



General Overview of the Basic Historical Narrative for the Babi Yar Holocaust Memorial Center

The Babi Yar Holocaust Memorial Center is a nonprofit educational institution documenting and commemorating the Holocaust, in particular the Babi Yar mass shootings of September 1941. According to its mission statement, BYHMC follows international principles: the International Council of Museums' Code of Ethics for Museums and the International Memorial Museums Charter. The memorial center wishes to present and explain the events of September 1941, but also to broaden and sustain the memory of the Holocaust in Ukraine and Eastern Europe, taking into account all geopolitical changes during the twentieth century.

The future BYHMC museum exhibition will be created on the basis of a special document entitled "The Basic Historical Narrative" (hereinafter - the narrative). The main principles in its creation are objectivity and political impartiality, a high level of scientific knowledge, maximum accuracy, and diligence in the reconstruction of historical events.

The historical narrative strives to adhere to the International Memorial Museums Charter's rule that "the interpretation of historical events should take place on the level of modern contemporary historical research and honor the scholarly principles of discourse and multiple perspectives." No single source can have the whole truth. A true narration of the past can develop only from a multiplicity of sources of different origins and with different perspectives, and with a highly professional approach. The reliability of an individual source should be evaluated in the light of other sources. This is the only path to minimizing subjectivity.

All authors feel the new Center is very important. Hopefully this knowledge, and the discussion about it, will allow Ukrainians and other citizens of the world to



safeguard our societies from future human-inflicted catastrophes. In other words, we can say that we must not erase from history the story of hundreds of thousands of innocent Jewish victims; we must pass on this knowledge to future generations. And we must learn about the perpetrators and the circumstances under which such atrocities become possible.

Any serious Holocaust memorial center must also talk about the involvement—the sometimes deep involvement—of locals in the Holocaust. All countries must face their entanglement in the Holocaust; none of the societies where Jews were living during the Holocaust comes out looking good. That is exactly why we want to remember the Holocaust. It helps in our thinking about good and evil, and about human capacities. Above all, the first responsibility of researchers and educators is to get the history right—an accurate record. It is what the victims would have wanted.

We think of our work as the scholarly basis on which others can develop the next steps for the Center. Our basic narrative will not be exactly the same as the story told to the future visitor. In that sense, the narrative serves as a point of departure for the museum designers, curators of the planned exhibition. It helps them to select storylines that can work in an exhibition. As with any new museum, hard choices will have to be made by all involved, including designers and curators.

Taking into account the fact that on the one hand, the creation of the BYHMC attracts the great attention of the Ukrainian society and government, and on the other hand, the work on the basic historical document is still ongoing, it was decided today to present a brief general review of the narrative. It clarifies certain key concepts, geographic boundaries that are outlined and substantiated; the thematic content is revealed together with some details about the procedure of development, approbation and adoption of the narrative. The public presentation of



the Narrative should be awaited till next fall (more on that, see. item "Concluding Remarks", pp. 31 of this document).

Main Definitions of the Narrative

The Holocaust is an organized and systematic extermination of the Jewish population by the Nazis and their allies during the Second World War, which killed 6 million Jews (of whom more than 1.5 million Jews are in Ukraine). However, the term "Holocaust" has a wider meaning. Thus, in UN General Assembly Resolution No. 60/7 "Memory of the Holocaust" of November 1, 2005, it is stated that the Holocaust "resulted in the murder of one third of the Jewish people, along with countless members of other minorities." An analogous interpretation is also contained in this year's message by UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on the occasion of the International Day of Holocaust Remembrance. Other victims of the Holocaust were recalled in the speech of the former UN Secretary-General Kofi Anan on January 24, 2005, dedicated to the 60th anniversary of the liberation of Nazi concentration camps. " There were other victims, too. The Roma, or Gypsies, were treated with the same utter disregard for their humanity as the Jews. Nearly a quarter of the one million Roma living in Europe were killed. Poles and other Slavs, Soviet prisoners of war, and mentally or physically handicapped people were likewise massacred in cold blood. Groups as disparate as Jehovah's Witnesses and homosexuals, as well as political opponents and many writers and artists, were treated with appalling brutality. "

However, the tragedy of the Jewish people is unprecedented. Two thirds of Jews in Europe were brutally killed. The whole civilization, which has made a great contribution to the cultural and intellectual heritage of Europe and the whole world, has been trampled and destroyed. There is the extremely precise and concise



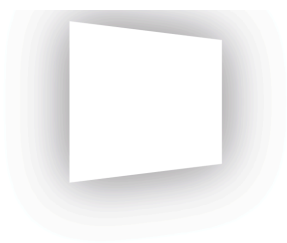
expression of the prisoner of the Nazi camps Auschwitz and Buchenwald, American and French Jewish writer, journalist, public figure, winner of the Nobel Peace Prize (1986) Eli Wiesel: "Not all victims were Jews, but all Jews were victims."

We believe that for Ukraine, which, lost almost 8 millions of its sons and daughters of different nationalities by the hands of the Nazis and their allies in the Second World War, this approach of the interpretation of the Holocaust notion is the most acceptable. President of Ukraine Petro Poroshenko said in his speech on January 27, 2017, International Day of Holocaust Memorials the following: "This is our common pain. It shakes in the hearts of Ukrainians, wounds of our long-suffering land, fills the book of the Ukrainian people with bitter lines."

In explaining *antisemitism*, which is such a big part of the Holocaust, the narrative follows the working definition used by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), which has been officially adopted by various countries including Germany and the United Kingdom. This definition speaks of "a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities." IHRA's working definition of Holocaust *denial* and distortion is also a guideline.

The narrative employs the term *Second World War*, which we consider to have begun on 1 September 1939. On that day in 1939, Germany invaded Poland and soon France, the UK, and the British Commonwealth declared war on Germany. The term *Great Patriotic War* appears occasionally, but our narrative adds that this term is a Soviet Communist concept, indicating the war in Europe between the Soviet Union and Germany and its allies.

In describing the German regime of those years, the concept is *National Socialism* and the actors are called *Germans* and *Nazis*. In referring to the victims



in Ukraine, the general line is one of speaking of *Jews* or of *Ukrainians of Jewish descent*, as appropriate, and with the understanding that those people may have had multiple identities. The narrative strives to avoid unconscious application of Nazi German terminologies such as “Jew by race.”

Europe is defined in geographic terms, which traditionally place it from the western coasts of Ireland and Portugal to the Ural Mountains. Within this European geographic space, Ukraine lies in East Central Europe. Ukraine itself, and other spatial and geographical terms, are defined below.

Non-Jewish victims'

Since, according to international practice and UN standards, the narrative is based on a broad definition of the term “Holocaust,” the BYHMC will honor and tell its visitors about other victims of Nazi man-hating policy. In Babi Yar in Kyiv, as well as in other places in Ukraine, the victims of mass murders were the Soviet prisoners of war (soldiers and officers of the Red Army), Roma, patients of the psychiatric hospital, and political opponents of the occupation regime, members of the communist and nationalist underground.

Red Army members as prisoners of war

The Germans killed and starved millions of captured Red Army members (also known as Soviet prisoners of war). The narrative describes and explains this policy, partly by looking at the Nazi German attitude toward international laws on warfare, and earlier abuse of other POWs. Eventually, the Red Army POWs were the second-largest group of victims killed as a result of Nazi actions. The crime unfolded

¹Here and further, the volume of individual thematic blocks in this “Basic Overview” does not correlate with the volume of similar structural elements in the “Basic Historical Narrative” of the BYHMC, and hence in the future museum exposition.



almost parallel to the Holocaust; until spring 1942, actually more POWs than Jews were killed. The crime and the Holocaust were interrelated because perpetrator groups and victims overlapped. (For instance, because of Jews found among the POWs.) Ukraine was one of the main countries of origin of the prisoners, and a central site of their captivity: some 2.5 million prisoners spent time in camps there.

That the POWs died en masse during the winter of 1941-1942 had not been deliberately planned, but it did result from (1) deliberately denying them legal protection, (2) plans aiming to starve parts of the general Soviet population, (3) and a radicalization because the “Blitzkrieg” failed in 1941.

The Soviet POWs were segregated according to political and racial-ethnic categories. All political functionaries and all Jews among the POWs were to be killed. In 1941 in lots of instances even officers, Asiatic-looking men, and female POWs were killed at once. On the other hand, certain ethnic groups were given the opportunity to collaborate with German forces and thus to be released.

Unlike the Holocaust, the direct killing and the mass starvation of Soviet POWs was debated in the German leadership and military. Soon it began to view the killings of Red Army “Commissars” as counterproductive, and to consider the mass of prisoners as workforce required for the German war effort.

The general narrative is mostly based on a small number of reliable book and articles, and to some degree on German archives files in Freiburg and Ludwigsburg.

How many Red Army soldiers came into German captivity and how many died there is still disputed. The narrative follows recent analyses, often highly critical of Soviet calculations, in stating that 2.4 to 3 million POWs died (not 3.3 million as has been assumed for a long time), of whom about 800,000 in Ukraine.



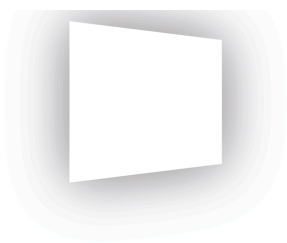
Roma

There was no unified central plan that guided the persecution and murder of the Roma (and Sinti); rather, it depended on geographical region and administrative area of authorization. As a result, both in the Reich and the occupied areas in Europe, Roma persecution under the Nazis was disjointed and full of and contradictions. But it is clear that the guiding principles used by the Nazis in their treatment of the Roma in occupied Soviet territories differed markedly from those applied in Germany proper. Thus, in Ukraine and elsewhere, an attempt was made to kill all the Roma, purely because of their ethnicity. The persecution took the form of mass killing operations and deportations.

The most useful sources are files from the local occupational administration; partisan reports to Moscow; political reports; investigations by the Red Army; the ChGK; public and secret Soviet tribunals against war criminals and “traitors”; and eye-witnesses’ and survivors’ testimonies.

In the materials of the ChGK, the testimonies by the local citizens are the most valuable. The ChGK documents are far less useful in determining when the Roma of a certain locality were killed, and how many.

Of the slightly less than one million Roma believed to have been living in Europe before the war, the Germans and their Axis partners killed up to 200,000. German military and SS-police units shot at least 30,000 Roma in Belarus, Russia and particularly Ukraine, often at the same time as they killed Jews and other victims. Many other Romani victims in Ukraine had been deported there from Romania.



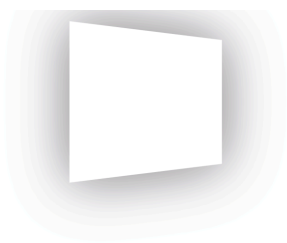
Psychiatric patients

The narrative on the murder of psychiatric patients is based on a growing body of research, undertaken in particular in Germany. The primary sources are postwar judicial proceedings in Germany, wartime German records, the ChGK, memoirs, journalistic articles, and oral history interviews. Under German rule, psychiatric patients were murdered in Kyiv, Dnipro, Chernihiv, Poltava, Kherson, Vinnytsia, Kharkiv, Donetsk, Lviv, and other places. The total in Ukraine was at least 5000. They were shot, gassed in mobile vans, or given lethal injections. The perpetrators were members of Einsatz Command 5 and 6, but the initiative sometimes came from the German military, which were to appropriate the buildings and food. This story about Ukraine has not been told enough, and the same applies to the killing process in Ukraine's neighbors.

There is still no complete list of all cases of murder. The narrative cannot also give a conclusive tale about a whole range of issues: the involvement of the local doctors, local administration, and local police (either in the killing, or in attempts to rescue the patients); the reactions of other locals, including the relatives of the victims.

Political opponents (Communists and Ukrainian nationalists)

The narrative describes the general Nazi German attitude toward non-Jewish Communists, and their treatment and killing in 1941-1944. Because there are few reliable studies on the subject, this story is told also on the basis of unpublished sources. The German treatment of active Communists in the occupied territories certainly varied over time and space. Some Communists even acquired positions under German occupation. It is still difficult to establish the number of non-Jewish Communist activists who were killed; it seems to be several tens of thousands.



The narrative also describes the evolution of Nazi German treatment and persecution of Ukrainian nationalist activists. Also there will be an attention to those who were killed in Kyiv, although it notes that postwar questionings of German killers suggest that their actual resting ground was likely not the ravine of Babi Yar proper, but one or more locations nearby.

There will also be information about other victims, such as those whom the Nazis labeled “asocial” (prostitutes and people with venereal diseases), and the victims of German-imposed famines in cities (whereby Kharkiv and Kyiv were struck particularly hard), and victims of anti-partisan warfare.

Geographical frames of the narrative

It is quite understandable that the core of the narrative of the center is Babi Yar and Kyiv. However, the narrative lens zooms out several times. One turn of the lens adds the rest of Ukraine, where over 2.3 million Jews were living before the Holocaust. Here the narrative is divided according to the following regions: Central, eastern, and southern Ukraine; Eastern Galicia and western Volhynia; Crimea; regions under Romanian rule; and Transcarpathia. A second turn adds the lands surrounding Ukraine. A third turn zooms out still more and sheds light on neighbors that are more distant. This third layer of the narrative, on Ukraine’s more distant neighbors, partly overlaps with the narrative on the broader European context, which has Germany at its core.

Babi Yar and Kyiv

In referring to *Kyiv*, the narrative has in mind the territory of the city within its current limits. There will be a solid description of the life of Jews in Kyiv in the first decades of the twentieth century. This is about who and what were *lost* in the



Holocaust of Kyiv's Jews. It describes the city's Jewish community; the contribution of Jews to urban development; Jewish religious and cultural life; and various Jewish organizations and institutions. Many Jews who lived in Kyiv at that time perished in Babi Yar.

This is contextualized by ample information about the history of Jews in Soviet Ukraine and outside it in other parts of the Soviet Union according to its borders of 1938. In the period from 1922 to 1939 these Jews underwent pressure to shed traditional features of Jewish identity, but also benefited in some ways from official bans on anti-Jewish discrimination and even a—temporary and limited—encouragement of Yiddish culture. These descriptions of prewar Jewish life are based on all available scholarly literature and documents on the topics. They are essentially the standard corpus of sources historians of these topics have been using, such as archival materials (from several Kyiv archives, the Central Archive for the History of Jewish People in Jerusalem, and the Yad Vashem Archive), as well as memoirs and the scholarly literature.

Then follows a presentation of Jewish evacuation and flight ahead of the German occupation, during the first three months of the Soviet-German war, from June 22, 1941 to mid-September 1941. This was a large movement in an rumor-filled atmosphere, a rapidly changing situation at the front, and an absence of guidance from the authorities.

The German arrival in Kyiv is described and then the days leading up to the main massacre – the first persecutions and killings of Jews; the explosions of bombs laid by Soviet secret services in the central quarters of the city; the appearance of the anonymous posters that ordered Jews to appear at a certain intersection on 29 September 1941; the reactions by Jews and others to these posters; and the walk of those Jews toward that place (“the walk of death”).



Additional research is underway on the visual and topographical sources and on the create ways to visualize the “walk of death” toward Babi Yar, the massacre site itself, and the surrounding area that was deliberately distorted by the direction of the Soviet authorities in the postwar period.

The massacre itself will be discussed in detail, with ample attention to both the victims, the various German murderers, and the varying roles of non-Jewish local inhabitants, civil administration and police, and Soviet prisoners of war (who were forced to level the huge mass grave).

The police, SS, and military authorities had jointly made an unprecedented decision – to murder all of Kiev’s Jews at one single stroke. Otto Rasch, the commander of Einsatzgruppe C, and Friedrich Jeckeln, the Higher SS and Police Leader for Ukraine, discussed the details with the German city commander. The first group of shooters in September 1941 came from Sonderkommando 4a and the Staff of Einsatzgruppe C; the second, lesser known group consisted of Reserve Police Battalion 45 from Usti nad Labem (Aussig) in Bohemia, comprising mostly ethnic Germans; and Police Battalion 303 from Bremen.

This narrative takes a frank but balanced look at antisemitism among locals, Ukrainian, Russians and other, both in word and deed. Many of these facts and details have been mostly unknown, or have been disputed or passed over in silence. One example are the antisemitic articles in the newspaper *Ukrains’ke Slovo*.

The international context of the massacre will become clear from a discussion of the visit to Kyiv, less than two weeks after the massacre, of twenty-five American, Italian, Swedish, Swiss, and other foreign correspondents. That the Nazis *invited* them is very significant, but it has not been discussed in depth anywhere.

Further, the history of Babi Yar continues with discussion of Nazi murder at or near the site in the months that followed the tragedy at the end of September



1941. In this context, it will be discussed separately about the functioning of the nearby Syrets camp and the attempts of the Nazis on the eve of the retreat from Kyiv to destroy their traces crimes in 1943

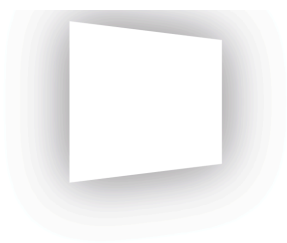
The narrative's death figures for the entire period of German occupation were probably lower than customarily thought, namely 40,000 or more Jews, of whom the vast majority were killed already in September and October 1941. Thousands of non-Jews were also killed. For the latter, the figures are in the thousands, except for the POWs, where indications speak of some 20,000.

There will also be the story of postwar judicial proceedings against the murderers, in both Germany and the Soviet Union. The official Soviet policies toward Babi Yar, and the various attempts in Soviet Kyiv by an embryonic civil society to properly remember the Babi Yar massacre, shall both receive ample attention.

Regions of Ukraine

Public works of history and museums of the history of the United States, Germany, and elsewhere recognize that the country at issue, or parts of it, in the past had alternate names and borders, unlike today's. But those works and museums are meant to meet the needs felt by contemporaries – today's citizens of those countries, and foreign visitors with an interest in them. Thus, museum narratives cover the events within contiguous territories defined by current state borders.

The narrative for the Babi Yar Holocaust Memorial Center is fully in line with global practices: in referring to *Ukraine*, it means the territory of the state of Ukraine today, within its internationally recognized state borders. At first sight this can seem self-evident – a matter of course. After all, Ukraine as an independent state since 1991 has not undergone territorial changes that have been

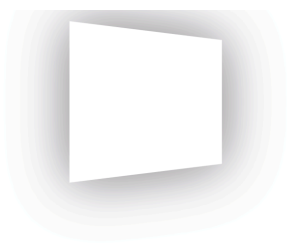


internationally recognized. Before then, there was the Ukrainian Socialist Soviet Republic, which was a dependent, non-autonomous entity with a larger state, the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics, that, paradoxically, after the Second World War became a separate member of the United Nations. Moreover, the international and inner-Soviet borders of Soviet Ukraine were stable for decades, changing for the last time as long ago as 1954.

But the narrative also clarifies that before and soon after the Second World War, the Ukrainian Soviet republic underwent very significant territorial changes. This is done so that designers and curators are aware of them, and can properly explain them to visitors. Thus, the narrative explains carefully the various regions outside Soviet Ukraine before the Second World War: western Volhynia, eastern Galicia, Transcarpathian (Zakarpatska) Oblast, Crimea, northern Bukovina, and southern Bessarabia.

It also explains that while the entire territory of today's Ukraine experienced German and German-allied occupation, the regimes varied. There was German rule: Eastern Galicia was added to the *General Government* (essentially, central Poland) as the Galicia District, and in September 1941, the *Reich Commissariat Ukraine* came into being in Volhynia. Expanding to the east and south several times, the Reich Commissariat became a large zone of *civilian* Nazi rule consisting of six general districts: Volhynia-Podolia, Zhytomyr, Kyiv, Mykolaïv, Dnipropetrovsk, and Crimea. Complicating matters further, the Crimea district always remained nothing more than a "partial district" called Taurida, without without Crimea proper. The peninsula remained under *German military rule*, hence outside the Reich Commissariat. The same happened to eastern Ukrainian cities and regions such as Kharkiv and Donetsk—they also never experiences civilian Nazi rule.

Transcarpathian oblast (or Subcarpathian Rus') remained under Hungarian rule for most of the war, but in October 1944 German armed forces occupied the



Kingdom and installed another Hungarian government of what became a state utterly dependent on Germany.

In 1941, reversing the Soviet annexations of June 1940, northern Bukovina and southern Bessarabia rejoined the Romanian state. In addition, several southwestern regions of Ukraine, located between the Dniester and Southern Buh rivers, became the *Transnistria Government* with Odessa as its capital. Transnistria was a zone of occupation and did not become an integral part of Romania.

After the war, the acquisition of western Ukrainian lands from Poland and their addition to Soviet Ukraine was formalized in a border treaty between the Polish and Soviet governments in August 1945. In the process, the Przemysl region, which had briefly been added to Soviet Ukraine, was returned to Poland). In 1951, another correction of the border with Poland took place (Soviet Ukraine then received the city of Khrystynopil (now Chervonograd), Belz and Ugniv, instead, it transferred the district of the city of Ustryki Dolyszni to Poland in the Bieszczady Mountains).

In June 1945, according to the Soviet-Czechoslovak Treaty, the Transcarpathia became a part of the Soviet Union. There a separate oblast was created.

The Paris Peace Treaty with Romania since February 1947 consolidated the Soviet Union, and hence the Ukrainian SSR, the territorial achievements of 1940 - North and South Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina.

Finally, in February 1954, Crimea officially left the Russian Soviet republic and joined Soviet Ukraine. The narrative follows the United Nations General Assembly in considering Crimea, Sevastopol, and all occupied parts of Donetsk and Luhansk oblast to be an integral part of the sovereign state territory of Ukraine.



Regions and themes in the narrative

The historical narrative has distinct regional sections, in a division that considers the administrative entities in Ukraine both before and during the Holocaust. This is done because many visitors likely want to receive two kinds of information. They want to know how the Babi Yar massacre took place and how it was possible, and they also want to know what happened in another region of Ukraine, one that is of particular interest to them. (The visitors may have this interest simply because they were themselves born in this region, or currently live.) Each regional narrative gives the full story of the Holocaust there, including the years leading up to it and its aftermath.

The various themes that will appear are:

- Soviet policies in 1939-mid-1941 (Jews deported and evacuated; Jews in the Red Army)
- early violent assaults (pogroms) on Jews
- German, Romanian, and Hungarian administrative and police structures and key personalities
- mass shootings and gassings in mobile vans
- the German treatment of the mass graves
- deportations to the death camps Belzec and Auschwitz
- rumors, intelligence reports, and news items about the persecution and murder
- Jewish self-administration and attempts at self-help
- Jews in forced confinement (ghettos, camps, labor camps)
- Jews in hiding, flight, and disguise
- Jews in the Soviet, Polish, Ukrainian partisans and in the Soviet, Polish, Ukrainian underground
- local and other non-German policemen (including ethnic Germans)
- local (non-German) administrations

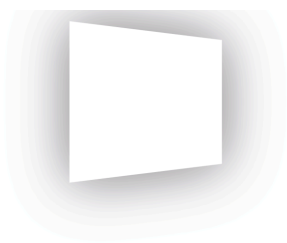


- rescue attempts by Ukrainians and other locals
- attitude of Ukrainian nationalistic forces towards Jews in Western Ukrainian region
- attitude of Polish national underground towards Jews in Eastern Galicia and Western Volhynia
- estimates of the number of Jews present and of the number who were killed
- entry of the Soviet armed forces to the specific location and the moment of liberation from German, Hungarian, or Romanian rule
- criminal and judicial investigation, and trails

Central, eastern, and southern Ukraine

In central, eastern, and southern Ukraine, the Holocaust happened between 1941-1943. These events are still little known and there are very few academic works about them. In this sense, the narrative is new. The Jews here were often killed in a single mass shooting, because no ghetto was created before. Overall survival in the military zone of occupation was extremely difficult. The authors employ multiple sources to corroborate the information, especially German and documents from this period, post-war trials, Soviet documents (ChGK and NKVD-KGB), and as well oral history. It is actually for the first time that a museum narrative combines Soviet and German documents this carefully. The principal problem has been that the Soviet estimations of the figures of Jewish victims are often incredibly high, particularly when they deal with large places or regions. The figures are also some of the most controversial aspects.

The Nazi persecution of Jews in hundreds of ghettos and camps in Ukraine has been neglected due to difficulties accessing sources. Likewise, the issues of auxiliary police participation in the Holocaust been frequently overlooked. Available sources now permit a careful reassessment of these issues. Many decisions key to



the implementation of genocide were taken by actors at the local level. Sources on these topics, again, are wartime German documentation; survivor testimonies; postwar Soviet, German, and other trials; Soviet Extraordinary Commission reports; and the extensive secondary literature, which dates mainly from the last 25 years. All sources need to be viewed skeptically and tested by historians, but most conclusions are based on patterns found across several sources that convincingly corroborate each other.

Based on detailed research using new sources, the narrative identifies and describes dozens of camps and ghettos not mentioned in previous overviews. Especially useful in this research have been testimonies recorded more recently and postwar trials unavailable until recently, and the new ability to conduct digital searches.

One controversial question is the motivation for members of the auxiliary police. The narrative attempts to answer the question by looking at biographical profiles of its members. Using studies of auxiliary policemen, the narrative offers a nuanced understanding of the respective roles played by issues such as German orders and threats, obedience, ambition, avarice, ideology, brutalization, and peer pressure for those who participated in genocide.

Eastern Galicia and western Volhynia

The narrative describes Soviet policies and society in 1939-mid-1941, including the deportation and evacuation of Jews; the experiences of Jewish members of the Red Army; Soviet censorship of Nazi antisemitism before the German invasion; and opinion about Hitler and the Jews. (This is also done in the narrative about Central, eastern, and southern Ukraine)

Eastern Galicia became a part of the General Government in August 1941. Therefore, the course of the Holocaust in this region showed a mixture of elements.



Some were typical for that territory, while other were typical for the territories further east, which had been under Soviet rule before 1939. The Eastern Galicia and Western Volhynia were occupied by German troops during the first two weeks of the war or so, so that only a small number of Jews managed to escape. This is the main reason why here the share of the Jewish population murdered during the Holocaust was much higher than in most other parts of Ukraine. In addition, this region was a main base for Ukrainian nationalistic movement. Moreover, Polish underground also was active. The Holocaust there, primarily in Volhynia, took place on the background of bloody Polish-Ukrainian clashes. Therefore, controversial questions about their involvement in the Holocaust refer to a high degree to this region.

The main sources used are testimonies and memoirs of surviving Jews; documents of German police, army, and civil administration; documents of local administration and police forces; contemporary newspapers; documents of the Soviet "Extraordinary commission"; materials from post-war judicial investigation and trials (primarily in Germany and the Soviet Union); testimonies and memoirs by Ukrainians and other non-Jewish contemporaries; documents produced by the OUN and the UPA.

The narrative on Galicia and Volhynia does not present findings that have not been published elsewhere yet. It summarizes findings of earlier research made by Kai Struve and other scholars. (In addition, it makes suggestions for materials and sources that could be used for an exhibition.) Nevertheless, interpretation of the subject of pogroms in July 1941 in Eastern Galicia is innovative. It emphasizes rather more German involvement and instigation than earlier studies have done. In fact, the largest pogroms were committed primarily by Germans, namely parts of Waffen-SS division "Wiking". But little-known violence also broke out in smaller



localities, and it was carried out less by spontaneous elements, than by nationalist insurgents and the OUN underground.

The most controversial question probably is that of involvement of the OUN and the UPA in mass killings of Jews. On the hand the narrative counters exaggerated claims about the role and participation of OUN and UPA that sometimes appear in the literature and in public debate. On the other hand the narrative makes clear that there was a certain involvement and agreement with the German mass murder of Jews.

Crimea

This region was special in many respects, primarily because of its unique population composition, both with respect to Jews (including many non-Ashkenazi Jews and Karaites) and non-Jews (including many Muslims). The source basis includes the archival collection of the Soviet extraordinary Commission, other Soviet reports, German wartime documents, postwar trials conducted in West Germany against former Nazis, and oral testimonies (mainly from the Yad Vashem Archive). The narrative shows the all-encompassing character of the Nazi genocide of Jews, carried out very rapidly, usually within several weeks after the beginning of the German occupation.

Regions under Romanian rule

The Holocaust in Bukovina, and particularly the Holocaust in Bessarabia and Transnistria, are much less known to the general public than the Jewish destruction in other areas. Painfully few people have heard about Bogdanovka, the site of a mass murder in Transnistria where over 50,000 Jews were killed. This lack of knowledge about these regions should be overcome. The narrative derives from multiple sources, in order to be able to corroborate the information they provide



and to be able to identify biases which normally exist in sources produced by humans. These are archival documents left behind by state institutions and its representatives, survivors' testimonies (both in oral and in written form), memoirs, diaries, letters, testimonies by Ukrainians and other non-Jewish contemporaries, and the mass media from the interwar and war period. Most of this information is in a book recently published by Diana Dumitru about Jewish-gentile relations during the Holocaust. There were striking regional variations in the attitudes of civilians towards Jews in Bessarabia and Transnistria. In particular, in the latter region civilians were less violent towards Jews and offered more help to the deportees. This is new point and story that has not been told in any museum before, based on an combination of sources collected in numerous locations and various languages.

The most controversial is the issue of the participation of local civilians in the murder of Jews. This refers primarily to a little-known wave of killing that took place in the summer of 1941 in Bessarabia. It has not been rare to encounter a hostile reaction when speaking about this subject in Moldova. The narrative is written with care and responsibility, so that it need not offend, yet at the same time shall be truthful to the studied primary sources and history.

Transcarpathia

This narrative, describing the Holocaust as seen from the bottom up, shows that many decisions key to the implementation of genocide were taken by actors at the local level. The Hungarian gendarmerie and the auxiliary police were not the main driving forces behind the murder of the Jews. Still without their participation, the German machinery would have been much less effective. The local population in Transcarpathia should not simply be viewed as neutral bystanders, but rather as people who made conscious choices. Likewise, the Jews themselves also displayed



considerable agency in their efforts to ameliorate their situation and survive, even though, in this hostile environment, their chances remained slim.

Wider geographic circles

The historical development easily justifies including in the narrative of the lands that surround Ukraine. These historical arguments include the following.

-the Reich Commissariat Ukraine included Polissia, a large area to the north of the Pripet River with forests, marshes, and cities such as Brest, Kobryn, Pinsk, Mozyr, and Rechytsa – all of which today are part of Republic of Belarus.

-Transnistria included not only lands within Ukraine's contemporary borders, but also much of the territory of today's Republic of Moldova. To describe only events in today's Ukraine, when Germany and Romania ruled adjacent regions in single administrative entities astride today's international borders, would distort the historical record.

-Eastern Galicia cannot be understood without proper attention to the Polish lands that were under German rule, and which housed, for instance, the death camps of Belzec and Auschwitz, where also many Ukrainian Jews were murdered.

-Many Ukrainian Jewish refugees were overtaken by the German occupiers further east, in Russian places such as Rostov, and were murdered there.

Defining which lands *surrounded* Ukraine during the Holocaust can be done in two ways. One would be to look at which countries border on Ukraine today, which produces a list of seven states: Russia, Belarus, Moldova, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, and Hungary. The narrative for the BYHMC, however, opts for a flexible approach that also takes into consideration geopolitical ties during much of the century in which the Holocaust unfolded. Hence, the first expansion of the map adds *Russia, Belarus, Moldova and Poland*.



Russia

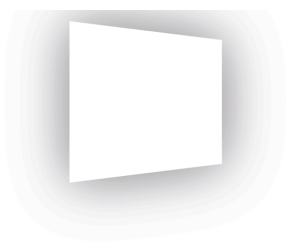
The narrative on Russia describes, for instance, the Holocaust in Kaluga, Pushkin near St Petersburg, Orel, and the little-known place Naro-Fominsk, in the Rostov region, and also the North Caucasus.

Kremlin's attitudes towards the Holocaust are of enormous importance for understanding, because the behavior of the Soviet government toward the Jews and their plight framed to a large extent Jewish and non-Jewish responses to it. In turn, Soviet policy towards the Holocaust during the Second World war was contingent on both domestic and foreign policy considerations. These findings have not been presented in a museum before. These aspects of Soviet policy can be controversial to some, because they place some of the responsibility for the scale of the Holocaust on Stalin and his entourage.

These Soviet authorities did not care about the salvation of Jews from the territories that were under Nazi and Romanian rule, and the Soviet Union reported and said little about the persecution and murder of the Jews, which we now call the Holocaust.

Belarus

Between 1920 and 1939, the western part of this territory belonged to the Polish state, while eastern Belarus constituted the territory of the Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic. In September 1939, after German-Soviet occupation of Poland, the western part of Belarus was incorporated it into the Soviet republic. The Germans in 1941 divided the territory of Belarus into different administrative units, the main ones being the region under military administration, in the Rear Area of Army Group Center, and the so-called General Commissariat White Ruthenia, as part of the Reich Commissariat Ostland.



Belarus was one of the most brutal theatres of the German war of annihilation against the Soviet Union. More than 500,000 of its Jews were murdered. In addition, Minsk was one of the most important destinations for deportation and murder of Jews from Reich territory and the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. The narrative is based on the research literature on Belarus, as well as contemporary sources and written and oral testimonies by survivors.

German anti-Jewish policy developed divergently in the western regions, which had belonged to Poland until 1939, and in the eastern regions. Belarus is also a good example of how interests of security policy and economic policy influenced the Holocaust—accelerating it, slowing it down, or influencing the selection of groups of Jews to be murdered earliest of all. These factors ultimately also led to the non-uniformity of policy of murder. Instead, we can see temporal and regional differences.

The most controversial issue is the one of the casualties of those murdered in Maly Trostenets. While Belarussian literature is still based on the figures of the ChGK, recent research arrives at significantly lower estimates. The narrative mentions both numbers. This actually offers an opportunity for future educational work; the question to start with then becomes, on what evidence are we basing victim numbers, and what does it mean for our memory?

In describing post-1943 official policy and remembrance attempts in Minsk, Rostov-on-Don, and beyond, the narrative shows that there are some similarities in the official policy and remembrance attempts in Kyiv, but also many differences.

Neighbors more distant

Another turn of the lens zooms out still more and, in a third geographic circle, adds neighbors more distant: Romania, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Hungary, and also the Baltic states. This category receives less attention in the narrative than the former.



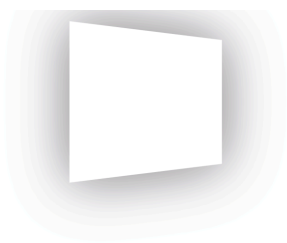
Otherwise, the narrative will lack focus and will be less able to fill the huge need for a full narrative on the lesser-known events of the Holocaust in Ukraine.

As said, the Baltic states will appear in the narrative's third geographical circle, not the second. It is true that Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania were part of the Soviet Union and in that sense share with Ukraine a Soviet past. But their involuntary incorporation in the Soviet Union internationally was never explicitly recognized. There is also a practical consideration: the Holocaust in the Baltics has left a much bigger record in the historical sources, including visual ones, than the Holocaust in Ukraine, Russia, Belarus, and Moldova has done—and it one that is also better known.

The narrative outlines the history of the Shoah in the Baltic states during the German occupation of 1941-1944, with reference to its prehistory: the independence of the three nation-states and the Soviet occupation 1940-1941. The geographical borders of this study follow the contemporary German borders of the three *General Commissariates* of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, which differ somewhat from today's borders. (For example a strip of Belarus was added to General Commissariat Lithuania in spring 1942.) About 280000 Jews fell under German rule in this region: ca. 210.000 in Lithuania, 70.000 in Latvia and 1.000 in Estonia. The murderous destruction was almost complete there were just a few thousand Jewish survivors from Latvia and Lithuania and dozens from Estonia.

The killing of over 95 % of the local Jewish population went very fast, especially in the countryside, and earlier than in most other regions of German-occupied Soviet territories. Until the end of 1941 all 1000 Estonian Jews were killed, 59.000 in Latvia and 150.000 in Lithuania – 210.000 victims in total.

This narrative is based on studies from multiple countries, such as the standard work by Christoph Dieckmann, which used archival sources extensively and in many languages, including the published results of the historical



commissions in all three countries. The question of cooperation between German and non-German perpetrators is contentious; but because a solid empirical basis is used, the conditions for reducing the contention are in place.

The German and European context

The narrative on Ukraine's more distant neighbors inevitably shall partly overlap with the narrative on the broader European context, which has Germany at its core. This is a solid, if relatively short, narrative on Nazi antisemitism and Nazi genocidal policy since 1933. It explains the origins and the course of Nazi antisemitism, its transformation into a state policy and its radicalisation into mass murder. There is a brief outline on the development of antisemitism on modern times, and its specific Nazi brand from 1919 on, reaching its first milestone with the setting in motion of the "Final Solution of the Jewish question" at the turn of 1941-1942. The text includes both German (Austrian) and European perspectives. This is because antisemitism was not restricted to Germany and German anti-Jewish policies stretched to most parts of continental Europe, either under German occupation rule or under German hegemony.

All this is a core chapter of the narrative on the Holocaust, for it explains how development led to the mass murder of European Jewry. It also addresses the course of anti-Jewish policies before the war in Germany, Austria and the Czech lands. All in all, this is the ramification of what happened during the war. Its basis is the enormous research literature which has been published the last three decades, especially on the emergence of the Holocaust in general.

In line with the large body of research, the narrative won't give a simple, unambiguous answer to very difficult questions. *One*, antisemitism alone cannot explain the Holocaust, there were other important factors, like the brutalisation of politics after 1918 and the rise of fascist and other right-wing extremism. Another



important factor was the structure of the Nazi regime, its social dynamics, the abolishment of the Rechtsstaat (law abiding state), its broad support among the German population, and Nazi imperialism.

Second, the Holocaust as systematic mass murder was not pre-planned in the 1920s or 1930s, Rather, it developed under the circumstances of German war and occupation. And *third*, not Hitler alone was responsible. A whole range of Nazi leaders, especially in the occupied territories, and even other parts of the German elite, participated in the shaping of Nazi policies.

All of this differs greatly from the assumptions of the research until the 1980s. However most of the research community accepts the three above-mentioned statements, but there is a lot of debate on the comparative weight of specific factors; but that is normal for such a complex historical event as the Holocaust. It is, for example, still controversial whether there was a single specific Hitler order to kill all European Jews; if so, when it was given; and what the significance of such an order would be. The narrative will not offer conclusive statements on such contested issues.

Central and Western Europe

The history of the Holocaust began with the first massacres of Jews in occupied Poland in September-October 1939 and lasted until May 1945, covering a broad geographic scope, including Western, Central, South-eastern and Eastern Europe, as well as Norway and Italy.

The analysis of the course of the Holocaust in all of these countries has not evoked a lot of historiographical controversy. There is a consensus on the major trajectories. From a combined perspective it is clear that the Holocaust broadly had two patterns. There were countries where the Jews were killed in their home regions (Poland/Soviet Union/Yugoslavia), and other countries where the Jews were



transported over a long distance towards extermination centers. German policies in Western and Eastern Europe also differed, and democratic or antisemitic traditions played a role. This is also important in order to interpret the other Axis states. The survival rates were quite different, given the course of the war, but also because of different German imperialist goals, the German outreach, and the reactions of occupied societies. All this is a synthesis of the research conducted over the past decades. The text avoids as much as possible one-sided statements on the controversial topic of the role of non-German governments and administrations.

Betrayal and rescue

The stories about betrayal and looting by Ukrainians and other non-Jews can disturb certain present-day visitors, who as of now do not have a single museum where these events are shown and explained. However, this very negative “news” will be balanced by ample attention to the phenomenon of rescue of Jews (and Roma), which was much more widespread than commonly assumed.

This is the one the topic that can have a positive impact on the audience and present a humanistic component of people’s behavior during the Second World war. It shows a moral dilemma for the choice of helping others, sometimes at the cost of one’s own life. The topic of rescue of Jews is less-known to both Ukrainian and non-Ukrainian audience than most other topics. Instead, there is stereotype, Ukrainians (and other non-Jews) overwhelmingly were cruel “collaborators” and persecuted the Jews on a par with the Nazis.

Sources on rescue are archival documents, oral testimonies by survivors and Ukrainian witnesses, published collections of documents and testimonies and contemporary historiography. Much of the rescue was neither sporadic nor solitary, but more or less organised, provided regularly on two levels: individual and collective. It depended on certain conditions including regime of occupation



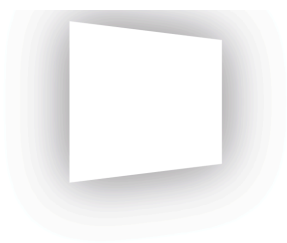
(German Nazi or Romanian zone of occupation), the age, gender, and number of Jews and Roma. There was also self-help, in the sense that Roma helped Jews, or that Jews helped themselves.

Collaborationism of the local population with the occupation regime

The historical narrative of the BYHMC will not avoid those themes that still cause a sharp debate and emotional controversy in society. Instead, he will try to create the most objective and diverse picture of distant events and phenomena. Thus, the narrative will frankly talk about collaborationism, that is, conscious, voluntary and intentional cooperation of the local population with the occupation regime.

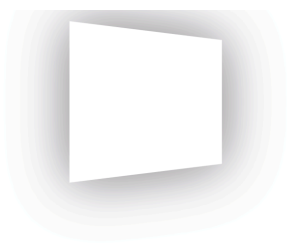
Despite their racist views, the German occupation authorities have engaged into cooperation the certain elements from the local population of Ukraine, who became officials at the lowest levels of the local administration and served in auxiliary police, helping the Nazis in their repressive policies, including the extermination of Jews. Police officers, who consisted of both local residents and war prisoners of different ethnic origin, drove the Jews, transported them to the ghetto and places of mass executions, provided rear support to the German punitive units and took direct part in the executions by themselves. For people who were lucky enough to survive the Holocaust, such activities related to the Ukrainian auxiliary police and ethnic Ukrainians, regardless of really nationality of the criminals.

At the same time, speaking about cooperation of the population of Ukraine with the occupants, the BYHMC will take into account a number of important moments of substantial nature. First, such a phenomenon as a collaborationism was common, characteristic for all territories conquered by the Third Reich. Secondly, about 300-500 thousand Ukrainians, according to the estimations of historians, in different ways cooperated with the Nazi authorities, which is just 1-2%



of their total number in that period. This indicator is not very different from similar indicators in other European countries, that did not have the pre-war negative experience of the communist authorities and did not suffer such massive destruction and brutal oppression during the war as Ukraine. In addition, the narrative will take into account the fact that almost 4.5 million Ukrainians fought against the Third Reich and its allies in the ranks of only one Red Army. In other words, the number of those who fought against the Nazis was at least 9 times greater than those who collaborated with them. In September 2016, speaking at the mourning ceremony to commemorate the victims of Babi Yar, the subject of this complex topic was touched by the President of Ukraine, Petro Poroshenko, who, in particular, said that "there were those for whom it is painful and shameful. and this, too, does not erode from national memory ." However, in his opinion," the collaborators left their mark in almost all Nazi occupied countries of Europe, but they do not personify their peoples."

So, the term "collaboration", when it comes to the Second World War and the participation of Ukrainians therein, should be used with extreme caution. However, this does not mean that this modern tedious and debatable topic will silently bypass the BYHMC. Only scientific, based on reliable sources, weighted, maximally objective, ideologically unbiased and deprived of political emotions, an approach to this problem can at last give an honest answer, put all the dots on the "i" and cease the possible passions around it.



Concluding remarks

Narrative is being written by a team of domestic and foreign scientists, led by the Chief Historian of the BYHMC, a Dutch researcher Karel Berkhoff (see Annex 1). In addition to the text itself, Narrative will also include necessary, in the opinion of the authors, annexes, especially, the indicative sources (text, visual, etc.), testimonies/stories about the fate of specific people or about certain events.

Narrative will necessarily undergo a thoughtful and comprehensive expert examination by two independent groups of specialists. One of them has already been formed (its members are mentioned in appendix 2), and the first version of the text has already been submitted for their review. Membership in the second group is open, and we hope to bring together scientists and museum figures of the world renown there. After having prepared the version, implemented all comments, wishes and recommendations, the narrative would be publicly presented to a wide audience in Ukraine and abroad, and it would be shown on the BYHMC web-page for general information and open discussion.

BYHMC is deeply convinced that the narrative should meet the will of Ukrainians to reveal a truthful and unbiased history. In addition to the public presentation, the narrative should become the subject of constructive discussions with the authorities in order to prepare a coordinated final version with maximum integration of all comments. It is planned to happen at the end of September 2018. After that, the narrative will be forwarded to other professionals, especially museum designers and curators, for practical implementation in the Center's core exhibition.

We would like to emphasize again that today, after the first stage of narrative writing, we believe a Basic Historical Overview will dispel skeptical doubts and answer the main scientific questions of concern to the public. We hope that it will become the subject of a broad and constructive discussion of all interested parties.



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