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Harvest of Despair: Life and Death in Ukraine Under Nazi Rule; The Choice: Poland, 1939-1945

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Reviewed by Robert Legvold

In This Review



Two books, one a meticulous history, the other a grim, beautiful mosaic of personal life under Nazi occupation in Ukraine. The first is a lifeless the history, the second is a historian,



Jews, Roma, prisoners of war, local Germans, Ukrainians, and, eventually, partisans. He starts with the invasion, the killing and the destruction, much of it done by retreating Soviet elements, but then turns to his principal task: to explore living, working, surviving, and perishing under a regime bent on erasing all but those who would serve as draft animals for an imported German population brought to realize the Nazi agrarian dream; for whom famine was a tool, not an effect; and whose genocidal madness extended to Jew, Roma, and Slav. Piecing all of this together was an enormous labor, and doing it with balance, restraint, and objectivity a major accomplishment.

Eber was an adolescent when the shadow of German occupation darkened Mielec, a small town, now forgotten, in the south of Poland. The nightmare began in the early winter months of 1942, when the motorcycles arrived and Mielec's Jews were rounded up and set on a murderous march toward the death camps in eastern Poland. Eber, for many years a specialist on Chinese history and literature at Hebrew University, has crafted a small literary masterpiece, summoning memory of the unbearably inhuman ordeal—the casual

