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THE HOLOCAUST IN ZHYTOMYR REGION: LOCAL PERPETRATORS AND RESCUERS

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the research paper is to analyze the manifestations of Nazi Holocaust policy in Zhytomyr region, focusing on the aspects of the participation of the local population of the region in both genocidal actions and the rescue of the Jewish population.

The scientific novelty of the work is in the comprehensive study of the manifestations of the Holocaust in Zhytomyr region, the involvement of the region's population in the murder of Jews and their rescue. As a result of the study, the propaganda stereotype concerning the direct involvement of Ukrainian independence movement representatives in the direct murders of the Jewish population has not been confirmed. The social drama in the conditions of occupation reality was that the local population, including that of Zhytomyr region, was simultaneously both among the perpetrators of the genocide and among the rescuers of Jews.

Conclusions. Zhytomyr region became one of the centres of the Nazi Holocaust policy in the occupied territory of Ukraine. During its occupation, according to the conclusions of researchers, at least 55,000 people of Jewish nationality were killed. At the same time, given the controversial nature of the source base, it can be argued that this figure is both inaccurate and underestimated.

For various reasons, the Holocaust in Zhytomyr region was distinguished by a number of features. That was a region where mass murders of Jews were among the first in the entire Reichskommissariat Ukraine. Despite the attempts of the occupiers to support anti-Jewish sentiments and provocations, cases of Jewish pogroms did not become widespread. The totality of the Holocaust in the region was manifested through the location of Reichsführer SS Heinrich Himmler's headquarters 'Hegewald' and the German colonies 'Hegewald' and 'Försterstadt' there.

Collaborators, in particular from the local auxiliary police, participated in the persecution and sometimes the murder of the Jewish population of Zhytomyr region. Concurrently, numerous locals, risking their own lives, participated in rescuing Jews.

At the same time, it should be noted that within the framework of the problem under study, promising areas of further research are the study of the influence of the personal presence of Reichsführer SS Himmler (in 'Hegewald'), as well as the existence of the German colonies 'Hegewald' and 'Försterstadt' on the conduct and outcomes of the Holocaust in Zhytomyr region, as well as specific manifestations of genocidal actions and the rescue of Jews by the local population.

Keywords: Holocaust, World War II, Zhytomyr region, Nazi occupation, local auxiliary police, Jewish population, OUN

ГОЛОКОСТ НА ЖИТОМИРЩИНІ: МІСЦЕВІ ВИКОНАВЦІ ТА РЯТІВНИКИ

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АНОТАЦІЯ

Мета статті – проаналізувати прояви нацистської політики Голокосту на Житомирщині, звернувши увагу на аспекти участі місцевого населення області як у геноцидних діях, так і в порятунку осіб єврейського населення.

Наукова новизна роботи полягає у комплексному вивченні проявів Голокосту на теренах Житомирської області, залучення населення регіону до убивства євреїв та їх порятунку місцевими жителями. У результаті дослідження пропагандистський стереотип про пряму участь представників українського самостійницького руху у безпосередніх убивствах єврейського населення не знайшов свого підтвердження. Соціальною драмою в умовах окупаційної дійсності стало те, що місцеве населення, зокрема і Житомирщини, одночасно було як серед виконавців геноциду, так і серед рятівників євреїв.

Висновки. Одним із центрів нацистської політики Голокосту на окупованій території України стала Житомирська область. За час її окупації, згідно з висновками дослідників, було вбито не менше 55 000 осіб єврейської національності. Водночас, зважаючи на контрверсійність джерельної бази, можна стверджувати про помилковість такої цифри у бік її заниження.

В силу різних причин Голокост на Житомирщині вирізнявся низкою особливостей. Це був регіон, де масові вбивства євреїв були одними з перших в усьому Райхскомісаріаті «Україна». Незважаючи на спроби окупантів підтримати антиєврейські настрої та провокації, випадки єврейських погромів не набули поширення. Тотальність Голокосту в регіоні проявилася через розміщення тут ставки райхсфюрера СС Генріха Гімmlера «Гегевальд» і німецьких колоній «Гегевальд» та «Фьорстерштадт».

До утисків, а подекуди і до вбивств єврейського населення Житомирщини долучилися колаборанти, зокрема з числа місцевої допоміжної поліції. Водночас багато місцевих, ризикуючи власним життям, взяли участь у порятунку євреїв.

Водночас слід зазначити, що в рамках досліджуваної проблеми перспективними напрямками подальших досліджень є вивчення впливу особистої присутності рейхсфюрера СС Гімmlера (у Гегевальді), а також присутності німецьких колоній Гегевальд і Фьорстерштадт на проведення та результати Голокосту в Житомирській області; конкретні прояви геноцидних дій і порятунків євреїв місцевим населенням.

Ключові слова: Голокост, Друга світова війна, Житомирська область, нацистська окупація, місцева допоміжна поліція, єврейське населення, ОУН

INTRODUCTION

Russian military aggression against Ukraine in the spring of 2014 and the full-scale war that began on February 24, 2022, have brought to the forefront the issue of preventing the spread of totalitarianism in the modern world. During World War II, the Nazi totalitarian regime implemented genocidal practices. The Holocaust was the most brutal one. The Ukrainian dimension of the Holocaust was almost the most extensive in all of Europe. Russian historiography and propaganda often associate the extermination of the Jewish population on Ukrainian lands by the Nazis with the active participation of local populations and the Ukrainian independence movement. This 'delegation' of guilt for crimes against humanity is biased, failing to consider numerous instances where locals saved Jewish lives.

The purpose of the research paper is to study the Holocaust in the territory of the Zhytomyr region. During the Nazi occupation, this region was part of the Zhytomyr General District (Reichskommissariat Ukraine). This study is devoted to analyze the aspects of the locals' participation in genocidal actions and Jewish people's rescue during the Nazi occupation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Holocaust in the Zhytomyr region remains a significant area of study in modern historiography. However, during the Soviet era, although this topic was not forbidden for ideological and political reasons, it was not of scientific relevance to Soviet historians until the late 1980s. Consequently, the theoretical, methodological, and factual basis for this subject was developed primarily by foreign scholars. Among foreign researchers, we should first of all mention the works of the American author Wendy Lower, especially her study 'Nazi Empire Building and the Holocaust in Ukraine'¹.

During the 1990s, W. Lower worked in the State Archive of the Zhytomyr Region, utilising documents from the occupation period for her research. She contextualized the Holocaust within the framework of 'Nazi empire-building' and analysed the 'Final Solution to the Jewish Question' as a central element of Hitler's Eastern policy, specifically through the example of the Zhytomyr General District. Renowned Dutch researcher of World War II and Nazi occupation, Karel C. Berkhoff, addressed the Holocaust of Jews and Roma in a separate section of his comprehensive study 'Harvest of Despair: Life and Death in Ukraine under Nazi Rule'². His work highlights regional dimensions of the Shoah, including its manifestations in the Zhytomyr region.

Ukrainian scholars such as Oleksandr Kruhlov, Andrii Umanskyi, and Ihor Shchupak have significantly contributed to Holocaust studies in Ukraine³. Since their research has a national focus, data on the Zhytomyr region remains generalised and often derived from descriptive sources. Researchers specializing in the Holocaust in Zhytomyr during the Nazi occupation, including Leonid Kohan⁴ and Nataliia

¹ Lower W. *Nazi Empire Building and the Holocaust in Ukraine*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005. 307 p.

² Berkhoff K. C. *Harvest of Despair: Life and Death in Ukraine under Nazi Rule*. Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004. 463 p.

³ Круглов А., Уманский А., Щупак И. *Холокост в Украине: Рейхскомиссариат "Украина", Губернаторство "Транснистрия"*. Дніпро, 2016. 564 с.

⁴ Коган Л. *Холокост на Житомирщині. Історичні уроки Голокосту та міжнаціональні відносини (до 70-річчя Другої світової війни): Матеріали міжнар. науково-практ. конф.* Дніпропетровськ, 2010. С. 323-349.

Rudnytska⁵, utilized local archival sources to identify specific manifestations of Nazi policies at the local level.

Western and Ukrainian historians also research the Holocaust in some settlements in the Zhytomyr region (Alla Batyeva, Serhii Bovkun, Ray Brandon, Svetlana Burmistr, Yuriy Polishchuk, Pavlo Pushkaruk, Pavlo Skavronsky, Mykhaylo Tyaglyy and other historians)⁶. These scientists research the deaths of local Jews, the number of Holocaust victims, and Holocaust remembrance.

JEW OF ZHYTOMYR REGION AND PECULIARITIES OF THE HOLOCAUST IN THE REGION

Researchers estimate that during the Nazi occupation of the Zhytomyr region from July 1941 to March 1944, 55,000 Jews were exterminated there, or 43.9% of their total number as of 1939 (according to the 1939 census, 125,007 Jews lived in the Zhytomyr region)⁷. The most massive extermination of Jewish nationality took place in July-November 1941 – a total of 48,500 people⁸. At this time, most Jews were killed in the Berdychiv area (2,500 people on August 27; more than 1,300 people in early September; 15,000 to 18,640 people on September 15-16)⁹; Zhytomyr (about 4,000 people in September); Novohrad-Volynskyi (about 4,000 people in September)¹⁰; Ovruch (about 3,350 people – first half of September); Korostyshiv (3,000 people – August)¹¹; Liubar (over 1,000 people – August 11)¹². Less large-scale killings of Jews continued until the final days of the Nazi presence in the region.

The issue of the relevance and accuracy of determining the number of Jewish victims is quite complex. This circumstance is complicated by the contradictory nature of sources, including oral history and testimony in criminal cases. For example, Pavlo Zelinskyi, working as a deputy and later as the head of the Berdychiv auxiliary police in the second half of 1941, stated that at least 8,000-9,000 Jews were shot in the town (Autumn 1941)¹³. At the same time, the local Volksdeutsche, the head of the Berdychiv district administration, Arnold Roder, testified that up to 30,000 Jews were shot in Berdychiv during the occupation¹⁴.

We believe that the total number of Jews killed in the Zhytomyr region, 55,000, as

⁵ Рудницька Н. Голокост на Житомирщині в документах Державного архіву Житомирської області. XX століття – етнонаціональний вимір та проблеми Голокосту: зб. наук. праць за матеріалами міжн. наук.-практ. конф. (Житомир, 22-23 жовтня 2010 р.). Дніпропетровськ, 2011. С. 373-378.

⁶ Брандон Р. Бараші. Життя та загибель єврейської громади. Київ, 2019. 48 с.; Брандон Р. Колодянка. Життя та загибель єврейської громади. Київ, 2019. 64 с.; Брандон Р. Любар. Життя та загибель єврейської громади. Київ, 2019. 72 с.; Бурмістр С., Тяглий М. Місце пам'яті жертвам німецької окупації в Іванополі. Київ, 2019. 24 с.; Тяглий М. (ред.). Голокост у Бердичеві і пам'ять про нього. Київ: УЦВІГ, 2019. 56 с.; Пам'ять нетлінна: Голокост на теренах нашого краю. Науковий збірник "Велика Волинь". Матеріали Міжнародної науково-краєзнавчої конференції (Бердичів, 13-14 вересня 2021 р.). Вип. 62 / Упоряд. П.С. Скавронський. Бердичів, 2021. 362 с.

⁷ Базовий історичний наратив Меморіального центру Голокосту "Бабин Яр". URL: <https://babynyar.org/ua/historical-narrative/5>; Шоа в Україні: історія, свідчення, увічнення / За ред. Р. Брандона, В. Лауер. Київ, 2015. С. 385-386.

⁸ Шоа в Україні: історія, свідчення, увічнення / За ред. Р. Брандона, В. Лауер. Київ, 2015. С. 381.

⁹ State Archives of Zhytomyr Region (SAZhR). Fund R-2636. List 1. File 9. PP. 13-14.

¹⁰ SAZhR. Fund R-2636. List 1. File 65. P. 1.

¹¹ SAZhR. Fund R-2636. List 1. File 16. P. 67.

¹² SAZhR. Fund R-2636. List 1. File 3. P. 28.

¹³ Archive of the Office of the Security Service of Ukraine in Zhytomyr Region (AO SSU ZhR). Fund 5. List 1. File 10360. P. 38.

¹⁴ Ibid. P. 52.

stated by contemporary Holocaust scholars, is not accurate and somewhat underestimated. After all, during the Nazi occupation, according to postwar Soviet data, 249,152 people were killed in the region, including 170,557 civilians and 78,595 prisoners of war¹⁵. Subsequently, the statistics on the number of deaths increased somewhat due to the discovery of additional facts violent deaths of civilians during the war. Thus, according to these statistics, Jews account for only 32% of the total number of civilian deaths. In practice, at least in the Zhytomyr region, most of the civilians killed were usually of Jewish nationality. Alternatively, the reliability of Soviet statistics on civilian deaths during the war can be questioned. After all, in the postwar period, the number of victims was mostly calculated on the basis of lists provided by local authorities. Out of the entire Zhytomyr region, exhumations and forensic medical examinations of victims of the Nazi occupation were carried out only in Zhytomyr.

The current official figures for the number of Jews killed by the Nazis during World War II in various regions of Ukraine look like they have been artificially rounded up to a thousand. For example, in the 'Basic Historical Narrative of the Babyn Yar Holocaust Memorial Centre', it is stated: "Overall, excluding Crimea, approximately 460,000 Jews were killed in Central, Eastern, and Southern Ukraine (about 38,000 of whom were in areas under German military administration). The largest numbers of victims were in the (modern) Khmelnytskyi (115,000), Vinnytsia (80,000, excluding areas under Romanian control), Kyiv (77,000), Zhytomyr (55,000), and Dnipropetrovsk (35,000) regions. [...] The data for Zhytomyr and Khmelnytskyi regions include about 13,000 Jews deported from Hungary"¹⁶.

In the context of Holocaust policies, the Zhytomyr region was marked by certain distinctive features. Notably, in Zhytomyr and Berdychiv, some of the earliest mass killings of the Jewish population were documented in territories that the Nazis would later incorporate into the Reichskommissariat Ukraine on August 20, 1941. As early as July 19, 1941, just ten days after the occupation of Zhytomyr began, 100 Jews were executed, accused of setting fire to city buildings¹⁷. Also in Zhytomyr, on August 7, 1941, 2 people were hanged¹⁸ and 402 Jewish men were shot dead¹⁹. At the beginning of the Berdychiv occupation, the Nazis shot 300 local Jews for allegedly participating in shooting at the Germans and killing a Wehrmacht officer²⁰.

On the territory of the Zhytomyr oblast, ghettos existed only for a short time in the locations of the most densely populated Jewish areas before their complete physical destruction. The ghetto lasted perhaps the longest in Berdychiv. In early March 1942, Jews from this ghetto were transferred to a labour camp on Lysa Hora and used for some work. This labour camp should also be considered a kind of ghetto. Most of the Jews in the Berdychiv labour camp were shot by the Nazis in June 1943²¹. In 1942, 240 Jews from Zhytomyr, who had been imprisoned following the liquidation of the ghetto and forced into various labor assignments, were executed by the Nazis²².

¹⁵ SAZhR. Fund R-2636. List 1. File 2. P. 10, 53-54, 56.

¹⁶ Базовий історичний наратив Меморіального центру Голокосту "Бабин Яр". URL: <https://babynyar.org/ua/historical-narrative/5>

¹⁷ Українське слово (Житомир). 1941. 3 серпня.

¹⁸ Central State Archive of the Higher Authorities and Administration of Ukraine (CSA HAAU). Fund 3833. List 2. File 84. P. 11; Українське слово (Житомир). 1941. 10 серпня.

¹⁹ Lower W. Nazi Empire Building and the Holocaust in Ukraine... P. 79.

²⁰ SAZhR. Fund R-2636. List 1. File 9. P. 13.

²¹ Ibid. P. 14, 41.

²² Lower W. Nazi Empire Building and the Holocaust in Ukraine... P. 74.

For practical reasons, the Nazis sometimes used highly skilled Jews for various jobs. To this end, Alfred Rosenberg issued an order on August 16, 1941. It provided for the forced labour of the Jewish population aged 14 to 60²³. A limited number of Jews from the Zhytomyr region were employed in the construction of Heinrich Himmler's headquarters near Zhytomyr and the section of the DG V highway between Zhytomyr and Vinnytsia²⁴.

The occupation administration sought to spread anti-Semitic sentiments among the local population to involve them in anti-Jewish actions or, at the very least, in identifying Jews. This was achieved through provocations and by equating pre-war Soviet crimes with Judaism, including the propagation of the stereotypical notion of 'Judeo-Bolshevism'. It was mentioned above that on July 19, 1941, the Nazis shot 100 Jews in Zhytomyr, accusing them of setting fire to houses in the city²⁵. To spread anti-Jewish sentiment, the Nazis also publicly hanged two Jews from the Cherniakhiv (now Zhytomyr) district on August 7, 1941, in Zhytomyr, who were accused of belonging to the Soviet NKVD and participating in the murders of the local population: Wolf Kiper and Moses Kobak. Nazi propaganda claimed that Wolf Kipper allegedly took part in the murder of more than 1,350 local 'Germans and Ukrainians', and that Moses Kobak was his assistant and killed more than 120 people²⁶.

In the Zhytomyr region, despite active Nazi propaganda and provocations, Jewish pogroms did not become widespread. Holocaust scholar Wendy Lauer states: "Although German leaders found a sufficient number of Ukrainian volunteers to carry out their anti-Jewish measures, pogroms were not widespread in the Zhytomyr region, to the disappointment of SD officials"²⁷.

Although pogroms were not numerous, the local population frequently engaged in the looting of Jewish property after the Jews were exterminated or relocated to ghettos²⁸.

LOCAL PERPETRATORS OF THE HOLOCAUST

Often, collaborators from the local police and auxiliary administration were involved in the harassment of Jews. The role of the local police was limited to the detention of Jews²⁹, their transfer, and in a few cases, their physical elimination³⁰.

For example, according to the testimony of Berdychiv police officers Petro Dvorskyi and Vasyl Mishchuk, auxiliary police were used during raids on the Jewish population to gather and escort them to places of mass executions and to collect and store personal belongings of Jews³¹. Zhytomyr resident Franz Brzhezynskyi (incidentally, a prisoner of Nazi and Soviet concentration camps) recalled: "It was in the fall of 1941. And when they recruited young men to the police, they began shooting Jews in Bohunia (at that time a suburb of Zhytomyr. – *Authors*). I overheard

²³ Косик В. Україна в Другій світовій війні у документах: збірник німецьких архівних матеріалів: в 4 т. Т. 1. Львів, 1997. С. 246.

²⁴ Lower W. Nazi Empire Building and the Holocaust in Ukraine... P. 143-150.

²⁵ Українське слово (Житомир). 1941. 3 серпня.

²⁶ CSA HAAU. Fund 3833. List 2. File 84. P. 11; Українське слово (Житомир). 1941. 10 серпня.

²⁷ Lower W. Nazi Empire Building and the Holocaust in Ukraine... P. 91.

²⁸ Ямковий І. Геноцид: архівно-документальні нариси. Житомир: Полісся, 1999. С. 158.

²⁹ AO SSU ZhR. Fund 5. List 1. File 8838. P. 55; AO SSU ZhR. Fund 5. List 1. File 11392. P. 22, 27.

³⁰ AO SSU ZhR. Fund 5. List 1. File 4011. P. 13-90.

³¹ AO SSU ZhR. Fund 5. List 1. File 10360. P. 127, 186.

a conversation between some policemen I knew, and one of them said: "My finger hurts from pulling the trigger. And the German to me: Well, take a break, let someone else work with the Jews. They were showing off the gold rings they had taken from the doomed women and girls, laughing: "They are so young, we ordered them to undress, and they cover themselves with their hands"³².

At the end of August 1941, the chief of the auxiliary city police and later the Korosten security police, Ivan-Roman Davydovskiy, conducted a registration of Jewish citizens. After the census, Jewish citizens were rounded up, inspected, and their belongings confiscated, and later taken by truck outside the city and shot. In total, according to his incomplete data, there were about 7 such raids resulting in the murder of more than 3,000 Jews. Some police officers, to obtain the property and belongings of the executed Jews, as well as possible promotions, directly participated in the shootings of Jews³³.

In September 1941, the Nazi occupiers carried out punitive measures against the Jewish population of the Brusyliv district. During these events, the local Ukrainian auxiliary police participated in the Jewish population collection, protection, and convoy. In total, according to inaccurate data, up to 100 people of Jewish nationality were executed in Brusyliv³⁴.

In Chudniv, the executions of Jews took place in three large waves, beginning in early September 1941. Detained Jewish families from the entire district were taken by SS soldiers and local Ukrainian auxiliary police to the cinema in the centre of the town, and from there they were taken in open cars to a park by the Teteriv River, where the executions took place. During the executions of Jews, Ukrainian police officers were controlled by SS Einsatzkommando soldiers who were behind them. Police officer Dmytro Labunets stated during the investigation that he had directly participated in these executions and killed 16 people. Subsequently, part of the local district police was 'sent' to eliminate the Jewish population in the village of Myropil. In total, 400-500 people of Jewish nationality were shot there. Dmytro Labunets personally shot 5 people. In addition to the above facts, it has been established that the Ukrainian auxiliary police also participated in the executions of Jews in the district centres of Liubar and Romaniv³⁵.

Mykhailo Hrytsyk, a policeman in the village of Karpivtsi, Chudniv district, testified that in the summer and fall of 1941, he arrested Soviet citizens of Jewish nationality. However, he did not participate in the subsequent executions. It was established during the investigation³⁶. In the village of Yanushpil (now Ivanopil), the Jewish population was arrested by the German gendarmerie and the local auxiliary police. Auxiliary police investigator Fedir Chyrko stated that in the fall of 1941, he conducted an investigation into two cases against local Jews, Voloshyn and Rybakov. They were accused of possessing weapons that had been seized from them during a search³⁷.

The first arrests and executions of the Jewish population in the Bazar district took

³² Жива історія Житомира. Історичний альманах. Вип. 1 / Упорядники: М. Гоманюк, О. Гуцалюк, Ю. Малихін. Житомир, 2010. С. 46.

³³ АО SSU ZhR. Fund 5. List 1. File 183. P. 17-20.

³⁴ АО SSU ZhR. Fund 5. List 1. File 4011. P. 2-17.

³⁵ АО SSU ZhR. Fund 5. List 1. File 13126. P. 32-35.

³⁶ АО SSU ZhR. Fund 5. List 1. File 8838. P. 55.

³⁷ АО SSU ZhR. Fund 5. List 1. File 11392. P. 22, 27.

place around September 1941. This was recalled by a local resident, Ivan Zabrodskiy. His wife was Jewish and a Holocaust victim. Policemen from the village of Ksaveriv came to the district centre to arrest Jews, then escorted them to Korosten and carried out partial executions on the way to their destination³⁸. On November 21, 1941, a mass shooting of the Jewish population took place in the village of Bazar. On the orders of the German occupiers who arrived from Ovruch, Ukrainian police officers under escort took the detained Jews to the outskirts of Bazar, to the village of Pisky, where they were all shot on the territory of a natural clay quarry³⁹. The shootings were carried out by 5 German police officers and about 10 representatives of the Ukrainian auxiliary police⁴⁰. There was no strict condition for the participation of Ukrainians in the execution; it was rather a manifestation of the lack of any personal humanity or a desire to simply 'serve' the new government.

For a researcher-historian, an important part of reconstructing past events is to consider human actions, their motives, and the circumstances that led to them. In this context, the manifestation of personal human qualities, even in extreme conditions, is vital. Thus, during the escort to the place of Jews execution, some of the local police officers of Bazar, including Oleksandr Puzeichuk, mocked them in every possible way, beating them with rifle butts⁴¹. Or another case. While burying the bodies of the executed Jews, a hand reached out from the grave that was almost filled in, and a voice was heard: "Comrades! I am not guilty of anything". He was the son of a local hairdresser who miraculously managed to survive. Then one of the policemen, Oleksandr Smirnov, said: "I'm going to help him now", grabbed a gun and shot at the place where the voice was heard and the hand was seen. This act was met with verbal condemnation from some of the people present at the scene⁴².

The main role in the extermination of Jews in the Zhytomyr region during World War II was played by the units of Einsatzgruppe C as special SS forces under the leadership of Otto Rasch. Their headquarters were located in Zhytomyr and Berdychiv⁴³.

The totality of the Holocaust on the territory of the Zhytomyr region, in particular since 1942, was manifested through the location of SS Reichsführer Himmler's Hegewald headquarters and two German colonies for Volksdeutsche Germans in the village of Huyva near Zhytomyr: 'Hegewald' (between Zhytomyr and Berdychiv) and 'Försterstadt' (between Korosten and Cherniakhiv).

In May 1942, Kurt Klemm, the General Commissioner of the Zhytomyr General District, noted: "The Jewish question is largely resolved in my general district"⁴⁴.

LOCAL RESCUERS OF JEWS DURING THE HOLOCAUST

Many residents of the Zhytomyr region risked their own lives to save Jews. Today, there are 221 people in the region who are recognised as Righteous Among the Nations. This is the third highest number in Ukraine after Vinnytsia and Kyiv

³⁸ AO SSU ZhR. Fund 5. List 1. File 8249. P. 105.

³⁹ AO SSU ZhR. Fund 5. List 1. File 11350. P. 28.

⁴⁰ AO SSU ZhR. Fund 5. List 1. File 385. P. 21, 46.

⁴¹ AO SSU ZhR. Fund 5. List 1. File 6839. P. 26.

⁴² AO SSU ZhR. Fund 5. List 1. File 11350. P. 23, 29, 32; AO SSU ZhR. Fund 5. List 1. File 8249. P. 102.

⁴³ *Lower W. Nazi Empire Building and the Holocaust in Ukraine...* P. 73.

⁴⁴ CSA HAAU. Fund KMF-8. List 1. File 64. P. 8.

(including the city of Kyiv) regions. In total, 2,659 people are currently recognised as Righteous Among the Nations in Ukraine⁴⁵ (in terms of number, it is the fourth largest country after Poland, the Netherlands, and France). In the Zhytomyr region, men and women of all ages, residents of towns and villages, both Ukrainians (mostly) and representatives of other nations, were rescuing Jews and recognised as Righteous Among the Nations. For example, in 1996, Valentyna Shcheniovskaya was awarded the title 'Righteous Among the Nations' for saving Jewish children in the Zhytomyr orphanage⁴⁶. She managed to save five Jewish children from Nazi executions⁴⁷.

However, there were probably even more residents of the Zhytomyr region (and Ukraine as a whole) who saved Jews but for various reasons did not receive the title of Righteous Among the Nations.

The aforementioned Franz Brzezinski, who later became a prisoner of Nazi and Soviet concentration camps, told the family story of the Jews rescue in Zhytomyr: "But my mother somehow brought home two Jewish boys, black-haired and handsome, and they hid behind our stove (where I used to hide when I sinned as a child). We lived very poorly, with nothing to hide behind. My mother brought them in, and it was autumn, already cold. And she placed chickens behind the stove where they were sitting to lay their eggs. I would bring her a spill, she would burn the spill under the stove, I saw her altering the children's big boots (they were barefoot), and tears would run down her cheeks. I used to grind corn for the children on the millstones, while my mother cooked mamalyha and fed them. And then, when I was first imprisoned, she transferred the children somewhere. I don't know what happened to them later"⁴⁸.

Sofiia Brunak, a resident of the Zhytomyr region, recalled the following in the years of Ukraine's independence: "The girls [...] came to their mother after their shift: "Olena Mykolaivna, if you don't save us, Aunt Sonia will bring the police here". Masha and Liza were Jewish. Mom turned for help to her friend Yuliia Foyne, whose husband, a German, was repressed in 1937. "I know a driver with a lorry", she said. They decided to take the girls to the Olevisk district – the swamps and forests of Polissia, where partisans had already appeared. The Germans avoided these territories. They took some tobacco along, supposedly to exchange it in the villages, in case the Germans stopped the car: "Where are you going? Why?" So my mother drove them. It was late autumn, terrible weather, wind, rain"⁴⁹.

Particularly difficult in terms of establishing reliable information is the issue of the rescue of Jews by citizens who were convicted on political charges after the return of Soviet administration. The case of Mykola Pankevych, a priest of the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church and at the same time the head of the Berdychiv city hospital, is vivid in this regard. He was a priest of the UAOC from 1922 to 1928 and from summer 1941 to December 1944, Mykola Pankevych explained the motive for his choice as follows: "I had a desire to serve in the Ukrainian church on my native land and in the Ukrainian language"⁵⁰. Kateryna Yurchenko, a Jewish nurse at the

⁴⁵ Праведники народів світу. Україна. URL: <https://righteous.jew.org.ua/>

⁴⁶ Ibidem.

⁴⁷ SAZhR. Fund R-2636. List 1. File 10. P. 24.

⁴⁸ Жива історія Житомира... С 46.

⁴⁹ Ibid. С. 48.

⁵⁰ AO SSU ZhR. Fund 6. List 1. File 28844. P. 14.

Berdychiv city hospital, reported during the investigation by the NKGB: "During the German occupation, Mykola Pankevych rescued Jewish citizens, as he rescued me from the German punitive authorities. It was in February 1942 when I was arrested by the SD, but I was released at Pankevych's request"⁵¹.

According to information from other hospital staff, including Lidiia Busa, head of the infectious diseases department, and Varvara Hertsyk, a doctor, it is known: "During the occupation, M. Pankevych hid 10 Jewish citizens from the German authorities. [...] Mykola Pankevych collected documents of deceased prisoners of war and distributed them to Jews, as if to save them from arrest"⁵².

But all this did not help him in the eyes of the Soviet regime: Mykola Pankevych was sentenced to 10 years in prison in a penitentiary, 3 years of deprivation of rights and confiscation of all his personal property⁵³.

The management of the Zhytomyr City Theatre tried to conceal the Jewish nationality of a number of its employees. An employee of the SD prison Edmund Beim proved that information during interrogations by the Soviet security services. This circumstance, along with other facts, may have been one of the reasons for the arrest and execution of the director of this theatre, Platon Semerda and his family in the summer of 1942⁵⁴.

Soviet historiography has established a stereotypical claim that the Ukrainian independence movement was inherently anti-Semitic and directly involved in the Holocaust. The issue of the OUN's attitude toward Jews is the subject of a separate research study. In general, it is worth noting that the facts of the Zhytomyr region OUN members participation in the extermination of Jewish citizens are not mentioned in the source base. It is no doubt that some nationalists joined the occupiers (not to be confused with those who used work in the occupation structures to legally cover their activities).

Ivan-Roman Davydovskiy was a member of the OUN marching group (led by Andrii Melnyk). According to his testimony, joining the OUN (Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists) facilitated better employment opportunities. In Korosten, as mentioned above, he participated in the extermination of Jews⁵⁵. In contrast, some local policemen, also members of OUN marching groups, helped Jews escape. Vasyl Shyre was among them. He came from Bukovyna. During the first months of the Nazi occupation he served as an aide to the head of the Zhytomyr regional police, Dmytro Zakhvalynskiy. One of the local policemen later testified to the security police and the SD that Vasyl Shyre released a Jew named Fatsstein who had been arrested by the field commandant's office. He and his former superior were also accused of involving a shoemaker named Hut, a Jew by nationality, in the regional police force. Hut was issued a Ukrainian passport⁵⁶.

According to some sources, an underground OUN group led by Andrii Melnyk had existed at the Zhytomyr City Theatre since the summer of 1941⁵⁷. Yakym Kovalenko

⁵¹ Ibid. P. 61.

⁵² Ibid. P. 63, 73.

⁵³ Ibid. P. 120.

⁵⁴ AO SSU ZhR. Fund 6. List 1. File 9236. P. 68, 89.

⁵⁵ AO SSU ZhR. Fund 5. List 1. File 183. P. 13, 23.

⁵⁶ SAZhR. Fund R-1151. List 1. File 3. P. 4.

⁵⁷ SAZhR. Fund R-5013. List 2. File 22996. P. 55.

was one of its members. He was a reporter of the occupation newspaper 'Holos of Volyn' and a theatre actor⁵⁸. In the summer of 1942, he and his Jewish wife moved to Berdychiv to escape persecution. And it helped. It is noteworthy that none of his Zhytomyr theater colleagues or the OUN members under the leadership of Andrii Melnyk gave this information to the Nazi occupiers⁵⁹.

German documents attest to the active work of the Zhytomyr region OUN branch (Stepan Bandera), headed by Roman Marchak. In particular, those that 'went up' and are now in the archival collection of the German Federal Archives in Koblenz⁶⁰. An extremely revealing moment was among the other 'unpleasant' consequences of Bandera's activities for the Nazis in the Zhytomyr region. It is also mentioned in some documents stored in the State Archives of the Zhytomyr region: "Today it has been established beyond doubt that Bandera's movement supplied not only all of its functionaries but also Jews with false passports"⁶¹.

CONCLUSIONS

Zhytomyr region became one of the centres of Nazi Holocaust policy in the occupied territory of Ukraine. During its occupation, according to researchers, at least 55,000 people of Jewish nationality were exterminated. At the same time, given the contradictory nature of the source base, one can argue that this figure is erroneous and underestimated. For a variety of reasons, the Holocaust was characterised by a number of peculiarities in the Zhytomyr region.

This was a region where mass exterminations of Jews were among the first in the entire Reich Commissariat of Ukraine. Despite the occupiers' attempts to support anti-Jewish sentiment and provocations, cases of Jewish pogroms were not widespread.

The totality of the Holocaust in the region was manifested through the location of SS Reichsführer Himmler's Hegewald headquarters and the German colonies of Hegewald and Försterstadt. Collaborators, including members of the local auxiliary police, joined in the harassment and sometimes extermination of the Jewish population of Zhytomyr. At the same time, many locals risked their own lives to save Jews.

At the same time, it should be noted that within the framework of the problem under study, promising areas for further research are the investigation of the personal presence impact of SS Reichsführer Himmler (in the Hegewald), as well as the presence of the German colonies of Hegewald and Försterstadt, on the totality of the Holocaust in the Zhytomyr region; specific manifestations of genocidal actions and the rescue of Jews by the local population during World War II.

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⁵⁸ AO SSU ZhR. Fund 5. List 1. File 10332. P. 15-16.

⁵⁹ SAZhR. Fund R-5013. List 2. File 22996. P. 54.

⁶⁰ Косик В. Україна в Другій світовій війні у документах: збірник німецьких архівних матеріалів: в 4 т. Т. 2: 1941-1942. Львів, 1998. С. 152.

⁶¹ SAZhR. Fund R-1151. List 1. File 14. P. 35, 47.

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