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**In The Shadow of the Shoah: The Ukrainian
Diaspora and the Holocaust**

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In the Shadow of the Shoah
The Ukrainian Diaspora and the Holocaust

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Introduction – A crooked timber

‘Out of the crooked timber of humanity, no straight thing was ever made’

- Immanuel Kant

Though Immanuel Kant’s well-known quotation has been interpreted in a number of ways, Isaiah Berlin famously saw it as encapsulating the foolishness of attempting to construct totalitarian systems. Using Kant’s reasoning as he saw it, Berlin wrote:

‘No perfect solution is, not merely in practice, but in principle, possible in human affairs, and any determined attempt to produce it is likely to lead to suffering, disillusionment and failure.’¹

In making this anti-utopian claim, Berlin alludes to the dichotomous, irregular and multifarious nature of humankind. The same is surely true of history. Simple overarching narratives of history most often fail to incorporate the complex and often contradictory nature of their subjects. The fluidity of language, culture and customs in much of the world and the often arbitrary construction of state boundaries means that ‘national’ histories are particularly prone to this falsification through simplification. Multiplicity not simplicity is the characterization that must surely come from a truthful reading of the history of ‘nations’.

Ukraine’s modern history serves as an effective example of this multiplicity. From the late eighteenth century until 1991, when it became an independent state, much of Ukraine formed part of the larger Hapsburg, Russian and finally Soviet empires. As Orest Subtelny has pointed out, the confrontation in Ukraine of the two ‘politico-ideological phenomena’ of ‘nation and empire’ is at the heart of the country’s fractured nature.² This confrontation spawned nationalist organisations such as the Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) and the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (known by its Ukrainian acronym UPA), whose raison d’être was furthering the cause of Ukrainian independence. However, these organisations also pursued a virulent form of exclusive ethno-nationalism that excluded ethnic minorities in their vision of

¹ I. Berlin, *The Crooked Timber of Humanity: Chapters in the History of Ideas*, (New Jersey, 2013), 1.

² O. Subtelny, ‘The Ambiguities of National Identity: The Case of Ukraine’, in S. Wolchik and V. Zviglyanich (ed.), *Ukraine: The Search for a National Identity*, (Oxford, 1999), 1.

Ukraine.³ They committed atrocities during the Second World War against, among others Jews, Poles, Russians and Ukrainians that were seen as enemies of the 'nation' and in parts of Ukraine often took a leading role in the Holocaust.⁴

Ukraine has also suffered a great deal. Most notably, the Great Famine of 1932-33 (often referred to as 'the Holodomor'), which wreaked havoc across Ukraine and resulted in the deaths of millions of people and the decimation of much of the country's rural life. In the Second World War an estimated 4.6 million people died during the war within Ukraine with a further 2.3 million 'Ostarbeiter' deported to work as slave labour in Germany.⁵ This grievous death toll includes some 1.5 million Jews killed in the Holocaust in Ukraine, most of whom were shot and buried in mass graves. Both Ukrainian nationalist organisations and Ukrainians serving in local police forces were heavily implicated in these murders.⁶

This history was also experienced very differently in different regions of Ukraine. Though regional complexities abound, broadly Western Ukraine experienced Soviet rule and Nazi occupation in a very different manner to Eastern and Central Ukraine and these regions have historically been part of different empires.⁷ In contemporary Ukraine, this difference in historical experience has manifested itself in regionalism both culturally and linguistically and in terms of political loyalties, playing a key role in political conflicts since the country's independence.⁸

Even a brief overview of Ukraine's modern history demonstrates that it is deeply complex and multi-faceted and does not lend itself to simple overarching narratives. Despite, or rather because of this evident complexity, there has been a widespread tendency of attempting to construct a consistent, one-dimensional narrative of Ukraine's recent history that can usefully serve as a foundation for Ukrainian identity. The focus of my dissertation will be this process, specifically in relation to the Holocaust, within the Ukrainian North American Diaspora. Before I move on to elaborating on this focus, an outline of this process within Ukraine itself is necessary.

³ J.P. Himka, 'The Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists and the Ukrainian Insurgent Army: Unwelcome Elements of an Identity Project.' *Ab Imperio*, 4 (2010), 87.

⁴ G. Rossoliński-Liebe, 'Celebrating Fascism and War Criminality in Edmonton: The Political Myth and Cult of Stepan Bandera in Multicultural Canada.' *Kakanien Revisited*, 12 (2010), 1.

⁵ A. Wilson, *Ukrainian nationalism in the 1990s: A minority faith*, (Cambridge, 2005), 17.

⁶ A. Podolskyi, 'A Reluctant Look Back: Jews and the Holocaust in Ukraine', *Osteuropa*, (2008), 271-278. (translation by Stephan Lang: <http://www.eurozine.com/articles/2008-11-28-podolskyi-en.html>)

⁷ T. Zhurzhenko, "'Capital of Despair": Holodomor Memory and Political Conflicts in Kharkiv after the Orange Revolution', *East European Politics & Societies*, 25.3 (2011), 598.

⁸ G. Sasse, 'The Role Of Regionalism', *Journal of Democracy*, 21.3 (2010), 99.

The conceptualization of history in Ukraine formed a key part of the country's 'national rebirth' after independence; under Leonid Kravchuk, independent Ukraine's first President, 'totalitarianism' was represented as the country's primary foe.⁹ Under Leonid Kuchma, who served as President from 1994 to 2004, the use of 'the Holodomor' and Soviet rule in political rhetoric regularly coincided with political conflicts.¹⁰ The pertinence of history in the nation-building project was certainly evident under both Kravchuk and Kuchma. However it was under President Victor Yushchenko that historical narratives of Ukraine's history began to form one of the main 'pillars' of nation building.¹¹ Yushchenko, who was President from 2004 to 2010, saw Ukraine as a 'post-colonial' society in which the cultural and political influences of Russia continued to prevent the country's development into a truly independent nation.¹² Under Yushchenko the development of a narrative of Ukrainian history that served to curb these influences was seen as essential and a key tenet of the government's agenda. The 'Baltic model', which conceptualised Ukraine as a victim of communism formed a key part of this narrative.¹³ At the core of this narrative of victimhood was 'the Holodomor', which Yushchenko saw as epitomizing the suffering Ukraine endured whilst part of the Soviet Union.¹⁴ The famine frequently featured in the President's public speeches, particularly in the wake of the so-called 'Orange Revolution' in which Leonid Kuchma was ousted from power and replaced with Yushchenko.¹⁵ This narrative of victimhood was accompanied by an attempt to rehabilitate Ukrainian nationalism and nationalist organisations such as the OUN and UPA.¹⁶ Under Yushchenko, these organizations became symbols of the Ukraine's struggle against the Soviet Union and were eulogized and characterized as 'heroes' with their dark past largely excluded from mainstream discourse.¹⁷ These twin narratives of victimhood and renewed nationalism formed the basis of a

⁹ H. Kasianov, 'Holodomor and the Politics of Memory in Ukraine After Independence', in C. Noack, L. Janssen and V. Comerford (eds.), *Holodomor and Gorta Mór: Histories, Memories and Representations of Famine in Ukraine and Ireland*, (London, 2012), 168.

¹⁰ Kasianov, 'Holodomor and the Politics of Memory', 168.

¹¹ Kasianov, 'Holodomor and the Politics of Memory', 168.

¹² Zhurzhenko, 'Holodomor Memory', 599.

¹³ Zhurzhenko, 'Holodomor Memory', 599.

¹⁴ P.A. Rudling, 'The OUN, the UPA and the Holocaust: A Study in the Manufacturing of Historical Myths', *The Carl Beck Papers in Russian and East European Studies*, 2107 (2011), 26.

¹⁵ Kasianov, 'Holodomor and the Politics of Memory', 176.

¹⁶ Zhurzhenko, 'Holodomor Memory', 599.

¹⁷ J.P. Himka, 'The Reception of the Holocaust in Postcommunist Ukraine', in J.P. Himka and J.B. Michlic (ed.), *Bringing The Dark Past to Light: The Reception of the Holocaust in Postcommunist Europe*, (Lincoln, 2013), 640.

reconceptualization of Ukrainian history under Yushchenko and the foundation of what Yushchenko saw as a new Ukrainian identity.

The novelty of Yushchenko's particular strand of memory politics was in its implementation. Throughout his time as President, he sought legal recognition for 'the Holodomor' as a genocide against the Ukrainian people. In 2008, the 'Law on the Holodomor in Ukraine in 1932-33' was eventually adopted by the Ukrainian Parliament, which characterized the famine as an 'act of genocide against the Ukrainian people'.¹⁸ This unification of law and politics was indicative of the widespread formalization and institutionalization of state memory politics that employed many organs of the state such as the Security Service and the Foreign Ministry to further the President's 'historical memory policy'. Perhaps the epitome of this institutionalization of memory politics and the intellectual core of Yushchenko's 'historical memory policy', was the Ukrainian Institute of National Memory, which was established in 2006 to produce patriotic history that could serve as a basis for Ukrainian identity and help consolidate the "nation".¹⁹ The election, in 2010, of Victor Yanukovych saw the end of many of the ideological tenets of the Yushchenko era 'historical memory policy' and a reversion to a more Sovietized conception of history with less of an emphasis on Ukrainian nationalism and the conceptualization of Ukraine as part of a wider Russian sphere.²⁰

The Holocaust in Ukraine was largely excluded from these grand narratives of Ukrainian history and continues to be marginalized in Ukrainian historiography today. As Anatoly Podolskyi has pointed out, the exclusion of the Holocaust from the 'official' conceptualization of Ukraine's recent history reflects the prominence of a 'mono-cultural' and 'mono-ethnic' idea of Ukrainian history that excludes ethnic minorities from narratives of 'national' history.²¹ Indeed when in 2009, the National Academy of Sciences in Ukraine released a one thousand page, officially sanctioned political history of twentieth century Ukraine, the text did not mention the Holocaust.²² As well as reflecting a tendency towards ethnically exclusive narratives of Ukrainian history, the exclusion of the Holocaust in mainstream discourses has also been a

¹⁸ S.V. Kulchytskyi, 'Holodomor in Ukraine 1932-33: An Interpretation of Facts', in C. Noack, L. Janssen and V. Comerford (eds.), *Holodomor and Gorta Mór: Histories, Memories and Representations of Famine in Ukraine and Ireland*, (London, 2012), 19.

¹⁹ Rudling, 'The OUN, the UPA and the Holocaust', 26.

²⁰ T.Kuzio, 'Competing National Identities and Democratization in Ukraine: The Fifth and Sixth Cycles in Post-Soviet Ukrainian History' *Acta Slavica Iaponica*, 33 (2013), 30.

²¹ Podolskyi, 'A Reluctant Look Back', 271-278.

²² Himka, 'Reception of the Holocaust', 642.

result of the one-dimensional eulogizing narrative of Ukrainian nationalism that, as I have mentioned, was particularly prevalent under Yushchenko. In this narrative, the complicity of nationalist organisations in the Holocaust is usurped by their characterisation as ‘national heroes’.²³ The difficulty of including the fate of Ukrainian Jews in the country’s ‘national story’ continues to be a problem today. The interpretation of the Holocaust in the Ukrainian Diaspora of North America has displayed many of the same difficulties as its interpretation in Ukraine.

The Diaspora in North America is largely descended from those who emigrated to the United States and Canada after the Second World War. They came predominantly from Galicia and were largely nationalist in outlook.²⁴ The organized Diaspora today is represented by large community organisations, most notably the Ukrainian Canadian Congress (UCC) and the Ukrainian Congress Committee of America (UCCA). It is also served by both Anglophone and Ukrainian language media organisations with *The Ukrainian Weekly* (English-language) and *Svoboda* (Ukrainian-language) being the most widely read diasporic newspapers.

The focus of this dissertation will be the place of the Holocaust in discourses on Ukrainian history within this North American Ukrainian Diaspora and through this, how history as a concept has been treated in the Diaspora. I will focus my analysis broadly on the period of 2003 to 2013. In this period, as I have outlined, history played a particularly pertinent role in the politics of Ukraine. It is therefore instructive to analyse how diasporic narratives of history developed alongside the intensification of memory politics in Ukraine. I have chosen 2003 as the start of the period because it is in this year that Victor Yushchenko made his first pronouncements regarding ‘the Holodomor’ as leader of the ‘Our Ukraine’ block of centre-right political parties.²⁵ It is also the 70th anniversary of ‘the Holodomor’, an occasion that was marked with widespread commemorative activity. The period ends with the start of ‘Euromaidan’, which eventually led to the ousting of Victor Yanukovich in 2014. An important point to note from the outset is that my focus is on the organized Ukrainian Diaspora, which is vocal on issues surrounding Ukrainian history, not simply all those living in North America of Ukrainian descent.

²³ Himka, ‘Reception of the Holocaust’, 640.

²⁴ Himka, ‘Reception of the Holocaust’, 648.

²⁵ Kasianov, ‘Holodomor and the Politics of Memory’, 174.

My analysis will be divided thematically into two parts (over three sections). Firstly I will analyse the part the Holocaust has played in the construction of a narrative of Ukrainian victimhood. To do this, I will focus on the conceptualization of this narrative around 'the Holodomor'. In this construction of Ukrainian history, it is the Holocaust as a whole and its place in the history of genocide that has affected the way in which the Diaspora has constructed the history of the famine into a narrative of victimhood. As I will seek to demonstrate, the Holocaust has not only acted as a framework around which the Diaspora has conceptualised the famine, it has also been viewed as an opposing narrative to 'the Holodomor', with discourses surrounding the famine demonstrating a strong element of competition with the Holocaust. Secondly I will analyse the way in which the Holocaust in Ukraine specifically has been excluded from diasporic narratives of Ukrainian history. This section will look specifically at the Diaspora's attitude to Ukrainian nationalism and nationalist organisations and the way in which the complicity of these organisations in the Holocaust has been largely omitted from narratives of their history. By analyzing the treatment of the Holocaust within the Diaspora through these two dimensions, I will argue that a strong disposition is revealed within the Diaspora of contemporizing history in aid of the consolidation of Ukrainian identity and in doing so, divorcing narratives of Ukrainian history from honest historical scholarship on the subject.

When assessing collective memory one is of course prone to generalisations. In light of this problem, my analysis is derived predominantly from sources that are broadly representative of large sections of the organized Diaspora. In particular, I have used the archives of *The Ukrainian Weekly* (the Diaspora's main Anglophone newspaper) and output from both the Ukrainian Canadian Congress (UCC) and the Ukrainian Congress Committee of America (UCCA).²⁶ *The Ukrainian Weekly* features contributions from a wide range of influential figures in the Diaspora and these contributions, as well as the paper's own editorials, often provide commentary on important historical issues such as the history of the famine and Ukrainian nationalism. The articles are of course selected for publication and I therefore use these articles on the assumption that they at the very least not opposed to the views of the newspaper as a whole. Another assumption I have made when using *The Ukrainian Weekly* as a source is that it not peripheral in its views on historical issues and more or less represents the zeitgeist of the organized Diaspora. The output from both the UCC and UCCA is used on similar assumptions. Given that these

²⁶ <http://www.ukrweekly.com/archive.htm>, <http://www.ucc.ca/>, <http://www.ucca.org/> [accessed 19 April 2015].

organisations exist to represent the Ukrainian community and they are elected by this community, I assume that their views on historical issues are not hugely out of kilter with the broad propensities of the Diaspora as a whole. Other sources when used have broadly been derived from individuals and organisations that are influential on key historical issues.

Before I move onto my analysis, one final qualification is needed. In coming to conclusions about the collective memory of the Diaspora, I am in no way suggesting that the community is intellectually homogenized in its approach to Ukrainian history. There are many opposing voices within this community who are committed to an honest interpretation of Ukraine's history. In particular, Professor John-Paul Himka of the University of Alberta has been a vocal opponent to historical distortion within the Diaspora and his extensive literature and commentary on the Holocaust in Ukraine and historical memory in the Diaspora forms the basis of much of my historiographical approach.

'The Holodomor' and Victimhood

The 1932-33 Great Famine, often referred to as 'the Holodomor' (literally 'extermination by hunger'), is a hugely significant event in twentieth century Ukrainian history. It was a grievous tragedy that greatly affected Ukraine. Recent demographic studies have concluded that the famine claimed an estimated 4.5 million lives (including 0.6 million lost births), which was equivalent to 16.5 and 4.0 percent of the rural and urban population of Ukraine respectively.²⁷ The details of the famine are highly contested but there is a consensus among reputable scholars that it was predominantly a consequence of an over ambitious industrialization programme and an extremely punitive implementation of collectivization; in other words, it was largely man made.²⁸ The most contentious debate, however, has surrounded whether it should be classified as a genocide. The legitimacy of this classification has been questioned on a number of grounds including the fact that other regions of Soviet Union were also affected (Kazakhstan incurred a proportionately higher number

²⁷ O. Rudnytskyi, N. Levchuk, O. Wolowyna, P. Shevchuk and A. Savchuk, 'Demography of a man-made human catastrophe: The case of massive famine in Ukraine 1932-1933', *Canadian Studies in Population*, 42, no. 1-2 (2015), 53.

²⁸ Rudnytskyi et al., 'Demography of a man-made human catastrophe', 54.

deaths) and the contrast between the rural and urban experience of the famine.²⁹ In the attention given to the subject, the complexity and multi-causal nature of the famine has often been lost with much of the attention devoted to the subject preferring to focus on political significance rather than simply historical detail. Victor Yushenko, who became the President of Ukraine in 2005, as I have said, placed the famine at the core of his 'historical memory policy', which sought to foster a moral recovery of the Ukrainian nation through a shared identity rooted in the experience of the past.³⁰ The memory project in the Diaspora has exhibited a similar process in the last decade with discussion of the famine framed around the idea of a key, shared event in Ukrainian history and much of the discourse on the subject focused on ideas of 'awareness' and 'recognition' of the genocidal nature of the famine. The Holocaust has played a key role as a reference point to the conceptualization of the famine as a narrative of victimhood. It is the place of the Holocaust in the development of this narrative that I will turn to now.

When advocating a genocidal interpretation of the famine, there is a strong tendency in the Diaspora to frame the argument for genocide around placing the famine 'on a par' with the Holocaust in the history of genocide. In 2003 Myron Kuropas, a regular columnist for *The Ukrainian Weekly*, lamented at the 'thousands of books, articles and monographs' written about the Holocaust compared to the lack of writing about Stalin's crimes.³¹ In a similar vein, Roman Serbyn, a Ukrainian-Canadian professor of history at the University of Quebec, in an interview published in *The Ukrainian Weekly*, talks of the struggles of bringing the famine into the 'consciousness of the citizenry', directly referencing the prominence of Nazi crimes as a comparison.³² When advocating a genocidal interpretation of the famine ideas of comparability to the Holocaust have been cited as strengthening the validity of this classification. For example, in 2003, Dr. Bohdan Vitvitsky, a prominent Ukrainian-born American attorney, argued that in failing to recognise that the famine was a genocide, one was following a similar logic that would characterize evidence for the Nazis targeting of Jews as 'circumstantial' and lead one to denying the genocidal nature of the

²⁹ Moore, Rebekah. "'A Crime Against Humanity Arguably Without Parallel in European History'": Genocide and the "Politics" of Victimhood in Western Narratives of the Ukrainian Holodomor', *Australian Journal of Politics & History*, 58.3 (2012), 370.

³⁰ Kasianov, 'Holodomor and the Politics of Memory', 169.

³¹ 'Koba's legacy: not be forgotten', *The Ukrainian Weekly* (New Jersey), 23 Mar. 2003

³² 'A conversation with Prof. Roman Serbyn, historian', *The Ukrainian Weekly* (New Jersey), 16 Jul. 2006.

Holocaust.³³ Similarly, in response to the Pulitzer Board's decision not to revoke Walter Duranty's Pulitzer Prize (whose reporting about the famine was heavily influenced by Soviet propaganda), Jaroslaw Sawka, a doctor from Detroit and regular contributor to the newspaper, again referenced the comparative nature of the famine and the Holocaust.³⁴ This constant comparison combined with the widespread belief that the famine has received too little attention in the history of genocide compared to the Holocaust has meant that the promotion of famine 'awareness' and 'recognition' is often modelled on the memory project surrounding the Holocaust. In this vein, in an article published in *The Ukrainian Weekly* entitled 'Reflections on "Visualizing the Holocaust"', the author advocates taking lessons from 'how the Jewish people used film in getting the story out'.³⁵ Similarly, in a march to mark the 75th anniversary of the famine in 2007, one of the marchers remarked that 'people always talk about the Jewish Holocaust' and that Ukrainians should 'do the same thing'.³⁶ This remark, though representing one marcher, was implied to express the collective sentiment of the march in the article. The use of the Holocaust memory project as a framework for the promotion of 'famine awareness' is indicative of an inclination within the Diaspora that views history as a series of narratives whose relative prominence in collective memory is derived from contemporary promotion rather than inherent significance.

The Holocaust has also affected the lexicon with which the famine is engaged with in the Diaspora. In 2003 a museum exhibition titled 'Not to be forgotten: A Chronicle of the Communist Inquisition in Ukraine, 1917-1991' toured the United States. The exhibition was created by the All Ukrainian Memorial Society from Kyiv but sponsored by the Organisation for the Defense of Four Freedoms in the US, publicized in *The Ukrainian Weekly* and financially supported by the wider Ukrainian American community.³⁷ The exhibition featured eleven periods of twentieth century Ukrainian history (covering the entire century) all of which featured different instances of victimhood. The section assigned to the famine, titled '1932-33 – "The Ukrainian Holocaust"', is particularly telling in regards to the famine's conceptualization alongside the Holocaust. The use of this sort of language reflects a tendency in the Diaspora to not only model the famine awareness campaign on the

³³ 'Was the Great Famine part of a genocidal campaign? Are Russians, Ukrainians equally culpable for Soviet crimes?', *The Ukrainian Weekly* (New Jersey), 06 Apr. 2003

³⁴ 'Foolitzer Prize awarded to Pulitzer Board and The New York Times', *The Ukrainian Weekly* (New Jersey), 23 May. 2004.

³⁵ 'Reflections on "Visualizing the Holocaust"', *The Ukrainian Weekly* (New Jersey), 29 Mar. 2009.

³⁶ 'Solemn march recalls 10 million victims of Holodomor', *The Ukrainian Weekly* (New Jersey), 25 Nov. 2007.

³⁷ 'Koba's legacy: not be forgotten', *The Ukrainian Weekly* (New Jersey), 23 Mar. 2003.

Holocaust memory project, but also to adopt terminology and phraseology associated with the Holocaust when writing about and describing the famine.³⁸ This process of applying Holocaust terminology has the intended effect of presenting the famine as a comparable event in the history of genocide, thus aiding its greater recognition. For example in 2003, writing about the Day of Remembrance for the famine on its 70th anniversary, the Reverend Basil Losten referred the need to publicise this 'hidden Holocaust'.³⁹ In that same year, *The Ukrainian Weekly* featured a letter from the All-Ukrainian Council of Churches that described the famine as 'the final solution to the Ukrainian issue'. Similarly, in 2004, Lubomyr Luciuk, a former chairman of the Ukrainian Canadian Civil Liberties Association (UCCLA), in an article for *The Ukrainian Weekly*, wrote about the need for 'all Holocaust victims' being remembered together, in reference to victims of the famine and other genocides.⁴⁰

The use of this Holocaust terminology tends to be employed for emphasis; terminology such 'hidden Holocaust' and 'forgotten Holocaust' is, for example, employed to highlight the injustice related to a lack of recognition.⁴¹ The use of this sort of terminology clearly represents an attempt to construct a narrative of victimhood framed in relation to the Holocaust. Admittedly, the use of specific Holocaust terminology has been less prevalent in recent years, however, the language of 'denial', especially in relation to the Russian interpretation of the famine, continued to be employed after the use of specific Holocaust terminology became less prevalent. It would be unfair of course to suggest that the Holocaust claims a monopoly on the use of the word 'denial' in relation to historical events. Indeed it is legitimately employed when talking about the Soviet Union's policy after the famine to deny that it occurred at all. However, this language of denial has also been used in relation to the famine's classification as a genocide clearly echoing the use of the term in relation to the Holocaust and characterizing opposition to a genocidal interpretation of the famine as comparable to denying the Holocaust was a genocide against the Jews.⁴² Given the extensive scholarly debate on notion of a 'famine-genocide' and the unsettled nature of this debate, it is not unreasonable to

³⁸ Moore, 'Genocide and the "Politics" of Victimhood', 376.

³⁹ 'Pastoral letter regarding observances of Day of Remembrance of Famine', *The Ukrainian Weekly* (New Jersey), 16 Oct. 2003

⁴⁰ 'All genocide victims must be hallowed', *The Ukrainian Weekly* (New Jersey), 07 Mar. 2004.

⁴¹ Moore, 'Genocide and the "Politics" of Victimhood', 376.

⁴²

http://www.ucca.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=234%3Aopen-letter-to-president-yanukovich&catid=8%3Aucca-statements&Itemid=23&lang=en, [accessed 19 April 2015], 'Doubt and Denial', *Ukrainian Weekly* (New Jersey), 08 Feb. 2009.

characterize the use of the language of 'denial' in this regard as indicative of an agenda driven construction framed in reference to the Holocaust.

A Competitive Element

Thus far, the elements of the memory project in the Diaspora that have been discussed represent an attempt to elevate the famine to a level comparable to the Holocaust; for it to be seen as a comparable event in the history of genocide. However the construction of this narrative of victimization by the Diaspora has at times morphed into competitive victimology with comparisons based on severity forming a key part of the narrative rather than simply comparable classification.⁴³ Explicit references to the greater level of severity of the famine have appeared in the Diaspora. In a statement by the Ukrainian World Congress and World Federation of Ukrainian Women's Organisations (both influential diasporic organizations based in North America) advocating greater remembrance for the victims of the famine, the famine is described as the 'most heinous mass crime ever committed by man against man' whilst also stating that 'The sheer numbers alone would qualify this entry as the world's most massive genocide'.⁴⁴ In a similar vein, though more explicitly, Lubomyr Luciuk, stated that 'more Ukrainians perished in the Terror Famine than all the Jews murdered in the six years of the Second World War'. Luciuk made this comment whilst arguing for a genocidal interpretation of the famine and explicitly against Holocaust-centrality in the conception of genocide.⁴⁵ Both of these statements argue for the famine's recognition as a genocide and both are therefore an attempt to compete in terms of suffering. The implication is clear; suffering during the famine was worse and thus must be remembered as such.

Explicit pronouncements like these of greater suffering during the famine are not hugely common but nevertheless represent a significant aspect of how the famine is interpreted and framed in relation to the Holocaust and other genocides. However, a much more common practice is to employ inflated numerical figures of the number of dead in order to justify a more prominent recognition for the famine and therefore

⁴³ Moore, 'Genocide and the "Politics" of Victimhood', 376.

⁴⁴ "Statement in support of remembering the victims of Ukraine's Great Famine", *The Ukrainian Weekly* (New Jersey), 16 Oct. 2003.

⁴⁵ 'All genocide victims must be hallowed', *The Ukrainian Weekly* (New Jersey), 07 Mar. 2004.

compete with the Holocaust and other tragedies.⁴⁶ The figure of 7-10 million deaths is the most common statistic cited in this manner and represents an inflation of the number of victims derived from a questionable reading of anecdotal evidence and it has been widely dismissed by reputable academics.⁴⁷ The Ukrainian Congress Committee of America (UCCA) has consistently used this figure whilst advocating greater awareness of the famine.⁴⁸ This inflated figure is also prevalent in the diasporic press and again is employed to argue for the famine's greater remembrance and its classification as a genocide. For example, in an article that advocates the erection of a memorial to the famine in Washington D.C., the author employed the figure of '7-10 million' as a justification whilst also noting that 'little is known about the genocide'.⁴⁹ An editorial published in *The Ukrainian Weekly* in 2006 displayed a similar use of this figure, describing the passage of a bill in the Rada (Ukraine's legislature), which recognized the famine as a genocide, as a 'moral victory' that finally told the 'truth' about the '10 million' who died during the famine.⁵⁰ This figure has also at times been employed with specific reference to the Holocaust. In an article also published in 2006, Oksana Hepburn, a former director of communications at the Ukrainian Human Rights Museum, notes that the murder of '7 to 10 million Ukrainians during the Soviet Terror Famine' is not widely recognized as a 'crime against humanity'. In this particular article, Hepburn makes explicit reference to the fact that '6 million Jews' died in the Holocaust and that this event is 'well documented and universally condemned'.⁵¹ By quoting both of these figures and using the opportunity to advocate a greater place for the famine in the history of genocide, Hepburn is clearly suggesting that on numbers, the famine was bigger than the Holocaust and in doing so perpetuating the notion of a 'hierarchy of suffering and victimhood', which has been a key feature of diasporic discourses surrounding the famine and its relationship to the Holocaust.⁵²

⁴⁶ Moore, 'Genocide and the "Politics" of Victimhood', 376.

⁴⁷ Rudnytskyi et al., 'Demography of a man-made human catastrophe', 55.

⁴⁸ 'Promote Holodomor Curriculum in New York State Education System', http://www.ucca.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=47%3Apromote-holodomor-curriculum-in-new-york-state-education-system&catid=7%3Aunis-action-items&Itemid=24&lang=en, [accessed 18 April 2015] 'A Critically Important Historical Assessment and Commemoration of the Holodomor on its 80th Anniversary', http://www.ucca.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=346%3Aa-critically-important-historical-assessment-and-commemoration-of-the-holodomor-on-its-80th-anniversary-&catid=5%3Apress-releases&Itemid=22&lang=en, [accessed 18 April 2015].

⁴⁹ 'Why a Famine Memorial in DC?', *The Ukrainian Weekly* (New Jersey), 22 May. 2003.

⁵⁰ 'A moral victory', *The Ukrainian Weekly* (New Jersey), 03 Dec. 2006.

⁵¹ 'Equal human rights for all', *The Ukrainian Weekly* (New Jersey), 31 Dec. 2006.

⁵² Moore, 'Genocide and the "Politics" of Victimhood', 376.

Not all statements that point out the total number of victims of a tragedy are indicative of competitive victimology. Statistics can be legitimately employed to help represent the enormity of a particular event. However, in these instances, among others, the use of this historically dubious figure in an advocative manner is demonstrative of the competitive nature of much of the discourse on the famine in the Diaspora. In an open letter from over 100 international scholars concerning the controversy surrounding the format of the Canadian Museum of Human Rights in 2011, a similar criticism for the use of this inflated figure was advanced against the Ukrainian Canadian Civil Liberties Association (UCCLA) (an advocacy group focused on promoting historical instances of Ukrainian victimhood) and the UCC. As the letter put it, in employing the inflated figure of 7-10 million, 'the implication is obvious: seven or ten million is more than six million; the Holodomor deserves more attention than the Holocaust.'⁵³

This particular controversy surrounding the Canadian Museum for Human Rights is perhaps one of the most high profile displays of competitive victimology in the Diaspora. The UCCLA and UCC consistently objected to plans that would give the Holocaust its own section in the museum if the famine wasn't also given a separate section in an 'equitable and inclusive way'.⁵⁴ The UCC also objected to the notion that the famine be included in the "Mass Atrocities" zone of the museum along with 'some 50 other incidents and events'.⁵⁵ Although the UCC rejected allegations from over 100 international scholars that it was trying to compete with the Holocaust on terms of levels of suffering, the nature of the UCC and UCCLA's campaign suggests otherwise.⁵⁶ The issue for the UCC and UCCLA was the lack of a permanent famine exhibition alongside and equal to the Holocaust. They did not advocate a similar treatment for other human rights abuses, just for a greater prominence for the famine. Indeed their arguments were based on the fact that the famine, in their view, was 'one of the greatest genocides in human history' and when met with allegations

⁵³ 'International Scholars Issue Open Letter', <http://anton-shekhovtsov.blogspot.co.uk/2011/04/international-scholars-issue-open.html>, [accessed 18 April 2015]

⁵⁴ 'UCC Continues Campaign of Accountability for CMHR', <http://www.ucc.ca/2011/12/23/ucc-continues-campaign-of-accountability-for-cmhr/>, [accessed 18 April 2015]

⁵⁵ 'UCC's Response to CMHR Controversy', <http://www.ucc.ca/2011/01/20/uccs-response-to-cmhr-controversy/>, [accessed 16 April 2015]

⁵⁶ 'Ukrainian Canadian Congress Responds to Malicious Allegations by "International Scholars"', <http://www.ucc.ca/2011/04/15/ukrainian-canadian-congress-responds-to-malicious-allegations-by-international-scholars/>, [accessed 18 April 2015]

that they inflated death tolls from the famine in a dishonest way, they continued to point out that the official position of the Ukrainian government was that '7-10 million' died in the famine, despite the historical consensus among reputable scholars that this figure is highly dubious (something which was clearly pointed out in the letter that made these allegations).⁵⁷ The UCC and UCCLA were therefore not campaigning on the principle that one should not elevate one incidence of suffering above another (a complex and difficult issue that is outside the scope of this paper), they were arguing that Jewish suffering during the Holocaust shouldn't be elevated above Ukrainian suffering during the famine and they were doing so on the basis of scale. The case of the Canadian Museum for Human Rights provides another example in which the Holocaust and its place in the history of genocide has been interpreted by the diaspora in reference to the famine and in which greater or comparable levels of suffering have formed a key part of this interpretation.

The Problem of Culpability

The Holocaust in Ukraine and specifically the issue of Ukrainian complicity, is one of the most contentious and complicated issues in the construction of a narrative of Ukrainian history both in Ukraine and in the Diaspora. There are a number of factors that contribute to this complication and an outline is necessary in order to understand the dynamics of the Holocaust's remembrance. Firstly, one and a half million Jews were killed in Ukraine as part of the Nazis' extermination policies.⁵⁸ Not only is this figure shockingly high, the vast majority of these Jews were shot and buried in mass graves.⁵⁹ As a result of this, the process of remembrance is more disparate and less tangible, with the lack of a particular 'site', that acts as a point of reference for remembrance and which encapsulates the enormity of the event. Babi Yar, where 33,771 Jews were massacred from the 29th to the 30th of September 1941, has to some extent acted as this particular 'site of memory' and indeed hosts one of the few

⁵⁷ 'UCC Continues Campaign of Accountability for CMHR', <http://www.ucc.ca/2011/12/23/ucc-continues-campaign-of-accountability-for-cmhr/>, [accessed 18 April 2015]

'Ukrainian Canadian Congress Responds to Malicious Allegations by "International Scholars"', <http://www.ucc.ca/2011/04/15/ukrainian-canadian-congress-responds-to-malicious-allegations-by-international-scholars/>, [accessed 18 April 2015]

⁵⁸ M. Winstone, *The Holocaust Sites of Europe: An Historical Guide*, (London, 2010), 373.

⁵⁹ Himka, 'Reception of the Holocaust', 628.

official Holocaust memorials in Ukraine.⁶⁰ However given that only a fraction of the total deaths in the Holocaust in Ukraine occurred at Babi Yar, its legitimacy as a singular point of reference for the event is highly questionable.

The second and most crucial factor that complicates the place of the Holocaust in the Ukrainian memory project is the high level of Ukrainian collaboration with the Nazis during the war. Around one hundred and forty thousand Ukrainians served in local auxiliary police formations under the command of the Nazis.⁶¹ These local police forces carried out many of the massacres of the Jews and in many instances, particularly in rural areas, they were the primary perpetrators of the Holocaust.⁶² In Western Ukraine some killings of Jews were even carried out by locals without instruction.⁶³ Perhaps the most difficult aspect of this collaboration for the construction of Ukrainian history is that nationalist groups such as the Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) were part of this collaboration and were perpetrators of the Holocaust. Stepan Bandera and his 'OUN-B' faction in particular were heavily involved in the Holocaust in Eastern Galicia.⁶⁴ Ukrainian nationalists from the OUN also often took leading roles in local police forces.⁶⁵ The Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA), which was formed in 1942, derived a large amount of its members from these local police forces and was heavily dominated by the Bandera faction of the OUN.⁶⁶ Not only were these nationalist organisations implicated in terms of their collaboration with the Nazis, they also carried out their own liquidations of Jews who were seen as 'enemies' of the Ukrainian state due to the conspiracy of Judeo-Bolshevism that was prevalent at the time and which characterized Jews as communist collaborators.⁶⁷ The aim of these organisations was of course to achieve Ukrainian independence and this fact is at the heart of the problem of how to present a narrative of Ukrainian twentieth century history that both celebrates the cause of Ukrainian independence and criticizes the criminal actions of the organisations and individuals who fought to bring it about. The glorification of these organisations as

⁶⁰ Himka, 'Reception of the Holocaust', 645.

⁶¹ Podolskyi, 'A Reluctant Look Back', 271-278.

⁶² M. Dean, *Collaboration in the Holocaust: Crimes of the Local Police in Belorussia and Ukraine, 1941-44*, (New York, 2000), 101.

⁶³ Podolskyi, 'A Reluctant Look Back', 271-278.

⁶⁴ O. Bartov, *Erased: Vanishing Traces of Jewish Galicia in Present-Day Ukraine*, (New Jersey, 2007),

⁶⁵ J.P. Himka, 'Collaboration and or Resistance: The OUN and UPA during the War', Conference Paper - *Ukrainian Jewish Encounter Shared Narrative Series*,

http://www.academia.edu/577915/Collaboration_and_or_Resistance_The_OUN_and_UPA_during_the_War, [accessed 20 April 2015] 7.

⁶⁶ Himka, 'Collaboration and or Resistance', 7.

⁶⁷ Dean, *Collaboration in the Holocaust*, (Washington D.C., 2013), 102.

'freedom fighters' is, as Omer Bartov has pointed out, mutually exclusive with their history of ethno-nationalism, ethnic and political mass violence and participation in the Holocaust.⁶⁸ However, it must also be pointed out that although these nationalist organisations fought for Ukrainian independence, they fought for an ethnically homogenous 'Ukraine for Ukrainians' along ethno-nationalist lines.⁶⁹ Even their role in Ukraine's independence struggle is therefore in need of qualification.

The third key difficulty with the historical interpretation of the Holocaust in Ukraine is related to a wider problem of how to remember the Ukrainian experience of the Second World War. As I have mentioned, non-Jewish Ukrainians also suffered greatly during the Second World War and there is therefore a dichotomy between a history of victimhood and one of perpetration when trying to construct a narrative of the Ukrainian wartime experience. There were also many Ukrainians who saved Jews from the Nazis; Ukraine is fourth place on Yad Vashem's list of 'The Righteous Among The Nations' with 2515 Ukrainians known to have prevented Jewish deaths, often at great risk to themselves.⁷⁰ Similarly to Ukrainian victimhood, there exists a problem of integrating this heroism into a narrative of the Second World War that also includes a degree of culpability.

Finally the process of presenting an honest, multi-faceted interpretation of the Holocaust in Ukraine has been further complicated by the tendency of the Russian media to use the issue of far-right ethno-nationalism in Ukraine to discredit the Ukrainian nation as a whole, characterizing Ukrainian nationalists as fascists. As Tarik Cyril Amar and Per Anders Rudling have pointed out, the response to this phenomenon has been to characterize it as Russian propaganda that has little historical basis. Any movement towards admitting that elements of this characterisation are true is seen as aiding and giving credence to Russian diatribes.⁷¹ This effect of Russian propaganda on the study of history reveals the dynamic relationship between present circumstances and the interpretation of history that has greatly affected the interpretation of historical issues both in Ukraine and the Diaspora.

⁶⁸ T. C. Amar and P.A. Rudling, 'Why the Revival of Nationalist Myth in Ukraine Should Alarm Us', <http://historynewsnetwork.org/article/155618>, [accessed 18 April 2015]

⁶⁹ J.P. Himka, 'Unwelcome Elements', 90.

⁷⁰ 'Statistics', <http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/righteous/statistics.asp>, [accessed 19 April 2015].

⁷¹ Amar and Rudling, 'Why the Revival of Nationalist Myth in Ukraine Should Alarm Us', <http://historynewsnetwork.org/article/155618>, [accessed 18 April 2015]

The interpretation of the Holocaust in the Diaspora has displayed many of these issues over the past decade with large sections of the Diaspora committed to an uncritical and, at times, glorifying conception of Ukrainian nationalists during the war. As John Paul Himka puts it, war criminality, particularly the role of Ukrainian nationalist organisations in the Holocaust, represents a 'blank spot' in the 'collective memory' of the Diaspora.⁷² There has been, as Himka has noted, little attempt to present an honest interpretation of Ukrainian nationalists. Instead there has been a tendency to rehabilitate these nationalist organisations and characterize them as heroic 'freedom fighters' without a qualification that they also, in many instances, participated in the Holocaust.⁷³ When met with allegations of nationalist complicity in the Holocaust, many commentators have often characterized these suggestions as stereotypical 'labels' that present a slanderous and 'adversarial' portrayal rather than an historical point.⁷⁴ Some commentators have even suggested that in describing war criminality on the part of Ukrainian Nationalists, historians are perpetuating a 'soviet perspective' and that this characterisation represents the enduring impact of 'poisonous ideas' of the Soviet Union on parts of the historical profession.⁷⁵

This uncritical and at times glorifying portrayal of Ukrainian wartime nationalism has been reflected in the output of representative organisations of the Ukrainian Diaspora in North America. The Ukrainian Congress Committee of America (UCCA) has consistently glorified nationalist organisations and nationalist leaders without an acknowledgement of their commitment to virulent ethno-nationalism and their participation in the murders of Jews and Poles during the Second World War (including their participation in the Holocaust). The reception of nationalist leaders provides an indicative example of the general attitude in Diaspora to Ukrainian nationalists. Stepan Bandera led the radical 'OUN-B' faction that, among other crimes, took a leading role in pogroms against Jews in Western Ukraine in the wake of Germany's 1941 invasion.⁷⁶ Both the actions and ideology that he represents in many ways epitomizes the dark side of Ukrainian nationalism and its antithesis to liberal democratic principles. Despite this, the UCCA has consistently eulogized him,

⁷² J.P. Himka, 'War Criminality: A Blank Spot in the Collective Memory of the Ukrainian Diaspora', *Spaces of Identity*, 5.1 (2005), 10.

⁷³ 'Equal human rights for all', *The Ukrainian Weekly*, 31 Dec, 2006.

⁷⁴ 'History, its uses and its misuses, Prof. Himka and getting off our knees', *The Ukrainian Weekly* (New Jersey), 24 Apr. 2005.

⁷⁵ 'UPA and the Ukrainian Identity Problem', *The Ukrainian Weekly*, 19 Jun. 2005, 'Just say "no"!', *The Ukrainian Weekly* (New Jersey), 08 Jan. 2006.

⁷⁶ Himka, 'Reception of the Holocaust', 630.

in 2009 saying that he remains an ‘inspiration for Ukrainians around the globe’.⁷⁷ Similarly, in response to the European Parliament’s condemnation (for his collaboration with the Nazis) of the “National Hero of Ukraine” status bestowed posthumously on Bandera by Victor Yushchenko, the UCCA cited a letter on its website from the Ukrainian World Congress that expressed extreme disappointment at this stance and accused the European Parliament of attempting to ‘rewrite Ukrainian history during WWII’. In commentary on this letter, the UCCA described Bandera as a ‘true hero of Ukraine’.⁷⁸ In an open letter sent to President Yanukovich in 2011, the UCCA expressed similar condemnation for, among other actions, Yanukovich’s revocation of this “Hero of Ukraine” status - the motivations behind this revocation were, it must be said, to do with politicized historical revisionism rather than a commitment to honest historical scholarship.⁷⁹ The Ukrainian Canadian Congress (UCC) has displayed a similar attitude to nationalist figures and leaders by applauding Yushchenko’s rehabilitation of Ukrainian nationalism and the official recognition of Bandera and others as “Heroes of Ukraine”.⁸⁰ Until 2010, the UCC also honoured the OUN and UPA (as well as the SS Galichina division) on Remembrance Day. The UCC stopped this practice in 2011 amid criticism for its glorifying portrayal of these organisations.⁸¹ The UCCA’s and UCC’s attitude to the ‘hero’ status of nationalist organisations and leaders reveals a mode of historical interpretation prevalent in the Diaspora that presents a one-dimensional narrative of Ukrainian nationalist organisations focused exclusively on their positive role in bringing about Ukrainian independence, excluding their considerable ‘dark’ past and culpability for the Holocaust.

⁷⁷ ‘On the 50th Anniversary of Stepan Bandera’s Murder’, http://www.ucca.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=91%3Aon-the-50th-anniversary-of-stepan-banderas-murder&catid=8%3Aucca-statements&Itemid=23&lang=en, [accessed 19 April 2015]

⁷⁸ ‘UWC Submits Statement to European Parliament and Ukraine’s President’, http://www.ucca.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=137%3Auw-c-submits-statement-to-european-parliament-and-ukraines-president&catid=27%3Auw-c-press-releases&Itemid=58&lang=en [accessed 14 April 2015]

⁷⁹ Open Letter of the Ukrainian Congress Committee of America to the President of Ukraine, http://www.ucca.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=234%3Aopen-letter-to-president-yanukovich&catid=8%3Aucca-statements&Itemid=23&lang=en [accessed 14 April 2015].

⁸⁰ ‘Ukraine’s President Recognizes Ukraine’s Freedom Fighters’, <http://www.ucc.ca/2010/02/01/ukraines-president-recognizes-ukraines-freedom-fighters/>, [accessed 14 April 2015]

⁸¹ ‘Ukrainian Community Honours Veterans On Remembrance Day’, <http://www.ucc.ca/2010/11/11/ukrainian-community-honours-veterans-on-remembrance-day/>, [accessed 14 April 2015]

In the open letter mentioned above that condemns the revocation of Bandera's "Hero of Ukraine", the Ukrainian World Congress argues that this 'rewriting' of history represents an 'attempt to destroy Ukrainian National Identity'.⁸² This statement hints at a widespread practice both in academic circles and the wider Diaspora of treating the history of Ukrainian nationalist organisations as a fundamentally contemporary issue integral to modern Ukrainian identity. Attempts to integrate an uncritical interpretation of these nationalist organisations into a narrative of Ukrainian history are common and they are intended to foster Ukrainian identity and thus serve contemporary political objectives. As in the case of Holodomor this reflects a widespread practice in the Diaspora of divorcing the presentation of history from the facts of the historical subject. In this vein, Roman Serbyn has argued for the rehabilitation of the OUN and UPA and their integration into a narrative of Ukrainian history that serves as part of a process of 'positive heritage making' and acts as a 'consolidation myth' to benefit the modern Ukrainian nation.⁸³ In an article that criticizes John Paul Himka's stance against prominent 'myths' about Ukrainian history, Serbyn, one of the most well-known and celebrated historians in the Diaspora, even suggests that historical fabrications, in this case the fake memoir of a Jewish woman who is presented as having served in the UPA, can be legitimately integrated into 'mythical history' if it has contemporary advantages (in this case, strengthening Ukrainian-Jewish relations).⁸⁴ Indeed, in the past Serbyn has advocated this idea of presenting a 'positive' portrayal of Ukrainian involvement in the Second World War, arguing that an attempt should be made to integrate both the UPA and Halychyna Division of the SS into a celebratory narrative of War.⁸⁵ In an interview published in *The Ukrainian Weekly* from 2006, he has also said it's 'outrageous' that the UPA's veterans are not recognized in Ukraine as war veterans with no mention or recognition of the organization's complicity in murders of Jewish

⁸² 'Open Letter of the Ukrainian Congress Committee of America to the President of Ukraine', http://www.ucca.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=234%26Aopen-letter-to-president-yanukovych&catid=8%3Aucca-statements&Itemid=23&lang=en [accessed 14 April 2015].

⁸³ R. Serbyn, 'Erroneous Methods in J.-P. Himka's Challenge to "Ukrainian Myths"', http://www.holodomor.org.uk/History/Serbyn_on_Himka.aspx, [Accessed 18 April 2015].

⁸⁴ Serbyn, 'Erroneous Methods', http://www.holodomor.org.uk/History/Serbyn_on_Himka.aspx, [Accessed 18 April 2015].

⁸⁵ 'Ukrainian and World War II', *The Ukrainian Weekly* (New Jersey), 27 Jun. 2004.

and Polish communities during the war.⁸⁶ Roman Serbyn is certainly not alone in advocating integration into the historical narrative of this positive interpretation of Ukrainian nationalism. In an article published in 2012, Askold Lozynskyj (a former President of the Ukrainian World Congress) presents a thoroughly uncritical and glorifying portrayal of the UPA and OUN. In this extensive article, Lozynskyj describes at length the history of these two organisations and the struggle for Ukrainian independence without acknowledging their wartime criminality. Lozynskyj hints at possible UPA involvement in violence against Polish communities in Volhynia, but quotes the word 'atrocities' as if to suggest that notions of UPA violence represent opinion rather than historical fact. Lozynskyj, like Serbyn, advocates integrating these nationalist organisations uncritically into Ukrainian history and argues that they represent the core of Ukrainian national identity. He predicts that they will form the 'vanguard of a future pantheon of Ukraine's true heroes'.⁸⁷ These two examples, from two very prominent figures within the Diaspora, are indicative of a conception of history in the Diaspora that not only attempts to rehabilitate Ukrainian nationalism, but does so in order to foster a shared identity and serve contemporary political objectives. Ukrainian nationalist history has not only been distorted, but has also become a contemporary issue. History has become myth and myth has become identity.

Another example that reveals aspects of a prevailing attitude towards the Holocaust and its memory in the Diaspora, is the response to prosecutions of Ukrainian war criminals in North America and the issue of the war criminality of some Ukrainian émigrés. The case of John Demjanjuk (previously Ivan Demjanjuk) provides an interesting case study. Demjanjuk, a Ukrainian émigré who moved to the United States in 1952, was sentenced to death in 1988 in Israel for carrying out murders of Jews as the notorious Treblinka prison guard 'Ivan the Terrible'. The Israeli Supreme Court overturned his sentence in 1993 as a result of exculpatory evidence that revealed that he was not in fact 'Ivan the Terrible'. However, new evidence emerged in 2001 that demonstrated Demjanjuk was a guard at the Sobibor camp in Poland and he was eventually extradited to Germany in 2009 to face charges relating to this role. He was charged in 2011 with accessory to the murder of 28060 people who

⁸⁶ 'A conversation with Prof. Roman Serbyn, historian', *The Ukrainian Weekly* (New Jersey), 16 Jul. 2006.

⁸⁷ 'A special history', *The Ukrainian Weekly* (New Jersey), 18 Nov. 2012.

were killed at Sobibor during his time as a guard.⁸⁸ Commentary on the case in *The Ukrainian Weekly* characterized the conviction as a politicized judgment by German courts without any condemnation of his role as a guard at a camp in which tens of thousands of people were murdered. In an article published on the front page of *The Ukrainian Weekly* reporting on Demjanjuk's sentence, emphasis is given to perspectives that argue that Demjanjuk was used as a 'scapegoat' for the German nation, that highlight the supposed irony that he was being tried in Germany and which point out the lack of 'direct' evidence that he participated in the killings that took place at the camp. The article also emphasizes Demjanjuk's relative lack of seniority as well as pointing out irregularities in the process of extradition.⁸⁹ The clear implication of the article is that this is a politicized miscarriage of justice. There is no appreciation of the presiding judges verdict that there was a clear trail of documents that proved Demjanjuk was a camp guard nor is there a discussion of the morality of serving in a role whose responsibility is to aid the process of mass murder at a camp built to carry out that process.⁹⁰ The lack of balance towards the case is clear in other articles published in *The Ukrainian Weekly* that deal with the trial and its verdict.⁹¹ The bias of *The Ukrainian Weekly's* presentation of the case is further evidenced when one compares its coverage to that of the wider international press. In the commentaries featured in *The Guardian* (UK), *The Telegraph* (UK), *USA Today* (US) and *Le Monde* (France) among others, attention is given both to the guilty verdict and misgivings about the case. All of them also provide perspectives on the case from relatives of victims who died at Sobibor, and thus address the issue of the immorality of serving as a camp guard and aiding mass murder.⁹² In other words, they are

⁸⁸ J. Ewing and A. Cowell, 'Demjanjuk Convicted for Role in Nazi Death Camp', http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/13/world/europe/13nazi.html?_r=0, [accessed 20 April 2015]

⁸⁹ 'German court convicts Demjanjuk, sentences him to five years in prison', *The Ukrainian Weekly* (New Jersey), 15 May. 2011

⁹⁰ Ewing and Cowell, 'Demjanjuk Convicted', http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/13/world/europe/13nazi.html?_r=0, [accessed 20 April 2015]

⁹¹ See 'The Demjanjuk verdict', 22 May. 2011, 'Demjanjuk defense presents closing arguments in Munich', 08 May. 2011, 'Must reading about Demjanjuk case' 01 Nov. 2009, 'The case of John Demjanjuk', 21 Jun. 2009, *The Ukrainian Weekly* (New Jersey).

⁹² H. Pidd, 'Demjanjuk found guilty of Nazi war crimes', <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/may/12/john-demjanjuk-guilty-nazi-war-crimes>, M. Day, 'Nazi death-camp guard John Demjanjuk found guilty of taking part in 28,000 murders', <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/history/world-war-two/8509759/Nazi-death-camp-guard-John-Demjanjuk-found-guilty-of-taking-part-in-28000-murders.html>, M. Schrader, 'Demjanjuk convicted over Nazi camp deaths', http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/world/2011-05-12-demjanjuk_n.htm, <http://www.lemonde.fr/europe/article/2011/05/12/le-verdict-du-proces->

balanced. There are clearly misgivings about the case and legitimate concerns about the validity of evidence and thus scope for investigation into these matters. However, the characterisation by *The Ukrainian Weekly* of the conviction of John Demjanjuk in 2011 as a politically motivated miscarriage of justice and the clear imbalance presented in the paper's coverage of the case, reflects a tendency prevalent in the Diaspora of treating criminal prosecutions of Ukrainian war criminals as 'witch hunts' rather than genuine attempts to bring about justice for crimes committed during the Holocaust.⁹³ These prosecutions have been interpreted as indicative of 'Ukrainophobia' and those drawing attention to Ukrainian involvement in the Holocaust accused of 'trotting out the old odium of Ukrainian Jew killers'.⁹⁴ The widespread characterisation of prosecutions of Ukrainian war criminals as a contemporary attack on Ukrainians generally reveals, yet again, the view that has been prevalent in the Diaspora that history, in this case the history of Ukrainian complicity in the Holocaust, is a crucial contemporary issue, deeply intertwined with modern day Ukrainian identity.

The attitude to Ukrainian war criminals has also displayed elements of competitive victimology, presenting a cross over between the Diaspora's interpretation of complicity in the Holocaust and the notion of Ukrainian victimhood. As John Paul Himka has noted, the Diaspora has often intensified efforts to commemorate the famine in response to trials and investigations of alleged war criminality of émigrés in North America.⁹⁵ In response to John Demjanjuk's trial in particular, commentary in the Diasporic press often called for a similar attention to be given to soviet war crimes.⁹⁶ This point clearly has some credence; the Soviet Union committed a great many crimes against a great many people and there is certainly a difficulty in paying

[demjanjuk-garde-de-camp-nazi-attendu-a-munich_1520800_3214.html?xtmc=demjanjuk&xtcr=22](http://www.lemonde.fr/europe/article/2011/05/12/crimes-nazis-john-demjanjuk-condamne-mais-libre_1521264_3214.html?xtmc=demjanjuk&xtcr=21), 'Jugé coupable, John Demjanjuk va être libéré', N. Bourcier, Crimes nazis : John Demjanjuk condamné, mais libre', http://www.lemonde.fr/europe/article/2011/05/12/crimes-nazis-john-demjanjuk-condamne-mais-libre_1521264_3214.html?xtmc=demjanjuk&xtcr=21, [all accessed 20 April 2015]

⁹³ Himka, 'War Criminality', 10.

⁹⁴ 'Ukraine needs study and lustration of past', 15 May. 2005, 'Ukrainian righteous among nations', 15 Jun 2003, *The Ukrainian Weekly* (New Jersey).

⁹⁵ J.P. Himka, 'Making Sense of Suffering: Holocaust and Holodomor in Ukrainian Historical Culture, and: Holod 1932–1933 rr. v Ukraini iak henotsyd/Golod 1932–1933 gg. v Ukraine kak genotsid [The 1932–33 Famine in Ukraine as a Genocide](review)', *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, 8.3 (2007), 686.

⁹⁶ 'The liberating truth', *The Ukrainian Weekly* (New Jersey), 15 May. 2005.

due respect to both the crimes of the Nazis and those of soviet totalitarianism.⁹⁷ However in responding to allegations of the wartime criminality of some Ukrainian North Americans in this way, a tendency is clearly displayed that puts Soviet crimes and Nazi crimes (and the victimhood associated with them) in competition with each other. In another instance of competitive victimology, this time explicitly on terms of suffering rather than criminality, under a section on its website titled 'War Criminality', the UCCLA provides the text 'Into Auschwitz, For Ukraine' by Stefan Petelycky.⁹⁸ This text highlights the wartime suffering of Ukrainians during the war and the persecution of Ukrainian nationalists by both the Nazis and Soviets.⁹⁹ By citing this text, which also attempts to re-conceptualize Auschwitz within the historical narrative of the war away from a Jewish-centric conceptualization of the site, the UCCLA is clearly trying to atone for Ukrainian wartime criminality by using Ukrainian suffering to compete with Jewish suffering. The implied notion is that Ukrainians suffered as much, if not more than the Jews and therefore this is the history of the Ukrainian wartime experience one should remember, not widespread criminality and culpability in the Holocaust.

Conclusion – Bleak prospects for honest history

The interpretation of the Holocaust within the Diaspora can be broadly understood in two dimensions. Firstly, the Holocaust as an historical concept has played a central role in the development of a narrative of victimhood within the Diaspora centred on 'the Holodomor'. Discourses on the famine have used the Holocaust and its centrality in the history of genocide as a framework around which to interpret the famine. They have used it as an example upon which to base a promotion of this tragedy as a genocide and adopted its lexicon to aid this promotion. This idea of comparability has at times morphed into a competition narrative in which the famine and the Holocaust are viewed as competing for prominence in the history of genocide. In the second dimension, the Holocaust and the fate of Ukrainian Jews during the Second World War has been omitted from the 'national' history of Ukraine. In historical discourses, a one-dimensional narrative of heroism has often been adopted in the

⁹⁷ See C. Leggewie, 'Equally criminal?: *Totalitarian experience and European memory*', <http://www.eurozine.com/articles/2006-06-01-leggewie-en.html>, [accessed 20 April 2015].

⁹⁸ 'Sources & Issues', <http://www.uccla.ca/sources.htm>, [accessed 20 April 2015]

⁹⁹ S. Petelycky, *Into Auschwitz, For Ukraine*, (Kyiv, 1999), 1.

characterisation of nationalist organisations such as the OUN and UPA. Their widespread collaboration with the Nazis and complicity in the Holocaust has been largely overlooked in this conceptualization. The place of the Holocaust in the Ukrainian memory project is thus a story of inclusion and exclusion; inclusion as an historical concept and reference point but exclusion from what is perceived to be Ukraine's 'national' history.

Through analyzing the construction of historical narratives of Ukrainian history by the Diaspora, we are also able to identify a widespread tendency that treats history as a contemporary issue. In this conceptualization, history's purpose is to serve contemporary political objectives of nation building and the consolidation of national identity. In particular, 'The Holodomor' and the history of Ukrainian nationalism have been employed to this end with these two histories forming the basis of a Ukrainian identity rooted in the twin historical experiences of victimization and nationalist struggle. The development of this narrative and the treatment of history in this way has been rooted in the contemporary circumstances of Ukraine where ideological discord and divided loyalties within the country have necessitated an attempt to develop a unified Ukrainian identity built on a shared experience of the past. The Diaspora, in its approach to the history of Ukraine, have largely been preoccupied with this formulation of Ukrainian identity and have preferred to prioritize contemporary political exigencies over honest historical scholarship.

At present the Diaspora in North America is preoccupied with the current crisis engulfing Ukraine and with working to curb Russian incursions in the country. Given this, what then will the likely effect of Ukraine's current crisis be on historical discourse and the interpretation of the Holocaust within the Diaspora? It is perhaps only with hindsight that we will eventually come to understand this relationship. However, one can reasonably speculate that we are unlikely to see a departure from the construction of history for the purpose of fostering identity. Not since Ukraine's independence has the need for a shared sense of unity been more apparent. It seems unlikely therefore that voices that oppose the subjugation of historical truth to civic unity will make their way into mainstream interpretations of Ukrainian history.

Benedetto Croce's famous quotation that 'all history is contemporary history' may have become an historical cliché, but it most certainly applies for Ukraine today.

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