

International Scientific Conference “Genocides, Mass Murders and Deportations on Ukrainian Lands during the World War II: How to Work with Sources”, April 17-19, 2018 (Kharkiv, Ukraine).

Report

An International research conference “Genocides, Mass Murders and Deportations on Ukrainian Lands During the World War II: How to Work With Sources” organized by the Center for Interethnic Relations Research in Eastern Europe and the Department of Historiography, Source Studies and Archeology of V.Karazin Kharkiv National University, as supported by the European Association of Jewish Studies and the Ukrainian Oral History Association, that took place for three days on April, 17-19, managed to bring together researchers from different regions of Ukraine, as well as from Germany and Canada. The agenda was rather full and included a score of reports grouped into six panels and three lectures.

The purpose of the project was to conduct a workshop as a research platform for the presentation and discussion of modern approaches and methods of working with sources about World War II. The workshop brought together young researchers from Ukraine and acknowledged experts from Canada, Poland, and Ukraine. The key stages of the project were as follows: participant recruitment; preparatory work; project promotion among experts and the Kharkiv audience; conduct of the workshop itself (open to the general public); and reporting and processing of the workshop results.

The workshop comprised presentation, discussion, and practical components. Participants had an opportunity to present and discuss their projects with invited experts. They latter gave master classes on how to work with sources about World War II. The workshop audience included students and faculty members of HE institutions, staff of museums, scientific and cultural institutions in Kharkiv. Short-term results of the project: a number of publications in the mass media about the workshop experience; online dissemination of the workshop video among stakeholders; preparation of the workshop materials for publication. The long-term result of the project, as expected by the organizers, will be the application of the knowledge and competences gained by participants during the workshop in their own projects. We also hope that the workshop will

intensify expert discussions about sources on poorly researched topics of Ukrainian history during WWII, such as the Holocaust, deportations, collaboration with Nazis, the Paraimos, etc.

It has already become a tradition to engage guest experts to the conference. This time, the conference hosted Jan Grabowski (Ottawa University), Gelinada Hrinchenko (V.Karazin Kharkiv National University), Oleksandr Zaytsev (Ukrainian Catholic University), and John-Paul Himka (University of Alberta). By all means, were their comments, remarks, and advice (interspersed with apt humor) valuable for all speakers, both for those who were presenting their findings for the first time, and the more seasoned researchers. It was my second time at the conference with such a format in Kharkiv, and I had a chance to make sure it fully proved its worth, and deserves attention of organizers of other academic events in Ukraine.

Since each panel concluded in a lively exchange of opinions on the presented reports, the conference was successful in reaching its primary objective – to become a true platform for discussions and give an impetus for further communication between the participants. Upon the whole, the subjects for discussion were different types of sources, from visual to oral history, in the context of studying such signs of mass violence of the WWII period as the Holocaust, genocide of the Roma, mass killings of mental facilities patients, Soviet persecutions of “Volksdeutsche” women and members of Ukrainian nationalist underground, etc. We will not retell all statements of the conference but certain aspects do deserve special attention. It was hard to ignore that most participants focused on discussing the information contained in varied sources, while paying less attention to specific methodological concerns in working with them, or the challenges they had to face in the process. For instance, psychological aspects seem to be significant, as it is extremely complicated to work with detailed accounts of the process of mass killings or to directly record testimonies of eyewitnesses about their traumatic experiences. We have many times heard our colleagues say they’d rather avoid certain topics because they were too difficult to handle for them in terms of psychological impact. This aspect was partially mentioned by Marta Havryshko, in her report about female Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) members or women fighting in the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) underground who fell victims to sexual violence from Soviet special units officers. A specific conference mainstream included discussion of archives of criminal cases from the former KGB archives. In total, seven reports related to them, either fully or in part, three of them in a dedicated panel. It is obvious that full access to this array

of sources became available only several years ago, that is why such interest from researchers is fully natural. However, in my humble opinion, there is a need to take a more critical approach to archival criminal cases, to trace the circumstances they were filed in, to search for answers to the questions such as what the impact on the files was from the investigators, from the accused persons, from witnesses, and from victims, since it is clear that not all of them were able to fully participate in the Soviet investigation process. Even more so, the respective methodological tools of the 1990s have become outdated and can hardly satisfy contemporary researchers' needs.

Another matter provoked further reflections in our mind. It was raised in the reports by Albert Venger and Olena Petrenko about mass killings of mental hospitals patients in the occupied Ukraine, committed by the Nazis not without contribution of local medical staff. Among other things, the presenters pointed out that there is hardly any documented evidence for the mental patients who were victims of Nazi persecutions. The few survivors either were not able to testify due to their medical condition, or were deliberately ignored by investigative authorities, both Soviet and German in this case. The problem is also similar for the study of the genocide of the Roma people. How adequate could the research findings be in cases when researchers do not have an opportunity to take a look on the mass killings from the victims' perspective? Which new sources could be engaged to overcome this issue? Apparently, each of the abovementioned aspects could be further developed into a separate academic forum, or a few of them.

Finally, it must be mentioned a keynote lecture by Jan Grabowski on "New Questions and New Sources to the Study of the Holocaust." In particular, its concluding part deserves special attention. The speaker briefly introduced a 2-volume edition of the "Dalej Jest Noc. Losy Żydów w wybranych powiatach okupowanej Polski." It has recently been published and co-edited by him and Barbara Engelking. It is the result of the five years of work of a research group who were using varied sources to reconstruct the history of perishing and surviving Polish Jews in certain localities. At the same time, much attention was paid to the issue of collaboration of local non-Jewish populations in their persecutions, such as police officers, firefighters, local administration staff, and common peasants. Therefore, it is no wonder that long before the official presentation of the book, Polish media initiated an active debate on the volumes. It was further instigated by recent somersaults of official memory policy in the present-day Poland. At the same time, one sadly acknowledges that Ukraine still has a long way to go to develop similar publications, not to mention

to have expert public discussion on the issues raised. Nonetheless, the outcome of conferences like the one in Kharkiv do offer some hope about the promising prospects of at least a segment of the Ukrainian academic community.

Due to the money awarded by the EAJS for travel grants, 17 PhD students and early career researchers from Ukraine and Germany had the opportunity to participate in the Conference. The PhD students and early career researchers who received travel grants were as follows:

Khrystyna Rutar (Lviv, Ukraine)
Tetiana Malykh (Kyiv, Ukraine)
Albert Venger (Dnipro, Ukraine)
Tetiana Fedoriv (Ternopil, Ukraine)
Roman Shliakhtych (Kryvyi Rih, Ukraine)
Volodymyr Zilinskyi (Lviv, Ukraine)
Iryna Motorna (Odesa, Ukraine)
Olena Petrenko (Bochum, Germany)
Ludmyla Askerova (Chernihiv, Ukraine)
Marta Havryshko (Lviv, Ukraine)
Megan Pytka (Carbondale, USA):
Andriy Usach (Lviv, Ukraine)
Anatoliy Pohorelov (Mykolaiv, Ukraine)
Serhiy Bilivnenko (Zaporizhia, Ukraine)
Kateryna Shimkevich (Zaporizhia, Ukraine)
Andriy Pykalo (Kharkiv, Ukraine)
Marianna Shpak (Kryvyi Rih, Ukraine)

The senior scholars and experts who received travel grants were as follows:

John-Paul Himka (Edmonton, Canada)
Jan Grabowski (Ottawa, Canada)
Oleksandr Zaytsev (Lviv, Ukraine)

Videos

Opening of the conference

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4V7tyjxVkc4&t=681s>

Lecture by prof. Jan Grabowski

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9MjCupwix5Q&t=3156s>

Lecture by John-Paul Himka

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Ryj1g5gVAI&t=2885s>

Lecture by Dr. Yuri Radchenko and final discussion

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yd1oXHpr8aA&t=1402s>

Report 1 and photos

<https://ethnickh.wordpress.com/2018/05/02/conference-kharkiv-2018/>

Report by Andrii Usach

<http://uamoderna.com/event/usach-war-crimes->

[conference?fb_comment_id=1705633016210540_1706165006157341#f8181be620a58c](http://uamoderna.com/event/usach-war-crimes-conference?fb_comment_id=1705633016210540_1706165006157341#f8181be620a58c)

Program of the conference

<https://ethnickh.wordpress.com/2018/03/24/conference-program-2018-eng/>

International Scientific Conference “Genocides, Mass Murders and Deportations on Ukrainian Lands during the World War II: How to Work with Sources”, April 17-19, 2018.

Organizers: Center for Interethnic Relations Research in Eastern Europe, Department of History at the V.N. Karazin Kharkiv National University.

Supported by: The European Association for Jewish Studies (EAJS) and the Ukrainian Oral History Association.

Venue: History Faculty, V.N. Karazin Kharkiv National University (Svobody Square, 4, Kharkiv, Ukraine).

Procedure: Presentation – 20 min., Q&A and Discussion to the Panel – 40 min., Discussant Comments to the Panel – 10 min.

Conference Program

April 17 (room 5-58)

3 p.m. – 3.30 p.m. Opening, Welcoming Remarks

3.30 p.m.-4.30 p.m. Keynote lecture

John-Paul Himka (Edmonton, Canada): The Specificity of Sources to Incidents of Mass

Violence: the Holodomor and the Holocaust as Examples. Testimonies, Memoirs, Photographs, and “Documents”. How to Evaluate and Work with Them

5 p.m. Welcome reception (Cafeteria «Bunker»)

April 18 (room 2-49)

9.30 a.m. – 11 a.m. Panel 1: Literature and Narratives

Chair: Kateryna Yeremeeva

Khrystyna Rutar (Lviv, Ukraine): To Be or Not to Be For Archival Photography on the Pages of a Historical Novel?

Tetiana Malykh (Kyiv, Ukraine): “Black Book” of Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee and Official Narrative of the “Great Patriotic War” in the USSR: Conflict of Memories

Discussant: John-Paul Himka

11 – 11.20 a.m. Coffee-break (Hall at Second Floor of the University)

11.20 a.m. – 1.10 p.m. Panel 2: Archival Criminal Trials

Chair: Roman Lubavs’kyi

Albert Venger (Dnipro, Ukraine): Information Capacity of Archival Criminal Cases of Persons Convicted for Engagement into Extermination of Mentally Challenged Persons in 1941-1943

Tetiana Fedoriv (Ternopil, Ukraine): Holocaust in Zbarazh in Archival Criminal Cases

Roman Shliakhtych (Kryvyi Rih, Ukraine): Archival Investigation Cases of Policemen as a Source to Study the Holocaust on the Territory of Kryvyi Rih in the Period of German

Occupation

Discussant: Jan Grabowski

1.10 p.m. – 2.10 p.m. Lunch (Cafeteria «Bunker»)

2.10 p.m. – 4 p.m. Panel 3: Official Documents of Occupation Administrations

Chair: Yuri Radchenko

Volodymyr Zilinskyi (Lviv, Ukraine): Information Capacity of Ukrainian Archival Deposits in Terms of Covering the History of Judenrats in the District of Galicia

Iryna Motorna (Odesa, Ukraine): Peculiarities of Studying the Policy of Romanian Administration on Ethnic Groups in Transnistria

Olena Petrenko (Bochum, Germany): Extermination of Jewish Patients in Psychiatric Hospitals during the Nazi Occupation in Ukraine

Discussant: Oleksandr Zaytsev

4 p.m. – 4.20 p.m. Coffee-break (Hall at Second Floor of the University)

4.20 p.m. – 5.20 p.m. Keynote lecture

Jan Grabowski (Ottawa, Canada): New Questions and New Sources to the Study of the Holocaust

April, 19 (room 2-49)

9 a.m. – 10.50 a.m. Panel 4: Gender and Extreme Violence

Chair: Artem Kharchenko

Ludmyla Askerova (Chernihiv, Ukraine): Archival Criminal Cases as a Source to Study the History of Repressions of Ethnic German Women in Chernihiv Oblast

Marta Havryshko (Lviv, Ukraine): Hidden Voices: Brutalization of Women's Bodies in Soviet Prisons

Megan Pytka (Carbondale, USA): Sexual Violence in World War II Galicia

Discussant: John-Paul Himka

10.50 a.m. – 11.10 a.m. Coffee-break (Hall at Second Floor of the University)

11.10 a.m. – 12.40 p.m. Panel 5: Ego-Documents

Chair: Yulia Kiseliova

Andriy Usach (Lviv, Ukraine): Can we hear the Voices of Local Perpetrators of Nazi Violence in Ukraine?

Anatoliy Pohorelov (Mykolaiv, Ukraine): Experience of Forced Labour of Local Population of Mykolaiv Region at Military Industrial Facilities of the Third Reich in the City of Bremen in 1942-1945

Discussant: Jan Grabowski

12.40 p.m. – 1.40 p.m. Lunch (Cafeteria «Bunker»)

1.40 p.m. – 3.30 p.m. Panel 6: Oral History Sources

Chair: Svetlana Telukha

Serhiy Bilivnenko, Kateryna Shimkevich (Zaporizhia, Ukraine): Understanding “Volynia”: Between a Myth and Amnesia

Andriy Pykalo (Kharkiv, Ukraine): Soviet Past in Oral Stories of Ukrainian Victims of Nazi Persecutions

Marianna Shpak (Kryvyi Rih, Ukraine): Holocaust Studies and the Dilemma of Work with Children’s Testimonies

Discussant: Gelinada Grinchenko

3.30 p.m. – 3.50 p.m. Coffee-break (Hall at Second Floor of the University)

3.50 p.m. – 4.30 p.m. Keynote lecture

Yuri Radchenko (Vienna-Kharkiv): “...from Zhytomyr, I was transferred to the front to the town of Vasylkiv to search for Communists and Jews, later – for Banderivtsi”: Biography of an OUN(m) Activist Oleksa Babiy in the Light of “Memories on the Escape from the Shooting

4.30 p.m. – 5.20 p.m. Summary Discussion

Changes in program: Because of a flight delay in Canada, the lecture by John-Paul Himka was conducted on 18 April rather than 17 April.