide of Ukrainians* was either not carried out or perhaps never issued at all, and that the Institute's imprint and the printing of the first page of the *Conclusion* on its letterhead had been forged. Consequently, neither the accompanying text about the history of the 1921–1923 famine nor the figure of 3.5 million deaths during the 1921–1923 famine, as determined by the self-appointed experts in the *Conclusion*, were ever reviewed by scholars from this Institute.

My 2023 review of the second edition of the book suggested rectifying the situation on the basis of the assumption that the inaccuracies could have been unintentional, possibly caused by haste or administrative pressure. I trusted that the aforementioned colleagues adhered to a scientific approach and would find falsifications unacceptable. Thus, the review called on the historians who signed the *Conclusion* on the 1921–1923 famine to withdraw their signatures.

ALAS, THIS DID NOT HAPPEN

Moreover, Markova, Marochko, and Papakin continued to actively participate in events organized by the editors of *The Genocide of Ukrainians*, one of the main objectives of which was the dehumanization of prominent Holodomor researchers and the institutions engaged in the scholarly study of the Holodomor. Specifically, these individuals were among the main participants of a 7 November 2023 gathering organized by the editors of *The Genocide of Ukrainians.* The meeting proclaimed itself the *World Congress of Researchers working on the Holodomor-Genocide of Ukrainians.*

The gathering not only repeatedly referenced the scientifically debunked figure of "10.5 million Ukrainians exterminated in 1932–1933 by the communist totalitarian regime", as if it were a scientifically established estimate of losses. In their media outlet *Ukraina moloda*, the organizers of the gathering emphatically accused such scholars as Ella Libanova, Stanislav Kulchytskyi, Hennadiy Boriak, Oleksandr Hladun, Yaroslav Hrytsak,

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[17] Heorhij Papakin, Ščodo zvernennja do kerivnyctva Instytutu ukrajins'koji archeohrafiji ta džereloznavstva im. M. S. Hruševs'koho NAN Ukrajiny pro rekomendaciju dodruku vydannja 'Henocyd ukrajinciv 1932–1933 za materialamy dosudovych rozsliduvan'. Letter № 47/01.14, dated 25 April 2024. Source: Private archive of Hennadii Yefimenko.

Serhiy Plokhyi, Ivan Patryliak, Liudmyla Hrynevych, Hennadii Yefimenko, and others[18] of being the Kremlin's "fifth column".[19]

The fabricated number of losses from both the Holodomor and the 1921–1923 famine, as presented in *The Genocide of Ukrainians*, continue to be persistently propagated by some members of the Ukrainian political sphere and the Ukrainian diaspora, many of whom sincerely believe these numbers and are simply unaware of the obstacles they objectively create to the idea of advancing the Ukrainian perspective on the crimes committed by the Kremlin and the tragedy experienced by the Ukrainian people. Therefore, it has become necessary **to continue** the scholarly analysis of the *Conclusion*.

Given that my 2023 review did not give sufficient attention to the direct analysis of the key figure in the *Conclusion*, specifically the claim of **3.5 million Ukrainians allegedly dying from the 1921–1923 famine**, the primary task of the current review is **to investigate the genesis of this figure**.

Despite the absence of Soviet-era prohibitions on mentioning or even researching the 1921–1923 famine in the Ukrainian SSR (at that time, it was referred to as the 1921–1922 famine), and despite the accessibility of contemporary sources to researchers, the issue of the death toll remains insufficiently studied. The challenges in researching this issue primarily lie in the absence of clear criteria to distinguish those who died as a result of this famine from other losses during the demographic catastrophe of 1914–1923. Therefore, it is entirely understandable that the article on the 1921–1923 famine in the *Encyclopedia of Modern Ukraine* emphasizes that "the first cases of death by starvation were recorded in October 1921; however, the total number of deaths from the famine remains unknown".[20]

Of course, expert estimates of losses were previously provided by both diaspora historians and contemporary Ukrainian scholars, with the first such estimate likely being a statement made by the Head of the All-Ukrainian Central Executive Committee (VUTsVK), Hryhoriy Petrovsky, in December 1922, when he mentioned that "126 thousand people died from hunger in Ukraine".[21] However, such estimates were often biased and one-sided or were grounded on a very narrow range of sources. Furthermore, after Ukraine gained independence, the primary research focus

[18]   Olena Mychajlivs'ka, 'Humanitarna vijna: dijal'nist' «p'jatoji kolony» v Ukrajini', *Ukrajina moloda*, 26 June 2024.
[19]   Maryna Ševčenko, 'P'jata kolona napohotovi: ščo obhovoryly i pro ščo poperedyly učasnyky Vsesvitn'oho konhresu doslidnykiv Holodomoru', *Ukrajina moloda*, 15 November 2023.
[20]   Olha Movčan, 'Holod 1921–1923', in *Encyklopedija Sučasnoji Ukrajiny*, ed. by Ivan Dzjuba, Arkadij Žukovs'kyj, and Mykola Železnjak (Kyjiv: Instytut encyklopedyčnych doslidžen' NAN Ukrajiny, 2006).
[21]   'Zvit CK Dopomholodu j Naslidholodu: dopovid' t. Petrovs'koho', *Visti VUCVK*, 281 (13 December 1922), p. 2.

shifted to the Holodomor of 1932–1933, the famine that was excluded from public discourse during Soviet times.

The first specialized scholarly study that focused specifically on determining the number of losses from the 1921–1923 famine in the Ukrainian SSR was the article published in 2019 by M.V. Ptukha Institute of Demography and Social Research of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine titled *Demographic Losses of Ukraine during the First Soviet Famine of 1921–1923*. In the introduction to the article, having noted that existing authoritative estimates range **from 0.3 to 1.5 million** losses, the authors rightly point out that "from a scholarly standpoint, this range in estimates presents the least-researched aspect of the 1921–1923 famine problem".[22] The article then goes on to substantiate, using a broad range of sources, the figure of **935.8 thousand** losses as a result of excess mortality in 1921–1923, with losses directly from hunger estimated at **502.5 thousand** people. Another **433.4 thousand** allegedly died of infectious diseases.[23]

However, in 2021, contrary to the research findings of specialists, the figure of 3.5 million losses from the 1921–1923 famine began to be actively disseminated in the public sphere, largely due to the publication of *The Genocide of Ukrainians*. At that time, an attempt was made to establish this figure as official.

The issue of losses from the 1921–1923 famine was directly addressed in the aforementioned *Conclusion*. In response to the question "What was the number of Ukrainians exterminated by the communist totalitarian regime during the mass artificial famine of 1921–1923?", the Conclusion provided a clear answer: "**3.5 million** Ukrainians died".[24]

Where did the figure of 3.5 million come from, and **what is the true origin of this number?**

Within the text of the *Conclusion*, this figure is composed of two figures. The first one, **1.5 million**, is falsely attributed to a well-known demographer, Arsen Khomenko: "According to A. Khomenko's individual calculations, the population losses in the Kharkiv and Poltava hubernijas[25]

22 Oleksandr Hladun, Omeljan Rudnyc'kyj, and Natalija Kulyk, 'Demohrafični vtraty Ukrajiny pid čas peršoho radjans'koho holodu 1921–1923 rr.', *Demohrafija ta social'na ekonomika*, 38 (2019), p. 15.
23 Ibid., p. 22.
24 'Vysnovok sudovoji istoryko-džereloznavčoji ekspertyzy [ščodo čysel'nosti ukrajinciv, znyščenych komunistyčnym totalitarnym režymom pid čas masovoho štučnoho holodu 1921–1923 rr.]', in *Henocyd ukrajinciv*, 2nd edn, pp. 436–37. Here and further on in the text, I am citing from the second edition of the book, published in 2022.
25 Hubernija – an administrative-territorial unit of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic (USSR) from 1920 to 1925 that very close to the province in its meaning. It was a second-level division (after the central government), consisting of povits (counties) from 1920 to 1923, or okrugs (districts) from 1923 to 1925. From 1920 to 1922, the territory of the USSR was divided into twelve hubernijas, but in October 1922, the number was reduced to nine. The hubernijas were composed of povits, and from March 1923, following a reform, they were made up of okrugs. The terms specified here, such as hubernija, povit, and okruga, are used further in the text to refer to administrative units of the USSR during the period from 1920 to 1925.

amount to 1.5 million Ukrainians".[26] The second figure of **2 million** is "derived" by the editors of the *Conclusion* from the following statement,

> Using a mortality rate of 27.1% from a population of 7.7 million permanently residing in the five southeastern hubernijas affected by the mass artificial famine, and having applied the formula x = 7.7 million * 27.1% / 100%, scientist A[rsen] Khomenko calculated that the number of those who had perished amounted to 2,086,700.

To this last number 1.5 million is added, and then the total is rounded to 3.5 million.[27]

Thus, the editors of the *Conclusion* put the entire "responsibility" for the figure of 3.5 million deaths on Arsen Khomenko, who in reality did not perform such calculations. Here is the concluding paragraph of the book (p. 428):

Вчений А. Хоменко, взявши за основу коефіцієнт смертності 27,1% із 7,7 млн населення, яке постійно проживало у п'яти південно-східних губерніях, охоплених масовим штучним голодом, та використовуючи формулу

$$ x = \frac{7{,}7 \text{ млн} \times 27{,}1\%}{100\%} \, , $$

розрахував, що чисельність загиблих становить 2 086 700 осіб. З урахуванням 1,5 млн загиблих населення Харківської та Полтавської губерній загальні втрати знищених масовим штучним голодом українців становлять 3,5 млн осіб.

Ill. 2. The final formula and the results of the estimated losses from the 1921–1923 famine

As we can see from the screenshot, there is no reference to the source containing the abovementioned "mortality coefficient of 27.1%" when presenting the "final formula". Additionally, no source is cited for the claim regarding the 7.7 million residing in the "five southeastern hubernijas affected by the mass artificial famine".

However, these components of the provided "formula" (27.1% and 7.7 million) are indeed mentioned earlier in the text of the *Conclusion*, including a reference to a source. Surprisingly, in both cases the "experts" do not refer to Arsen Khomenko's texts, as one might have expected from the "final formula". Instead, they refer to an article published by Vasyl Marochko in the newspaper *Slovo Prosvity* in April 2018 under the title *Lenin's*

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[26]   Ibid., p. 427.
[27]   Ibid., p. 428.

Mass Extermination by Hunger, 1921–1923: A 'Brotherly' Distribution of Death[28] (hereafter referred to as "V. Marochko's newspaper article") that does not reference any sources. Moreover, the first mention of the coefficient within the text of the *Conclusion* refers to just one hubernija, not five, "In Zaporizhia hubernija, 1.2 million people were starving, and the mortality rate was 27.1%".[29] Thus, the infamous 27.1% in the explanatory note of the *Conclusion* and in its "final formula" are being applied to different objects: in the first case, it refers to those who "were starving" in Zaporizhia hubernija, while in the second it refers to the "population permanently residing" in five hubernijas. Therefore, even this single fact provides sufficient grounds to assert the false premise of the thesis postulating 2 million deaths from the famine of 1921–1923 in these hubernijas.

Now I will address the source of the figures mentioned in the *Conclusion*, namely Marochko's newspaper article, which became the only basis for the "calculation" of losses. In this article, the 27.1% and 7.7 million population are given little attention, and the references are scattered across three paragraphs of a rather extensive text.[30]

The first of the three references to the 27.1% figure contains a clue for identifying the source of the so-called "mortality coefficient" that appears in the *Conclusion*: it is noted that the mentioned 27.1% represents the mortality rate among **"those who fell ill due to hunger"**. The origin of the figure of 7.7 million also becomes clear: it likely refers to the rural population of the three southeastern hubernijas as of 1 May 1923. These regions indeed absorbed the territories of Zaporizhia (annexed to Katerynoslav) and Mykolayiv (annexed to Odesa) hubernijas, which were dissolved in the autumn of 1922, as well as Oleksandriya povit of then-dissolved Kremenchuk hubernija (annexed to Katerynoslav hubernija).[31]

Although Marochko's newspaper article does not cite any sources, it does – similarly to the *Genocide of Ukrainians* – repeatedly mention the name of the Ukrainian demographer Arsen Khomenko. A keyword search led me to a scholarly article by V. Marochko published a year earlier and dedicated to Khomenko.[32]

Since this article about Arsen Khomenko is a scholarly one, it references the sources for the same figures and phrases that appear in the newspaper article. This makes it possible to determine the actual basis of the claims made in the newspaper article. Specifically, in Marochko's

28   Vasyl' Maročko, 'Lenins'kyj ljudomor 1921–1923 rr.: "bratnij" rozpodil smerti', *Slovo Prosvity*, 964 (2018), p.3.
29   Vysnovok sudovoji istoryko-džereloznavčoji ekspertyzy, p. 425.
30   Maročko, 'Lenins'kyj ljudomor', p. 3.
31   'Pro administratyvno-terytorial'nyj podil USRR: Postanova Prezidiji Vseukrajins'koho Central'noho Vykonavčoho komitetu', *Visti VUCVK*, 250 (5 November 1922), p. 8.
32   Vasyl Maročko, 'Profesor demohrafiji Arsen Khomenko: "pryčyna smerti – rozstril"', Z *archiviv VUČK-HPU-NKVD-KHB*, 47 (2017), 345–90.

scholarly article we encounter a sentence, the first part of which is identical to the newspaper version, "The mortality rate compared to 'those who fell ill due to hunger' in Zaporizhia hubernija was 27.1%".[33]

Indeed, the quotation does not specify the date for the recorded figure, and from the context it might appear that refers to September 1922. The number of those "who fell ill due to hunger" is not indicated either. However, following this sentence we find a reference to the source: an editorial article from the *Statistical Bulletin* edition of 1922, which made use of the reports from the Central Committee for Aid to the Starving, under the auspices of the All-Ukrainian Central Executive Committee (TsK DopHol; hereafter referred to as the Central Aid Committee to the Starving).[34] This source not only contains the cited statement but also indicates the period it pertains to, as well as the number of deaths among "those who fell ill due to hunger". The article is in Russian, therefore I provide my translation of the entire sentence that contains the mentioned reference here, "The extent of the severity of the situation is revealed, for instance, by the fact that starting in the autumn of 1921 [until] 1 May of [this] year, 188,563 cases of hunger-related illnesses were registered in Zaporizhia hubernija [and this was the highest figure among all hubernijas, while the total recorded number of such illnesses across the five hubernijas was 269,286 people—H.Y.], of which 50,096 were fatal, including 46,262 cases of child mortality (the latter constitutes about 17% of the number of starving children in Zaporizhia)".[35]

Here is a screenshot of the entire paragraph that contains the quoted sentence. It shows that the issue in question pertains to 7 May 1922.
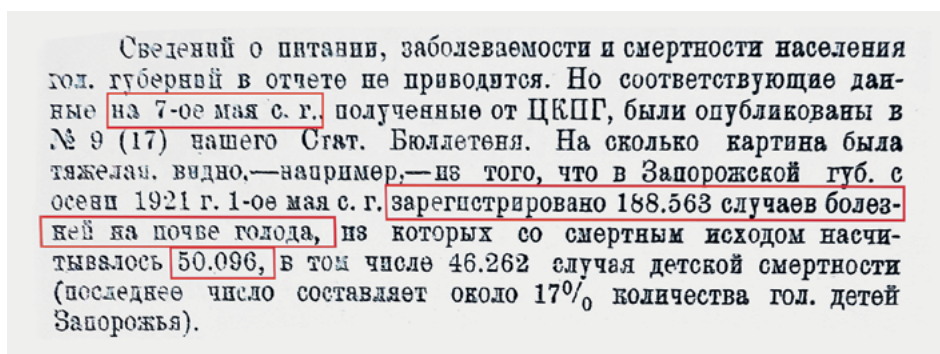
Ill. 3. Incidence of hunger-related illnesses and mortality in Zaporizhia hubernija starting autumn 1921, according to the Central Aid Committee as of 7 May 1922

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33   Ibid., p. 351.
34   'Pomošč' holodajuščym na Ukrayne (Po otčetu C.K.P.H. pry VUCYK na I–IX 22 h.)', *Statystyčnyj Bjuleten'*, 22 (1922), 26–27.
35   Ibid., p. 26.

Given that the *Statistical Bulletin* analyses an editorial article rather than a text authored by Arsen Khomenko, the mortality rate of 27.1% mentioned in Marochko's newspaper article is not formally attributed to Khomenko. Thus, attributing the authorship of the mortality rate of 27.1% to Khomenko is **an invention of so-called "experts" in population estimates, or the editors of the *Genocide of Ukrainians***; it is, essentially, a "falsification of a fabrication". Moreover, the rate itself is calculated inaccurately. If 50,096 died of those 188,563 who "fell ill due to hunger", then the rounded percentage would be 26.6% (50096/188563*100), not 27.1%.

However, a discrepancy of 0.5% is a minor issue. The main point is that this rate, which was calculated based on the source information, metaphorically represents the situation only in Zaporizhia hubernija of the Ukrainian SSR, the hardest hit by famine. Moreover, **it pertains not to the entire population of the hubernija** (listed in the text as **1.317 million**), nor to all those suffering from hunger (930,000 in May 1922), but only to those identified as "ill due to hunger" (188,562 people).[36]

I should emphasize that all the figures mentioned in the previous six paragraphs have been extracted from the same article published in the *Statistical Bulletin* – an article that summarizes data from various reports by the Central Aid Committee. My verification of the data presented in this article against the texts of each of these Central Aid Committee reports, which were also published in the *Statistical Bulletin*, confirms that in the report that mentioned the 188,562 who "fell ill due to hunger" in Zaporizhia hubernija (dated 7 May 1922), the population of the entire hubernijas was listed as **1.1256 million**, while the number of those suffering from hunger (as of May) was **948,556 people**.[37] **This indicates that the same figures could vary in different reports**, and this is something any scholar should keep in mind when specifying the source of the figures provided.

There is one more detail that any specialist should have noted: in the aforementioned article from the *Statistical Bulletin*, which Marochko cites in his scholarly work and whose data served as the basis for calculating the mortality rate in his newspaper article, **there are additional mortality indicators among those who fell ill "due to hunger"**. We are referring to a table compiled by the Central Aid Committee. This article breaks down the number of people who "fell ill due to hunger" across all five hubernijas officially recognized as famine-stricken.

The table provides data for each hubernija for the period from January to August 1922. The indicators vary significantly among the hubernijas, but the situation in Zaporizhia was indeed the most severe. This time,

36   Ibid.
37   Ibid., p. 32.

a slightly higher number of those who fell ill due to hunger is reported, i.e., **195,238** people (since the data extends to August 1922), but the number of deaths among them is significantly lower, i.e., 22,431 people.[38] If we convert these figures into the mortality rate, it would be 11.5%. Furthermore, the Central Aid Committee itself acknowledged that these figures were calculated based on incomplete data.

Despite the fact that the figures have been acknowledged as incomplete by the editors, the data allowed for a comparative review of the situation across different hubernijas. Let us examine the screenshot of the table and the accompanying explanations from the article.[39]

По августовским данным Санэпида НКЗ (см. Бюллетень ЦКПГ., № 8 от 20-ix 22 г.) состояние заболеваемости на почве голода представляется с начала 1922 года в следующем виде:

ГУБЕРНИИ	Заболеваемость на почве голода	Число случаев отравления суррогатами	Умерло от голода
Донецкая.	20945	48	1572
Екатеринославская	21559	1211	8498
Запорожская . . .	195236	164	22431
Николаевская. . .	23846	282	17438
Одесская	7700	св. нет	2259
Итого. . . .	269286	1705	52198

Публикуя эти цифры, ЦКПГ оговаривается, что итоги подведены по неполным данным, а потому они непоказательны. Но все же достаточно выпукло рисуется особо бедственное положение Екатеринославской, Запорожской и Николаевской губерний, где на-ряду с повышенной заболеваемостью, против остальных 2-х губерний, и смертностью от голода, видим наиболее частые случаи отравления суррогатами.

Ill. 4. Assessment by the People's Commissariat of Health of hunger-related illness and mortality rates from January to August 1922

Of course, I do not intend to assert that the number of deaths from famine in the Ukrainian SSR is limited to the **52.2** thousand mentioned in the table. Nor do I claim the accuracy of the figures presented by Hryhoriy Petrovskyi at the Seventh All-Ukrainian Congress of Soviets in December 1922, which stated that "126 thousand people died from famine in Ukraine".[40] I insist, however, that the incompleteness of the data acknowledged by the Central Aid Committee fundamentally **precludes any realistic assessment of the losses** from the 1921–1923 famine based

38   Ibid., p. 26.
39   Ibid.
40   'Zvit CK Dopomholodu j Naslidholodu', p. 2.

on the figures provided in these reports. In other words, it is *a priori* impossible to make a well-founded estimate of the number of deaths from the 1921–1923 famine using the data cited by Vasyl Marochko. There is certainly no basis for deriving the number of direct losses from the famine from these figures.

However, despite the aforementioned issues, Marochko's newspaper article not only specified the number of deaths during the 1921–1923 famine but also "forged" a common "coefficient/rate" of losses for several hubernijas during that period. Clearly, this has no relation to reality.

When "a common rate of losses" is first mentioned in Marochko's newspaper article and scholarly text, it is stated that the "mortality rate among those who 'fell ill due to hunger' was 27.1%". However, the figures from which this coefficient was calculated and the category of the population to which it pertained are not specified. The article does not even suggest that the "27.1%" was applied to the entire Zaporizhia hubernija. In other words, the information is fragmentary but, initially, it is not overtly false. Yet, by the end of the same article, this "coefficient" has been applied without any justification as a general rate for the entire **rural population** residing not only in the officially recognized famine-stricken southeastern regions, but also in **Kharkiv** and **Poltava** regions. Moreover, the number of deaths is not calculated from an estimate of the population in these regions in 1921 (when famine affected cities as much as villages) but is inexplicably based on the estimated number of peasants in these regions as of early May 1923, **that is after the period of mass mortality from famine had ended**.

To clarify the point, I will provide a screenshot of part of the table from the publication by Arsen Khomenko,[41] which was referenced in Vasyl Marochko's academic article.[42] It is from this table that Marochko derived his calculations for the rural population. The list of gubernias hubernijas and the population residing in them is given as of 1 May 1923, after the reduction of the number of hubernijas in the Ukrainian SSR from 12 to 9. The red highlights the hubernijas to which Marochko, and subsequently the editors of the *Conclusion*, applied the "mortality rate of 27.1%".

41   A[rsen] Ch[omenko], 'Pryrodnij ruch sil's'koho naselennja Ukrajiny (Po danych vesnjanoho oprosu 1923 roku)', *Statystyčnyj Bjuleten'*, 20 (1923), 26–27.
42   Maročko, 'Profesor demohrafiji Arsen Chomenko', p. 354.

ГУБЕРНІ	Кількість господарств на 1 гр. 1923 р.	В них населення
1	2	3
Волинська	318275	1591461
Донецька	369745	2058076
Катериносл. . . .	546715	2991989
Київська	840729	3769775
Одеська	577540	2635166
Подільська . . .	756480	3086552
Полтавська . . .	627760	3180624
Харьківська . . .	407685	2234731
Чернигівська . . .	340933	1820362
Разом . .	4585862	23368736

Ill. 5. Number of households and total rural population of the Ukrainian SSR by gubernias hubernijas as of May 1, 1923, according to Arsen Khomenko's estimates[43]

Let us examine the rural population figures of the three southeastern hubernijas: Donetsk, Katerynoslav, and Odesa. These hubernijas had indeed absorbed Zaporizhia and Mykolayiv hubernijas by the spring of 1922. Upon calculation, we find that Khomenko estimated the rural population of these three hubernijas at 7,685,231 people as of 1 May 1923. Upon being rounded, the figure comes to 7.7 million – the exact number mentioned in Marochko's newspaper article and in the *Conclusion*. 27.1% of this number equals approximately 2.086, or roughly **2 million** people. However, while relying on these figures, Marochko failed to account for the fact that, as of May 1923, Katerynoslav hubernija also included Oleksandriya povit of the former Kremenchuk hubernija, whose population according to the 1920 census was 388,889 people.[44] Thus, Marochko overlooked the territorial inconsistency and, accordingly, the difference in population between the three southeastern hubernijas of the Ukrainian SSR as of 1 May 1923, and the five such hubernijas as of early May 1922.

Let us return to the "mortality coefficient". There are no grounds for applying it as a common indicator for several hubernijas. Even the incomplete data cited in the publications upon which V. Marochko relies provide a clear understanding of the diverse nature of the famine in each hubernija. Furthermore, the aforementioned article by Arsen Khomenko contains a table dedicated to analysis of the natural movement of the rural population in the Ukrainian SSR from 1 May 1922 (the peak of the famine)

43   Ch[omenko], 'Pryrodnij ruch sil's'koho naselennja', p. 26.
44   'Naselenie Ukrainy po dannym perepisi 1920 goda (svodnye dannye po gubernijam i uezdam). Čislennost' naselenija. Vozrastnoj sostav. Gramotnost'. Nacional'nyj sostav', in *USSR. Centr. stat. upr.* (Char'kov: Tipolit. V-RSUVO, 1923), p. 7.

to 1 May 1923.[45] This table, broken down by okruga, clearly illustrates the regional differences in natural population movement and, consequently, in famine losses during the reporting period. In March 1923, okrugas replaced povits, reducing the number of third-level administrative units (centre-hubernija-okruga/povit) by half. This table is shown below:[46]

Ill. 6. Table of the natural movement of rural population in the Ukrainian SSR from 1 May 1922 to 1 May 1923, by okruga (as estimated by A. Khomenko)

Let me recall that the baseless application of the invented "mortality coefficient" to the famine-stricken hubernijas did not seem to satisfy either Marochko or the editors of the *Conclusion*. In V. Marochko's newspaper article, without any justification, the same "coefficient" was applied to the rural population of Kharkiv and Poltava hubernijas as of May 1923. Calculations demonstrate that, according to Khomenko's estimates, some 5,415,355 peasants resided in these two hubernijas at that time (the number also included the residents of three povits from the Kremenchuk hubernija that had been dissolved in October 1922).[47] Applying 27.1% to this figure results in approximately **1.5 million** people. Subsequently, by adding together these two completely fabricated numbers (2 million and 1.5 million), first Marochko in 2018 in *Slovo Prosvity*, and later the signatories of the ***Conclusion*** went on to claim that "3.5 million Ukrainians died from the mass artificial famine of 1921–1923, orchestrated by the totalitarian communist regime".[48]

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[45]   Ch[omenko], 'Pryrodnij ruch sil's'koho naselennja', pp. 26–27.
[46]   Ibid., p. 27.
[47]   Ibid., p. 26.
[48]   'Vysnovok sudovoji istoryko-džereloznavčoji ekspertyzy', p. 428.

Thus, if we consider the administrative-territorial division of spring 1923, the fabricated "mortality rate/coefficient" was applied to five of the nine existing hubernijas. However, if we evaluate it within the administrative division of spring 1922, this figure essentially covers eight out of twelve hubernijas. In other words, both Marochko and, following him, the editors and signatories of the **_Conclusion_**, by way of accumulating falsehoods and demonstrating ignorance, assert an absolute absurdity: that in 1922, in each of the eight hubernijas (out of the twelve that existed) of the Ukrainian SSR, 27.1% of the population died from hunger (whether it be peasantry, according to Marochko, or the entire population, as claimed by the **_Conclusion_**). It is important to emphasize that this figure is significantly higher than the proportion of losses from the Holodomor of 1932–1933. Moreover, despite the clear distinction between the terms **"number of residents"** and **"number of peasants"**, the editors and signatories of the Conclusion show no concern for this difference, presenting absolutely identical quantitative indicators for both concepts.

Such a colossal percentage of deaths from hunger, as the editors and signatories of the **_Conclusion_** insist, occurred despite the fact that, since December 1921, there existed open sources of information about the ongoing famine in the Ukrainian SSR, and international organizations were involved in alleviating the famine as well. There are no words to adequately describe such blatant falsehoods about our past, uttered by so-called "scholars".

In summarizing my analysis, I must categorically state that the section of the **_Conclusion_** that deals with the genesis of the 3.5 million losses from the 1921–1923 famine contains **not a single verified figure** – it's all pure fabrication. Arsen Khomenko, on whose supposed authority the editors of the **_Conclusion_** base this number, never even remotely mentioned anything resembling the 27.1% figure, nor did he discuss any "mortality coefficient" even for the truly famine-stricken hubernijas. Moreover, he certainly did not write about 1.5 million deaths from hunger in Poltava and Kharkiv regions.

A telling detail: by taking the claims about the number of losses from Marochko's newspaper article and attributing them to Khomenko, the editors of the **_Conclusion_** managed to distort even the fictitious figures invented by Marochko himself. Given the complete fabrication of all the "arguments" presented in the Conclusion, there is every reason to assert that **there is no basis for the estimate of 3.5 million losses from the 1921–1923 famine**. The dissemination of such pseudoscientific and blatantly false statements, endorsed by the director of an academic institute within the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine or by well-known scholars and public figures, is not only an outright endorsement of pseudoscience as such actions also significantly damage both the modern image of Ukraine and our collective memory of the past.

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