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### **Erroneous Methods in J.-P. Himka's Challenge to "Ukrainian Myths"**

For some time now, Professor John-Paul Himka has been campaigning against what he calls "Ukrainian myths about traumatic aspects of the twentieth-century." On 28 March 2011, he explained his chosen mission in his address at the University of Alberta. An abridged version of his text can be found on the Internet under the title "Interventions: Challenging the Myths of Twentieth-Century Ukrainian History" [http://www.foa.ualberta.ca/Research/~media/University%20of%20Alberta/Faculties/Arts/Faculty%20Site/Research/celebration\\_jph\\_march28.pdf](http://www.foa.ualberta.ca/Research/~media/University%20of%20Alberta/Faculties/Arts/Faculty%20Site/Research/celebration_jph_march28.pdf)>. Regrettably, what Himka has produced in this article is not a good history of the tragic events, and his analysis of the myths that they engendered is flawed. His paper is not helping to set the historical record straight, nor does it contribute to the formulation of positive myths of national consolidation, crucial for newly independent states like Ukraine. Himka's approach tends to reinforce anti-Ukrainian mythologies.<sup>1</sup>

Himka feels that, both as an academic and a public intellectual, he has a responsibility and a moral duty to challenge what he regards as myths, and because of his "self-identification as a Ukrainian", he can do it "from the inside." The two "core myths," as Himka sees them, that have become the objects of his indignation are: (a) the claim that the Ukrainian famine of 1933 was genocide, and (b) the denial that OUN and UPA participated in the Holocaust. What bothers the historian is that these myths are instrumentalized and exploited in tandem. Himka complains: "The genocide argument is used to buttress another campaign, to glorify the anticommunist resistance of the Ukrainian nationalists during World War II." Since he regards the nationalists, i.e., OUN and UPA, as being implicated in the Holocaust, he considers their glorification unacceptable. Rejecting the nationalist (in his opinion) view of Ukrainian history, Himka concludes that "a revisionist treatment" is "not only appropriate, but obligatory."

If Himka's presentation gives the impression of a *déjà vu, déjà entendu* – there are good reasons for it. Anybody who remembers the Soviet war on the Ukrainian diaspora in the 1980s will recall Douglas Tottle's *Fraud, Famine and Fascism: The Ukrainian Genocide Myth from Hitler to Harvard* (Toronto, 1987). Tottle's pseudo-scholarly treatise left a similar impression. Only his accusations were more blatant and thoroughly mendacious with regard to the Soviet famines of 1921–23 and 1932–33. With Soviet aid, and echoing Soviet propaganda, Tottle accused Ukrainian nationalists of criminally collaborating with the "fascists" and then fleeing to the West where, as refugees, they promoted the myth of a man-made famine in Ukraine in order to deflect attention from their own crimes and to gain sympathy as victims of Communism. Unlike the Soviet propagandists, but like Himka today, Tottle did not deny the famine: the gradual opening of Soviet archives was making that argument untenable. The similarity in

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Tottle's and Himka's positions resides in their rejection of the Ukrainian genocide and their paramount interest in the Ukrainian involvement in the Holocaust.

Calling on his training as a historian, Himka writes: "Once I took up the project of clarifying the history of the Holocaust, I submitted the topic [to – RS] the usual disciplinary procedures, which include researching in primary sources and rethinking in relation to existing research." In line with such sound scholarship, he pledges to "uncover the truth," because "truth is a value in and of itself". These are laudable qualities. What is regrettable, however, is that the author, despite linking the two issues in tandem, seems to pursue only one of the two selected "myths"—the wartime activities of the OUN and UPA.

Himka gives no assurance of the same attention to the Ukrainian genocide. He tells us that his interest in the famine flowed out of his work on the Holocaust, and seems to keep it limited to that initial motivation. Thus, while he has conducted "a number of undergraduate and graduate seminars on the Holocaust," he only led one seminar on the famine of 1932–33. He gives no indication that he has done extensive archival research on the Ukrainian genocide or even read the main published documents and scholarly literature on the subject. His claim, therefore, that he exposed his students to different perspectives and "tried to find the best presentations of the varying points of view" rings somewhat hollow, especially after one learns from his course outline that the first seminar meeting was devoted to Tottle's fraudulent book. Lemkin's seminal article on the Ukrainian genocide did not even figure in the course bibliography. Himka's accusation that his opponents have avoided "serious and honest confrontation" with his arguments or "with the sources on which they rest" seem to be a mirror image of his own attitude in the Ukrainian genocide debate.

Himka's essay deals with facts and ideas (interpretation, definitions, and conceptualizations) about "holocaust," "Holodomor," "genocide," and "myth." All of these subjects demand a rigorous methodological approach and precise formulation. Unfortunately Himka often treats his facts and ideas loosely, evasively, and irresponsibly. It may be, as he admits, that writing short texts results in oversimplification and that they tend to be sloppier. Since it is only 3,500 words maybe one should indeed be more indulgent when criticizing Himka's essay. But it seems to me that the author must honor his claim of rigorous truth-seeking scholarship and profound inside knowledge of Ukrainian realities. I do not think that these qualities are reflected in such statements as the following two examples: "While Yushchenko pursued his campaign to have every country recognize the famine of 1932-33 as a genocide, he [was – RS] simultaneously suppressing the history of the other genocide, the Holocaust." The accusation against Yushchenko's suppression of the history or the commemoration of the Holocaust is serious: it reflects badly not only on the president of Ukraine, but also on that country's national policy. Unless Himka can show that such state policy actually existed, he is contributing to the creation of an anti-Ukrainian myth.

In another passage, Himka leaves it to the reader to guess whether or not there were Jewish doctors in the UPA: "The myth maintains that Jews served as doctors in UPA, and therefore UPA rescued, rather than killed, Jews." A logical interpretation of this sentence leads to the conclusion that since the UPA killed Jews, there could not have been any Jews in its ranks. Other historians, however, claim otherwise. Was it to dissimulate these and other ambiguities and apparent falsities in his text that Himka offers this confusing explanation: "In speaking of the views I oppose as mythologies, I do not always mean to make truth claims"?

### The Holodomor — History or Myth?

Before answering the question whether the Holodomor should be considered a genocide in fact or a myth, it is necessary to clarify the terms we are using—“the Holodomor” “genocide,” and “myth.”

Himka fails to elaborate on the meaning of “Holodomor” and “genocide,” and he only makes a cursory comment about his use of the term “myth.” Since he does not define genocide, we are left unaware whether Himka accepts Lemkin’s comprehensive definition of the Ukrainian genocide as a four-pronged attack by the Communist regime against the Ukrainian nation. He defines myths as “unexamined components of an ideologized version of history.” In other words, he does not distinguish myths from history, but considers myths to be bad history, which are used for an unworthy purpose. By contrast, the Oxford online dictionary gives other usages of myth: “an exaggerated or idealized conception of a person or thing,” and makes no connection with history. Similarly, in the Merriam-Webster dictionary we read: “a popular belief or tradition [...] embodying the ideals and institutions of a society or segment of society.” It follows that myths are not history, and that all myths are not bad or necessarily used in a harmful way. There is an interesting online literature on the positive characteristics and beneficial uses of myths. Genocides, including the Holocaust and the Holodomor, have been written up in good and bad historical narratives and also have become overgrown with a lot of mythology. Some of the myths are noxious and some benign. The mythical elements accompanying the Holocaust and the Holodomor do not impinge on their characterization as genocides. That qualification depends on other criteria.

On the issue of the Ukrainian genocide, Himka writes: “In the *mythicized* version, Stalin unleashed the famine deliberately in order to kill Ukrainians in mass and thus to prevent them from achieving their aspirations to establish a national state. I, however, point out that the precondition for the famine was the reckless collectivization drive, which almost destroyed Soviet agriculture as a whole. [...] My somewhat more nuanced view is a problem for the mythologists, who want the world to recognize that the famine, or as they call it – *the Holodomor*, was a *genocide* as defined by the United Nations in 1948” (emphasis added – R.S.) Contrary to Lemkin’s definition, Himka erroneously limits the notion of genocide to the starvation of Ukrainian peasants, and so he has a conceptual problem with the Holodomor.

The “more nuanced view” that Himka offers for explaining the famine is the specious argument that “the precondition for the famine was the reckless collectivization drive, which almost destroyed Soviet agriculture as a whole.” In other words, the starvation was caused by collectivization, which was the same throughout the Soviet Union.

There are two problems with his argument. First, as Himka himself admits, there were local and specific conditions in Ukraine: “particularly severe measures applied in those regions.” The famine there “was connected with a major offensive against perceived nationalism in the [C]ommunist [P]arty of Ukraine”; as a result “the famine in Soviet Ukraine and in the Ukrainian-inhabited Kuban region of Soviet Russia was more intense than elsewhere in the Soviet Union.” Himka even quotes a clause from the UN Convention on Genocide to show that “what happened in Ukraine in 1932-33 could fit” the description in the document.

Second, Soviet documents show that collectivization and the opposition to it did not reduce the quantity of cereals and other food products in the USSR to below famine levels. Students of Soviet economic history agree that in 1932 and 1933 the USSR had enough foodstuffs to feed the whole population. It was only necessary to stop confiscating all grain and other foodstuffs, open the stockpiled reserves, stop exporting, and accept offers of aid from abroad. Soviet documents — the law of 7 August 1932 that condemned peasants to death for “stealing” from the fields the grain they sowed, and Stalin’s letter to Kaganovich, written four days later, in which he anticipates the famine (“the moment things get worse”) warns of the possibility of a revolt and the loss of Ukraine. Detailed, comprehensive reports from Ukraine by Bolshevik leaders and GPU functionaries before and after the “five ears of corn law” clearly show that it was Stalin and the Communist regime that unleashed the famine with a conscious intent and precise motives.

Himka has a problem with the term Holodomor (“as they call it”). He could have gotten a better idea of the word and the concept if he had tried to understand it by analogy with the Holocaust, of which he is an expert. When the term “holocaust,” whose basic meaning is sacrificial offering by immolation, is capitalized and preceded by the definite article, it refers to the genocide against the Jews. In a similar way, the Holodomor has evolved beyond its original sense of forced starvation and now embraces the notion of a Soviet-led genocide against the Ukrainians. Himka’s shortcoming here is his insistence on treating the Holodomor according to the old peasantist interpretation (intentional starvation of the peasantry). He fails to see what Raphael Lemkin saw 68 years ago— namely, that the famine was only one component of the genocidal acts that the Soviet regime perpetrated against the Ukrainian nation.

Himka is right to affirm that “whether the famine constituted a genocide is a matter of interpretation.” But he fails to explain the criteria on which the interpretation must be based. The only generally accepted definition of genocide, which provides such criteria, is the 1948 UN Convention on Genocide. Article II declares that genocide means “acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such.” Himka does not like the document because it only recognizes four groups and “excludes victims of social and political murder.” That may be a valid criticism, but it is irrelevant to the question of the Ukrainian genocide. The (partial) destruction indicated in the document applies to ethnic Ukrainians as a national group in general, of which the peasants form an integral part not according to their socio-economic function but to their national-ethnic characteristics.

Raphael Lemkin, who in 1943 coined the term “genocide” and conceptualized the crime it connoted, and later was instrumental in getting it adopted by the UN General Assembly, had no difficulty in applying the UN definition to what happened in Ukraine. In 1953, five years after the declaration of the UN Convention on Genocide, and on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the Great Famine, Lemkin addressed a 3,000-strong audience at the Manhattan Center in New York with an allocution entitled “Soviet Genocide in Ukraine.” This Polish legal expert of Jewish origin elaborated his analysis within the parameters of the UN Convention. He described it as a four-pronged attack by the Communist regime against the Ukrainian nation, with the intent to destroy (1) the intelligentsia (“the national brain”), (2) the national churches (“the soul of Ukraine”), (3) the independent peasants (“the repository of the tradition, folklore and music, the national language and literature, the national spirit of Ukraine”), and (4) the cohesion of the Ukrainian people by forced in- and out-migration with the aim of changing the republic’s ethnic composition by reducing the number of ethnic Ukrainians and increasing the

number of non-Ukrainians, particularly Russians. It cannot be stressed enough that in his conceptualization of the Ukrainian genocide Lemkin avoided the “peasantist interpretation” still prevalent among both genocide deniers (Terry Martin) and genocide promoters (Norman Naimark). Instead, he treated the peasants as part of the ethnic and national group, not as a social category.

If Himka had taken Lemkin’s outline and filled it with data provided by newly released Soviet documentation, he would have realized that the destruction of the Ukrainian national intelligentsia and elites of all sorts began in 1929 and 1930, with the arrests and show trial of the so-called Union for the Liberation of Ukraine (SVU). It continued with the purges of real and imaginary “nationalists” within various state administrations, which culminated in the “great purges” of the second half of the 1930s. A similar analysis of documentary sources shows the destruction of much of Ukrainian cultural and spiritual life (the church, literature, scholarship, theater, language, and so on). The ethnic mixing of the population, reported by foreign observers who visited Ukraine towards the end of the famine, is corroborated by official and other Soviet documents. If Himka had more than a tangential interest in the Holodomor, he would also be interested in the fate of the eight million ethnic Ukrainians in the RSFSR (according to the Soviet census of 1926) who were subjected to the state policy of physical and cultural destruction. This genocidal act should be added to the Lemkin list as a fifth prong of Stalin’s destructive policy towards the Ukrainian nation.

Perhaps the most bizarre and morally objectionable part of Himka’s article is the reasoning behind his opposition to the Ukrainian community’s effort to secure recognition for the Ukrainian genocide. Himka does not see it as a legitimate campaign for historical justice for the victims, but rather as a political and ideological gimmick to glorify the struggle of the OUN and the UPA and blame the Jews for the famine. To bolster his argument he invokes irrelevant and misleading affirmations, such as the claim that the campaign “finds its greatest resonance in the area of Ukraine where there was no famine, and in the overseas diaspora deriving from that region.” First, the argument is irrelevant: the recognition of a crime as genocide is contingent on objective criteria and not on the geographical distribution of its popular support. Second, the history of the Ukrainian genocide’s affirmation is quite different from what Himka insinuates.

While taboo in Soviet Ukraine, the first promoters and pioneers of famine studies in the diaspora in the immediate postwar decade originated from the regions where the famine took place in central and eastern Ukraine. They were: Semen Pidhainy, Dmytro Solovei, Fedir Pigido, S. Stariv, Yar Slavutych, Vsevolod Holubnychy, Ivan Maistrenko, and others; and it was the younger generation of “easterners” – Oleh Pidhainy, Marco Carynnyk, and others who were most active in researching and writing in English about the famine. In Soviet Ukraine in the late 1980s, during the glasnost period, it was the “eastern” survivors and their descendants who first raised the question of the Ukrainian famine in the USSR. Since then, most of the publications on the subject in independent Ukraine have been produced by scholars and journalists whose roots are in the Holodomor-affected regions.

As for the present, stronger, support in western Ukraine and the diaspora, Himka knows the historical and political reasons why and how popular memory on the famine was dulled in the more Russified and Sovietized eastern and southern regions of Ukraine, and why it survived better in the western parts of Ukraine and the North American diaspora (which came mostly from western Ukraine).

Most of the people who have been actively promoting the recognition of the Holodomor as genocide and have embraced the heritage of Ukrainian struggle for independence against Communist Russia and Nazi Germany would probably be offended if they read Professor Himka's insinuation against Ukrainian attitudes towards the victims of the Holodomor and the Holocaust. There are various fringe elements in the North American Ukrainian community to whom some of Himka's reproaches should be legitimately addressed. Every community has these people, but serious scholars don't take marginal elements for the main body of the community or minority views as representative of the community. Most Ukrainians do not behave the way Himka insinuates that they do. They do not engage in "competing victimology" and are not "galled" by the fact that the widely accepted numbers for the victims of the Holodomor are lower than those of the Holocaust. They do not spout "anger at Russians and Jews" in their "genocide campaign."

Contrary to Himka's claim, the Ukrainian community has every right to "be calling on the world to empathize with the victims of the famine." This right is unconditional, and it belongs to the victim group of every genocide or mass atrocity. To suggest, as Himka does, that it is subject to some sort of reciprocal expression of feeling towards the victims of other criminal activity is casuistic. This is not to overlook the fact that thousands of Ukrainians helped Jews during the war (Yad Vashem attests to that). The help that Jews received from the Ukrainian population during the war is praiseworthy. Many Ukrainians risked their lives saving or trying to save Jews. Those who hid Anne Frank in Holland were not even arrested, while Ukrainians lost their lives when caught hiding Jews. Contrary to Himka's insinuation, many if not most of the Ukrainians who "embraced the heritage of the wartime nationalists" empathize with the victims of the Holocaust.

I find Himka's opposition to "the *campaign* for recognition as genocide [my emphasis – R.S.]" of the Holodomor, on the pretence that it is being used to "glorify the anticommunist resistance of the Ukrainian nationalists during World War II," a casuistic argument against recognizing the Ukrainian *genocide* itself. The instrumentalization of a historical event does not change the nature of the event. The Nazis exposed Soviet crimes (the starvation of Ukrainians and the Katyn massacres of Poles) in a propaganda war against the Soviets, yet no one will now say that these crimes cannot be recognized because the Nazis used them for ideological and political purposes.

### **The OUN, the UPA, and the Holocaust in the Modern Ukrainian National Myth**

A fundamental methodological flaw in Himka's discussion of the OUN, the UPA, and the Holocaust is his failure to distinguish between history and myth, and then to see their respective roles in the Ukrainian heritage of World War II. Had he done so, he might have come up with a more nuanced and more truthful rendering of the events and of the safeguarding of their memory by the Ukrainian community. As a Holocaust scholar, Himka must be well versed in the literature on the role of heritage in the Jewish tradition. "History tells [...] how things came to be as they are. Heritage passes on exclusive myths of origin and continuance, endowing a select group with prestige and common purpose" (Beth S. Wenger, *History Lessons: The Creation of American Jewish Heritage*, p. 19, quoting David Lowenthal). History has a duty to discover and explain the past in a truthful way; the goal of myths is to fashion desired attitudes about the past

for the future. We evaluate history by its adherence to veracity; myths are judged by their usefulness and their morality – by the righteousness of the cause they advocate. History sins by commission and omission; myths cannot be blamed for what they do not say.

It is in the nature of national heritage, composed of history and myths, to elevate and idealize the past. There is nothing wrong, Himka's claim notwithstanding, with "glorifying the anticommunist resistance of the Ukrainian nationalists during World War II." It is right to praise people who sacrificed their lives for national independence and freedom from foreign tyranny. It would be wrong only if the glorification discourse contained malevolent messages. Himka complains: "Defenders of the mythical history often circulate fabricated memoirs of a non-existent Jewish woman who served in UPA." Yet, there is nothing wrong with the idea of a Jewish woman serving in the UPA; as part of Ukrainian mythology it promotes positive Ukrainian-Jewish relations. Verification of veracity belongs to the discipline of history not the domain of mythology. The point is that rather than calling the story "mythical history," one should distinguish whether it is presented as a mythical or historical discourse, and then evaluate it accordingly. If the story is presented as history and is then proven to be a fabrication, it should be rejected as historical falsification.

Himka criticizes President Yushchenko for embracing the "OUN-UPA-Holodomor" identity and pushing it on the Ukrainian public. What Himka fails to see is that the Ukrainian politician was attempting positive heritage making. We are dealing here with what can be called consolidation myths. Since the breakup of the Soviet Union two basic myths have been operating in Ukraine, seeking to consolidate post-Soviet formations according to opposing principles. One is centred in Russia but enjoys strong support among pro-Russian segments of Ukrainian society. This myth promotes the idea of a common "Russian World" (*russkii mir*), of which the Ukrainians are supposed to be an integral part even if, for the time being, Ukraine and Russia are separated by what the myth holds as "artificial" state boundaries. The most aggressive promoters of the "Russian World" idea are the Russian state authorities (see the speeches at the recent Vladimir conference on the upcoming celebrations of the 1,150th anniversary of the foundation of Russian statehood at <<http://news.kremlin.ru/news/12075>>). Its most vocal and outspoken advocate is the patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church (see the recent visit of Patriarch Kirill to Kyiv to celebrate the 1,023d anniversary of the baptism of "Russia" at <<http://english.ruvr.ru/2011/07/29/53902761.html>>). Among the ideological underpinnings of this myth are: the idea of a common historical experience, stretching from Kyivan Rus' to the "Great Fatherland War" of 1941-45, the Russian language that everyone understands in Ukraine, and the Orthodox Church, which necessarily must be under the Moscow patriarch.

At the beginning of his term in office, President Yushchenko tried to counter this imperialist myth encroachment on Ukrainian sovereignty by promoting Ukraine-unifying myths founded on specifically Ukrainian traditions and historical experiences. One was to be the Holodomor, or the man-made famine of the 1930s that decimated Ukraine and whose memory has survived in all parts of Ukraine. The other component of the projected integrating myth was the movement for national liberation, embodied by the OUN and the UPA, whose members and supporters fought against both totalitarian empires—Hitler's Third Reich and Stalin's Soviet Union. What is often overlooked is the fact that Yushchenko's recognition of the UPA was not in opposition or to the detriment of the veterans of the Red Army. His ambition was to reconcile the veterans of the Red Army and the UPA. This fostering of a shared Ukrainian heritage was a

noble one. What Yushchenko can be reproached with is not having brought into the project the Ukrainian veterans of the Waffen SS Division Halychyna and other units of the armed forces of the Axis powers. Even this limited project did not succeed because of insufficient understanding and support within Ukrainian society, especially among its ruling elites.

After just one term in office, Yushchenko lost the presidential elections. This was a serious blow to the historical heritage that his administration was promoting. Himka suggests that the defeat had something to do with a divided historical memory and Yushchenko's handling of it. He is right. President Yanukovich, Yushchenko's successor, and his supporters have "pushed the opposite perspective," and the current official promotion of this "historical-identity" is very harmful for Ukraine.

I agree with Himka's analysis of the malady but not with the cure, when he proposes "the deconstruction of the historical mythologies of both camps." There are four problems with his suggestion. First, the war of the myths is not an internal Ukrainian war: on the one side are the pro-Ukrainian citizens of Ukraine and the pro-Ukrainian part of the Ukrainian diaspora; on the other side are the pro-Russian citizens of Ukraine, pro-Russian emigrants from Ukraine (of various ethnic backgrounds), and, most importantly, the Russian state and church authorities. Second, even if the two sides in Ukraine heeded Himka's advice and gave up their struggle, it is most certain that Russia (the state and the Russian Orthodox Church) would not abandon its policy of promoting the imperialist "Russian World." Deconstruction of the two mythologies in Ukraine would thus open the floodgates to myths coming from Russia. Third, the two camps are not struggling for the same space. Ukrainocentric myths focus on a distinct Ukrainian entity, while the Russocentric idea is predicated on the old imperial model of Russia, of which Ukraine would be an integral part. Fourth, myths can play a highly constructive role in the life of communities and help with nation and state building. Ukraine needs the leaven of good and healthy historical myths.

At present, pro-Ukrainian myths are being attacked from many quarters, and the efforts to discredit them seem to be gaining in strength. In Ukraine itself, not to speak of Russia, state and church structures seem overly favorable to some form of the "Russian world" myth. With the weakening of Ukrainocentric myths, citizens of Ukraine will be drawn into the orbit of the myth-rich "Russian World." As György Schöpflin notes, "Through myth the assimilation of ethnically different groups is accelerated, as the myth-poor community accepts that upward social mobility demands the abandonment of its culture, language and myth-world in exchange for something superior, for a better world" (George Schöpflin in Hosking and Schöpflin, *Myths and Nationhood*, 22). Himka's participation in the discussion of Ukrainian myths is a contribution to the impoverishment of pro-Ukrainian myths and the strengthening of the "Russian World" myths.

Now let us turn from myths to history. Professor Himka quotes his university motto: "*Quaecumque vera*—whatsoever things are true." He is welcome to apply that principle in his historical analysis of the OUN and the UPA, their struggle for the independence of Ukraine, and their participation in criminal activities. The only proviso is that the truth be obtained from adequate documents that provide sufficient information for a complete and comprehensive interpretation. In this regard, a few remarks should be made about Himka's text. He affirms that the "UPA launched a massive cleansing action against the Polish population of Volhynia and later Galicia, in which perhaps a hundred thousand Poles perished." Unfortunately, the author



does not give the context in which these killings took place, nor any account of the atrocities committed by the Polish side. This is not to relativize the two sides of the conflict, but there were two sides and an objective historical rendering of the events must take both of them into account. Himka's one-sided presentation of the event is more in the style of myth-making than historical analysis.

I also have a problem with Himka's story line on the OUN involvement in the Holocaust. It is not a nuanced version of what happened. He attributes the 1941 pogrom of Jews in Lviv solely to the OUN; he does not mention the involvement of common criminals and the action of ordinary citizens of Polish and Ukrainian background provoked by the revelation of massacred victims in Soviet prisons. Himka claims that the Jew-hunting militias were connected to the OUN, that these militiamen formed the nucleus of the UPA in 1943, and that until the end of the war they lured surviving Jews out of hiding in order to execute them. Thus, he states, the "UPA killed at least thousands of Jews" and the "OUN was implicated in the murder of tens of thousands of Jews." The only side of Ukrainian-Jewish relations that Himka presents is that of the extermination of Jews by Ukrainians. A fundamental question arises: can all the cases of killings of Jews be classified as part of a genocide (the Holocaust), as defined by the UN Convention? Another question: what about the Ukrainians who saved Jews? Himka does not mention them or the humanitarian work of the Ukrainian clergy. This is not what one would call a "*quaecumque vera*" account, a complete and balanced rendering of Ukrainian-Jewish relations during the war.

In his section on the "strategies" for the dissemination of his ideas, Himka declares his happiness at discovering "the power of short pieces" because they are more widely read, especially when they are posted on the Internet. He states that traditional academic publications take long to write, sometimes even longer to be published, and have limited audiences. We have seen that Himka acknowledged the fact that "short pieces" tend to be sloppier and are prone to error and oversimplification. The text under discussion here would seem to belong to the category of a short work by a public intellectual. As the adage goes, "The problem with being a public intellectual is you get more and more public and less and less intellectual." Academic rigor and integrity, proper to scholars, tend to be more relaxed in public intellectuals writing goal-oriented short pieces. Historical writing can easily take on mythical coloring. This is what, I'm afraid, has been happening with some of Himka's writing as he discards his professorial toga and heads for the limelight of the public intellectual. I was sorry to see his name under the infamous 2011 Open Letter, even though he was only a contributor to its redaction and not its author. I have commented on that piece elsewhere and will not do so here. I mention it only because the line of argument is similar and the results are equally harmful to the legitimate right of Ukraine to have a constructive, foundational national myth.

As a scholar of Jewish history, Himka is well aware that there are positive Jewish historical myths about the Jewish struggle for a national homeland and on the Jewish genocide, which are honored by Jews around the world. He also knows about anti-Jewish myths on both these subjects, developed to undermine the very existence of the Israeli state and denigrate the memory of the Holocaust. It seems to me that Himka does not object to the first and does not condone the second. I fail to understand why he cannot take a similar attitude towards the myths surrounding the Soviet Ukrainian genocide and the Ukrainian struggle for independence (in particular during World War II). If he is serious about "clarifying the history of the Holocaust in Ukraine," he

must know that it cannot be done in isolation from its general context and that his partisan treatment of the subject only contributes to strengthening anti-Ukrainian myths about Ukrainian-Jewish relations.

*Ending on a personal note*

My longest and fondest memories of John-Paul Himka are from the 1983 McMaster University Conference on “Ukrainian-Jewish Relations in Historical Perspective.” At that time we both knew much less about Ukrainian-Jewish relations than we know today, and that was probably one reason why our impressions of them, as I recall, were much closer. Since then we have both challenged, in our respective ways, what we thought was not right in the writings on Ukrainian history, both by Ukrainians and non-Ukrainians. We have also disagreed and argued, usually orally and privately, when meeting at conferences. This is my first public comment about his ideas. I trust he will appreciate my frankness and sincerity. The choice to respond to my observations or not is his. He insists that he has a Ukrainian identity, and is an academic *and* a public intellectual who enjoys challenges. I think his biggest challenge at this point is to determine how to combine and distinguish his two vocations and fulfill them faithfully in accordance with his enunciated principles.