



The Ongoing Challenge of Producing an Integrated Microhistory of the Holocaust in East Central Europe

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BOOK FORUM: OMER BARTOV, *ANATOMY OF A GENOCIDE: THE LIFE AND DEATH OF A TOWN CALLED BUCZACZ* (NEW YORK: SIMON AND SHUSTER, 2018)

The Ongoing Challenge of Producing an Integrated Microhistory of the Holocaust in East Central Europe

Anatomy of a Genocide: The Life and Death of a Town Called Buczacz, by Omer Bartov, New York, Simon and Shuster, 2018, 416 pp., USD\$30.00 (hardcover), ISBN 9781451684537

In a review essay of major works in Holocaust studies written almost a decade ago, historian Mark Mazower noted a tendency in recent historiography toward “encyclopedism,” in which “as if in the face of extreme suffering, everything is equally worth recording.”¹ The frequent danger, he observed, was “a sacrifice of analytic depth on the altar of detail,” while commending works that found “a fruitful way of rescuing the Holocaust from encyclopedism, on the one hand, and localism on the other.” Given the sheer enormity of the Shoah, microhistory has often emerged as the preferred method of historical reconstruction. The puzzle of human nature in relation to extreme violence, combined with the care required to honour the uncanny individual and communal suffering produced by it, seems best addressed in a unit of analysis that reproduces the phenomena on a human scale. It is the “small place” that is said to help us “think big.”

How to strike a graceful balance between analysis and detail, as noted by Mazower, remains a challenge, and works that adopt a micro-historical approach face the dilemma most sharply.² The painstaking research required to reconstruct the history of a town, county, or region often means years of plumbing the depths of local archives and private collections. Like William Faulkner’s fictional Yoknapatawpha county, which functions as its own universe for exploring issues of race, identity, cruelty, and their legacy in the American South, the studies that emerge from the efforts of these historians serve as laboratories for examining questions of murder, violence, evil, racism, antisemitism, and beyond in German-occupied Europe.³

In the last few years, a number of studies have taken novel approaches to writing about genocide and interethnic violence on the local level during the Second World War. Arguably among the most innovative and ambitious in their conclusions are Raz Segal’s study of the destruction of Jews in Subcarpathian Rus’ and Max Bergholz’s examination of the spiral of violence in the small Bosnian border town of Kulen Vakuf in the shadow of the Independent State of Croatia.⁴ Omer Bartov’s *Anatomy of a Genocide*, focused on the town of Buczacz (Ukr. Buchach) in the historic Eastern borderlands (*Kresy*) of Poland, represents the latest

¹ Mark Mazower, “God’s Grief,” *Times Literary Supplement*, 17 September 2010, 7–8.

² See Thomas Kühne and Tom Lawson, eds., *The Holocaust and Local History* (Edgware: Vallentine Mitchell, 2011); Claire Zalc and Tal Bruttman, eds., *Microhistories of the Holocaust* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2017).

³ See e.g. Jan Grabowski’s study of Dąbrowa Tarnowska county: *Hunt for the Jews: Betrayal and Murder in German-Occupied Poland* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013); Christopher R. Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (New York: HarperCollins, 1992); Jan T. Gross, *Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001); Christopher R. Browning, *Remembering Survival: Inside a Nazi Slave-Labor Camp* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2011); Shimon Redlich, *Together and Apart in Brzezany: Poles, Jews and Ukrainians, 1919-1945* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003).

⁴ Raz Segal, *Genocide in the Carpathians: War, Social Breakdown, and Mass Violence, 1914-1945* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2016); Max Bergholz, *Violence as a Generative Force: Identity, Nationalism, and Memory in a Balkan Community* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2017).

contribution to take a novel approach in this genre. Although the three differ in their methodology and conclusions, they share a shift away from the big cities toward more rural areas, against “the urban bias” of many studies on mass violence and civil war.⁵

As the title indicates, *Anatomy of a Genocide* seeks to document the “life and death” of a small town and its vicinity. In the context of the ethnic mosaic of historic Eastern Galicia, this means three main ethnic groups of Poles, Jews, and Ukrainians, whose “agony peaked at different times and often at the hands of different perpetrators, just as their propensity to collaborate with the occupiers depended on different factors and changing circumstances” (289). The crux of the book is of course the genocide of the Jewish community of Buczacz, with some overlap with the ethnic cleansing of Poles by Ukrainian nationalists and the spiral of violence that followed.

What is striking from the outset about *Anatomy of a Genocide* is the absence of the conventional scholarly apparatus typically found in similar regional studies. It is a book without an introduction, conclusion, or bibliography as well as any requisite tables or appendix, though it is densely packed with over a hundred invaluable real-time photos, documents, and maps culled from archives and collections after two decades of research. The book therefore largely goes silent on matters of methodology or historiography, which, where they appear, are generally relegated to the endnotes. In this regard, *Anatomy of a Genocide* discards the conventional apparatus more radically than Jan T. Gross’s *Neighbors*, whose narrative is punctured by vignette-like reflections on sources and historiography. For theoretical exposition or authorial intent, the reader has to turn to Bartov’s previously published articles on Eastern Galicia.⁶ These features are likely a reflection of the publisher’s desire to reach a broad readership, but it quickly becomes apparent that the decision is related to the book’s specific aim and style.

The book’s primary mode of narration is one of description and extensive quotation of primary source material taken from German documents, postwar trials, testimonies, and memoirs. With each major episode of the town’s history, the reader is presented with a kaleidoscope of perspectives and voices with minimal intervention by the author. This approach is most effective in descriptions of the major upheavals that rocked the region, such as the First World War and its aftermath, the short-lived West Ukrainian National Republic (ZUNR) that lasted eight months from late 1918 and early 1919, and the Soviet occupation from 1939 to 1941. Like Segal, Bartov sees the First World War as the watershed moment that “completely changed the rules of the game” from a period of nationalist incubation between 1848 and 1914 (36–8). The avalanche of mutual perceptions, misperceptions, stereotypes, and recriminations triggered by both wars functions here as a kind of heuristic in giving a nuanced picture of how the experience of invading armies, occupations, and state-building projects left a lasting and layered imprint on ethnic relations in subsequent years. The imagined and re-imagined communities of post-Versailles Eastern Europe unleashed a wave of irredentist claims, here between Poles and Ukrainians, which left the Jews in a losing situation by virtue of Jewish separatism (now seen as a political threat) and a related view that regarded the Jews as “not belonging to the land” (289).

Particularly noteworthy in this flux of shifting social relations is Bartov’s drawing attention to the frequently overlooked violence over Eastern Galicia between the Poles and the Ukrainians from 1918–20. The level of fraternal blood-letting in this period, which peaked in 1919 –

⁵ Bergholz, *Violence as a Generative Force*, 9.

⁶ Among others: Omer Bartov, “Wartime Lies and Other Testimonies,” *East European Politics and Societies* 25, no. 3 (2011): 486–511; “On Eastern Galicia’s Past & Present,” *Daedalus* 136, no. 4 (2007): 115–8; “Guilt and Accountability in the Postwar Courtroom: The Holocaust in Czortkow and Buczacz, East Galicia, as Seen in West German Legal Discourse,” *Historical Reflections* 39, no. 2 (2013): 96–123; “Communal Genocide: Personal Accounts of the Destruction of Buczacz, Eastern Galicia, 1941–1944,” in *Shatterzone of Empires: Coexistence and Violence in the German, Habsburg, Russian, and Ottoman Borderlands*, ed. Omer Bartov and Eric D. Weitz (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), 399–420.

including crucifixions, impaling, the cutting off of breasts, or the burning alive of the inhabitants of an entire village locked inside a manor by Ukrainians – was a foreshadowing of the violence to come, and “largely forgotten” given the even greater scale of ethnic cleansing and genocide that followed during the Second World War, as the author notes (78–81).

The kaleidoscopic perspective works best, in my view, in shedding light on the realignment of ethnic relations that took place under the second invasion and occupation of Poland by the Soviet Union from 1939–41, which has come to form its own Gordian knot of triangular ethnic recriminations in both scholarship and memory. Bartov rightly situates the long-standing allegation of Jewish collaboration with Communism (expressed in the term *żydokomuna* or Judeo-Communism) within the national trauma experienced by Polish elites with the collapse of the Second Republic. The “sociopolitical upheaval that inverted the order of things” was one in which national minorities slipped from under the thumb of Polish hegemony and “the Ukrainians and even more so the Jews, now had the upper hand, as the Soviets used them to enforce their rule” (131). Bartov characterizes this with the apt metaphor of a Polish stab-in-the-back myth towards its national minorities (133).

At its best, *Anatomy of a Genocide* is a veritable monument of words. Bartov uses his primary sources as a palette and directs the voices accordingly in the unfolding drama. The chink of theoretical armour is rarely heard in the text. The Hilbergian trinity of perpetrators, victims and bystanders is quickly washed away in this bottom-up account. The micro-historical register has the capacity, as historian Carlo Ginsburg wrote of Tolstoy’s work, “to communicate to the reader the physical, palpable certainty of reality”⁷ – a quality all the more desirable in an unflinching examination of genocide. It is not a book that seeks great explanatory power, but a sustained look at how genocide was perceived and experienced by all actors involved. In fact, *Anatomy of a Genocide* appears designed to resist mapping on patterns or a facile over-intellectualization.

Inevitably, however, questions arise whether the narrative method of deploying a multitude of individualized perspectives can be effectively sustained. Where it pays off, as in the above or in its presentation of the *Judenrat* and the Jewish police from a variety of perspectives (169–79), the unrelenting pluralism of perspectives ultimately catches up with the reader in other parts. At some point, the cataloguing of raw experiences brings diminishing returns and the reader begins to long for more traditional modes of historical explanation, causality, and pattern-making, if not the occasional touch of sociology.

This becomes noticeable in the author’s discussion of “the entire gamut of gentile engagement in Jewish fate” (258). In the last three years, I had the opportunity to work with colleagues affiliated with the Polish Center for Holocaust Research in Warsaw on a project led by Jan Grabowski and Barbara Engelking that examined the fate of Jews after the major “liquidation actions” of ghettos in occupied Poland during Operation Reinhard. One of the main points of focus were Jewish survival strategies in the context of the *Judenjagd*, or “hunt for Jews,” from about mid-1942 to the end of the war. The two-volume publication to come out of this effort examined a total of nine counties, most of them in the General Government and all written as microhistories.⁸ One of these studies dealt with the county of Złoczów in Eastern Galicia, northwest of Buczacz.⁹

In recent years, the *Judenjagd* has emerged as the great terra incognita in the historiography of the Holocaust on Polish lands. Bartov’s book undoubtedly adds to this scholarship. His

⁷ Carlo Ginsburg, “Microhistory: Two or Three Things That I Know about It,” *Critical Inquiry* 20, no. 1 (1993): 28.

⁸ Barbara Engelking and Jan Grabowski, eds., *Dalej jest noc. Losy Żydów w wybranych powiatach okupowanej Polski* [It is still night. The fate of Jews in selected counties of occupied Poland], Vols. 1–2 (Warsaw: Stowarzyszenie Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów, 2018). Abridged English-language version forthcoming.

⁹ Anna Zapalec, “Powiat złoczewski” [Złoczów county], in *Dalej jest noc*, Vol. 1, 623–760.

discussion of this process roughly overlaps with two chapters of the book (“The Daily Life of Genocide” and “Neighbors”). Of course, the author is under no obligation to subordinate his narrative to current scholarly trends, but I read these chapters with a sense of a lost opportunity in terms of the possibility to observe crucial patterns. I was struck by the relative absence of the countryside in the book, in which the outlines of the *Judenjagd* remain somewhat obscure. The absence of a clear map of the Buczacz region created specifically for the publication does not always allow the reader to get his geographical bearings, especially in reference to the numerous villages mentioned in the narrative.

The book does not map easily onto this emerging historiography. For example, it is not always clear how many Jews survived the Holocaust in the Buczacz region. According to the testimony of *Judenrat* member Dr. Bernhard Seifer, “over 1,000 human shadows emerged from the forests” after the first liberation of the town by the Red Army on 23 March 1944 (before it was re-occupied by the Wehrmacht on 7 April), adding that Buczacz was “the only town in Europe which could boast such a number of survivors” (173). In another place, the author states that a “few hundred Jews” emerged from hiding after this initial liberation (230). By the time the Soviets returned for good on 21 July, we are told that “fewer than a hundred Jews were still alive in the area” (230). Elsewhere, the author refers to “the more than two hundred testimonies by Jewish survivors of the German occupation of Buczacz” (256). Likewise, the major reasons for survival largely reproduce the ambiguity of the testimonies themselves. Seifer himself claimed that it was the work of specific members of the *Judenrat*, others attributed it to the Jewish resistance, while in another place the author writes that “most of the few survivors were saved by a German administrative official and a couple of Wehrmacht officers” (173–74, 259). It may be that the current historiography is in the grip of its own obsession surrounding numbers whose accuracy is bound to remain elusive, but a reader interested in these specific matters is left none the wiser after consulting the book.

In her study of Bielsk Podlaski county, Barbara Engelking found that the overwhelming majority of Jews to find long-term shelter did so in villages inhabited by remnants of the petty nobility, which had its roots in the economic colonization of the Lithuanian and Belarusian lands in the fourteenth century.¹⁰ These stood in marked contrast to the more antagonistic posture of villages dominated by the peasantry, whose serf ancestors were emancipated as late as the mid-nineteenth century. Given its history of Polish colonization and settlement, one would expect to find a similar pattern in Eastern Galicia. By the same token, in my own study of Dębica county in Western Galicia, Jews who inhabited villages prior to the war had a much higher survival rate than the Jews of the *shtetl*.¹¹ The relatively high proportion of Jewish inhabitants of villages (*Yid. dorf yidn*) are a unique legacy of Austrian rule in historic Galicia in contrast to lands partitioned by Prussia or Russia. Village Jews form a frequently overlooked cohort in the history of the Holocaust. We find a description of such an inhabitant, a tinsmith from the village of Łosiacz, in the testimony of Mikołaj Szczyrba on which Bartov draws: “The Jew Majer Warner was well liked by the local community. He was poor, he owned no great property, he did favours for people. He looked like an Aryan, he was light-haired, spoke Ukrainian well and this allowed him to walk around the region.”¹² The cohort of village Jews suggests that greater integration with the non-Jewish surroundings was a crucial element of survival. In contrast, *shtetl* Jews, who continued to play a more traditional role of a small-town middle-man minority, appear to have primarily turned to former business

¹⁰ Barbara Engelking, “Powiat bielski” [Bielsk county], in *Dalej jest noc*, Vol. 1, 168.

¹¹ Tomasz Frydel, “Powiat dębicki” [Dębica county], in *Dalej jest noc*, Vol. 2, 518. I estimate that as many as 50 per cent of the 268 survivors identified in my county were village Jews.

¹² Archiwum Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego w Warszawie [Archives of the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw (AŻIH)], testimony collection 301, file 3684, testimony of Mikołaj Szczyrba, 7.

acquaintances or employees for help. In *Anatomy of a Genocide*, a passing reference is made to the shelter of Alicja Jurman by “an eccentric elderly Polish nobleman living on the edge of a village,” who “defied all threats from local Ukrainians” (251). Perhaps more of the above elements were observed by the author in the course of his research, but they rarely appear in the narrative in a sustained fashion. Overall, the cataloguing register of the book, despite its *long durée* arc, tends to resist locating patterns.

As someone studying Western Galicia (District Krakow), I was drawn to *Anatomy of a Genocide* for key regional differences as well as points of convergence. The ethnic triangle of Poles-Jews-Ukrainians, the impact of the Soviet occupation, and the ethnic cleansing of the Polish population form the major elements of divergence in Eastern Galicia (District Galicia). In contrast, in Western Galicia, the axis of local violence directed at Jews came primarily from ethnic Poles, with the Polish “blue” police playing a similar role to the Ukrainian police. At the same time, from mid-1943 to the end of the war, thousands of Polish refugees from Volhynia and Eastern Galicia would seek shelter from Ukrainian violence in the territory of Western Galicia.

Given this ethnic mosaic combined with the fact that the “Final Solution of the Jewish Question” ran parallel to distinct policies aimed at different groups within the indigenous population (though certainly not in the same genocidal capacity), the study of genocide in East Central Europe faces a unique problem of how to write an “integrated history” of the Holocaust per Saul Friedländer’s dictum.¹³ Doris Bergen has written about the “ongoing challenge of producing an integrated history of the Holocaust.”¹⁴ The challenge becomes all the more pressing, in my view, on the scale of a microhistory, with its entangled web of victims, localized social processes, and links between patterns of violence. The context of Eastern Galicia in particular appears to beg the question of how to write such a history. Raz Segal has pointed to the “selective” integration as practiced by Friedländer. In his study of Subcarpathian Rus’, he therefore sought to foreground the “links between the layers of violence against different groups rather than the more common tendency to think about the fate of the Jews in comparison to that of another group.”¹⁵ As a corrective to Friedländer’s historical praxis in the context of East Central Europe, Segal’s study keeps a close eye on “the connecting threads in this multilayered system of violence,” where the Holocaust in practice is understood as “a nexus of multidimensional processes of mass violence.”¹⁶

Anatomy of a Genocide represents one answer to these questions. Yet I was surprised by the relative absence of a more sustained treatment of links between these various groups and social processes in this study of Buczacz and its vicinity. Given the frequent coupling of “Poles and Jews” vis-à-vis the Ukrainian nationalists or police formations in Eastern Galicia – such as in the exclamation “Death for the Jews and Poles, long live independent Ucraina [Ukraine]” after the mass murder of Jews on Fedor Hill – one would expect a series of continuing links between the dynamics of both groups (181). Timothy Snyder was perhaps the first to point out that the participation of Ukrainian policemen in the Holocaust in Volhynia in 1942 was an important precondition for the mass murder of Poles the following year.¹⁷ By the same token, in her study of Złoczów, Anna Zapalec found that while Polish underground structures were largely apathetic to the plight of the Jews, Polish-Jewish solidarity was nonetheless

¹³ See Saul Friedländer, “An Integrated History of the Holocaust: Possibilities and Challenges,” in *Years of Persecution, Years of Extermination: Saul Friedländer and the Future of Holocaust Studies*, ed. Christian Wiese and Paul Betts (London: Continuum, 2010), 21–9.

¹⁴ Doris L. Bergen, “No End in Sight? The Ongoing Challenge of Producing an Integrated History of the Holocaust,” in *Years of Persecution*, 289–309.

¹⁵ Segal, *Genocide in the Carpathians*, 17.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 17–18.

¹⁷ Timothy Snyder, “The Causes of Ukrainian-Polish Ethnic Cleansing 1943,” *Past and Present*, no. 179 (2003): 197–234.

much stronger in the region, with the vast majority of Jews taking shelter with local Poles as opposed to Ukrainians.¹⁸

Still, given ongoing scholarship that highlights other axes of integration, one wonders if they are relevant to the Buczacz region.¹⁹ For example, in my study of Western Galicia, I found that hunts for Jews ran parallel to hunts for escaped Soviet POWs, brutal roundups of Poles sent for forced labour in the Reich, partisans, Roma, and anyone targeted by the occupation authorities for that matter. The same testimony of Szczyrba cited by Bartov contains these elements, such as mention of a Soviet POW of Jewish background by the name of "Lova," who escaped German captivity, hiding together with Majer Alter's group, though they are left out of the narrative.²⁰

Another ambiguity concerns the scale of framing and its implications. Evgeny Finkel and Scott Straus have called for the need to distinguish the micro and meso levels of analysis in the study of genocide.²¹ In Western Galicia, I found that the great majority of individuals tried after the war for collaboration and the persecution of Jews did not represent a random sample of peasants, but those tried for collaboration on the basis of their ties to the "village security system" imposed by the German authorities, consisting of village heads, rotating village guards, a system of "hostages" (*zakładnicy*), foresters, gamekeepers, messengers and the like.²² The institutional role therefore largely determined the range of behaviour, not a shared ideological profile. These key meso-level structures of the countryside are not discussed in the book and one wonders how they differed in the region under investigation. The historic division between the town and the village remained strong in the Polish countryside. Jews who came into contact with the rural world for the first time did not always register these distinct roles, often describing their captors in homogenizing terms such as "peasants," "Christians," or "mobs." An overreliance on Jewish testimonies in this regard has its interpretive limit.

Overall, the dilemmas faced by rural societies receive passing mention in the book. Yet these factors were not unrelated to the conditioning of local societies in anticipatory obedience and the specific course that local violence could take. For example, in parts of Western Galicia, areas that experienced German state terror against locals for the shelter of Jews could rapidly transform into zones of communal violence against Jews, where collective fears of Jews revealing the identity of their former shelterers to the Germans under torture were mobilized.²³ These fears – real and imagined – often contained a grain of truth and are found scattered throughout the book (241, 245, 253, 281), as are acts of repression against locals for the shelter of Jews and others (254, 256, 282, 283). But without reconstructing this social dynamic in its entirety, it is difficult to understand how it played out on the local level. As Jan T. Gross once

¹⁸ Zapalec, "Powiat zloczewski," 742. Similar observations are found in Shmuel Krakowski, "The Attitude of the Polish Underground to the Jewish Question during the Second World War," in *Contested Memories: Poles and Jews during the Holocaust and Its Aftermath*, ed. Joshua D. Zimmerman (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2003), 102.

¹⁹ For instance, Volha Bartash has advocated for the inclusion of the Romani experience in Holocaust studies to help shed light on both genocides, see Volha Bartash, "Family Memories as Sources for Holocaust Studies: Insights from the Belarusian-Lithuanian Border Region," *S.I.M.O.N. – Shoah: Intervention. Methods. Documentation* 2 (2017): 4–16. Similarly, Jason Tingler has undertaken an integrated history of the Holocaust and mass atrocities of non-Jews in the counties of Chełm and Hrubieszów, see Jason Tingler, "Mosaic of Destruction: The Holocaust and Interethnic Relations in Chełm, Poland 1939-1944" (PhD diss., Clark University, in progress).

²⁰ AŻIH, 301/3684, testimony of Mikołaj Szczyrba, 8.

²¹ Evgeny Finkel and Scott Straus, "Macro, Meso, and Micro Research on Genocide: Gains, Shortcomings, and Future Areas of Inquiry," *Genocide Studies and Prevention* 7, no. 1 (2012): 56–67; Evgeny Finkel, *Ordinary Jews: Choice and Survival during the Holocaust* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017), 195–6.

²² Tomasz Frydel, "Judenjagd: Reassessing the Role of Ordinary Poles as Perpetrators in the Holocaust," in *Perpetrators and Perpetration of Mass Violence: Action, Motivations and Dynamics*, ed. Timothy Williams and Susanne Buckley-Zistel (Abingdon, OX: Routledge, 2018), 190–1.

²³ Frydel, "Judenjagd," 194–8.

observed, “each episode of mass killing had its own situational dynamics,” and these dynamics appear to have functioned alongside the forces of greed, ethnic hatred, and antisemitism described by the author.²⁴

In fact, it is very likely that the violence was itself transformative. The “identity politics” of daily life under a racist and genocidal regime, where categories of identity were now linked to questions of life and death, powerfully shaped all groups under occupation. As the sociologist and historian Marcin Zaremba observed, ethnic identification became paramount during the war, but in the absence of authentic state institutions and organizations, this led to a kind of “tribalization” of social relations along ethnic lines.²⁵ Despite the *long durée* narrative and the shifting landscape of identities and perpetrators in this “world turned upside down” examined in *Anatomy of a Genocide* (131, 259), the stability of ethnic categories and key terms such as “antisemitism” never comes under scrutiny, as it does in Segal’s examination.²⁶ The late Lee Ann Fuji questioned the very stability of “groups” and their ethnic logic in her work on the Rwanda genocide and called for a “dynamic approach” to explaining low-level genocidal participation.²⁷ Similarly, Doris Bergen and Donald Bloxham have drawn attention to the counterintuitive category of antisemitism or hatred as a product or *effect* of the Holocaust and participation in violence, as much as its *cause*.²⁸ It would seem that an “anatomy” of genocide at times requires more precise surgical tools, especially in the moments where identity was conditioned by periods of violence. Max Bergholz’s work on the power of violence to rapidly produce “far-reaching transformations in social relations, forms of categorization, and configurations of power,” often along an “ethnic axis,” may offer useful analytical tools in the context of genocide in Eastern Europe.²⁹

Thomas Kühne has suggested that *Anatomy of a Genocide* represents the “most convincing counter piece” to Timothy Snyder’s “top-down view” found in *Bloodlands*.³⁰ It is not clear if this is one of the book’s goals, but it does raise the question of the macro-level view. The centre-piece of the book, and to my mind its most effective and haunting chapter (“German Order”), concerns the reconstruction of the German occupation and its “surreal mix of horror and normality” for close to three years. “The tidy German homes were an island of normality floating on an ocean of blood,” writes the author, even as the tap water was polluted by the mass graves of Jews executed the same day on Fedor Hill and residents were instructed to use soda water for a few days (219–20, 222). Studies of the German occupation of the General Government and Ukraine in particular have emphasized the colonial nature of its *Herrenmenschen*.³¹ Martin Winstone has pointed out that the worst features of the General Government – labelled “the first colonial territory of the German nation” by its governor Hans Frank – were magnified in District Galicia (nicknamed “*Skandalizien*” for the German *Galizien*) in what Winstone called a “nakedly

²⁴ Gross, *Neighbors*, xxi.

²⁵ Marcin Zaremba, *Wielka trwoga. Polska 1944-1947: ludowa reakcja na kryzys* [The Great Fear. Poland 1944-1947: A Popular Reaction to Crisis] (Krakow: Wydawnictwo Znak, 2012), 129–31. For the German translation, see *Die große Angst. Polen 1944-1947: Leben im Ausnahmezustand* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2016).

²⁶ Segal, *Genocide in the Carpathians*, 9–13, 49–50.

²⁷ Lee Ann Fuji, *Killing Neighbors: Webs of Violence in Rwanda* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009), 11–21, 103–4.

²⁸ Doris L. Bergen, “Antisemitism in the Nazi Era,” in *Antisemitism: A History*, ed. Albert S. Lindemann and Richard Simon Levy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 198; Donald Bloxham, *The Final Solution: A Genocide* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 265.

²⁹ Bergholz, *Violence as a Generative Force*, 312–21.

³⁰ Thomas Kühne, Review of *Anatomy of a Genocide: The Life and Death of a Town Called Buczacz*, *Washington Independent Review of Books*, 9 April 2018.

³¹ Wendy Lower, *Nazi Empire-Building and the Holocaust in Ukraine* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007); David Furber and Wendy Lower, “Colonialism and Genocide in Nazi-occupied Poland and Ukraine,” in *Empire, Colony, Genocide: Conquest, Occupation, and Subaltern Resistance in World History*, ed. A. Dirk Moses (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010), 372–400; Patrick Bernhard, “Hitler’s Africa in the East: Italian Colonialism as a Model for German Planning in Eastern Europe,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 51, no. 1 (2016): 61–90.

colonial regime.”³² It seems to me that this specific colonial rule was the very oxygen of the ecosystem that permitted the “public and nonchalant nature of the killings and the perpetrators” sense of impunity and omnipotence, their absolute power over life and death,” described by the author (225). Yet the word “colonialism” is nowhere to be found in the discussion or the index, even as the German sources make references to “the construction of the East” (356, f17) and Jewish testimonies speak of fighting “the entire German empire” (256).

How should readers understand this lacuna? Does the macro perspective of colonialism truly find no corollary on the micro and meso levels in this patch of *Lebensraum*?

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Notes on Contributor

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³² Martin Winstone, *The Dark Heart of Hitler's Europe: Nazi Rule in Poland under the General Government* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2015), 30, 106.