

The Unknown Black Book: powerful testimonies by Holocaust survivors in Nazi-occupied areas of the USSR

BLOOMINGTON, Ind. -- Of the six million Jews who perished in the Holocaust, more than 2.5 million died in territories controlled by the Soviet Union during World War II. The vast majority of this populace was murdered in open-air massacres, carried out in the very towns and cities where they had been living.

The Unknown Black Book: The Holocaust in the German-Occupied Soviet Territories, edited by Joshua Rubenstein and Ilya Altman, provides a revelatory compilation of testimonies from Jews who survived these massacres and other atrocities enforced by the Germans and their allies.

The book was published by Indiana University Press in association with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. It includes introductions by Rubenstein, Altman and Yitzhak Arad and is translated by Christopher Morris and Rubenstein.

The book's testimonies, from residents of cities, small towns and rural areas, are first-hand accounts by survivors of work camps, ghettos, forced marches, beatings, starvation and disease. Collected under the direction of two renowned Soviet Jewish journalists, Vasily Grossman and Ilya Ehrenburg, they tell of Jews who lived in pits, walled-off corners of apartments, attics and basement dugouts, unable to emerge due to fear that their neighbors would betray them.

Included are accounts of how non-Jewish residents of Lithuania, Belarus and other Soviet areas joined advancing German troops in the slaughter of their Jewish neighbors. Other residents, however, including desperately poor peasants, risked their lives to shelter survivors.

About the editors

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