

Introduction:

Conceptualizations of the Holocaust in Germany, Poland, Lithuania, Belarus, and Ukraine: Historical Research, Public Debates, and Methodological Disputes

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The Shoah belongs to one of the most thoroughly investigated aspects of modern European history. Scholars have used the Holocaust methodology to study other genocides, or forms of ethnic or political violence. Nevertheless, our understanding of the extermination of the European Jewry is limited, fragmented, and changes constantly due to new investigation methods, research interests, and public debates. The first studies on the Holocaust were conducted already during the Shoah but because of different reasons historians in some countries such as Germany and Ukraine did not pay much attention to them and concentrated rather on the documents left by the perpetrators and their fate during the war. While in Poland the research on the Holocaust never stopped, even if it was subjected to various political and ideological limitations, and the Shoah has been publicly debated since the middle of the 1980s, this was not the case in Lithuania, Belarus, and Ukraine. Nevertheless, in the last two decades, the importance of the Holocaust was discovered in these countries as well and it is currently conceptualized in the framework of regional, national, and European history.

Keywords: *Holocaust; Poland; Belarus; Historiography; Lithuania*

The Shoah belongs to one of the most thoroughly investigated aspects of modern European history. Historians have used the methodology of the Holocaust studies to investigate other genocides, or forms of ethnic and political violence. Nevertheless, our understanding of the destruction of the European Jewry is still limited and fragmented. It also changes constantly as a result of new methods of investigation, research agendas, and public debates.¹ The first studies of the Holocaust were conducted as early as the time of the Shoah. While hiding in occupied Warsaw in late 1943, Emanuel Ringelblum (1900–1944), a talented historian from Buczacz and Vilna, wrote one of the first academic analyses of the Shoah based on his observations.² A few months before, while residing in the Warsaw ghetto, he had initiated and directed the collection of documents on the persecution and destruction of the Jews in Poland, Lithuania, Belarus, and Ukraine.³ Although

Ringelblum and his family were ultimately denounced and killed, together with their helpers, on 7 March 1944, his archive and analytical observations survived the war. They were found, published, and contributed to the conceptualization of the Holocaust in Poland, Lithuania, Ukraine, and Belarus.⁴

Another important collection of testimonies to have a major impact on the postwar conceptualization of the Shoah in Lithuania, Poland, Ukraine, and Belarus was initiated a few weeks after Ringelblum's murder. It was organized by a group of Jewish survivors, who founded the Jewish Historical Commission in the liberated city of Lublin and within three years collected more than seven thousand survivor testimonies. In addition, they published several analytical booklets, articles, and short books on the Shoah.⁵ Members of this community such as Philip Friedman (1901–1960), Rachel Auerbach (1903–1976), Joseph Wulf (1912–1974), Szymon Datner (1902–1989), and Józef Kermisz (1907–2005) continued investigating the Holocaust during the 1950s and the 1960s.⁶ Because of their undertaking, knowledge about the extermination of European Jews and scholarly approaches to this subject had already existed in the immediate postwar period. However, the reception of knowledge about the Holocaust was limited to Jewish communities and a small number of individual gentile scholars who sympathized with the victims of the Shoah.⁷

During the first years after World War II, many people—including historians—did not know that a genocide of the Jews had occurred during the war. Those who knew usually diminished its importance or misrepresented it. Some of these intellectuals were to be found among German historians, including the most prominent ones. It was in the first instance not the chaos of the postwar years or the lack of foreign language skills, but the preoccupation with German history, the perception of ordinary Germans as victims of Hitler and the Nazis, antisemitism in German academic communities, and a lack of empathy for the victims of the Shoah that did not allow German intellectuals and German society as such to take notice of the Shoah or understand its importance. In 1946, one of the most prominent German historians, Friedrich Meinecke (1862–1954), published *Die deutsche Katastrophe: Betrachtungen und Erinnerungen* (The German Catastrophe: Contemplations and Recollections).⁸ Meinecke was unconcerned about the Jews, their fate during the war, and Nazi policy toward European Jewry. His main concern was to apologize for the German *Geist* that had been harmed by the Nazis. He recalled the German contribution to European culture and portrayed the Germans as the main victims of the Nazis. According to his interpretation of the recent German past, the Nazis had deluded German society and harmed the good name of the nation of *Dichter und Denker*. The murder of millions of Jews and other civilians or the exploitation and destruction of Europe did not belong to German history and identity, because the Nazis were not Germans. They were a small group of lunatics who had harmed the German nation and culture.⁹

The rejection of guilt and the lack of empathy for the Jews and other victims of Nazi Germany were challenged only in the late 1950s and early 1960s, during the

trials against German war criminals such as the Ulm Einsatzkommando trial in 1958, the Eichmann trial in 1961, and the Frankfurt Auschwitz trials between 1963 and 1965.¹⁰ The rejection of guilt and lack of empathy gradually evaporated from German historiography as well as from conceptions of German identity in the 1980s and the 1990s when the Holocaust was publicly discussed and debated within German society. It was both German and outside historians who convinced the German public that the Holocaust constitutes a chapter of modern German history and even represents a central aspect of it. Debates surrounding Christopher Browning's *Ordinary Men* and Daniel Goldhagen's *Hitler's Willing Executioners* as well as the Wehrmacht exhibition showed that the question of Holocaust perpetrators cannot be reduced to Hitler and a dozen of other prominent Nazis, that there was no clear boundary between the Nazis and the Germans, that many perpetrators of the Holocaust were ordinary people and not pathological sadists, and that the Wehrmacht was involved in the Holocaust and had committed numerous crimes against civilians. As a result of these debates, the Shoah moved from the periphery to the center of German history, even if the number and effectiveness of Holocaust deniers and obfuscators in today's Germany should not be underestimated.¹¹

The historiographical and political recognition of the Holocaust in Germany, however, caused new problems for the transnational conceptualizations of the subject. In the 1980s and 1990s, some German historians such as Dieter Pohl and Christian Gerlach started to thoroughly investigate the Holocaust and its perpetrators. However, they did so within the framework of German history.¹² Even as they studied the Shoah in Ukraine, Poland, Belarus, or Lithuania, their primary interest and concern was not the comprehensive and complex nature of the Holocaust in these countries, but rather the role of German perpetrators and the German occupation as such. On the one hand, it was understandable that after decades of intellectual ignorance and political distortion, German historians wanted to show the significance of the Shoah for German history, and to reveal the leading role of the Nazi state and German perpetrators in the extermination of European Jews. On the other hand, this way of investigating and writing history affected the transnational nature of the Holocaust and helped historians and politicians in countries such as Ukraine, Poland, and Lithuania to relocate the entire guilt for the murder of the Jews in their countries on the German occupiers, or to deny the agency of non-German perpetrators.¹³

The publication of Jan Tomasz Gross's *Neighbors* in 2001 and the following debate about a pogrom without the presence of German perpetrators is only one of many examples that the Holocaust "was in reality a series of 'Holocausts,'" as Dan Stone observed, questioning the Germano-centric conceptualization of the Shoah.¹⁴ To understand the Holocaust in plural and to reconceptualize it, we need to recognize its complex and transnational nature, as well as the fact that its perception by perpetrators, victims, and "bystanders" was strikingly different and sometimes even contradictory.¹⁵ Combining the national or local Holocausts into a single history of

the Holocaust is more difficult than it might appear. It requires a recognition of its European and transnational nature, while researching its history on the local levels. It also requires new research methods and the analysis of all kinds of sources, perceptions, and interpretations. How challenging this task might be was first demonstrated during the debate between Martin Broszat and Saul Friedländer in 1987–1988. Friedländer, a survivor of the Holocaust and the author of one of the first comprehensive European histories of the Shoah, tried to convince the director of the most important German historical institute, the Institute of Contemporary History (Institut für Zeitgeschichte), Martin Broszat, who in April 1944 had joined the NSDAP and protected Nazi Germany as a *Flakhelfer* (auxiliary of the German Luftwaffe), that the opposition of a “rational” German scholarship versus a “mythical memory” of Jewish survivors does not exist, and that it is crucial to take the accounts of the victims as seriously as the documents created by the perpetrators.¹⁶

Although today no historian of the Shoah questions the importance of Friedländer’s critique on Broszat and the significance of his concept of “integrated history,” the altering of methodologies to do justice to the complexity of the Shoah and to recognize its transnational nature is still an exception among many historians of the Holocaust in Eastern Europe. The recognition of other sources and re-conceptualizations of Holocaust history have frequently served as a source of debate, because the new approach questioned the national paradigms or the standard Germano-centric approach to the subject. Studies on the transnational community of perpetrators such as local pogromists, Lithuanian and Ukrainian policemen, and various local actors involved in the deportations of Jews from ghettos to extermination camps have attracted the interest of some societies in Eastern European countries and recently even German historians.¹⁷

After all, it would be naïve to believe that research on the Holocaust operates in isolation from politics and public debates. It was civil society and the broader public that have raised new questions or refused to accept some aspects of the new studies. In addition, the conceptualization of the Holocaust was greatly impacted by political processes such as the Cold War, the dissolution of the Soviet Union, and the rise of authoritarian and rightwing governments in the last ten years. They influenced the questions we asked regarding the past and changed access to archives, making new kinds of documents available to researchers. Because in the early 1990s the archives in the republics and satellite states of the Soviet Union, including Belarus, Lithuania, Poland, and Ukraine opened their collections to researchers, new insights could be generated on the nature of collaboration between local fascists such as the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (Orhanizatsia Ukraïns’kykh Natsionalistiv [OUN]) and the Nazis or the importance of Eastern Europe as the site for the implementation of the Shoah. The debates on the Wehrmacht, Jedwabne, or the *žydšaudžiai* (Lith. Jew-shooters) demonstrated that historical research on the Holocaust matters, and that its results are dependent on our access to and interpretation of archival documents.¹⁸

One of the most significant historiographical debates of the last two decades concerned the transnational nature of the Shoah on the local level, as opposed to the European dimension of the Shoah because the latter is already known.¹⁹ The kernel question of the debate has been how to investigate the various aspects of the Holocaust such as perpetrators, everyday life in the ghettos, and collaboration within a framework of transnational and European history? How to write the history of the Shoah without marginalizing the agency of local actors and how to show the complex relationships between them and the Germans and the Jews? How to investigate and write with empathy the history of the Holocaust in Poland, Belarus, Lithuania, and Ukraine and show its importance for the entire event? How to explain to readers the political processes that produced local genocidal communities? How to show the links between seemingly unrelated subjects, such as the agency of political inmates in the Gestapo prison on Prinz-Albrecht-Strasse in Berlin and the murdering of the Jews and other civilians in western Ukraine? How to explain contradictions such as the decision of the antisemitic priest Maximilian Kolbe (1894–1941) to volunteer to die in place of a stranger in Auschwitz before it became a camp of extermination, or how to explain the dynamics within the Polish Home Army (*Armia Krajowa* [AK]) which united democrats, fascists, antisemites, and a small number of Jews who had to hide their Jewish identity?

This special section of the journal provides answers to only some of these questions in the context of Poland, Ukraine, Belarus, and Lithuania—the countries in which the Germans and various kinds of local perpetrators murdered a substantial number of all Holocaust victims. In these articles, the authors examine two interrelated issues. First, some of the texts analyze the complexity and contradictory nature of the Holocaust, using concrete examples such as the Lublin ghetto, the service of the Ukrainian nationalist Roman Shukhevych in the German battalions, and the AK. Other texts investigate how public debates and political processes impacted the scholarly and popular conceptions of the Holocaust and the role that research on the Shoah played in these debates. Taken together, they show that the conceptualization of the Holocaust occurred on many levels, involving contemporary perceptions of events, research, publications, public debates, scholarly disputes, and the politics of memory.

The notion of “conceptualization” in relation to Holocaust studies was coined by Dan Michman, the current director of the International Institute for Holocaust Research at Yad Vashem. Michman has studied and taught the Holocaust for many years, reflecting on the methodology and theory of this specific part of the discipline of history. In a text dealing with the question of methodology and conceptualization, Michman explained that the study of the Holocaust raises the same problems as the historical investigation of other subjects and pointed out the importance of the language. He then specified his understanding of conceptualization: “Appropriate elucidation of the research theme (a historical event, phenomenon, or process) in terms of its contents, essence, and limits is the act known as conceptualization; the

product of conceptualization is a concept, and the linguistic label applied to it is the term.”²⁰ Without doing any harm to this understanding of “conceptualization,” we can call attention to the fact that a historian who investigates the Holocaust operates within national, transnational, local, European, and global frameworks, writes for specific communities, and is shaped by values rooted in certain communities. On the one hand, the publications of historians have the power to unleash debates and change societies or alter the historical identities of a community. On the other hand, their research interests and beliefs are influenced by public debates, historical processes, and values. Historians conceptualize the Shoah in different ways, using different kinds of documents, applying different interpretations, and emphasizing different aspects of their subjects. However, as members of a community of Holocaust scholars, they write the history of the same event. In recent years, more and more efforts have been undertaken to combine the local or micro investigations with the transnational and European dimension of the Shoah, or to integrate the micro findings within the wider framework of the Holocaust, while contextualizing it. The notion of conceptualization helps us to understand the process of writing the history of the Holocaust, providing it with different meanings, and to see how understanding of the Shoah changes over time due to new research interests, findings, and debates.²¹

All five countries investigated in this collection—Germany, Poland, Ukraine, Belarus, and Lithuania—have their own specifics on the level of the historical implementation of the Holocaust and postwar debates. For a long time, Auschwitz and Nazi Germany served as the two main symbols of the Holocaust. German Nazis were equated with all perpetrators of the Holocaust, and their role in the Shoah was often overestimated. This common understanding of Nazi Germany already began to take root during the Shoah and was later reinforced by international reactions to the rejection of guilt for the Shoah in postwar Germany. While it goes without saying that we should never underestimate the leading role of Nazi Germany in the implementation of the Shoah, the simple equation of Holocaust perpetrators with the Nazis or Germans is misleading and deficient. The transnational and European nature of the perpetrators does not mean only places like Jedwabne where the Germans were not present during the murder of the Jews. Of key importance are the various forms of collaboration with the Germans during the occupation and the Holocaust, and indifference toward the fate of the Jews on the part of the local population in Poland, Ukraine, Belarus, Lithuania, and many other countries. The Einsatzgruppen who shot Jews after the German attack on the Soviet Union or the German officials and staff of Operation Reinhard did not operate in a vacuum or a space free of local people but in local settings and among local populations. They murdered Jews who lived in the centers of Belorussian, Lithuanian, Polish, and Ukrainian villages, towns, and cities and they did it with the help of local people, including mayors, policemen, priests, and ordinary citizens. The perception of the Shoah as a German or German-Jewish event is misleading.

Poland was the country in which half of all Holocaust victims had lived before 1939. The extermination of the Jews took place before the eyes of the Poles and was part of their everyday life. Poles, both in rural and urban areas, could not avoid seeing how the Jews were mistreated, ghettoized, and murdered. While some Poles helped the Jews, others actively or passively persecuted them. Many Poles, especially in the General Government, profited from the Holocaust, taking into their possession Jewish houses, taking over their businesses, or “Aryanizing” their property. Polish intellectuals started to debate the behavior of the Poles during the Holocaust only in the late 1980s, when Jan Błoński published his essay “The Poor Poles Look at the Ghetto” and Claude Lanzmann’s *Shoah* was screened in Poland.²² However, it was only thanks to Jan Tomasz Gross’s *Neighbors* that the first public debate about the participation of Poles in the murder of Jews changed the general understanding of Polish agency during the Shoah. This subsequently gave rise to other important studies and drew historians’ attention to survivor testimonies as historical documents.²³

Unlike Poland, Ukraine has not seriously begun to debate the importance of the Shoah for its history, or the behavior of Ukrainians during the Holocaust. From 1944 until 1991, Ukraine was a Soviet republic and it had to write its history according to the paradigms of Soviet ideology. The murder of the Jews was not completely absent in the Soviet-Ukrainian historiography of World War II, but it became an invisible part of the Great Patriotic War. At the same time, the history of the Holocaust was distorted by the Ukrainian diaspora, which included people directly involved in the implementation of the Shoah such as policemen and city mayors as well as members of the OUN and the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (Ukrains’ka Povstans’ka Armiia [UPA]), which murdered 70,000 to 100,000 Poles before some of their members left western Ukraine with the Germans in 1944. During the Cold War, historians of the Ukrainian diaspora polemicized with Soviet propaganda. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, this attitude to the Holocaust as a part of the Ukrainian history has been prolonged. On the one hand, the Shoah was marginalized in Ukraine. On the other, historians, who investigated the agency of the Ukrainians during the Holocaust, were attacked and their research rejected as anti-Ukrainian Russian, Polish, or Jewish propaganda.

Like western Ukraine, Poland, and Belarus, Lithuania lost more than 90 percent of its Jewish population during the Holocaust. More than two hundred thousand Lithuanian Jews were murdered between summer 1941, when Germany launched the attack on the Soviet Union, and the second half of 1944, when the Red Army pushed the Wehrmacht westwards. The Shoah in Lithuania is usually divided by scholars into four phases: first, the pogroms after the attack on the Soviet Union in June 1941; second, mass killings by Einsatzgruppe A; third, the systematic murder of the Jews in the provinces and larger towns; and fourth, the liquidation of the ghettos between 1942 and 1944. Because of the relatively small number of German policemen and administrators, Lithuanians played a crucial role in all phases of the Holocaust, and

their agency naturally became an important subject of research and debates. Although the first exhibition on the Holocaust was opened in a Lithuanian Jewish museum as early as 1944, Lithuanian historians began to examine the contributions of Lithuanian policemen and ordinary Lithuanians to the Holocaust only in the early 1990s, after the collapse of the Soviet Union.²⁴ The publication of their research was accompanied by a public debate about the so-called *žydšaudžiai* (Jew-shooters) and another major debate that occurred more recently after the publication of *Mūsiškiai* (Our People) by Ruta Vanagaitė.

Belarus was one of the countries in Eastern Europe where every tenth citizen was a Jew. Altogether, no fewer than eight hundred thousand Belorussian Jews were murdered by the Nazis and their collaborators. In contrast to its neighboring countries of Poland, western Ukraine, and Lithuania, antisemitism and nationalism were much less pronounced in Belarus. However, life in the Soviet Union, as well as the extensive terror of the Nazis, made the Belorussian population indifferent toward the Jews. Most of the Belorussian Jews were shot by the German *Einsatzgruppen* and the *Einsatzkommandos* of the *Sicherheitsdienst*. In addition, the *Schutzmannschaften*, which were composed of Lithuanian, Ukrainian, and Latvian volunteers, operated in Belarus. Most Belorussian Jews died as a result of the "Holocaust by bullets," although the Germans opened one extermination camp in Maly Tratsianiets. After the war, the Holocaust in Soviet Belarus was de-ethnicized and Belarusianized: the murdering of the Jews was presented as a part of the Nazi terror against the Belorussian people. As in other Soviet republics, the word "Holocaust" did not appear in historical books, with the exception of publications in Yiddish.

The articles in this collection deal with the conceptualization of the Holocaust, focusing on German, Polish, Ukrainian, Lithuanian, and Belorussian history and the interactions between them. Germany is not analyzed as a separate country, but it plays an important role in every article as a force that initiated the Shoah and occupied the analyzed countries during the Holocaust. While some of the authors concentrated on the complex or even paradoxical aspects of the history of the Holocaust, others analyzed public debates, the role of historians and other actors in them, and the shaping of official and unofficial memory of the Shoah. Combined, the articles show in specific examples how the Holocaust occurred in occupied Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, and Belarus, and how its history was conceptualized during and after the war.

David Silberklang analyzes the complexity of the Shoah on the local level, focusing on three aspects of Jewish life in Lublin District: an unusual Jewish wedding in the ghetto (attended by some Nazis responsible for the watching and killing of the Jews), the fate of the Jews in the Poniatowa forced labor camp, and life in the ghetto during the last days of its existence. These three aspects of one story, which begins with a wedding and ends with a murder, are interrelated not only by the actors but also by the perspective of the author. Using documents left by the Jews, Silberklang shows how the Jewish actors understood the events in the ghetto and why they behaved in ways that are difficult for us to comprehend today. The various kinds of

Jewish sources used by him—including postcards, letters, and survivor accounts—are indispensable to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the motivations and cynical actions of the perpetrators. This approach shows that the Germans involved in the story were not uniformly evil, and that the behavior of the Jews was not uniformly “good” or heroic. The complexity of the Shoah arises from the questions posed by Silberklang and from answers obtained through an analysis of documents that were previously undervalued by historians who studied the Holocaust in the District of Lublin.

Joshua Zimmerman addresses the attitude of the Home Army (AK) towards the Jews. During the last six decades, this subject has been heavily debated. The veterans of the AK either remained silent on this issue or they depicted the AK as an army that never harmed the Jews but only helped them. Jews who survived the Holocaust in occupied Poland frequently held the AK in contempt and understood it as an anti-Jewish organization. Polish historians avoided the subject of the Jewish question within the AK until 2005, when a group of Holocaust historians began to publish works dealing with the involvement of the AK in the Shoah. Zimmerman explains that the question of the attitude of the AK toward the Jews is far more complex than a simple black-and-white story. Analyzing survivor accounts found in the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw, Yad Vashem Archives in Jerusalem, the Fortunoff Archive for Holocaust Testimonies at Yale, and the Shoah Foundation Visual Archive at the University of Southern California, Zimmerman shows that antisemitism was dominant in the ranks of the AK, that many of its members were reluctant to help the Jews, and that some murdered them. Only a small group of AK members helped the Jews, who usually had to hide their identity while staying in the AK.

Focusing on Roman Shukhevych, one of the commanders of Schutzmannschaft Battalion 201 and the leader of the UPA, Per Anders Rudling explains how Ukrainian nationalists committed crimes against civilians and the Jews both in Belarus and Ukraine. The history of Schutzmannschaft Battalion 201 starts with the collaboration between the Bandera faction of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalist (OUN-B) and the Germans in the Polish part of the General Government in 1940. At this time, the OUN-B succeeded in establishing two Abwehr battalions: Nachtigall and Roland. The Germans reorganized them into Schutzmannschaft Battalion 201 because of a political conflict with the leadership of the OUN-B and deployed it in Belarus. There the battalion “fought against Soviet partisans,” which involved assistance in the shooting of Jews and the murder of Belorussian civilians. When the Germans dissolved Schutzmannschaft Battalion 201, Shukhevych co-founded the UPA, which massacred thousands of Poles and Jews in western Ukraine and was composed of people who had helped the Germans to murder the Jews as policemen. Shukhevych used the knowledge obtained in Belarus to cleanse Ukraine of “ethnic enemies.” Rudling’s approach encompasses several essential transnational aspects of the Holocaust in Eastern Europe and shows how genocidal agencies—in this case the German and Ukrainian ones—met and interacted.

The question of how to investigate the violence of the OUN-B and the UPA is the subject of Grzegorz Rossoliński-Liebe's article. He briefly explains how Ukrainian nationalists defined and organized themselves between 1918 and 1945, what role fascism and mass violence played in their ideology, and how they practiced mass violence during World War II. Although the OUN understood itself as a fascist movement and murdered Poles and Jews to "cleanse" the "Ukrainian territory" of "ethnic enemies," until recently Ukrainian and German historians investigated the OUN and UPA as a resistance movement without paying much or any attention to their contribution to the Holocaust in western Ukraine, or to the murdering of the Poles in 1943 in Volhynia and in 1944 in eastern Galicia. Various reasons have been offered for this interpretation of history. Next to the lack of interest in unveiling this part of the history by the OUN and UPA veterans, who after the war organized themselves in cultural and political organizations in North America and Western Europe, where they were celebrated as national heroes, it was the ignorance of documents left by the survivors of the OUN and UPA violence, combined with an understanding of the Holocaust in western Ukraine as a purely German event. This prevented several historians of Eastern Europe and Nazi Germany from addressing and investigating the agency of the Ukrainian nationalists during the Shoah in western Ukraine. In contrast to these historiographical interpretations, Jewish historians who survived the Holocaust in western Ukraine, and used documents left by victims and survivors, studied the role of the OUN and UPA in the implementation of the Shoah in Volhynia and eastern Galicia, and investigated other forms of mass violence practiced by this movement during World War II.

The conceptualizations of the Shoah in Ukraine and Belarus are the subject of Olga Baranova's comparative contribution. To explain how the Holocaust was conceptualized in post-Soviet Belarus and Ukraine, Baranova begins with a short analysis of the Soviet period, during which the extermination of the Jews did not exist as a separate subject. It became an invisible and unrecognizable part of the suffering of the Soviet people. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Belarusian and Ukrainian historians began to investigate the Holocaust in their countries, but they shied away from explorations of the role played by Belorussian and Ukrainian perpetrators in the Shoah. Nevertheless, because of a dissimilar political situation in these two post-Soviet republics, the Holocaust was conceptualized differently in both. Baranova concludes that the "coming to terms" with the Shoah in Belarus and Ukraine was not completely unsuccessful, although the rejection of guilt for collaboration in the Holocaust has remained an inherent aspect of the scholarly and political discourses in these countries.

Stasiulis Stanislovas shows how the Holocaust happened and was perceived in Lithuania between 1941 and the present. He divides the conceptualization of the Holocaust into three phases. During the first phase (1941–1944), Lithuanian Jews were murdered by the Germans and their Lithuanian collaborators. The shootings of the Jews happened among Lithuanian communities and were seen by local

Lithuanians. They were not a secret for Lithuanian society, a part of whom had helped the Germans to persecute and kill their Jewish neighbors. During the second phase (1944–1991), the Holocaust disappeared from the awareness of Lithuanians in the Soviet Union and diaspora communities. Both groups conceptualized their past without paying attention to the Shoah or to their role in this event. When Soviet historiography allowed the Holocaust to evaporate from the dominant narrative of Soviet suffering, Lithuanian diaspora organizations were very defensive toward any attempts concerning the investigation of collaboration and the question of Lithuanian agency during the murder of the Jews. The political circumstances in the last phase (1990–today) made it possible to rethink the marginalization of the Holocaust in recent Lithuanian history, but this process was not entirely successful. On the one hand, historians published several important books about the Shoah in Lithuania, shedding light on some of the darkest chapters in Lithuanian history, including the participation of Lithuanians in mass shootings and the “Aryanization” of Jewish property. On the other hand, a part of Lithuanian society has preferred to believe in Soviet and diaspora myths and has remained skeptical of scholarly investigations and re-conceptualizations of the Holocaust.

The articles in this collection concentrate on two interrelated features of the conceptualization of the Shoah in Belarus, Poland, Lithuania, and Ukraine. First, they show that many aspects of the subject remain shrouded in darkness and that the Holocaust was a complex episode in modern European history. Its investigation requires the openness of researchers toward all kinds of sources, which when combined can show a comprehensive picture of the past and shed light on some of its darkest parts. Second, the articles demonstrate that the Belorussian, Polish, Ukrainian, and Lithuanian societies continue to struggle with coming to terms with the Holocaust. An especially difficult aspect of this process is an analysis of the agency of each respective society during the extermination of the Jews. The expulsion of guilt occurred first in Germany, immediately after the war. During the first postwar decades, German historians and intellectuals believed that only a very small, evil, and unrepresentative part of German society, frequently understood as the leaders of the Nazi party, had been involved in the implementation of the Holocaust. It took more than four decades to dismantle the myth of the “clean Wehrmacht” (*saubere Wehrmacht*) and many other myths concerning the noninvolvement of German society in the Shoah. When German society finally understood in the late 1980s and the early 1990s that the process included elements of the entire society—not just a select group of sadists or fanatical Nazis—German historians began to diligently and thoroughly investigate the subject, in particular the German perpetrators. However, the European and transnational nature of Shoah perpetrators has remained untouched. It became a source of interest only to the extent that it was directly related to German perpetrators or the history of Nazi Germany. The actions of other fascist movements, such as the OUN and UPA in Ukraine (which most German historians perceive as a resistance movement), the

agency of the Poles during the Shoah, or of the transnational community of Holocaust perpetrators have only recently been perceived and analyzed by German historians. This one-sided and genuinely national process of investigating and coming to terms with the Holocaust has hampered similar processes in Ukraine, Poland, Belarus, and Lithuania, as well as other European countries.

The notion of conceptualization is methodologically appropriate in attempting to comprehend how the Shoah happened, how it was perceived by various actors, how its history has been written, and which meaning it obtained in public debates. In the last two decades, some historians of the Holocaust, including Dan Michman, used it to explain the complex, complicated, and contradictory nature of the Holocaust, and to show how we can study it as a transnational and European process. Because of the boom of memory studies and other fashionable approaches to the subject, “conceptualization” as an analytical tool has largely remained untouched, used only marginally by scholars interested in the historiography of the Holocaust. However, the concept could be applied in many other approaches, for example, to the study of the transnational community of Holocaust perpetrators or to understand why the Nazis decided to implement the Shoah in Eastern Europe and how local populations reacted to it. Given that in Poland, Belarus, Ukraine, and Lithuania a substantial part of European Jews was murdered and the history of their persecution and extermination was only written in a fragmentary way, historians of the Holocaust should consider using this methodological approach to investigate the Shoah transnationally, taking all of its actors and documents seriously.

Notes

1. For an overview of Holocaust debates in post-communist Eastern Europe, see John Paul Himka and Joanna Michlic, *Bringing the Dark Past to Light: The Reception of the Holocaust in Postcommunist Europe* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2013). For new methodological approaches to the Holocaust, see Omer Bartov, ed., *The Holocaust: Origins, Implementation, Aftermath* (London: Routledge, 2015); Norbert Frei and Wulf Kansteiner, *Den Holocaust erzählen: Historiographie zwischen wissenschaftlicher Empirie und narrativer Kreativität* (Göttingen: Wallstein-Verlag, 2013); Frank Bajohr and Andrea Löw, eds, *Der Holocaust: Ergebnisse und neue Fragen der Forschung* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2015).

2. Emanuel Ringelblum, *Stosunki polsko-żydowskie w czasie drugiej wojny światowej*, ed. Artur Eisenbach (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1998).

3. Some of the documents were edited and published in twenty-three volumes by the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw, see *Archiwum Ringelbluma* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 1997–2017). The third volume published by Andrzej Żbikowski contains documents concerning the Soviet occupation and the beginning of the Holocaust in Lithuania, Belarus, and Ukraine.

4. On the denunciation and execution of Emanuel Ringelblum, see Jan Grabowski, “Tropiąc Emanuela Ringelbluma: Udział polskiej Kriminalpolizei w ‘ostatecznym rozwiązaniu kwestii żydowskiej,’” *Zagłada Żydów. Studia i Materiały* 10, vol. 1 (2014): 27–56. On diaries as historical sources, see Alexandra Garbarini, *Numbered Days: Diaries and the Holocaust* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006).

5. Laura Jockusch, *Collect and Record! Jewish Holocaust Documentation in Early Postwar Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Natalia Aleksion, "The Central Jewish Historical Commission in Poland, 1944–1947," in *Making Holocaust Memory*, ed. Jan Schwarz, Gabriel Finder, Natalia Aleksion, and Antony Polonsky (Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization 2008), 74–97.

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11. Christopher Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (New York: Harper Collins, 1992); Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* (New York: Knopf, 1996); Julius Schoeps, eds., *Ein Volk von Mördern? Die Dokumentation zur Goldhagen-Kontroverse um die Rolle der Deutschen im Holocaust* (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 1996); Christian Hartmann, ed., *Verbrechen der Wehrmacht: Bilanz einer Debatte* (Munich: Beck, 2005).

12. Dieter Pohl, *Nationalsozialistische Judenverfolgung in Ostgalizien 1941–1944: Organisation und Durchführung eines staatlichen Massenverbrechens* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1997); Christian Gerlach, *Kalkulierte Morde: Die deutsche Wirtschafts- und Vernichtungspolitik in Weißrussland 1941 bis 1944* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 1999).

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14. Dan Stone, "The 'Final Solution': A German or European Project," in *Histories of the Holocaust*, ed. Dan Stone (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 15.

15. For the critic of the concept of bystander, see Omer Bartov, "The Voices of Your Brothers' Blood: Reconstructing Genocide of the Local Level," in *Jewish Histories of the Holocaust*, ed. Norman J. W. Goda (New York: Berghahn, 2015), 105–34.

16. Saul Friedländer, "An Integrated History of the Holocaust," in *The Holocaust and Historical Methodology*, ed. Dan Stone (New York: Berghahn, 2012), 181–89.

17. Christoph Dieckmann, *Deutsche Besatzungspolitik in Litauen 1941–1944* (Wallstein, Göttingen 2011); Kai Struve, *Deutsche Herrschaft, ukrainischer Nationalismus, antijüdische Gewalt: Der Sommer 1941 in der Westukraine* (Berlin: De Gruyter Oldenbourg 2015).

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24. Saulius Sužiedėlis and Šarūnas Liekis, “Conflicting Memories: The Reception of the Holocaust in Lithuania,” in *Bringing the Dark Past to Light: The Reception of the Holocaust in Postcommunist Europe*, ed. John Paul Himka and Joanna Michlic (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2013), 323.

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