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Définir les « crimes contre l’humanité » en Union soviétique. La politique nazie d’incendie des villages et le discours soviétique sur les victimes de guerre soviétiques juives et non-juives, 1941-1947

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- 1 Pictures of villages reduced to ashes, their inhabitants killed or deported, and elderly survivors seated amid the cinders of their homes and belongings are among the most common Soviet and post-Soviet representations, both public and private, of the Great Patriotic War. In the course of the three decades that preceded the collapse of the Soviet Union, three events significantly helped to activate these public and private memories: the construction of the memorial complex at Khatyn’, near Minsk, which was inaugurated in 1969,¹ the publication of *Ia iz ognennoi derevni* by Adamovich in 1975,² and, Klimov’s “*Idi i smotri*,” which won an award at the 1985 Moscow International Film Festival.³
- 2 It was typical of late Soviet depictions of Nazi campaigns against the civilian population in occupied territories to qualify this extreme violence as genocide. Mass killings of villagers, some incinerated dead or alive, are central to the application of the term “genocide,” but the fact that entire villages were eradicated is also an important factor. Soviet representations played a role in shaping Western views of the war on the Eastern Front, particularly Klimov’s relatively popular movie. Nevertheless, the subject was far less well-known in the West than it was – and continues to be – in post-Soviet countries. Soviet and post-Soviet discretion about the mass annihilation of the Jews, on the one hand, and the use of the term “genocide” to designate the mass destruction of Soviet villages and their inhabitants, on the other, are crucial to understanding both Western suspicion and the low importance that has been attributed to this kind of war violence in Western literature about the Soviet Union.

- 3 Germany is an exception, however. Beginning in the 1950s, the events that took place in the Soviet hinterland have received attention in both literature intended for the general public and in academic studies, where it has been cast within the framework of the war on partisans, the famous "*Partisanenbekämpfung*." It has been argued that what transpired was a war against a pitiless and treacherous enemy, the Soviet partisan, who led a guerrilla campaign against the German army. The "dirty war" led in the Belorussian countryside and elsewhere on Soviet occupied territories was legitimized by the non-respect of the laws of warfare by Soviet partisans, perceived by the Germans as irregular fighters.⁴ This point of view was severely challenged by the "Exhibit on the Crimes of the Wehrmacht," which launched a fierce debate in German public opinion and among German historians.⁵ Atrocities against Soviet villagers featured prominently among the war crimes committed by the Wehrmacht and denounced by the exhibit's curators.⁶ Echoing Soviet historiography, they claimed that warfare against guerrilla fighters served in fact only as a pretext for slaughtering as many civilians as possible. Furthermore, they underscored the unreliability of German sources, with some exceptions, concerning the fate of civilians, and relied on post-war Soviet sources for descriptions of the unspeakable treatment of Soviet villagers. In this context, Christian Gerlach's study of occupied Belorussia offered the most exhaustive depiction to date of German operations against Belorussian villages. He dismissed the idea that these operations were a mere pretext to attack civilians, depicting in some detail a German strategy to cleanse the regions dominated by Soviet partisans that led to the creation of dead zones in 1943. He also showed, however, that the overwhelming majority of the victims were in fact civilians, with Soviet partisans representing probably no more than 9% of reported casualties. A small proportion of these civilians were Jewish, the "war against partisans" providing, in some cases, a method of cleansing rural areas of the remaining Jewish population.⁷ He addressed the atrocious fate of the civilians in detail, including descriptions of human funeral pyres. It should be noted that most of Gerlach's evidence on this last point came from testimony collected during Soviet post-war investigations, including statements made during the show trial staged by Soviet authorities in Minsk in 1946, as well as from excerpts from Adamovich's documentary book *Ia iz ognennoi derevni*.
- 4 This paper argues that, from the outset of the German invasion, the pictures of burned Soviet villages, destroyed along with their inhabitants, were central to Soviet representations of German atrocities, even before the Germans implemented the large-scale destruction that was at the heart of their massive anti-partisan operations beginning in the Spring of 1942. However, burned villages were not merely an instrument of propaganda with deep roots in collective representations of the traditional horrors of war. They were also a reality of the Nazi war in the East, which was marked by a policy of systematic destruction of villages and the killing and deportation of their inhabitants, part of an unprecedented campaign of violence against civilians. Local Soviet investigations conducted in liberated territories produced invaluable material that documented this specific violence against Soviet civilians, while also providing documentation about mass shootings of Jews. At the end of the war, because they were involved in the international legal effort to punish Nazi crimes, the Soviets were compelled to apply the concepts of war crimes and crimes against humanity to the mass killings of Soviet POWs and of civilians on the Soviet occupied territories. Without concealing the ordeal of Soviet Jewish communities – at least for a short while immediately following the war – they opted to focus on the victims of burned villages

during the Nuremberg trial as well as the trials staged in parallel in Soviet Union in 1945-46 and again in 1947 by selecting facts and witnesses.

- 5 During the early months of the invasion, there were few references in Soviet official publications to killings of Jews, but the German arson of Soviet villages was prominently featured.⁸ We still know very little about the actual information collected by Moscow regarding the situation in the occupied territories, primarily because of highly limited access to the relevant archives. Some historians make reference to reports from regional communist leaders, however, notably Ponomarenko, the first secretary of the Communist Party of Belorussia, and to numerous reports received and summarized by NKVD Major Sudoplatov. These reports described, among other subjects, the fate of the civilian population, including the mass killings of Jews beginning within the first few weeks after the invasion, but we still know little about the actual scope of this information.⁹ Soviet leaders knew what was happening to the Jews, but almost nothing was reported in Soviet newspapers or in the many booklets on German atrocities that were edited for the public, Soviet propagandists, and Red Army soldiers.
- 6 As *Pravda* reported on September 13, 1941,

Sometimes under the threat of execution, sometimes by bribes or by promises, German fascist officers recruit agents, who are sent to the rear with a special mission: to demoralize Soviet territories behind the front with provocative, hostile rumors saying that Hitlerite hordes do not touch the civil (pacific) population, they do not carry out savage and monstrous mass killings, they kill Jews and Communists.¹⁰
- 7 Emphasizing the specific fate of the Jews was thus considered to be deliberately demoralizing the Soviet population and hence to be collaborating with the enemy. Mass killings of Jews were sometimes mentioned, notably at Babi Yar, but this information was far from reflecting the real scale of the slaughter of the Jews. In the case of Babi Yar, Soviet newspapers claimed there were 52,000 Jewish victims,¹¹ but in Kamenets Podolsk, the number of Jewish victims was alleged to be 400, since the reports covered killings at the beginning of August and did not include the unprecedented slaughter at the end of the same month, when Jeckeln reported 23,600 victims.¹² In this case, it is unclear whether the mention of the mass killings in Kamenets-Podolsk in early August and the silence regarding the massacres at the end of the month that had sixty times more victims was deliberate or not. On the eve of the August 27-28 massacre, Shcherbakov, the head of the Sovinformburo, had received an NKVD report that mentioned, among many similar shootings, that 400 Jewish refugees, mostly women and children from different regions, were assembled and executed in Kamenets-Podolsk.¹³ Obviously, Shcherbakov chose – or was allowed – to make this information public in the Sovinformburo statement of August 30, 1941.¹⁴
- 8 Instead of covering the specific fate of the Jewish communities at the hands of the German invaders, the literature about mass atrocities sought to demonstrate that the entire Soviet population was the target of this inhuman German onslaught. In this context, the subject of villages partly or completely incinerated and their inhabitants executed appeared very quickly and was completely consistent with the official interpretation of the war. The destruction of villages and their inhabitants concerned the Slavic rural population, which was supposedly the principal target of a Nazi racial war against the Soviet Union described in speeches and in print ever since the beginning of the war, including in a speech by Stalin on November 6, 1941.¹⁵ The subject was also

linked to the war's alleged economic objectives of the war of destroying and plundering Soviet wealth. The burning of villages meant the destruction of housing as well as goods not already pilfered by the troops. Very often, it was mentioned that this terrible decision was taken as a reprisal against villagers who opposed the confiscation of their goods, cattle, or food:

German punitive detachments burned Zamoshch'e, Zaplius'e, Okliuzh'e and many other villages in the region of Leningrad to the ground. When burning villages, fascists drove the peasants out of them, forbidding them categorically to take away with them even the most essential things.¹⁶

- 9 Depriving the population of food, shelter, and warm clothes was depicted as a barbarous act that was tantamount to a death sentence, especially in the harsh climatic conditions of Soviet Union. Numerous pictures captured villagers' despair as they sat among ashes and ruins with only stovepipes still standing, among of the most vivid icons of the war.¹⁷
- 10 The violence that accompanied this pillaging included widespread rape of village women as well as kidnapping for serving in German brothels, as described in the following Sovinformburo statement from October 8, 1941:

In the former rest home of the Lensovet, in Kamenka, Germans organized a brothel for officers. Collective farmers of the artel 'Unity' received the order to give six young girls to the brothel. Aware of the fate that awaited them, all the girls hid in the woods. When they arrived, without warning, in the village, the fascists didn't find any women. Then, the Germans took five collective farmers and shot them, and burned down the village.¹⁸

- 11 The burning of rural homes and the destruction of entire villages were also frequently associated with the execution of residents or worse, with reported cases of villagers being burned alive:

Region of Smolensk. A telephone line has been spoiled close to the village of Pochinok. The Germans herded old people, women and children from the village into a building of the collective farm administration and burned all of them alive.¹⁹

- 12 In the following excerpt, the sadistic treatment of Jews and non-Jews by Germans was merged with the same picture of helpless civilians consumed alive by the flames, through the juxtaposition of two separate events:

In the city of Belostok, the Germans drove more than 300 Jews into the synagogue, where they detained them for a few days, extorting money and valuables from them. The third day, fascists torched the synagogue, together with the Jews who remained inside. In Gkusskii district, the Germans burned the village of Makovichi and the villagers, and all of the remaining women and men were driven to the concentration camp of Slutsk. In this camp a few thousands of prisoners.²⁰

- 13 The same subtext – Jews and non-Jews are treated alike, with the same incredible sadism –, or even the substitution of the description of violence against Jews by the violence against non-Jews, may be read in the following sentence, where the word "pogrom"²¹ was used to describe events in a village in the Leningrad region:

In the village of Peresheek, Liadskii district, region of Leningrad, the German occupants organized a wild pogrom. They took from the population all the grain, cattle, poultry, all the clothing and the housing utensils. After the plunder, the Germans raped a few maids and then torched the entire village.²²

- 14 This kind of killing was not limited to the civilian rural population: pictures of the corpses of Red Army soldiers who had been tortured and burned also circulated in publications devoted to German atrocities.

- 15 Indeed, the burning of villages associated traditional, if widely denounced, war violence with hitherto unknown cruelty. Soviet readers did not have to look very far in order to recall the violence of the Civil War, including the destruction of villages. On the other hand, an unprecedented degree of sadism and cruelty was supposed to define the singularity of the Nazi war against the Slavic population. Sadism and the absolute inhumanity of the invaders were frequently emphasized by Soviet witnesses. One traditional component of atrocity-related propaganda, the publication of diaries allegedly found on dead or captured enemy troops, was supposed to confirm this feature of rank and file German soldiers:

The 25th of August. We throw hand grenades into the houses. Houses quickly ignite. The fire spreads to the other isbas. A beautiful picture! People cry, and we laugh at their tears. We have already burned 10 villages this way. The 29th of August. In one village we captured the first twelve dwellers who were passing by and drove them to the cemetery. We forced them to dig a wide and deep grave. There is not and there can't be any mercy for the Slavs. Damned humanism is foreign to us.²³

- 16 The prominence of the subject of the destruction of villages and the annihilation of their inhabitants is all the more remarkable because this was not at the time the principal tactic of the German invaders that it would be later, beginning in the Spring of 1942 after the Bamberg operation. According to a team of Soviet historians led by Romanovskii that was working in Belorussia, approximately 3% of the villages burned in this republic during the war were destroyed in 1941²⁴. Still, even this relatively small percentage (which should not be taken as definitive, since, as discussed in the conclusion of this paper, a census is currently being undertaken) tallies with a relevant number of cases, which was sufficiently high to have influenced Soviet opinion. Indeed, some sources reported reprisals of this kind during the early months of the war in other areas than Belorussia, including the newly occupied territories and particularly the region of Leningrad.²⁵
- 17 As reports of the arson of villages increased after early 1942 in Soviet publications about German atrocities, the texts increasingly took on the form of legal acts, making clear to the Soviet reader and to the rest of the world that these were war crimes that called for judicial punishment. Indeed, the concern of Soviet authorities with producing legally admissible documentation led to the creation of the State Extraordinary Commission on German War Crimes (henceforth ChGK), which unquestionably increased the mass of written documents related to German atrocities, including the arson of Soviet villages. The political goals underlying the creation of this commission by a decree of November, 1942 (but which began to actually function only in the Spring of 1943) and the propagandistic aspect of its official statements justify widespread distrust of this Stalinist institution.²⁶ Still, the huge undertaking of collecting information and interviewing witnesses, opening mass graves, and conducting forensic investigations sheds light on repression and mass killings against various groups of the Soviet population during the occupation, including Jewish and non-Jewish civilians. This information is all the more valuable when one examines locally-gathered material, even if it is unclear what specific procedures were used in the field at the various levels: district, rural soviet, locality. Many local mass killings of Jews and non-Jews documented by local commissions under the aegis of the ChGK are not reflected in any other sources. Second, local material of the ChGK provides insight into several aspects of the war, notably the specific ways in which civilians were persecuted and killed during the occupation. This is not to say that no bias was introduced at the local level, as is discussed below. Nevertheless, first-hand

information is able to provide a far more complete picture than the published statements of the State Extraordinary Commission could suggest, or even the unpublished reports written at a higher level that summarized the findings of local commissions and forwarded up the hierarchy. This has already been demonstrated for the mass killings of the Jewish population. The abundant material about many sites of mass killings of Soviet Jews, on very different scales, with frequent references to victims' nationality, is all the more striking in that most public Soviet publications were mute concerning such facts.²⁷

- 18 Indeed, the way in which the results of local investigations were transmitted varied from place to place. Particularly as regards the fate of the Jewish population, the ethnic identity of the victims was sometimes clearly specified but in other cases was not reported separately from the number of "pacific Soviet civilians," as they would be described later in most of the ChGK published statements. These variations suggest that no clear instructions were given regarding the silence surrounding the slaughter of Jews in Soviet occupied territories. It seems that the attitude of Soviet authorities, even at the top level, was not clearly established during the war years. This is illustrated by the famous censorship of the ChGK report on Kiev in early 1944, when Shvernik, the head of the ChGK and a true vassal of Stalin, submitted his report on Kiev to Alexandrov, which started with the words: "Hitlerite bandits committed a mass killing of the Jewish population," and described the Jews gathering at the intersection of Melnikovaia and Dokterevskaia streets. In writing these words, in December, 1943, Shvernik was simply following the Soviet official line according to which Babi Yar epitomized the German mass killing of Jews that had been described by Molotov, at length and unambiguously, as the slaughter of Kievan Jews, in his note of January 6, 1942, which had been sent to Allied diplomatic representatives and immediately published in Soviet newspapers²⁸. Even the inflation of the official number of victims did not mean automatically that the Jewishness of the majority of them should be concealed. As late as January 19, 1944, Kobulov, from the NKGB, wrote to Shvernik that, according to initial estimates, 70 000 Jews, 20 000 Soviet POWs and 10 000 former members of the Party and the Komsomol had been executed at Babi Yar during the occupation.²⁹ Shvernik clearly did not expect what followed, which was the return of his report with significant modifications after it had been shuttled back and forth, with the involvement of such top figures as Molotov himself, Vyshinskii, or Shcherbakov.³⁰ From that point onward, Babi Yar lost its unambiguous status as a Soviet denunciation of mass annihilation of Jews and became instead a site for denouncing the mass killings of alternatively either Jews and non-Jews, as will be discussed below.
- 19 As has been shown, the burning of villages and the massacre of their inhabitants were very often discussed in Soviet official publications even before these practices began to be implemented on a far broader scale. What had been widely publicized because it was for long a topos of the war atrocity literature that echoed traditional representations of the violence of war against civilians then took on unprecedented proportions, beginning in the Spring of 1942 and lasting until the end of the German occupation. This latter phase also gave rise to vast documentation that was mostly stored within the silence of Soviet archives. Indeed, thousands of mostly handwritten pages in ChGK files contain the testimony of villagers and lists of names of the victims killed in countless locations.
- 20 Most witnesses were unable to precisely identify the troops who burst into their villages or hunted down village residents hiding in the woods, let alone recall the names of the principal perpetrators. In their accounts, operations against the villages were the product

of wanton violence, even when they referred to "punitive expeditions" (*karatel'nye ekspeditsii*). The link between violence against the local population and the frequent presence of partisans was not established. The strategy of large search-and-sweep operations that began with operation "Bamberg" in late March, 1942 in the area of Bobruisk-Belostok and their multiplication and intensification throughout 1943, when the decision was taken to create large "dead zones," are not at all present in the testimony of people who had no understanding of what occurred beyond their own village or, at best, cluster of localities. Only German sources enable a general understanding of these operations, because they present the destruction of villages along with mass plundering, killings, and the deportation of village inhabitants within the context of the broader German strategy of fighting the partisans. They also reveal the implication of several Nazi institutions, including the Wehrmacht, the SD, and the SS, in the various stages of "Bandenbekämpfung" operations. German sources also reflect the reactions of certain German dignitaries to the harsh treatment of the Soviet civilian population during this dirty war, in which they denounced the counter-productive effects of German cruelty against the rural population, which was so critical to the economy of occupied territories.

³¹ Such reactions in German records are indicative of the particularly unconventional treatment of civilians, which these sources do not refer to elsewhere. Reports from Soviet partisan sources are less complete than German sources, but they provide a broader picture of what was happening than do local witnesses following the liberation of their districts. However, as opposed to German sources, partisan sources did make the ordeal of civilians during these operations particularly clear, including the mass killing of people by burning them alive. Partisan reports were central to informing Moscow about these operations, which were denounced in the Soviet press, such as the "tragedy of Osveia," the Soviet version of the operation Winterzauber³².

21 Documents collected by Soviet local commissions, nevertheless, provide a good understanding of the fate of civilians, particularly the methods used to slaughter them. This is significant, since this kind of killing is perhaps what most strongly differentiates the information available from German and Soviet sources, and, therefore, the Soviet and post-Soviet narrative on one hand, and the Western (German) narrative on the other. Local soviet commissions were required to specify both the number of victims and the method by which they were killed (i.e., by shooting, hanging, or burning), gruesome accounting that was recorded either on pre-printed forms containing categories of ways of dying or in hand-drawn tables. In the field, the heads of collective farms or of sel'sovet were responsible for drawing up lists of victims that included their names and how they died. The accounting on which these lists were based remains unclear, particularly in the case of mass killings. Clearly, they were most often based on pre-war population lists, without always verifying that the entire population was present in the village at the time of the operation.³³

22 Frequently, everyone remaining in a village were executed, including both inhabitants who had not fled or were not serving in the Red Army and people from other villages, refugees, or those who had occasionally been assembled by the Germans themselves. Killing methods varied from location to location. Some victims were shot or gathered in buildings into which the Germans then tossed grenades. The burning of these buildings implies that both the corpses and the bodies of the wounded who had survived shootings or grenade attacks were incinerated together. Executions by gunfire at the edge of pits, followed by cremation, are also mentioned.³⁴ An additional approach also frequently

appears in local files of the ChGK in which villagers were deliberately burned alive. As previously mentioned, the description of this kind of mass killing by Western historians is based on several sources. These include public testimony during Soviet post-war show trials or taken by the Soviet authorities during pre-trial depositions and later transmitted to German investigators, mostly from Soviet witnesses and occasionally from the defendants themselves. Sources also include witness reports collected by Adamovich in the 1970s, in a genre that would be adopted by other Soviet writers.³⁵ Although this method of killing is very frequently mentioned in the various sources of testimony, it has continued to be denied or called into question by some German historians in recent publications.³⁶ For this reason, it seems particularly important to take this first-hand archival material into account in order to shed light on this important but controversial aspect of the atrocities committed by Germans on Soviet civilians.³⁷

- 23 The killing of every inhabitant, however, was not always the rule. Some villagers were deported after being assembled and taken by foot or other transportation to camps located relatively near the operation zone before being sent to join the labor force within the Reich or other locations.³⁸ This was the fate of the villagers who survived the anti-partisan operations in North-western Belorussia and were deported to the camp of Salaspils in Latvia (Ostland), for example.³⁹ Although testimony collected on the spot among surviving villagers does not refer to the destinations of these deportees, ChGK files contain questionnaires completed by Ostarbeiter who succeeded in returning to their former places of residence as well as special files devoted to camps located in former occupied Soviet territories, notably at Salaspils.⁴⁰
- 24 Violence against civilians was also conducted outside of the villages. Most testimony underscored the fact that people who were taken captive were women, young children, the elderly, and the sick. Indeed, those who had the physical ability to escape the Germans and their auxiliary troops took refuge in the woods. Hidden in *zemlianki*, villagers on the run had to survive hunger and cold. When they were successfully tracked down by the Germans and their auxiliaries, escapees suffered the same tragic fate of either execution or deportation.⁴¹
- 25 The participation of local collaborators in the arson of the villages and the martyrdom of their inhabitants is occasionally mentioned. It seems unavoidable in the case of expeditions in which a special fate was reserved for the families of partisans.⁴² On the whole, however, the participation of non-Germans is dramatically underplayed in the Soviet records,⁴³ and the arson of villages by Soviet partisans is naturally completely obscured.⁴⁴ The testimony of villagers most often does not suggest any relationship between the presence of partisans and the German expedition against their villages. In fact, another factor is frequently referred to – German retreat. The fact that most of the exactions described in these testimonials are related to this period of the war, which continues to be somewhat unfamiliar to the historians, can be explained by the temporal proximity between these events and witness's accounts. It could also reflect the sheer scale of the crimes committed during this distinctive period of the war, which included the retreat of the Wehrmacht and the civil administration, and was also associated with pharaonic plans for the evacuation of both material resources and people. These vast evacuation plans were only partially completed and varied deeply from one location to another. They nevertheless contributed to lethal mass displacement of the population as well as mass executions and the burning of villages, often in reprisal against a population

that was reluctant to leave their homes and belongings for an unknown destination in order to follow the defeated Wehrmacht.⁴⁵

- 26 In the Soviet Union, the war had been a time of both mobilization and active documentation gathering regarding German war crimes. In order to galvanize public opinion and legitimize the heavy sacrifices asked of the population, information about German atrocities was widely disseminated. These two activities, both heavily organized by the Soviet state, played on a judicial treatment of the war that was partially implemented during the war, notably during the 1943 show trials, but which found its full expression only after German capitulation.⁴⁶
- 27 During the immediate post-war years, the Soviet Union had several opportunities to offer its version of the war and the Nazi occupation by staging trials both abroad and on Soviet soil. This section describes how Soviet officials dealt with the matter of qualifying violence against different population groups. It argues that it was a time during which the official discourse of the war was under development, a discourse that was not stabilized before 1947, especially regarding the fate of Soviet Jewish victims. The Soviet Union had gathered a significant body of evidence concerning crimes committed by the occupying German forces. Post-war trials were a milestone in the selection of these crimes and in the way in which they would be ranked hierarchically. They combined Soviet integration with Allied discourse on the nature of the Nazi experience and a specific Soviet discourse on the Eastern Front.
- 28 Soviet participation in the drafting of the London Charter and the four counts of the indictment against defendants at the Nuremberg International Military Tribunal has recently been re-assessed, especially concerning the first count of the indictment (Crimes against Peace) and the charge of complicity, stressing the role of Aaron Trainin, a Soviet legal academician, already internationally famous for his work on war crimes and member of the Soviet delegation.⁴⁷ Moreover, Soviet Union actively participated in the construction of a new concept, crimes against humanity,⁴⁸ an addition to the more traditional concept of war crimes.⁴⁹ The present section shows how Soviet integration into an international judicial process influenced Soviet public discourse concerning civilian victims of the war, which revealed both the Jewish ordeal and that of the other victims of the occupation, principally the inhabitants of burned villages.
- 29 For the Western Allies, crimes against humanity included several aspects of Nazi policy, but this charge clearly targeted above all the mass annihilation of European Jews.⁵⁰ In his opening statement, Justice Jackson, Chief Prosecutor for the United States of America, dedicated an entire section to crimes against the Jews,
- the most savage and numerous crimes planned and committed by the Nazis were those against the Jews. [...]of the 9,600,000 Jews who lived in Nazi-dominated Europe, 60% are authoritatively estimated to have perished. Five million seven hundred thousand Jews are missing from the countries in which they formerly lived, and over 4,500,000 cannot be accounted for by the normal death rate nor by immigration; nor are they included among displaced persons. History does not record a crime ever perpetrated against so many victims or one ever carried out with such calculated cruelty.⁵¹
- 30 Moreover, Jackson claimed that the worst treatment had been unquestionably reserved for Eastern European Jews:
- As the German frontiers were expanded by war, so the campaign against the Jews expanded. The Nazi plan never was limited to extermination in Germany; always it contemplated extinguishing the Jew in Europe and often in the world. In the West,

the Jews were killed and their property taken over. But the campaign achieved its zenith of savagery in the East. The eastern Jews have suffered as no people ever suffered.⁵²

31 Even if the Allies were not aware of the full scope of the Holocaust at the time of Nuremberg,⁵³ the trial was the first opportunity to document and to give a comprehensive definition to the fate of European Jews, including those in the Soviet Union. Although the complete set of Einsatzgruppen reports had not yet been discovered,⁵⁴ some of them were already in circulation and were quoted by both American and Soviet prosecutors.⁵⁵ Among the mass killings of Jews reported by German sources that were cited by Jackson, Babi Yar, with its 33,771 victims, was by far the deadliest, although this figure was quite inferior to Soviet estimates, as will be discussed below.⁵⁶ Otto Ohlendorf, the former leader of Einsatzgruppe D, who explained how his unit killed more than 90,000 Soviet Jews, including men, women, and children, between June, 1941 and June, 1942, had been summoned by the American Public Ministry, and his deposition constituted another important moment in the description of Jewish slaughter in the occupied Soviet territories.⁵⁷

32 The Soviet prosecution unquestionably contributed to revelations about the Jewish fate at Nuremberg, but it had certain particularities. On several occasions, the Soviets cited the same statistics used by the Western Allies concerning the annihilation of European Jewry on the whole, but they never offered precise figures about the number of Soviet Jewish victims, with some exceptions for the Baltics. Nuremberg also was an important moment in the universalization of the identity of the victims of Babi Yar by the Soviets, and the Soviet definition of Nazi crimes against humanity definitely included victims other than Jews.

33 General Rudenko's opening statement began with a long treatise on Nazi racial theory as the key to understanding their vision of the world. He left out any mention to the place of the Jews in this theory, but he did utter this well-known, eloquent statement about Nazi occupation policy:

The population of these countries, and of Slav countries above all others – especially Russians, Ukrainians, Byelorussians, Poles, Czechs, Serbians, Slovenes, Jews – were subjected to merciless persecution and mass extermination.⁵⁸

34 His speech left no uncertainty, however, about the actual fate of Soviet Jews in terms of their extermination:

The bestial annihilation of the Jewish population took place in the Ukraine, in Byelorussia [sic], and in the Baltic States. In the town of Riga some 80,000 Jews lived before the German occupation. At the moment of the liberation of Riga by the Red Army, there were 140 Jews left there.⁵⁹

35 Several months later, in his closing statement on July 29, 1946, Rudenko, speaking of Kaltenbrunner, described again the activities of the four Einsatzgruppen, including the massacre at Babi Yar, as "an execution unmatched in cruelty, when 100,000 Soviet citizens perished on a single day."⁶⁰ In this entire section of his presentation that related to the Einsatzgruppen, in which, in addition to Babi Yar, he mentioned several mass killings known to have involved Jews, Rudenko did not a single time refer to the fact that the victims he was discussing were Jewish. In fact, victims' fates were merged into a collective, sadistic method of murdering both Jews and non-Jews:

And when Kaltenbrunner's fate will be decided, all the victims asphyxiated in the 'murder vans' near Stavropol, buried alive in the graves near Kiev and Riga, burned

alive in the Byelorussian [sic] villages, must never be forgotten. All these innocent victims are on his unclean conscience.⁶¹

36 Later in the speech, Rudenko offered a surprisingly blurred version of events:

And all of the operations "Cottbus" for the extermination of Jews in the Baltic towns, in the Ukraine and Byelorussia [sic] – all these were carried out in conformity with Rosenberg's theories and with his agreement."⁶²

37 Nevertheless, in his statement concerning Streicher's guilt, he mentioned that "over six million European Jews" had been slaughtered.⁶³ Instead of being denied by the Soviet team, the mass annihilation of Jews in Europe and the Soviet Union was thus re-framed within a narrative of which it was not the most significant element, despite the fact that its vast scale was clearly mentioned or, in the case of the Soviet Union, at least strongly suggested; the deaths of Jews were thus in effect permanently envisioned as being in competition with other victims.

38 The Soviet team organized the presentation of evidence according to the four counts in the indictment, but when it came to the charge of war crimes, different aspects of the charge were addressed by different members of the Soviet team, notably the treatment of prisoners of war, forced labor, and deportation into "German slavery." The arson of villages and their "wanton" destruction were described several times, first by L.N. Smirnov, Chief counselor of Justice, who was the Assistant Prosecutor for the USSR, in his presentation on "crimes against the peaceful population," but also by General Sheinin during his presentation on "the plunder of private, public, and state property,"⁶⁴ and later by Raginsky, State Counsellor of Justice of the Second Class, in terms of the "wanton destruction and annihilation of towns and villages." It was Raginsky who emphasized the planned creation of dead zones.⁶⁵ He described the fate of the Latvian village of Audrini, which had been destroyed in January, 1942 along with its entire population,⁶⁶ and the burning of villages in the Leningrad region in February, 1944, according to the verdict of the Leningrad trial.⁶⁷ But he also described the fate of villages in other occupied countries and inserted the projection of images of the destruction of Lidice that had been filmed by the Germans, before showing a second documentary film devoted to the destruction of Soviet localities perpetrated by the Germans in the Soviet territories.⁶⁸ However, the witness called in this section by Raginsky was Joseph Abgarovitch Orbeli, the director of the State Hermitage Museum, who presented himself as an international expert and testified about the destruction of the monuments of culture and art in Leningrad.⁶⁹ The fact that no witness from a burned village was called in this section on material destruction, despite the quantitative and qualitative importance of these actions, does not mean that this kind of crimes was downplayed at Nuremberg. Quite the contrary, the burning of villages received the highest publicity in the section on "Crimes against Humanity" presented by Smirnov on February 25 and 26, 1946.

39 An entire section of Smirnov's statement was devoted to the persecution of the Jews, including in the occupied Soviet Union, but this section was preceded by the vivid evocation of the tragedy of the burned villages, through the testimony of the first ordinary Soviet witness.

In order to explain the methods adopted by the German fascists in the execution of their cannibalistic plan for the extermination of the Soviet people – peaceful citizens of my motherland, women, children, and old people – I request the tribunal to call and question witness Grigoriev, Jacob Grigorievitch, a peasant from the village of Pavlov, village soviet of Shkvertovsk, region of Pokhovsk, district of Pskov.⁷⁰

40 Grigoriev explained that he and one of his sons were the sole survivors of his family to escape. Every other family member had been killed during the operation, including his nine year-old son, who was burned alive, as were most of the remaining inhabitants of the village. Grigoriev further explained how the burning of his village was not an isolated incident and that several other villages and their inhabitants had suffered a similar fate. He made the point that there was no partisan activity whatsoever in his village:

nobody indulged in any partisan activities since there was nobody left. Only old people and small children were left in the village; the village had never seen any partisans and did not know who these partisans were.⁷¹

41 The fate of Soviet POWs was then addressed during Smirnov's presentation when he called the third Soviet witness, Doctor Eugene (sic) Alexandrovich Kivelisha.⁷²

42 Jewish mass killings came later in Smirnov's demonstration. Like the Americans, he produced a report from the Einsatzgruppe A (URSS-57) that had been found by the Red Army in Gestapo archives in Latvia and that described other mass killings (Pinsk, Kislovodsk, Stavropol'). Further, he claimed that 3 million Jews had perished in Poland, quoting a report of the Polish Government, while providing no similar total figures for the occupied Soviet territories. He summoned his fourth witness on the following day, Abram Gerzevitch Sutzkever, a Jewish writer who had been in the Vilnius ghetto between June, 1941 and September, 1943. Sutzkever had close ties to influential members of the Soviet Jewish intelligentsia, and his testimony was certainly arranged by Ehrenburg and Mikhoels.⁷³ In the same year that he testified at Nuremberg, his written testimony about the fate of the Vilnius ghetto was published in Moscow, in yiddish.⁷⁴ Actually, Sutzkever, a Yiddish writer, had dreamt to testify in this language⁷⁵. Because he was originally from recently annexed territories – and despite being born a subject of the Russian empire⁷⁶ – he had been a Soviet citizen for only a short time, and it was certainly not by chance that the president of the court asked him: "Are you a Soviet citizen?" To which Sutzkever replied: "Yes."⁷⁷ Smirnov underscored several points made by Sutzkever during his testimony, including the fact that there were 80,000 Jewish inhabitants in Vilnius prior to the occupation, of whom 79,400 were exterminated; this was the last sentence of the questioning. No mention was made of Sutzkever's participation in the partisan movement and the rescue of priceless Jewish archives. Two additional Jewish witnesses were questioned by Smirnov: the Polish citizens Severina Shmaglevskaya concerning Auschwitz, and Samuel Rajzman, who had been deported from the Warsaw ghetto to Treblinka.

43 Consistent with Rudenko's February 8, 1946 speech, witnesses testified specifically on the mass killing of Jews. However, among these three Jewish witnesses, only the poet Abram Sutzkever was the only one to specifically refer to mass killings of Jews in the former occupied Soviet territories. The two other Jewish witnesses summoned by the Soviets at the Nuremberg trial did not come from the Soviet Union and testified about Polish camps – Auschwitz and Treblinka – that had been liberated by the Red Army, thus illustrating the narrative used by the Soviets at Nuremberg regarding the Jewish ordeal, which was consistent with the general indictment alleging an exceptional effort to destroy European Jewry. This had the effect of underlining the overall scale of the events while also minimizing the enormity of the Jewish losses that took place within occupied Soviet territories.

44 The final part of Smirnov's presentation about crimes against humanity concerned religious persecution. He summoned the Archdean of the churches of the City of

Leningrad, the Very Reverend Nikolai Ivanovich Lomakin, whose testimony provided a gruesome portrait of Leningrad under the siege.⁷⁸

- 45 Witnesses were not intended to play an important role at the Nuremberg trial because written evidence was given greater weight. Furthermore, witnesses summoned by the prosecution, especially the Soviets, clearly did not have the same status as other witnesses. Although they obviously had an emotional impact on the Western audience, some doubt surrounded the veracity of their accounts.⁷⁹
- 46 Nevertheless, the choice of witnesses had been thoroughly prepared by the Soviets, since Fall 1945. It's not easy to follow from the beginning to the end how they were selected, but the documentation available in former Soviet archive suggest both conflicting views inside Soviet leadership and a constant evolution, from the first drafts to the very audience at Nuremberg. Several lists of possible witnesses circulated, reflecting different understandings of the relative weight that should be given to different aspects of the martyrdom of the Soviet population.
- 47 Preparation for the Nuremberg trial was assigned both to an official commission and to the secret Politburo commission headed by Vyshinskii. At the meeting of November 9, 1945, a short list of Soviet witnesses was to ratify, but it was also decided to expand the list of potential witnesses. A subcommittee was specially in charge of selecting witnesses who should testify at Nuremberg, although Soviet leadership didn't know how far they would have the possibility to summon them at the public audience, and in that case how many.⁸⁰ Several institutions took part in the selection process by drawing up lists of witnesses. The subcommittee had at its disposal several lists sent by the ChGK, the NKVD, the Red Army.⁸¹ Obviously, the Jewish Antifascist committee played also a prominent role, possibly at a later stage.⁸²
- 48 The short list mentioned above, "ratified by the Vyshinskii commission,"⁸³ included 19 names, only one of whom, V.Iu. Davydov, was described as Jewish⁸⁴. The individuals appearing on the list were primarily high-profile experts or public figures who participated in the largest ChGK inquiries, the rank-and-file witnesses being only a minority.⁸⁵ The sites of certain well-known Jewish mass killings were included in the inquiries, from Auschwitz to L'vov, but the fact that the individuals nominated as witnesses were not Jewish makes it highly probable that the objective was to universalize the victims. In one emblematic example, a Polish priest named Savitskii, *ksendz* in Rovno, was the only witness listed for a site in which several thousand Jews had been killed. Certain other elements, such as the destruction of spiritual and artistic patrimony, were introduced, particularly by figures such as M. Dmitriev, head of the Department devoted to Ancient Russia Art at the Russian Museum of Leningrad, I.A. Orbeli, Academician, vice-head of the Soviet Academy of Sciences, who participated in the inquiries on suburbs estates in Leningrad, and I.A. Gruzdev, a member of the leadership of the Soviet Writers Union, who took part in the ChGK investigations of famous Russian historical cities, including Novgorod and Pskov. Then, an undated draft, probably the new extended list, included the names of 35 possible witnesses selected by the ChGK, with their whereabouts and a brief description of the events or facts about which they could testify.⁸⁶ Six were explicitly mentioned as Jews, including four witnesses of Babi Yar.⁸⁷ Nine witnesses on the list could testify about the ordeal of the Soviet POWs. The following hand-written notation appears in the margin of the list: "arson of villages and cities," as though the reader was referring to a particular topic that was missing from the document.

- 49 By contrast with the two earlier lists, a third draft explicitly mentioned the destruction of villages in a section devoted to this kind of crime.⁸⁸ Five witnesses had been selected for this section: Iakov Grigor'evich Grigor'ev, head of a collective farm in the Pskov oblast', Vasili Pavlovich Pavlov, also the head of a collective farm in the region of Pskov, Vasili Sergeevich Sergeev, villager of the region of Pskov, Nadezhda Nikolaevna Ostreiko, kolkhoznitsa of the Minsk region, and Sof'ia Vasil'evna Sikritskaia, a villager in the same region. Some of these figures were direct survivors of the atrocities, and each could testify about the destruction of the villages and the killing of their inhabitants, some of whom were burned alive. Nevertheless, while the topic of the burned villages clearly lay behind the composition of this third list, it was far from the most prominent emphasis. The first section was devoted to "murder and brutal behaviour against the civilian population" and counted 14 witnesses, six of whom were identified as Jewish. The second largest section was devoted to "murder and brutal behaviour against Soviet POWs," with 11 witnesses, followed by a section on deportation and forced labor (six witnesses). The murder of children was treated in a separate section that included four witnesses.
- 50 What happened between December, 1945 and February 18, 1946, when Soviet witnesses of German atrocities fled from Vnukovo airdrome to Germany, remains unclear. According to the most famous of them, Avrom Sutzkever, nine witnesses were selected to be seated in the plane. In addition to Sutzkever himself, four witnesses actually testified at Nuremberg: Iossif Abramovich Orbeli, Nikolai Ivanovich Lomakin, Evgenii Kivilska, Iakov Grigor'ev. The others who had been selected but were not allowed to speak were Professor Dmitriev from Leningrad, two Belorussian girls, former inmates of Auschwitz and Maidanek, Tarkovskii, former POW of the military hospital at Slavuta, and David Iossifovich Budnik, a Kievan Jew. The former was already a bit of celebrity by 1946. He was one of the few escapees of the commando that had taken part in the incineration of the corpses at Babi Yar in 1943 and had succeeded in escaping the German death sentence, the usual fate for those who had been selected among the Syrets camp inmates for this task. Budnik, as Berliant, Davydov, Brodskii and Steiuk, had been interrogated several times by Soviet authorities since the liberation of Kiev and, as mentioned above, had been selected to testify at Nuremberg in various drafts. Davydov had been especially honored to tell their story to Khrushchev, few days after the liberation of the city, and to show him all the sites where German atrocities took place in Kiev.⁸⁹ The final selection of Budnik in Moscow can be explained by several factors: selected witnesses had to be located and screened by Soviet authorities.⁹⁰ The result of this selection was unpredictable, as Sutzkever's diary suggests.⁹¹ Nevertheless, the ability of the witnesses to speak according to the Soviet prosecution was certainly central, and in any case, each detail of their speech was already prepared in Moscow.⁹² However, once at Nuremberg, witnesses could still have been eliminated. Sutzkever, again, relates in his diary that he waited for days, not knowing whether he would be called to testify (and in which language). The reasons for this uncertainty are not clear: obviously a lack of time for the Soviet prosecution but also, perhaps, some reluctance either from the Soviet delegation or the General Procuracy.⁹³ That Soviet prosecution was ready to summon an important witness from Kiev, a Jew who would certainly testify about Operation 1005 in Babi Yar in 1943, which is, indirectly, on all the Soviet victims lying under the ground of Babi Yar ravine, rather than on the mass killing of Kievan Jews at the end of September, 1941 is an important fact, that confirms the centrality of this topic for the Soviets, which was already noticeable in the earlier draft lists of witnesses mentioned earlier. And the fact

that, although he was in the corridors of the Nuremberg Tribunal, Sutzkever was the only one to testify concerning the ordeal of Soviet Jews constitutes a choice that demands further investigation. Sutzkever's oratory skills might represent a preliminary answer.

- 51 Clearly, Soviet authorities had screened Jewish and non-Jewish witnesses on Babi Yar, but ultimately, no Soviet witnesses were summoned to give testimony about it or any other site at which mass killings of Jews took place within the pre-1939 Soviet borders, even though Babi Yar had been featured by Soviet newspapers during the war and even though it was mentioned by the Soviet prosecution during the trial, with Rudenko ambiguously stressing the number of victims without specifically using the word Jews (100,000 Soviet citizens instead of 52,000 mentioned in a previous assessment). The massacre had also been made public during the January, 1946 Kiev trial (see below), not to mention through the publication of poems by Jewish writers up until the year 1947.⁹⁴
- 52 A new public Soviet discourse on war crimes and crimes against humanity also predominated inside Soviet Union in the wake of the war. The staging of public trials against foreign, mostly German, POWs, both in tandem with the Nuremberg trial and again at the end of 1947, provided a new opportunity to advertise the atrocities committed on occupied Soviet territories.⁹⁵ As might be expected, these trials were completely controlled by the Kremlin, which gave them top priority. Eighteen public trials against war criminals were held in the Soviet Union between late 1943 and late 1947 concerning 224 POWs. The widely publicized Kharkov trial constituted the first major attempt by the Soviets to implement the Allied declaration according to which second-order war criminals should be tried in the countries where they had committed war crimes. However, further trials of this kind were not held in the Soviet Union before the end of the war. An initial wave of post-war show trials was organized between December, 1945 and February, 1946 in Smolensk, Briansk, Nikolaev, Kiev, Minsk, Riga, Velikie Luki, and Leningrad, a second wave was held in Stalino, Bobruisk, Sebastopol, Chernigov, Poltava, Vitebsk, Kishinev, Novgorod, and Gomel during the Fall of 1947. In both cases, secret committees were appointed to select the indicted POWs, judges, prosecutors, lawyers, and witnesses and to coordinate and approve the prosecution's strategies and each trial's final verdict. Advertised by the press, these trials were also the subject of a number of publications⁹⁶ and showed evidence of being driven by a clear overall politico-educational objective.
- 53 The staging of the public for this trial is particularly striking in comparison with Nuremberg. The public was clearly supposed to represent Soviet society, including priests.⁹⁷ Public reactions are regularly mentioned in published reports of the trials, such as the wave of applause when the sentences were read and the fact that several thousand people observed the public hanging of most of the defendants. Press and radio coverage as well as meetings in factories, universities, and in the countryside allowed stories of the atrocities to spread far beyond the people attending the actual trial and demonstrated the severe treatment of war criminals by the Soviet state, backed by formal legal proceedings.
- 54 Soviet post-war show trials were used by the authorities as a tool for redefining crimes committed on its soil that the Soviet government wished to expose. This qualification of the crimes was explicitly based on the indictment counts drawn up by the Allies in preparation for Nuremberg. As a consequence, the particular fate of Soviet Jews appears clearly in the show trials of 1945-46, in obvious contrast with the quasi-silence during the war-time trials, which were marked by a tendency to universalize the identity of Soviet

victims.⁹⁸ The killing, deportation, and plundering of the non-Jewish population nevertheless played a far more central role. The policy of burning thousands of Soviet villages to the ground thus received even more extensive coverage than during the 1943 trials.

- 55 The show trial in Leningrad between December 28, 1945 and January 4, 1946 exemplifies this new-found centrality of the subject of the arson of villages. In fact, the policy of incinerating villages was characterized as part of a policy of total destruction that was not limited to rural areas. The indictment read that "the Leningrad region was placed in the category of regions which had to be erased." In addition to the 3,153 villages destroyed by the Germans, the indictment also drew attention to urban devastation, particularly of the cultural heritage of Novgorod and Pskov and the palaces on the outskirts of Leningrad, including Gatchina, Pavlovsk, Pushkin, and Peterhof. The denunciation of the violence perpetrated against civilians through the destruction of their villages played a vastly more important role than during the Nuremberg trials, as well as the facts that were related primarily to the end of the occupation.⁹⁹ This explosion of violence at the end of the war was linked to the particular conditions of the German army's retreat. One of the primary defendants, Remlinger, the military commander of Pskov from September, 1943 to February, 1944, was said to have confessed that

in accordance with group "Nord" general staff of November, 1943, the retreating German army had to evacuate, on the territory situated between the front lines and the line going through the cities of Narva-Pskov-Ostrov and further to the south, all the population, except for the ill and those unable to be transported, in the direction of Riga. All villages, towns, cities were to be set on fire and subjected to explosive devices. I, Remlinger, have received from the general staff "Nord" all of the orders mentioning the evacuation and the destruction of localities and I have communicated these orders to the local kommandanturen to be carried out.¹⁰⁰

- 56 The martyrdom of civilians in the Leningrad region was exemplified by the mass killing in the village of Pikalikhha, on February 27, 1944, which was widely described in Soviet newspapers covering the Leningrad trial.

On the order of Remlinger, the German officer of the Feldkomandantur in the territory of the Karamyshevskii district, Gruns, and the chief of the Feldgendarmarie, Max, when the Red Army was going closer, set villages on fire and deported by force the population to fascist hard labor (katorga) in Germany. On February 27, 1944, Soviet citizens who refused to go to Germany – 180 people, exclusively elderly people, women, and children – were gathered in the houses of the village of Pikhhalia and burned. Those who tried to escape through the windows were shot.¹⁰¹

- 57 The mass killing in Pikhhalia was just one among the many examples mentioned during the trial. There were a number of indications that this practice was widespread, particularly the total number of villages destroyed and of villagers killed and deported for the region as a whole, or for certain districts. The testimonies of survivors also provided many examples, further reinforced by the sheer scale of destruction that each defendant had had inflicted. For instance, one defendant claimed that he had been personally involved in the arson of more than twenty villages in the region of Leningrad.¹⁰² However, the German scorched-earth policy in advance of the Soviet attack was not the only explanation for the violence described during the trial. The war against the partisans had been conducted up until the actual final German withdrawal. As a consequence, the combination of the policy of destruction in the partisan areas and the

evacuation and scorched-earth policies produced an orgy of violence against Soviet villagers in the final months of the occupation.

58 Another defendant whose name was given as Ianike had supposedly mentioned in his confession an order from Remlinger from December, 1943

which ordered the torching of every locality in the area in which Soviet partisans operated, the deportation of the entire able-bodied population to behind the German army and the shooting of all others.

59 Nevertheless, describing his participation in carrying out the order, Ianike did not talk about fighting the partisans themselves, only about random violence against civilians:

There we encircled a village, the name of which I don't remember, we torched all the buildings and shot all the population, more or less 200-250 people. I personally shot, more or less, 30-35 people.¹⁰³

60 The prevalence of the topic of burning villages is all the more striking in the cases of show trials held in areas where the pre-war Jewish population had been annihilated. As mentioned earlier, the genocide against the Jews was explicitly denounced in Soviet publications connected to both Nuremberg and Soviet public trials. However, the evocation of the mass killings of Jews did not follow exactly the same pattern in every city in which major show trials took place. In the Minsk trial, the proportion of Jewish victims among the civilians killed in Belorussia during the occupation was never mentioned, although the numerous examples of mass killings that did explicitly concerned Jews that were evoked during the proceedings listed dizzying numbers of victims (although the mass killings that were mentioned were far from representing the total number, and many figures were inaccurate). The Nazis' desire to exterminate all of the Jews was never mentioned, by contrast with the Riga trial. In his final speech at Riga, prosecutor Zav'ialov, referring to the Nazi occupation in the Baltic area, claimed that "Jewish population has been totally exterminated."¹⁰⁴ The interrogation of defendant Hess at the Minsk trial is typical of this half-confessed (on the part of the Soviets) truth. The public attorney asked him:

You went from one locality to another. Why? Did you have a special task, to go from city to another and destroy the Jewish population? [Hess replied:] Yes, we had the task to destroy all the Jewish population in the region of Vileika.¹⁰⁵

61 Every aspect of the persecution and the extermination of Jews were addressed both by the defendants and the Soviet witnesses, a minority of whom were Jewish survivors. The extermination of other minorities was also very clearly mentioned, including the extermination of all of the Gypsies in the Baltic region, which was proclaimed several times at the Riga trial¹⁰⁶ and was also mentioned, although only briefly, at the Minsk trial.

¹⁰⁷

62 The mass killing of Jews was explicitly and extensively covered during the public trial in Kiev in January, 1946. Several defendants were accused of participating in them, some of whom explained that they were not guilty while not denying that the slaughter had taken place early in the occupation, i.e., before they were assigned to the Soviet Union. One participant, however, an SS officer named Isenman, explained in some detail the involvement of his division, "Viking," in the extermination of the Jewish population in Berdichev, L'vov, and Tarashchi. Because of the Soviet prosecutor's insistence, the mass killing of Jews was described in great detail, particularly in the case of the defendant Drachenfels, who arrived in Rovno in October, 1942 and who helped execute 25,000 Jews in a small forest 9 kilometers east of Rovno.¹⁰⁸ However, the mass killing of the Kievan

Jews at Babi Yar predominated, especially among the depositions of witnesses. The most wellknown witness was Dina Pronicheva, a survivor of the massacre who recounted a long story about what she had seen and experienced that made it abundantly clear that the victims had been Jewish.¹⁰⁹ The cremation of bodies (Operation 1005) was vividly described by another witness, Berliant, we already met as a possible witness for Nuremberg trial¹¹⁰. Along with Pronicheva, he was quoted in the final indictment by the prosecutor.¹¹¹

- 63 The ordeal of Soviet villagers nevertheless played a more central role in descriptions of Nazi exterminatory policies in occupied Soviet territory, a specific policy that was linked both to the German past and to the Nazi *Weltanschauung*. The prosecutor at the Riga show trial tied this practice explicitly to the past history of the area, which had previously been ruled by the Teutonic knights, and quoted a chronicle: “they committed villages to flames – houses were torched like straw. They killed most of the men and took the women and children prisoner.”¹¹² The same prosecutor also established the connection with the considerably more recent past, quoting one of the defendants who spoke of the creation of “dead zones” during the withdrawal from the Moscow region at the end of 1941:

I could understand the very term of “dead zone,” and I didn’t need further deciphering by some instruction. I’m a WWI veteran, and when the German army withdrew from the region of Lille, we also made “dead zones” there that were 15-16 kilometers wide, destroying and torching every locality within the zone.

- 64 On the other hand, the prosecutor emphasized that the violence inflicted by Nazis on civilians, particularly children, was on a scale that was beyond any past experience.¹¹³ The past of another defendant named Küpper was also referred to during testimony. Küpper had been involved in the pillaging of “Soviet Ukraine” in 1918 and again in similar operations in Ukrainian villages during which hundreds of localities were torched in 1942, before later participating in large-scale anti-partisan operations as the Feldkomendant of Daugavpils.¹¹⁴
- 65 The integration of the anti-partisan campaign within a broader genocidal (although this term was not yet used in the Soviet Union of 1946) plan against the Slavic (i.e., Russian) population was clearly emphasized during the Minsk trial. This assertion extended beyond repeated demonstrations during the trials that almost all of the victims of the operation were civilians. The following dialogue between the Soviet prosecutor and the German defendant Herf at the Minsk trial emphasized this point:

During the opening of the trial, you made the statement that Kube had told you in detail how Himmler had given the order to the chief of the general staff for the fighting against partisans, Bach, to destroy in occupied Soviet territories 20 million Russians, and that this should considerably diminish the activity of the partisan movement. Is this true?

Herf answered: Himmler gave the order to Bach to destroy 20 million Russians, and Bach himself said that it was unavoidable to destroy not 20 million, but more, 30 million people.

The prosecutor: What was the goal of such massive destruction of the Soviet population?

Herf: From 1943 on, Himmler stated that Urals should belong to the Germans and that, to the West of Urals, we had to ensure that no Russian would remain.¹¹⁵

- 66 This colonial obsession was repeatedly referred to during the Kiev trial as an explanation for the Nazi determination to kill as many people as possible.¹¹⁶
- 67 However, the struggle against the partisan movement as a pretext for destroying the Slavic population was not an argument limited to the Soviet audience. It had already been

underscored a few days before at the Nuremberg trial, during the testimony of Bach-Zelewski, and had already been developed by Rafaël Lemkin in his *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe*, edited in 1944.¹¹⁷

- 68 ChGK actions were heavily cited during each of these trials to support the indictments, which alleged a variety of crimes. The defendants' confessions both before and during the hearings played a key role in establishing their guilt, however, because descriptions of ChGK acts lacked precise evidence and did not identify participants in the killings. Confessions were extracted using a variety of methods in these completely orchestrated trials.¹¹⁸ In describing his involvement in the plan to convert the left bank of Dniepr in a desert zone (*zona pustiny*) by the "SS Death's Head Division" during his deposition of November 2, 1947, which was quoted in the Poltava trial, Bekker, allegedly, declared:

The localities through which the SS Division retreated provided an extraordinary picture of savage destruction. Arson everywhere. The picture of these crimes was so monstrous that one could believe that the whole earth was burning.¹¹⁹

- 69 This quote was particularly unlikely coming from a defendant, but it definitely provided a perfect example of the vivid picture of the war that the Soviets sought to publicize.

Conclusion

- 70 Following the strategy of dissimulation and concealment about the Great Patriotic War that characterizes late Stalinism, a renewed quest for memory of the war was cultivated by post-1953 Soviet leaders. This movement to resuscitate memories of the war found particularly powerful expression in the construction of memorials.
- 71 The setting of the Khatyn memorial made it abundantly clear that it was intended to provide an example of the hundreds (or thousands) of other, similar cases. Indeed, the representation of these many other villages is a distinct feature of this memorial site, which still occupies a central place in post-Soviet Belorussian national consciousness.¹²⁰ By contrast, Babi Yar represents the impossible memorialization of the mass killings of Jews. Even when Soviet leaders eventually decided to erect a monument to Babi Yar victims in 1976 on a site that had become nearly unrecognizable since the war, the Jewish identity of most of the victims was concealed, even though it had become an informal gathering place for Jewish Soviet citizens ever since the end of the war. Now that the Jewish identity of the victims is officially recognized, and despite the ongoing competition between several memorials to various groups of victims, the enormity of the mass killings on September 29-30, 1941 has the effect of masking the fact that, no matter how monstrous Babi Yar was, it involved only a small fraction of the 1,5 million Jews who died during the war inside Ukraine's present-day borders.¹²¹
- 72 In this context, the *Povyshenie statusa spasshikhhsia zhitelei sozhzhennykh belorusskikh dereven'* [Elevating the status of the escapees from Belorussian burned villages] project is striking given the already overwhelming presence of the subject in the Belorussian landscape. Indeed, Khatyn is the best-known and most visited Belorussian memorial, and the Belorussian countryside is dotted with other local memorials of various sizes, shapes, and ages. However, the launching of this project is symptomatic of the enduring anxiety of being forgotten. It can be explained by the prevailing idea that the list of burned villages remains incomplete. However, this movement to memorialize above all reflects post-Soviet frustration with Western memory of the war in the East. Since the end of the 1980s

in Belorussia, like in other post-Soviet countries, foreign and local Jewish associations have begun to fund memorials in areas in which Jews had been exterminated. The fact that the new Belorussian project seeking recognition of the status of the survivors of burned villages is supported by a German foundation (“Erinnerung, Verantwortung und Zukunft”) also involved in making reparations to Nazi victims in Eastern Europe confirms the idea of an underlying competition between Jewish and non-Jewish victims.¹²² It also underscores a shared desire for recognition – as well as some form of compensation – from the West, through designation as “victims of Nazism.” Again, archival evidence, primarily from the ChGK, is referenced by the NARB, the Belorussian national archives, as part of a move to create an electronic data-base that includes village names, data on the destruction of farms and killings among the population, and other significant dates and archival resources.¹²³

- 73 Clearly, the urge for a shared history of the Nazi occupation that would yield a narrative embracing every victim represents the only means of gaining recognition of these atrocities. It is also the only way in which a depoliticized approach to documenting these monstrous historical episodes can be achieved. Such an approach is critical to increasing our understanding of these mass crimes against a civilian population that, while neglected in the West, has been instrumentalized in the East.

NOTES

1. Alexandra Goujon, “La mémoire des villages brûlés pendant la Seconde Guerre mondiale: l'exemple de Khatyn en Biélorussie,” in David El Kenz, François-Xavier Nérard, eds., *Commémorer les victimes en Europe, XVI-XXI siècles* (P.: Champ Vallon, 2011), 77-90.

2. Ales Adamovich, Ianka Bril', and Vladimir Kolesnik collected more than 300 testimonies among survivors in 1970-1973, criss-crossing the Belorussian countryside with their tape recorder. Ales Adamovich, Ianka Bril', Vladimir Kolesnik, *Ia iz ognennoi derevni...* (M.: Sovetskii pisatel', 1991) 11. The book was first published in Belorussian in Minsk in 1975, then in Russian in 1977, with several translations, including English – *Out of the Fire* (M.: Progress, 1980).

3. Based on a screenplay of Ales Adamovich and film-director Elem Klimov, this film had a difficult period of development. It is an icon of *perestroika*, among other films that presented a fresh interpretation of the Soviet past. Indeed, several aspects of the film explain the censorship to which it was subjected. In fact, its shooting in the late 1970's was initially supported by the First Secretary of the Belorussian Communist Party, but was subsequently disrupted by Goskino, who saw it as tainted by “dirty estheticism” and “naturalism.” Still, the topic of the film, based on the award-winning books by Adamovich *Khatinskaia povest'* and *Ia iz ognennoi derevni*, both written during the Brezhnev era, cannot be said to be provocative. For a similar point of view, see Denise Youngblood, *Russian War Films: On the Cinema Front, 1914-2005* (University Press of Kansas, 2007), 232, who labels *Idi i smotri* “the apogee of the Soviet war film.”

4. On the fear of irregular fighters (*Freischärler*) in 1914 as a trigger for violence against civilians, see the now classic book by John Horne and Alan Kramer, *German Atrocities 1914: A History of Denial* (Yale University Press, 2001), on war crimes committed by the German army while invading Belgium and North-Eastern France in 1914.
5. Christian Hartmann, Johannes Hürter, and Ulrike Jureit, eds., *Verbrechen der Wehrmacht: Bilanz einer Debatte* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2005).
6. Hannes Heer, "Die Logik des Vernichtungskrieges. Wehrmacht und Partisanenkampf," in Hannes Heer, Klaus Naumann, eds., *Vernichtungskrieg: Verbrechen der Wehrmacht, 1941-1944*, (Hamburger Edition, 1995), 104-138.
7. Christian Gerlach, *Kalkulierte Morde: Die deutsche Wirtschafts- und Vernichtungspolitik in Weissrussland, 1941 bis 1944* (Hamburg: Hamburger Ed., 2000), 859-1055, Christian Ingrao, *Les chasseurs noirs: La brigade Dirlewanger* (P.: Perrin, 2006), 26-50, 156-171.
8. For a presentation and discussion of available scholarship on Soviet mass media and the Holocaust in the Soviet Union, see Karel C. Berkhoff, "Total Annihilation of the Jewish Population': The Holocaust in the Soviet Media, 1941-1945," *Kritika*, 10, 1 (2009): 61-105, here 61-65.
9. Il'ia Al'tman, *Zhertvy nenavisty* (M.: Fond Kovcheg, 2002), 385-386 (Ponomarenko reports), Berkhoff, "Total Annihilation...", 66-67 (Often quoted Ponomarenko's reports mentioning the "merciless annihilation" of Jews are dated mid-August 1941). An important report sent to Stalin in mid-1943 stated very clearly that "massive extermination of the Jews began during the first days of occupation," which tends to prove that Soviet authorities were totally aware of both the scope and the chronology of the Holocaust taking place in the occupied territories. Berkhoff, "Total Annihilation...", 67.
10. Reproduced in *Chudovishchnye zverstva nemetskikh fashistov (po materialam Sovetskogo Informbiuro (SIB))* (M.: Voennoe izdatel'stvo NKO SSSR, 1941, Vyp. 1), 8.
11. *Pravda*, *Izvestiia*, November 19, 1941. In their report, which was quoted and reproduced several times, German perpetrators claimed 33,771 Jewish victims. See Klaus-Michael Mallman, Andrej Angrick, Jürgen Matthäus, Martin Cüppers, eds., *Die "Ereignismeldungen UdSSR" 1941: Dokumente der Einsatzgruppen in der Sowjetunion*, 1, (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2011), 615.
12. BA-B (Bundesarchiv-Berlin-Lichterfelde), R 58/217, EM 80, September 11, 1941. This document has been quoted several times. See for example Dieter Pohl, "The Murder of Ukraine's Jews under German Military Administration and in the Reich Commissariat Ukraine," in Ray Brandon, Wendy Lower, eds., *The Shoah in Ukraine: History, Testimony, Memorialization*, (Indiana University Press, 2008), 23-76, here 31.
13. Berkhoff, "Total Annihilation...", 66-67.
14. It was immediately published in *Pravda* on August 31, 1941. Berkhoff, "A Total Annihilation...", 72. Statements of the Sovinformburo were spread in various publications. This statement is quoted, for example, in *Chudovishchnye zverstva nemetskikh fashistov*, vyp. 1, 36.
15. J.V. Stalin, *On the Great Patriotic War of the Soviet Union*, (M.: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1946), 29. In this speech, Stalin called the Nazi regime a true copy of the tsarist regime and claimed: "they organize medieval pogroms against the Jews as readily as the tsarist regime did." But he added a little further, quoting Hitler himself: "If

our hearts are set on establishing our great German Reich we must above all things force out and exterminate the Slavonic nations.”

16. *Chudovishchnye zverstva*, 43 (iz vechernogo soobshcheniia SIB, 14.09.1941).

17. See for example David Shneer, *Through Soviet Jewish Eyes: Photography, War and the Holocaust*, (Rutgers University Press, 2011), 95.

18. Quoted for example in *Chudovishchnye zverstva nemetskikh fashistov (po materialam Sovetskogo Informbiuro)* (M., 1942, vyp. 2), 17.

19. *Chudovishchnye zverstva*, vyp. 1, 40 (iz utrennogo soobshsheniia SIB, 10.09. 1941).

20. *Chudovishchnye zverstva*, vyp. 1, 33 (iz utrennogo soobshsheniia SIB, 26.08.1941).

21. This interpretation can easily be contested, since the word “pogrom” is commonly used in the Russian language to describe mass violence and destruction with no reference to the specific kind of violence suffered by the Jewish population. We still argue that, in this text, the use of “pogrom” could only play with an unspoken reference to the fate of Jews, with the subtext: “this time, it is the Slavic population that is the victim of this violence.”

22. *Chudovishchnye zverstva*, vyp. 3, 11 (iz utrennogo soobshsheniia SIB, 10.01.1942).

23. *Chudovishchnye zverstva*, vyp. 2, 40 (iz vechernogo soobshsheniia SIB, 22.08.1941). On the use, and possible fabrication, of German letters and diaries by Soviet propaganda, see Jochen Hellbeck, “The Diaries of Fritzes and the Letters of Gretchens.” *Personal Writings from the German-Soviet War and Their Readers*,” *Kritika*, 10, 3 (Summer 2009): 571-606, here 590-598.

24. Id est 150 of the 5,295 localities listed by the team. Gerlach, *Kalkulierte Morde*, 871.

25. Alexander Hill, *The War Behind the Eastern Front: The Soviet Partisan Movement in North-West Russia, 1941-44* (Routledge, NY, 2005), 114, mentions that during anti-partisan operations in 1941, whole villages were razed in the region of Leningrad. For example, 281st Security Division razed 23 villages of undisclosed size to the ground between November 30 and December 7, 1941.

26. Marina Sorokina, “People and Procedures: Towards a History of the Investigation of Nazi Crimes in the USSR,” *Kritika*, 6, 4 (Fall 2005): 797-831.

27. Kirill Feferman, “Soviet Investigation of Nazi Crimes in USSR: Documenting the Holocaust,” *Journal of Genocide Research*, 4 (2003); Nathalie Moine, “La Commission d’enquête soviétique sur les crimes de guerre nazis: entre reconquête du territoire, écriture du récit de la guerre et usages justiciers,” *Le Mouvement Social*, 222 (janvier-mars 2008): 81-109; Niels Bo Poulsen, “Rozlidyvaniia voennikh zlochiniv «po-sovets’ki». Kritichnii analiz materialiv Nadzvichainoi derzhavnoi komisiï” [War crime investigation po sovetski? Evaluating material from the Extraordinary State Commission], *Golokost i suchasnist’* [Holocaust and Modernity. Studies in Ukraine and the World], 1 (2009): 27-46.

28. See “Nota narodnogo komissara inostrannykh del tov. V.M. Molotova o povsemestnykh grabezakh, razorenii naseleniia i chudovishchnykh zverstvakh germanskikh vlastei na zakhvachennykh imi sovetskikh territoriiakh”, *Pravda*, 7 January 1942, 1-2.

29. GARF, f. 7021, op. 149, d. 28, l. 10.

30. Lev Bezymenskii, “Informatsiia po sovetskii,” *Znamia*, 5 (1998).

31. Gerlach, *Kalkulierte Morde*, 907-908, 951, 972-974, Ingrao, *Les chasseurs noirs*, 38-39.

32. See numerous examples of this kind of reports from partisans in Natal'ia Kirillova, Viacheslav Selemenev, et al., eds, *Tragediia belorusskikh dereven', 1941-1944: dokumenty i materialy* (Minsk – M.: Istoricheskiiia pamiat', Natsional'nyi arkhiv Respubliki Belarus', 2011). On the operation Winterzauber from the point of view of German sources, see Gerlach, *Kalkulierte Morde*, 911, 1013. On the first occurrence of the term "The tragedy of Osveia," see *ibidem*, 1014, footnote 758 (February, 1943). See also a series of coded telegrams sent by the Soviet partisans from the area of Osveia in Kirillova, Selemenev, eds., *Tragediia belorusskikh dereven'*. For example "All the villages located along the road Drissa-Sebez' until the river Svol'no have been burned by punitive forces and the population executed and burned. Some of them fled, hiding in the woods," *ibidem*, 7.

33. This issue is not mentioned in the instruction of the ChGK on war crimes accounting, 31 Mai 1943, GARF (Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii), f. 7021, op. 116, d. 7.

34. Ekaterina Stepanovna Iukhnevich's testimony, collective farm, "Kommunar," village of Zadezh'e, Osveia district, Podol'sk region, 22 March 1945: "And at the time of the expedition in March-April 1944, Germans gathered all the population that had not fled into the woods and made them to take their clothes off, they shot them all in a pit (*lama*) and then poured something on them and lit them on fire. There were about 250-270 corpses, they were difficult to identify since they were all burned. All of the corpses remained at the same place and now they are simply buried in a mass grave (*bratskaia mogila*)" GARF, f. 7021, op. 92, d. 218, l. 65-65ob.

35. See for example Sergei Paniznik, *Osveiskaia tragediia: Kniga narodnoi pamiati* (Minsk: Iunatstva, 1992 (1990)).

36. See for example Ruth Bettina Birn, "'Zaunkönig' an 'Uhrmacher.' Grosse Partisanenaktionen 1942/1943 am Beispiel des 'Unternehmen Winterzauber,'" *Militär-geschichtliche Zeitschrift*, 60, 1 (2001): 99-118, here 112. As chief historian of war crimes and crimes against humanity in the Canadian Justice department, Ruth Bettina Birn is particularly swayed by reliable pieces of evidence. ChGK archives relating to the Winterzauber operation, the subject of Birn's article, reveal voluminous testimony and several lists of burned inhabitants concerning the Osveia district, the epicentre of the Winterzauber operation (North-Western Belorussia) in GARF, f. 7021, op. 92, d. 218. See also the act dated March 24, 1945, NARB (Natsional'nyi arkhiv respubliki Belarus' – Belarussian national archives), f. 845, op. 1, d. 144, l. 43-46. On the important proportion of victims killed by fire — a deduction based on the scarcity of cartridges and projectiles found at the scene by Soviet investigators, see also Ingrao, *Les chasseurs noirs*, 168, who quotes witnesses and Soviet reports that were transmitted to German judicial authorities.

37. See Ingrao, *Les chasseurs noirs*, 171, who gives an interpretation of the specificity of this form of killing by fire, which he called "*une purification incendiaire et prophylactique*," referring to Western practices of collectively culling herds suffering from rabies, in connection with the "microbial imagination" (*l'imaginaire microbien*) prevailing in the German description of these villages 'infested by bands[of partisans] (*Bandenverseucht*)'".

38. Gerlach, *Kalkulierte Morde*, 1015-1018.

39. According to the Osveia district commission, there were 21,000 inhabitants in this district on the eve of the occupation. 4, 518 were executed during the war and 6,175 were deported. The official report of this commission added the following point: these figures of people respectively killed and deported did not precisely match lists of names attached to the report, since in localities where the entire population had been exterminated, it

had not been possible to establish all of the victims’ names. NARB, f. 845, op. 1, d. 144, l. 45. Gerlach, *Kalkulierte Morde*, 1016.

40. What happened to the civilians who were deported (“evacuated” according to German sources) to the camp of Salaspils as a result of antipartisan operations is also controversial. Although the few remaining German sources related to Salaspils are very clear about the arrival of this contingent, not a word is said about the fate of the children; Andrei Angrick, Peter Klein, *The “Final Solution” in Riga: Exploitation and Annihilation, 1941-1944* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2009), 241. By contrast, ChGK files, and Soviet memories, are full of accounts of taking blood from Soviet children for Wehrmacht soldiers, Salaspils being currently nicknamed “the blood factory.”

41. See for example the testimony of Mariia Ivanovna Vasil’eva (village of Budoni, district of Idritsa, region of Velikoluki): “On March 17, 1944, citizens of our village: Rudnevich Kristina Il’inichna, Grishaeva Marfa Ivanovna, Voronina Elena Ivanovna, Voronina Olimpiada Ivanovna were captured by the Germans in the woods, because they were hiding from the Germans, and were sent to the concentration camp of Idritsa. Then they were taken to Latvia into slavery and died from unsustainable labor and unbearable living conditions. Voronina Elena and Voronina Olimpiada were young children and died from disease as well.” GARF, f. 7021, op. 20, d. 7, l. 252.

42. See for example GARF, f. 7021, op. 20, d. 7, l. 324 ob-325 on the participation of policemen from surrounding villages in the execution of 46 villagers, burned alive, with the arson of every building in the village of Dubrovo (region of Veliki Luki) in January, 1943.

43. Which is not the case of the partisans’ reports. See, for example “Nemtsy i latviiskaia politsiia na svoem puti zhgut derevni, ubivaiut starikov, zhenshchin, detei, szhigaiut derevni” (coded telegram, 19/02/1943), in Kirillova, Selemenev, eds., *Tragediia belorusskikh dereven’*, 11.

44. Bogdan Musial, *Sowjetische Partisanen 1941-1944: Mythos und Wirklichkeit*, (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2009). On the arson of whole villages by Soviet partisans in retaliation for collaboration and especially participation in German antipartisan campaigns, see Masha Cerovic, “‘Au chien, une mort de chien.’ Les partisans face aux ‘traîtres à la Patrie,’” *Cahiers du Monde russe*, 49, 2-3 (2008): 239-262, here 247, 252, 254.

45. Dieter Pohl, *Die Herrschaft der Wehrmacht: Deutsche Militärbesatzung und einheimische Bevölkerung in der Sowjetunion, 1941-1944* (München: Oldenbourg Verlag, 2008), 321-330, see in particular 327.

46. Ilya Bourtman, “‘Blood for Blood, Death for Death’: The Soviet Military Tribunal in Krasnodar, 1943,” *Holocaust Genocide Studies*, 22, 2 (2008): 246-265. Sergey Kudriashov, Vanessa Voisin, “The early stages of ‘legal purges’ in Soviet Russia (1941-1945),” *Cahiers du Monde russe*, 49, 2-3 (2008).

47. Francine Hirsch, “The Soviets at Nuremberg: International Law, Propaganda, and the Making of the Postwar Order,” *American Historical Review*, 113, 3 (June 2008): 701-730.

48. On the concept of “crimes against humanity,” see Sévane Gabarian, “Crimes against humanity,” *Online Encyclopedia of Mass Violence*, [online], published on 19 June 2008, URL: <http://www.massviolence.org/Crimes-against-humanity>, ISSN 1961-9898. This concept was first used in a joint declaration of the governments of France, Great Britain, and Russia describing the mass killing of the Armenian population as constituting “new crimes against humanity and civilization.” Thereafter, the Lansing Commission spoke of

“offenses against the laws of humanity” as dissociated from “war crimes” or “offenses against the laws and customs of war,” but without further definition.

49. Telford Taylor, *The Anatomy of the Nuremberg Trials: A Personal Memoir* (London: Bloomsbury, 1993), 79-80, 101, 116. For his positive view on A. Trainin, 59.

50. M. Marrus, “The Holocaust at Nuremberg,” *Yad Vashem Studies* 26 (1998): 5-41; Patricia Heberer, Jürgen Matthäus, ed., *Atrocities on Trial: Historical Perspectives on the Politics of Prosecuting War Crimes* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008), XVI. In most recent scholarship however, the impact of Nuremberg and subsequent trials on the understanding of the Holocaust has been examined far more critically. See in particular Donald Bloxham, *Genocide on Trial: War Crimes Trials and the Formation of Holocaust History and Memory* (Oxford University Press, 2001). Whatever the errors of perspective on the Holocaust that were committed during the Nuremberg trials and whatever the limitations in applying this new concept of “crimes against humanity,” which was subordinated to other counts in the indictment, the fact remains that it was designed above all to put the unprecedented fate of the European Jews on trial.

51. *Trial of the Major War Criminals before the International Military Tribunal* (hereafter *IMT*), vol. 2, 118-119 (21 November 1945)

52. *Ibid.*, 122.

53. See the somewhat misleading title of the document collection edited by the CDJC, *La persécution des Juifs dans les pays de l'Est présentée à Nuremberg. Recueil de documents publiés sous la direction de Henri Monneray* (P.: Éditions du Centre de Documentation Juive Contemporaine, 1949), which includes documents produced for the International Military Tribunal, but also for the later trials conducted by the General Procuror Telford Taylor at Nuremberg, without the participation of the Soviet Union. Concerning the Soviet Union, see in particular excerpts from the Einsatzgruppen reports discovered in 1946.

54. Hilary Earl, *The Nuremberg SS-Einsatzgruppen Trial, 1945-1958: Atrocity, Law, and History* (Cambridge University Press, 2009), 75. The reports were seized on September 3, 1945 in the former Gestapo Headquarters building in Berlin but were not discovered, among the tons of seized paper material, until late 1946-early 1947.

55. Report of the Einsatzgruppe A, dated January 31, 1942, and its famous map showing the state of the extermination of the Jews October 25, 1941, presented by the American Public Ministry. The Soviets produced another report of the Einsatzgruppe A at Nuremberg (URSS-57).

56. *IMT*, vol. 2, 125 (21 November 1945).

57. *Ibid.*, vol. 4, 311-354 (3 January 1946).

58. *Ibid.*, vol. 7, 152 (8 February 1946).

59. *Ibid.*, 192 (8 February 1946).

60. *Ibid.*, vol. 19, 597-598 (29 July 1946).

61. *Ibid.*, 598.

62. *Ibid.*, 603 (29 July 1946). The operation “Cottbus,” which started on May 20, 1943, was certainly the most murderous anti-partisan operation undertaken by the Germans. In his report to Himmler, Bach-Zelewski claimed 9,800 deaths, not counting the 2-3,000 locals who had been killed by explosions during mine-clearing operations. 15,000 were claimed by the German radio, but for the historian Christian Gerlach, the correct estimate should be over 20,000 victims (Gerlach, *Kalkulierte Morde*, 950). The Dirlewanger division was

particularly involved in this operation (Ingrao, *Les chasseurs noirs*, 146-147). However, contrary to an operation such as Sumpffieber (Ende Sommer 1942), it does not seem that a significant proportion of the victims were Jewish.

63. *IMT*, vol. 19, 610 (29 July 1946), although in its speech of February 8, 1946, this figure had been censored by the Vyshinskii commission, which expunged the following sentence from a previous draft "Here is the bloody result of the slaughter organized by the defendants in the middle of the xxth century: of the 8 millions of Jews who lived in the territories occupied by the Nazis, 5,700,000 were exterminated." The draft and its corrected version can be found in GARF, f. 9492, op. 1a, d. 468, l. 83. Quoted in Sergeï Mironenko, "La collection des documents sur le procès de Nuremberg dans les Archives d'État de la Fédération Russe," in Annette Wieviorka, ed., *Les procès de Nuremberg et de Tokyo* (Bruxelles: Éditions Complexe, 1996), 63-68, here 66.

64. Through a brief quotation of the Extraordinary State Commission report of 13 September 1945, *IMT*, vol. 8 (20 February 1946).

65. *Ibid.*, 104ff. (22 February 1946).

66. *Ibid.*, 118 (22 February 1946). Audrini's case, already mentioned during the trial which had taken place in Riga, will be at the center of a new Soviet trial in 1965.

67. On the Leningrad trial, see below.

68. *Ibid.*, 120-121 (documentary film on Lidice), 123 (documentary on the destruction in the Soviet Union).

69. *Ibid.*, 124-130. Counsels for the defendants contested the relevance of this testimony, which interpreted the repeated shelling of the Hermitage as a deliberate attempt to destroy the museum collection, since, according to them, it couldn't be regarded as the bombing of a city under a state of siege.

70. *Ibid.*, 256 (26 February 1946).

71. This insistence on the lack of resistance from Soviet villagers that the Soviets chose to stage at Nuremberg was not new but counters the too-often made assertion of the uniquely heroic posture of Soviet public discourse at the end of the war and of a turn towards an emphasis on victimhood which would have taken place in the post-Stalin Soviet Union.

72. *IMT*, vol. 8, 270 (26 February 1946).

73. In September, 1943, Sutzkever escaped from the Vilnius ghetto and joined the partisan movement. He was evacuated by air to Moscow in March, 1944 and participated in the editorial work of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee – he wrote the section on Vilnius in the *Black Book*. Ehrenburg devoted a paper to him in the April 29, 1944 issue of *Pravda* entitled "Torzhestvo cheloveka." Cf. Avrom Sutzkever, "Mon témoignage au procès de Nuremberg," translated from Yiddish by Gilles Rozier ("Mayn eydes-zogn farn nirnberger tribunal: togbukhnotitsn", published for the first time in 1966), *Europe*, 796-797, (1995): 140-153, here 140. "J'appelle Ehrenburg. Je me sens redevable à son égard. Il m'a placé en premier sur la liste des témoins, et finalement j'arrive en retard." Antonella Salomini, *L'Union soviétique et la Shoah* (P.: La Découverte, 2008), 126-127; Jan Schwarz, «After the Destruction of Vilna. Abraham Sutzkever's poetry, testimony and cultural rescue work, 1944-46," *East European Jewish Affairs*, XXXV, 2 (2005): 209-224. see also, Joseph Leftwich, *Abraham Sutzkever: Partisan Poet* (New York: T. Yoseloff, 1971).

74. *Fun Vilner geto* was published in Moscow and Paris in 1946; an expanded version was published in Tel Aviv in 1947.

75. As soon as his departure for Nuremberg was confirmed, he raised in his diary the issue of the language he should use for his testimony and apparently tried to convince Ehrenburg, Smirnov, and others actors in the trial to be allowed to speak in Yiddish. Because Yiddish was not among the working languages of the trial, he was forced to testify in Russian, at Nuremberg. Contrary to what most commentators have said, quoting Sutzkever’s diary entry of February 17, 1946, his goal was not only to prove that Yiddish culture, through its language, was still alive. He also had some doubt about his capacity to express everything he had to say in Russian (“Je ne maîtrise pas encore suffisamment bien le russe pour pouvoir livrer avec précision les méandres de mon âme. J’ai invoqué la muse des langues afin qu’elle me vienne en aide,” Avrom Sutzkever, “Mon témoignage...,” 149-150 (February 27, 1946). Apparently, the Muse responded favorably to his appeal. The Soviet correspondent Boris Polevoi wrote in *Pravda* several days later that he had deeply moved the court.

76. Born near Grodno into the family of a rabbi, he received a traditional Jewish education at Vilnius and wrote his first poetry in Hebrew before moving to Warsaw and becoming a celebrated Yiddish poet. In 1946, Sutzkever left the Soviet Union for Poland and later Israel.

77. *IMT*, vol. 8, 307 (27 February 1946).

78. The choice of Lomakin as witness in Nuremberg had been contested by the Patriarch Aleksei because of his low intellectual ability, see GARF, f. 9492, op. 70, d. 468, l. 88-89. For a similarly negative description of Lomakin, based on his low moral value, see Sutzkever, “Mon témoignage...,” 141, 151-152. Lomakin had spent the siege in Leningrad and testified, as rector of the Georgievsky cemetery church, about the victims of the raids, but above all the victims who died from starvation and the piles of bodies surrounding the church. “From all this, the peaceful citizens of the town suffered privations unique in the history of mankind.” *IMT*, vol. 8, 335 (27 February 1946).

79. See Taylor Telford’s impressions of the Soviet prosecution, Telford, *The Anatomy of the Nuremberg Trials*, 307-318, especially 315: “Were the statistics inflated? Were the atrocities invented or overstated? Total reliance on official reports based on untested depositions by unseen witnesses is certainly not the most reliable road to factual accuracy [...] Considering the number of deponents and the play of emotional factors, not only faulty observation but deliberate exaggeration must have warped many of the reports. But granting all that, were the flaws so numerous and so deep as to undermine the general accuracy of the picture presented?”

80. GARF, f. 9492, op. 1a, d. 468, l. 67-70; GARF, f. 7445, op. 2, d. 391, l. 55, 39. Membership of the subcommittee included Gorshenin (General Procuracy of the Soviet Union), Rychkov (People’s Commissariat of Justice), Goliakov (Supreme Soviet of the Soviet Union), Bogoiavlenskii (ChGK), Kudriavtsev (ChGK). GARF, f. 7445, op. 2, d. 396, l. 1

81. GARF, f. 7445, op. 2, d. 396, l. 16-19; f. 9492, op. 1a, d. 468, l. 1-2, 4-5.

82. See Sutzkever, “Mon témoignage...,” 140.

83. *Spisok svidetelei zverstv nemetsko-fashistskikh zakhvatchikov nad sovetskimi grazhdanami. Uтвержден комиссией тов. Вышинского*, GARF, f. 9492, op. 1a, d. 468, l. 12-14.

84. V.Iu. Davydov was one of the survivors of the team of Soviet prisoners who had been ordered to disinter and burn the corpses of Babi Yar as part of operation 1005. At the time

of the selection for the Nuremberg trial (and sooner during his post-Kiev liberation examination as well), he was identified as a Jew. In his book, A. Kuznetsov, who met him in the 1960s to write a chapter of his novel-document *Babi Yar*, claimed that he was Russian. See excerpts of his interrogation by the NKGB, November 1943, published in Tat'iana Evstaf'eva, Vitalii Nakhmanovich, eds., *Babii Iar: Chelovek, vlast', istoriia, Kniga 1* (Kiev: Vsneshorgizdat Ukrainy, 2004, 5 vols), document 71; Anatoli Kouznetsov, *Babi Yar* (P.: Robert Laffont, 2011 (reed)), 290.

85. Dmitrii Ivanovich Kudriavtsev, Head of the Department "Crimes registration," who had participated in Extraordinary State Commission's inquiries in Odessa, Ozarichi, Stavropol', Stalino, Maidanek, Auschwitz, Sachsenhausen, Danzig; Sergei Trofimovich Kuz'min, ChGK inspector, had participated in the inquiries in the regions of Ternopol', L'vov, Auschwitz, Sachsenhausen, Danzig, Shtuthof; Nikolai metropolit Krutitskii, member of the ChGK, had participated in the inquiries of Tula, Khatyn', Kiev, in Crimea, Leningrad, Rzhev, Viaz'ma, Gzhatsk, a Polish priest named Savitskii, *ksemdz* in Rovno, who had participated in the inquiry in this city; a third priest, Lomakin, representant of the metropolit of Leningrad and Novgorod, who had participated in the inquiry in Novgorod; the Ukrainian academician P. Tychina, who had participated in the commission in Kiev, Iu.M. Dmitriev, Head of the Department "Art of Ancient Russia" of the Russian Museum of Leningrad, who had participated in the inquiry in Novgorod, I.A. Gruzdev, a member of the Soviet Writers' Union, who had participated in the inquiries of Novgorod, Pskov, and other cities; I.A. Orbeli, academician, vice-head of the Academy of Sciences of SSSR, who had participated in the inquiries of Petrodvorets, Pushkin, Pavlovsk.

86. *Spisok svidetelei dlia uchastiia v protsesse nad nemetsko-fashistskimi zakhvatchikami ot Chrezvychainoi Gosudarstvennoi Komissii*, GARF, f. 9492, op. 1a, d. 468, l. 6-11.

87. Including V.Iu. Davydov. The other witnesses from Kiev were S.B. Berliant, I.M. Brodskii, A.Ia. Steiukh. On them see below.

88. *Spisok svidetelei ot CGK dlia uchastiia v protsesse nad nemetsko-fashistskimi zakhvatchikami v gorode Niurnberge*, GARF, f. 9492, op. 1a, d. 468, l. 15-28.

89. See "Zapiska byvshikh zakliuchennykh Syretskogo kontslageria D. Budnika, V. Davydova, Z. Trubakova, I. Dolinera, V. Kukli 'V Syretskom lagere,'" May 20, 1945, DAKO (Derzhavnii arkhiv kiïvs'koï oblasti), f. P-4, op. 2, spr. 85, ark. 176-182 available at <http://www.kby.kiev.ua/book1/documents/doc85.html>.

90. GARF, f. 7445, op. 2, d. 391, l. 55. They were also provided with food and new clothes. See A. Sutzkever, "Mon témoignage...," 140, (February 17, 1946). Some witnesses had disappeared, some were already dead at the time of the Nuremberg trial, as Brodsky, "killed at the front," GARF, f. 7021, op. 116, d. 342, l. 12-14, 33-41.

91. Sutzkever, "Mon témoignage...," 140.

92. *Ibid.*, (February 16, 1946). "On a déjà téléphoné quatre fois du Comité pour me dire de venir immédiatement. Sans tarder, cette fois. Je cours, mes documents sous le bras. On rédige le protocole de mon témoignage, le tout prend cinq heures."

93. *Ibid.*, 146 (February 23), 147 (February 24), 148 (February 25), 149 (February 26). As late as February 25, the final choice of Soviet witnesses is not made.

94. On the testimonies of Dina Pronicheva in Ukraine in 1946, cf Karel C. Berkhoff, "Dina Pronicheva's Story of Surviving the Babi Yar Massacre: German, Jewish, Soviet, Russian, and Ukrainian Records," in Ray Brandon and Wendy Lower, eds., *The Shoah in Ukraine: History, Testimony, Memorialization* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), 291-317.

On Soviet Jewish poetry about the Shoah on Soviet territories, including Babi Yar, see Maxim D. Shrayer, "Jewish-Russian Poets Bearing Witness to the Shoah, 1941-1946: Textual Evidence and Preliminary Conclusions," *Studies in Slavic Languages and Literature (ICEES, Congress, Stockholm 2010, Papers and Contributions)*, ed. By Stefano Garzonio, www.pecob.eu, 59-117.

95. On trials against foreign POWs in the Soviet Union, see among others Nikita Petrov, "Deutsche Kriegsgefangene unter der Justiz Stalins. Gerichtsprozesse gegen Kriegsgefangene der deutschen Armee in der UdSSR 1943-1952;" Stefan Karner, ed., "Gefangen in Russland" *Die Beiträge des Symposiums auf der Schallaburg 1995* (Graz – Wien: Selbstverlag des Ludwig Boltzmann-Instituts für Kriegsfolgen-Forschung, 1995), 176-221; Andreas Hilger, Nikita Petrov, Günther Wagenlehner, Der "Ukaz 43": Entstehung und Problematik des Dekrets des Präsidiums des Obersten Sowjets vom 19. April, 1943," Andreas Hilger et alii, eds., *Sowjetische Militärtribunale, Band 1. Die Verurteilung deutscher Kriegsgefangener 1941-1953* (Köln: Böhlau Verlag, 2001), 177-209; A. Hilger, "Die Gerechtigkeit nehme ihren Lauf? Die Bestrafung deutscher Kriegs- und Gewaltverbrecher in der Sowjetunion und der SBZ/DDR," in Norbert Frei, ed., *Transnationale Vergangenheitspolitik: Der Umgang mit deutschen Kriegsverbrechern in Europa nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2006), 180-246; A. Hilger, "Sowjetische Justiz und Kriegsverbrechen. Dokumente zu den Verurteilungen deutscher Kriegsgefangener, 1941-1949," *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte (VfZ)*, 2006, 461-515; Alexander Victor Prusin, "'Fascist Criminals to the Gallows!': The Holocaust and Soviet War Crimes Trials, December 1945-February 1946," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, 17, 1 (Spring 2003): 1-30; Manfred Zeidler, "Der Minsker Kriegsverbrecherprozess vom Januar 1946. Kritische Anmerkungen zu einem sowjetischen Schauprozess gegen deutsche Kriegsgefangene," *VfZ*, 52 (2004), 211-244.

96. B.S. Utevsikii, *Sudebnye protsessy o zloedaniakh nemetsko-fashistskikh zakhvatchikov na territorii SSSR*, (Iuridicheskoe izdatel'stvo, 1946), *Sudebnyi protsess po delu o zloedaniakh, sovershennykh nemetsko-fashistskimi zakhvatchikami v Belorusskoi SSR (15-29 ianvaria 1946 goda)* (Minsk, 1947); *Sudebnyi protsess po delu o zloedaniakh nemetsko-fashistskikh zakhvatchikov na territorii Latviiskoi, Litovskoi i Estonskoi SSR* (Riga: Knigoizdatel'stvo, 1946).

97. For example, *Sudebnyi protsess po delu o zloedaniakh nemetsko-fashistskikh zakhvatchikov na territorii Latviiskoi, Litovskoi i Estonskoi SSR*, 60.

98. On the treatment of the Holocaust during this wave of trials, see Prusin, "'Fascist Criminals to the Gallows!'"

99. GARF, f. 7021, op. 30, d. 1727, l. 30-39. This is confirmed by more recent research on the Leningrad Region. Alexander Hill maintains that the bulk of German atrocities were committed both at the end of 1941 and in Fall, 1943-Winter, 1944, at least as regards the territory of Army Group North. Hill, *The War Behind the Eastern Front*, 114.

100. GARF, f. 7021, op. 30, d. 1727, l. 32.

101. GARF, f. 7021, op. 30, d. 1727, l. 32ob.

102. GARF, f. 7021, op. 30, d. 1727, l. 34ob.

103. GARF, f. 7021 op. 30, d. 1727, l. 33.

104. "Evreiskoe naselenie istreblialos' pogolovno," *Sudebnyi protsess na territorii Latviiskoi, Litovskoi i Estonskoi SSR*, 117 (indictment). He repeated the same idea when he spoke about the crimes of Jeckeln in the Baltic territories, *ibid.*, 127.

105. *Sudebnyi protsess v Belorusskoi SSR*, 183.

106. *Sudebnyi protsess na territorii Latviiskoi, Litovskoi i Estonskoi SSR*, 24 (indictment). During the hearing of the evening of January 27, Jeckeln cited Kaltenbrunner and Himmler's order to annihilate all Soviets of Gypsy nationality, as well as the cases of mass shootings of Gypsies at Salaspils, Vilnius and Kaunas. *Ibid.*, 65. The total extermination of the Gypsies is confirmed during the final summation, *Ibid.*, 129, as well as during sentencing, *ibid.*, 176.
107. *Sudebnyi protsess v Belorusskoi SSR*, 109 (hearing of 18.01.46).
108. L. Abramenko, *Kiivskii protses: Dokumenti ta materialy*, (Kiev, 1995), 52.
109. *Ibid.*, 69-72. On the several testimonies of Dina Pronicheva in Ukraine in 1946, see Berkhoff, "Dina Pronicheva's Story of Surviving the Babi Yar massacre...", 291-317.
110. It should be noticed that the Kiev trial took place before Soviet prosecution at Nuremberg.
111. Berliant was on the list of the witnesses mentioned at the beginning of the trial, but his deposition does not appear in the proceedings of the trial as published in 1995. Abramenko, *Kiivskii protses*, 12. His statement before the opening of the trial on January 4, 1946 can be read in USHMM (United States Holocaust memorial museum) RG-06.025*02, Box 41, 371.
112. *Sudebnyi protsess na territorii Latviiskoi, Litovskoi i Estonskoi SSR*, 121 (indictment).
113. *Ibid.*, 142 (indictment).
114. *Ibid.*, 150-151 (indictment).
115. *Sudebnyi protsess v Belorusskoi SSR*, 221-222 (hearing of 22.01.46). For the context, see Gerlach, *Kalkulierte Morde*, 52-55.
116. Abramenko, *Kiivskii protses*, 47 for example.
117. IMT, vol. 4, 481, 483-484 (7 January, 1946). R. Lemkin, *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe*, (Washington, 1944), 237.
118. See Zeidler, "Der Minsker Kriegsverbrecherprozess...", 224-225, using the testimonies that former German POWs gave to German judicial authorities when they returned to Germany in the mid-1950s'.
119. GARE, f. 8131, op. 37, d. 4012, l. 16.
120. Goujon, "La mémoire des villages brûlés pendant la Seconde Guerre mondiale...", in El Kenz, Nérard, eds., *Commémorer les victimes en Europe*, 77-90.
121. On the memory of Babi Yar, see Richard Seldon, "The Transformations of Babii Yar," in Terry L. Thompson, Richard Seldon, eds., *Soviet Society and Culture: Essays in Honor of Vera S. Dunham*, (Westview Press, 1988), 124-161; Evstaf'eva, Nakhmanovich, eds., *Babii Yar: Chelovek, vlast', istoriia*, Kniga 1; Jeff Mankoff, "Babii Yar and the Struggle for Memory, 1944-2004," *Ab Imperio*, 2 (2004): 393-415; Franck Grüner, "Die Tragödie von Babij Jar im sowjetischen Gedächtnis: Künstlerliche Erinnerung versus offizielles Schweigen" and Edith Clowes, "Entwürfe zur Erinnerung an den Holocaust: Evtushenkos und Kuznecovs Babij Jar," in Franck Grüner, Urs Hefrich, Heinz-Dietrich Löwe, eds., *Zerstörer des Schweigens: Formen künstlerlicher Erinnerung an die nationalsozialistische Rassen- und Vernichtungspolitik in Osteuropa* (Cologne, Böhlau, 2006), 57-98 and 115-128; Boris Czerny, "Babij Jar. La mémoire de l'histoire," *Revue d'Histoire de la Shoah*, 181 (juillet-déc. 2004): 61-75. On Jewish attempts to make Babi Yar a specific place of memory for the genocide of the Soviet Jews, see Mikhail Mitsel', "Zapret na uvekovechenie pamiati kak sposob

zamalchivaniia Kholokosta: praktika KPU v otnoshenii Bab'ego Iara," *Golokost i suchasnist'*, 1 (2007): 9-30.

122. On German compensation policy in post Soviet countries, see Constantin Goschler, ed., *Die Entschädigung von NS-Zwangsarbeit am Anfang des 21. Jahrhunderts*, Band 4: *Helden, Opfer, Ostarbeiter. Das Auszahlungsprogramm in der ehemaligen Sowjetunion* (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2012 (forthcoming)), especially Tanja Penter, "Die belarussische Stiftung "Verständigung und Aussöhnung". Zwangsarbeiterentschädigung im Schatten der Lukasenka-Herrschaft", *ibid.*, 103-192 and *id.*, "Die russische Stiftung "Verständigung und Aussöhnung." Entschädigung zwischen Misstrauen und Marginalität," 193-279.

123. <http://www.mestovstrechi.info/ru/stranitsi/povishenie-statusa-spashikh-syazhiteleysozhzhennich-dereven-2>, for previous projects of the German foundation devoted to the memory of burned villages in Belorussia, see <http://www.stiftung-evz.de/projekte/ns-opfer/treffpunkt-dialog/projekte-2010-belarus/>.

ABSTRACTS

Abstract

The mass arson of villages on occupied Soviet territory and the terrible plight of their inhabitants – who were executed, burnt alive or deported – has left a lasting impression on the minds of East Europeans, whereas the genocide of Jews in these same regions has been disregarded for decades. The contrast between the remembrance of Soviet Jewish and non-Jewish victims became particularly striking in the 1960s when the new Khatyn memorial monument near Minsk devoted to the memory of Bielorussian torched villages became a real pilgrimage site for most of the Soviet population, while the Babi Yar ravine near Kiev, which had seen the greatest massacre of Soviet Jews, was selected amid stormy controversy for the tardy construction of a monument broadly commemorating victims of Nazi massacres in Kiev. This article aims to show how the theme of burnt down villages pervaded official discourse from very early on in the war and competed with the narrative of the mass killing of Soviet Jews, even though the end of the war and the Soviets' judicial cooperation with their Western allies in the prosecution of war criminals prompted, both at home and abroad and over the course of several months, a more explicit discourse about the specific plight of Soviet Jews. The accounts of Nazi atrocities, published during the first weeks following the invasion, develop at length the theme of war violence committed against civilians, a theme both ancestral and unheard of by its magnitude. That was before the occupant moved on to the massive "dead zone" policy reported by Soviet commissions of enquiry through survivors' accounts and lists with the names of victims. The trials that immediately followed the war, in Nuremberg as well as the Soviet Union, gave the Stalinist leadership the opportunity to apply the new judicial concept of crime against humanity to the various categories of Soviet victims of the occupation.

Résumé

La destruction par le feu de milliers de villages en territoire soviétique occupé, ainsi que le sort atroce de leurs habitants, exécutés, voire brûlés vifs, ou déportés a durablement marqué les consciences à l'Est, alors que le génocide des juifs dans ces mêmes régions reste dans l'ombre depuis des décennies. Ce contraste entre la mémoire des victimes juives et non-juives en Union

soviétique apparaît particulièrement frappant à partir des années 1960, lorsque le nouveau mémorial de Khatyn près de Minsk, consacré à la mémoire des villages brûlés biélorusses, devient un véritable lieu de pèlerinage pour l'ensemble des Soviétiques, tandis que le site du plus grand massacre de juifs soviétiques, le ravin de Babi Yar à Kiev, malgré de houleuses controverses, voit la construction, tardive, d'un mémorial qui universalise les victimes des massacres. L'objectif de cet article est de montrer comment, dès le début de la guerre, le thème des villages brûlés est omniprésent dans le récit officiel et entre en compétition avec le compte rendu du massacre généralisé des juifs soviétiques, alors même que la fin de la guerre et la coopération judiciaire des Soviétiques avec leurs alliés occidentaux pour juger les criminels de guerre donnent lieu, pendant plusieurs mois, à un discours beaucoup plus explicite, sur la scène internationale comme en territoire soviétique, concernant le sort spécifique des juifs soviétiques. Les récits d'atrocités nazies, publiés dès les premières semaines après l'invasion, développent abondamment ce motif, à la fois ancestral et inédit par son ampleur, de violence de guerre commise contre les civils, avant même que l'occupant ne passe effectivement à une politique massive de création de « zones mortes », ce dont les commissions d'enquête soviétiques rendent compte à travers les témoignages de rescapés et les listes nominatives de victimes. Les procès de l'immédiat après-guerre, à Nuremberg comme en Union soviétique, sont l'occasion pour la direction stalinienne d'appliquer le nouveau concept judiciaire de crime contre l'humanité aux différentes catégories de victimes soviétiques de l'occupation.

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