BURIED LIVES, UNBURIED PAST:
SOVIET HOLOCAUST JUSTICE IN WESTERN UKRAINE, 1965-1969

By

OLESYA DUDENKOVA

A THESIS PRESENTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

2014
To Dmitriy, Diana, Tatyana, Daniel and Maksim
for being more than amazing siblings, but also my best friends.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my thesis advisor, Dr. Norman Goda, for his support and guidance. His dedication to my research motivated and challenged me to ask difficult questions and attempt to discover answers. I consider myself very fortunate to have had such an outstanding scholar and professor as my advisor. I am also grateful for Dr. Vassili Schedrin for being so interested and dedicated to my work. As a committee member, his expertise and advice was invaluable. Additionally, I would like to thank the UF Center for European Studies for their funding and resources, as well as the UF Center for Jewish Studies for funding portions of my research. I am thankful for the opportunity I had to work at the US Holocaust Memorial Museum; the archives provided the majority of documents used for my research and interaction with many scholars proved vital for the nascent stages of my project.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 EASTERN GALICIA AND HOLOCAUST IN L’VIV</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 SS WACHMÄNNER: THE CASE OF OLEKSANDR KIRELAKHA</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 EVOLVING SOVIET LAW AND POLITICS</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 L’VIV TRIAL IN 1966</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 OLEKSANDR KIRELAKHA TRIAL II</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 CONCLUSION: ANALYSIS AND QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX: SELECTED TRANSLATED DOCUMENTS</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF REFERENCES</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CPSU Communist Party of the Soviet Union
ESC Extraordinary State Commission
JAC Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee
KGB Committee for State Security (Komitet Gosudarstvennoy Bezopasnosti)
OUN Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists
SS Protection Squadron (Schutzstaffel)
UkSSR Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic

__________________________

In transliterating Russian and Ukrainian words and proper names, I followed the Library of Congress system and used the contemporary spellings, rather than historical versions. For example, I used the spelling “Kyiv” for Ukraine’s capital. For some German words I used their original spelling in order to preserve the meaning, such as Wachmänner. Translations are my own unless otherwise indicated.
Beginning in 1965, the Soviet Union launched an extended series of trials of former Nazi collaborators known as Wachmänner. These Soviet citizens had served as SS guards for Germany during World War II. The majority faced trial immediately after the war, but received amnesty in the mid-1950s. From 1965, the Soviet authorizes reopened military tribunals and brought these men to trial once more.

This research focuses on several trials in the western Ukrainian city of L’viv from 1965-1969. The trials display the post-Stalinist Soviet legal system at work with its extensive and thorough investigations. They also provide information about the Holocaust in Ukraine, including details regarding massacres, labor camps and Jewish resistance. Additionally, the trials raise important questions about Soviet justice and memory. This study focuses on the trials as part of a greater phenomenon in domestic and global politics during the Cold War, as well as their pedagogical role at the local level.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

In his study on major Holocaust trials, Lawrence Douglas explained that criminal law has faced the dual challenge to “represent and judge the Holocaust’s horror.”¹ Despite the limitations of the law, numerous courts in various countries have attempted to serve justice for the crimes committed during World War II and the Holocaust. In doing so, many trials provided “principled judgment and historical tutelage” in their respective contexts.² The Soviet Union is not an exception. However, the Soviet trials deserve careful scrutiny when considering their judgment and representation, or the lack thereof, of Holocaust crimes. Beginning in 1965, a second wave of trials of Nazi collaborators began in the Soviet Union, with military tribunals judging cases in several cities throughout the republics. Why did Soviet authorities hold trials of Nazi collaborators more than twenty years after the war? Furthermore, what can these trials reveal about the Holocaust and the Soviet response to Jewish suffering? This study focuses on trials in the western Ukrainian city of L’viv, as part of a greater phenomenon in domestic and global politics as well as their pedagogical role at the local level.

The records of the Soviet Politburo have not been declassified, and researchers have limited access to other records showing the authorities’ decision-making processes. Therefore, the exact reasons leading the Soviet authorities to open military tribunals and try Nazi collaborators in the mid to late 1960s are unknown. Furthermore, the trials received limited press coverage at all levels – global, national and local. Nonetheless, nothing in the Soviet Union happened in isolation. Thus, one can analyze these trials by considering Soviet politics of the

² Douglas, Memory of Judgment, 2.
1960s, both domestically and internationally. The Ukrainian context, particularly that of Western Ukraine and L’viv, is also vital. Furthermore, these Soviet trials add another dimension of global Holocaust justice in the 1960s.

Several articles on the early Soviet military tribunals during the 1940s exist. Alexander Prusin explains that few scholars have studied Soviet military trials because of limited archival access and the apparent Soviet tendency to use trials as vehicles of propaganda.\textsuperscript{3} However, Prusin believes that examining court documents can provide valuable information about Soviet legal practice, as well as historical material on the Holocaust in the Soviet Union. During the immediate postwar era, most trials were held in places that once had high populations of Jews such as Kyiv, Riga and Minsk. Despite public knowledge of Nazi crimes, the trials did not discuss Jewish suffering explicitly; instead, the Soviet courts used euphemisms such as “massacres of Soviet citizens.” The propaganda that accompanied the trials served as a pedagogical tool and the ideological platform against foreign and domestic enemies. Additionally, the Soviet authorities considered the international arena and showed their commitment to punishing Nazi criminals. Nonetheless, Prusin asserts “Although the Soviet press still downplayed the Holocaust by pointedly referring to the murdered Jews as “Soviet citizens,” the trials became the first instances that revealed to the Soviet public the scope of the Jews’ tragedy and made it an inseparable part of the history of the Great Patriotic War.”\textsuperscript{4}


\textsuperscript{4} Prusin, “‘Fascist Criminals to the Gallows!,’” 9.
Ilya Bourtman’s article on the Krasnodar trial of 1943 supports much of Prusin’s argument. Bourtman examines the public trial of eleven Soviet citizens accused of betrayal and collaboration, eight of whom were publicly hanged. His detailed study of this trial and its media coverage indicates that the Soviet authorities functioned with political, ideological and instrumental motivations, both at in the national and global arenas. Bourtman suggests that the Soviet authorities had several reasons for holding trials, including: “exacting revenge and extracting retribution; deterring future collaboration; cleansing Soviet society of ‘enemies of the state’; garnering evidence for reparations claims; countering Western allegations of Soviet wrongdoing and enabling the authorities to draw parallels between Soviet justice and Western justice.” Although Bourtman points out that the court asked many questions and highlighted details of the atrocities, he includes no discussion about the trial’s lack of attention to Jewish suffering. His emphasis on Soviet media reveals the trial’s functional role to serve the propaganda agenda. Additionally, “by conducting these trials, the Soviet leaders demonstrated not only their commitment to prosecuting crimes against humanity, but also their independence in holding trials separately from their allies. It seems likely that, particularly after the war, foreign policy goals were a core reason for the continuation of Soviet military tribunals.”

Much of the evidence used in Soviet tribunals came from the Extraordinary State Commission (hereafter ESC or the Commission). Kiril Feferman’s article traces the ESC’s

---


6 Bourtman, “‘Blood for Blood, Death for Death,’” 259.


origins and the collection of evidence in the Soviet Union. The Commission was formed in 1943, chartered with a dual purpose in collecting evidence of Nazi crimes during the occupation. The ESC gathered information about atrocities committed by the Germans and aimed to discover the identities of any collaborators in the course of its investigations. The Commission’s findings were never widely published in the USSR, but the Soviet authorities used its documentation as evidence in court. Furthermore, Feferman emphasizes that the type of information the ESC gathered and later published about Jewish suffering changed over the course of its short existence. In early interviews and reports, interrogators asked about the victims groups and specified Jewish losses. However by 1944, reference to the Holocaust gradually disappeared as the ESC published reports on the crimes against “Soviet citizens.” For instance, a 1945 report from the Kyiv District made no mention of Jewish deaths or the Babi Yar massacre. Therefore, the Soviet authorities began to ignore Jewish suffering before the Holocaust was actually over despite their alleged commitment to bring Nazi criminals and collaborators to justice.

The Soviet treatment of Jews worsened in the immediate postwar period. In his study on Soviet Jews, Yuri Slezkine shows how Stalin’s relationship to Jews deteriorated, resulting in anti-Semitic actions. According to Slezkine, Stalin’s political attacks after the war did not target “class enemies” or “the bourgeoisie” as the 1930s purges had. Instead, for the first time its history, the Soviet state differentiated groups based on ethnicity, and primarily targeted Jews. After the Communist takeover, the majority of Jews had migrated to large cities throughout the

____________________

Occupants and their Henchmen and the Damages inflicted by them to Citizens, Kolhozes, Public Organizations, State Enterprises.

9 The Babi Yar massacre was the most notorious massacre of the Holocaust.

1920s and many quickly gained prominence in the upper echelons of society, most notably the intelligentsia. However after World War II ended, anti-Semitic rumors began circulating about the “alien elements” and the danger of Jewish influence in Soviet society, which culminated in the “new crusade against Jewish Communists.” Slezkine explains, “What Hitler could not accomplish, Stalin did.”

Perhaps the best example of this anti-Semitic campaign is the fate of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee (hereafter JAC) and the history of The Black Book. Ilya Altman provides a thorough background of this tragic episode in Soviet Jewish history. The JAC, headed by Solomon Mikhoels, was formed in February 1942, as one of five anti-fascist committees established by the Soviet state. Its primary role was to raise global awareness about Nazi crimes against Jews in order to gain international financial support for the Red Army. In early 1943, the idea of The Black Book emerged amongst several JAC leaders. This project aimed to collect documentary material on Nazi persecution of Jews in the USSR. The initial idea was to publish The Black Book in the United States but several key players, namely Ilya Ehrenburg, insisted that a book about Jewish suffering in the Soviet Union should be published inside the Soviet Union as well. As Ehrenburg and the JAC began compiling and editing eyewitness testimonies, they encountered roadblocks from the Soviet authorities. The initial Soviet ambiguity eventually turned into accusations of falsified information and “bourgeois nationalism,” thus prohibiting The Black Book from being published in the USSR. Although the JAC leadership continued to

---

11 Slezkine, The Jewish Century, 313.

seek other avenues of publication, the Soviet authorities shut down their efforts. Stalin ordered Mikhoels’ assassination, which served as a “precursor to the crackdown on the JAC and Yiddish culture that would accelerate in the fall of 1948.”\textsuperscript{13} Fifteen former JAC leaders faced trial in 1952 for anti-Soviet activity and nationalistic struggle; thirteen received the death penalty. Soviet Jewish life and culture suffered yet another causality. \textit{The Black Book} was never published in the Soviet Union.

In his early study on official Soviet representation of the Holocaust, Łukasz Hirschowicz outlines the methods used to represent Jewish suffering in the Soviet Union throughout the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{14} He considers public commemorations, such as monuments, anniversary celebrations and exhibitions. Hirschowicz also examines Holocaust representation in Soviet media, literature, film, theater, and academics. He argues that the Shoah was a “kind of non-event” in the Soviet Union; no one denied the brutal treatment of Jews, but the authorities propagated that Nazi Germany had equally targeted all Soviet citizens. “Hence the Holocaust was reflected in the Soviet mirror in a peculiar way, in line with Soviet ideological percepts and desired cultural attitudes and with the existing policies, both internal and foreign.”\textsuperscript{15} Under Stalin, official publications virtually ignored Jewish suffering during the war. After Stalin’s death, some information about the Holocaust began to appear, but always in a distorted manner. For instance when listing victim groups, publications would place “Jews last in the pecking order,” thus undermining their losses. Furthermore, any discussion of Nazi crimes was placed

\textsuperscript{13} Altman, “The History and Fate of \textit{The Black Book},” xxxiv.


\textsuperscript{15} Hirschowicz, “The Holocaust in the Soviet Mirror,” 30.
within a larger politicized context often targeting West Germany and Israel. These types of anti-Jewish treatment of the Holocaust extended to all parts of Soviet society.

In a more recent publication, Zvi Gitelman argues that the Soviets did not follow a consistent “party line” on Holocaust representation. “While most Soviet writers either ignored the Holocaust or submerged it in more general accounts of the period, none denied it, and some did treat it not simply as German atrocities but as a uniquely Jewish fate.”\textsuperscript{16} Gitelman agrees that the Holocaust was seen as a part of Soviet victimization, the murder of innocent civilians, and most publications on World War II repressed Jewish suffering. Furthermore this pattern stifled any possibility of public Jewish commemoration, as seen in the Babi Yar controversies.

Gitelman analyzes possible Soviet motivations of such treatment. In addition to general anti-Semitism and precedent set by Stalin’s anti-Jewish actions, Gitelman suggests that a shift occurred in the “political formula.” The authorities legitimized the Soviet state by cultivating a myth about the Great Patriotic War that all Soviet citizens could identify with. Giving special attention to Jewish suffering during the war could undermine the premise that Western fascism was an inherent evil that aimed to destroy Soviet socialism. Furthermore, discussion of the Holocaust raised difficult questions the authorities were unwilling to deal with, such as local collaboration and Zionism. In fact, the Soviet state began equating fascism and Zionism. Some writers linked the ideologies of two, whereas others claimed that Zionists had collaborated with the Nazis. Thus the Soviets considered that commemorating the Holocaust would only bolster the Jewish “bourgeois-nationalistic ideology.” As a result, Soviet representations of the

Holocaust remained ambiguously generalized, sowing a “bitter legacy” of memory in the Soviet Union.

Internationally however, the Holocaust received much more attention, particularly through trials starting in the 1960s. Several scholar offer insightful accounts of the Eichmann Trial of 1961.17 Facing numerous charges, Adolf Eichmann’s trial in Jerusalem served as a landmark case in global Holocaust justice because it was the first time a court dealt directly with genocide against European Jewry, rather than general war crimes committed during the Second World War. According to Lawrence Douglas, the trial became a representational paradigm of testimony, providing “a vehicle of the stories of survivors.”18 Moreover, the Jerusalem court used the trial “as a tool of historical instruction and normative reconstruction” of the official Israeli memory. Even though the trial drew various criticisms, it received international attention and press coverage. Additionally, the Eichmann Trial marked the beginning of increasing global Holocaust justice.

After a period of judicial stagnation in the 1950s, the West German government opened more preliminary investigations from 1959, with a dramatic increase in 1965-1966. Devin Pendas studies the Frankfurt Auschwitz Trial, opened in 1963 by the West German government.19 This trial charged twenty-two defendants with participation in the Holocaust as high- to lower-level officials at the Auschwitz-Birkenau camp. Pendas explains that at its core, the Auschwitz Trial dealt with the Nazi genocide against the Jews. However this trial, along with


18 Douglas, Memory of Judgment, 106.

other trials in Germany, was conducted under the existing German criminal code, rather than international law as seen at the Nuremberg tribunal. Pendas considers the restrictions of trying Nazi genocide under such a system and argues, “German courts could not adequately represent many of the most significant elements of the complex historical process of exterminating European Jewry.”

Nonetheless, the twenty-month-long trial called hundreds of witnesses and reviewed historical testimony and documents. Furthermore, the court visited the scene of the crime to gather physical, experiential evidence. Soviet authorities also participated by providing documents, engaging in what Pendas calls an early form of Ostpolitik. Overall, “the Auschwitz Trial was both the most prominent Nazi trial in the history of the Federal Republic and also one that was utterly typical of the 1960s in its subject matter in its application of ordinary law to Nazi crimes.”

As this statement suggests, the Auschwitz trial did not happen in isolation but was followed by many other trials.

However, West Germany was not the only European nation placing its Nazi criminals on trial. In her study of East and West German trials, Annette Weinke offers an insightful argument about Holocaust justice within the Cold War context. The Federal Republic received pressure from East Germany (German Democratic Republic, GDR); the East German state reviewed Nazi records and exposed West German politicians and public figures who once served the Third Reich. Furthermore, as the decision for building the Berlin Wall, a physical marker in Cold War

---

20 Ibid., 53.

21 Ibid., 4.


23 Ibid., 159. These were Nazi records captured by the Soviets, provided to the GDR by Moscow. East Germany had a monopoly over the records.
War Germany, came about in 1961, the GDR aimed to prove that it was the only anti-fascist German state. Weinke argues that a type of East/West German rivalry developed and the Holocaust trials in both Germans states became interdependent. Although “each sought to improve its image on the international stage,” the German states played by different politics. As West Germany addressed the issue of the expiration of the statute of limitations on Nazi murders, the GDR became increasingly secretive about its archival materials and ambiguous in its pursuit of justice for Nazi crimes. On the contrary, “trials became not the only but certainly the dominant forum for dealing with the Nazi past” for the Federal Republic.

Beginning in 1965, the Soviet Union also opened new trials of Nazi collaborators. This thesis focuses on several trials in L’viv from 1965 until 1969. The majority of the sources come from microfilm copies of ESC files located at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum archives. The ESC archives contain KGB trial protocols, some of which are complete, others fragmented. The files here include both complete transcripts from military tribunals and excerpts from others. These transcripts contain interrogations, witness testimony, forensic investigations, and other documentation used as evidence in court. The KGB opened, conducted and kept the records for all these. Therefore, the documents present a subjective perspective. Nonetheless, the records are fascinating both for their content and the Soviet approach to justice. I also examine newspapers and similar sources to investigate the motivation and influence of the

---

24 Ibid., 163.


26 It is unclear why the KGB trial protocols were organized together with ESC documentation. It may be that any files containing any ESC testimony were kept together (the trials used some ESC testimony), or that the trial protocols were kept to use as evidence the future. Perhaps, it was merely an issue of disorganization with the changing governments and document transfer.
trials in Soviet society and abroad. Since official Soviet Politburo records are still closed, one can only study available sources and contextual evidence to draw conclusions.

Trial protocols serve a dual purpose. Despite a Soviet bias, the trials provide raw information and unique insight into the Holocaust in western Ukraine, particularly in the L’viv region. The material supplements recent scholarship on the Shoah in Ukraine. Additionally, from collaborators’ perspectives, the trials add to our understanding of German-trained Ukrainian policemen, known as Trawnikis, in the Holocaust. Their testimonies also reveal new aspects of Jewish suffering and resistance in the region. I argue that Trawnikis, serving the Wachmannschaft SS, played an important role in carrying out the extermination of Jews in western Ukraine. Additionally many cases of Jewish resistance during massacres and deportations exist, adding to recent scholarship that further debunks the myth of Jewish passivity.

Furthermore, these trials showcase the post-Stalinist legal system and the Soviet attempt at justice for Nazi crimes. Soviet trials beginning in 1965 followed the increasing global attempt of Holocaust justice in the 1960s. The Soviet authorities used the trials to gain international prominence for their “moral leadership” against Nazi crimes, as well as to reassert political control domestically. The trials followed the new Soviet Criminal Code of 1958, which resulted

---


in thorough investigations. The trials thus contributed to the growing public awareness of the Holocaust in Soviet society and indirectly influenced the formation of public memory at the local level.

Chapter one provides a background on Eastern Galicia and the Shoah in L’viv, within the context of World War II and the Holocaust in Ukraine. In chapter two, I introduce a Ukrainian Red Army soldier named Oleksandr Kirelakha, who eventually served as a Trawniki, to discuss the role of Ukrainian collaborators and immediate postwar Soviet justice. I consider the larger Soviet context in chapter three including: the impact of Stalin’s anti-Jewish actions, Nikita Khrushchev’s changing policies, and Leonid Brezhnev’s Cold War politics. Chapter four discusses a major public trial that took place in L’viv in 1966; I discuss the final protocol and verdict, as well as the national and local media coverage of the event. In the fifth chapter, Kirelakha re-enters the scene with a second trial from 1968 to 1969; his case provides a fascinating perspective into the Soviet legal system and the court’s effort at discovering the truth. I offer some concluding thoughts and questions for further research in the final chapter.
CHAPTER 2
EASTERN GALICIA AND HOLOCAUST IN L’VIV

The city of L’viv is located in the region historically known as Eastern Galicia. The four provinces that comprised this region include the modern-day Ukrainian oblasts of L’viv, Volhynia, Ternopil’ and Ivano-Frankivsk, with L’viv as the once “thriving cultural, economic and political center.”¹ Historically, this territory was a borderland centered between Poland and Russia, as well as the Lithuanian Commonwealth and the Austro-Hungarian Empire. In 1772, the Habsburgs annexed southern Poland including Eastern Galicia. Poles, Ukrainians and Jews made up the population and all had deep roots in the region; however no single ethnic group was the majority. As a result of the diverse population and shifting regimes, Eastern Galicia became a “mixed bag of interdenominational and interethnic coexistence on the one hand, and of animosity, strife, and bloodshed on the other.”²

Jewish life in Eastern Galicia differed from the rest of Ukraine because this territory never belonged to Imperial Russia and was therefore never part of the Pale of Settlement, the region assigned to Jews by Catherine the Great in 1791. In fact, Eastern Galician Jews received full civil rights when the Austrian Empire emancipated Jews between 1859 and 1868.³ By 1880, a Jewish intelligentsia emerged due to the growth of secular education; this included doctors, lawyers and other professionals. Furthermore, L’viv became the “site of numerous Jewish periodicals that reflected the spectrum of Jewish public views – Orthodox and maskilic publications, literary journals, and collections of humor and satire” in the late nineteenth and

² Bartov, Erased, 4.
early twentieth centuries. Simultaneously, Jewish emancipation led to a high influx of Jews into the countryside, which resulted in increased tension and animosity from Ukrainian peasants competing economically. Almost forty percent of all Galician Jews lived in rural areas in 1910, a very high proportion compared to other Jewish communities in Europe. Additionally, L’viv boasted 57,000 Jewish residents, over one third of its total population.

During World War I, Eastern Galicia experienced extreme upheaval and dramatic regime changes. As the Austro-Hungarian Empire unraveled, Poles and Ukrainians began fighting for independence and both groups struggled to gain control of Eastern Galicia. Ukrainians declared independence and established the West Ukrainian’s People’s Republic in 1918. However, Poles and Ukrainians both relied on Jews in order to constitute a majority in the region. The Jewish community remained strictly neutral. Nonetheless, each ethnicity accused Jews of sympathizing with the other side. Deeply rooted anti-Semitism surfaced as pogroms intensified during this conflict over Eastern Galicia. For instance in November 1918, Polish forces captured L’viv and accused Jews of treason, which provoked anti-Jewish actions that killed seventy-two Jews and wounded three hundred others. Poland defeated the Ukrainian forces in 1919 and gained control of Eastern Galicia. Under Polish rule, Jews suffered from anti-Semitic policies during the interwar period. Many lost their positions in government, municipal institutions, academia and

---


public services. Other Jews faced economic loss through the confiscation of business licenses.\textsuperscript{8} Meanwhile, Ukrainian nationalist groups merged to create the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) in Polish-ruled Eastern Galicia in 1929. As part of their fight for Ukrainian independence and sovereignty, the OUN included an extremely racist and anti-Semitic ideological platform.\textsuperscript{9} As ethnic tensions flared, political repression increased, and the Polish economy plummeted, many Galician Jews moved to larger cities in hopes of finding a better livelihood. Approximately 100,000 Jews lived in L’viv by the late 1930s, forming third largest Jewish community in Poland.\textsuperscript{10}

In August 1939, Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia entered a non-aggression pact and signed a secret protocol that partitioned Poland, thus altering the fate of Eastern Galicia once again. The German Wehrmacht invaded Poland on 1 September 1939 and devastated its weak neighbor within a month’s time. On 17 September 1939 the Soviet military attacked Poland from the east. After Germany had invaded Poland, an estimated 130,000 Jewish refugees fled to L’viv, which more than doubled the Jewish population. In accordance with the non-aggression pact, Berlin and Moscow maintained a peace. The two leaders also adhered to the secret protocol and divided the Polish territories.\textsuperscript{11} By mid-November 1939, Joseph Stalin had formally annexed the

\textsuperscript{8} Yones, \textit{Smoke in the Sand}, 25.
\textsuperscript{9} Per A. Rudling, \textit{The OUN, the UPA and the Holocaust: A Study in the Manufacturing of Historical Myths} (Pittsburgh: Center for Russian and East European Studies, 2011).
\textsuperscript{10} Yones, \textit{Smoke in the Sand}, 27.
\textsuperscript{11} For more on the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, see Timothy Snyder, \textit{Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin} (New York: Basic Books, 2010),114-116; Also see A. Dulian, “The Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact: Historical Background,” \textit{International Affairs} 55 (November 2009): 181-187. The Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact of August 1939 created a non-aggression agreement and secretly partitioned Poland between Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia. One week later, the Nazis attacked their eastern neighbor. Although Britain and France declared war on Germany, Poland virtually fought alone. The overwhelming Nazi invasion, the lack of sufficient troops and the Soviet attack from the east guaranteed Poland’s crushing defeat.
new territories into the USSR. The Soviet Union gained eastern Poland, including Eastern Galicia. Stalin immediately incorporated this region into Ukraine, creating three new oblasts of Stanislav, Ternopil and L’viv.

The Soviet takeover exacerbated the ethnic strife that deeply characterized Eastern Galicia, yet Stalin’s iron fist suppressed any nationalistic endeavors from surfacing. Many Jews welcomed the Red Army, considering the Soviets a better alternative over the repressive Polish government and a savior from the impending Nazi German threat. On the contrary, the Ukrainians “viewed the Soviets as an obstacle to the fulfillment of their dream, the resurrection of the Ukrainian Republic.” And the Polish population felt bitterly humiliated as the Red Army defeated their short-lived independent Polish Republic. Thus as Stalin asserted control and enforced collectivization, he also imposed measures to deal with nationality issues in Eastern Galicia. The Soviet government treated all inhabitants with suspicion and targeted potential national enemies. The secret police arrested anyone deemed as politically and socially “unreliable” elements. As a result, large groups including Poles, Ukrainians and Jews were deported to the Russian east.

Consequently, the invaders divided their gains based on the pact signed one month earlier. Stalin also gained the Baltic states, which he annexed into the Soviet Union in 1940.

12 Snyder, Bloodlands, 128.


14 Yones, Smoke in the Sand, 41.

15 Polonsky, The Jews in Poland and Russia, vol. III, 376-378, 385. Stalin’s nationalities politics have important implications for postwar treatment of Jews and the Holocaust. I will discuss this in Chapter 3.
The Soviet incorporation of Eastern Galicia was interrupted on 22 June 1941 when Adolf Hitler launched Operation Barbarossa. The well-planned invasion employed *Blitzkrieg* tactics that resulted in the surprise attack on the entire western Soviet border and a speedy penetration of all western regions. German generals predicted that the Soviet regime would surrender within months. Hitler aimed to destroy the Red Army and take control of Soviet industrial and agricultural centers, as part of his plan for the Third Reich to conquer and resettle Russian lands. Thus Germany rescinded the non-aggression pact and gained cooperation from Finland and Romania for the use of their territories in order to stage attacks. Indeed, within five months of the invasion, the Wehrmacht defeated and occupied all of the western Soviet regions, with Ukraine’s capital Kyiv falling under Nazi control on 19 September 1941.  

Once occupied in 1941, Ukraine fell under four different administrative areas. Much of the eastern Ukrainian lands remained under the German military administration, with Kharkiv as a key city. A civilian administration called *Reichskommissariat Ukraine* was established under Erich Koch, encompassing the majority of Ukraine including Kyiv. Furthermore, the southern territory of Transnistria, including Odessa, fell under Romanian occupation and control. The Nazis incorporated Eastern Galicia into their General Government, which had been created by Hitler out of occupied Poland to serve as Germany’s “rump state” and would not be annexed into the Third Reich. Initially comprised of eastern Poland, from Warsaw to Krakow, this civilian administration increased with the addition of western Ukraine.

---


17 Arad, *The Holocaust*, 163, 185, 229, and 274. Romania, under Marshal Ion Antonescu, became a deeply committed German ally and invaded southern Ukraine in June 1941. Hitler allowed him to control this region throughout the war.
Hitler’s vision to exterminate all European Jewry, known as the “Final Solution,” was fully underway by March 1942. However, Jewish elimination began much earlier in the Soviet Union. During the first weeks of Operation Barbarossa, the German military aimed to secure the conquered Soviet lands and targeted Soviet partisan units. Since Nazism viewed “Judeo-Bolshevism” as its main threat, intimately linking communism and Jews, orders dealing with partisans inevitably translated into orders against Jews. As the Wehrmacht occupied Soviet territories, unrest and crimes, such as lootings, increased amongst the local population. The blame for local crime increasingly fell on Jews, resulting in more orders to kill the Jewish population. The majority of Jews shot in Ukraine during the first two months were male. Senior Nazi officials continued to provide spoken orders for the elimination of Soviet Jewry, and by August 1941, encouraged total extermination of all Jews including women, children and the elderly. This forced mid-level administrators and officers to improvise in order to fulfill their commands. As a result, methods to resolve the “Jewish Question” were rapidly devised and massacres claimed the lives of most Ukrainian Jews.\textsuperscript{18}

Specially trained mobile killing squads, called \textit{Einsatzgruppen}, had the specific task of killing the Jewish population in the newly acquired territory. The regular army, SS units, German order police battalions and many local recruits, including the Ukrainian police, also participated in the massacres. \textit{Einsatzgruppen} C and D penetrated the regions of Ukraine. Sonderkommando 4a, a subunit of \textit{Einsatzgruppen}, arrived in Volhynia as early as 30 June 1941 and reached

\textsuperscript{18} Arad, \textit{The Holocaust}, 129-133; Wendy Lower, \textit{Nazi Empire-Building and the Holocaust in Ukraine} (Chapel Hill, NC: North Carolina Press, 2005), 98-101; Snyder, \textit{Bloodlands}, 188. Michael R. Marrus, \textit{The Holocaust in History} (Toronto: Key Porter Books Limited, 2000). According to the functionalist school of thought, Hitler and the Nazis did not possess an evident roadmap for the elimination of Jews, but rather contemplated several possibilities. This improvised process led to the emergence of the Final Solution, the systematic mass murder of European Jewry. On the other hand, Holocaust intentionalists argue that the Nazi regime followed clear goals and always planned to exterminate European Jews in death camps, such as Auschwitz.
Zhitomir by 18 July. Under the supervision of SS and Police Leader Friedrich Jeckeln, the massacre at Kamianets-Podilsky set the precedent for Jewish elimination in Ukraine. In late August, German policemen murdered almost 24,000 Jews in four days. One month later the Wehrmacht, accompanied by Sonderkommando 4a, captured Ukraine’s capital. Kyiv’s Jews were massacred almost immediately. Babi Yar claimed the lives of 33,000 Jews within two days, becoming the most notorious massacre of the Holocaust. Himmler officially ordered the extermination of all Ukrainian Jewry in October 1941 during a visit to Ukraine. At least 150,000 Jews had already been massacred in Ukraine prior to Himmler’s official command.19

However, the Final Solution in the Eastern Galician District of the General Government differed from the extermination in other parts of Ukraine. On 20 January 1942, the Wannsee Conference confirmed the landmark decision to eliminate the Jewish population through organized mass murder. In the General Government, this manifested itself through a series of extermination camps already under construction.20 Under the code name “Operation Reinhard,” top Nazi officials orchestrated the Jewish elimination through gassing in the death camps of Belzec, Sobibor and Treblinka, which became fully operational in the spring and summer of

---


20 Willy Lindwer, “Wannsee Conference: 11 Million Sentenced to Death,” VHS (Teaneck, NJ: Ergo Media, 1994). The January 20, 1942 conference consisted of the top fifteen Nazi officials, including Hitler, Himmler, Goering, Eichmann and Heydrich. Major decisions were outlined and discussed, establishing that the “Final Solution” meant total extermination of Europe’s approximate eleven million Jews (according to Eichmann). The conference called for cooperation and understanding of all players, such as transportation and police. The officials discussed the technical details of murder, particularly the death camps which started operating that spring. For more on the Wannsee Conference, see Mark Roseman, The Wannsee Conference and the Final Solution: A Reconsideration (New York, NY: Picador, 2002).
1942.²¹ Odilo Globocnik, SS and Police Leader in the Lublin District, oversaw the killing of the General Government’s 2.28 million Jews. Due to its unique situation, located east of the line designated by the partition but also part of the General Government, the Jews of western Ukraine endured more extreme policies.²² In addition to ghettoization and harsh labor, the 600,000 Jews of Eastern Galicia faced the threat of mass shootings or deportation to death camps. By the end of March 1942, nearly 58,000 Jews from Lublin, L’viv, and Krakow perished at Belzec. However, the lack of available transportation forced the Nazis to continue massacres throughout the region as well.²³

Before the Nazis implemented the systematic extermination of Jews, anti-Jewish violence erupted out of the ethnic conflict and ubiquitous racism in Eastern Galicia immediately after the Wehrmacht had arrived. L’viv fell under German occupation on 30 June 1941. At the time of the invasion, approximately 260,000 Jews lived in the oblast including an estimated Jewish population of 150,000 to 170,000 in L’viv itself.²⁴ Local anti-Semitism combined with Nazi incitement resulted in intensified violence and a wave of pogroms. Many locals and Ukrainian nationalists associated Jews with Stalin’s regime and blamed them for any Soviet mistreatment. Thus in L’viv, Jews were humiliated and forced to “clean streets with their bare hands or with toothbrushes and to wash down the bodies of those recently executed by the Soviets” before

²¹ Yitzhak Arad, Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka: The Operation Reinhard Death Camps (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1987). Construction and experiments began earlier in Belzec, in Fall 1941, but the death camp was not prepared for its first mass transports until mid-March 1942. Sobibor became operational in April 1942 and Treblinka received its first transports in July 1942.

²² Arad, The Holocaust, 223.


hundreds were shot. For instance, *Einsatzgruppe C* had arrived with the Wehrmacht and organized a Ukrainian militia of local volunteers from L’viv in order to execute a brutal massacre of 4,000 local Jews. Due to these and other spontaneous actions, approximately 12,000 Jews were murdered in Eastern Galicia during July 1941.

Once Germany annexed Eastern Galicia into the General Government on 1 August 1941, a *Judenrat* was formed in L’viv and a ghetto established in mid-November. Located in the northwestern part of L’viv, in the Zamarstynów and Kleparów neighborhoods, the ghetto was a slum without any sewage or water systems, and had almost no electricity. About 80,000 Jews were forced to move inside the ghetto by mid-December. By November 1942 the ghetto contained 105,000 Jews, becoming one of Europe’s largest. The Germans shrank the territory of the ghetto several times due to the shrinking number of inhabitants, but it remained extremely overcrowded with terrible living conditions. Furthermore, the Jews of L’viv endured “two years of continual *Aktionen*.” The first deportation took place in March 1942 when 15,000 Jews were transported to Belzec from the Kleparów railroad station. The so-called “Great *Aktion*” ravaged L’viv in August 1942. A German-led search “combed” city streets in search of any hiding Jews.

Most Jews outside the ghetto were unprepared and fell under this wave of persecution. Extreme violence, looting, spontaneous shootings, transports to labor camps and deportations to Belzec characterized this *Aktion*. By the end of August, the Jewish population in L’viv was reduced to

---

26 Ibid., 419-425.
27 Yones, *Smoke in the Sand*, 131-142. Yones includes the most detailed description of the L’viv ghetto, including it conditions, leadership, life, etc.
60,000, approximately 100,000 less than a year before.\textsuperscript{30} Aktions continued until Soviet liberation in July 1944, but the majority of Jews perished by autumn 1943.

In addition to the ghetto, the Germans established a labor camp in L’viv on Janowska Road. It was also located in a northwestern suburb of the city, on the territory of a former Soviet machine factory. Known as Janowska, this was the main camp of a series of slave-labor camps in Eastern Galicia. Janowska manufactured goods for the SS and Wehrmacht. It consisted of three sections, which were “separated by double barbed wire, punctuated with watchtowers whose searchlights scanned the entire camp area by night. The [Ukrainian guards] and SS men, armed with machine guns, manned the towers around the clock.”\textsuperscript{31} Section one contained garages, workshops and offices; it also housed Ukrainian guards. Additionally, a transit camp known as the Dulag (short for Durchgangslager) operated there. The prisoner barracks were held in the second section; it included a roll-call lot, gallows and a narrow path in the rear that led north to the “dunes” used for massacres in the “valley of killings.”\textsuperscript{32} The third section held the German arms factory where more than half the prisoners worked along with other Jews from the ghetto.

The Germans assembled the Janowska workforce through the street round-ups in L’viv as well as by transporting Jews from other towns and villages of Eastern Galicia. At its peak, Janowska contained 30,000 inmates; however the prisoners constantly changed. In fact, “the prospects of survival in Janowska were minuscule. Everyone delivered to this nightmarish world was doomed to die, sooner or later.”\textsuperscript{33} In the transit camp, Jews were selected for deportation or

\textsuperscript{30} Ibid., 166-168.

\textsuperscript{31} Ibid., 187. Again, Yones provides the most thorough account of Janowska.

\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., 186.

\textsuperscript{33} Ibid., 202.
work. Many of those chosen for work were later massacred. For instance, a mass shooting of 12,000 Jews occurred in June 1943. From late the summer to autumn 1943, *Sonderkommando* 1005, a special unit assigned to eliminate traces of the Final Solution, received a “top secret” operation to incinerate the corpses in the “dunes” behind Janowska. At the height of the operation, the squad cremated 2,000 corpses per day. The remaining 3,000 prisoners were finally liquidated in November 1943.

The Germans did not round up Jews, shoot Jews and transport Jews, or operate the death camps by themselves. They relied on forced and voluntary collaborators in order to complete the task. In July 1941, the Security Police created a training camp for selected Soviet POWs to undergo training for SS-Wachmannschaft service in Trawniki, in the Lublin District. The majority of these POWs were Ukrainians who eventually served as SS guards in various capacities across the General Government. More than 1,250 recruits had arrived at Trawniki by March 1942. Up to 5,000 men served in the Trawniki system. During training, the men swore to serve Nazi Germany for the duration of the war. The Germans no longer treated them as enemy POWs, but as foreign servicemen which allowed them to receive various benefits. The Trawniki men learned how to conduct round-ups of partisans and Jews, perform arrests and searches, as well as the rules for escorting and guarding prisoners. Additionally, they received

---


35 Peter Black, “Foot Soldiers of the Final Solution: The Trawniki Training Camp and Operation Reinhard,” in *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, vol. 25, no. 1 (Spring 2011): 1-99, 6-7. In September 1943, Globocnik reported that 3,700 men served as Trawnikis; although at least 4,750 men had received identification numbers. Another 300 men were added to the ranks during the following six months. According to Black, the majority of the selected men did not know for what they were selected. Furthermore, the horrific conditions in POW camps and fear of Nazi consequences provided ample motivation for men to serve. My research confirms this as well.
ideological training, including anti-Soviet information and lectures on race. After 1943, Trawniki recruits were also required to shoot a Jew for practical training.\(^{36}\)

After training, the Trawnikis were divided into detachments containing 90-120 guards each; the units were then deployed across the General Government to carry out their assigned tasks. Their role was essential. For instance, the Belzec “camp staff consisted of twenty-five to thirty German personnel, former members of the euthanasia program, and sixty to eighty ‘Trawniki’ Ukrainians.”\(^{37}\) Globocnik mentioned these “Trawnikis” in his final report to Himmler and briefly outlined their service. This included SS-Wachmannschaften participation “1) at each major deportation; 2) at many regional shooting operations; and 3) as guard detachments at Belzec, Sobibor and Treblinka.”\(^{38}\) They also served in Eastern Galicia’s labor camps and ghettos, including Janowska in L’viv. Ultimately, “the Trawniki men were deeply involved in implementing Operation Reinhard’s first three purposes (killing, forced labor, confiscation of personal property upon Jews’ arrival in the camps).”\(^{39}\) Despite their tragic success, the Nazis could not complete their Final Solution in totality as the Allies weakened them on all fronts. Therefore as the Red Army approached in 1944, many Trawnikis were transferred west to serve in concentration camps within the Third Reich.

Despite the high Nazi ambitions in 1941 and the quick advance through the western Soviet regions, the Nazis had underestimated the harsh Russian winter and miscalculated the reserves Stalin had access to east of the Ural Mountains. A Red Army offensive launched in

\(^{36}\) Ibid., 16-20.

\(^{37}\) Arad, *The Holocaust*, 274.

\(^{38}\) Black, “Foot Soldiers of the Final Solution,” 5, 20.

\(^{39}\) Ibid., 20.
December 1941 outside of Moscow became the first setback for the German soldiers. Nevertheless, Germany regained strength in the spring and conquered large stretches of land in the south, including the Caucasus and Crimea. Next, Hitler ordered an attack on Stalingrad, a major industrial center in the south. A counter-offensive from the Soviet army ushered in the turning point of the war in November 1942, by trapping the German 6th army until they surrendered on 31 January 1943. Weakened by the Allies on all fronts, the Wehrmacht began retreating, while the Red Army started to liberate its regions. In fact, by the end of 1943, the Soviets had reoccupied Ukraine and continued to regain territory through 1944. By this time, victory was in sight on the western front as well; American and British forces hoped to defeat the Wehrmacht in 1945. Germany surrendered unconditionally on 8 May 1945. The Nazi defeat did not come soon enough, especially for European Jewry. Nearly six million Jews perished across Europe. The Germans and their collaborators murdered one and a half million Jews in Ukraine. When the Soviets arrived in L’viv, they estimated that 200,000 prisoners had been killed at Janowska. Two months after Soviet liberation, in September 1944, only 3,400 Jews remained in L’viv. Over eighty percent of Jews perished in Eastern Galicia, with an estimated 215,000 Jewish deaths in the L’viv oblast alone.41

---

40 Yones, Smoke in the Sand, 207.
41 Kruglov, “Jewish Losses in Ukraine, 1941-1944,” 284. The number of Jews most likely included recently arrived refugees from the east.
CHAPTER 3
SS WACHMÄNNER: THE CASE OF OLEKSANDR KIRELAKHA

Oleksandr Prokopovich Kirelakha was born in 1913 to a family of seven; they lived in a small village in the Poltava oblast’, located in central Ukraine.¹ His family belonged to the peasant class and his parents worked for the local collective farm after the Bolshevik takeover. Oleksandr received only a third grade education. He worked for the collective farm until 1932 when he moved to the larger town of Dnipropetrovsk to work in a factory. He served his two-year conscription for the Red Army from 1935 to 1937 in the cavalry division. After demobilization, Oleksandr returned to Dnipropetrovsk and held various jobs until the military drafted him again in May 1941. Up to this point, he had no political involvement and held no record of anti-Soviet activity. The Second World War had erupted in Poland almost two years prior to Kirelakha’s reenlistment in the Red Army. He was in active service when Germany launched Operation Barbarossa.

During the first few days of war in June 1941, Kirelakha was wounded in his right leg. As the Red Army retreated in July, the Nazis took him captive near Belatserkov just south of Kyiv. These Soviet prisoners of war were sent to camp “B” near Chelmno, Poland. The German treatment of Soviet POWs was far worse than that of their British and American counterparts.² Hitler viewed Soviets both as Slavic sub-humans and Bolshevik threats. Furthermore, the Nazis neglected feeding the high numbers of Soviet POWs in their effort to guarantee food for the home front. As a result, lack of proper nourishment, clothing and shelter characterized the

¹ USBU in L’viv Oblast’, Number 18114, Volume 1-4, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives, RG 31.018M Reel 73, Ukraine.
makeshift Soviet POW camps, causing epidemics such as typhoid and dysentery to spread rapidly. For example, in October 1941 alone, as many as 4,600 Soviet POWs died per day."

Additionally, the Nazis used Soviet POWs as a labor force and experiment subjects at Auschwitz. Some prisoners received the opportunity to serve Germany in various capacities, which undoubtedly seemed preferable to the horrific camp conditions. By the end of the war, over three million Soviet prisoners of war – 57 percent – perished in German captivity.\(^3\)

In late September or early October 1941, SS officers arrived to the Chelmno POW camp, lined up the prisoners and selected about fifty men. Kirelakha later testified that he had no knowledge of what was happening when the SS officers drove the selected POWs approximately seventy kilometers to Trawniki. After a month’s time of rest and nourishment, the SS filled out forms and fingerprinted each prisoner. The POWs learned that they had been selected to serve as guards in the SS Wachmannschaft. The Nazi officials formed units and assigned prisoners into companies. Kirelakha later confessed to signing a mandatory oath of loyalty to the service of the German armed forces. After this registration and formation process, the men received the titles of “Wachmann SS” and rifles, after which they began training. Kirelakha underwent training at Trawniki for about eight months until spring 1942.

In the spring of 1942, Kirelakha’s SS unit was sent to guard Jewish ghettos in District Galicia, specifically in L’viv, Bronislav and Zboriv.\(^4\) They guarded the ghettos and labor camps, as well as convoyed prisoners to and from work. During this time, transports of Jews from L’viv also arrived in Belzec and massacres of ghetto inmates occurred frequently. After five months in western Ukraine, Kirelakha was reassigned to Lublin in August 1942; the same district that

\(^3\) Ibid.

\(^4\) The trial protocols do not specify Kirelakha’s Wachmannschaft unit. His individual number was 415.
contained Belzec, Sobibor and the Majdanek complex of camps. He served as a ghetto guard in Lublin until autumn 1943. His main task also included guarding transportation convoys. Towards the close of 1943, the SS sent many of their Wachmannschaft “Trawniki” units to Germany. Kirelakha was directed to Germany to guard the Hanover POW camp, which contained Soviet soldiers. Operation Reinhard had been successful. By November 1943, only approximately 25,000 Jews still lived in the General Government. Furthermore, the Soviet military was quickly regaining their lost territory.

Kirelakha served in Hanover until the American liberation.\(^5\) Upon the Americans’ arrival, he changed into civilian clothing and posed as a Soviet POW. He remained in U.S. custody for approximately two weeks, until the Soviet prisoners were handed back to the Red Army. After returning to the USSR, Kirelaha took up work in Dnipropetrovsk, Ukraine where he had lived before the war. However in 1947, he moved to Vladivostok, the southeastern-most corner of Siberia, in order to avoid arrest. The authorities were searching for Nazi collaborators. The Soviet government had opened military tribunals as early as 1943. The trial in Krasnodar charged eleven Soviet citizens of collaboration with the Nazis. This open military tribunal found the accused guilty of treason and eight of the guilty were publicly hanged. Stalin employed this mode of “justice” as part of an ideological battle while the Red Army fought to reconquer lost territory.\(^6\) Several public military tribunals followed in other major cities such as Mariupol’, Riga

\(^5\) Kirelakha later testified that the Americans entered the camp on 10 May 1945. However, the U.S. military actually occupied the city of Hanover one month earlier, on 10 April 1945.

\(^6\) Bourtman, “‘Blood for Blood, Death for Death.’”
and Kyiv. The trials were conducted under the Soviet Criminal Code. After the war ended, the Soviet authorities continued this judicial process with increased fervor.

Much of the evidence used in Soviet military tribunals came from the Extraordinary State Commission. In addition to the ESC’s findings, the Soviets captured countless German documents and used them in order to put collaborators on trial. Stalin had no intention of allowing Nazi collaborators to go unpunished. In fact between 1943 and 1953, the Soviet authorities accused and arrested more than 320,000 citizens for collaboration. Most of these trials were closed military tribunals and sentenced real criminals. They were not public show trials. The courts employed a broad definition of traitors deemed “counterrevolutionaries,” and made no distinction between collaborators and actual perpetrators. Nonetheless, the courts maintained a hierarchy of charges with “homeland betrayal” above “crimes against humanity.”

The postwar Soviet military tribunals did not need fabricated evidence. The crimes under Nazi occupation were ubiquitous and undeniable. Nonetheless, postwar Stalinist justice did not create a period of normalization, even for war crimes trials. Instead, it “continued to be a mixed system, where regular courts coexisted with extraordinary bodies of investigation and jurisdiction and where the rule and automaticity of law was limited by discretionary practices of

---

7 Ibid. The particular laws included 58-1(a) and 59-1(b) of the Criminal Code, which addressed counterrevolutionary activity and crimes against Soviet citizens.


10 Bourtman, “‘Blood for Blood, Death for Death’.”

11 Penter, “Collaboration on Trial,” I will discuss the Soviet’s definition and concept of “crimes against humanity” further on.
the police and the role of local networks.”

For instance, the Soviet Criminal Process Code allowed sentences to be passed based on the “judges’ inner convictions” and the absence of a defense attorney became the norm. Unlike Nuremberg and other postwar trials elsewhere, all defendants in Soviet trials pled guilty; and confession served as ultimate proof of guilt in a Soviet court. Rather than presenting substantial evidence in court, Soviet investigators conducted hours of “rigorous interrogations” prior to the trial. This process guaranteed confessions that allowed for a speedy sentence, thus molding the “Soviet approach to the prosecution of Nazi war crimes: swift and merciless retribution for atrocities committed by Germany and its allies in occupied Soviet territories.”

On 17 March 1949, the Soviet authorities accused Kirelakha of treason and imprisoned him in Dnipropetrovsk. His arrest form included basic information, family history and a detailed physical description, with the unique feature of “SS” tattooed under his left armpit. His first interrogation took place on the day of the arrest. It dealt primarily with his personal and family background. Kirelakha’s second interrogation was conducted almost two months later on 10 May 1949. The military prosecutor, Lieutenant Smirnov, usually began by asking an open-ended question. “You are arrested as a traitor of the Homeland…Tell us about this.” Kirelakha accepted his guilt and answered, “Yes, indeed I am a traitor of the Homeland.” He recalled his

---


13 Prusin, “‘Fascist Criminals to the Gallows!,’” 3.

14 Prusin, “‘Fascist Criminals to the Gallows!,’” 5.

15 Kirelakha was accused according to statute 54-1(b) in the UkSSR, which dealt with treason in Ukraine. The records do not provide details about Kirelakha’s arrest. Therefore, it is unclear whether he was arrested in Vladivostok (far east Siberia) and transferred to Dnipropetrovsk (central Ukraine) for prosecution, or if he was visiting Dnipropetrovsk where he was taken into custody. The documents do indicate that his permanent place of residence was Vladivostok, but he was imprisoned and put on trial in Dnipropetrovsk. I will discuss his 1949 trial in greater detail further on.
wartime activity including his capture, his time in the POW camp, his selection for the Wachmannschaft SS, his Trawniki training, and his SS service until American liberation. The prosecutor ended this interrogation by asking Kirelakha for his Trawniki number and how much time he spent in the American zone, indicating a suspicion of a connection to the US.16

Kirelakha’s trial was located in Dnipropetrovsk and consisted of seven interrogations during the trial with the final one on 26 May 1949.17 The military tribunal’s primary concern was Kirelakha’s collaboration. On 12 May, the prosecutor asked, “Under which circumstances did you give into German captivity?” Kirelakha explained that he was wounded in his right leg at the end of June 1941, and soon after the Wehrmacht captured him along with other wounded and unwounded Red Army soldiers. However, the questions themselves assigned guilt and did not allow for any defense. The prosecution then followed up with, “Now tell about how you entered into the service of the German SS.”18 Regardless of Kirelakha’s claims that he was captured and had not entered Nazi service, the court clearly considered collaboration as a voluntary act of treason.

The military tribunal paid close attention to the details of Nazi training at Trawniki. During the trial, Kirelakha was repeatedly asked questions about his eight-month training, including “Which disciplines were taught at the training camp Wachmannschaft SS?” And, “Who did the training camp Wachmannschaft SS prepare?” Kirelakha recalled that he and other recruits received training in drill formation, rifle use, guard service training, specialized techniques, as well as political information. He explained that from what he knew “the training

16 Kirelakha stated that he spent about 10-15 days in the American zone. His Trawniki number was 415.

17 The seven interrogations were all during the trial. The dates include (all in 1949): March 17; May 10, 12, 14, 16, 17 and 26. The protocols do not specify if any pre-trial interrogations took place.

18 USHMM Archives RG 31.018M Reel 73, Frames 0979-0981, Ukraine. Interrogation 3 - Italics mine.
camp Wachmannschaft SS in Trawniki (Poland) prepared special troops from Russian POWs for future work in guarding Russian POW camps, Jewish camps, and for work in so-called death camps.” Kirelakha, though admitting to guarding Jews, initially claimed that he never killed anyone.\textsuperscript{19} When asked by the court, Kirelakha provided two lists of other Ukrainian guards that served the Wachmannschaft SS alongside him in various locations throughout the war.

Kirelakha’s case was then directed to the higher military tribunal in Ukraine for further review and final jurisdiction. Aside from his personal documents and statements, his file included no supplementary evidence. This military tribunal reviewed Kirelakha’s case on 16 June 1949. He had no attorney. He pled guilty and repeated his statement. One notable difference between this and his earlier statements exists. Kirelakha now claimed that he actually had not taken an oath to serve the Nazis, but had admitted to it earlier because Lieutenant Smirnov had threatened him with gunpoint. Kirelakha claimed that Smirnov did not beat him during the interrogations, but his comment regarding a gunpoint confession may reveal the military tribunal’s brutality. Kirelakha’s denial of taking the Nazi oath held no weight for his case. The prosecution had suggested a verdict of twenty-five years of labor. The presiding court members agreed, sentencing Kirelakha to twenty-five years in a rehabilitation labor camp and the confiscation of all personal property.

Despite trying thousands of Nazi collaborators, the Soviet authorities largely ignored the Holocaust. Kirelakha’s trial reflected the Soviet tendency to not only focus on the act of treason, but also to overlook Jewish suffering altogether. Immediately after the war, the rhetoric and representation of wartime events and causes underwent strict censorship. In fact, Joseph Stalin

\textsuperscript{19} In his 1949, Kirelakha denied killing anyone during his service to the SS. However in his 1968 trial, he confessed to participating in shooting Jews. I will discuss this further on.
ceased to commemorate the Soviet victory after 1946.\textsuperscript{20} Despite the overwhelming Soviet contribution to the Allied victory, the war also highlighted the Red Army’s lack of preparation and near-defeat in 1941 that plagued Stalin’s memory.\textsuperscript{21} Furthermore, the Soviet Union never allowed public remembrance or memorialization of Jewish suffering during the Holocaust. The official Communist Party (CPSU) stance propagated that Nazi Germany aimed to destroy or enslave all Soviet citizens. Indeed the Soviet population, specifically Ukrainians and Byelorussians, did suffer high losses; however the proportion cannot compare to the more than two million Jews murdered by the Nazi instigated genocide in the Soviet occupied territories alone.\textsuperscript{22} Anti-Semitism certainly did not end with the Holocaust in the USSR. “If the Nazis gave the Jews ‘special treatment,’ the Soviets would not.”\textsuperscript{23} For example, a monument was erected at Babi Yar commemorating Soviet victims, but with no mention of Jewish losses.\textsuperscript{24} As a result, the

\textsuperscript{20} Nina Tumarkin, \textit{The Living and the Dead: The Rise and Fall of the Cult of World War II in Russia} (New York, NY: Basic Book Publishers, 1994), 104. Moscow held a Victory Parade on 24 June 1945, and another Victory Day Parade on 9 May 1946. However beginning in 1947, Stalin demoted Victory Day from a state holiday to a regular working day.

\textsuperscript{21} Disregarding military intelligence reports, Stalin did not mobilize the Red Army to fight Nazi Germany in the spring of 1941. Furthermore, Stalin clearly erred in purging many of the most brilliant and talented military officers during the 1930s, that weakened the Red Army significantly. Nazi Germany quickly penetrated its western regions. Utterly shocked by the invasion, Stalin went into hiding for several days, assuming he would be ousted out of power. By December, the Wehrmacht approached Moscow and posed a serious threat to the Soviet capital.

\textsuperscript{22} Kruglov, “Jewish Losses in Ukraine,” 286-287. According to Kruglov, over 60\% of non-combat related deaths in Ukraine were Jews. Out of the 1.6 million Jews remaining in Nazi-occupied Ukraine, over 98\% died. Whereas approximately 7\%, over one million Ukrainian civilians perished during the war. Although the figures seem comparable, the percentages show that Jewish death was far more drastic.


\textsuperscript{24} Babi Yar was a ravine outside of Kyiv that became the location of the largest and most notorious massacre of the Holocaust, claiming over 33,000 Jewish lives in only two days, September 29-30, 1941. I will return to Babi Yar remembrance in a later chapter.
CPSU’s precedent of overlooking the Holocaust by generalizing the victim group influenced all arenas of society, including popular culture and justice.

****

Unlike Oleksandr Kirelakha, not all Wachmänner returned to the Soviet Union after the war. Many collaborators posed as refugees, escaped to Displaced Persons camps, and eventually emigrated to the West. The two most notorious cases are those of Ivan Demjanuk and Feodor Fedorenko. Born in 1920 in central Ukraine, Demjanuk was mobilized by the Red Army and fell into German captivity in May 1942. He immigrated to the United States in 1951 and became a citizen in 1958. The Department of Justice began investigating Demjanuk’s case in 1975 after a Soviet witness mentioned serving together with him in Nazi camps. This launched a complicated series of trials and legal actions that lasted nearly three decades and involved multiple governments. In 1981, the United States denaturalized Demjanuk for falsifying immigration documents and extradited him to Jerusalem, per Israeli request. He faced trial in 1987 for charges of volunteering for the Wachmannschaft SS and playing an important role at the Treblinka gas chambers. Demjanuk, however, claimed that he spent the majority of the war in a POW camp near Chelmno, Poland. Furthermore, no wartime documents could prove his placement at Treblinka, though some records did confirm his SS service. The Jerusalem court sentenced him to death in 1988, but Demjanuk appealed this conviction.25

When the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, much archival material became available. The newly released documents further complicated Demjanuk’s case, showing that he did not serve at Treblinka. The Jerusalem court overturned the verdict in 1993 and the Israeli prosecution did not

press other charges. The United States restored Demjanuk’s citizenship in 1998, yet the Office of Special Investigations (OSI) continued researching his case using the new Soviet documents. In 1999, the OSI filed for Demjanuk’s denaturalization proceedings once again, claiming that he served at Trawniki, Sobibor, Majdanek and Flossenbürg. In 2002, the United States court revoked his citizenship and ruled to deport him to Ukraine. After a series of appeals, Demjanuk was deported from the United States to Germany and arrested in 2009. He faced another trial for 28,060 murders at Sobibor. The German court found him guilty and sentenced him to five-year of imprisonment. At his old age, Demjanuk appealed once more and died in a German nursing home in 2012 at ninety-one years of age.26

Another Ukrainian Trawniki guard who escaped to the United States was Fedor Fedorenko. He was born in 1907 in southern Ukraine and conscripted by the Red Army in June 1941. One month later, the German military captured him and sent him to a POW camp near Chelmno, Poland. Fedorenko was selected to serve the Wachmannschaft SS, completed training at Trawniki, and worked as a guard at the Treblinka death camp starting in autumn 1942. After the war ended, Fedorenko did not return to Ukraine but immigrated to the United States in 1949; he became a citizen in 1970. The U.S. Department of Justice began investigating his case and filed denaturalization proceedings in 1978. Although he admitted to serving as a Wachmann, Fedorenko denied direct participation in Holocaust crimes. Nonetheless, the U.S. ultimately extradited him to the Soviet Union in 1984, where he faced trial for treason and mass murder. In 1986, the Crimean court sentenced him to death by shooting. Fedorenko’s execution was announced in July 1987.27

26 Ibid.

The cases of Demjanuk and Fedorenko exposed the West to the ubiquitous web of Nazi collaboration during the war, suggesting the importance of Trawniki guards for the completion of the Final Solution. The cases also reveal the global attempt to serve justice for Holocaust crimes decades after the war ended. Demjanuk’s case highlights the complexity of Holocaust trials in the postwar era. Comparing the fate of both men emphasizes the drastically different verdicts, yet it also demonstrates the global commitment for Holocaust justice through the involvement of the United States, Israel, Germany and the Soviet Union. In particular, the USSR provided the OSI with Demjanuk’s Trawniki identification card placing him at Sobibor, and a Soviet court sentenced Fedorenko. Therefore, the cases signal Soviet involvement and their changing legal policies concerning Nazi collaboration.

CHAPTER 4
EVOLVING SOVIET LAW AND POLITICS

Until Stalin’s death in 1953, the Soviet Union continued to seek out former collaborators and try them for treason against the homeland. However, a shift occurred in Soviet politics in the mid-1950s. Stalin’s iron fist had placed the Soviet society under intense strain, and most leaders called for a reprieve after Stalin’s death. Nikita Khrushchev’s rise to power ushered in a “thaw” in Soviet society, marked by some flexibility and limited freedoms. His “Secret Speech” at the 20th Party Congress in February 1956 served as a catalyst for change by dismantling the fear engrained through the Stalinist system. The speech did not remain a secret and “it was the greatest single factor in breaking down the mixture of fear, fanaticism, naivety and ‘doublethink’ with which everyone, according to temperament, intelligence and status, had reacted to Communist rule” throughout the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.¹ One practical result of the Khrushchev thaw was the release policy from the Gulag labor camps.

For example in June 1954, Oleksandr Kirelakha wrote an appeal from his imprisonment in Siberia located in Mariinsk, Kemerovo, Russia to the Presiding Chairman of the Supreme Council of Voroshilov, in Dnipropetrovsk. He requested amnesty.² This two-page appeal briefly recounted his situation. Although he accepted his guilt, Kirelakha explained that as an uneducated person, he did not know any better than to follow Nazi orders and did so out of fear for his life. During the last few years of harsh labor, Kirelakha claimed that his health had deteriorated. He asked for the court to consider his case and give him the opportunity to become

² USHMM Archives, RG 31.018M Reel 73, Frames 1007-1008, Ukraine.
a “true Soviet man.” The court reviewed Kirelakha’s case in September and withdrew his sentence on 29 November 1954, granting him amnesty. It went into effect in 1955.

The Soviet system continued to evolve throughout the 1950s, and significant changes occurred in the legal process. Before Stalin’s death, Moscow reinstated the death penalty by shooting, but only for treason, espionage and sabotage. In December 1958, the Soviet Union reformed its criminal law and the republics followed suit by also producing new criminal codes that reflected Moscow’s changes. Ukraine erected a revised criminal code in 1961, which reaffirmed the death penalty for treason. “The legal reforms introduced during the late 1950s had above all two aims: to make law more settled and predictable, so as to avoid arbitrariness and terror, and to involve ordinary people more in judicial processes.” According to the new Criminal Code, civilians could be convicted only for breaking a specific article in the criminal code and must be tried in a properly constituted court. Emergency courts were outlawed and vague accusations, such as “enemy of the people” could no longer be used. A defendant’s confession became insufficient to convict and the Criminal Code required the court to conduct a judicial investigation in order to pass a verdict, even if the defendant acknowledged his guilt. According to the 1958 revisions, military tribunals were considered “courts of the USSR” and were required to follow the general criminal court process, except that all presiding court members had to be in active service to the military.

---


4 Hosking, The First Socialist Society, 350.

5 Ibid.
This legal system followed an “inquisitorial” model. An “agency of inquiry” would initiate a case, which acted as an accusation and the agency would then serve as the prosecution.\(^6\) Once assembled, a criminal court normally involved five major figures as officials. First, the procurator served as the supervisor of the court to ensure that the law was not violated and that all parties acted accordingly. The Code also required three presiding members, including a chairman and two people’s assessors, who held the responsibility of a jury. Furthermore, the investigation was assigned to an official, called an “investigator,” whose role was to “conduct a comprehensive, balanced, exhaustive investigation of all evidence and to prepare an opinion to indict or not.”\(^7\) The Committee of State Security (KGB) generally investigated serious crimes against the State. The state also assigned defense attorneys for each defendant. The Soviet inquisitorial legal system aimed to uncover all evidence objectively and come to a decision. First, the defendant was called to provide a testimony concerning all circumstances of his accusation. The investigator would then present the available evidence in court, including documentation and testimony. The witnesses did not testify for the prosecution or defense, but for the entire court in order to help disclose all of the truth. The presiding members would suggest a verdict based on the evidence.

Despite Khrushchev’s curbing of violence and brutality that had characterized the Soviet Union under Stalin, his rule grew increasingly unpopular due to the instability and unpredictability of his policies. He was ousted in October 1964 and replaced by Leonid Brezhnev, who eventually consolidated control over Soviet government and society. Brezhnev immediately reversed many of Khrushchev’s policies, including education, economic and

\(^6\) Various State agencies could initiate cases. The KGB often served in serious crimes against the State.

agricultural reforms. If the Soviet Union experienced a “thaw” under Khrushchev, Brezhnev’s rule resulted in a political and social “chill.” Although the Criminal Code did not experience major changes with his rise to power, the year of 1965 marked some significant developments. On 4 March 1965, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet Union published a decree “On the punishment of individuals responsible for crimes against peace and humanity and military crimes, regardless of the time committed...” In essence, this decree emphasized that no statute of limitations on Nazi crimes existed. It also served as a catalyst to reopen countless cases and launched new trials of Soviet citizens previously tried for treason, regardless of the conviction.

The concept of “crimes against humanity” originated from the Soviet notion of “crimes against peace.” At the Nuremberg Trials, this concept was broadened and two more categories were added. Nuremberg categorized “War Crimes” and “Crimes Against Humanity” as separate categories in addition to “Crimes Against Peace.” According to Francine Hirsch’s study named “The Soviets at Nuremberg,” the Soviet authorities seemed to agree with these definitions and later used the rhetoric in other postwar trials. Although the 1965 Soviet decree addressed crimes against peace and humanity, as well as military crimes, the trials of Nazi collaborators in the late 1960s seemed to focus mostly on crimes against humanity as defined by Nuremberg “namely, murder extermination, enslavement, deportation, and other inhumane acts committed against any

---

8 USHMM Archives RG 31.018M Reel 73, Frame 1532, Ukraine.

9 Francine Hirsch, “The Soviets at Nuremberg: International Law, Propaganda, and the Making of the Postwar Order” in American Historical Review, June 2008, pp. 701-730. The definition came from Aron Trainin, a well-known Soviet professor of criminal law. This original concept included: acts of aggression; propaganda of aggression; the conclusion of agreements with aggressive aims; the violation of treaties which serve the cause of peace; provocation designed to disrupt peaceful relations between countries; terrorism; and support of armed bands (fifth columns).

civilian population, before or during the war, or persecutions on political, racial, or religious
grounds in execution of or in connection with any crime within the jurisdiction of the Tribunal,
whether or not in violation of domestic law of the country where perpetrated.”

Thus, the KGB used the 1965 decree to open the military tribunals and accuse the former Wachmänner. Passed in March 1965, this decree coincided with Brezhnev’s recent rise to power and the upcoming twenty-year anniversary of Victory Day. In addition to celebrating the anniversary of the Great Patriotic War, the Soviet Union was approaching the semi-centennial of the Bolshevik Revolution. These two impending milestones were not simply moments of reflection and celebration for the USSR. By the mid-1960s, few people remembered the Revolution and could actually relate to the Bolshevik takeover. Moreover, World War II and the Khrushchev thaw allotted many Soviet citizens the opportunity for western exposure, that which they never had under Stalin in the 1930s. As Brezhnev attempted to impose control over a fractured society, the upcoming twenty-year anniversary was well timed. Brezhnev not only re-instated Victory Day as a national holiday, but also launched a program of remembrance and commemoration. “From 1965 on, the Great Patriotic War continued its transformation from a national trauma of monumental proportions into a sacrosanct cluster of heroic exploits that had once and for all proven the superiority of communism over capitalism.”

Therefore, the Soviet leadership under Brezhnev nurtured a “cult of the Great Patriotic War.” In fact, “the idealized war experience was a reservoir of national suffering to be tapped and tapped again to mobilize loyalty, maintain order, and achieve a semblance of energy to

---

11 Ibid. Section II, Article 6. (c)
12 Tumarkin, The Living and the Dead, 133.
13 Ibid., 129-133
counter the growing nationwide apathy and loss of popular resilience of spirit.”

As more material in various forms about World War II reached the Soviet public, information about Nazi crimes against Jews appeared as well. In the immediate postwar period, “the Holocaust was treated as regrettable, but merely one small part of the larger phenomenon that, according to the Soviets, resulted in the death of twenty million of their citizens.”

Although there was no consistent “party line” on representing Jewish suffering after the war, it was mostly generalized and overlooked. This tendency extended to all forms of media and representation. Direct mention of the word “Jew” was usually avoided in various publications. As a result, the specific crimes committed under Nazi occupation, and particularly those against Jews, were never commemorated.

More information about the Holocaust began to “leak out” during the 1960s; however, this material still required government approval. For instance, a Soviet Yiddish monthly appeared in 1961, called Sovietish heymland. Although it contained information about the Holocaust, this publication was also censored and followed a pattern of situating Jewish suffering amidst the Soviet victory over fascism.

Several other publications about the Second World War also emerged, including material and documents of Nazi crimes during the occupation. Mourning the loss of Jewish life in Kyiv, Yevgenii Yevtushenko wrote his famous poem “Babi Yar” in 1961 and read it publically for many audiences; Literaturnaia gazeta finally published it on 19 September 1961. The poem gained national attention when Dmitrii

14 Ibid., 133.
16 Ibid., 25. Sovietish heymland had to contain a political purpose when writing about the Holocaust. This included the following themes: 1) gentiles frequently saved Jews; 2) when Jews resisted, it was for universal reasons; 3) all nationalities within the USSR collaborated against the Nazis; and 4) the only Nazi collaborators were fascists, and mostly live in the West now.
Shostakovich set the words to music in his Thirteenth Symphony. However, this drew heavy criticism; Yevtushenko and Shostakovich were forced to neutralize the topic of Jewish suffering by adding a line about Soviet loss: “Here lie Russians and Ukrainians; they lie with Jews in a common grave.”\footnote{Tumarkin, \textit{The Living and the Dead}, 119-121.} Therefore, the Soviet authorities did not permit direct representation of the Holocaust. Despite discussing the Holocaust vaguely and indirectly, such publications still contributed to some public awareness of Jewish suffering.

Additionally, Mosfilm released a documentary film in 1965 entitled \textit{Ordinary Fascism}. This film quickly gained popularity and became widely viewed amongst the Soviet public.\footnote{Mosfilm is one of the largest and oldest film studios in Russia (1920-present). The film was later released in the USA in 1968 under the title “Triumph over Violence.” It was directed and narrated by Mikhail Romm, making the film inseparable from him.} Created from captured Nazi footage, the film presented a case against fascism arguing that it eliminates individuality and produces robotic subjects who mindlessly adhere to the evil will of their leader. Furthermore, the case of Nazi Germany showed that fascism involves a totalitarian ruler followed by a thoughtless and robotic crowd, which produced monsters and inevitably resulted in war and mass murder. By emphasizing the Nazi atrocities, \textit{Ordinary Fascism} exposed the Soviet public to a Holocaust history, albeit indirectly. The documentary actually addressed racist ideology and discrimination, emigration, ghettoization, pogroms, deportations, death camps and massacres. On one hand, the narrator adhered to the Soviet pattern of overlooking Jewish suffering and generalizing the genocide. Yet on the other hand, the fact that racial ideology and discrimination was included was revolutionary in Soviet representations of World War II. Although the narrator did not frequently speak of Jewish suffering directly, he certainly
provided ample visual evidence and context clues that allotted the audience an opportunity for critical analysis.

Though not its central feature, the film also mourned Soviet losses and celebrated its victory of the war, making it relevant in 1965. As battle scenes flashed on the screen, the narrator stated, “Twenty million lives; twenty million of the best lives we gave that there would be no fascism on earth.” Thus, the film coincided with the celebratory spirit of the twenty-year anniversary of World War II in 1965. Not only did the film celebrate the Soviet defeat over Nazism, but it also exposed the Soviet public to Holocaust atrocities at large, perhaps for the first time. Furthermore, the interplay between Nazism and genocide in *Ordinary Fascism* reflected the recent and ongoing Holocaust trials globally, and foreshadowed the focus of the impending Soviet trials that began in 1965.

The Soviet media paid much attention to the Eichmann case, beginning with his capture in 1960 to his execution two years later.19 This landmark case in Jerusalem signified that global Holocaust justice began dealing genocide against European Jewry, rather than general war crimes committed during the Second World War. However, the Soviet press politicized the trial in its coverage. “While the role of Eichmann in the Holocaust was admitted, the reports diluted the story of Nazi atrocities in a flood of propaganda” against the West, Israel and Zionism.20 Nonetheless, the Soviet public was exposed to not only Nazi atrocities against Jews, but also the fact that other nations were placing such criminals on trial. In addition to the Eichmann trial in Jerusalem, East Germany and West Germany both began prosecuting Nazi criminals for murder

---


20 Ibid., 38
and participation in crimes against humanity in the 1960s. The Frankfurt Auschwitz Trial serves as the principal example.

In addition to providing captured Nazi materials and documents for trials, the Soviet Union also participated in the controversy over West Germany’s expiring statute of limitations. The German statute of limitations on murder during World War II was postponed and due to go in effect on 31 December 1969. The Jewish Telegraphic Agency (JTA) reported on 26 March 1969, “Soviet Premier Alexei Kosygin assailed the statute of limitations on West German war crimes prosecutions today and accused West German authorities of planning to grant amnesty to Nazi war criminals including many notorious SS and Gestapo men.”

Kosygin’s accusation came four years after the Soviet authorities had passed its decree against any statute of limitations on Nazi crimes in the USSR, which also marked the beginning of its own series of trials of Nazi collaborators in 1965. Within the Cold War climate, the Soviet government’s motivation may have stemmed from the perceived global judicial rivalry. The program received some international attention, at least from the Jewish press. The JTA reported Moscow’s decree in March 1965, which quoted the USSR’s statement that they “cannot permit the Fascist barbarians to go unpunished.”

Indeed, the Soviet Union displayed its commitment of convicting Nazi criminals in the ensuing years. The JTA reported at least seven trials of Nazis or local collaborators taking place in the Soviet Union over the next four years. The first reported trial took place in Krasnodar,

---


trying six Soviet citizens for serving in Sobibor and Belzec, and charged for killing about one million victims.\(^{23}\) The Jewish press reported on four trials that occurred in Riga, in the Latvian Republic. One Riga trial in October 1966 drew thousands of spectators, as the six Latvian defendants faced charges for murdering 15,000 Jews in addition to an unspecified number of Latvians and Roma. During the trial, the lobby walls that led to the courtroom displayed photos of the scenes.\(^{24}\) The Riga court also sentenced five Nazis to death in two separate trials taking place in January 1966 and March 1967. The final Riga trial opened in January 1968, with five Latvian defendants charged for committing crimes against humanity. JTA reported, “They planned the executions not only of Jews but of anti-Nazi partisans and others in the town and killed a number of people with their own hands. The trial was expected to last a week and will hear eyewitness evidence from survivors, including several Jews, who have volunteered to testify.”\(^{25}\) The last two trials, reported by the JTA, took place in the Russian towns of Luga and Mineralnye Vody, and had similar characteristics as other Soviet trials.\(^{26}\)

The Jewish press coverage reveals several aspects about the Soviet trials after 1965. First, the fact that some trials received international attention indicates that the USSR participated in


\(^{26}\) The Mineralnye Vody trial charged six Russians with collaboration in a wartime massacre of 60,000 victims, mostly Jews; no verdict was reported. The Luga case tried and sentenced a Gestapo member to death for participating in the torture and murder of Jews, Roma and other Soviet citizens around Leningrad.
the global attempt for Holocaust justice. The Soviet motives are unclear. Perhaps, the Soviet authorities intentionally held public military tribunals in order to display its moral leadership against fascism and Nazi crimes in the midst of the Holocaust justice rivalry and the Cold War. Furthermore, the brief JTA trials mentioned some aspects of the trial processes, such as defense attorneys and types of evidence and witnesses. Such publications made the Soviet legal system appear more credible and displayed its post-Stalin changes in action. In reporting the charges against the defendants’, the JTA wrote about Jewish victims in six of the seven trials. Concerning the Krasnodar trial, the article stated, “No mention of the fact that the majority of the victims were Jews was made in the Soviet press.”27 The coverage of the other six trials had no such statements, but expressed that the charges included crimes against Jews. Again, this type of coverage displayed the alleged Soviet commitment for Holocaust justice, at least in the Jewish press.

The JTA, however, did not cover all of the Soviet military tribunals of the late 1960s. The 1965 decree marked the beginning of an extended series of trials, prosecuting Nazi collaborators in the Soviet Union. As the JTA reports revealed, the trials took place in various cities across the USSR. The military tribunals were typically formed in the location of the crime, but the courts depended on documentary evidence from other places. In addition to several public trials, many closed military tribunals prosecuted defendants. Many of the accused men were former Trawniki guards who had received amnesty during the 1950s. Since the 1965 decree banned a statute of limitations for Nazi-related crimes, they could be prosecuted again despite receiving amnesty

under Khrushchev. Therefore, many defendants faced trial for the second time in the Soviet Union. The military tribunals in the 1960s, however, varied drastically from the immediate postwar trials due to the evolving Soviet legal system. The thorough trial investigations offer a unique perspective of the Holocaust. Furthermore, the military tribunals of the 1960s display the processes of the judicial system and the Soviet attempt to achieve justice for Nazi-related crimes.
Chapter 5
L’Viv Trial in 1966

On 24 December 1966, the Military Tribunal of the Carpathian Military District, held in L’viv, sentenced six men accused of betraying the “Soviet Homeland” during World War II, and for participating in the torture and killing of Soviet people and others in Nazi occupied territories. All six men, Sergey Prihodko, Aleksandr Minochkin, Nikolay Stankov, Georgiy Pankratov, Aleksei Zhukov, and Sergey Lagutin, had served as “Trawnikis” in the Nazi Wachmannschaft SS forces. Although the defendants did not know one another prior to the war and came from different parts of the USSR, their lives followed a pattern. All six were born between 1918 and 1922; however none of them were from L’viv or western Ukraine. The defendants all fought for the Red Army at the beginning of World War II. By late 1941, Prihodko, Minochkin and Stankov were captured, selected and trained by the Nazis as SS guards. The other three men, Zhukov, Pankratov and Lagutin became “Wachmann SS” in summer 1942, following their capture, selection and training.

The chronology of the defendants’ service differed slightly. But all six worked in Lublin and L’viv, particularly at the Janowska camp. The Nazis sent the Wachmann SS units to Germany by late 1943 or early 1944 and, aside from Pankratov, the defendants had continued to serve in various concentration camps. Upon the Nazi defeat, four rejoined the Red Army and served until 1946. In the immediate postwar years, each man faced indictment for treason in

---

1 USHMM Archives RG 31.018M Reel 73, Frame 1492, Ukraine. The full names of the six defendants include: Sergey Samuelovich Prihodko, Aleksandr Semenovich Minochkin, Nikolay Andreievich Stankov, Georgiy Antonovich Pankratov, Aleksei Ivanovich Zhukov, and Sergey Ivanovich Lagutin.

2 Pankratov escaped in summer 1943 from Janowska, but returned after several weeks in the forest. He was arrested, beaten, imprisoned and interrogated in L’viv. Afterwards, he was sent to Auschwitz, Buchenwald, and later to other parts of Germany as a laborer. He was liberated by the Americans and rejoined the Red Army. I will discuss this circumstance in relation to the trial and verdict further on.
Soviet military tribunals. Half received a verdict of ten years of imprisonment in labor camps; the other three, twenty-five years of labor. All six received military amnesty by 1956. However between September 1965 and July 1966, the Military Board of the USSR Supreme Court identified these men and reopened their cases.

This trial took place in L’viv under the Military Tribunal of the Carpathian Military District. A full court assembled and the trial was open to the public. A general-major presided as the chairman, joined by another lieutenant colonel and major, filling the roles of the people’s assessors in accordance with Soviet military legal procedure. Also, two military official personnel served as prosecutors and each defendant had a defense attorney provided by the L’viv Oblast. The six were accused of crimes committed under Statute 56, Article 1 of the Ukrainian SSR. Known as an “especially dangerous state crime” this statute addressed “treason against the homeland.” More specifically, the trial protocol stated that the defendants were tried “in accordance to the Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet Union from March 4, 1965 ‘On the punishment of individuals responsible for crimes against peace and humanity and military

---

3 Prihodko, Minochkin, Pankratov and Lagutin rejoined the Soviet forces upon American liberation in Germany. Prihodko was tried under statute 56.1 “b” of the UkSSR, and the other five men under statute 58.1”b” since they all lived in Russia. Stankov, Pankratov and Minochkin received the ten year sentence, while Prihodko, Zhukov and Lagutin were sentenced to twenty-five years. Pankratov was the first to be granted amnesty in October 1952, and Stankov the last in January 1956; the other four men received amnesty in 1955.

4 The protocol does not specify whether it was a closed or a public trial, however a local newspaper covered this trial and confirmed that it was open to the public.

5 General-Major Kravchenko served as the chairman; Lieutenant Colonel Romanov and Major Bondar’ fulfilled the “two people’s assessors” requirement.

6 The prosecutors included General-Major Kryuchkov and Lieutenant Colonel Zinchenko. The defense attorneys included the following: Fedorishev for Prihodko, Kalugin for Minochkin, Kakstov for Stankov, Goncharsc’ev for Pankratov, Koval’ for Zhukov, and Lesnaya for Lagutin.

7 Special Section 56.1 of the UkSSR: The Supreme Soviet Council of the Ukrainian Republic amended the statute in June 1961, adding the death penalty as a possible punishment.
crimes, regardless of the time committed, and considering that the defendants committed grave crimes against the Soviet Homeland during the wartime period, the military tribunal does not find reason for implementing the statute of limitation (Statute 48 UkSSR).”

The court indicted “all six persons for committing crimes under St. 56 Art.1 of the UkSSR.” Each defendant pled guilty. The court used witness testimonies, investigations of experts, records from the Extraordinary State Commission, photographs of Janowska, as well as captured Nazi documents to prove the guilt of each individual defendant. Although these records should be approached critically, the different type of evidence used in this trial makes it distinctly different from the immediate postwar trials under Stalin.

Interestingly, the trial took place in L’viv even though none of the defendants lived in western Ukraine or the Carpathian Military District. Only Prihodko and Stankov were born in the Ukrainian Republic, and the other four men in various parts of Russia. At the time of arrest in

---

8 USHMM Archives RG 31.018M Reel 73, Frame 1055, Ukraine. Reel 73, 1532

9 USHMM Archives RG 31.018M Reel 73, Frame 1055, Ukraine. Reel 73, 1517. The trial protocol and verdict from 24 December 1966 offer a fascinating glimpse into the case of these six men from the perspective of the Soviet Military Tribunal in L’viv. It provides the backbone for my research and analysis of this particular trial because the protocol reveals the court’s focus and its effort at forging justice. These records bring attention to the location of the trial. Additionally, the emphasis on particular events and crimes implies what might be the central objective and reason for these trials. The protocol’s word choice also portrays what was permissible in Soviet courts during this time period. Unfortunately, this protocol records only one perspective of the trial, creating an inevitable bias. Nonetheless, this single perspective with its bias presents a vital dimension of Soviet Holocaust justice. The copy of the trial protocol contains twenty pages of typed text. The opening salutations include an outline of the make-up of the court. This is followed by brief paragraphs about each defendant with their demographics, military history and judicial information. The demographics included date and place of birth, current residency, occupation pre and postwar, marital status, nationality, party affiliation, education. The military and judicial history reviewed the years of service in the Red Army, dates of the initial trial in the military tribunals, years of imprisonment, date of release under amnesty, as well as the date that the Ministry of Internal Affairs identified and reopened the case.

10 Places and dates of birth: Prihodko – Chernigov, Ukraine 1918; Minochkin – Yaroslav, Russia 1921; Stankov – Zaporozhiya, Ukraine 1918, but grew up around Moscow; Pankratov – Gor’kovsk, Russia 1921; Zhukov – Ulyanovsk, Russia 1918; and Lagutin – Stavropol’, Russia 1922.
1966, only Prihodko lived in Ukraine, but in the north-eastern part, whereas the rest of the men lived various parts of Russia, spread all the way from Moscow to Siberia. Furthermore, the defendants faced charges under the Ukrainian statute of 56.1. In their initial military trials immediately after the war, everyone except Prihodko was accused of treason under statute 58.1”b” of Russia. Hence the location of the 1966 trial plays a central role in this case. Treason could be tried and punished in anywhere. However, the L’viv court brought these alleged traitors of the homeland to the specific location of the crime. The defendants were also accused of “crimes against peace and humanity” in addition to treason. The fact that the military tribunal took place in L’viv implies that seeking justice for crimes against humanity, particularly crimes committed locally, rather than merely for treason, was the central objective of the trial.

The military tribunal established that the six defendants had indeed fought for the Red Army during the war. In German captivity, they had betrayed the Soviet Homeland and voluntarily joined the Nazi forces, serving as SS guards. Upon completing training in Trawniki, Poland, they received uniforms, took an oath of loyalty to serve Nazi Germany, and were given the titles of “Wachmann SS.” ¹¹ Aside from two general statements, the court did not elaborate or seek to determine the details of treason itself through the act of voluntarily joining the Nazi forces. Nor does the court explore the Nazi training and indoctrination at Trawniki. Instead the protocol continues: “While in service of Nazi Germany, the defendants, Prihodko, Minochkin, Stankov, Pankratov, Zhukov and Lagutin, together with the Germans and under the command of

¹¹ In Russian, the men were often called “Wachmanns” (Вахманы) in court testimony and records in reference to multiple Wachmannschaft SS guards. Therefore, in further transliterated quotes, I will also use the German original “Wachmänner” to mean the SS guards or “Trawnikis”.
Nazi German officers, personally participated in the torture and murder of Soviet persons and persons of other countries occupied by Nazi Germany.”

The remaining fifteen pages of the protocol provide a comprehensive and chronological portrait of the men’s SS service during the occupation. The report provides strenuous details. Here, in great detail, the court focused on specific crimes, committed by each individual, connecting each defendant to specific crimes. The protocol reviews a wide scope of crimes in addition to murder, including any participation in massacres, round-ups, liquidations, beatings, convoys, as well as stealing and trading victims’ belongings. These trials thus offer a unique glimpse into the Holocaust in the General Government, and specifically in L’viv.

The Trawniki training camp is mentioned again, but only as a starting point of the defendants’ violent actions. During training, Minochkin and Stankov participated in “punitive operations against peaceful Polish citizens” and Zhukov against Polish partisans. Minochkin and Stankov also took part in arresting and forcing Jews into concentration camps from surrounding areas. Upon completing training, the Nazis placed the new SS guards in units and assigned them to various locations. Each defendant’s unit served in the Lublin District between 1942 and 1943, where their primary tasks included guarding the concentration camp, ghetto and prison, as well as convoying prisoners to various work.

The court reviewed the role of each defendant in Lublin. For instance, Minochkin shot one woman in 1942 while convoying prisoners from the ghetto to the concentration camp. He

---

12 USHMM Archives RG 31.018M Reel 73, Frame 1055, Ukraine. Reel 73, 1517

13 USHMM Archives RG 31.018M Reel 73, Frame 1518, Ukraine. The Russian word for “punitive” is “карательный” and actually has a different meaning close to “cruel” and is usually used in context of extermination. Other ways to translate this and capture a more probable meaning are “killing operations” or “exterminating operations”. I will discuss the protocol’s word choice in more detail further on.
also stated that he had participated in a shooting that killed 400 Jews deemed unfit for work, namely the ill, elderly and children. In addition to this, Minochkin personally participated in shooting two groups of ten to fifteen people. Pankratov worked as a guard as well, during which time he repeatedly beat prisoners, and participated in rounding up Jews from surrounding areas into the ghetto.

The recounting of Zhukov’s activity captures the court’s attempt to connect defendants to specific crimes and highlight their individual roles in the murder. Zhukov also guarded the Lublin prison and concentration camp, and convoyed prisoners to and from work, often beating them. Additionally the protocol reads, “In fall 1942 together with other Wachmänner, Zhukov participated in convoying individuals of the Jewish nationality from the Lublin ghetto to the Majdenek death camp. At this time, Zhukov beat prisoners and shot at them. In spring 1943, Zhukov participated again in a punitive operation against Jews in one village near Lublin. During this operation, the Wachmänner were commanded by Germans to beat and shoot weak and rebellious Jews on the spot. Zhukov, in this operation, forced Jews from their homes and beat them with the butt of his rifle.” The details not only emphasize Zhukov’s actions and violence, but the report also reveals how much the court knew and chose to reiterate about Jewish suffering and extermination.

Lagutin’s unit served in areas surrounding Lublin, where he confiscated food and produce from the Polish locals. At the end of 1942, a massacre took place of 500 Jews from the Majdanek Camp construction. According to the USHMM Holocaust Encyclopedia, “the SS routinely shot prisoners too weak to work either on the edge of the camp grounds or in the Krepiecki Forest north of Lublin” during the winter of 1941-1942. It is possible that Minochkin may have participated in such actions.

14 The Nazis forced many Jews and POWs to work on the Majdanek Camp construction. According to the USHMM Holocaust Encyclopedia, “the SS routinely shot prisoners too weak to work either on the edge of the camp grounds or in the Krepiecki Forest north of Lublin” during the winter of 1941-1942. It is possible that Minochkin may have participated in such actions.

15 USHMM Archives RG 31.018M Reel 73, Frame 1519-1520, Ukraine.
ghetto in the village of Linchyn took place.\textsuperscript{16} The protocol states, “during this violence, together with other Wachmänner, Lagutin personally participated in shooting fifteen people on the ghetto territory.”\textsuperscript{17} Lagutin later took part of another massacre of 200 factory workers. He served as a guard while Germans shot the prisoners, and “finished off” those who did not die after the first bullet. Lagutin’s service points to the wide spectrum of work assigned to the SS guards in the Nazi apparatus.

Eventually, the six defendants’ units all transferred to L’viv, specifically to the Janowska camp. Located in the northwestern suburbs of L’viv, Janowska served as a labor camp and transit camp for Jews. The Wachmänner guarded prisoners going to and from work, as well as to the deportations taking prisoners to death camps. The protocol also indicated that they “actively participated in mass shootings of prisoners including elderly, women and children.”\textsuperscript{18} The court reviewed each act of violence in which the defendants participated and established that from the spring until November 1943, at least 22,000 Janowska prisoners perished by gunshot. Stankov’s unit arrived to Janowska in the early spring of 1943. He took part of several systematic shootings of exhausted and ill prisoners, usually in groups of fifty, and a larger massacre of 200 people. In May 1943, Minochkin, Pankratov, Prihodko and Zhukov arrived at Janowska. In addition to participating in smaller shootings, these five defendants all played a role in a three-day massacre with a total of about 15,000 victims.\textsuperscript{19} During the summer, another mass operation of 4,000

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{16} Linchyn is in modern-day Ukraine, in the Rivne oblast.

\textsuperscript{17} USHMM Archives RG 31.018M Reel 73, Frame 1520, Ukraine.

\textsuperscript{18} USHMM Archives RG 31.018M Reel 73, Frame 1521, Ukraine. Jews arriving at Janowska went through a selection process similar to Auschwitz-Birkenau. Those fit for work stayed at Janowska and were used as forced labor. Those deemed unfit for work, the majority, were either deported to Belzec or shot at the Piaski ravine, just north of the camp.

\textsuperscript{19} Lagutin only arrived in Janowska in the autumn, hence he was not present during this mass shooting.
\end{footnotesize}
people took place, followed by occasional shootings claiming as many as 400 lives at a time. The Nazis decided to fully liquidate the camp in November 1943, thus executing the remaining 2,000 prisoners of Janowska.  

The court records contain elaborate word choice and detailed descriptions of the mass shootings. It paints a vivid portrait of the genocide in western Ukraine and reveals the Soviet court’s view of the horrors. The following passage describes the three-day execution:

Soon after the defendants, Prihodko, Minochkin, Zhukov and Pankratov, arrived to the Janowska camp, several thousand citizens of the Jewish nationality, including women, children and elderly, from the L’viv ghetto and surrounding areas were transported to the [Janowska] camp. For the duration of several days, they were kept outdoors without cover in the camp, with no food or water. At the end of May and beginning of June 1943, all of these Soviet people were shot near the camp in a ravine that was called the “Valley of Death”. This mass extermination of innocent people lasted three days. During this evildoing, the defendants Prihodko, Minochkin, Stankov, Pankratov, Zhukov, and other Wachmänner under the command and direct participation of Nazis, led groups of 70-100 doomed people from the camp, severely beat them, forced them to undress, and drove them to the pits that were already dug out.  

The SS guards then forced the prisoners to edge of the pit and pushed them in, as the Germans fired rounds of ammunition. “Convoying the columns of the doomed to the execution site, the defendants Prihodko, Stankov, Minochkin, Pankratov and Zhukov kicked and beat the prisoners with their rifles. They personally shot the prisoners who resisted, tried to escape or slowed down the process.”

20 Arad, *The Holocaust*, 225-226. There were anywhere from 135,000 to 160,000 Jews living in L’viv prior to the Nazi occupation. It is possible that Janowska experienced far more traffic since it also served as a transit camp for the region. This military tribunal in L’viv dealt with specific crimes committed by the defendants on their territory and did not address the detailed figures about deportations or other massacres. The figures provided here are those that the court dealt with, and may not necessarily represent comprehensive statistics of Jewish deaths in Janowska.

21 USHMM Archives RG 31.018M Reel 73, Frame 1522, Ukraine. Quotations original.

22 USHMM Archives RG 31.018M Reel 73, Frame 1523, Ukraine.
This passage describes the extermination process in detail. The court specified that the victims included women, children and elderly. The protocol reiterates this fact each time a shooting was discussed. The court thus differentiated between war crimes and the concept of crimes against humanity, which was crucial for this trial. The killing of women, children and elderly has no direct connection with treason; nonetheless, the court emphasized it. Furthermore, the defendants held no responsibility for Jews kept outdoors without food or water for several days upon arrival to Janowska. Yet the court included this fact in the trial’s final protocol. This indicates that the prosecution explored all of the circumstances in Janowska, and not only the crimes committed by the defendants, revealing the court’s interest in the victim suffering itself.

However the protocol only conservatively mentioned Jews in this specific passage about the three-day massacre. Aside from establishing that “several thousand citizens of the Jewish nationality” were brought to Janowska, the following rhetoric described the victims as Soviet people, prisoners, or the “doomed.” The fact that the victims were Jewish was not mentioned again. Interestingly, the sections describing the defendants’ activities around Lublin specified Jews much more frequently and clearly. For example: “In fall 1942 together with other Wachmänner, Zhukov participated in convoying individuals of the Jewish nationality from the Lublin ghetto to the Majdenek death camp. At this time, Zhukov beat prisoners and shot at them. In spring 1943, Zhukov participated again in a punitive operation against Jews in one village near Lublin.”23 As the passage continues, the words “Jews” and “prisoners” are used interchangeably, reiterating that the prisoners and victims were in fact Jews. The tone in Janowska massacre description seems to shift and the victims’ ethnicity is never referred to again even as the protocol recounts the various massacres throughout 1943. Is this perhaps

23 USHMM Archives RG 31.018M Reel 73, Frame 1519, Ukraine. Italics mine.
coincidental, or did the location of the crime influence the Soviet court’s description of Jewish suffering? Did the L’viv military tribunal not want to focus on the fact that the crimes committed outside its doorstep were primarily against Jews? Nonetheless, the court established the victims’ ethnicity. Also if the protocol is read as a whole, the fact that the victims were Jewish is unmistakable due to the frequent mention of Jews in the first part.

Furthermore the use of syntax and diction points to the guilty, and allows the court to elaborate on the suffering and horrors of the shooting itself. First, the protocol follows the official Soviet historical narrative of this time period by introducing the war as the “Great Patriotic War.” Traditionally, this narrative explains Soviet victimization by Nazi Germany that resulted in a Soviet triumph through the defense of the homeland. Interestingly enough, the protocol usually describes the defendants’ actions in the active voice and refers to Germans in the passive voice. This pattern illuminates the defendants’ guilt and places the Nazis in the background. The sentence structure is consistent with the court’s attempt to connect each defendant to specific crimes. By using active voice, the protocol assigns the guilt through syntax.

The court uses Jewish phraseology and labels the Janowska ravine as the “Valley of Death” since it was described this way by witnesses; the protocol repeats this phrase several times. This phrase indicates the magnitude of the massacre because the execution site was not

---

24 Lublin was part of the General Government and remained so. L’viv had been annexed Soviet territory and was added to the General Government after August 1941. After the war, L’viv was reintegrated into Soviet Ukraine, whereas Lublin remained a part of Poland.

25 The Soviet Union, and present-day Russia, referred to World War Two as the “Great Patriotic War,” also translated as the “Great Fatherland War.” This name reveals the Soviet perspective of the war, assigning primary Nazi victimhood to the USSR and claiming responsibility for protecting the “Russian homeland” and defeating fascism.

26 In Russian, it reads “Долина смерти”.

65
simply a pit, but a valley. The “Valley of Death” also has a biblical reference to Psalm 23. It is impossible to decipher whether the use of this phrase had a religious intent in a Soviet court. Furthermore, the protocol used specific adjectives and adverbs to describe circumstances. The Wachmänner severely forced the prisoners to their backbreaking work; the SS guards violently beat the exhausted prisoners and shot peaceful citizens. The doomed died in the evildoing. Although some of these descriptions refer to the defendants’ actions, they are not necessary to establish a straightforward account of the crimes. The use of such details reveals the court’s interest in discovering more about the suffering itself, not merely the cold facts of the committed crimes. The protocol does summarize how many people each defendant killed, but only after a detailed description of the massacre. The protocol’s word choice indicates that recounting the victims’ suffering and the horrors of the massacre was a priority for the military tribunal.

In addition to focusing on details concerning the massacres, the trial also explored other events and occurrences connected to the defendants during this time period. The Soviet court considered assistance with deportations a crime as well, and therefore paid attention to such details. In fact, the prosecution had no misconception about the meaning of Jewish deportations during Nazi occupation. Each time the trial protocol referred to a deportation, it always identified the transport’s destination. For instance as previously mentioned, Zhukov aided with deportations while serving in the Lublin ghetto. The protocol records that he convoyed Jews to the “Majdenek death camp.” This concise description not only identified the destination of the

27 Psalm 23:4 - “Even when I walk through the dark valley of death, I will not be afraid for you are close beside me.” (NLT version)

28 In the Janowska three-day massacre, Stankov killed four people; Pankratov – three.; Zhukov and Prihodko – two each; Minochkin – one.
Jews but also pointed to their ultimate fate, showing that the Soviet court had a clear understanding and willingness to mention the Jewish fate.

As part of the General Government, the Jews of western Ukraine also faced the possibility of deportation and gassing. Stankov was first of the six defendants to arrive in Janowska in the spring of 1943. During this time, he participated in convoys of prisoners to the Kleparov station in L’viv for deportations to Belzec. The protocol explained that Stankov served as a guard, but it also described his role in further detail. He arrested Jewish prisoners and “systematically” convoyed them to the train station. There, the guards forced the prisoners to undress, loaded them naked and “deported them for extermination to the Belzec death camp.”

The convoys that Stankov participated in deported approximately 10,000 individuals to Belzec.

The court showed an interest in isolated crimes in addition to focusing on the mass shootings and deportations. By mentioning the following instance, the protocol showed the court’s interest in a wide scope of committed crimes, and also revealed another horrific aspect of the Holocaust, namely rape. “In the summer of 1943, the unit commander Malov raped a young female prisoner in the camp and then shot her twice, wounding her. The defendant Zhukov was present and “finished off” the victim by shooting her.” This incident received no more elaboration, yet it was recorded because it showed another crime committed by a defendant. However, the protocol could have easily omitted the circumstances of this crime by providing a vague description or no description at all. Nonetheless, the fact that the final protocol included

---

29 USHMM Archives RG 31.018M Reel 73, Frame 1521, Ukraine. Most accounts regarding deportation and arrival to death camps explain that victims were forced to strip naked after arrival and prior to “showering.” This account differs shockingly. The trial protocol specifically included that the guards forced the prisoners to strip at the train station and loaded them naked for deportation. This description suggests a stark difference in the treatment and deportation process between western and eastern Jews.

30 USHMM Archives RG 31.018M Reel 73, Frame 1524, Ukraine.
this incident showed the Soviet court’s interest and willingness to pay attention to such isolated crimes. It also implies that the court evidently dealt the suffering of Jews, both on the mass scale as well as on the individual level.

The protocol also outlined historical events because it always provided the context for the defendants’ alleged crimes. In November 1943, the Nazis decided to kill the remaining prisoners at Janowska. For this purpose, a special SS force arrived early one morning.\(^{31}\) The prisoners apparently discovered the Germans’ plans and a rebellion erupted. They broke the barbed wire fence and attempted a mass escape. However, the Nazis and Wachmänner surrounded the camp. They crushed the uprising by firing rounds from machine guns and rifles into the crowds of prisoners. Afterwards, the Germans and Wachmänner liquidated the remaining 2,000 prisoners and shot them outside the camp in the ravine known as the “Valley of Death.”\(^{32}\)

The prosecution then connected each defendant to specific crimes during the Janowska uprising and its subsequent liquidation. Minochkin, Stankov and Lagutin shot at prisoners to quash the rebellion. Stankov, Minochkin and Prihodko later convoyed the prisoners to the ravine, forced them to undress and kicked them into the pit under the gunfire. Meanwhile, Lagutin delivered three machine guns to the extermination site. Zhukov drove out the ill prisoners from the camp hospital and loaded them in the trucks for delivery to the ravine. By

---

\(^{31}\) This is confirmed by Arad in *Holocaust in the Soviet Union*, 340. According to Arad, “large numbers of Orpo and a company of Caucasian soldiers subordinated to the German Sipo” arrived to Janowska on the morning of November 19, 1943.

\(^{32}\) Arad records that about 7,000 Jews from Janowska were murdered in November, whereas the USHMM Holocaust Encyclopedia writes that the “SS staff and their local auxiliaries murdered at least 6,000 surviving Jews from various forced-labor camps in Galicia when the Janowska camp was liquidated in November 1943.” These figures are significantly higher than the protocol’s record of approximately 2,000. The Soviet court could have had incorrect data or perhaps intentionally underrepresented the number of victims. But, the protocol implies that these 2,000 prisoners were executed at the ravine on that same day. It does not include the Jews killed during the uprising or others from various labor-camps, as the Holocaust Encyclopedia points out.
focusing on each individual’s role, the court assigned personal guilt and responsibility to the defendants. Furthermore, the court’s effort to establish a verdict caused them to review the process of mass shootings again, offered specific details about the complexity of the extermination, and served as a reminder of the Nazis’ resolution for a complete Final Solution. Instead of simply stating concise facts, the protocol followed the pattern of elaborating on details of the liquidation and massacre. Although the prosecution reviewed these actions in order to determine guilt, the court indirectly explored Jewish suffering during the Holocaust.

After the November liquidation of Janowska, the Nazis directed the Wachmannschaft units to Germany where the SS guards continued to serve at various concentration camps such as Buchenwald and Bergstedt. All of the defendants, except Pankratov, served the Nazis until the war ended. Pankratov had fled Janowska and attempted to escape the SS with two other Wachmänner in June 1943. After several weeks of wandering through the forest, they returned to the camp, only to be arrested. The Nazis beat and interrogated the runaway men while keeping them in the L’viv prison. Eventually Pankratov was deported to Auschwitz and given a prisoner number. From Auschwitz, the Germans sent Pankratov to Buchenwald and later to the Dora sub-camp where he worked until the American liberation.

In the months after the war, all six men returned to the USSR with the Red Army, “but concealed from Soviet authorities their personal participation in mass killings and violence of

---

31 Stankov, Lagutin, Prihodko and Zhukov served as concentration camp guards. However, Minochkin was assigned to the Russian Liberation Army (ROA) in March 1945. The ROA was made up of anti-communist Russian forces, subjugated to the Nazi German high command during WWII. After the war, the Soviet government labeled and tried ROA soldiers as traitors.

34 USHMM Archives RG 31.018M Reel 73, Frame 1055, Ukraine. 1492- In an earlier testimony, Pankratov had explained that he escaped the camp after a fight with his superior, thus revealing some motive behind attempting to leave the SS.
Soviet citizens and people of other countries in German concentration camps.” As previously mentioned, Soviet authorities discovered their wartime positions and tried them for treason in the years immediately after the war; however they all received amnesty in the mid-1950s. The sentence protocol of the 1966 trial recorded that all six defendants pled guilty, fully acknowledging their guilt, for betraying the Homeland and committing crimes against peace and humanity.

After providing the detailed overarching narrative of the men’s roles as SS guards during the war, the protocol summarized the specific charges brought against each defendant. This included a list of crimes and brief overviews of witness testimonies used as evidence. At least nine former Wachmänner and other local civilians testified in court, usually presenting evidence about more than one defendant. Additionally, the prosecution used the defendants themselves as witnesses in each other’s cases. At least four witnesses testified for each defendant’s case. For instance, seven witnesses confirmed Minochkin’s guilt, two of whom were other defendants on trial - Stankov and Prihodko. The protocol recorded specific accusations used as evidence such as that of witness Lobuntsev who “explained that Minochkin actively participated in the German-led punitive operations against civilians in both the Trawniki and Lublin areas. In the process of these operations, Minochkin beat the doomed people, and also personally shot at them.” Lobuntsev claimed that he saw Minochkin participate in Janowska’s three-day massacre.

---

35 USHMM Archives RG 31.018M Reel 73, Frame 1525, Ukraine.

36 The specific charges were another review of the committed crimes including participation in massacres, liquidations, beating, etc. The nine witnesses included the following former Wachmanns: Lobuntsev, Tarasov, Litvinenko, Skorohod, Garifullin, Tsyuplenkov, Mistyuk, Shirmaliev, Gordeev.

37 Minochkin was specifically accused of shooting people and participating in the massacres by convoys prisoners, forcing them to undress, and leading them to the ravine.

38 USHMM Archives RG 31.018M Reel 73, Frame 1526, Ukraine.
as well. The court also asked local civilians and Janowska survivors to testify.\textsuperscript{39} Gilbert Bednarskiy came from Poland as a witness of Lagutin’s crimes in Linchyn. Leonid Zimmerman also arrived from Poland; he and another witness, Edmund Zaidel, had been former Janowska prisoners. This shows that the court used a variety of testimonies in combination with other documentation and investigations to determine the responsibility and pass the verdict.

Ultimately the protocol stated that “based on this evidence, the military tribunal finds Lagutin, Minochkin, Stankov, Zhukov, Prihodko and Pankratov guilty for betraying the Homeland by committing crimes against st. 56.1 UkSSR” and in accordance to the March 1965 Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet Union. Furthermore, “in determining the punishment for the defendants, the military tribunal considered that during the nation’s difficult times, they betrayed the Soviet Homeland – went to serve the enemy and committed grave crimes in mass extermination of innocent people.”\textsuperscript{40} As a result, the court sentenced the six defendants to death, by shooting. The Ukrainian KGB in L’viv was to continue to hold the men in custody until the verdict was carried out.\textsuperscript{41}

The court’s wording in the verdict reemphasized that the defendants’ crimes consisted of more than treason. The fact that the majority of the protocol focused on the second charge, the crimes committed against humanity, shows that this was the military tribunal’s primary concern. Pankratov’s situation provides an interesting example. “The military tribunal, in determining the

\textsuperscript{39} M. Grigorovich and C. Yavkin, “Prisoners Accused: From the Courtroom,” \textit{L’vovskaya Pravda}, 24 December 1966. The final protocol did not list these witnesses by name. However, a local newspaper mentioned their testimonies. I will discuss press coverage in detail further on.

\textsuperscript{40} USHMM Archives RG 31.018M Reel 73, Frame 1532, Ukraine.

\textsuperscript{41} I have not seen records confirming that the sentence was carried out. But there is no reason to believe that it was not, especially considering the fact that the names of the defendants are mentioned in later trials, but they themselves never testified again.
extent of punishment, considered Pankratov’s case separately; although he terminated his service to the Germans in the summer of 1943, during the time of his service as a Wachmann, he actively participated in killing people and personally shot them.”

Pankratov did not receive a lighter sentence even though he voluntarily escaped from the Nazis, thus concluding his service to the Soviet enemy. The protocol’s statement reveals that the court was more concerned with Pankratov’s acts of violence rather than his political loyalty during the war. This suggests that the Soviet authorities launched these series of trials in order to seek justice for the crimes committed by collaborators against humanity during World War II.

The media coverage for this trial also reported the crimes against humanity, but framed them as treacherous acts against the homeland. Although it gained no international attention, the 1966 trial in L’viv was open to the public and received national and local media coverage. The national Soviet official party-line newspaper, Pravda, included two brief articles about the trial. In the 25 December 1966 issue, Pravda published an article on the last page entitled “Payback” (Rasplata). The short story listed the six defendants, Minochkin, Stankov, Pankratov, Lagutin, Zhukov and Prihodko, calling them “traitors” and stating that they all pled guilty for their crimes. The newspaper explained that the men entered SS service and participated in mass extermination of the peaceful population during the Nazi occupation of L’viv. Additionally, the court had “recreated a terrifying picture of the evildoings committed by these fanatics together with their masters in the Janowska death camp. The fascists and their henchmen exterminated 200 thousand people here. Amongst whom were citizens from the Soviet Union, Poland, France, Czechoslovakia, Italy.” Finally, Pravda reported that the military tribunal sentenced the men to

--

42 USHMM Archives RG 31.018M Reel 73, Frame 1055, Ukraine. 1533

death by shooting, and that the audience “boldly welcomed this just verdict.”

The Soviet press coverage of this trial differed significantly from the JTA rhetoric about the other Soviet trials, although the trials themselves appear similar in nature. Pravda included no details about the actual crimes committed by the defendants, and omitted Jewish suffering altogether. The JTA’s coverage created the allusion that the USSR aimed to bring Nazi criminals to justice for crimes against humanity, particularly Jews. Pravda, however, followed the Soviet pattern of generalizing the suffering of World War II. Yet the fact that Moscow’s Pravda reported this trial implies the significance of the case. The tone of the article, even the title “Payback,” fits the Soviet rhetoric about the Great Patriotic War. This indicates that the Soviet authorities may have had a dual, almost contradictory, purpose in launching this series of trials. In addition to displaying its moral leadership on the international stage by participating in Holocaust justice, Brezhnev may have used the trials to help cultivate the “cult of the Great Patriotic War” in his attempt to reassert ideological control domestically. Thus, the authorities generalized the victim group to all Soviet citizens, making the ultimate defeat of Nazi Germany an even more significant victory for the entire population. In doing so, Pravda actually distorted history and the nature of the trials.

In addition to national coverage, the 1966 L’viv trial received attention in the local press. This coverage presented a more nuanced picture of the case. Although it was not a daily paper, L’vovskaya Pravda was the official party publication in L’viv, with everything written in Russian. On 24 December 1966, it published a lengthy article entitled “Prisoners Accused: from the Courtroom.” The newspaper labeled the six defendants as traitors of the homeland and wrote,
“The audience responds with anger and indignation at the cannibals’ atrocities.” In addition to such superfluous descriptions, the article actually covered the highlights of the trial by navigating through the stories of three witnesses. The first witness, Edmund Iosifovich Zaidel, was a former prisoner of Janowska and his experience illuminates the history of Janowska. The Nazis captured Zaidel at age twelve during a round up. Out of a group of six, he was the only one not shot but selected for labor in Janowska. Later, he was chosen for deportation; at the Kleparov station, all of the inmates had to strip naked and were forced inside the train cars. Zaidel tied his clothing into a knot and snuck it inside the train. The boy widened a crack in the train and jumped out because he knew that the train’s destination meant death. With no other place to go, Zaidel returned to Janowska. Prior to the final liquidation, he dug out a shelter in the trenches and hid there after the Nazis decided to exterminate the remainder of the prisoners.

By using the testimonies, L’vovskaya Pravda elaborated on the “massacre of children” and reported “people were killed in groups and individually, with the most sophisticated methods.” The newspaper offered a thorough description about killings at the “Valley of Death” and included specific stories of violence, such as one Nazi torturing a prisoner by pulling out his teeth, one by one. The article also described the deportations at the Kleparov station, including that prisoners had to be shoved inside the train because they resisted. According to L’vovskaya Pravda, this L’viv ghetto held about 300,000 prisoners, but they constantly changed as some were exterminated and new ones arrived. The newspaper concluded that it is difficult to fathom

44 M. Grigorovich and C. Yavkin, “Prisoners Accused: From the Courtroom,” L’vovskaya Pravda, 24 December 1966. In Russian, the word for “atrocities” is actually “bloody evildoings,” which adds an even greater dramatic effect.

45 The witnesses included: Edmund Iosifovich Zaidel and Leonid Zimmerman, both former inmates of Janowska, and Gibert Bednarskiy, a Polish eyewitness.
such atrocities, but they are not coincidental; rather, they are a result of fascism and the cannibal “master Aryan race” theory. Furthermore, “the Wachmänner tried to imitate their ‘masters’” and the court was now seeking justice for their crimes.

Despite its more thorough coverage, *L’vovskaya Pravda* also failed to state that Janowska was primarily a Jewish camp. In the description of the “Valley of Death” massacres, the paper stated that the victims included people of different nationalities including Russians and two thousand Italian soldiers. Yet, the article does not mention Jews at all. However, such a detailed description at the local level probably left little doubt considering that only two decades had passed. Aside from the historical events, *L’vovskaya Pravda* included other clues, such as the witnesses’ names. Of the three witnesses the newspaper covered, only Zaidel’s patronymic of “Iosofovich” was included. An audience that retained any memory of wartime events and/or some knowledge of name origins could decipher that Jews died at Janowska. Moreover, the trial itself did deal with Jewish suffering and death; since it was a public trial at least some locals were directly exposed to the truth.

The other local newspaper to cover the 1966 trial in L’viv was the *Leninskaya Molod’*. This official paper of the Komsomol was written in Ukrainian and tended to be more informative on local matters. Rather than publishing many official documents and speeches, the paper generally included articles in essay form on topics deemed ideologically important. The first article on the trial appeared on 16 December 1966 entitled “Mothers and Infants Will Not Forgive!” and a second article called “Truth and Only Truth” was published five days later.\(^\text{46}\) Much of the content of these articles reflected that of *L’vovskaya Pravda*. For instance,

---

Leninskaya Molod’ also reported about the same court witnesses and described Janowska atrocities in detail. However, the articles were longer, included more nuanced detail and contained more about the response of the public, thus providing an insight to the formation of public memory in western Ukraine.

Leninskaya Molod’ explained that everyone gathered for the trial of those who served the Nazis in order to deal with the traumatic wounds of the Great Patriotic War. Furthermore, the newspaper asserted that the people could not forgive, but sought truth and justice since mothers and children had lost their husbands and fathers. Although the articles contained some World War II rhetoric on the surface, they really dealt with the Holocaust at Janowska. Leninskaya Molod’ included more details from Zimmerman’s testimony, whose barrack had been located across the street from the Wachmann barrack. He described daily camp life, shootings and the brutality of the Wachmann guards. Also, this newspaper actually mentioned Jews. Before describing the three day massacre known as the “Valley of Death,” the first article referred to the defendants and explained, “They, the Wachmanner, went to round up the Jews.” The story continued with an in-depth account of the killings. Aside from the first reference to Jews, the remainder of the article identified the victims as “prisoners” or “inmates” throughout the remainder of the story. Nonetheless, a direct connection could be made. And unlike the national Pravda and L’vovskaya Pravda, this newspaper did not list other nationalities amongst the victims, thus not generalizing or distorting the victim group. Leninskaya Molod’ also emphasized the suffering of women, children and the elderly. This focus implies that the local newspaper was dealing more with the crimes against humanity rather than treason and collaboration.

The second article included a testimony from a local woman who had not testified in court. She explained, “The fascists brought wagons full of prisoners. After the round up in the
ghetto, they brought and brought Jews to the [Janowska] camp. Then – to the ravine and there, they shot them. A stream flowed nearby my house. But then, blood flowed. The blood of those shot broke the dam built by the Nazis. I saw one prisoner who escaped. He was naked, thin and frightened.” This testimony indicates that locals clearly remembered what happened and who the Nazis targeted. Furthermore, at least some locals were willing to speak of Jewish suffering publicly. By using local testimony, the newspaper created a direct connection between the trial and the people, thus revealing the trial’s significance to the local population. The people of western Ukraine certainly had suffered during the Nazi occupation; and according to *Leninskaya Molod’,* this trial was used as a public healing process. The article on 16 December ended with this paragraph:

No! This does not happen on our Soviet land, in the land of L’viv. The pain from the Great Patriotic War, transferred from the abuse of the fascist concentration camps to former soldiers; all honest Soviet people are helping each other. And those survivors, former inmates of Buchenwald, Majdanek, Auschwitz and Janowska camps, experience nightmares (with sweat and heat). Frantic ambulance sirens sound. Doctors rush to the victims. The once incurable wounds are being healed.

The trial continues!

This passage makes the suffering of World War II and the Holocaust inseparable, following the Soviet pattern of representation. Furthermore, it presents L’viv as an intimate part of the Soviet Union, despite its relatively recent annexation. This generalization could have contributed to the “cult of the Great Patriotic War” nurtured by the Brezhnev government. Nonetheless, regardless of the motives, the court still sought justice for the crimes committed in L’viv, and the locals certainly had access to the trial and various press coverage on it. Although the newspapers generally followed Soviet patterns, the trial still dealt with Nazi collaborators and discussed genocide. The Soviet authorities perhaps intended to reassert ideological control and
loyalty through such trials. However for the local population in L’viv, this trial provided an opportunity to achieve a sense of justice for the recent crimes committed in their backyards. The exposure to Jewish suffering during the trial triggered public memory and may have contributed to an increasing consciousness of the Holocaust in Ukraine. Furthermore, the 1966 case was a part of a series of trials in the Soviet Union and in L’viv. No other trials in L’viv received media coverage and it is unclear whether any were open to the public. However, the KGB conducted meticulous investigations of Holocaust crimes committed by former collaborators. One such man was Oleksandr Kirelakha.
Oleksandr Kirelakha’s troubles did not cease upon receiving amnesty in 1955. Nor did he receive a completely “blank slate” once he was freed. On 12 October 1965, the Ministry of Internal Affairs reviewed Kirelakha’s case to determine his amnesty release date as well as his current place of residency in Dnipropetrovsk, Ukraine. The Soviet authorities had launched investigations of former Nazi collaborators, including Ukrainians who once served the Wachmannschaft SS. Records show that at least two other former Wachmann guards had served as witnesses and mentioned Kirelakha during their testimonies earlier in 1965. Each new trial was initiated by the KGB’s “review of archival case,” which also included the accused person’s list of other guards who once served in the Wachmannschaft SS with them. For instance, two men listed Kirelakha in February 1968 when the KGB reopened their cases. In this way, the Soviet legal process, even under Brezhnev, nurtured a system of denunciation. This also suggests that every case and interrogation contributed to the complex and intertwined web of justice in the Soviet Union.

Due to newly discovered evidence, the Ukrainian KGB reopened the criminal case of Oleksandr Kirelakha in L’viv on 27 March 1968 for treachery against the Soviet Homeland during the Great Patriotic War. Kirelakha did not face trial alone. The KGB initiated dozens, if

---

1 USHMM Archives RG 31.018M Reel 73, Frame 1055, Ukraine.
2 Ibid., Frames 1584 and 1602. Ivan Donstov testified on 14 January 1968 and Vasily Kirkach on 3 March 1968. It is unclear exactly whose trial these men served as witnesses, but both interrogations took place in Krasnodar. These protocols were later reviewed by the L’viv KGB in 1968 as evidence against Kirelakha. The fact that these interrogations took place prior to the Decree’s publication indicates that the KGB had already reopened trials. Furthermore, these protocols reference an earlier 1964 trial.
3 Ibid., Frames 1615 and 1619. Kubov Grigoriy and Borisenko, Ivan on 16 February 1968.
4 Ibid., Frame 1009.
not hundreds, of cases and launched a series of military tribunals after 1965 that dealt with former Red Army soldiers who once served in the Second World War. In many ways, Kirelakha’s story represents a typical case; however, the investigation and the court’s unlikely verdict for his trial in 1969 raises important questions about why and how the Soviet authorities approached Holocaust justice twenty years after the war. Furthermore, the trial’s content provides more information about the Holocaust in Eastern Galicia and the court process displays the changes in the Soviet legal system.

*****

Before the KGB officially reopened Kirelakha’s case on 27 March 1968, Kirelakha had testified as a witness in another trial. The Ukrainian KGB brought him to L’viv, and Kirelakha testified on 23 February 1968. The interrogation opened with the “proposition [for Kirelakha] to tell all known information about the circumstances under which he was summoned.” Without further prompting, Kirelakha shared the details of his wartime activity and collaboration. His narrative included more specific information than the interrogation from his 1949 trial. Kirelakha began with his Red Army service, explained his captivity and the subsequent selection for Trawniki training. He then outlined each assignment in the Wachmannschaft SS service. In addition to a brief description about the type of work they carried out, Kirelakha also listed other Wachmann guards whom served alongside him in each location. For instance, Kirelakha explained that he guarded the prisoners of Janowska and proceeded to list sixteen names of other

5 Ibid., Frame 1010. Although this witness interrogation protocol does not specify whose trial Kirelakha served as a witness for, it was most likely for Platon Demidenko’s case. Kirelakha’s answers suggest that Demidenko was on trial and later protocols show that Kirelakha had testified in Demidenko’s trial.

6 In the Soviet legal process, the witness is generally asked to share everything about the given circumstances. The KGB and/or the court must have informed Kirelakha what information they wanted him to share for the circumstances regarding the case, because the protocol does not include any specific question.
“traitors of the Homeland, former soldiers of the Soviet Army” that he remembered.\(^7\) He completed his story by briefly recounting American liberation, his return to the Soviet Union, the 1949 trial and verdict, as well as his 1955 amnesty.

The prosecutor followed up by asking Kirelakha to state the facts he knew regarding the shooting of camp prisoners in the locations he served during the war. Kirelakha responded that “During my time of service as a Wachmann in the German forces SS, I was an eyewitness and direct participant in the shooting of prisoners in the Zboriv and Janowska concentration camps.”\(^8\) He explained that in 1943, the Wachmann guards led twenty male prisoners from Zboriv to a pit located approximately one kilometer from the camp. Along the way, about ten men fell from exhaustion and the guards shot them on the spot. Kirelakha confessed to shooting two or three prisoners at this time. Upon reaching the pit, each Wachmann carried a rifle and was to participate in the shooting. The German commander gave orders, but did not shoot himself. Kirelakha did not shoot anyone at the pit, because all of the victims had already been killed before his turn. He relisted the names of other guards who had participated in the shooting. The interrogation ended with his detailed retelling of this shooting in Zboriv.

The next day, 24 February 1968, Kirelakha continued this testimony. The prosecutor began by asking him to “continue telling about the facts you know about the mass extermination of Soviet citizens.”\(^9\) Kirelakha described shooting of about forty Jews of the Janowska camp in the autumn of 1943. He had assisted a Nazi commander in leading the prisoners to a field, where

---

\(^7\) USHMM Archives RG 31.018M Reel 73, Frame 1013, Ukraine. In this list, he included the four men who named him in earlier interrogations in 1965 and 1965, as well as others Wachmann guards he could not remember.

\(^8\) Ibid., Frame 1017.

\(^9\) Ibid., Frame 1023.
an SD officer met them and shot each prisoner while the Wachmänner guarded the group.

Kirelakha also explained that about two months later, he had participated in the two-day mass execution of Janowska prisoners.\textsuperscript{10} According to Kirelakha, at least one thousand, if not a few thousand, Jews perished at this time. During the first day, he was guarding the camp perimeter and witnessed how SD officers and Wachmänner loaded groups of Jews and drove them outside the camp. He concluded that the prisoners were to be shot. The next day, Kirelakha was assigned to work outside the camp and his assumptions were confirmed as he approached the massive pit, more than ten meters long and three meters deep with countless bodies inside.

During the interrogation, Kirelakha proceeded to describe the shooting in detail and confessed to shooting one or two prisoners himself.

Vehicles with Jews arrived to the pit every fifteen to twenty minutes, and they were all killed by the Germans and us Wachmänner. Many prisoners jumped into the pit without any resistance, but some of them did not want to jump and showed resistance. The Germans and Wachmänner, including myself, forcefully pushed these prisoners into the pit and then shot them. This extermination of innocent people presented a terrible image. I specifically remember a woman screaming, tearing out her hair, begging not to be killed; but the executioners brutally threw her into the pit and shot. One of the murderers, I do not remember who, also grabbed a child and threw him into the pit, shot and killed him.\textsuperscript{11}

A few days after the shooting, Kirelakha and other SS guards led Jewish prisoners to the massacre site where they filled the pit. Kirelakha remembered blood saturating the soil.

The prosecution also asked Kirelakha about shootings during his service in Lublin and Trawniki. He stated that no massacres took place during this service there. However in autumn 1943, Nazi officials ordered Kirelakha and other Wachmänner to Bialystok to aid in a Jewish

\textsuperscript{10} Kirelakha most likely referred to the liquidation of Janowska that occurred in November 1943.

\textsuperscript{11} USHMM Archives RG 31.018M Reel 73, Frame 1029-1030, Ukraine.
He testified about additional instances he remembered from his service around Lublin. The prosecution also presented him with a list of names of other former Wachmann guards, but he did not recognize any of them. During the last of these interrogations, that took place on 25 February 1968, the prosecution asked Kirelakha to provide a description of the physical features of each Wachmann he had previously listed. Finally, the prosecutor asked why he had not confessed to participating in the shootings during his 1949 trial in the military tribunal. Kirelakha explained that he had feared a harsh sentence.

Kirelakha had denied his participation in shootings during the 1949 trial. He had also omitted the massacres from those interrogations altogether. Kirelakha clearly wished to avoid any additional charges and punishment. However, the military prosecutor only asked two questions about shootings, murder or violence throughout the entire series of interrogations. During the fourth interrogation on 14 May 1949, the prosecutor had asked to describe the specialized training they had received at Trawniki. He then followed up by asking, “Were there practical assignments for mass killing of people as practice?” Kirelakha answered that during the first period of training at Trawniki, shooting Jews was not included in the practical training; however during his service in L’viv, he heard from other Wachmann guards that this practice was instituted. The prosecution returned to this question three days later and asked, “While at the ‘Wachmannschaft SS training camp in Trawniki, did you participate in shooting Jews during practical training?” Kirelakha reaffirmed his previous statement by explaining that “in the first

---

12 Ibid., Frame 1033. Sara Bender, The Jews of Bialystok during World War II and the Holocaust (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2008). Bialystok is located about 250 kilometers north of Lublin. The Germans decided to destroy the Bialystok ghetto in August 1943. This decision was carried out through several deportations taking the remaining Jews to Treblinka, Majdanek and Auschwitz. Kirelakha did not provide specific details and the prosecution did not ask follow up questions concerning Bialystok. All that Kirelakha stated was that they left the deported train in Majdanek and he does not know what happened to the people.
group of trainees, which I was a part of, methods of mass killing of Jews were only explained to us but not shown in practice, so we did not practice shooting. It is possible that later groups of Wachmänner practiced shooting. I personally did not participate in shootings at any time in any place.”

Two important factors stand out from these segments of the 1949 trial. First, the military prosecutor only inquired about the shooting of Jews as practice during training. He connected both questions specifically to Trawniki, but not the other locations of Kirelakha’s service for the SS. During one interrogation, the prosecutor had asked Kirelakha about his activity after training. However after receiving a general description, the prosecutor did not inquire about specifics of his service, but followed up by asking him to list names of others who served with him in each place. The interrogation protocol records no questions concerning shootings or violent activity in Janowska or Zboriv, the two camps that Kirelakha served the longest. Instead, the military tribunal focused specifically on the Nazi training, which is consistent with the court’s purpose of sentencing traitors after the war. Additionally, during this trial, Kirelakha straightforwardly denied his participation in shooting Jews. Although the prosecutor did not inquire about shootings in Janowska or Zboriv, Kirelakha nonetheless asserted his innocence.

Kirelakha’s interrogations in 1968 were quite different. As shown earlier, the series of testimonies in 1968 dealt primarily with Kirelakha’s activity in Zboriv and Janowska, rather than Trawniki. The prosecution inquired and probed about any incidents of mass shootings, but gave almost no attention to the Nazi training. In response, Kirelakha confessed his participation and provided detailed elaborations of the shootings he remembered. The nature of these specific interrogations followed the pattern set during the trials of the late 1960s, which dealt with treason

13 USHMM Archives RG 31.018M Reel 73, Frames 0981 and 0986, Ukraine.
and crimes against humanity during the Great Patriotic War. This pattern revealed that the court was primarily concerned with Wachmann involvement in the shootings and violence that occurred during the war.

The juxtaposition of the 1949 and 1968 interrogations also indicates the instrumental purpose of both trials. Despite the shifting focus of the interrogations, the prosecution in both trials asked Kirelakha to provide the names of other Wachmänner. Interestingly, Kirelakha’s lists in 1949 and 1968 show inconsistencies. In 1949, he remembered only twelve Wachmänner, whereas he named seventeen in 1968. Kirelakha included eight of the same people in both lists.14 As previously mentioned, Kirelakha himself had been listed by four others. Of the twenty-one men that Kirelakha had named in 1948 and 1968, the KGB reopened at least eight cases and brought the men to trial by 1969.15 The court investigators also used such lists, both from earlier and ongoing trials, as pieces of evidence in court.

*****

The L’viv KGB officially reopened Kirelakha’s case on 27 March 1968, accusing him of treason and committing crimes against humanity during World War II.16 By this time, other former Wachmann guards had already confirmed his SS service, and he had confessed to participating in two shootings. The court continued to gather additional evidence in order to establish his guilt. One type of evidence consisted of German records. The L’viv KGB requested

14 In 1949, Kirelakha listed Beck, Komendant, Orlovskiy, Rabnyuk. Lesik, Pashko, Volovikov, Trauberg (two German, Volksdeustche brothers), Kirkach, Kharchenko, and Konev. His 1968 list included: Lesik, Dontsov, Dianov, Pashko, Gushinksiiy, Volovikov, the Trauberg brothers, Kubov, Kirkach, Borishenko, Pushkarev, Vovchenko, Kharchenko, Konev, Svitel’nikov (Svitelnik) and Demidenko.

15 These eight included: Komendant, Dontsov, Dianov, Volovikov, Kubov, Kirchach, Borisenko and Konev. Also, Demidenko served as a witness. Chances are that more of the men listed by Kirelakha were brought to trial; the records could be found in a different location.

16 USHMM Archives RG 31.018M Reel 73, Frame 1009, Ukraine.
Moscow to provide copies of documents to help verify the defendant’s SS service. The court reviewed Nazi lists of Wachmann guards who underwent training at Trawniki, as well as lists of transfers and service assignments throughout 1943. The captured documents were incomplete, but the court confirmed Kirelakha’s service by using them. One specific list compiled in Trawniki on 11 September 1943 listed Wachmann guards assigned to leave for Germany, including their names, date and place of birth, as well as their individual SS numbers. Of the two hundred men listed, Kirelakha’s name was underlined, thus verifying his wartime collaboration.

However, his SS service did not automatically translate into crimes against humanity, specifically murdering ghetto inmates. Similar to the 1966 case, the prosecution attempted to connect Kirelakha to crimes against humanity, not merely treason since he had already been found guilty for this. The court relied heavily on witnesses. This proved difficult. For instance, Valentin Plugatar’ testified for the L’viv court on 2 April 1968. He resided in Kyiv, but also had served as a Trawniki during World War II. Plugatar’ outlined his wartime activity and provided a list of other Wachmänner whom he remembered. He remembered Kirelakha from the overlap of their service in Lublin. Plugatar’ explained that he never participated in or witnessed any shootings or violence of camp prisoners. He recalled that some Wachmann guards had assisted in transporting Jews for a deportation, but he could not remember if Kirelakha personally participated in this mission. Instead of providing clarification and confirmation, testimonies such as these complicated the prosecution’s case.

---

17 Ibid., Frames 1388-1390. The protocol included a summary of the “Documents Review” on 29 May 1968, as well as translated lists of the Wachmannschaft SS guards.

18 Ibid., Frames 1391-1422. Kirelakha’s SS number was #415.

19 Ibid., Frames 1273 – 1275.
Kirelakha himself had confessed to participating in two shootings, one in Zboriv and another in Janowska. The prosecution seemed to narrow its focus to these locations and instances. Nonetheless, the court did not use Kirelakha’s testimony as solid proof of his guilt. The investigation continued to determine the details of these two massacres, and specifically Kirelakha’s role in them. Apparently, unlike the infamous three-day Janowska massacre, the court possessed little evidence and information about the Zboriv shooting. To prove Kirelakha’s guilt, the court had to first establish that this massacre actually occurred. Therefore, the KGB launched an investigation that included testimonies from a variety of witnesses as well as forensic excavations of the killing site. This caused the trial’s focus to shift from treason to crimes against humanity, particularly the Jewish genocide.

The court reviewed three testimonies from the Extraordinary State Commission as evidence for the Zboriv shooting. These accounts offered a unique glimpse of Zboriv under Nazi occupation because they were recorded in October 1944, soon after Soviet liberation. The witnesses provided fresh accounts of their experiences and were perhaps less influenced by postwar politics. Furthermore, two of the witnesses were local Jews and they recalled their stories of personal loss, suffering and survival. The other testimony came from a local Ukrainian who witnessed the atrocities inflicted upon the Jewish population. Taken together, these records provide a comprehensive overview of the Zboriv ghetto, as well as detailed stories of Nazi

---

20 In Soviet Ukraine, the town of Zboriv was located in the Ternopil oblast, east of L’viv. Therefore, the L’viv court had probably not dealt with crimes committed outside of its jurisdiction until this point. Furthermore, it was a village that did not contain a large Jewish ghetto like Janowska.

21 USHMM Archives RG 31.018M Reel 73, Frame 1669-1678, Ukraine. These documents were reviewed in court on 7 April 1968. The three witnesses included two Jewish survivors, Evva Mendevevaa Gal’pern (b.1913) and Mark Isaakovich Kesler (b.1900), as well as a local Ukrainian named Stefan Ostapovich Bregider (b.1904). All three testimonies were originally recorded by the ESC from 15-17 October 1944.
brutality and the fate of its inmates. By reviewing these documents in 1968, the court engaged directly with the memory of Jewish suffering and mass murder.

According to the ESC testimonies, upon occupation in July 1941, the Nazis rounded up all Jewish men in Zboriv and shot them along with the Soviet prisoners of war. Stefan Bregider witnessed this, and Evva Galpern lost her father and two brothers in this action. On the following day, the Nazis forced Jewish women to cover the pit with dirt. Galpern recalled going into the pit and seeing about eight hundred corpses. In December 1941, the Germans enclosed the edge of the Jewish section with barbed wire, creating a ghetto. Zboriv also had a labor camp, which contained workers for the Through Road 4 (Durchgangsstrasse IV). German and Ukrainian police heavily guarded the Jewish ghetto. Any offense, from the most minor to that of attempted escape, earned the punishment of death. The ghetto could hold about five hundred people. Throughout 1942, Jews from surrounding areas were rounded up and brought to Zboriv. The Nazis selected stronger Jews for the labor camp and placed the others in the ghetto, frequently taking groups out to be shot. Approximately three thousand Jews passed through Zboriv. The Germans began to systematically liquidate the camp in June 1943. As resistance increased, the Germans locked the remaining six hundred Jews in their barracks and set them ablaze.

---

22 Bregider’s house was located in close proximity to the shooting. Galpern’s father had been the head of the Jewish state bank in Zboriv prior to the war. Presumably, her brothers were younger than her since they were not drafted by the Red Army.

23 Brediger testified that about five hundred men were shot, rather than eight hundred.


Evva Galpern and Mark Kesler both lived in the labor camp, which held about 2,000 Jewish workers. They recalled that laborers received one hundred and fifty grams of bread and a bowl of watery soup per day. They worked twelve to fourteen hour days. As a result, the inmates grew weak from hunger and exhaustion. Guards frequently shot anyone unable to work. Kesler remembered twenty to thirty people dying every day. Furthermore, the Nazi commander Klaus kept a tight and brutal control of the labor camp and ghetto. Galpern testified that “German soldiers and German police conducted shootings of peaceful citizens. For example, if one person ran away from the camp, the Germans went to the ghetto, grabbed the first fifteen people (who were innocent), and shot them near the camp in the Solokinskoii valley.”

This valley served as the killing site of the Zboriv Jews. According to Gaspern, a total of about 8,000 people perished there throughout the Nazi occupation and “every citizen of Zboriv can confirm this brutality of the Nazi Germans and their collaborators.”

In his testimony for the ESC, Kesler also included many specific instances of Nazi brutality in Zboriv. He recalled an occasion when commander Klaus entertained a visiting Nazi officer, who had arrived with his large German shepherd. “After getting drunk, they took a fifty-five year old man in the camp and ordered him to run away from the camp. They released the dog after [the man], which quickly reached him and began tearing him into pieces, shredding his clothing and body. When Klaus approached the man lying on the ground, he shot him.”

Bregider also recalled “there was such a brutal instance when the camp commander Klaus walked through the ghetto and saw a beautiful Jewish woman. He invited her to come live with

---

26 USHMM Archives RG 31.018M Reel 73, Frame 1670, Ukraine.
27 Ibid., Frame 1670. She described a specific shooting when Jews from the ghetto were forced to undress and left outside in the snow for an entire day, until they were taken out to the valley and shot one by one.
28 Ibid., Frame 1676.
him, but she did not accept. Then he sent a soldier to take her to the camp toilets, took a whip and forced her to clean out the waste with her hands as he beat her until she finished.”

One day in early spring 1943, the Germans had ordered Bregider to deliver food to the laborers. After he completed this assignment, Bregider escaped. He took refuge in the forest for six weeks and then dug a pit in a field, where he hid until Soviet liberation. In June 1943, Galpern also escaped from the labor camp with the help of a local family. Like Bregider, she took cover in an underground pit for fourteen months until July 1944. The Nazis carried out mass liquidations of camp and ghetto in the summer of 1943. During a shooting in July, several Jews managed to escape. In retaliation, the Germans gathered the remaining five hundred prisoners into one barrack and blocked it with hay, furniture and wooden planks. They drenched it with gas, set it ablaze and shot anyone who tried to escape, thus killing the last Jews of Zboriv.

In 1968, the evidence for Kirelakha’s case, despite his confession, grew increasingly vague and contradictory. Since many other former Wachmänner men also faced trial, the prosecution used them as witnesses. A single interrogation could serve as evidence for more than one case, due to the intertwined histories of the defendants. Although four men had listed Kirelakha, the majority of other cases reopened by the KGB in L’viv did not list him, including the former Wachmänner who Kirelakha himself had named. Furthermore, like Plugatar’, the witnesses who did remember Kirelakha only had vague recollections of him and could not confirm his direct participation in shootings and other violent actions. On the contrary, other witnesses described different circumstances and claimed that Wachmänner, including Kirelakha, did not participate in certain massacres.

29 Ibid., Frame 1677.
In his February 1968 testimony, Kirelakha had listed Ivan Dontsov, claiming that they had served together in Zboriv and participated in the shooting of twenty prisoners outside the camp. The L’viv KGB reopened Dontsov’s case simultaneously with Kirelakha’s.\(^{30}\) When Dontsov testified on 11 April 1968, he confirmed serving alongside Kirelakha as an SS guard in Zboriv.\(^{31}\)

However, Dontsov’s recollection of the Zboriv shooting differed significantly from Kirelakha’s. Dontsov explained that in late 1942 or early 1943, the Wachmann commander ordered them to convoy a group of about twenty-six “exhausted and unusable” prisoners to a ravine in a field about one kilometer outside the camp. The Wachmänner led the prisoners to the ravine, where German soldiers shot them in the back of the head. During the shooting, the Wachmänner guarded the area, but shot no one. Dontsov also relisted the other guards who had participated, including Kirelakha. On the following day, 12 April 1968, the prosecutor read segments from Kirelakha’s testimony in February, when he had claimed that the Wachmänner killed approximately twenty prisoners during a massacre in Zboriv. The prosecution asked Dontsov to clarify the discrepancies. Dontsov reiterated his testimony and explained that he remembered a shooting of about twenty-six prisoners, rather than twenty. Furthermore, he emphasized that Wachmänner did not participate in the shooting itself; they simply convoyed the prisoners to the ravine where Germans shot them. According to Dontsov, no prisoners had fallen en route to the killing site and the Wachmänner shot no one.\(^{32}\)

---

\(^{30}\) Ibid., Frame 1633. His case was also reopened on 27 March 1968. Although it was on the same day, the trials were separate. The court did use these two defendants to testify against one another through individual testimonies and in a cross-examination (which I will discuss in more detail later). Though intertwined, their cases, along with trial and verdicts remained separate.

\(^{31}\) Ibid., Frames 1056-1059.

\(^{32}\) Ibid., Frames 1060-1065.
The prosecution seriously considered Dontsov’s statement. In his next interrogation, Dontsov was asked to describe Kirelakha and identify a photograph of him. On 16 April 1968, the court investigators travelled to Zboriv with Dontsov in order to determine the location of the alleged shooting. During the inspection, Dontsov indicated the location of the Zboriv camp and retraced the route to the place the pit had been, a wooded area about two hundred meters away from the camp. Due to new buildings and more vegetation in the area, Dontsov could only estimate the location of the pit. The KGB investigators returned to Zboriv for further inspection in June. They asked local residents to testify in order to gather more information about the Zboriv camp, the shootings, and the participation of Wachmann guards on trial in L’viv.

Galpern’s statement in 1944 that every Zboriv citizen can confirm the Nazi brutality during occupation proved true over two decades later. The KGB interviewed nine locals in the summer of 1968. All of the witnesses had had some level of interaction with the Nazis or lived in close proximity to the camp during the occupation. Agritina Davidovich and Anna Ukhanskiy were forced to host German officers in their homes. Mariya Nechai served as an assistant cook, and the camp commander Klaus lived at her house. The remaining witnesses lived on the same street as the ghetto or labor camp. Some of the Zboriv locals provided specific details and

33 Zboriv is located about ninety kilometers east of L’viv in the Ternopil oblast.

34 USHMM Archives RG 31.018M Reel 73, Frame 1071-1073, Ukraine.

35 These nine local residents were all Ukrainians, and included the following (in no particular order): Nechai, Mariya (b.1914), Kmet’, Fedor (b.1907), Davidovich, Agritina (b.1889), Ukhanskiy, Anna (b.1898), Radzikhovskiy, Fedor (b.1897), Nechai, Dmitriy (b.1902), Romanishchin, Ivan (b.1907), Red’ku, Petr (b.1894), and Bigus, Anton (b.1893). Seven of these witnesses still resided in Zboriv in 1968. Mariya Nechai lived in L’viv, and Anton Bigus lived in Prisovtsyu, a village outside of Zboriv. These nine interrogations took place between 4 June and 11 July 1968.

36 It is unclear whether she was forced to host the German commander, or if they cohabitated.
lengthy descriptions of the camps and shootings, while others seemed more detached. Nonetheless, all of the testimonies included some consistent information and patterns.

Every witness openly discussed Jewish persecution. These testimonies contained no generalization or misconception about the victim group. Unlike other interrogation protocols, these testimonies did not fall into the Soviet rhetoric of generalizing the victims by referring to them as “Soviet citizens,” “innocent civilians,” and “camp prisoners.” The Zboriv locals stated that the ghetto and labor camp held “individuals of the Jewish nationality,” and they continuously spoke of Jewish laborers, shootings, etc. Furthermore, the investigator himself did not avoid recognizing Jewish suffering. For example on 3 July 1968, the prosecutor asked Ivan Romanishchin if he knew in “which specific pit the police shot Jews?” Romanishchin recalled the general area where a group of Jews was killed, but not the exact location of the pit. Each witness had to share any information they knew about the extermination of Jews.

In response, many witnesses shared detailed recollections about the Nazi brutality and the Jewish persecution. Mariya Nechai did not witness any massacres, but saw Jews walking to the massacre site and heard the shootings. She explained that some Jews attempted to escape or fell to the ground when they did not want to comply with orders; but the guards shot them immediately and carried their bodies to the pit. Nechai remembered that “women and children screamed and cried, but the perpetrators did not pay attention; they beat them and shot them in place.” Mariya Nechai’s brother-in-law, Dmitriy Nechai, actually witnessed the killing itself. His testimony included lengthy and detailed descriptions of Jewish suffering and murder. The killing site was located just outside of town in “Redku’s Orchard” where three pits, about thirty

---

37 USHMM Archives RG 31.018M Reel 73, Frame 1365, Ukraine.
38 Ibid., Frame 1308.
meters long and up to three meters deep, were prepared. “Those condemned, who did not want to strip naked and showed any resistance, were beaten with rifle butts and feet.”

Dmitriy Nechai had witnessed a massacre of at least 1,000 Jews, where Germans and policemen shot the prisoners. Overall, “this crime represented itself in this frightening image: people screamed (especially women and children), wept, many lost consciousness and fell, mothers pressed their young children against their chests and fell together after being shot. Other children were kicked and thrown into the pit, and killed there.”

In addition to describing specific instances of mass murder, the Zboriv locals also recalled information about the Jewish ghetto, the labor camp and its inmates, individual stories of Nazi brutality, as well as the final extermination of the remaining Jews through burning them in a locked barrack. Despite recalling the atrocities, the witnesses did not remember the perpetrators so well. Five of the nine remembered at least one German or Ukrainian serving in the camp, but no one claimed a direct connection. Two of the women, Agritina Davidovich and Anna Ukhanskiy, had billeted Germans in their homes for varying periods of time; but both denied any interaction with the occupiers and claimed no personal relationships with the Germans. Fedor Kmet’ also lived on the same street as the ghetto. Although he had witnessed guards beating and killing prisoners, he stated that he had never known their names and does not remember their

---

39 Ibid., Frame 1342. The Nazis had forced Nechai to help load and transport Jews to the killing site. “Redku’s Orchard” was literally the edge of Petr Redku’s apple orchard.

40 Ibid., Frame 1343.

41 Ibid., Frame 1344.

42 Commander Klaus was the most notorious. Two witnesses remembered his assistants Kaputssar and Foxx. Two others remembered a Ukrainian SS guard named Martyuk.
faces. Kmet’ also explained that the camp guards did not mix with the locals because they lived in a barrack inside the camp and ate separately.

None of the witnesses recognized Kirelakha’s name. The interrogator asked each specifically about Kirelakha, but the witnesses claimed never to have heard his name. Although each local confirmed and shared detailed accounts of the atrocities under Nazi occupation, the crimes could not be connected directly to Kirelakha or the other Wachmänner facing trial in L’viv. Yet through these testimonies, the court engaged directly with Jewish suffering and the local memory of the Holocaust in Zboriv. Even if the locals had known Wachmänner and remembered their names, they denied any connection and emphasized the atrocities committed against Jews instead. This caused the KGB investigators to focus on these crimes as well, making the Jewish genocide a priority in the trial over collaboration and treason.

Nonetheless, the court aimed to identify the actual perpetrators of these crimes including Kirelakha. Since no local witnesses could confirm his participation and the court heard contradictory evidence from other Wachmänner, such as Dontsov, the KGB investigators searched for solid proof of his crime. On 25 June 1968, the investigators brought Kirelakha to Zboriv and asked him to indicate the location of the Jewish labor camp, as well as the alleged killing site of the twenty prisoners. They began on Mlinovetskiy Street. Kirelakha walked north until he reached building number forty, the same place Dontsov had indicated in April. Kirelakha announced that this building had held Jewish men used for labor during the Nazi occupation; barbed wire had surrounded its perimeters and Wachmänner guarded the prisoners. Next,

---

43 USHMM Archives RG 31.018M Reel 73, Frame 1319, Ukraine.

44 Ibid., Frames 1047-1054. Present at this investigation was the Head KGB investigator of L’viv, Major Rapot, joined by two local witnesses, Fedor Mikhailovich Futorskiy and Igor Mikhailovich Martyuniv, in accordance to Soviet judicial procedures.
Kirelakha showed the route from the camp zone to the killing site. He continued north and turned left after passing the last house on the street. Kirelakha climbed a low hill and surveyed the surrounding area. He explained that they had shot prisoners somewhere in the valley below, but could not remember the exact location. He also recalled that a few small trees had been growing near the pit in 1943. The protocol recorded that trees no longer grew in the valley; private potato gardens had been planted since. The protocol also included a sketched map of the route from the labor camp to the killing site, as well as photographs of Kirelakha pointing to the building and valley.

Although Kirelakha and Dontsov had indicated the same building used for the Jewish labor camp, they showed different locations for the killing site. Not only did their court testimonies differ, the field evidence did not match either making the case even more convoluted. Several of the local Zboriv witnesses had mentioned shootings that took place in “Redku’s Orchard.” On 4 July 1968, the L’viv KGB asked Petr Fedorovich Redku, the owner of the old orchard, to testify. Redku explained that he had planted the orchard in 1931, located in the northern part of the town toward the direction of Zolochiv. “During the period of the temporary Nazi occupation of Zboriv, the perpetrators shot Jews in dugout pits in my orchard.”

Redku recalled that policemen led a group of up to thirty Jewish males to a small pit near two apple trees in his garden, where “perpetrators” shot them during the winter of 1942-1943. He did not specify the identity of these perpetrators, and stated that he could not remember the names or faces of the policemen. Also, Redku explained that mass shootings took place in two large

---

ravines inside the orchard.\textsuperscript{46} In direct contradiction to Kirelakha’s indication, Redku stated that no pits had been dug and no trees had ever grown in the valley closer to Mlinovetskiy Street.

Following the interrogation, the KGB investigators asked Redku to indicate the exact location of the shooting.\textsuperscript{47} This investigation started at the place of Redku’s old orchard. The area had been collectivized after the war and served as Zboriv’s collective construction organization, due to its close proximity to the timber forest.\textsuperscript{48} Redku led the way toward two apple trees that grew in the yard. He stopped and explained that these trees remained from his orchard. After surveying his surrounding, he pointed to the area about fifteen meters from the trees and announced that the shooting took place there. He had witnessed the pit being filled after the shooting. The protocol recorded that the place indicated by Redku was located three hundred meters away from the last house on Mlinoveskiy Street and that no type of vegetation grew in the specific area. This description reasserted the contradiction of Kirelakha’s indication.

One week later on 11 July 1968, the KGB investigators returned with an excavation team including a judicial medical expert, named Tatyana Vasiliyevna Kazantseva. Their purpose was “to exhume the remainder of corpses of unknown individuals, located in the yard of the Zboriv collective construction organization (on the territory of the former ‘Redku’s Orchard’).”\textsuperscript{49} Petr Redku was invited to participate again. Before the exhumation began, Redku explained that the

\textsuperscript{46} Ibid., 1369. Redku explained that these pits were prepared in advance. According to him, the ravines were approximately 80 meters long, 3 meters wide, and 3 meters deep.

\textsuperscript{47} Ibid., 1373. This part of the investigation was also carried out on 4 July 1968, and in accordance with Soviet law. The two local witnesses present were Aleksei Vasileivich Lyusov and Iosif Ivanovich Balitsov. The investigation was also photographed and included in the protocol.

\textsuperscript{48} Located in the northern part of Zboriv, it was just fifty meters away from from the Through Road leading to Zolochiv.

\textsuperscript{49} USHMM Archives RG 31.018M Reel 73, Frame 1950, Ukraine. Major Rapot also led this investigation. The two local witnesses included Yakim Dmitriyvich Schalaya and Iosif Ivanovich Balitsov
shooting could have been located about twenty meters away from the place he had initially shown. He relied on the two apple trees as indicators of the killing site. The other location had only one tree nearby, but a second tree had been chopped down. Therefore, Redku explained that he could have been mistaken and was not completely sure exactly where that group of up to thirty males had been executed.

Given the circumstances, the KGB investigators decided to excavate the area near the two apple trees that Redku had initially indicated. They unearthed an area of three by three meters in perimeter, and one and a half meters deep. After exhuming the bodily remains from the pit, the KGB investigators realized that Redku’s apprehension proved accurate; only seven skulls were found amongst the retrieved bones. All of the bones appeared a pale yellow color and were covered in dirt. In addition to the bones, the KGB found a pair of black leather women’s shoes, the sole of a wooden shoe or sandal, and a large quantity of rusted nails. The protocol recorded that the corpses were found in a mixed manner, noting that the pit was not a grave. The protocol included photographs of the forensic work. After the exhumation, Redku stated that he remembered hearing stories of a Jewish family, including women and children, killed and buried in his orchard.

The medical report confirmed Redku’s recollection. This report consisted of a detailed analysis of the exhumed bones. Medical expert Kazantseva studied that bones and typed a long description and conclusion of the exhumation. The bone measurements showed that the victims included seven individuals of different ages, both male and female. The damage suggested that the corpses had been buried for twenty to twenty-five years. Furthermore in determining the

---

50 In addition to these seven skulls, the KGB found 7 lower jawbones, 14 collar bones, 12 shoulder blades, 5 breast bones, 126 ribs, 134 vertebra, 14 humerus, 14 elbows, 12 radial bones, 13 pelvic bones, 14 femurs, 12 tibias, 10 fibulas, 60 bones from hands and feet.
cause of death, Kazantseva noted that the skulls all suffered from fractures, but no evidence of gunshot wounds existed. She concluded that it was impossible to determine the specific cause of death; however the multiple fractures in the skull bones indicated death due to head injuries.

This exhumation provides an interesting angle to the Soviet judicial process, and its results raise important questions about the Holocaust in western Ukraine. The forensic findings were obviously not connected to the shooting that Kirelakha and Dontsov had described. More importantly, they were connected to no shooting at all. Rather than finding the corpses of twenty to thirty exhausted male laborers shot, the results indicated that an entire Jewish family was beaten to death and haphazardly buried in a pit. Unfortunately, other than Redku’s vague recollection, the protocol includes no other information or analysis concerning this event.

Nonetheless, the forensics pointed back to the Holocaust, showcasing its fatal brutality and full completion. First, the fact that the perpetrators killed the entire family served as a reminder that no Jews were spared, including women and children. Additionally, considering that the victims died by beating, rather than in a systematic shooting, raises the question of responsibility and guilt in this deeply anti-Semitic part of Ukraine. Redku’s memory was also interesting, because: 1. He remembered hearing stories about this Jewish family, which meant locals were sharing such information, and 2. He never stated who actually killed the family.

Furthermore, this exhumation shows how emphatically the L’viv court searched for solid evidence in order to determine Kirelakha’s guilt. His confession and the local witnesses’ generalized recollections of shootings were insufficient to indict him. For this reason, the court sent investigators to unearth actual proof of the alleged Zboriv shooting. The detailed and deep investigation suggests the court’s pursuit of justice and reemphasizes its focus on the “crimes against humanity” rather than merely collaboration. The mistaken location did not deter the KGB
from continuing its investigation. The excavation team returned the following day, on 12 July 1968, in order to exhume the other possible killing site. In addition to Redku, another local eyewitness, Anton Ivanovich Bigus, was summoned to participate. Individually, both Redku and Bigus claimed that they remembered the location of the shooting of up to thirty male prisoners. They indicated the same location near the single apple tree in the yard of the collective construction organization.

During the seven and a half-hour long investigation, the KGB excavated a pit with a perimeter of three by three meters and two and a half meters deep. A strong rotting smell filled the air as they began exhumming corpses and bones. This time, Redku made no mistake. The team retrieved twenty-six skulls, along with other bones. The protocol recorded a detailed description of the exhumation. For instance, black dirt covered all the bones and after washing them with water, many remained black. Most bones were stripped of soft tissue, yet a few were still covered in muscle. Additionally, five corpses were partly intact, covered with pieces of clothing. The team also retrieved a pair of black leather boots from the pit. In addition to these descriptions, the protocol included a series of photographs documenting every step of the exhumation process. The photographs showed the location prior to any digging, as well as a close-up shot near the apple tree. The camera captured tractors moving dirt and individuals shoveling. Furthermore, the investigators took photographs of the corpses and bones themselves,

---


52 These other bones included: 23 right femoral bones, 21 left femoral bones; 22 right tibias, 20 left tibias; 19 right peroneal bones, 18 left peroneal bones; 18 sacral bones; 20 right shoulders, 21 left shoulders; 17 right and 18 left elbows; 16 right and 17 left radials; 13 right and 12 left shoulder blades; 12 breast bones; 160 ribs; 120 vertebrae; 19 lower jawbones
including the medical personal reviewing them. These photographs were included in the protocol itself with arrows and notations explaining the details of the exhumation.

Finally, a medical analysis followed the exhumation. On 12-13 July, Kazantseva produced another long and detailed medical report. The number and types of bones show that at least twenty-six corpses were found. Also, the bone damage suggested that the bones had been buried for twenty to twenty-five years. The measurements of teeth and bones indicated that all victims were male adults. And the cause of death was “a vast deadly destruction of the brain” through gunshot wounds. Kazantseva’s medical report also included several photographs showing the skulls’ measurements and locations of bullet holes.

These exhumation results also proved that Dontsov had told the truth, at least about the victims and the location of the killing site. Kirelakha, on the other hand, had been mistaken about both. Although local witnesses could not confirm the identity of the actual perpetrators, Dontsov’s accurate description must have bolstered his entire testimony, including his claim that Wachmänner did not kill any Jewish prisoners during that shooting. On 6 August 1968, the L’viv KGB acquitted Ivan Dontsov, due to “not gathering sufficient evidence on the personal participation of Dontsov in killing Soviet citizens.” The same reasoning extended to Kirelakha’s case as well. However, since Kirelakha had confessed to shooting prisoners yet could not identify the killing site, investigation of him continued.

The court proceeded with a series of interrogations and cross-examinations. But rather than clarifying Kirelakha’s role and proving (or disproving) his participation and guilt, the new

53 Additionally, there were photographs of the pit after the exhumation and clothing retrieved from the pit.
54 USHMM Archives RG 31.018M Reel 73, Frame 1993, Ukraine.
55 Ibid., Frame 2290.
evidence continued to create a more convoluted picture. The prosecution brought Kirelakha in for interrogation two more times in August 1968. In addition to serving in Zboriv, Janowska and Lublin, Kirelakha had spent some time guarding smaller concentration camps. The prosecutor asked him about his service in the Kazimirovka and Boryslav, including the camp layouts and shootings of prisoners. Kirelakha’s responded with vague responses. He stated “as I remember” several times, revealing his uncertainty; and he gave approximate dates of service for each location. However, when Kirelakha stated that no shootings occurred during his service at the Kazimirovka camp, the prosecution used other Wachmann testimony in order to draw out more information. For instance, the prosecutor referred to an interrogation of Grigoriy Kubov, who had listed Kirelakha during his trial in 1947. Kubov had confessed that he and other Wachmann guards, including Kirelakha, shot Jews who attempted to escape and convoyed two hundred prisoners to the killing site while serving in Kazimirovka and Bronislav. “What can you say in light of this evidence?” the prosecutor probed Kirelakha.

Kirelakha did not yield and claimed that such instances never occurred during his service at these camps. The KGB continued to ask more questions, probably with at least a two-fold purpose. First, the prosecution was still trying to connect Kirelakha to a specific shooting in order to convict him. Secondly, each interrogation could be used as evidence against another defendant in a different case. For example, the KGB had also reopened Kubov’s case on 16

56 The interrogations took place on August 15-16, 1968 in Kharkiv, Ukraine. It is unclear why the interrogation was located in Kharkiv rather than L’viv. The L’viv KGB still led the prosecution, with Major Rapot as the head investigator.

57 USHMM Archives RG 31.018M Reel 73, Frame 2018, Ukraine. Arad, The Holocaust, 338-339. Boryslav also had a labor camp on the D-4 road. It is located about 100 kilometers southwest of L’viv. According to Kirelakha, Kazimirovka was a tiny village located ten kilometers away from Zboriv in the direction of Zolochiv.

58 USHMM Archives RG 31.018M Reel 73, Frame 2020-2021, Ukraine.
February 1968. Therefore, had Kirelakha confirmed Kubov’s statement about shooting runaway Jews in Kazimirovka and Bronislav, it could serve as evidence against both men. In addition to Kubov’s testimony, the prosecutor also asked Kirelakha about statements made by three other former Wachmann guards.59 Again, Kirelakha denied any knowledge of or participation in other shootings. This practice reveals how complex and intertwined these cases became. It also highlights the system of denunciation in Soviet justice.

Finally, the prosecutor asked Kirelakha to repeat his story about the Zboriv shooting. He retold this instance and reiterated his participation of killing one or two prisoners; but he added that he could not remember if Dontsov had actually participated in the shooting itself. The prosecutor explained that Dontsov had testified about a shooting of twenty-six prisoners, rather than twenty. Kirelakha agreed that that could have been the case and he had simply estimated the number of prisoners. The prosecutor then revealed to Kirelakha that the remains of corpses from the exhumation proved that twenty-six males were shot, and the location was near Redku’s Orchard. Kirelakha seemingly did not notice the disparity. He restated that there could have been twenty-six prisoners and explained that during the shooting, trees grew in the valley that he had indicated. Further confusion ensued when Kirelakha’s list of Wachmann guards at the Zboriv shooting did not match with Dontsov’s, and the former did not even recognize some names on the latter’s list. The prosecutor probed for some more details and finally asked, “Investigations determined that in Zboriv during 1942 to 1943, mass shootings of the Jewish population occurred. What do you know about such shootings and the participation of Wachmanns in

59 These men included: Voinolovich, Demidenko and Komendant, all Wachmann guards whom once served with Kirelakha.
Interestingly, the KGB persisted in asking about Jewish shootings. The court was probably trying to elicit as much information as possible from Kirelakha. Although Kirelakha knew nothing of such shootings and therefore could not confirm Wachmann participation, this trial shows that the court openly faced the issue of Jewish persecution during the war.

As previously mentioned, the Lviv KGB had reopened many cases of former Wachmann guards and their trials were also in full swing by August 1968. Therefore, the court had the opportunity to gather more information in order to connect the dots of Wachmann participation during the Holocaust. In addition to referencing other testimonies during interrogation, the court staged cross-examinations, known as “confrontations.” A series of confrontations took place from August 19th – 21st, between Kirelakha, Donstov and Konev. The third participant, Nikolai Fadeevich Konev, also faced charges for treason and crimes against humanity while serving the Wachmannschaft SS. When the KBG reviewed his case on 3 April 1968, Konev pled not guilty and denied serving as a Wachmann. Other former Wachmänner, including Kirelakha and Donstov, had listed Konev and his name was found in captured Nazi documents. Nonetheless, Konev insisted that he never served the Nazis, and suggested that there may have been another individual with an identical name. Due to these circumstances, the court arranged confrontations to discover if the former Wachmann guards could recognize one another.

---

60 USHMM Archives RG 31.018M Reel 73, Frame 2031, Ukraine.

61 The prosecution continued to ask details about Kirelakha’s service in Janowska, Trawniki, Lublin and Germany. But the nature of the interrogation remained the same. Kirelakha’s answers stayed vague and he did not reveal new information. He denied any knowledge about other shootings

62 USHMM Archives RG 31.018M Reel 73, Frames 1858-1866, Ukraine.
In the first confrontation, the prosecutor questioned Kirelakha and Konev. The latter claimed that he did not recognize the civilian sitting before him, and was seeing him for the first time. However, Kirelakha answered that he recognized Konev, stated his name and explained that they served in the German SS forces together. Kirelakha recalled that they met in Trawniki and served together in Lublin, Janowska and Zboriv; he claimed that Konev also participated in the Zboriv shooting, but was unsure if he ever shot anyone in Janowska. Konev simply denied everything, reiterating that he never served the SS nor had he been to the places listed. Kirelakha, on the other hand, claimed that Konev simply did not want to face reality. At the end of the confrontation, Kirelakha stated that “I will repeat again that Konev, who is at this confrontation with me, together with me and others listed above served in the German SS and personally shot prisoners from the Zboriv camp; I have truthfully told all the details previously.”

On the following day, 20 August 1968, Kirelakha faced Dontsov in the court confrontation. Both men recognized one another. However, when asked about the Zboriv shooting, their accounts differed significantly. The prosecutor did not probe very deeply and no resolution was reached. Finally, Dontsov and Konev came in for a confrontation on 21 August. Neither man recognized the other. Konev claimed that he did not know Donstov and was seeing him for the first time. The prosecutor reminded Dontsov that he had listed Konev in earlier

---

63 Ibid., Frames 2078-2088. Like Kirelakha’s most recent interrogations, these confrontations all took place in Kharkiv and were held by the L’viv KGB.

64 Ibid., Frames 2087-2088.

65 Ibid., Frames 2089-2096.

66 Ibid., Frames 2097-2099. Interestingly enough, Konev refused to sign each confrontation protocol. These confrontation protocols were included as part of Kirelakha’s case. I am unsure about the final verdict of Konev’s case.
interrogations. Dontsov explained that he did, in fact, remember serving with a man named Konev; however the person before him looked like a completely different man.

This series of confrontations did not aim to establish the facts or discover the details of the crimes themselves. Instead, the KGB used these confrontations in the attempt to confirm the responsibility of certain defendants. This practice shows another method used by the Soviet legal system. However, the court failed to prove Konev’s service to the SS due to the contradictory claims. Dontsov had already been acquitted and served as a witness. And Kirelakha’s case remained unclear and contradictory as well. During the following months, the L’viv KGB continued to reopen cases and bring former Wachmann guards on trial. The prosecutor questioned the accused about Kirelakha when applicable. For instance, throughout November and December 1968, the KGB asked at least twelve men whether they knew anything about Kirelakha.67 However, none of the men recognized Kirelakha’s name and could not confirm his service or participation in any shootings.

Finally, on 23 January 1969, the L’viv court acquitted Oleksandr Kirelakha.68 The verdict protocol briefly reviewed to his wartime activity, and referred to his 1949 trial and 1955 amnesty. The protocol outlined the highlights of Kirelakha’s case, beginning with his February 1968 testimony, when he confessed to shooting prisoners from Janowska and Zboriv. The protocol then described the different types of evidence that disproved Kirelakha’s claim. Other former Wachmann guards, whom Kirelakha had listed including Dontsov and Konev, could not confirm his service and participation in these locations. Furthermore, the exhumation fieldwork

67 Ibid., Frames 2234-2281. These men include: Boi, Shirgaliev, Latypov, Skorokhod, Klimenko, Litvinenko, Nechaev, Lobyuntsev, Kitsenko, Albinov, Krivorotenko, and Tsekhmistro.

68 Ibid., Frames 2291-2294.
 unearthed different results and local eyewitnesses from Zboriv could not recognize Kirelakha. In regard to Janowska, “Aside from Kirelakha’s statements about his participation of shooting prisoners from the Janowska camp in L’viv, other evidence in the process of investigation was not found.”69 The protocol concluded: “Therefore, additional investigations did not discover sufficient evidence for the personal participation of Kirelakha in the killing of Soviet citizens. Kirelakha was convicted in 1949 for the serving in the German forces SS, guarding and convoying prisoners to work in concentration camps.”70

It is unclear how often Soviet courts acquitted defendants. However, these trials do reflect an increasing multiplicity in the Soviet legal system during the 1960s. First of all, every defendant did not plead guilty in accusation of treason and crimes against humanity. Although Kirelakha confessed his alleged crime, Dontsov denied direct participation and Konev rejected the accusation altogether. Furthermore, Kirelakha’s confession was insufficient evidence for the court to convict him; this displays the 1958 Criminal Code in action. The law required the court to gather additional convincing evidence in order to convict a defendant. The L’viv court spent almost ten months gathering information, but to no avail. Another general characteristic of the legal system under the new criminal code was reduced sentences. Nonetheless, the death penalty remained for treason and other serious crimes against the State. The L’viv 1966 trial shows that the Soviet authorities had no hesitation in passing the death penalty. Yet the conviction of these six men stands in direct contrast to the acquittals of Dontsov and Kirelakha.

---

69 Ibid., Frame 2293.

70 Ibid.
CHAPTER 7
CONCLUSION: ANALYSIS AND QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Like numerous courts dealing with Nazi crimes around the globe in the postwar era, the Soviet trials also faced the dual challenge to “represent and judge the Holocaust’s horror.”\(^1\) How well did the Soviet military tribunals fare in representing the Holocaust and in serving justice for Nazi-related crimes? Furthermore, given the extent of the Final Solution in Soviet territories and the climate of the Cold War, why did the Soviet authorities hold trials of Nazi collaborators more than twenty years after the war? Not only do such trials reveal new information about the Holocaust and exhibit the legal system at work, they also raise important questions about Soviet motivation and the government’s purpose for pursuing Holocaust justice in the late 1960s.

The Soviet trials after 1965 certainly focused on crimes against humanity, rather than merely collaboration and treason as seen in the immediate postwar trials. As a result, they provide insight about the Holocaust, particularly concerning the role of “Trawniki” Wachmänner. The entire program and the numerous interrogations show the wide scope of Wachmann service in *Operation Reinhard*. The military tribunals brought the accused men to the location of the crime for trial. The KGB reviewed and reopened over one hundred cases of former Wachmänner in 1968 in L’viv alone.\(^2\) Furthermore, the practice of listing names during interrogations gives a glimpse into the extent of Wachmann service both in L’viv and the General Government. The Germans relied on these men to complete a variety of tasks, from guarding camps to murdering prisoners. For instance, Oleksandr Kirelakha guarded workers in a small labor camp in Zboriv, a seemingly inconsequential task compared to his participation in

\(^1\) Douglas, *The Memory of Judgment*, 5.

\(^2\) USHMM Archives RG 31.018M Reel 73, Ukraine. This archival folder alone includes 112 case reviews, which served as the first step to reopening a case. These documents could be the tip of an iceberg. Nonetheless, they suggest how extensive the trials were in L’viv.
deporting Bialystok’s Jewish population to Majdanek, which inevitably meant their death. Regardless of whether he knew of the Jewish fate, Kirelakha and other Wachmänner played a vital role in the Final Solution in the General Government.

Additionally, the trials highlight specific details about Jewish suffering and resistance in Eastern Galicia. During the interrogations, the prosecution explored a variety of crimes. This yields valuable information about Jewish suffering in L’viv. Defendant and witness testimonies discussed rounding up, guarding, beating, deporting and massacring Jews. They confirm that Jews of Eastern Galicia suffered under the ordeal of forced labor and faced the dual threat of deportation or mass shooting. The Wachmann testimony and media coverage depicted the brutality; it showed Jews were forced to strip naked prior to deportation. Furthermore, numerous defendants spoke of the massacres in the “Valley of Death” outside of Janowska, providing detailed descriptions of the process. The investigations in Zboriv serve as a reminder that the Shoah reached every locality and targeted Jews of all ages and both gender.

The trials also reveal lost episodes of Jewish resistance in L’viv. During the 1966 trial, the six former Wachmänner explained that they did not participate in the systematic shooting of prisoners during the three-day massacre at Janowska. But, they claimed they shot only at Jews who tried to escape. The fact that each Wachmann shot at least one “runaway” prisoner, suggests that at least some Jews resisted their fate through an attempt to escape. Furthermore, the court held a cross-examination between defendant Minochkin and witness Litvinenko during this trial; their interaction reveals a fascinating instance of Jewish resistance.³ Litvinenko testified that Minochkin had participated in looting and trading valuables during their Wachmann service in

³ USHMM Archives RG 31.018M Reel 73, Frame 1508-1510, Ukraine. Litvinenko was also a former Wachmann.
Lublin. In defense, Minochkin explained that Litvinenko could not have known him during their time in Lublin since they were in different units. The confrontation continued:

Defendant Minochkin: “…Allow Litvinenko to name to the court his best friend at the Janowska camp, Stankevich, whose eye the prisoners knocked out. Litvinenko was called foreman in the camp. He and Stankevich went together during their time off to L’viv, got drunk from beer together, and on top of this, never paid the waiters. One always pretended to be deaf and the other one blind.”

Witness Litvinenko: “…About Stankevich, [Minochkin] expresses a falsehood. Indeed, the only truth is that the prisoners knocked out his eye when Stankevich was convoying them to the place of execution.”

The court did not explore this episode in further detail during this trial. Nonetheless, this chance information reveals an instance of Jewish response; Stankevich’s blindness suggests that all Jews did not go “as sheep to the slaughter,” but some certainly resisted actively in the face of death.

Furthermore, the trials after 1965 display the changing Soviet legal system at work, especially when compared to immediate postwar trials. The new Criminal Code of 1958 drastically altered the Soviet legal system, including everything from the judicial process to the verdicts. When Kirelakha faced trial in 1949, he was forced to plead guilty and the military tribunal used his confession as the ultimate proof of his crime; this was the common practice of Soviet courts. In the 1960s trials, defendants could plead not guilty and even deny participation in the alleged crimes. Moreover if a defendant pled guilty, the court still had to find substantial evidence to establish his guilt. Kirelakha’s trial is significant because it showcases this practice. Although he confessed to murder, the court continued searching for evidence including Nazi records, ESC documents, testimonies from other defendants and local witnesses, as well as forensic investigations and cross-examinations. In addition to conducting investigations, the

---

4 The L’viv KGB placed Stankevich on trial in 1968 and Litvinenko in 1969. I have not seen the full transcripts or verdicts of their trials.
L’viv court followed the judicial process of the new criminal code. This included formally reviewing and initiating the case of each defendant, assembling a full court with witnesses, and providing substantial evidence for each case.

These trials also indicate other aspects about Soviet justice. Each defendant had to provide a list of other Wachmänner when the KGB first opened his case. Furthermore, the court used defendants to testify against one another in trial. These practices show the system of denunciation that functioned within the Soviet legal system. Although denunciation could certainly cause the KGB to investigate a case, the court still relied on other evidence to pass a verdict. Kirelakha’s trial also raises more interesting questions about the Soviet court dealing with Holocaust crimes. Why did the KGB send investigators to conduct forensic work in Zboriv? Either the prosecution was dedicated to proving Kirelakha’s participation in the alleged massacre, or perhaps this episode was part of a larger attempt to discover the truth and achieve justice for Holocaust crimes in Eastern Galicia. Indeed, the locals had suffered under Nazi occupation and witnessed the annihilation of the Jewish population. The witness testimonies and local media coverage in the late 1960s indicate that the public still remembered the wartime violence. Since Stalin largely ignored the Holocaust and never allowed commemoration, could these trials have served as a vehicle to address wartime suffering and atrocities at the local level? Despite the fact that the L’viv court brought hundreds of former collaborators to trial, only the 1966 trial of six Wachmänner received any media coverage from 1966-1969.\(^5\) Furthermore, only one local newspaper actually mentioned Jews when reporting the trial, thus raising questions about Soviet politics and local anti-Semitism.

\(^5\) It is unclear whether any other trials were public or not, but the newspapers did not report any of them.
Moreover, the trials in L’viv did not occur in isolation. Military tribunals brought former collaborators to trial across the Soviet Union during the late 1960s. The Soviet authorities, under Brezhnev’s leadership, may have used the trials to help cultivate the myth of the Great Patriotic War beginning in 1965. Although the trials focused on crimes against humanity, the committed violence was presented as the inevitable consequence of collaborating with Nazi Germany. Domestically, this bolstered Bolshevism and provided Soviet authorities an ideological platform over the “western, fascist” states. The myth of the Great Patriotic War created an identity for all citizens in the fractured Soviet society. Assuming power in late 1964, Brezhnev could have used this to help impose ideological control domestically. Additionally, the authorities may have wanted the collaborator trials to serve as a warning to any potential dissenters.

The context of global Holocaust justice and the Cold War also suggests that the Soviet authorities aimed to prove their moral international leadership and commitment to prosecuting Nazi crimes. Beginning with the Eichmann trial and continuing with the West German and East German trials, a wave of global Holocaust justice emerged during the 1960s. Given the extent of the Holocaust in Soviet territories and the number of former collaborators living within the Soviet Union, Moscow probably felt pressure to display its moral leadership within the Cold War context. The trials seemingly bolstered Soviet ideology and provided the authorities a platform to speak out against the West. If Moscow stood as the beacon of anti-fascism, they certainly had to prosecute Nazi-related crimes.

Although the trials dealt primarily with crimes against humanity, how well did the Soviet courts actually represent the Holocaust and pass judgment for the committed crimes? The interrogations and testimonies themselves spoke of Jewish suffering, though some more openly than others. Regardless, there was no misconception that the L’viv court dealt with genocide
against Jews. As the prosecution focused on the crimes against humanity, the court was exposed to the horrific details of Jewish suffering and extermination. At least within the court, the Holocaust in Eastern Galicia was well represented. However, the media told a different story. Moscow’s Pravda not only ignored Jews, but also equated treason with crimes inflicted upon individuals. The local coverage certainly reflected the trial in that it reported the atrocities committed at Janowska. Yet L’vovskaya Pravda also failed to mention Jews and distorted the truth by listing other nationalities. Only Leninskaya Molod’ included Jewish suffering in its stories, albeit briefly. Thus the public received more exposure of wartime violence through the trial media coverage, but often as a misrepresentation of the truth.

Within the paradigm of the Soviet legal system, the courts did serve justice for Holocaust crimes. The former Wachmänner on trial were guilty for collaboration and treason. However, the courts focused on crimes against humanity committed by each defendant. The trial records show that the military tribunals conducted thorough and extensive investigations within the perimeters of Soviet law. Furthermore, the various sentences indicate that the Soviet court did not pass haphazard judgments against all of the accused. This practice certainly requires more research, both of other Wachmänner trials and non-related murder cases in the Soviet Union for comparison of judicial process and verdicts.

Rather than providing answers, this research raises more questions that deserve further study and careful examination. The trials reviewed here only touch the tip of the iceberg of the program in L’viv, not to mention Ukraine and the entire Soviet Union. Conducting a wider and deeper investigation of the trials in the late 1960s will certainly reveal more information about the Holocaust and provide a fuller portrait of Soviet justice. Furthermore, since Politburo records remain classified, the trials offer a glimpse into official Soviet functionality. The trials also raise
important questions about representation and public memory. As post-Soviet states struggle with the bitter legacy of ignoring and distorting the Holocaust, representation and judgment are vital for national identity and public memory. Today, the deeply fractured Ukrainian society is dealing with human rights issues and a national identity crisis. Therefore studying the formation of memory and justice through trials in the postwar period can offer an important perspective on present-day Ukrainian society.
APPENDIX
SELECTED TRANSLATED DOCUMENTS

DOCUMENT #1: Oleksandr Kirelakha’s fourth interrogation during his first trial in 1949.6

Interrogation Protocol
Arrested – Kirelakha, Oleksandr Prokofovich
Dnipropetrovsk
14 May 1949
Interrogation began at 13:00.
Interrogation ended at 15:10.

- Question: Tell about your activity while in the training camp Wachmannschaft SS in Trawniki.

- Answer: In the training camp Wachmannschaft SS, indeed I with other Wachmänner went through preparation, i.e. education.

- Question: Tell about what made up the specialized training that you mentioned in the previous interrogation?

- Answer: In addition to guarding and fighting training, we Wachmänner in training camp Wachmannschaft SS went through specialized training in which we were taught how to conduct raids, arrests, confiscations at shootings and how to shoot.

- Question: Were there practical assignments for mass killing of people as practice?

- Answer: I went through training in the training camp Wachmannschaft SS during the first selection, and in that period of training in Trawniki during the practice for new trainees, shooting Jews was not included. During later trainings at the Trawniki camp, there was a special camp with Jews who were held for shooting for practice for the Wachmänner. I heard this from another source after returning to Trawniki from my time in the L’viv camp.

- Question: What was part of the political training for the Wachmänner?

- Answer: We did not go through special political training in the camp Wachmannschaft SS, but during the training process discussions were led about German military victories on the fronts, praising the German army, while slandering the Soviet Union and the Soviet Army.

Interrogation ended. The interrogation protocol was correctly recorded from my words, read by me personally, and signed. (Kirelakha’s signature)
Interrogator: Smirnov (signature included)

6 USHMM Archives RG 31.018M Reel 73, Frames 981-982, Ukraine.
DOCUMENT #2: Portion of trial transcript from 1966 including defendant Sergey Prihodko’s statement.7

Excerpt from the Protocol of Trial Hearing
14 December 1966
Military Tribunal of the Carpathian Military District, Open Trial Hearing in L’viv

(Includes lists of presiding members, government prosecutors, defendants, and defense attorneys.)

Statement of defendant Pankratov:

I was called to the ranks of the Soviet Army in autumn 1940, and for my service I was assigned to the 15th tank division, 30th tank regiment that was stationed in the city of Stanislav, now Ivano-Frankivsk, where the Great Patriotic War reached me. I was undergoing service as a platoon control motorcyclist.

As soon as the war began, our regiment was redeployed to Chernivtsi. From Chernivtsi, we retreated while fighting to the region around Hristinovka, and were surrounded by German forces in the Odessa oblast. We had no more ammunition and fuel by that time, completely out. We burnt the vehicles and cannons and began making our way to Pervomaysk, but the Germans already occupied it on 4 August 1941. After this, we began making our way towards the advanced front lines, but we could not reach it and on 6 August 1941 in the village of Golovanevsk, I fell under German captivity. I had a revolver, but not cartridges for it.

The Germans forced about three thousand Soviet prisoners of war, including me, to a brick factory in Uman, where a prisoner of war camp was located. At that time, the camp held very many prisoners of war. We were not fed, starved. The camp had unbearable life conditions. The prisoners of war were forced to work and I went to work on the construction of the aerodrome. I was located at the prisoner of war camp in Uman from August 1941 until May 1942.

In May 1942, the Germans transferred me and other prisoners of war to a camp in Chelmno, Poland.

Once, Germans arrived there in 3-4 vehicles. All of the prisoners of war were lined up, including me. The Germans walked by the line and chose individual prisoners, pointing to one or another, so that he would step forward. In this way, the Germans pointed at me and Kazakov. We stepped forward. At that time, the Germans chose about 60 people in this way and relocated us to another zone.

The selection took place with the help of Malov. He informed us that we would all be sent to work in Ukraine, but they took us to the town of Trawniki, Poland. This was around May – June, 1942.

7 USHMM Archives RG 31.018M Reel 73, Frames 1492-1500, Ukraine.
In Trawniki, I met defendant Zhukov. In Trawniki, we were given military uniforms, some black and some gray. We were photographed with our assigned numbers. Afterwards, we began training on carrying out guard service, we learned German songs, commands, and participated in construction projects. Lessons on anti-Soviet topics took place.

Later, in the presence of Malov, the Germans filled out forms/applications for all of us, including me. During the form completion, I answered that I have no Jewish background in my family. They took my fingerprint and I took an oath of loyalty to serve Nazi Germany.

After completing Trawniki training, I was given the title of Wachmann in the German forces SS. When I was in Trawniki, I did not have weapons and did not participate in any operations; but after completing training at Trawniki, along with other Wachmänner, I was sent to Lublin. Together with me was defendant Zhukov, Wachmann Shapiro.

We arrived to Lublin in August 1942. At the time of our arrival, there were many Wachmänner in Lublin. First we carried out guard service in the camp where we lived; later we were assigned to guard the ghetto and prisons, which held individuals of the Jewish nationality.

At each assigned post, I had a rifle and cartridges. Wachmänner Kazakov and Zhukov carried out guard service together with me. We guarded the labor camp. During this period, I personally forced Jews to work hard, applying physical force.

Once, defendant Zhukov and I were guarding Jews who were working. A Jewish foreman approached us and complained that one Jew was not working but laid down to rest. Defendant Zhukov and I beat that Jew; we beat him with our rifle butts and kicked him.

Early one morning, the Germans took about forty Wachmänner, including me, loaded us on 4 – 5 automobiles/trucks and drove us about 8 – 10 kilometers from Lublin. There, the Germans gave us an order, to cordon off the village and not allow anyone to leave. We, Wachmänner, cordoned off this village and the Germans began driving the Jews from their homes into the town square. This action lasted from the morning until about two in the afternoon. Then we were taken off the cordon. The Germans loaded two trucks with Jews and drove them somewhere, the rest of the people remained in the town square. We, Wachmänner, returned to Lublin by foot. There were no shootings of Jews.

In fall 1942 we, Wachmänner, were lined up early in the morning and informed that we were to liquidate the Jewish ghetto. The ghetto was located in the outskirts of Lublin. At the German order, we, Wachmänner, including me, cordoned off the ghetto and the Germans drove the people out of the housing. When everyone was forced out, the Wachmänner were taken off the cordon; we selected 50-60 people from those gathered and convoyed them to the railroad station.

While convoying people to the station, one elderly Jew continuously lagged behind the column, and I personally shot him. During the ghetto liquidation, the Jews threw their valuables into buckets that the Germans had specially placed in the square.
In total, I convoyed 2–3 columns of people to the station for deportation. Along with me, defendant Zhukov and Wachmann Kazakov convoyed Jews. At the wagon doors, we forced the Jews to undress to their underclothing and we loaded them in the wagons.

It was apparent that the people were sent to extermination. During the next five days, we guarded the belonging of those who had just been deported from the ghetto. I also saw a pit that contained about 50 corpses; but I do not know who shot these people.

I did not participate in any more punitive operations in Lublin, but continued to guard the prison and labor camp until May 1943. In May 1943, other Wachmänner and I were reassigned from Lublin to L’viv in the Janowska camp.

Soon after our arrival at the Janowska camp, a transport of prisoners arrived. A live corridor of Wachmänner was formed from the Kleparov station to the camp. Jews were unloaded from the train and they moved along this live corridor to the female zone of the camp.

A little later, the UberWachmänner announced to us, Wachmänner, that there was going to be a mass shooting of prisoners. All Wachmänner, without exception, were armed with weapons and cartridges. There were also Germans in regular green uniform, but not in black uniform.

At the time of the mass shooting, we, Wachmänner, in groups of four with 1–2 Germans, selected columns of prisoners of about 50-60 people and convoyed them to the place of the shooting. The place where prisoners were shot I showed to the investigating organs. We seated the prisoners next to the ravine, ordered them to strip naked, and knocked them into the pit with our rifle butts and by kicking them, where the Germans shot them.

On the first day of the mass shooting, I personally convoyed 4-5 columns to the extermination site and during the convoys I personally shot two prisoners. (Indignation in the audience.)

The second day of the mass shooting of prisoners took place the same way as the first day. I personally convoyed prisoners to the extermination site. In total, on the second day of the mass shooting, I convoyed 2 columns, each of 50-60 people. During the convoys to the extermination site, I shot one prisoner.

On the third day of the mass shooting, I did not participate and do not remember where I was at.

During the two days of the mass shooting of prisoners, defendant Zhukov convoyed prisoners to the extermination site with me. I know him well, as he lived in the same section with me in the Janowska camp; thus I remember him well.

Along with me, during the three-day mass shooting, the following Wachmänner convoyed prisoners to the extermination site: Gordeev Nikolai, Kazakov Nikolai Petrovich, Litvinenko, Shapiro, others I do not remember.
After the mass three-day shooting of prisoners, I had a dispute with Uberwachmann Malov, who was my supervisor; together with Kazakov and Gordeev, I escaped from the Janowska camp. This was in July 1943. Lysyi Nikolai was on guard duty.

We left the camp through the gates, where Lysyi stood. We retreated about 15-20 kilometers away from the camp. Kazakov led us. Along the path, we did not come across any partisans. We walked in the direction of Rava-Ruska. During the day, we sat in the rye. I remember that at the time, Kazakov told us to return to the camp to find out where the partisans were located, and then to go join them. I do not remember all the details, but in fact, when we returned to the Germans in the Janowska camp, the Germans arrested us, beat us, and placed Gordeev and me in the isolation ward. I do not know what happened to Kazakov.

I do not remember where we left our rifles that we had run away with. During the German interrogations, I said that we went on unauthorized leave, and we had no intention to escape from the camp. After, I was transferred to the L’viv prison, where I was interrogated twice. The Germans questioned me and severely beat me.

Later, from the L’viv prison, I was sent to the Auschwitz concentration camp, where I was placed among others in the dugout. Along with me, was located Uberwachmann named Nikolai. I do not remember his name and patronymic. The Uberwachman and I were dressed in Wachmann uniform. Later, this uniform was taken from us and we wore another uniform – stripped. I was then assigned #154909. Later, I was transferred to the Buchenwald concentration camp, where we were fed very poorly. This was in September 1943. There the Germans dressed me in a different stripped uniform and assigned #33512. In Buchenwald, no one interrogated me. From the Buchenwald concentration camp, I was transferred to the city of Dora for work in an underground factory, where I first loaded stone and later worked as a plumber until 1945.

At the end of April 1945, we, prisoners, about 6-7 thousand from Dora, were sent to Bergen in a train. Along the way, we were not fed. On the second day, after arrival, we were liberated by American forces and they guarded us.

(The trial continued with cross-examinations after defendant Prihodko gave this statement.)
After the explanation of st. 19 UPK UkSSR, witness Kirelakha O.P. confirmed that he speaks Russian and desires to speak in Russian. (Kirelakha’s signature)

At the suggestion to tell all that he knows about the given circumstances in regards to which he was called, witness Kirelakha O.P. stated:

In May 1941, living in Dnipropetrovsk, I was summoned to the Krasnogrod military unit for retraining for 45 day.

When the war began in June 1941, I, along with others, was sent into active duty.

At the end of July 1941, the region of Belaya Tserkov in the Kyiv oblast, I was wounded and fell under German captivity. After a few days in the Belaya Tserkov camp, the Germans sent me and other prisoners of war in Chelmno, Poland, where I was located in the prisoner of war camp until fall 1941; after which the Germans sent me in a group of 60 people to Trawniki, Poland, during which the Hitlerites did not tell us the purpose of the transfer from Chelmno.

In Trawniki, it was announced to us that we would undergo training in a Wachmann camp. At first, our group did nothing, but in spring 1942 we were dressed in black military uniforms and given rifles. After, we went through a course on line formation as well as other training.

At the camp, the training of Wachmänner SS forces, I was trained until April 1942, after which the Germans sent me and other Wachmänner to L’viv (called Lemberg at the time), where we carried guard service of the Janowska camp prisoners.

Together with me, the following traitors of the Homeland, Soviet prisoners of war, came from the Trawniki Wachmann training to the Janowska camp: Lesik Vladimir, Dontsov Ivan, Dianov Ivan, Pashka Gavriil, Gushinskiy, do not remember his name – Polish nationality, Volovikov, I believe his name was Leonid, two brothers named Trauberg, Germans born in the Soviet Union, Kubov, do not remember his name, Kirkach Vasiliy, Borisenko Ivan, Pushkarev Vasiliy, Vovchenko, do not remember his name, Harchenko Roman, Konev Nikolai, Svitelnikov (or Svitelnik), Demidenko Platon, and other Wachmänner whose names I do not remember.

In about three months, I was transferred to carry out guard service in a camp located on the outskirts of Zboriv, Ternopil oblast. It was called the Zborivskiyy camp. It held Jews, about 150 people who worked on the construction of the highway between Zolochiv and Ternopil.

Serving together with me in this camp were Lesik Vladimir (the head of our group), Dontsov Ivan, Dianov Ivan, Pashko Gavriil, Gushinskiy, Kubov, Harchenko Roman, Konev Nikolai, Demidenko Platon, and a few other Wachmänner whose names I do not remember.

---

8 USHMM Archives RG 31.018M Reel 73, Frames 1010-1021, Ukraine.
I remember that Demidenko was transferred to our unit from a camp located in Kazimirov, near Zolochiv in the L’viv oblast; I do not remember the reason why he was transferred, but I remember well that he served in our Wachmannschaft unit in the Zboriv camp.

In this camp, we guarded Jews and convoyed them to work.

During summer 1943, I do not remember the month, our entire unit was transferred back to the Janowska camp in L’viv; a group of Ukrainian policemen replaced us at the Zboriv camp.

In the Janowska camp, I continued to guard prisoners; there were several thousand prisoners, amongst which were women, elderly and children.

In about 3-4 months, many Wachmänner, including me, were directed to Lublin where we also guarded prisoners and convoyed them to work.

I do not remember who from the above listed Wachmänner served with me in the Lublin camp, since I was there only a short time.

At the end of 1943, I was sent with a large group of Wachmänner to Germany, where I carried out guard service until the end of the war in Hannover, Stettin, Bergedorf and Hamburg.

In May 1945, I was captured by the American forces, and soon handed over to the representatives of the Soviet command.

During the time of filtration, I concealed my service to the German forces SS.

In March 1949, I was arrested by the MGB, and in May of that year, I was sentenced to 25 years of imprisonment.

I was freed from my imprisonment in 1955 by the amnesty.

- Question: Tell about the facts you know concerning the shooting of prisoners in the camps in which you served as a Wachmann?

- Answer: During the time of my service in the German forces SS, I was an eyewitness and direct participant of shooting prisoners in the Zboriv and Janowska camps.

In early 1943, the commandant of the Zboriv camp, I do not know his name – German nationality, selected 20 prisoners, who were exhausted due to the harsh labor, and ordered us to lead them outside the camp to a field and shoot them. Carrying out the commandant’s order were us Wachmänner, including me; the prisoners who could not walk were laid on a sled and the rest walked in a line to the field next to an already dug out pit.

The prisoners were convoyed to the pit by me, Kirelakha, Lesik Vladimir, Gushinsky, Dontsov Ivan, Dianov Ivan, Pashko Gavriil, Harchenko Roman, Konev Nikolai, and Demidenko Platon, and also the commandant of the camp.
On the path from the camp zone to the pit (it was located about one kilometer from the camp), some prisoners could not walk and fell. We shot them on the spot, laid their bodies on a sled and drove them to the pit, and tossed them into it.

Along the way, a total of about 10 people were killed, two or three of whom I shot personally; the rest were shot by other Wachmänner, but I cannot remember who in particular shot them.

The remaining prisoners we shot at the pit, aiming at their backs or skulls. The condemned were shot by all the Wachmänner, that is Lesik, Gushinskiy, Dontsov, Dianov, Pashko, Harchenko, Konev and Demidenko. I personally did not shoot any prisoners by or into the pit, because when it was my turn to shoot, there was no one to shoot since all the prisoners had been killed.

How many people each of the named Wachmänner killed, I do not know since I was not counting; but everyone shot. Along the way, as I have already stated, I personally shot two or three men among the prisoners, who fell and could not go further.

I do not know who buried the corpses of the shot prisoners of the Zboriv camp. We, Wachmänner, did not bury them.

During this evildoing, the German commandant did not personally shoot, but only directed the shooting, and gave ammunition to the Wachmänner, for the machine guns.

All of the Wachmänner, including me, were armed with Russian style rifles.

There were no more facts about shootings of prisoners in the Zboriv camp during my time there.

Per my request, this protocol has been read aloud by the investigator; the statements from my words are correct: (Kirelakha’s signature).

Interrogator: Head investigator of UkKGB of L’viv oblast, m-r Rapota (Signature included).
- Question: Continue your statement about the facts you know concerning mass extermination of Soviet citizens.

- Answer: Aside from the instance of Zboriv prisoners that I discussed at yesterday’s interrogation, I know that Germans, with direct participation of Wachmänner including myself, carried out mass shootings of citizens of the Jewish nationality, located in the Janowska camp (Germans called it a labor camp).

In August or September 1943, when I was located in service in Janowska after my return from Zboriv, the camp SS commandant Wilhaus ordered me to convoy a group of prisoners of about 40 people from the camp to the extermination site. This group of Jews (only males) was already located outside the camp zone. I, armed with a rifle, led the prisoners in a line as Wilhaus walked next to me.

About 200 meters from the camp, I saw a man with a machine gun in a SD uniform, I do not know his nationality since I did not speak with him.

After stopping the group of prisoners condemned for death, Wilhaus ordered them to strip naked.

After they undressed, Wilhaus ordered them to walk up one by one to the machine gunner, who shot them with a single bullet.

At this time, Wilhaus and I stood next to the group of Jews awaiting their death; we did not participate in their shooting.

Along the way, the prisoners followed and acted calmly, without showing any resistance. True, on the way to the ravine, one man from the prisoners went away from the group to the side, and for this, Wilhaus shot him, taking the rifle from my hands.

The shooting of these 40 prisoners there at the ravine and there was no special second pit. No one buried the corpses in front of me.

I do not know who and to where the clothing was taken, since I returned to the camp zone immediately after this extermination.

In a month or two after this shooting in the Janowska camp on the outskirts of L’viv, a two-day mass shooting occurred, in which I participated personally in this evildoing on the second day. I would like to share the details about this.

On day one, I was located in the camp zone as a guard and saw how Germans in SD uniforms and Wachmänner from our unit, who in particular I do not remember, loaded prisoners onto open

---

9 USHMM Archives RG 31.018M Reel 73, Frames 1022-1035, Ukraine.
auto trucks and drove them from the camp zone, and returned without them. From this, I draw
the conclusion that they were driven out for shooting; especially since on the second day, the
same thing occurred and I personally saw how Germans and Wachmänner drove prisoners to the
ravine and shot them.

On the next day in the morning, about 10-15 Wachmänner and I were ordered to go to the
shooting site, to the ravine. When we arrived there, I saw a dugout pit ten meters in length and up
to three meters deep. I saw many corpses of shot prisoners at the bottom of the pit. I do not know
when they were killed, whether it was that day or earlier.

Near the pit stood four or five Germans with machine guns.

Soon, automobiles began arriving with the condemned, whom were mostly male. I saw only one
woman and one child, around age five. Wachmänner from the Janowska camp, whose names I
do not remember, convoyed the prisoners in automobiles.

By the German command, the prisoners climbed of the vehicles, which held about 25-30 people,
and they jumped into the pit, and the machine gunner shot them with single shots. The
Wachmänner who were near the ravine with me and those who convoyed the prisoners also had
direct participation in the shooting, that which I saw.

At German command, I also shot once or twice at the condemned, who had jumped into the pit.
Whether I killed one of the prisoners, I do not know, since other Wachmänner and Germans were
shooting simultaneously. I do not remember the names of the Wachmänner who participated in
this shooting.

Vehicles with Jews arrived every 15-20 minutes and they were all killed by the Germans and us,
Wachmänner.

Many prisoners jumped into the pit without any resistance, but some of them did not want to
jump and showed resistance. Germans and Wachmänner, including me, forcefully pushed them
into the pit and then shot them.

This extermination of innocent people created a terrible picture. I especially remember when the
aforementioned woman screamed, tore her hair, and begged not to be killed before her death, but
the executioners forcefully threw her into the ravine and shot her.

One of the executioners, I do not remember who, also grabbed the child in his arms and threw
him into the pit, after which he shot and killed him.

The shooting took place until about three in the afternoon that day and during that time, about a
thousand people were killed, many even a few thousand.

On the second or third day after this shooting, I and other Wachmänner convoyed six prisoners
to the extermination site, who buried the corpses. I saw how the ground absorbed the blood of
the murdered people. We returned the Jews, who filled the pit, back to the camp. I do not remember which Wachmänner convoyed these prisoners to the pit and back with me.

Other facts of mass extermination of people in the Janowska camp during my time there did not occur.

As I have already stated, from the Janowska camp I was transferred to the Lublin concentration camp, where I carried guard service of the prisoners.

- Question: Describe the layout of the Janowska camp.

- Answer: The Janowska camp was located on the outskirts of L’viv, at the end of Janowska street. The camp territory had three or four wooden barracks in which the prisoners lived. The camp was surrounded by barbed wire; a guard tower stood at each corner, on which we Wachmänner carried out guard duty of the prisoners.

Wachmänner, including me, lived in a separate barrack, also on the camp territory, but a barbed wire fence from the prisoner zone separated it.

The shooting location of Jews was in the ravine located about one kilometer from the camp.

- Question: What do you know about the shootings of people with Wachmänn participation in Lublin and Trawniki?

- Answer: During my time in Lublin and Trawniki, there were no shootings.

In fall 1943, the Germans ordered other Wachmänner and me to go from Lublin to Bialystok (Poland), where we escorted an transport of Jews to Majdanek, which was located near Lublin.

We left this transport in Majdanek and I do not know what happened to these people.

I do not remember which Wachmänner escorted this transport with me.

I am aware of another fact. At the end of 1943, before being sent to Germany, we Wachmänner were transferred from Lublin to Trawniki. There I saw how groups of Jews opened trenches of corpses of shot people and tore out gold teeth, which they gave to the Germans that directed this “operation.” The corpses were then placed on a pile and burnt. In total, about 500 corpses were burnt. I do not know who and when these people were shot.

- Question: Do you any of the following from you service to the German SS forces: Litvinenko Vasilii Nikoforovich, Lobuntsev Egor Ivanovich, Kuzennov Nikolai Andreevich, Kutsenko Ivan Ivanovich, Fedrenko Aleksandr Zaharovich and Lebedev Sergey Vasilievich, and also Sbeshnev Peter Eliseevich?

- Answer: No, I do not know the names of these individuals. It is possible that I knew them during my service to the German SS forces, but I did not know their names.
- Question: Why did you not state the facts about Wachmänner and your personal participation in shooting concentration camp prisoners during the investigation for your military tribunal?

- Answer: I did not tell about this during the investigation and in court only because I was afraid to receive a harsher punishment.

Per my request, this protocol has been read aloud by the investigator; the statements from my words are correct: (Kirelakha’s signature).

Interrogator: Head investigator of UkKGB of L’viv oblast, m-r Rapota (Signature included).
DOCUMENT #5: Testimony of Evva Mendeleevna Gal’pern from the ESC records given on 17 October 1944, reviewed by the L’viv court on 7 April 1968.\textsuperscript{10}

Copy of copy

Extraordinary State Commission

Interrogation Protocol

17 October 1944

I, the Commissioner of the Zboriv raion commission assisting to establish the evildoings of the German-Fascist invaaders Luchko Stefan Fedorovich, interrogated the following witness who called herself the following name:

Gal’pern, Evva Mendeleevna, 1913 year of birth; origin of proletariat of town of Zboriv, same raion, Ternopil’ oblast; Jewish nationality; middle school education, completed 7 grades of gymnasium in Ternopil’; in Zboriv, live on Bazarnoi Road, house #1; work in Zboriv in collective factory; single; not judged.

Warned about the liability for giving false statements according to statute 89 UkSSR.

Signature: Gal’pern.

The Witness stated the following:

I am the daughter of the former chief accountant of the Zboriv Jewish state bank. The Germans shot my father, mother and two brothers; but I managed to save my life by living in a pit for 14 months together with the Saiger I.S. family, with whose help I fled from the camp in June 1943 and hid until July 1944, until of day of liberation of Zboriv from the German occupiers.

In 1941 with the arrival of the German-Fascist occupiers in Zboriv, the Germans began to capture peaceful citizens, brought them to Torgovuy Road and shot them; my father and two brothers were shot there.

On the second day after the shooting, I personally went to the pit, where lay about 800 male corpses, with the goal of identifying my family, but identifying them was impossible since there were so many and they were covered with some dirt. In 1942, the Germans began to enclose the Jewish settlement with a barbed wire, called it a “ghetto” and forbid the Jews to exit the borders, or they would be shot; and indeed they did this.

\textsuperscript{10} USHMM Archives RG 31.018M Reel 73, Frames 1669-1671, Ukraine.
Peaceful residents of the “ghetto” were taken for work, but only those capable of work; I found myself there and was located in the camp for 3 months, from March until June 1943, working in the camp as a maid.

The German Klaus headed the camp; his assistant was Kaputsar. I do not know their names and patronymics; both were German. By the commands of Klaus and Kaputsar, the German soldiers and German police carried out shootings of peaceful citizens. For example, if one person escaped from the camp, the Germans went to the “ghetto” and took the first 15 people, who were innocent, and shot them in the Sokolinskoi valley.

In the Sokolinskoi valley, the Germans shot about 8,000 peaceful citizens, all gathered from the Zboriv raion.

Before the shooting, all were divided and kept in the snow, undressed and sitting for about 24 hours; afterwards, they were led from Zboriv into the Sokolinskoi Valley and shot there in turn.

Every citizen of Zboriv can confirm this brutality of the Nazi Germans and their collaborators.

I know from the stories of Zboriv residents that on 23 July 1943, after a few people escaped from a shooting in the camp, the Germans forced the remaining peaceful residents into the barrack (about 500 people), covered it with hay, furniture and wooden boards, drenched it with gas, and burnt everyone alive; anyone who tried to escape was shot with a bullet from a machine gun. Young children were taken by the legs and beat against the fence until death if front of the mothers’ eyes.

After seeing such brutality, I ran from the camp, hid in a pit and was located underground for 14 months, thus saving my life.

I cannot add anything else concerning this. The protocol has been read to me and correctly recorded from my words.

Signature: Gal’pern

Commissioner: Luchko

Copy verified: Head investigator of UkKGB in L’viv Oblast, Major Rapota (Signature)

7 April 1968
DOCUMENT #6: Testimony of Dmitriy Grigoriyvich Nechai, resident of Zboriv, given on 13 June 1968.\textsuperscript{11}

Protocol of Witness Interrogation
Zboriv
13 June 1968

Head investigator of UkKGB for L’viv Oblast’, major Rapota

Name: Nechai, Dmitriy Grigoriyvich
Year of birth: 1902
Place of birth: Zboriv, Ternopil’ Oblast’
Nationality and citizenship: Ukrainian, USSR
Party affiliation: N/A
Education: 4 grades
Occupation: Collective farmer

After the explanation of st. 19 UPK UkSSR, witness Nechai D.G. confirmed that he speaks Russian and desires to give his statement in Russian. \textit{(Nechai’s signature)}

At the suggestion to tell all that he knows about the given circumstances in regards to which he was called, witness Nechai D.G. stated:

During the period of the temporary German occupation of Ukraine, I lived in Zboriv on Mlinovskiy Road, I do not remember the house number (next to the building that now holds the repair group).

In spring 1942, the Germans created a labor camp in the building now used by the repair group, into which they brought up to 300 Jewish men. These people were physically healthy, therefore they were used for the construction of the highway. As a result of the grueling work and hunger, the camp prisoners were so depleted that many died and the criminals shot many who served in the camp.

The camp zone was surrounded by barbed wire. In addition to the building – a large brick house, in which the Jews lived, the camp zone also held a wooden barrack similar to a barn, in which tailors and shoemakers from the prisoners worked. The perpetrators burnt down this building in summer 1943 with people inside, which I will tell more about later.

Policemen called “vlasovti,” who had Russian nationality, guarded the camp.\textsuperscript{12} I did not know and do not know any of their names, since I never met them.

\textsuperscript{11} USHMM Archives RG 31.018M Reel 73, Frames 1338-1349, Ukraine.

\textsuperscript{12} It seems that some Zboriv locals remembered and referred to Wachmänner as “vlasovtsi.”
Around spring 1943, these “vlasovtsi” left somewhere, and Ukrainian policemen, who were natives of western Ukrainian regions, replaced them. I also do not know any of their names. They served in the camp until liquidation, that is until summer 1943.

The commander of the camp was Klaus, and his assistants were Kapitsar and Fox. They lived in the city in private homes. Klaus, in particular, lived with his mistress Nechai, Mariya (now living in L’viv) on Mlinovskiy Road in a house where a Pole used to live.

Nechai Mariya worked in the kitchen for a brief period, where she prepared food for the Germans and “vlasovtsi”; afterwards, she moved into the house with Klaus, where I saw her frequently when I passed by. Additionally, I saw her together with Klaus in town.

My former wife, Nechai, Olga Nikolaevna, also worked in this kitchen. She moved to Poland in 1955 to live with our daughter. (I do not know the address.)

The “vlasovtsi” guards lived in the homes of Ukhanskoi, Anna and Davidovich, Agritina on the same Mlinovskity Road.

I know the following about the participation of Germans and “vlasovtsi” in the extermination of Jews.

In summer 1942, the Germans created a Jewish ghetto in the town center, which contained old men, women and children – a total of a few thousand people.

One morning, the Germans ordered the residents of Mlinovskiy Road, including me, to go into the ghetto in wagons, without telling us the purpose. When I arrived in the cart, I saw a large group of Jews – women, elderly and children of all ages – surrounded by SS men and “vlasovtsi,” along with other camp workers, many of my neighbors, and Germans who arrived from some other city.

The Jews themselves loaded the people who were ill and could not walk onto the wagons. The perpetrators lined up the rest of the people and led them outside the town along the road towards Zolochiv. We followed behind the column in the wagons, along with the SS guards.

The condemned were led to the outskirts of town to “Redku’s orchard,” where three large pits were dug in advance, about 30 meters in length, 2-3 meters in width and 2 meters in depth.

Once the wagons were unloaded, the Germans ordered us to drive away to the side and wait for further instruction. All of the wagons drove about 50 meters away from the pits and stopped. Besides me, the wagon drivers were Dovgan’ Stepan (deceased), Radzihovskiy Fedor, and other who I do not remember.

Before our eyes, the perpetrators shot all of the Jews, including the children, into one of the pits.

This action took place in this way. First, all of the Jews were ordered to sit on the ground. Then, the perpetrators separated a few people from the group and forced them to strip naked. They
pushed them into the pit and shot them. The condemned who did not want to undress or showed resistance were beaten with rifle butts and kicked. The clothing was searched in the presence of Germans in order to find Jewish valuables taken from the labor camp.

In such a way, all of the Jews were shot, and there were no less than one thousand people.

This crime represented itself in this frightening image: people screamed (especially women and children), wept, many lost consciousness and fell, mothers pressed their young children against their chests and fell together after being shot. Other children were kicked and thrown into the pit, and killed there.

Germans as well as “vlasovsti,” who guarded the prisoners of the labor camp located on Mlinoskiy Road, shot the people in the pit.

A portion of the perpetrators stood around the perimeter of the killing site.

After the shooting ended, prisoners covered the pit with dirt (these prisoners were from the labor camp, but the perpetrators shot none of them then). The pit was completely full of corpses.

We were ordered to drive up to the piles of clothing from the killed people; when we drove up, the Jewish workers placed all of the clothing and shoes into the wagons, after which the SS guards guided us back to the camp on Mlinovskiy Road, where the workers unloaded the six or seven wagons. Only after this were we allowed to return home.

I forgot to mention that we made two or three trips to gather all of the clothing and shoes from the killed people.

I do not know the names of any of the perpetrators who participated in this shooting, aside from Klaus and Fox. They both stood by the pit, but I did not see whether they shot at people.

Living next door to the labor camp, I often saw how Klaus shot exhausted and ill prisoners with his gun in the camp zone. The prisoners themselves told me (I spoke with them from my yard through the barbed wire fence) that the “vlasovtsi” guards shot many camp inmates during their work on the road, and they were also butchers like the Germans.

I personally did not see instances where “vlasovtsi” shot people in the camp zone or while convoying them to work.

I do not know the guards named Kirelakha, Dontsov and Konev.

In summer 1943, the perpetrators destroyed the labor camp on Mlinovskiy Road, and all other prisoners were killed. A portion of them were driven from the camp on automobiles and shot somewhere outside the town. A large part [of the prisoners] were forced inside the wooden barrack (barn), they closed the doors, poured gasoline on all sides, and set it on fire. Many who tried to escape leapt out the doors that they broke down, but the German perpetrators shot them.
with rifles and machine guns. The Ukrainian policemen stood as guards inside the perimeter of
the camp during this crime. I did not see whether they shot. Klaus directed the entire operation.

All of the prisoners were burnt alive and shot in the burning wooden barrack.

I personally saw this from my yard.

On the second day, Klaus ordered other local residents and me to drive the burnt corpses in our
wagons to a pit outside of town, there to “Redku’s orchard.” In total, there were over 200
corpses.

In summer 1942 or 1943, I do not remember exactly, I saw a Jewish man hung upside down in
the camp zone for attempt escape from the camp; other prisoners told me the reason later. Klaus
stood by the gallows with a gun in hand and forced another prisoner to hang the aforementioned
Jew, which he did.

In Zboriv, the perpetrators carried other mass shootings of the Jewish population, but I did not
seem them and only heard about them from others.

I would like to add the following to my statement – in 1945 in a military tribunal in Ternopil, my
former wife, Nechai Olga, and I were each sentenced to ten years of imprisonment. I was
accused of giving away Jews to the Germans and for having connections with the perpetrators,
which indeed was not so. Nechai Olga was accused for working in the perpetrators’ kitchen.

I have nothing else to add to my statement.

The protocol has been read to me aloud and correctly recorded from my words; I have no
corrections.

Signature: Nechai

Investigator: Head investigator of UkKGB in L’viv Oblast, Major Rapota (Signature)
Protocol
Reproduction of the situation and circumstances of events
Zboriv
4 July 1968

Head investigator of UkKGB in L’viv oblast’ major Rapota, with participation of witness Redku Petr Fedorovich and presiding witnesses Lyusii Aleksei Vasiliivich, residing in Zboriv on Matrosova Road, 15, and Balitskiy Iosif Ivanovich, residing in Zboriv on Shovtnevoi, 7, in accordance to the requirements of st. 194 and 195. UPK USSR carried out an inspection of the location where witness Redku P.F. indicated that during the period of temporary German occupation of Zboriv the perpetrators shot approximately 30 Jews.

The presiding members received an explanation of rights of attending all actions of the investigation and to make statements concerning those or other actions.

The presiding witnesses also received an explanation on the basis of st. 127 UPK USSR of their responsibility to present the facts, occurrences, and results of the inspection of the location with the purpose of reproducing the events.

In accordance to chapter IV of st. 167 UPK USSR, Redku P.F. received an explanation of the responsibility of a witness assigned by st. 70 UPK USSR and he was warned of he responsibility of st. 179 UK USSR for the refusal or rejection to testify and st. 178 chapter II. UK USSR for perjury.

The inspection began at 14:00 and ended at 16:25.

At 14:00, the aforementioned individuals arrived to the territory of the Zboriv of the inter-collective construction organization, which is located in the northern part of Zboriv, about five hundred meters from the town next to the highway between Zboriv and Zolochiv.

By the recommendation of the investigator, witness Redku P.F. entered the yard of the specified organization, headed in the direction of two apple trees that grew in the yard, inspected the location and stated that the two apple trees remained from his old orchard, which he planted in the prewar years.

Then, witness Redku showed the location of the water drain in 1942. In this pit, Redku indicated that at the end or 1942 or beginning of 1943, policemen shot approximately 30 camp male prisoners, about which Zboriv residents told him of, but he does not remember exactly whom. He personally saw how the pit was covered with dirt.

The place that witness Redku indicated is located 13-15 meters from the apple trees growing nearby. This place has no construction or plants.

---

13 USHMM Archives RG 31.018M Reel 73, Frames 1373-1377, Ukraine.
The distance from the inter-collective construction organization, where the pit is located, to the last houses on Mlinovskiy Road is about 300 meters.

With the photo camera “FyeD-2,” photographs were taken of the recorded location of the shooting of Zboriv camp prisoners, as indicated by witness Redku P.F.

Additionally, a layout has been compiled of place with the designated location of the shooting, as witness Redku indicated.

The layout is attached to this protocol.

No statements or comments were made.

The protocol was read to the witnesses. Recorded accurately.

Signatures of witness (Redku), presiding witnesses (Lyusii and Balitskiy), and head investigator of UkKGB (Rapota).
Photograph of investigations in Zboriv. The text reads, “Remains of corpses, retrieved from the pit, being washed with water.” Signature of head UkKGB investigator, Rapota, is included.14

14 USHMM Archives RG 31.018M Reel 73, Frame 1979, Ukraine.
Photograph of forensic investigation in Zboriv. The text reads, “The remains of human corpses, retrieved from the pit.” The signature of head UkKGB investigator, Rapota, is included.\footnote{USHMM Archives RG 31.018M Reel 73, Frame 1982, Ukraine.}
LIST OF REFERENCES


Kasianov, Georgiy and Philipp Ther, eds. *A Laboratory of Transnational History: Ukraine and Recent Ukrainian Historiography.* Budapest: Central European University Press, 2009.


Rudling, Per A. The OUN, the UPA and the Holocaust: A Study in the Manufacturing of Historical Myths. Pittsburgh: Center for Russian and East European Studies, 2011.


Olesya Dudenkova was born in Zheleznogorsk, Russia. At age five, she immigrated to the United States with her parents, Vladimir and Lidiya, and five siblings. Olesya earned a Bachelor of Art in History, with a minor in Psychology, at the University of North Florida in Jacksonville, where she received a number of awards including the SMART Grant, Gray Study Abroad Scholarship, Presidential Scholarship, Florida Bright Futures Medallion, and Ling Scholarship.

Olesya pursued a Master of Art in History at the University of Florida with a focus on modern European history. She worked as a graduate research and teaching assistant for the Center for European Studies and received the Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) fellowship to study Polish. Additionally, Olesya worked as a graduate research assistant at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, where she used her native Russian to assist with the initiative on the Holocaust in the Soviet Union.