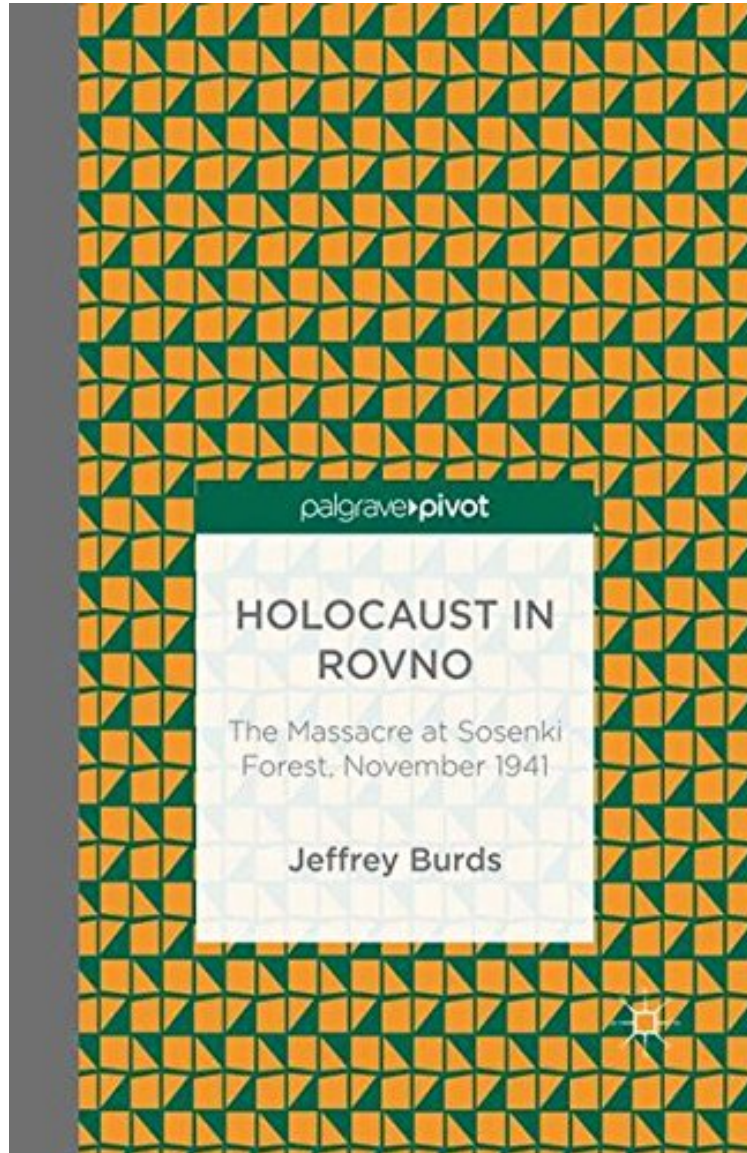


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## Holocaust in Rovno: The Massacre at Sosenki Forest, November 1941 (Palgrave Pivot)

*J. Burds*

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**J. Burds : Holocaust in Rovno: The Massacre at Sosenki Forest, November 1941 (Palgrave Pivot)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Holocaust in Rovno: The Massacre at Sosenki Forest, November 1941 (Palgrave Pivot):

8 of 8 people found the following review helpful. Well researched, gripping and important book.By Adam

CwejmanBurds written early on in the book that the massacre just outside the Polish (currently in Ukraine) city of Rovno has been described as the "Second Babi Yar". Babi Yar is known as one of the most brutal and massive executions of Jews in the entire war. But in fact, Babi Yar was one of more than 100 large scale executions of Jews in what today is the Baltic countries, Belarus, Ukraine, Poland and Russia. The holocaust has primarily been known to have taken place in large Polish ghettos and death camps. But the holocaust in the eastern parts of Europe was mainly a question of fast and ruthless executions during the fall and winter of 1941, not long after the Germans had invaded the Soviet Union. Babi Yar and Sosenki were not unique, far from it. They were a part of a massive scheme to completely rid Europe of Jews. Not long after the German/Soviet front moved east Police Battalions, Einsatzgruppen and Ukrainian collaborationists and nationalists from the OUN began their meticulous work. Perhaps it is the scale of the holocaust that has made the massacre outside of Rovno unknown until now. So many massacres occurred that the numbers, tens of thousands on a weekly basis, simply lose all their meaning. They become abstract statistics. And when one reads the numbers. Towns and villages emptied of Jews in a matter of days it simply becomes abstract and distant. What is often missing are eye witness accounts. But Burds has found eye witness reports from both survivors, bystanders as well as the killers. This brings the reader painfully closer to the subject at hand. Much of the data Burds uses has not been used at all before. A majority of it is from Russian, Ukrainian and Polish archives. As well as written testimonies deposited at Yad Vashem. Thus the study is primarily built on first hand sources. 17500 people were murdered during three nights four kilometers outside of Rovno. Most were shot by German Police battalions and Ukrainian auxiliary units from behind and fell into pre-dug ditches. Around 4000 children were killed separately from their parents and family or just thrown into the graves, some children were killed by grenades thrown into the graves. Many of the victims shot suffocated to death as not all died immediately from the bullet wounds. Perhaps due to the fact that many of the shooters were drunk many did not die immediately but were buried alive among their families, friends and neighbors. The few survivors who did not flee during the 4 km march to Sosenki from Rovno survived by pretending to be dead in the mass graves. And crawled away during the cover of darkness. Burds also describes how the remaining Rovno ghetto was eliminated where 4000 people were taken away north and killed. The book wastes no space. It gives a clear and well written of the events that transpired in Rovno. It is excellently researched. Beside the description of the events in and around Rovno Burds does a good and well balanced job of briefly discussing what the unresolved past of Ukraine means for our contemporary times. His quotes from Levinas and Amos Oz among others give the reader some basic tools of comprehending the immense and totally otherworldly violence, hate and racism that took place in Rovno. But first and foremost Burds honors the 17 500 victims by simply remembering them, and helping others to do the same. And helping descendants of survivors, like myself, to understand what happened to their families and relatives. Many family stories of what happened during the holocaust are often reduced to sentences like "they were shot in the east", either because details are too painful to hear, or because details were not simply known. The opening of Russian archives help families to understand what happened. It also spells out in brutal clarity something which can and should never be forgotten. Among the victims in Sosenki forest were my father's uncle and aunt, Dosik and Basia, his grandmother Bejla as well as my father's cousins who were around the age of 5, the children of Basia.

In November 1941, near the city of Rovno, Ukraine, German death squads murdered over 23,000 Jews in what has been described as "the second Babi Yar." This meticulous and methodologically innovative study reconstructs the events at Rovno, and in the process exemplifies efforts to form a genuinely transnational history of the Holocaust.

"This shockingly powerful and original book is the most detailed account ever written of the 'Second Babi Yar' in Rovno. Clearly narrating the entangled history of the city and the region of Rovno, it presents an excellent example of transnational history." - Hiroaki Kuromiya, Professor of History, Indiana University, USA, and author of *Conscience on Trial: The Fate of Fourteen Pacifists in Stalin's Ukraine, 1952-1953* (2012) About the Author Jeffrey Burds is an Associate Professor of History at Northeastern University and the Co-Director of The Center for the Study of Russia and the Soviet Union.