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**Roman MYKHALCHUK**

*PhD (History), Professor of the Department of World History, Rivne State Humanities University, 12 Stepan Bandera Street, Rivne, Ukraine, postal code 33000 (r.mykhalchuk@ukr.net)*

**ORCID:** 0000-0001-9313-4830  
**ResearcherID:** AAD-6148-2020

**Roman SHLIAKHTYCH**

*PhD (History), Postdoctoral fellow of the Dnipro National University named after O. Honchar, Gagarin Avenue 72, Dnipro, Ukraine, index 49000 (shliakhtych\_rp@kneu.dp.ua)*

**ORCID:** 0000-0001-5877-3522

**Роман МИХАЛЬЧУК**

*кандидат історичних наук, професор кафедри всесвітньої історії, Рівненський державний гуманітарний університет, вул. Степана Бандери, 12, м. Рівне, Україна, індекс 33000 (r.mykhalchuk@ukr.net)*

**Роман ШЛЯХТИЧ**

*кандидат історичних наук, докторант, Дніпровський національний університет ім. О. Гончара, проспект Гагаріна 72, м. Дніпро, Україна, індекс 49000 (shliakhtych\_rp@kneu.dp.ua)*

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**VIDEO TESTIMONIES OF THE HOLOCAUST EYEWITNESSES  
IN THE REICHSKOMMISSARIAT “UKRAINE”: STRUCTURE,  
METHODOLOGY, POTENTIAL (ON THE EXAMPLE OF YAHAD-IN UNUM  
ARCHIVAL COLLECTION)**

**Abstract.** *The purpose* is to analyze the video testimonies of the Holocaust eyewitnesses in the Reichskommissariat “Ukraine” of the oral history collection of Yahad-In Unum (Paris, France). **The methodology of the research** is based on the principles of scientificity, historicism, problem historical methods, as well as methods of analysis and systematization. There have been two methods of utmost importance to our study, in particular, the historical typological method and the method of classification of sources. Due to the above-mentioned methods, it was possible to identify the main thematic blocks of interviews and determine their potential for the scholars, who dealt with the history of the Holocaust. The oral history method has become the leading one. **Scientific Novelty.** There has been devoted a separate study on the analysis of the Holocaust oral history sources by the scientific institution “Yahad-In Unum” regarding the situation of the Jews in the Reichskommissariat “Ukraine” for the first time in historiography. There has been analyzed the Jews situation during the Holocaust from the non-Jewish

testimonies perspective. There have been introduced a large number of unpublished oral sources into the scientific circulation. **Conclusions.** In the article there has been analyzed the methodology, structure of the oral history collection of Yahad-In Unum interviews, and the potential of these sources on the Holocaust study in the Reichskommissariat "Ukraine". The sources from the non-Jewish perspective testimonies shed light on the details of the Jews situation, their death, and survival during the Holocaust, which were not found in other official sources. In addition, there is the information about other victims of the Nazis – mentally ill people, disabled children, and the Gypsies (the Roma) in the French institution sources. The above-mentioned sources reflect the non-Jewish population involvement (by force and/or voluntarily) in the Nazi crimes regarding "the Jewish issue solution", the trauma of the Holocaust, and commemoration/memorialization during the post-war period.

**Key words:** Yahad-In Unum, video testimony, oral history, Patrick Debois, Holocaust, Reichskommissariat "Ukraine", archival sources.

## ВІДЕОСВІДЧЕННЯ ОЧЕВИДЦІВ ГОЛОКОСТУ В РАЙХСКОМІСАРИАТІ "УКРАЇНА": СТРУКТУРА, МЕТОДОЛОГІЯ, ПОТЕНЦІАЛ (НА ПРИКЛАДІ АРХІВНОЇ КОЛЕКЦІЇ ЯХАД-ІН УНУМ)

**Анотація.** *Мета дослідження* – охарактеризувати відеосвідчення очевидців Голокосту в Райхскомісаріаті "Україна" усноїсторичної колекції Яхад-Ін Унум (м. Париж, Франція). **Методологія дослідження** ґрунтується на принципах науковості, історизму, проблемно-історичного методів, а також методах аналізу і систематизації. Важливими для нашого дослідження були історико-типологічний метод та метод класифікації джерел. Їхнє застосування уможливило виділити основні тематичні блоки інтерв'ю та визначити їхній потенціал для дослідників історії Голокосту. Провідним став метод усної історії. **Наукова новизна.** Вперше в історіографії окрему розвідку присвячено аналізу джерел усної історії Голокосту наукової інституції Яхад-Ін Унум щодо становища євреїв в райхскомісаріаті "Україна". З перспективи неєврейських свідчень проаналізовано становище євреїв під час Голокосту. До наукового обігу введено велику кількість неопублікованих усних джерел. **Висновки.** В статті проаналізовано методологію, структуру проведення інтерв'ю усноїсторичної колекції Яхад-Ін Унум та потенціал цих джерел у дослідженні Голокосту в райхскомісаріаті "Україна". З перспективи неєврейських свідчень ці джерела висвітлюють подробиці становища євреїв, їхньої загибелі та виживання під час Голокосту, які не зустрічаються в інших офіційних джерелах. Крім того, в джерелах французької інституції наявна інформація й про інших жертв нацистів – психічнохворих людей, дітей-інвалідів, циган (ромів). Означені джерела відображають залучення неєврейського населення (примусово та/чи добровільно) до злочинів нацистів у "вирішенні єврейського питання", травму Голокосту, комеморацію / меморіалізацію в післявоєнний період.

**Ключові слова:** Яхад-Ін Унум, відеосвідчення, усна історія, Патрік Дебуа, Голокост, райхскомісаріат "Україна", архівні джерела.

**Problem Statement.** According to the prominent philosopher Karl Yaspers, history is memories that are given not only as knowledge, but also as a kind of soil "with which we maintain a connection in order not to disappear and to which, therefore, we owe our human existence (Yaspers, 1996, p. 184). Hence, the philosophers and historians understood the importance of the memories for an objective coverage of events and phenomena in the first half of the 20th century. Oral history is becoming an increasingly vital tool for its knowledge owing to the methodological approaches development, which are applied in order to understand the past. It is feasible to create those aspects of historical events and phenomena with the help of memories that cannot be studied using only official sources. At the same time, oral memories should not be idealized. They should be verified with the help of other sources. To our mind, there is no need to conduct such an analysis in this article, instead, we

offer to look at the oral memories from the perspective of their formation methodology, to analyze their internal structure. Furthermore, our aim is to show the potential of the video evidence from the collection of the French centre Yahad-In Unum for studying the Holocaust policy implementation in the Reichskommissariat "Ukraine" (hereinafter – RKU – *author*).

There were 7,982 video testimonies filmed in 12 countries in Yahad-In Unum's collection in May 2024. The paramount task of the above-mentioned organization is to find witnesses and record memories in Ukraine, where there have been interviewed 3,065 witnesses, 3,308 video testimonies have been filmed, and 1,298 sites of mass executions carried out by the occupiers in Ukraine have been identified (Mykhalchuk, 2024a, p. 104).

Almost 70% of these interviews describe the history of the Holocaust at the regional level in the settlements of the RKU. We analyzed the video testimonies of the Holocaust eyewitnesses and territories that were part of this occupation zone (about 500 interviews). Based on this information, we identified numerous stories that may be revealed based on the analysis of these testimonies. In general, they helped us learn about interethnic relations, about the exploitation and forms of violence against the Jewish community during the years of the Nazi occupation, as well as to reconstruct the shooting and identify the scene of this crime. The Jewish theme was not the main one for most of the interviewed witnesses, but for almost all of them, what they saw or heard was a traumatic experience that remained for a lifetime. Hence, witnesses, especially those, who saw crimes against the Jews with their own eyes, talk about these events in quite detail and indicate the places where they took place. We identified four main blocks of information based on this specificity of the sources: the pre-war life of the Jewish community; detection, discrimination and individual murders of the Jews during the autumn of 1941 – spring of 1943; the reconstruction of mass murders and identification of crime scenes; commemorative practices during the post-war period.

**Review of Recent Research.** It should be mentioned that the studies written by the founder of Yahad-In Unum, Patrick Desbois are considered to be important historiographical works. In particular, Desbois emphasized the relationship between the Holocaust witnesses and the Jews, who were usually their neighbours (Desbois, 2011; Desbois, 2013; Desbois, 2018). He mentioned local residents involvement in "the Jewish issue solution" by the Nazis, by forcing them to perform "dirty" work ("small death jobs"), such as digging up/burying corpses, searching and sorting through the clothes of murdered victims, etc. (Desbois, 2011).

Another French researcher, Daniela Rosenberg, analyzed the implementation of the Holocaust policies in Dnipropetrovsk general district based on video evidence collected by Yahad-In Unum team (Rozenberg, 2016). Daniela Rosenberg's study is an example of writing the history of the Holocaust from below, when the genocidal practices were analyzed through the memories of eyewitnesses and victims. Due to the approach, it was possible to see details of the mass shootings of the Jews and the reaction of the local residents to this crime that are not found in other sources. On the other hand, the book is an important component for popularizing the work of the French Yahad-In Unum team

The Ukrainian scholars intensified their Holocaust research significantly using the Yahad-In Unum source database. Roman Shliakhtych analyzed the Holocaust in the rural areas of Dnipropetrovsk region based on over 100 Yahad-In Unum oral testimonies (Shliakhtych, 2019), the murder of the Jews in the quarry of a brick factory in Hdantsivtsi (Shliakhtych, 2023), and the Jewish forced labour camps along the Kryvyi Rih–Dnipro highway (Shliakhtych, 2024). It was feasible for Volodymyr Zilinskyi to clarify the reaction of murderers, victims and witnesses during the Holocaust in Lviv region, based on these

sources (Zilinskyi, 2019) and analyze the sources of Yahad-In Unum in the study on the forced labour camps in Galicia district (Zilinskyi, 2024). Andriy Khoptiar singled out 82 actions of the Jews murder, in which about 115 thousand people died in Kamianets-Podilskyi region (Khoptiar, 2020). Yuriy Kaparulin not only described the Holocaust in Kalinindorf region, but also highlighted commemorative practices at the sites of the mass executions (Kaparulin, 2020). Yuriy Radchenko used Yahad-In Unum sources (83 video sources) extensively in his monograph on the auxiliary police, local administration, SD and the Shoah in the Ukrainian-Russian-Belarusian border region (Radchenko, 2024). Roman Mykhalchuk highlighted the role of civilians in the Nazi plans for the Holocaust in the general region of Volyn-Podillia (Mykhalchuk, 2020); he analyzed the role of the Jewish property in the dynamics of the Holocaust with the focus on the local non-Jewish population (Mykhalchuk, 2021), he highlighted the oral history sources of the Holocaust in the Yahad-In Unum archival collection on materials from Volyn and Podillia (Mykhalchuk, 2023), the potential of the Yahad-In Unum oral history collection in the Holocaust research (Mykhalchuk, 2024a), rape as a form of sexual violence during the Holocaust (Mykhalchuk, 2024b).

**The purpose** of the research is based on the analysis of about 500 interviews from the Yahad-In Unum collection, to reveal the structure of these interviews, describe the methodology for their creation, and determine the potential of these testimonies for researching the implementation of the Holocaust policy in the Reichskommissariat Ukraine.

### **Research Results.**

#### *Interview Structure and Methodology*

One of the paramount tasks of the Yahad-In Unum research expeditions was, on the one hand, to find eyewitnesses to the mass murders of the Jews, and on the other hand, to find the material remains of the Jewish settlements and discuss with the witnesses' interethnic relations in the region where they lived (Rozenberg, 2016, p. 34). The structure of each interview was formed in accordance with these tasks. The video evidence recorded by the French researchers had diverse information content, timing, etc.

For example, there were 15 interviews, which lasted from 8 to 20 minutes and were recorded from the territory of Zaporizhzhia region, which was part of the general district "Dnipropetrovsk" (Archive of Yahad-In Unum (YIUA), Testimony 403U; 404U; 405U; 414U; 417U; 420U; 421U; 422U). In total, the team recorded 39 interviews in the region. It could be explained by the fact that the largest concentration of the Jewish population in Ukraine was in its western regions. And the local non-Jews were very rarely not the witnesses or even the participants in the Holocaust. The Jewish population could be found in the southeastern regions of Ukraine, either in large cities such as Zaporizhzhia, Dnipropetrovsk, Kryvyi Rih, etc. or in the Jewish national districts: Stalindorf, Novozlatopilskyi, Kalinindorfskyi, etc. It should be mentioned that not all residents of the above-mentioned cities or villages saw with their own eyes what was happening to the Jews.

A researcher Yuriy Radchenko while comparing the Yahad-In Unum interviews with the Shoah Foundation interviews noted that they were not biographical. The interviewers asked questions that were specifically related to the history of the murder of the Jews in a given area. They were not interested in the witnesses' biographies, so it is difficult to make a clear judgment about the identity and views of the respondent (Radchenko, 2024, p. 34). However, almost all interviews have their own structure. Initially, the witnesses mentioned their year of birth, place of residence, parents' occupation, and family life during the 1920s and 1930s.

According to the French researcher Daniela Rosenberg, all witnesses interviewed by the

Yahad-In Unum team in Ukraine can be conditionally divided into three groups (Rozenberg, 2016, p. 35). The first group is the people, who directly saw the mass shootings of the Jewish population. There is about a third of them. The second group is made up of the witnesses to individual episodes of the Jews genocide and their discrimination (arrests and imprisonments, the creation and functioning of ghettos, robbery and rape, transportation of victims to places of execution, etc.). This is the largest group of witnesses – approximately 60% of all those interviewed. The third group is the witnesses, who lived near the Jewish colonies and towns and told what they heard from other people. There are about 10-15% of such respondents, depending on the region.

In order for all interviews to have a scientific context, and not just stories about the past, the Yahad-In Unum team developed a methodology and technique for conducting interviews. They were conducted at different times of the year and in any weather. The interview location could be the witness's house or a yard near the house. The respondents were also asked to show the place of the mass shooting and/or conduct an interview at this place. If the witness agreed to be interviewed at the crime scene, then in this case he was asked about the position of the executioners, the location of the victims and other participants in this crime. Depending on what the witness saw, the interview focused on certain specific points, for example, on the place of observation, imprisonment and transportation of the victims, the stages of the extermination process, the role of the perpetrators and their assistants, etc. (Rozenberg, 2016, p. 41).

No less important was the determination of the facts reliability that the witnesses spoke about. There was used the principle of using three agreed testimonies in order to establish the objectivity of the stated facts. Hence, the witnesses from Kryvyi Rih Mykola P. (YIUA, Testimony 942U) Nadiya S. (YIUA, Testimony 943U), Ivan I. (YIUA, Testimony 944U) told information about the shootings in the settlement of Hdantsivka (nowadays the part of the city of Kryvyi Rih – author). In particular, they testified about the number and location of pits in the quarry, about groups of the Jewish population, who were brought to this place for being murdered in 1941–1942. It should be mentioned that there coincide even the approximate dates of the shootings in their stories. All three also spoke about “Operation 1005,” which was carried out in this area in the autumn of 1943. There is information about the shooting of the Jews and their relocation to the ghetto in Ostrozhka in Volyn. Most witnesses indicate that the Germans forced the non-Jewish residents to bury the graves of the murdered Jews. Such details were consistent in the interviews with witnesses Liubov (YIUA, Testimony 77U), Leonid, and Mykola (YIUA, Testimony 78-79U). The stories of Tamara (YIUA, Testimony 80U), Heorhiy (YIUA, Testimony 81U), and Anatoliy (YIUA, Testimony 82U) described the ghetto for the Jews in the town of Ostroh.

In cases where there was no consistent testimony, the story could be verified by the ballistics examination at the site of the alleged shooting. It happened in the village of Putylivka in the Stalindorf Jewish National District, when the witness's words were confirmed by shell casings and personal belongings of people killed at the site (Rozenberg, 2016, p. 43). It should be kept in mind that oral testimonies are the subjective sources, they should be compared with other sources by cross-examination (Hrinchenko, Rebrova, Romanova, 2012, p. 180).

Hence, the interview structure developed by the French researchers and their methodology helped scholars to analyze the “Bullet Holocaust” from the perspective of the witnesses to the crimes, and the Yahad-In Unum sources supplement the traditional source base with important/exclusive information.

*The potential of the video evidence collected by the Yahad-In Unum team  
for the Holocaust researchers*

It is impossible to carry out the study on the genocides of the 20th century without the oral testimonies' involvement of the victims, witnesses and even perpetrators. Such sources are used nowadays in order to study the policy of implementing the Holocaust in the Reichskommissariat "Ukraine". The collection of video testimonies of Yahad-In Unum is valuable and, in some cases, even unique precisely because it is based on the testimonies of the Holocaust eyewitnesses. The Holocaust was not the main topic of their interviews for obvious reasons, for some of the witnesses, but only a kind of background against which their personal lives and the lives of their loved ones took place. However, only witnesses, especially those, who saw the crimes against the Jews with their own eyes, told unique details that cannot be found in any other source. Hence, without a doubt, the above-mentioned interviews have significant potential for studying the genocide of the Jewish population during the Nazi occupation of Ukraine.

One of the first stories we encounter in the interview is related to the pre-war experience of the respondents. For example, a witness from the village of Novoyuliivka in the present-day Kryvyi Rih district recalled that there was the Jewish settlement called Rotfield near her village. Children from this settlement went to school in the village of Novoyuliivka, and the witness's class also included the Jews (YIUA, Testimony 1083U). Another witness from the village of Kamianka in Cherkasy region recalled that there were many Jews in the village before the German occupation. They lived separately in the village near the Tiasmin River, and the Jewish children went to a separate school (YIUA, Testimony 2026U). Another witness, Mykhailo A. from the Ukrainian village of Vysoke, in Dnipropetrovsk region, recalled that the Jews from the Krasindorf colony had stone houses with iron roofs and "a black loudspeaker that often broadcast music" (Rozenberg, 2016, p. 61). During the Holodomor, the Jewish settlements did not suffer as much as the Ukrainian ones, although they were located nearby (YIUA, Testimony 982U). The residents of the Jewish settlements had the opportunity to hire non-Jews (mostly the Ukrainians – *authors*) to do housework or to look after children (YIUA, Testimony 1074U). These testimonies reflected different aspects of the Ukrainian-Jewish life before the beginning of the Nazi occupation. On the one hand, the Ukrainian and the Jewish peasants lived nearby, their children went to the same schools, were friends, they worked together on the collective farms and at various enterprises. But on the other hand, some of the local peasants were openly jealous of the Jews, especially of their supposed wealth, better living conditions, etc. At the same time, all witnesses, who lived in the Ukrainian SSR say that this jealousy did not lead to pogroms or other interethnic conflicts during the pre-war period. After all, even the Germans were forced to state that during the occupation of post-Soviet Ukraine, "attempts to provoke the Jewish actions failed. The reason for this is that in the eyes of the average Soviet person, the Jews lead a proletarian lifestyle, and, hence, are not an object for attack" (Pohl, 2009, p. 245). One more reason could be added, in particular, the joint overcoming of difficult situations created by the Stalinist totalitarian regime. One of them was the Holodomor of 1932 – 1933. For example, a witness from Oleksandria, Valentina Ya., said that during the Holodomor, her family was helped to survive by her mother's Jewish friend Ustiniia Nikitichna. She sold food at the local market and was able to feed the witness's family (YIUA, Testimony 2027U). Nataliia M. from the village of Torhovytzia, Kirovohrad region, also survived during the Holodomor. At that time, she was caring for a child in a Jewish family, ate with them, which is why, she was able to survive (YIUA, Testimony 2029U).

It should be mentioned that the witnesses from the territories of modern Rivne and Volyn regions had a different experience. After all, they lived in the interwar period as part of the Polish state, which pursued a policy different from the USSR. There were diverse interethnic relations in Volyn during the interwar period. They were not cloudless, but not catastrophic either. Most of the analyzed sources of Yahad-In Unum testified to positive reflections of good-neighborly relations. Many of such stories were based on a trade and economic basis. According to Maksym Hon based on the example of the city of Rivne: "The "interethnic borderland" was supplemented by the contacts of those representatives, who run businesses and created jobs for the freelance workers, despite their socio-cultural identity. The Poles, the Ukrainians, and the Russians usually bought certain goods in stores owned by the Jews. The Artisans or merchants (of the above-mentioned nationalities) produced their products as they hoped that the Christians would be interested in it" (Hon, 2018, p. 16). The Jewish and non-Jewish children went to school together, spent time together after school, and played together. According to a non-Jewish witness from Olyka: "There were no conflicts with the Jews, the children played together" (YIUA, Testimony 1773U). The witness recalled the Jewish classmates – Eisenberg, Eisenstein, Hait in Dubno and noted: "We lived among the Jews, we communicated... We knew many Jewish words, especially stupid ones" (YIUA, Testimony 1379U). The Jews in Boremel said goodbye to their classmates and waved as they were taken to be shot when there was the "solution of the Jewish issue", which confirmed the friendly relations of the interwar period (YIUA, Testimony 1337U).

In our opinion, the interwar experience of the respondents allowed us to show the Holocaust not as an event confined in space and time, but as a dynamic situation that developed even before World War II broke out and became possible during the years of the German occupation of Ukraine.

The evacuation process was one of the first stories related to the occupation and spoken about by the witnesses. Taking into consideration the eyewitness accounts, we can identify several factors that prevented the majority of the Jewish population from evacuating. In particular, there was the lack of time to leave. It could be applied to the western regions of the Ukrainian SSR, which were occupied first and where the evacuation process was not established by the Soviet authorities. In addition, this is the idea that the Germans would not do anything bad to the Jews. Hence, in the settlement of Naybot, which was located in the Crimea, there was a local Jew named Zvanetsky. He was engaged in water supply in the village and was sure that the Germans needed various workers, including the Jews. Therefore, nothing bad could happen to them (YIUA, Testimony 393U). The Jews did not leave the Inhulets colony and other Jewish settlements near Kryvyi Rih, because the elderly had already seen the German occupation of the 1918 model. They also thought that the Germans, who approached them in the summer of 1941 would behave in the same way as they did twenty-three years ago. Another factor that complicated evacuation for some Jews was the socio-economic conditions in which they lived. For example, numerous respondents stated that the heads of the institutions and enterprises with their families, heads of collective farms, party functionaries, etc were the first to evacuate from the Jewish settlements and large cities. There were the Jews among them. Hence, the "rich" Jews with their families left the village of Oleksandrivka in Kirovohrad region even before the arrival of the first German units. Instead, the ordinary collective farmers were forced to remain in the occupation, which almost none of them survived (YIUA, Testimony 2035U). Therefore, it was almost impossible for the ordinary people, workers and peasants, to evacuate. And those, who remained in the occupation experienced all the charms of the "new order".

The eyewitness accounts clearly show the discrimination policy against the Jewish population, which began in the first days of the German occupation. Typical of most interviews is the information that in the first days and weeks of the occupation, the Jews lived freely in their homes, but later everything changed (YIUA, Testimony 909U; 411U; 1996U). The Jewish communities in the cities and villages of the RKU began to be concentrated in ghettos, they were forced to wear armbands, and they were also imposed with large taxes and fines and forced to work, very often, in jobs that were not typical for them.

There was confirmed the existence of at least 442 ghettos in Ukraine. (Altman, Y. et al, ed., 2011, p. 210). The first of them were formed at the beginning of the occupation. These were the ghettos in Balyn, Domachevo, Kupel, etc. (Dean, M. et al, ed., 2012, p. 1316). According to the data in the “Encyclopedia of Ghettos and Camps, 1933 – 1945” in the territory of the general district “Volyn-Podillia” there were 134 of them (Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 2012, pp. 1322–1508). However, other data suggest that there could have been as many as 150. All ghettos were overcrowded. In the Boremel ghetto there were 20–25 houses (YIUA, Testimony 1343U), which an eyewitness described as “small, like little houses” (YIUA, Testimony 1337U). The Jews slept in the open air in the overcrowded Kozhan-Horodka ghetto (YIUA, Testimony 185B). A witness from Hoshcha noted that the Jews slept on the floor “like little pigs” in the local ghetto (YIUA, Testimony 1431U). The Jews could not feel safe, being subjected to the physical, sexual, and moral abuse while staying in the ghetto. The German commandant forced the Jews to dance in Kostopil ghetto (YIUA, Testimony 1787U). The Germans entered the ghetto at night and committed sexual violence in Brest (YIUA, Testimony 161B).

There were established six ghettos in Dnipropetrovsk region, four of which were established in the countryside around Kryvyi Rih: the villages of Novo-Vitebsk, Kamianka, Inhulets and Freydorf (Dean, M. et al, ed., 2012, pp. 1621–1622). In such ghettos, the Jewish families lived in a certain part of the village, but it was usually not fenced off, as in cities and towns. According to the testimonies by the residents of the Jewish colonies, it becomes clear that in almost all villages, in 1941 – 1942, the Jews were concentrated in separate houses and forced to work, mainly in agriculture. At this time, the local police, authorities, and sometimes the Germans and local residents robbed the Jews and abused them. For example, in the village of Novo-Vitebsk local Jews were forced to live in an open ghetto established on one of the village streets (Dean, M. et al, ed., 2012, p. 1631). This ghetto began to operate in September 1941. The Jews lived in groups of 5–6 families in one house. They were not guarded, but at the same time they were forced to wear an identifying sign – the “the Star of David”. Witness Klavdiia M. recalled that there were 6 local policemen in the village and it was they who abused the Jews living in the ghetto and later shot them. There were sent to work all physically strong Jews from the ghetto to a forced labor camp on the DG IV route, and those who remained in the village were shot. The witness recalled that the women, who were forced to work on the route had children left in the village and were soon killed. Klavdiia M. recalled two women, whose children were killed, they survived the camp, and after the war they were witnesses at the trial of the local policemen (YIUA, Testimony 926U).

The Jews were forced to wear “the Star of David” from the first days and weeks of the German occupation and generally go through a process of “dehumanization of the victim”. They were forced to perform humiliating practices and were publicly mocked. For example, in the village of Kamianka, Cherkasy region, the local police officers forced the Jews to dive into a winter river under the ice. If a person swam out, they survived, but many Jews drowned

in the icy water (YIUA, Testimony 2026U). Humiliating anti-semitic measures were applied to the Jewish workers. When the Jews were leaving the Luninets ghetto for work, they were forbidden to walk on the sidewalks, but only along the road (YIUA, Testimony 190B). The practice of involving the Jews in the hardest work was quite widespread (cleaning toilets, various waste, using people to transport goods, etc.).

Many witnesses saw or heard personally how and who gathered and escorted the Jews to the place of murder (the policemen and the Germans). At the same time, there were the testimonies in which, when asked by the interviewer: "Who are these people?", the witnesses preferred not to give specific names, because among them could have been their acquaintances, relatives, neighbours.

There could be found information in the testimonies regarding the mass executions of the Jews were carried out by the Germans. Usually, witnesses could not identify the units to which the murderers belonged, but they remembered their uniforms, the number of the criminals and the weapons they fired from. For example, a witness from the city of Oleksandria recalled that the Jews were escorted to the place of execution by the Germans and the policemen. The Germans were dressed in green uniforms, and the policemen were in civilian clothes, only on their heads were military caps. The Germans were armed with the machine guns (YIUA, Testimony 2028U). There were six Germans who shot the Jews near the village of Pershotravneve in Dnipropetrovsk region. They were also assisted by six local policemen, who escorted the Jews to the place of execution (YIUA, Testimony 948U). There were four individuals, who shot the Jews and the Roma in the area of the city of Molochansk in the summer of 1942 (YIUA, Testimony 420U). Numerous witnesses identified the German soldiers in green military uniforms. Hence, this could be evidence of the involvement of the Wehrmacht soldiers in the Holocaust.

Sometimes there were carried out mass shootings only by the police officers without the Germans participation. For example, a witness from the village of Novo-Vitebske recalled that the shooting of the local Jews was carried out by the police officers by themselves. During the shooting, they drank alcohol and shot until they ran out of ammunition. After that, they killed the wounded with iron bars, and small children were beaten against the wheels of carriages and thrown into a pit. In total, there were six police officers in the village of Novo-Vitebske, almost all of whom were convicted after the war. A police officer, who was called Nedilko, was asked at the trial whether he felt sorry for shooting women and children, replied that he did not feel sorry, but only felt sorry for two twin girls, who hugged each other before the shooting (YIUA, Testimony 926U). When analyzing the criminal cases filed against the local criminals, it is sometimes difficult to establish the personal involvement of the police officers directly in mass murders. Therefore, the eyewitness accounts are a very important source for establishing the truth.

We can also find more or less exact dates of the executions and the time of their execution in some interviews. The witnesses, as a rule, mentioned the season and year of the execution, but it is rare to find an exact date. Hence, according to a witness from the village of Bobrynets, Kirovohrad region, the execution of the Jewish population took place in the summer, apparently in 1942 (YIUA, Testimony 1995U). According to a witness, the shooting took place in December 1941 in another village, Pidvysoke, in the same region (YIUA, Testimony 2039U). Other witnesses from this village stated that the frequency of the shootings of the Jews occurred twice a week, every Tuesday and Friday (YIUA, Testimony 2038U). Therefore, such details should be carefully checked, because human memory cannot

always accurately reflect time and climatic conditions, especially when it comes to events 80 years ago.

In the eyewitness accounts there was mentioned the rescue of the Jews during the shooting. As a rule, the Jews were saved after the murder itself, when they were able to climb out of the pit and hide with the local non-Jews. Only one boy managed to climb out of the pit and escape after the shooting of the Jewish population near the village of Oleksandropil, Dnipropetrovsk region (YIUA, Testimony 1057U). During the shooting near the village of Turkenivka, one girl was wounded. She was pulled out of the pit by the local residents and later sent to her relatives in Mariupol. That is how she survived (YIUA, Testimony 1595U).

Sometimes, the respondents also told about cases when the Jews were released from the shooting site by the executioners themselves. A witness Mykola M. from the village of Kostiantynivka, Zaporizhzhia region, was among a group of people, who were to be shot. But a local policeman recognized him and released him (YIUA, Testimony 407U). In addition, there were recorded unsuccessful rescue attempts. For example, after the shooting of the Jews from settlement No. 20, which was located in Dnipropetrovsk region, a boy named Vania survived. He came back to the village, but he was soon discovered by the police and shot (YIUA, Testimony 462U).

The areas, where the Jewish population was shot, other groups of local residents were also killed. For example, mentally ill people and disabled children (YIUA, Testimony 419U). There was also frequent information about the executions of the Roma. According to German ideology, the Roma as well as the Jews were the representatives of a “lower race”, who had no right to exist. There were recorded numerous examples of the murders of Gypsies (Roma) in the territory of the general district “Volyn-Podillia”. In particular, in those territories that are currently part of modern Ukraine (YIUA, Testimony 448U; 453U; 471U; 861U; 1481U; 1794U), as well as in those that are part of southern Belarus (YIUA, Testimony 156B; 185B). According to a witness, about a hundred Roma of all ages and genders were shot in an anti-tank ditch in Nikopol in southern Ukraine. Later on, the Jews were also shot at the same place (YIU, Testimony 947U).

No less important was the economic factor, which also made the Holocaust possible on a large scale. The witnesses interviewed by the Yahad-In Unum team often mentioned the looting of the Jewish property (Mykhalchuk, 2021). As a rule, these lootings took place after mass shootings, when the Jewish houses remained empty (YIUA, Testimony 415U; 1473U), or directly at the shooting site (YIUA, Testimony 407U). A characteristic feature of the Jewish property looting left behind after the liquidation of the ghetto was the participation of the peasants from neighboring villages in this process. There could be such examples in Volyn, which include the interviews about the looting of the ghettos in Ozeryany (YIUA, Testimony 1461U), Sernyky (YIUA, Testimony 544U), Horynhrad (YIUA, Testimony 1402U) etc. According to the eyewitness accounts, who described the looting of the ghetto the following: “They took things and dismantled houses” (YIUA, Testimony 1398U), “those who wanted furniture, and those who tore up the floor, took the boards. In short, they took whatever they wanted” (YIUA, Testimony 840U) та ін.

The witnesses from various localities said that in their settlements there were involved in the looting of the Jews, the German and Romanian soldiers (YIUA, Testimony 392U) and very often, local police officers (YIUA, Testimony 2037U) and the representatives of the local authorities (YIUA, Testimony 2015U). There were also cases when the Germans punished the looters, including police officers, for such activities. For example, in the village

of Turkenivka, police officer Skyba took off a gold wedding ring from a murdered man at the scene of the shooting. The German saw this and killed him for it (YIUA, Testimony 1595U). Such acts of punishment were committed not because the Germans sought justice for the Jews, but rather because of their desire to loot the Jews themselves.

Thus, the stories about the different stages of the Holocaust were the main ones in the interviews recorded by the French researchers. The commemorative practices at the sites of mass shootings in the post-war period is another important story that stands out in many video testimonies. Some witnesses mentioned the exhumation and identification of the victims of the shootings. For example, a witness from the village of Krasnoselivka in the Crimea saw the reburial of the victims of the mass shootings, which took place in 1957. After that, a memorial sign was erected at the site of the reburial (YIUA, Testimony 396U). It was mentioned in diverse interviews that after the end of the occupation, monuments were built at the sites of these crimes, even spontaneous ones (YIUA, Testimony 2023U; 419U; 2030U). However, there were also areas where there was never a single monument. For example, more than two thousand people were killed in a brick factory quarry in Kryvyi Rih, but this place wasn't marked in the city's memorial space (Shliakhtych, 2023, pp. 34–40). The situation is similar in Western Ukraine. For example, the witnesses from the territories of Volyn-Podillia general district mentioned the absence of the memorial signs after the shooting of both local Jews (YIUA, Testimony 1791U), and Gypsies (Roma) (YIUA, Testimony 185B). On the contrary, the monuments were erected under the Soviet rule in other settlements. For example, in 1945, a memorial sign was erected in Vyshnivtsy (YIUA, Testimony 841U), a separate monument to executed children in Domachevo (YIUA, Testimony 136B) etc. The narrator Maria Yosypivna gave an interview near a monument erected under the Soviet rule in Kremenets (YIUA, Testimony 1361U). In addition, there could be found information about post-war trials of collaborators in the witness testimonies – the police officers, who committed crimes against the Jewish population (YIUA, Testimony 840U).

**Conclusions.** Hence, the eyewitness accounts recorded by the Yahad-In Unum team are of great importance for an objective study on the history of the Holocaust. The witnesses of this crime saw and told many details due to which it was feasible to recreate various aspects of the Holocaust more deeply in individual localities. The vast majority of witnesses interviewed by French scholars were the Ukrainian peasants. The continuity of their memories made it possible to show the Holocaust as a social and dynamic phenomenon. After all, this crime was committed by people (some witnesses specify these people), and other people died as a result of this crime. During this time, against the background of mass murders, the local Jews became victims of dehumanization, were mocked, robbed, raped, etc. It was done by the Germans and their allies, local authorities and police, as well as some local residents.

Mass murders had their own characteristics in different localities, but were carried out according to a similar procedure. The Jewish population was shot immediately and completely in some villages and towns, while in others they were allowed to live for a longer period of time. The witnesses shared their horrifying experiences during interviews, especially those who saw this crime with their own eyes. They talked about the preparatory stage for the shooting (how the shooting site was prepared, how the victims were collected and escorted to this place, who escorted them, etc.) and about the crime itself (who shot, how many criminals there were, when this crime took place, approximately how many people died, what happened to the property of the murdered Jews, etc.). Another plot that we can record in interviews is stories about commemorative practices at the crime scene in the post-war period. The

witnesses shared their memories of monuments, commemoration of the dead, and the current state of these places. Many of the storytellers suffered from psychological trauma, because terrible memories accompanied them throughout their lives.

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