NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES

DIVISION OF RESEARCH

Narrative Section of a Successful Application

The attached document contains the grant narrative and selected portions of a previously funded grant application. It is not intended to serve as a model, but to give you a sense of how a successful application may be crafted. Every successful application is different, and each applicant is urged to prepare a proposal that reflects its unique project and aspirations. Prospective applicants should consult the Research Programs application guidelines at https://www.neh.gov/grants/research/public-scholar-program for instructions. Applicants are also strongly encouraged to consult with the NEH Division of Research staff well before a grant deadline.

Note: The attachment only contains the grant narrative and selected portions, not the entire funded application. In addition, certain portions may have been redacted to protect the privacy interests of an individual and/or to protect confidential commercial and financial information and/or to protect copyrighted materials.

The application format has been changed since this application was submitted. For instance, narratives must now be only three pages. You must follow the guidelines in the currently posted Notice of Funding Opportunity (see above link).

Project Title: Pogrom: The Origins of the European Genocide of the Jews, 1917-1921

Institution: University of Michigan

Project Director: Jeffrey Veidlinger

Grant Program: Public Scholars

Pogrom: The Origins of the European Genocide of the Jews

In 1919 boots were hard to come by in Ukraine. Even in the north, where almost everyone seemed to work in the felt and leather industries, a good pair of winter boots took an expert craftsman fourteen to sixteen hours to make, and were essential in the cold winter months. Veniamin Feldman, who my team interviewed in Ovruch, Ukraine, just before his hundredth birthday, in 2003, recalled how the fur had to be worked into the soft leather of the inner sole and hammered onto the firm outer sole of the boot. Feldman, who was born in Yanova Rudnya, about twenty kilometers from Ovruch, explained that a cobbler would come to his village from nearby Valednik to sew boots for anybody who could provide their own leather and fur.

In the preceding five years, a parade of militaries had marched through the region— the German Kaiser's musketeers, the Imperial-Royal Hussars of Franz-Joseph's Austro-Hungarian Army, Cossack horsemen and Sich Riflemen, Leon Trotsky's revolutionary Red Army, Ukrainian nationalists, and a variety of insurgents. Each requisitioned provisions—and boots—from the townsfolk.

One day in January 1919, a local Pole, who had been a warrant officer in the tsarist army and now led a small band of anti-Bolshevik fighters, showed up at Feldman's house and demanded leather for boots. Feldman's father, who leased a local mill from the Polish landowner for his livelihood, sent the officer away, retorting that he doesn't even have enough leather for his own boots, let alone any leather to spare. That evening, the warrant officer returned with some men, some "Poles" according to Feldman. "They dressed my father in a winter coat with boots and all, took him into the woods and killed him. They took away his boots and left." A week later Feldman found his father's frozen barefooted body in the woods.

Feldman's father had become one of the first victims of the pogroms that accompanied the Russian revolution and ensuing Civil War, a wave of violence that ravaged 1200 towns in 1919-1920, left over one hundred thousand Jews dead in its wake, and turned millions more into refugees.

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I first became interested in the pogroms when I was part of a team of researchers conducting oral history and linguistic interviews with Yiddish-speakers in small towns throughout Ukraine. Most of the people we interviewed were elderly, often in their eighties and nineties. The eldest among them had vivid memories of the revolutionary pogroms, and many, like Feldman, had lost relatives in the violence. Nisen Yurkovetsky, who we interviewed in Tulchyn in 2009, still had a scar across his arm from the bullet that killed his mother, and grazed him as she held him in her arms. The infant Yurkovetsky was rescued when a Polish priest noticed some movement in the mass grave that held the rest of his family. I had heard many—too many—similar stories from people who had literally crawled out of mass graves. Many of the stories date to the Nazi invasion of 1941, but there were enough stories of mass executions from earlier periods that I began to wonder about the connection.

Listening to the ordinary people we interviewed talk about the quarter-century between the Russian revolution of 1917 and the German invasion of 1941 made me realize how connected these events were. I was struck by the similarities in the ways they spoke about the bloodshed of 1919 and the Holocaust. Many interviewees even used the term "pogrom" to describe the latter. In the small towns of Ukraine, where many of the first massacres of the Holocaust took place, victims and perpetrators knew each other personally and remembered on whose side each had stood in the previous conflict. Nazi reports echoed the rallying cries of the militants in 1919. In Zhytomyr, the regional capital of the province to which Ovruch belongs, the German Einsatzgruppen reported that "3,145 Jews had to be shot, because experience showed that they must be considered as bearers of Bolshevist propaganda and saboteurs." Germans and Ukrainian

collaborators murdered Jews just as they had in 1919, because they feared the Bolsheviks and obdurately declined to differentiate them from the Jews.

I began to wonder what we could learn about the Holocaust by studying the pogroms, and, conversely, what some of the recent scholarly insights on the Holocaust could tell us about the pogroms. Was the violence of 1919 an early warning of the Holocaust, or even part of the same phenomenon? If so, could that mean that mass violence and the physical extermination of millions of Jews in Eastern Europe would have been possible even without the Nazi invasion? Without Hitler?

The first step was to see how contemporaries spoke about the pogroms while they were underway. I found an answer in the most prominent of locations. On September 8, 1919 the *New York Times* reported on the pogroms with an article headlined "Ukrainian Jews Aim to Stop Pogroms." The deck continued, "Mass Meeting Hears that 127,000 Jews Have Been Killed and 6,000,000 are in Peril." The article concluded by quoting Joseph Seff, President of the Federation of Ukrainian Jews: "This fact that the population of 6,000,000 souls in Ukraina and in Poland have received notice through action and by word that they are going to be completely exterminated—this fact stands before the whole world as the paramount issue of the present day."

I was shocked to discover that the murder of six million Jews throughout Europe was not only foretold on the pages of the *New York Times*, but was also widely discussed as a distinct possibility throughout the decade. World leaders discussed the dire plight of Jews in Poland and Ukraine during the Paris Peace Conference, which began just as the worst violence erupted in January 1919. In 1920, a year after the *Times* warned of mass extermination, the American Jewish Committee declared that "the very existence of the Jewish population is in jeopardy." A comprehensive report by the Public Committee for Assisting Pogroms Victims, a division of the Russian Red Cross, soberly concluded "The task that the pogrom movement set itself was to rid Ukraina of all Jews and to carry it out in many cases by the wholesale physical extermination of this race." *The Nation* titled a 1922 feature article on the pogroms in Ukraine "The Murder of a Race," as though searching for a phrase to describe what the Polish Jew Raphael Lemkin would later, in his 1944 indictment of the Nazi regime, *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe*, term "genocide."

Jews not only spoke about the violence of the pogroms in cataclysmic terms, they also acted accordingly. They fled the threatened region by the millions, established far-reaching self-help and philanthropic organizations, lobbied the Great Powers, colonized new lands, worked to establish their own political sovereignty, and acted in groups and alone as vigilantes to forestall what many adamantly believed was a coming catastrophe. Ironically, each of these actions signaled Jewish vulnerability to the world, and cast the Jews of Europe as an out-group, whose desperate movements were threatening the world order. The flood of Jewish immigrants from Poland and Ukraine into European capitals like Paris, Berlin, and Vienna stoked fears that the refugees could be closet Bolsheviks. Jews fleeing "Ukrainian Cossacks" often landed in neighborhoods near Ukrainian refugees fleeing "Jewish Bolsheviks." In rapidly expanding urban centers, like Berlin and Munich, these ethnic tensions spilled into the public sphere. It was a toxic mix.

Yet despite all the alarms it raised at the time, the slaughter of over one hundred thousand Jews during the Russian Civil War of 1917–1921, in the very same places in which the mass murders of the Holocaust began, has been largely forgotten. The Holocaust is commonly linked to Christian theological anti-Judaism, early modern Judeophobia, and nineteenth-century racial theories, but is rarely associated with the actual genocidal violence perpetrated against Jews in the wake of the Russian Revolution.

Work Plan

Pogrom is based primarily on three sets of archives: 1) the Public Committee for the Assistance of Victims of the Pogroms, which took testimonies and collected evidence of pogroms in their immediate aftermath; 2) the records of Soviet tribunals and commissions collected in the

early 1920s during the trials of alleged pogrom perpetrators; and 3) materials from the 1926 Parisian trial of Scholem Schwartzbard, who assassinated former Ukrainian Head of State Szymon Petliura and used his trial to present evidence of Petliura's culpability for the pogroms. I supplement these materials with a multitude of published material, including documentary collections, writings by key figures in the conflict, writings by refugees around the world, and official report by governmental and non-governmental organizations on aid distribution.

I have perused all of the research documents I will need for the book, and have compiled extensive notes. On the basis of this work, I have written outlines of each chapter and drafts of four chapters. At this point, I need additional time to write the manuscript and to complete the remaining research. My deadline for submission of the first draft of the manuscript is May 2018, but I plan on submitting the manuscript in stages so that the editor can get back to me with required revisions of earlier chapters before I finish submitting the later chapters. This will allow me to work on revisions continuously throughout the summer of 2018. I will then have a revised manuscript prepared for submission in fall of 2018.

I am seeking half-time support for the period of September 1, 2017-August 31, 2018. This grant will allow me to free myself of all my teaching duties and many service obligations, but I will retain my administrative responsibilities as Director of the Frankel Center for Judaic Studies at the University of Michigan. My dean supports this plan and has agreed to restrict my administrative duties to allow me to dedicate at least half my time completely to the book project.

Pogrom will be divided into two parts: in the first, following an introductory chapter, I will explore six pogroms at the ground level, to expose the intimate and local ways that violence overtook each of these communities. Chapter 1) In Kiev, Orthodox Christian townsmen reacted to the murder of the Metropolitan by attacking Jews. Chapter 2) In Ovruch, a warlord took advantage of a power vacuum to carry out sadistic and venal atrocities against a defenseless population. Chapter 3) In Proskurov, a Ukrainian nationalist militia massacred Jews under the guise of fiercely combatting Bolshevism. Chapter 4) In Smela, anarchist bandits shot Jews into a ditch on the outskirts of town, pillaging their property in the process. Chapter 5) In Slovechno, local Ukrainian peasants attacked their Jewish neighbors, claiming that the Jews' cows were grazing on the peasants' land. Chapter 6) In Krivoe Ozero, Russian military commanders slaughtered Jews in an attempt to restore the tsarist monarchy.

In each of these chapters, I will ask how so many different groups of people came to the same conclusion, that killing Jews was an acceptable response to their disparate predicaments. By limiting each chapter to a single set of characters, I mean to illustrate the matrix of personal motivations, group dynamics, and social identifications at work in mass violence. This close-up vantage point allows me to ask why, for instance, the Jews of Slovechno made the fateful decision to seek shelter in Motl Ratner's home on the third night of the pogrom, and how Kosenko, the firebrand ringleader, knew where to find them. What does it tell us about Kosenko's upbringing that his own mother emerged from her farmhouse to wash the wounds of Hannah Gozman's daughter as the injured girl fled to safety in the nearby village of Petrushki? And why, in the midst of the violence, did some unknown peasants approach Moyshe Feldman and demand that he convert? That's not what the pogrom was supposed to be about. These moments suggest the complex web of social interactions and seemingly contradictory set of motivations that undergirded the killing frenzy.

The second part of the book looks at the global impact and aftermath of the pogroms. The first of these chapters looks at Paris, where the Peace Conference began just as the worst violence erupted in Ukraine, compelling the peacemakers to add minority rights and the Jewish question to their agenda. The second chapter turns to Palestine, where Jewish refugees from Poland and Ukraine learned the importance of Jewish self-defense and convinced themselves they would never be secure until they constituted a majority in a sovereign state. The third chapter moves to the Latin Quarter of Paris, where on May 25, 1926, Schwartzbard murdered Petliura, shouting, "I have killed a great assassin." The narrative then moves to Moscow for the fourth chapter, from

where the new Soviet government punished the Ukrainian peasants and set the seeds for the next conflict. The fifth chapter in this section takes us to Munich, where Jewish radicals, Ukrainian nationalists, Russian monarchists, and far right "national socialists" plotted their own utopian visions for Ukraine and the world. Back to Ukraine, this time in 1941, the final chapter looks at how the new wave of violence that came with the German invasion drew upon preexisting patterns and networks.

Competencies, skills, and access

I am Director of the Frankel Center for Judaic Studies at the University of Michigan, where I am also Joseph Brodsky Collegiate Professor of History and Judaic Studies, and teach courses on the Holocaust, Modern Jewish History, and Antisemitism. This will be my fourth book on various aspects of Jewish life in Russia and Ukraine. My first book, *The Moscow State Yiddish Theater: Jewish Culture on the Soviet Stage*, won a National Jewish Book Award, the Barnard Hewitt Award for theater scholarship, and was named a *Choice* Outstanding Academic Title. I later helped rework the book into an artistic exhibition, *Chagall and the Artists of the Russian Jewish Theater,* which opened at the Jewish Museum in New York in 2009 and later traveled to the Jewish Museum in San Francisco. The exhibition catalog was a National Jewish Book Award finalist and received the Award of Excellence from the American Association of Museum Curators. Two theatrical plays were also based on my book, one of which premiered in Philadelphia and the other in London.

My second book, *Jewish Public Culture in the Late Russian Empire* was a critical success and won the J. I . Segal Prize and the Canadian Jewish Book Award. My most recent book, *In the Shadow of the Shtetl: Small-Town Jewish Life in Soviet Ukraine*, follows the lives of a group of elderly Yiddish-speakers in Ukraine, exploring how they survived as Jews under Communism and Nazism. In writing that book, between 2002 and 2010, I traveled regularly to Ukraine as co-director of the NEH funded Archives of Historical and Ethnographic Yiddish Memories (www.aheym.org), an oral history and linguistic project that interviewed Yiddish speakers throughout Eastern Europe. It was while undertaking research for this book that I became aware for the first time of the cataclysmic impact the pogroms of the Civil War had in shaping twentieth-century Jewry in Ukraine and Poland. *In the Shadow of the Shtetl* received critical accolades and won a Canadian Jewish Book Award. *The New York Review of Books* suggested it "can help us better understand places like Rwanda or Cambodia—or Bosnia." I also write occasional articles for the online magazines, *Tablet* and *Marginalia*. Additionally, I am Vice-President of the Association for Jewish Studies, Associate Chair of the Academic Advisory Committee of the Center for Jewish History, and a member of the Academic Committee of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. I work in Russian, Yiddish, Hebrew, French and German sources.

Final Product and Dissemination

Pogrom is being published by Metropolitan Books/ Henry Holt and Company, and is being edited by Sara Bershtel. Metropolitan has already negotiated deals with HarperCollins in Canada, Macmillan in the UK, Beck in Germany, Het Spectrum in the Netherlands and Rizzoli in Italy, and is continuing to negotiate rights in additional regions. The book's release will be timed for the 2019 centennial of the pogroms. The anticipated length of the manuscript is approximately 100,000 words, and publication is tentatively planned for the winter of 2019. Publication will be in hardcover with a simultaneous e-book and a subsequent paperback edition.

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