

Timothy Snyder's *Bloodlands*: Right-wing propaganda disguised as historical scholarship — Part Four

Snyder's minimization of the role of Eastern European fascists in the Holocaust

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This is part four of a five-part review of Timothy Snyder's book Bloodlands. There is also an accompanying timeline reviewing the critical historical background.

Unless otherwise indicated, all page references are to Timothy Snyder, Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin, 2nd edition, New York: Basic Books, 2022.

Perhaps the most disturbing component of the relativization of the crimes of fascism in *Bloodlands* is Timothy Snyder's systematic distortions of the Nazi-led genocide of six million European Jews. For all the detailed descriptions of gassings and mass shootings in *Bloodlands*, Snyder offers the most systematic right-wing historical revision of the established understanding of the crimes of fascism in decades, outstripping anything that Ernst Nolte dared to do in the late 1980s.

Snyder persistently downplays the persecution of the Jewish population of Western and Southeastern Europe by the Nazis. The murder of Dutch, French, Greek and Yugoslav Jews, as well as the annihilation of Hungary's Jewish community of half a million people, are mentioned in a few sentences, if at all.

Other victims of the genocidal policies by the Nazis are all but ignored as well. The systematic mass murder of an estimated 200,000 mentally ill and handicapped people, first in Nazi Germany and then in occupied Europe, is skipped over by Snyder in a single paragraph. The genocide of between a quarter and half a million European Sinti and Roma is not mentioned at all.

The state-led arrests and mass murder of communists and socialists by the Nazis in Germany and countries they occupied is not mentioned. Also all but ignored is the massive forced labor complex that the Nazis established, which, in total, involved over 20 million slave laborers from across Europe, including not only the occupied Soviet Union and Poland but also countries like France, Italy, Belgium and the Netherlands. Instead, Snyder insists again and again that Nazi camps in Europe—which grew to over 40,000, including not only the death camps, but also various concentration camps, forced labor camps and camps for POWs—were not that big of a deal. ^[1]

It is impossible to address all of these issues within the framework of this review. We will focus on two aspects of Snyder's falsifications that have assumed critical significance in the context of the NATO proxy war against Russia in Ukraine, the massive rearmament of Germany and the

rehabilitation of fascist forces across the continent. This is Snyder's deliberate minimization of the persecution of German Jews and his attempt to both downplay and justify the collaboration of Eastern European fascists in the Nazi-led genocide.

Snyder's minimization of the Nazis' persecution of German Jews

In his preface, Snyder writes:

Most of the German Jews who saw Hitler win elections in 1933 died of natural causes. The murder of 165,000 German Jews was a ghastly crime in and of itself, but only a very small part of the tragedy of European Jews: fewer than three percent of the deaths of the Holocaust. (p. ix)

In another passage, trying to prove how vastly “inferior” Hitler's methods of persecutions of the Jews were compared to Stalin's alleged “genocide” of Ukrainians in 1932-1933 (see part 1 of this review), Snyder alleges that the April 1, 1933 boycott had “only a limited effect; the main consequence was the emigration of some 37,000 German Jews in 1933. It would be five more years before substantial transfers of property from Jews to non-Jewish Germans—which the Nazis called ‘Aryanization’—took place” (pp. 62-63). This extraordinary claim suggests that, compared to Poles in the Soviet Union, the Jewish population of Nazi Germany really had little to complain about.

To “substantiate” what he writes, Snyder references the preeminent historian of Nazi Germany, Richard J. Evans. But the cited passage by Evans reads very differently from what Snyder concocted. Describing the rapid onslaught by the Nazis on first political opponents and then the Jews after Hitler's appointment as Chancellor on January 30, 1933, Evans writes:

On 1 April 1933 storm troopers stood menacingly outside such premises warning people not to enter them. Most non-Jewish

Germans obeyed, but not with any enthusiasm. The biggest Jewish firms were untouched because they contributed too much to the economy. Realizing it had failed to arouse popular enthusiasm, Goebbels called the action off after a few days. But the beatings, the violence and the boycott had their effect on the Jewish community in Germany, 37,000 of whose members had emigrated by the end of the year. The regime's purge of Jews, whom it defined not by their religious adherence but by racial criteria, had a particular effect in science, culture and the arts. Jewish conductors and musicians such as Bruno Walter and Otto Klemperer were summarily dismissed or prevented from performing. The film industry and radio were rapidly purged of both Jews and political opponents of the Nazis. Non-Nazi newspapers were closed down or brought under Nazi control, while the journalists' union and the newspaper publishers' association placed themselves under Nazi leadership. Left-wing and liberal writers, such as Bertolt Brecht, Thomas Mann, and many others were stopped from publishing; many left the country. ... Altogether about 2,000 people active in the arts emigrated from Germany in 1933 and the following years. ... By 1934, some 1,600 out of 5,000 university teachers had been forced out of their jobs, a third because they were Jewish, the rest because they were political opponents of the Nazis.^[2]

Apart from the number of 37,000 Jews who were forced to emigrate, none of these facts are mentioned in *Bloodlands*. It gets even worse as Snyder enters into the territory of the best-researched and most notorious aspects of the Nazis' anti-Jewish policies. The Nuremberg Laws are brushed off in three sentences as basically insignificant.

Germany's Nuremberg Laws of 1935 excluded Jews from political participation in the German state and defined Jewishness according to descent. German officials were indeed using the records of synagogues to establish whose grandparents were Jews. Yet in the Soviet Union the situation was not so very different. (p. 110)

But it was. This review has already discussed the gross falsifications of the Polish operation by the NKVD at the hands of Snyder. But even his two-sentence summary of the Nuremberg Laws is misleading. Jews were not classified "according to descent," as he euphemistically puts it, but according to the manufactured category of "race." And to claim that all the Nuremberg Laws did was to exclude "Jews from political participation in the German state" is an equally gross minimization of the reality of fascist Germany.

As Evans explained:

The Reich Citizenship Law defined citizens of the Reich exclusively as people of "German or kindred blood". Just as crucially, it declared that only someone who, "through his conduct, shows that he is both desirous and fit to serve the German people and Reich faithfully" was entitled to be a citizen of the Reich. Only citizens could enjoy full political rights. All other people, notably the Jews, but also potentially all opponents of the regime, or even those who silently distanced themselves from it by their lack of enthusiasm for its policies, were merely "subjects of the state". They had "obligations towards the Reich" but were given no political rights in return.^[3]

All aspects of social life in Nazi Germany were now permeated with anti-Semitism. Public buildings and parks, swimming pools and shops—almost all became inaccessible to those classified as "Jews" by the Nazi regime. Many Jewish children had to change their schools and were henceforth forced to attend Jewish schools. The personal life of individuals was also massively affected. The Nuremberg Laws banned "illicit sexual relations" that comprised virtually all kind of physical contact between those classified as "Jews" and those classified as "Aryans," including kissing and embracing. Whatever the Great Russian chauvinism of the Stalinist bureaucracy, there is not even a remotely comparable piece of Soviet legislation with regard to any national or ethnic minority. But to Snyder, none of that is worth mentioning.

The origins of fascist anti-Semitism in Germany and Eastern Europe

In a book with hundreds of pages on the Nazi regime and the Holocaust, Snyder provides effectively no explanation at all about the ideological and political roots and content of Nazi anti-Semitism. If he did, the entire edifice of his false comparison of fascism and Stalinism, let alone communism, would crumble. The scholarship on this subject is too vast to cite, but all serious historians agree that the violent anti-Semitism of the Nazis formed a central component of German fascist ideology. The Nazis shared this violent anti-Semitism with the Eastern European far right. Both, in fact, had similar historical and political origins.

Modern political anti-Semitism first emerged as part of the political reaction against the French Revolution, which had granted democratic rights to the country's Jewish population. It struck particularly deep roots in the Tsarist Empire, which became the bulwark of reaction against the French Revolution in Europe. Discriminated against by the state and oppressed economically, the Jewish population of the Russian Empire—the largest in Europe—was for the most part confined to live in the Pale of Settlement (roughly comprising what are today Ukraine, the Baltics and parts of Poland) and was not granted civil rights. The Russian state, the Tsarist family and the Russian Orthodox Church became arguably the worst promulgators of anti-Semitism.

With the development of capitalist relations and the emergence of the working class, especially from the 1880s onwards, this official anti-Semitism increasingly merged with the political reaction against Marxism and the organized workers' movement. The bogeyman of the "Jewish revolutionary" and, especially from the revolution of 1905 on, the "Jewish communist," became central to the incitement of anti-Jewish violence that was used time and again by the state to divide the multinational working class of the Russian Empire. In the revolutions of 1905 and 1917, it became a central component of antirevolutionary violence more broadly.

In Germany, the Jews were granted civil rights much later than in France. However, in contrast to the Jewish population of the Russian Empire, Jews in Germany were eventually granted full civil rights by 1871, facilitating their large-scale assimilation. In the following decades, anti-Semitism acquired a particularly strong component of the envy of middle classes that feared for their "own" businesses and positions.

Fundamentally, however, in Germany, as in Russia, political anti-Semitism became a central tool of the reaction against the powerful Marxist movement in the German working class that was led by the Social Democratic Party of Germany—the only party in Germany that consistently fought anti-Semitism in the German *Kaiserreich*.^[4]

Konrad Heiden, one of the first and most perceptive biographers of Adolf Hitler, stressed that Hitler's violent hatred of the Jews originated in his violent hatred of the workers' movement. He wrote:

... the labour movement did not repel him [Hitler] because it was led by Jews; the Jews repelled him because they led the workers' movement. For him this inference was logical. ... it was not Rothchild, the capitalist, but Karl Marx, the Socialist, who kindled Hitler's anti-Semitism. No justice! No equal rights for all! ^[5]

In the aftermath of the 1917 October Revolution and the 1918-1919 German Revolution, this fusion of anti-Marxism and anticommunism, on the one hand, and anti-Semitism, on the other, became the central feature of far-right, counterrevolutionary politics across Europe. The civil war, in which the imperialist armies backed bourgeois nationalist forces in Poland, Ukraine and throughout the former Russian Empire against the Red Army, witnessed the biggest mass slaughter of Jews in history before the Holocaust. Up to 200,000 Jews, most of them in Ukraine, were brutally murdered in pogroms that were principally perpetrated by White counter-revolutionary forces, along with Polish and Ukrainian nationalist armies. An estimated 300,000 Jewish children were orphaned. The massacres only ended thanks to the victory of the Bolsheviks, who waged a consistent struggle against anti-Semitism. There is not a single mention of this hitherto unprecedented act of mass murder of the Eastern European Jewish population in *Bloodlands*.

Having suffered defeat in the civil war against the Red Army, many of the Russian, Baltic and Ukrainian nationalist exiles ended up in Germany and Austria. Several of them, most notably Alfred Rosenberg, one of the chief architects of the Nazis' war in the East, became prominent figures in the Nazi movement.

The Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union and the Holocaust

The invasion of the Soviet Union by over 3 million Wehrmacht soldiers on June 22, 1941 was supported by half a million troops from Hungary, Romania, Finland, Italy and Slovakia, as well as volunteers from fascist Spain, all of which became deeply implicated in the crimes against both the Soviet population and the Holocaust. Based on a combination of anticommunism and anti-Semitism, the Nazis were also able to mobilize the same local nationalist and fascist forces in the former Soviet Union that German imperialism had already backed in the civil war against the Red Army over 20 years earlier.

The historical scholarship of the past decades has established beyond any doubt that the beginning of the Nazi-Soviet war in June 1941 marked a qualitative escalation of the Nazis' anti-Jewish policies.

Before 1941, there had been mass deportations, the ghettoization and starving to death of hundreds of thousands, as well as mass shootings. However, it was only now that the Nazis' anti-Jewish policies acquired a genocidal character in the sense that not "only" men but also women, children and the elderly were systematically targeted for extermination. A large portion of the over 1 million Soviet Jews who were killed in the Holocaust would be dead by early 1942.

The infamous Wannsee Conference in January 1942—which is mentioned in one single sentence in *Bloodlands*—was the formal basis for the orchestration of the industrial slaughter of Europe's remaining Jewish population. It was quickly followed by the so-called "Operation Reinhard" in Nazi-occupied Poland, during which some 1.7 million Polish Jews were gassed to death.

Snyder's trivialization of Ukrainian collaboration in the Holocaust

In the entire 500-page book on mass murder in Eastern Europe, which focuses almost obsessively on Ukraine, Snyder devotes but a few paragraphs to local collaboration, and he does not mention the role of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) in the Holocaust at all. Snyder goes out of his way to make the absurd claim that the collaboration with the Nazis in Eastern Europe—which, by his own admission, involved no less than 1 million people—was *not* ideologically or politically motivated. He writes:

The classic example of collaboration is that of the Soviet citizens who served the Germans as policemen or guards during the Second World War, among whose duties was the killing of Jews. *Almost none of these people collaborated for ideological reasons, and only a small minority had political motives of any discernible sort.* ... In eastern Europe, it is hard to find political collaboration with the Germans that is not related to a previous experience of Soviet rule. (p. 397, emphasis added)

This statement is not only itself contradictory but also demonstrably false. Moreover, the "experience of Soviet rule" is the standard justification of the Eastern European far right for its collaboration with the Nazi regime (along with not so subtle references to "Jewish collaboration" with the Soviets). No serious historian has ever accepted it. Snyder's "narrative" also conveniently leaves out the fact that up to 380,000 European Jews were slaughtered on the orders of the fascist regime of the Iron Guard in Romania, which had no "previous experience of Soviet rule."

It must be stressed that the overwhelming majority of Holocaust historians that Snyder claims to rely on completely contradict and reject his "narrative." One case should serve as a revealing example. The works of the pioneering Soviet-born Holocaust historian Yitzhak Arad, on "Operation Reinhard"—the murder of 1.7 million Polish Jews in the Nazi-occupied General Government—and the Holocaust in the Soviet Union are frequently referenced in *Bloodlands*. In contrast to many of Snyder's other sources, the majority of his references to Arad's works are, in fact, correct. This suggests that Snyder indeed did read these books with some care—an assumption that one cannot make with regard to many of the other works in his bibliography, given the staggering amount of errors in his citations.

Snyder references Arad to allude to the large-scale collaboration in Lithuania, where the Lithuanian Activist Front (LAF) engaged in massacres of Jews before the Wehrmacht arrived. Ninety-five percent of the Jewish community in Lithuania were murdered, one of the highest death rates in all of Europe. Ten thousand were killed within just the first weeks, largely by Lithuanian nationalists and fascists.^[6]

Yet Snyder completely omits what is arguably the most notorious collaborationist organization in Eastern Europe, the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN), which is discussed at some length in Arad. In *Bloodlands*, the OUN is mentioned only twice and that in passing (p. 151 and pp. 326-27). The origins of this organization are never explained, and the only crimes that Snyder mentions, vaguely, are its massacres of Poles.

The OUN was founded in 1929 in Vienna by exiled veterans of the nationalist army of Symon Petliura, which fought against the Red Army in the civil war of 1918-1921 and was involved in massacres of Ukrainian Jews. Throughout the 1930s, the OUN received funding from the Nazis and established close relations with their intelligence, all the while engaging in terrorist and pogromist activities in what was then the Second Polish People's Republic and Western Ukraine. While the OUN split into two rival wings in 1940—one headed by Stepan Bandera and one by

Andrei Melnyk—both collaborated closely with the Nazis.

The OUN's ideology was shaped by violent anticommunism, ethnic Ukrainian nationalism and anti-Semitism. A May 1941 document by the OUN-B included a paragraph calling for the “clearing” of “hostile elements from the terrain of Ukraine.” It stated, “at a time of chaos and confusion liquidation of undesirable Polish, Muscovite and Jewish activists is permitted, especially supporters of Bolshevik-Muscovite imperialism.”^[7]

As part of their preparations for the invasion, German Army Intelligence organized two Ukrainian battalions, “Nightingale” and “Roland” in cooperation with both OUN groups. When the Wehrmacht invaded, the Ukrainian right launched a simultaneous attack on the Red Army. According to Yitzhak Arad:

The “Nightingale” battalion was attached to the German forces that entered Lvov on June 30. The battalion also took part in anti-Jewish riots. With the German entry into Lvov, Bandera's men established a Ukrainian national government under the leadership of Yaroslav Ste?ko. However, since Germany's plans for the Ukraine contradicted the national ambitions of the Ukrainians, their new government was dissolved a week after being established.^[8]

Hours after the ill-fated proclamation of their own “independent” state in alliance with a fascist Europe, the Ukrainian nationalists, working with the German occupiers, launched a horrific pogrom in Lviv. Historian John-Paul Himka has offered a gruesome analysis of the unfolding savage sexual violence, beatings and the mass murder of thousands of Jews.^[9] One of the leaflets by the OUN inciting anti-Jewish violence in the early days of the war read, “Moscow, Poland, the Hungarians, Jewry are our enemies. Destroy them!”^[10] On the 15th anniversary of the assassination of Symon Petliura, from July 25 to 28, 1941, the OUN organized yet another pogrom in Lviv, with 1,500 deaths.^[11]

While the OUN-B was mistaken in its belief that the Nazis would grant them an independent state, and some of its leaders were eventually arrested by the Nazis, there is no question that violent anti-Semitism was a central part of their ideology and that the organization as a whole continued their collaboration with the Germans. Members of the OUN staffed the civilian administration that the Nazis set up both in parts of occupied Poland—organized as the General Government—and the *Reichskommissariat* Ukraine.

There are no innocent explanations for Snyder's omission of this central chapter in the history of the Nazi occupation of Ukraine. Thirty years after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the sinister record of the OUN has been amply documented by historians. In fact, Timothy Snyder himself established his reputation as a historian of Eastern Europe, above all, with his 2004 book, *Reconstruction of Nations*, in which he addressed the massacres of Jews and Poles by the OUN and its paramilitary arm, the Ukrainian Insurgency Army (UPA), in West Ukraine. Directly contradicting his claims in *Bloodlands* about the presumed lack of “political” and “ideological” motives among local nationalist collaborators, Snyder wrote at the time:

Ukrainians who joined the German administration and the German police in 1941 were acting on several motives: to continue a career they knew, to have influence over their own affairs, to steal property, to kill Jews, to gain personal status, to prepare later political actions. Because the Ukrainian state had to be created, while the Polish state only had to be restored, Ukrainian

nationalists had a political motive to collaborate with the Germans and to encourage Ukrainian youth to join Nazi organs of power. Yet in daily practice cooperation with the Nazis had little to do with this political goal, which the Nazis opposed, and much to do with killing the Jews, a major Nazi policy. To repeat, the greatest change in Volhynian society was the murder of 98.5 percent of Volhynian Jews....

All in all, about twelve thousand Ukrainian policemen assisted about fourteen hundred German policemen in the murder of about two hundred thousand Volhynian Jews. Although their share in the actual killing was small, these Ukrainian policemen provided the labor that made the Holocaust possible in Volhynia. They worked right through December 1942. The next spring, in March–April 1943, virtually all of these Ukrainian policemen left the German service to join the Ukrainian partisans of the UPA (Ukrains'ka Povstans'ka Armiia, Ukrainian Insurgent Army). One of their major tasks as UPA partisans was the cleansing of the Polish presence from Volhynia. [Emphasis added]^[12]

By late 1942, at the height of Nazi Germany's expansion in the East, about 14,000 German policemen and gendarmes oversaw the work of about 160,000 local auxiliary policemen in the *Reichskommissariat* Ukraine and the *Reichskommissariat* Ostland (which was covering the Baltics and Belarus).^[13]

But now, in *Bloodlands*, Snyder makes the extraordinary claim that these “[l]ocal policemen serving the Germans in occupied Soviet Ukraine or Soviet Belarus had little or no power within the regimes themselves.” (p. 137) This is a lie.

As Snyder himself acknowledged back in 2004, the *Sicherheitspolizei* and the *Einsatzgruppen* of the SS, the principal force behind the mass shootings of Jews—the single most common method of murder in occupied Ukraine, Belarus and the Baltics—frequently involved these local policemen in their mass murder. They were also deployed in the liquidation of ghettos and the mass deportations of the remaining Jews to the death camps in occupied Poland.

Snyder's relativization of and justification for the crimes of the Trawniki

A particularly notorious collaborationist force was the so-called Trawniki, a group of mercenaries that were largely recruited from Soviet prisoners of war. Although the Nazis did not only recruit Ukrainians to the Trawniki, their predominance in this mercenary force was so visible that both historians and many survivors have often used the term “Trawniki” interchangeably with “Ukrainians.”

While admitting their role in the Holocaust in general terms, Snyder tries to present them as clueless chaps who ended up, more or less by accident, participating in the biggest genocide in history. He writes:

The Trawniki men knew nothing of this general design [of murdering all the Jews] when they were recruited, and had no political or personal stake in this policy. (p. 256)

At another point, he states:

The regular and massive transports of Jews had overwhelmed the small gas chambers at Treblinka very quickly, and so the Germans and the Trawniki men had to [?!] resort to shooting. This was not the task for which the Trawniki men had been trained. They did it badly, but they did it. (p. 267)

This is a blatant lie. Murdering Jews is exactly what the Trawniki had been trained for. In fact, the very name of this mercenary force originates in the name of their SS training camp in the Lublin District of Nazi-occupied Poland which was called Trawniki. This region became the center of the so-called “Operation Reinhard,” the code name for the systematic murder of 1.7 million Polish Jews who were living on the territory of the General Government. The participation of the Trawniki was essential to all aspects of this mass murder operation—from the gassing in the camps, to the exploitation of Jewish forced labor and the plunder of the property of the murdered.^[14]

At the Trawniki training camp, where these men spent between six weeks to six months, they would first receive “basic training, military drill, and weapons instruction (rifles, machine guns, submachine guns, and grenades). In addition, recruits received what many of them termed ‘special training’ in police escort, guard, and transport duty.”^[15]

While most of these men were relatively young, had a peasant background and were not politically organized, the Nazis vetted them in the recruitment process, trying to make sure that none of them had ever been a member of the Communist Party. The historian Peter Black, who is cited by Snyder on the Trawniki, described their ideological and political training in considerable detail. His essay is a devastating refutation of Snyder’s grotesque trivialization of this group of trained mass murderers. Black noted:

All training exercises were conducted in German while interpreters transmitted the content to non-German-speaking trainees. The latter also endured weekly lectures (communicated through interpreters) that dwelled upon the superiority of the Nazi over the Soviet system, the dangers of “the Jewish-Bolshevik conspiracy,” and the benefits of serving Germany and Adolf Hitler bravely and obediently.^[16]

One of the Trawniki men later recalled receiving “anti-Soviet training” and instructions on “how to carry out roundups of partisans and Jews.” In his own words, he and other Trawniki would go on to become “executioners and punishers to perform the extermination of prisoners in death camps, and Wachmänner [guards] to guard death camps, concentration camps and Jewish ghettos.”^[17]

This is an accurate description. After their training, the roughly 2,000 to 3,000 Trawniki were employed throughout the General Government and occupied Ukraine to guard the death and concentration camps and to make sure the ghetto liquidations—that is, the mass deportations of their Jewish prisoners to death camps—“ran smoothly.” They also participated in large-scale massacres, especially in Lviv, where they murdered 2,000 Jewish prisoners on May 25, 1943 and 1,000 Jews on October 25-26, 1943. Many of the 3,000 survivors were then murdered by the Trawniki in yet another massacre, on November 19, 1943.^[18]

Apart from their duty as guards in the death camps of Operation Reinhard where they exercised notorious brutality, engaged in sexual violence, blatant plunder and alcoholism, the Trawniki have become perhaps most notorious for their participation in the liquidation of the Warsaw Ghetto. In the great deportations of July-September 1942, the Trawniki facilitated the deportation of 265,000 Jews from the Warsaw

Ghetto to the Treblinka death camp, participated in the shooting of some 25,000 ghetto prisoners, and were then deployed in the violent suppression of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising of April-May 1943.^[19]

In exchange for their services in mass murder, the Trawniki were bestowed with vast social privileges by the Nazi occupiers, not to speak of the fact that they were given all but free rein in the plunder of the belongings of their victims. The Nazis even insisted vis-à-vis *Reichsdeutsche* [“ethnic” Germans living in occupied Eastern Europe] that, unlike other “racially inferiors,” the Trawniki should be treated “as equals.”^[20]

For reasons of space, this review had to focus on Snyder’s extraordinary omissions and distortions of Ukrainian collaboration with the Nazis. It must be stressed, however, that these omissions and distortions of Eastern European collaboration with the Nazis extend to the Baltic countries and Belarus, as well as to Poland. Here, a series of gruesome pogroms erupted in the summer of 1941, resulting in the deaths of thousands of Jews. None of these pogroms are mentioned by Snyder. As in the rest of Nazi-occupied Eastern Europe, the Nazis formed a local police force in occupied Poland, the so-called “Blue Police,” which was likewise implicated in the Holocaust. Again, there is no mention of it in *Bloodlands*.

As is the case across Eastern Europe, the far right in Poland has sought to deny or even justify this anti-Jewish violence by pointing to the alleged “collaboration” of Jews with the Soviet authorities. Snyder’s entire narrative of a “double occupation” of Poland by the “Soviet regime” and the Nazis, and his constant, unpleasant insistence on citing how many Jews supposedly staffed the Soviet secret service, must be interpreted, at the very least, as a significant concession to these forces.

This reviewer could also not fail but notice that Snyder devotes a considerable amount of space to the Jewish police in the ghettos which, according to him, shared a “monopoly of force” with the Germans (p. 265). The “minor detail” that these Jewish policemen, in contrast to the local collaborationist police, were virtually all murdered themselves in the end, was apparently not worth mentioning to Professor Snyder. His formulations about the Jewish police’s supposed “monopoly of force” in the ghettos also stand in very marked contrast to his claims that Ukrainian and other nationalist collaborators of the Nazis in the Holocaust had no political or ideological motivation and “little or no power.”

One last point needs to be made. In the concluding chapter of *Bloodlands*, Snyder raises, again in a thoroughly dishonest manner, Stalinist anti-Semitism. The revival of anti-Semitism by the Stalinist bureaucracy was one of the clearest and most disturbing expressions of the fundamentally counterrevolutionary character of Stalinism. Politically, it was rooted in the revival of Great Russian chauvinism and deep hostility toward the internationalism of its revolutionary, Trotskyist opponents. On this basis, essential elements of the old trope of “Judeo-Bolshevism” were revived by the Stalinist bureaucracies in the Soviet Union and throughout Eastern Europe, especially in the post-World War II period.

But in this question too, the fundamental difference between the Soviet state and the German state under the Nazis emerges very clearly. Even though anti-Semitism was increasingly promoted by the Soviet bureaucracy, especially after the Great Terror, it is a historical fact that an estimated 90 percent of Polish Jews who survived the Holocaust—and only about 10 percent of the country’s pre-war Jewish population of up to 3.5 million did—survived in the Soviet Union. Had the working class in Europe and the Soviet Union not been beheaded by Stalinism before the war and had the struggle of the Red Army and workers throughout Europe during the war not been sabotaged by the bureaucracy, the Holocaust, along with the other crimes of fascism and the Second World War, could have been prevented.

To be continued

[1] To cite but a few passages: He calls the “system of concentration camps” that the Germans had erected by the spring and summer of 1940 “small”. (p. 150). Later he writes, “Camps were more often the alternative than the prelude to execution...The image of the German concentration camps as the worst element of National Socialism is an illusion, a dark mirage over an unknown desert.... Jews who were sent to concentration camps were among the Jews who survived.” (pp. 381, 382)

[2] Richard J. Evans, *The Third Reich in Power*, Penguin Books 2006, pp. 15-16.

[3] Ibid., p. 544.

[4] See David North, “The Myth of “Ordinary Germans”: A Review of Daniel Goldhagen’s *Hitler’s Willing Executioners*”, in: *The Russian Revolution and the Unfinished Twentieth Century*, Mehring Books 2014, <http://www.mehringbooks.org/special-issues/russian-revolution-unfinished-twentieth-century/15.html>

[5] Konrad Heiden, *The Führer*, New York: Carroll & Graf Publishers 1999, p. 59.

[6] It should be added that Arad himself fought with the Soviet partisans in what is now Lithuania. In other words, according to Professor Snyder, he engaged in “illegal warfare”. When the Lithuanian government, which engaged in the massive persecution of Jewish anti-Nazi resistance fighters and the rehabilitation of fascism, tried to indict him for “war crimes”, Arad, who was never a communist, stated, “I am proud that I fought the Nazi Germans and their Lithuanian collaborators. That fate made it possible for me to fight against the murderers of my family, the murderers of my people.” Daniel Brook, “Double Genocide”, in: *Slate*, July 26, 2015.

URL:

<https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2015/07/lithuania-and-nazis-the-country-wants-to-forget-its-collaborationist-past-by-accusing-jewish-partisans-of-war-crimes.html>.

[7] Quoted in: Karel C. Berkhoff, Marco Carynnyk: “The Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists and Its Attitude toward Germans and Jews: Iaroslav Stets’ko’s 1941 Zhyttiepyss”, in: *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, Vol. 23, No. 3/4 (December 1999), p. 153.

[8] Yitzhak Arad, *The Holocaust in the Soviet Union*, University of Nebraska Press 2009, p. 89.

[9] John-Paul Himka, “The Lviv Pogrom of 1941: The Germans, Ukrainian Nationalists, and the Carnival Crowd”, in: *Canadian Slavonic Papers*, Vol. LIII, Nos. 2-3 – 4, June-September-December 2011, pp. 409-443. The article is available at <http://www.mehringbooks.org/special-issues/russian-revolution-unfinished-twentieth-century/15.html>. The Lviv Pogrom of 1941: The Germans, Ukrainian Nationalists, and the Carnival Crowd. Only one minor article by Himka, the preeminent expert on Ukrainian nationalism, appears in Snyder’s bibliography for *Bloodlands*.

[10] Quoted in: Karel C. Berkhoff, Marco Carynnyk: “The Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists and Its Attitude toward Germans and Jews”, p. 154.

[11] Arad, *The Holocaust in the Soviet Union*, p. 91.

[12] Timothy Snyder, *The Reconstruction of Nations: Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, Belarus, 1569–1999*, Yale University Press 2004, pp. 160, 162.

[13] *Die Verfolgung und Ermordung der europäischen Juden durch das nationalsozialistische Deutschland, 1933-1945*, Bd. 8, Sowjetunion mit annektierten Gebieten II Generalkommissariat Weißruthenien und Reichskommissariat Ukraine, De Gruyter: Oldenbourg 2016, p. 24.

[14] Peter Black, “Foot Soldiers of the Final Solution: The Trawniki Training Camp and Operation Reinhard”, in: *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, Vol. 25, no. 1 (Spring 2011), pp. 1–99. For some reason, Snyder, even in his 2022 edition, decided to cite not this English version of Black’s essay, but a much earlier version that was published in German and Polish in 2004 and that Black has revised significantly in his 2011 essay. His two references in chapter 8 to the German essay both contain mistakes.

[15] Ibid., p. 15.

[16] Ibid., p. 16.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Ibid., p. 30.

[19] Ibid., p. 23.

[20] Ibid., p. 37.



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