

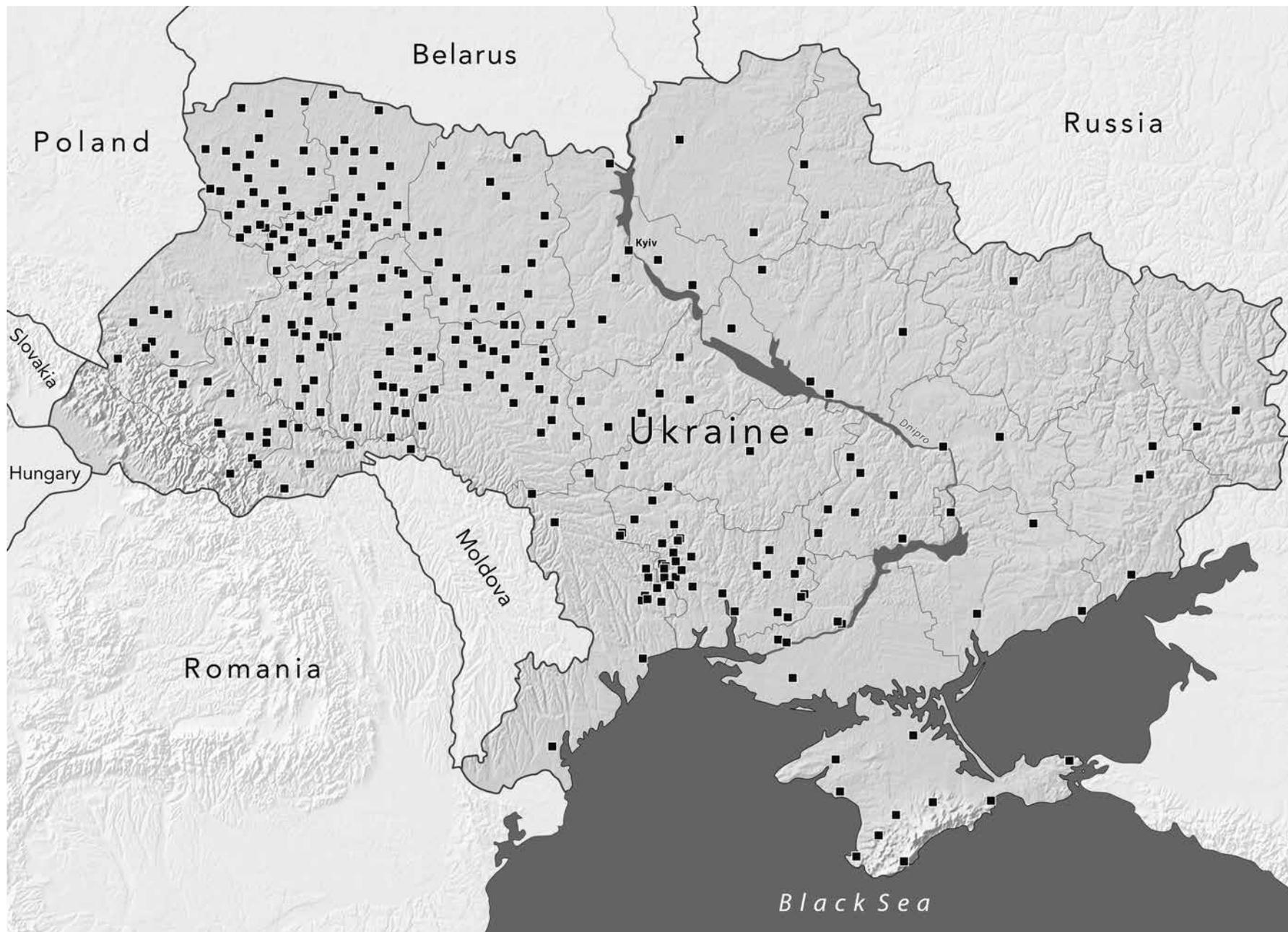


PROTECTING MEMORY
PROTECTING AND MEMORIALISING
HOLOCAUST MASS GRAVES IN UKRAINE

During the German occupation from 1941 to 1944, over one million Jewish children, women and men were murdered in mass shooting operations and hastily buried throughout the territory of present-day Ukraine. The international project *Protecting Memory* was established with the aim of transforming the neglected and forgotten mass graves of Jews and Roma into dignified places of remembrance and to provide historical information and preserve the memory of the victims for the present and future. The project was funded by the German *Federal Foreign Office* and carried out from 2016 to 2019 by the *Foundation Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe* in close cooperation with the *Ukrainian Center for Holocaust Studies* (Kyiv).

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Map of present-day Ukraine showing 300 towns and villages where shootings of 500 or more Jews were carried out between 1941 and 1944. Mass shootings also took place in many other communities.

Andrej Umansky/Alexander Kruglow (content), mr-kartographie, Gotha (cartography)

THE »HOLOCAUST BY BULLETS«

The »Holocaust by bullets« is still a little-known chapter in the history of the genocide of European Jews. Around two million Jewish children, women and men died between 1941 and 1945 as a result of mass shootings carried out by German SS, police and military units and their local auxiliaries.

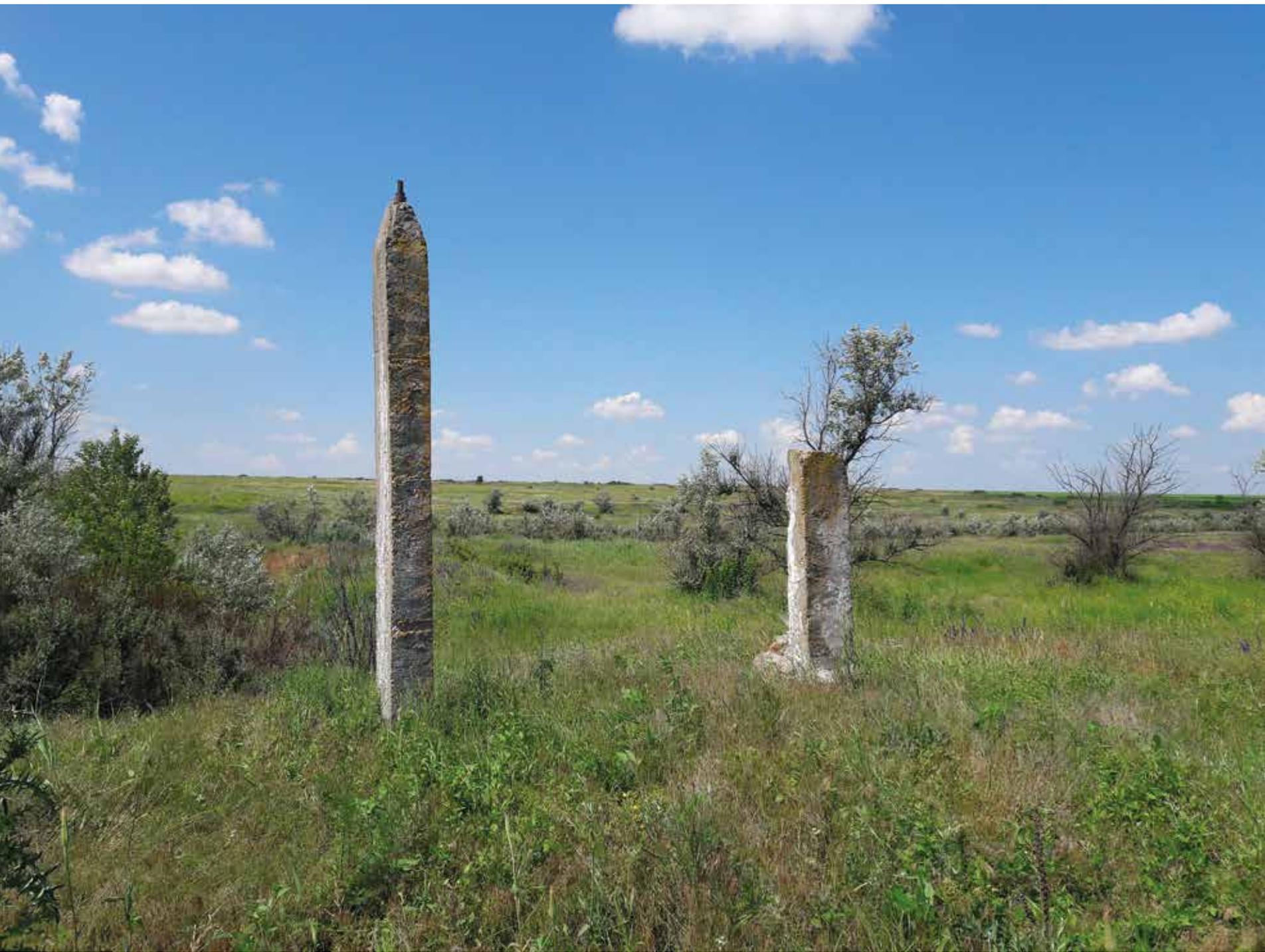
The systematic murder began with the invasion of the Soviet Union on 22 June 1941. The National Socialists' anti-semitic and anti-Bolshevist world view considered Jews to be the driving force behind the Soviet state. Special Einsatzgruppen (mobile killing units) were set up and given the order to shoot Jewish men. They later targeted women and children as well. In some cases, so-called gas vans were also used to commit murder. According to current estimates, more than 1,900 Jewish communities in the occupied Soviet territories between the Baltic Sea and the Black Sea were destroyed as a result of these crimes. The number of mass shooting sites was far greater. Only a small number of Jews were hidden by non-Jews and thereby able to survive. Roma, Soviet prisoners of war and patients with mental or physical disabilities were also murdered in mass shootings.



Mizocz (Poland, under Soviet occupation from 1939, now Ukraine),
14 October 1942: members of the Jewish community prior to their shooting.
Gustav Hille, Národní archiv, Prague, ČVKSNVZ, Az. 338/75



The shooting of Jews in Dubossary (Moldovan SSR) on 14 September 1941
by marksmen from Einsatzkommando 12 of Einsatzgruppe D.
Imperial War Museum, London



THE MASS GRAVES TODAY

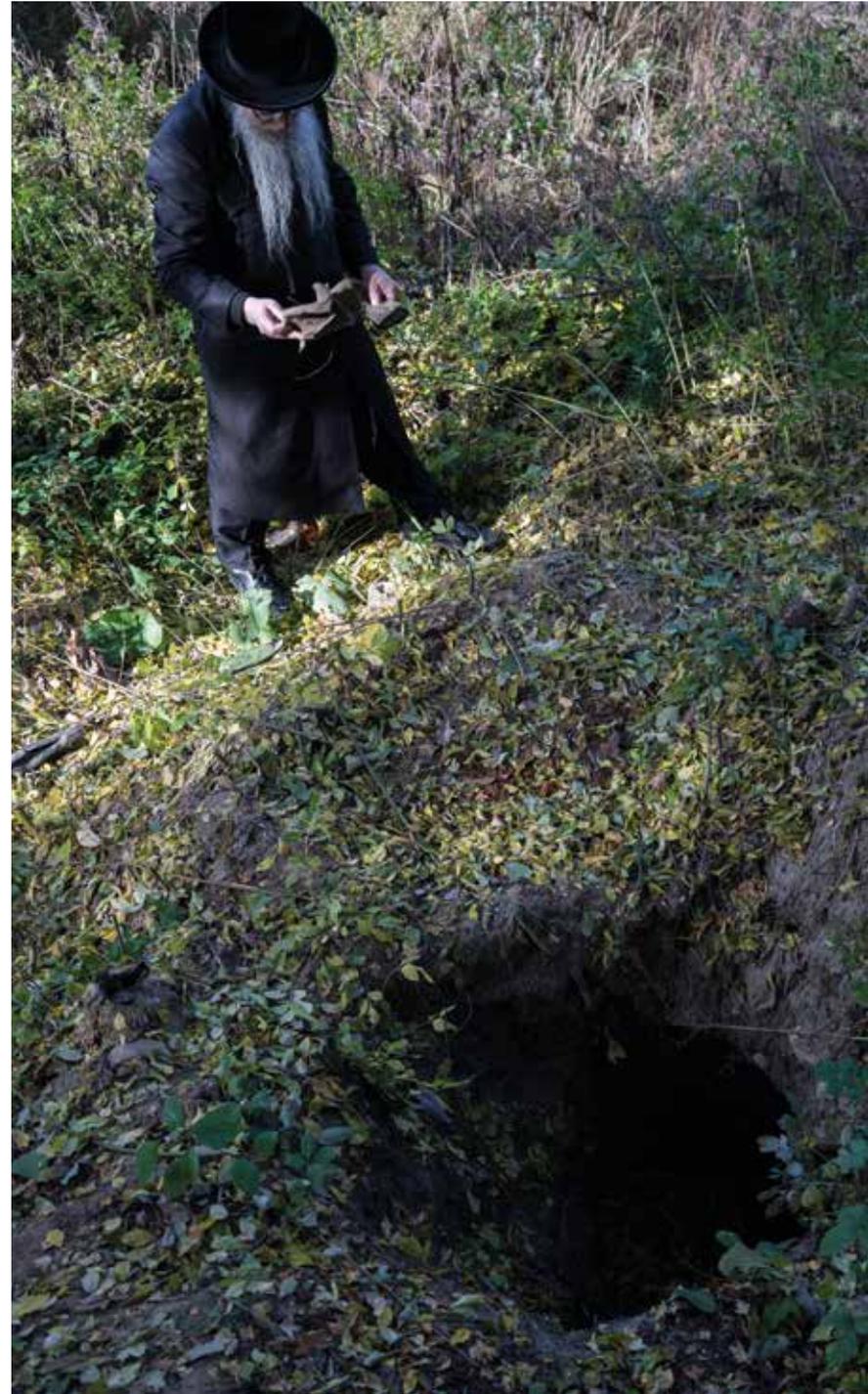
There are an estimated 2,000 mass shooting sites on the territory of present-day Ukraine alone. In remote ravines and forests, in the middle of fields, in former anti-tank ditches or in sand quarries, entire Jewish communities were wiped out, often within the space of a few days. Memorials were put up at some of the murder sites during the Soviet era, but other sites faded into oblivion after the war. Today, hundreds of mass graves remain unmarked, unprotected and neglected. Desecration of the graves often lends them a desolate appearance. Many of the sites are used for agriculture.



Zymivnyk (formerly Kuibyscheve), 2016: remains of a memorial at a neglected mass grave in southern Ukraine (Kherson oblast). In many parts of this region Jews were thrown alive into deep wells.

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Khazhyn, 2018: the mass grave on the outskirts of the town of Berdychiv was repeatedly subject to illegal excavations. A representative of the *Committee for the Preservation of Jewish Cemeteries in Europe* recovers human remains.





THE PILOT PROJECT

Six decades after the end of the German occupation, the organisation *Yahad-In Unum* began to record the geographical location of mass graves in the former Soviet Union. The project is led by the French priest Father Patrick Desbois. His study, which is funded by the *German Federal Foreign Office*, is based in particular on interviews with contemporary eyewitnesses. Inspired by this project, in 2010 the *American Jewish Committee Berlin* launched an initiative to protect and memorialise mass graves in Ukraine. By 2015, five sites in the west of the country had been transformed into dignified memorial sites, the work again funded by the *Foreign Office*. *Protecting Memory* was originally conceived as a pilot project with the aim of establishing appropriate approaches to deal with Holocaust mass graves. From the start, the project has been accompanied by educational programmes designed for schools in the region.



Bakhiv (western Ukraine), 2015: the memorial site recalls the mass shootings of more than 8,000 Jews from Kovel in June 1942 and protects four mass graves.

Ostrozhets (western Ukraine), 2015: memorial site with a memorial plaque and information stele dedicated to the approximately 800 Jews shot in October 1942.



IDENTIFYING THE GRAVES

The sustained impact of the pilot phase led the *Foreign Office* to continue the project in 2016. Supervised by the *Foundation Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe*, the *Protecting Memory* project entered a new phase in its work to protect and identify mass graves. In conjunction with its Ukrainian partners, the Foundation designed fifteen memorial sites, three of which are dedicated to murdered Roma.

Non-invasive methods were used to identify the boundaries of the graves in order to comply with Jewish religious law (Halacha) and so as not to disturb the graves. The graves and the immediate vicinity received administrative protection by transferring the plots concerned into communal ownership, redesignating their function as memorial sites and making corresponding changes to cadastral maps.

Vakhnivka, 2016: Members of the *Centre of Archaeology at Staffordshire University* using ground penetrating radar at the New Jewish Cemetery. A section of the mass grave had been marked with a red metal fence.





HISTORICAL RESEARCH

Historical research has been a central feature of the project from the outset. The analysis of early reports by the Soviet Extraordinary Commissions and of documentation from German court proceedings helped to establish the possible location of the mass graves before the start of the archaeological investigations. However, along with identifying and protecting the graves, *Protecting Memory* also aims to remember those who were murdered and the communities in which they lived as well as to provide details of the crimes. For this reason, steles have been put up at all of the memorial sites, featuring information about the victims, perpetrators and crimes. The academics involved in the project have carried out groundbreaking work in this respect as in most cases the places selected for the memorialisation of Holocaust mass graves are in small communities into which there has been little to no research to date. The lack of sources on places where Roma were murdered presents an additional challenge.



Berdychiv town archive: Mykhaylo Tyaglyy, a historian from the *Ukrainian Center for Holocaust Studies* who is working on the *Protecting Memory* project, examines a historic document on the Jewish history of the town.



Kolodianka, 2016: project coordinator Aleksandra Wróblewska with Ananii Makarchuk. He and his brother Arkadii witnessed the mass shooting while working as cowherds.
Foundation Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe



Chukiv, 2016: the historian Mykhaylo Tyaglyy with an eyewitness who could remember Jewish forced labourers in the village.
Foundation Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe



EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES

The results of the historical research are also used in the educational activities run in schools in the regions where the project sites are located. An educational programme has been developed with the aim of motivating teachers, pupils and students to explore their local history independently and to become ambassadors for the new memorial sites. In May 2018 students from Zhytomyr and Vinnytsia universities conducted interviews in the project localities. They wanted to find out how individuals and collectives in communities affected by the Holocaust remember what happened. With guidance from the *Ukrainian Center for Holocaust Studies*, a project partner, the results are being analysed and written up for use in additional educational and historical programmes beyond the remit of the project.



Kyiv, 2017: seminar for teachers as part of the *Protecting Memory* project



Oral history project with students from the Ivan Franko State University in Zhytomyr, 2018



Oral history project with students from the Ivan Franko State University in Zhytomyr, 2018



CONSTRUCTION WORK

Once the exact location of the mass graves had been identified it was possible to begin planning the design of the memorial sites and information steles. The four architects working on the *Protecting Memory* project – Taras Savka and Anastasiia Hulevata from Lviv and Anton Oliinyk and Iryna Tsyba from Kyiv – had to overcome a series of challenges. The architectural transformation of the sites had to make the dimensions of the mass graves clear but at the same time also protect the graves from being opened and desecrated. The task was on the one hand to create dignified memorial sites with accompanying information, but on the other hand to find cost-effective and sustainable solutions. The experiences gained in the process should provide other initiatives with the knowhow to protect further mass graves.



Samhorodok, 2019: work on the new memorial site. The previously erected obelisk, which does not refer to the victims, has been retained. A representative of the *Committee for the Preservation of Jewish Cemeteries in Europe* oversees the construction work.



Khazhyn, 2019: the topography presented a particular challenge to protecting the mass graves.



Forest near Plyskiv, 2019: here too an existing obelisk has been retained. A layer of gravel is intended to protect the mass grave from being disturbed.

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В 1941-1944 ГОДАХ ЖИЗНЬ И САНКТУАРИИ
ТА НАРКОНАЛЬНИХ СЕЛАХ БЫЛО ЗАВЛЕЧЕНО ИНИЦИАТИВНО
ОККУПАТОРНОЙ ТА ИА ИМАЕТ ИВНИ САНКТУАРИИ
НА ОДНОМ МЕСТЕ БЫЛО ПОКТО ИРОВАНО 500 СЕПЕР
ИЕХАИ ОШУИ ИХИ БСЮИТ-САРПАН И БСЮИ
ПРОВОУ ЖИТТЯ.

ТАКЖЕ ТАКОЖ ПОСТИВЛЮИХ ТИТ ИС ИЕРОВАИ
ПОВСАКОРОИ ИАДРЕИНО.

BETWEEN 1941 AND 1944, JEWISH LIFE IN SANKHODOK
AND THE SURROUNDING VILLAGES WAS ERADICATED
BY THE GERMAN OCCUPIERS
AND THEIR SUBORDINATE AUTHORITIES.
APPROXIMATELY 500 JEWS WERE MURDERED AT THIS SITE.
MAY THEIR SOULS BE BOUND IN THE BOND OF
EVERLASTING LIFE.

IN MEMORY OF 45 UNKNOWN PERSECUTERS OF WWII WHO
WERE ALSO SHOT HERE.

ТАКЖЕ ПОСТИВЛЮИХ
ПОВСАКОРОИ ИАДРЕИНО



INAUGURATION OF MEMORIAL SITES TO MURDERED JEWS

The *Protecting Memory* project has established fifteen memorial and information sites in twelve communities. Twelve of the sites are dedicated to the murdered Jews and three to the murdered Roma. The memorial sites were inaugurated in June and September 2019. Relatives of families who used to live in the communities travelled from the US, Israel and Australia to attend. Large numbers of people from local communities and schools were also present at the deeply moving ceremonies, despite blazing heat in June and high winds and low temperatures in September. The speakers at the various sites repeatedly pointed out that Jewish history is part of Ukraine's national history.



Samhorodok, September 2019: school pupils placed a doll on the protected mass grave to signify that almost half of the 500 victims were children.



Kolodianka, June 2019: Zehava Dotan and her family talking to villagers. Her mother was from the village and survived the Holocaust. At the front of the picture to the right is Ananii Makarchuk. He witnessed the shootings, in which some of his Jewish classmates were murdered.



Vakhnivka, September 2019: the well-attended inauguration of the memorial site at the New Jewish Cemetery.

VAKHNIVKA



The memorial site in the middle of a forest outside Vakhnivka. In the spring of 1942 at least 400 Jews from the village were killed here in a single day.



Memorial site at the New Jewish Cemetery in Vakhnivka. It is dedicated to the approximately 40 Jewish victims buried in a mass grave here.

PLYSKIV



Between 1941 and 1943 the perpetrators mainly used the former livestock cemetery outside Plyskiv to carry out shootings of Jews from this village and the surrounding area. The biggest such »operation« took place in October 1941, when over 500 Jews were shot here in a single day.



On the initiative of a local businessman, a section of the mass grave in Plyskiv has been protected by a concrete fence. During the project, a memorial stone and information stele have been added to the memorial site.



CHUKIV

In February 1943 around 300 Jews from the Chukiv forced labour camp who were considered unfit for work were shot or beaten to death at a nearby site. Most of the victims were from the Romanian-occupied parts of Ukraine.



SAMHORODOK

On 4 June 1942 at least 500 Jews, half of them children, were shot in a field outside Samhorodok. Fifteen Soviet prisoners of war were also murdered there.



KOLODIANKA

Around 100 Jews from Kolodianka and the surrounding area were murdered in a nearby field. Archaeological investigations have been unable to determine the exact location of the graves. An information stele has been put up alongside the memorial dating from the 1990s.



BARASHI

In autumn 1941 more than 170 Jews from Barashi and the surrounding area were murdered in a field about 4 km from the centre of the village and hastily buried in two mass graves.

LIUBAR



At the time of the 1939 census, over 1,800 Jews were living in the small town of Liubar (around 70 per cent of the total population). Most of them were murdered in autumn 1941 in a nearby sand quarry. An information stele has been added to the existing memorial site.



Around 500 Jewish men from Liubar were shot outside the town in August 1941. Archaeological investigations have been unable to determine the exact location of the graves. An information stele erected as part of the project and a memorial stone placed at the site by a local resident serve to commemorate the victims.

LYPOVETS



From the end of April 1942 more than 950 Jews were shot in a field near Lypovets and hastily buried in two mass graves. One of the graves was protected by large trees, while the other was repeatedly damaged as a result of agricultural activity.

KHAZHYN



The mass grave in Khazhyn is one of several located in and around Berdychiv. From mid-August 1941 this site was repeatedly used to carry out mass shootings of Jews, and most likely also of Soviet prisoners of war. The high number of victims, which the Soviet Extraordinary Commission put at 10,656, along with the regular looting of the graves, made the protection of this site a priority.



Representatives of the *Committee for the Preservation of Jewish Cemeteries in Europe*, the local rabbi, the chairman of the Jewish Community of Berdychiv and two archaeologists from the *Centre of Archaeology at Staffordshire University* survey the desecrated graves in Khazhyn, April 2017.

KHAZHYN



The newly-designed memorial site, October 2019.



The ravine was reinforced and covered with stones in order to better protect the graves.



THE EXHIBITION IN BERDYCHIV

Located in central Ukraine, in the 19th century Berdychiv was a multicultural town. By around 1900 Jews made up some 80 per cent of the town's population. Crafts and trades flourished. The town was a centre for the Hasidic religious movement. The Polish-Catholic population also played a significant role in the life of the town. According to the Soviet Investigation Commission some 30,000 Jews were murdered during the German occupation in mass shootings in the town and surrounding area.

In conjunction with the town's annual Holocaust commemoration, on 16 September 2019 an open-air exhibition was inaugurated at the central memorial site in Berdychiv. German and Ukrainian project partners worked closely together to produce the exhibition. Along with diplomatic representatives from Germany, Israel and the US, a large number of local residents attended the inauguration. The exhibition consists of information panels in three languages. These describe Jewish life in the town and how it was destroyed, as well as the difficult process of establishing fitting ways of commemorating the murdered Jews.



Berdychiv, September 2019: Holocaust commemoration at the town's central memorial site and inauguration of the open-air exhibition.



View of Berdychiv, around 1900. To the left is Uspenski Cathedral, to the right the Discalced Carmelites Monastery, and at the front of the monastery to the left is the three-storey Old Town Synagogue. Foundation Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe



Berdychiv, Great Choral Synagogue, the place of worship for the town's non-orthodox Jews. The building has been used a factory since the 1960s.

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MYKHAYLO VAINSELBOIM

Mykhaylo Vainshelboim was born in 1928 and lived with his family in Berdychiv. In summer 1941 the family's home was destroyed in a Wehrmacht air raid and they moved to live with an aunt in the ghetto set up by the Germans. On 15 September 1941 members of the Ukrainian auxiliary police entered the house. The German occupiers had decided to murder the vast majority of the Jewish population. Mykhaylo managed to escape. His mother and three siblings were taken to the airfield and shot. The Germans initially spared his father as he was a skilled craftsman. On 3 November 1941 he was forced to walk to Sokulino with Mykhaylo. There they had to undress. They said their last goodbyes. The 13-year-old boy hid in tall grass, crawled away and was ultimately received help from the Savelkos, a non-Jewish family. After liberation he returned to Berdychiv.



The Yudanin and Vainshelboim families before the war. More than 30 members of Mykhaylo Vainshelboim's family were murdered in and around Berdychiv.

Privately owned



GALINA SHULYATYTSKA

Galina Shulyatytska was born in 1932 to Yuhim Sendler – a Jew from Berdychiv – and his Christian wife Raissa Shulyatytska. At the time of the German invasion the family was living in Belarus, where Yuhim Sendler ran a factory. He was called up to serve in the Red Army, while Raissa fled with her three children. Galina's two younger siblings, Violetta und Heinrich, died due to a lack of food and other essentials. Galina only narrowly escaped a mass shooting in Bobruisk. In December 1941 Raissa and Galina reached Berdychiv. It was hard for them to find anyone to take them in. They lived in constant fear of being discovered. However, they survived. Yuhim Sendler went missing during the war and is presumed to have died. After the war Galina graduated from the teacher training institute in the town and worked in a evening school.



Galina (left), with her mother, father
and sister Violetta

Privately owned



REMEMBERING THE MURDERED ROMA

Roma were also victims of mass shootings between 1941 and 1944. Around 12,000 children, women and men died in German-occupied Ukraine. 139 sites of these crimes have been recorded so far. The Romanian leadership, which was allied with the German Reich, had around 25,000 Roma deported to the Romanian-controlled regions in southern Ukraine between the Dniester and Southern Bug rivers. More than 11,000 Roma perished there. To remember the crimes against Roma, in June 2019 the *Protecting Memory* project dedicated two memorial sites with information steles near the villages of Kalynivka and Divoshyn in northern Ukraine. In Ivanopil the project put up an information stele by the site of a grave where Roma have been reburied. The emotional inauguration ceremonies were of great significance for Roma in Ukraine, who are often subject to harassment in the society.



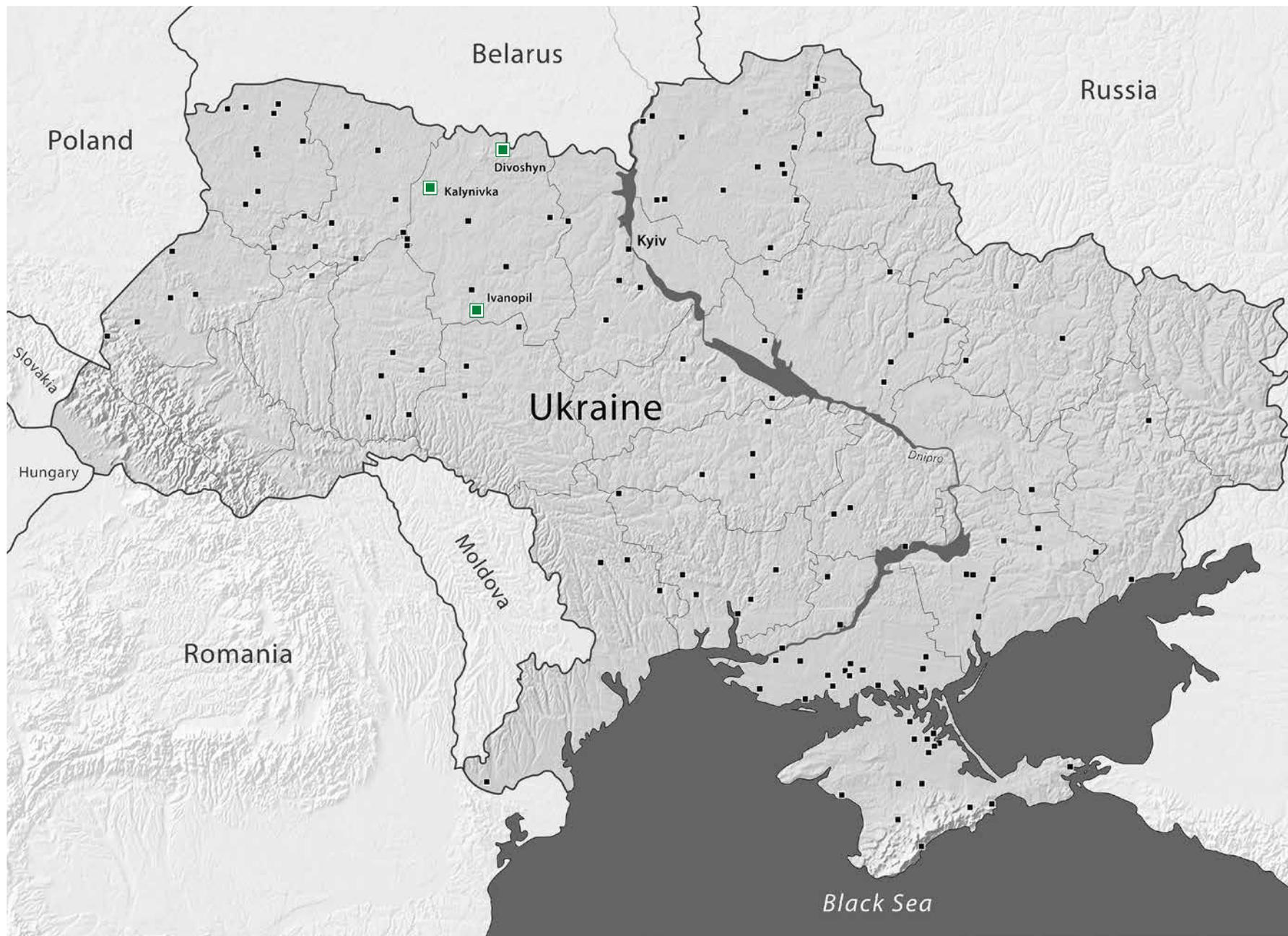
Ivanopil, June 2019, inauguration of the information stele.



Divoshyn, June 2019: a large number of people attended the ceremony, including local residents and guests who had travelled there specially.



Kalynivka, June 2019: villagers attend the official opening of the memorial site in the searing heat.



Map of 139 documented sites where Roma were murdered between 1941 and 1944 on the territory of present-day Ukraine. The three *Protecting Memory* memorial sites dedicated to murdered Roma are highlighted. Mykhaylo Tyaglyy (content), mr-kartographie, Gotha (cartography)



Divoshyn, June 2019: actors from *Romans*, a Roma theatre ensemble from Kyiv, perform at the inauguration of the memorial site along with their director, Igor Krykunov. In 1942 around 80 Roma were shot on the outskirts of the village of Divoshyn.



Kalynivka, June 2019: according to information from the Soviet Extraordinary Commission, during the German occupation 32 Roma were burnt alive in a barn near the village.

Ivanopil, October 2019: between 40 and 80 Roma were murdered in Ivanopil in 1942. The information stele is dedicated to all victims of the German occupation of Ivanopil: Jews, Roma, Soviet prisoners of war and genuine or alleged political opponents of National Socialism.





CREDITS

The *Protecting Memory* project is run by the *Foundation Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe* in conjunction with the *Ukrainian Center for Holocaust Studies* in Kyiv. It is funded by the *German Federal Foreign Office*.



Auswärtiges Amt



The *Foundation Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe* is a federal foundation, which is responsible for the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, the Memorial to the Homosexuals Persecuted under the National Socialist Regime, the Memorial to the Sinti and Roma Murdered under the National Socialist Regime and the Memorial and Information Point for the Victims of National Socialist »Euthanasia« Killings. The law establishing the foundation additionally requires it to contribute to »ensuring that all victims of National Socialism are remembered and honoured appropriately«.

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Unless specified, all photos are by Anna Voitenko,
Foundation Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe.



In August 2019 the German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas opened an exhibition on the *Protecting Memory* project in the *Federal Foreign Office*. It is planned to show it in Ukraine too as a touring exhibition.

Foundation Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, Photo: Marko Prieske

Cover photo: Liubar, June 2019: Maia Bondarchuk, the only Jewish resident of this small town, with a photo of her grandparents, who were murdered.