The National Relief's position was the opposite of that of the NSV: weakness as a consequence of France's military defeat in June 1940. It cooperated willingly with the Vichy government but was not as politicized as the NSV, nor did it promote a program of lasting social or political change. Like the NSV, most of its employees worked gratis. Unlike the NSV, the National Relief selected employees based on qualifications, most of whom were upper-middle-class Catholic women. It, too, was financed by a combination of contributions, for which it enjoyed a monopoly, and government transfers. Some of its revenues came from expropriations and fines imposed on Jews and political opponents of the Vichy regime. It also received sizeable contributions from France's overseas territories. The National Relief had no explicit policy concerning Jews, though some of its local officials refused to help them on racist grounds. It also discriminated against Gaullists and communists. When choosing beneficiaries, it concentrated on age and place of residence. Hadwiger characterizes the National Relief as a middle-class, Catholic war charity. After 1949, it, too, was quickly forgotten.

The author's thesis that the NSV and the National Relief lay at the center of wartime social welfare policy in their respective countries is untenable. It would be more accurate to say that the two charities played significant supporting roles. The fashionable interpretive ideas used by the author add little to his analysis. *Nationale Solidarität und ihre Grenzen* serves two useful purposes: it offers the reader a convenient way to learn a great deal about the two charities, and it provides us with an example of the hazards of presentism.

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Birds of Prey: Hitler's Luftwaffe, Ordinary Soldiers, and the Holocaust in Poland

By Philip W. Blood. Stuttgart: ibidem, 2021. Pp. xv + 484. Paperback €39.90. ISBN: 978-3838215679.

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The title of this book is slightly misleading. The volume focuses primarily on the *Luftwaffe*'s little-known role in World War II in fighting Soviet partisans or "bandits" (*Bandenbekämpfung*), in this case in the Białowieża (*Bialowies* in German) forest in the northeast of German-occupied Poland. Jews fleeing to the forest to escape the Holocaust were caught in the middle and became victims largely of the *Luftwaffe*'s hunter killers, ordinary ground soldiers of the Nazi air force. Whether in the forest killing partisans, local villagers, or Jews, the *Luftwaffe* infantrymen engaged in a war of extermination.

According to Philip Blood, Hermann Göring, the *Luftwaffe* supreme commander and in 1939 designated Adolf Hitler's successor, shaped the air force "out of forestry, hunting, and aviation, which combined the elements that were most Germanic in spirit to raise a frontier police with the capability to strike at enemies from a long distance" (62). Göring's wartime interest in the Białowieża forest resulted in no small part from his passion for hunting. Not far away, in East Prussia, Göring – named in 1934 Reich Master of the German Forests and German Hunt – had turned Rominten, the Kaiser's former hunting estate, into one of his own private domains.

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Göring's minions in the Reich Forest Office (*Reichsforstamt*, RFA) praised Hitler and Göring as saviors of Germany and protectors of its forest and game—this despite vegetarian Hitler's abhorrence of hunting. After 1935, forestry officials like Ulrich Scherping promoted "Aryanisation of the hunt," excluding Jews and "foreigners without German nationality" from hunting (68). A year later, Walter Frevert published a book that elevated him to Göring's personal hunter (*Leibjäger*) and confidant. Frevert invented Nazi hunting rituals and put forth an honor or morality code of hunting that found its way into *Luftwaffe* etiquette and manuals of discipline.

Also, Göring's focus on the Białowieża forest, which covered some 630,000 acres, related to his wartime responsibility for the economic and other exploitation of Nazi-occupied territories. The Nazis imagined the forest a primaeval wilderness, part of a permanent frontier on Germany's eastern borderlands, and a natural barrier to the threat of the "Bolshevik" horde. Like the vast space that lay beyond the frontier—Belorussia and Soviet Russia, effectively Hitler's *Lebensraum*—the forest and the surrounding area were to be cleansed of their Slav and Jewish inhabitants and replaced with German settlers.

When World War II began in 1939, the Białowieża area, including nearby Białystok, fell within the Soviet zone under the Nazi-Soviet pact. The Nazi occupation and cleansing of the area began immediately in June 1941 with the German invasion of the Soviet Union. German army, SS, and police units murdered Jews, deported other locals, and destroyed villages. Soon the Germans established a powerful security presence in Białowieża under combined army, SS-police, RFA, and other civilian bureaucracies.

But during 1942, the security situation deteriorated in Białowieża amid the insurgency of increasingly well-armed and organized Soviet and Polish partisans. The partisans engaged in acts of terror, notably sabotaging German transport, communication, and supply lines and attacking German officials. The Nazi leadership vilified the partisan as illegal "bandits." In August 1942, Hitler issued a directive for "intensified action against banditry in the East." A part of the directive, ordered Göring to deploy *Luftwaffe* "field forces" in the East in "areas threatened by bandits" to "reinforce the garrisons there" (136).

Amid the escalated *Bandenbekämpfung*, Göring dispatched a *Luftwaffe* security battalion to Białowieża, led by Major of Reserve Emil Herbst, that operated against partisans in the forest from July 1942 to March 1943; and thereafter—following the German defeat at Stalingrad—until the German retreat from the East began in July 1944, a smaller, more aggressive antipartisan special commando, led by Frevert.

Much of Philip Blood's book details the history of both units. Until now, the *Luftwaffe* has not been identified in specific acts of mass killings of partisans, Jews, and other civilians, largely because many of its records were destroyed in 1945. Blood's account, based on previously unpublished archival sources, especially the Białowieża units' war diaries and officer reports, and applying GIS analysis to the documents, maps the units' movements and operations. Most important, the meticulous portrayal details the units hunting and fighting partisans, often in cooperation with SS and police, that included deporting and/or killing Slavic villagers and killing Jews caught fleeing into the forest, mainly to escape deportation from ghettos in Pruzhany and Kamieniec-Litewski.

Of the ordinary soldiers in the *Luftwaffe* units, Blood concludes that "Nazi dogma or personal rewards played no part in inducing the troops to kill" (258). Instead, he maintains, the troops were well-trained, gifted with freedom of action (*Auftragstaktik*), encouraged to kill "soft targets," and taught a specific style of fighting, "extermination warfare" (*Vernichtungskrieg*). "The hunter, the warrior, the warlord; to be master of the battlefield, whether infantryman or general, was the perpetual quest of the mechanistic military culture." (419)

The book's conclusion discusses relevant postwar issues, including Frevert's 1957 book, *Rominten* and its blatant nostalgia for the German hunt, Nazi style; the "lost Jewish past in Białowieża;" and the "myth of the clean Luftwaffe" (404–421).

Most unfortunately, what is a solidly researched study is marred by serious editing problems. These include misspelled words, incomplete sentences, punctuation errors,

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inconsistent italicization of foreign words, and mismarking of GIS maps 17 through 22. Errors exist, too, in the use and citing of sources on pages 296–297 (Edward B. Westermann, *Flak: German Anti-Aircraft Defenses, 1914–1945* [2001]) and page 307 (*Hitler's Table Talk, 1941–1944* [2000 paperback edition]).

Despite such issues, Philip Blood's work is a valuable microhistory of the *Luftwaffe*'s participation in Nazi extermination warfare in the East, including the Holocaust, carried out by common German soldiers trained and encouraged to hunt their victims like animals.

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The Ravine: A Family, a Photograph, a Holocaust Massacre Revealed

By Wendy Lower. Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2021. Pp. 272. Hardback $28.00. ISBN: 978-0544828698.

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Wendy Lower has structured her entire book around one photograph. It first appears on page 3. One half of it depicts a group of military men pointing rifles at a civilian woman who holds one child with her left hand and cradles another with her right. The family is a gunshot away from falling into a ravine that opens right in front of them. The gaping hole takes up the other half of the image. Its apparent emptiness is unnerving as its very purpose is to be filled with human bodies, including those of the woman and her two children we see curled up on the edge of the ravine.

Susan Sontag writes of "the repertoire of hard-to-look-at cruelties" and argues that such images carry a provocation: "can you look at this?" She suggests that "[t]here is the satisfaction of being able to look at the image without flinching. There is the pleasure of flinching" (*Regarding the Pain of Others* [2003], 41). Lower decides not to flinch and invites us to do the same. The photograph keeps coming back throughout the text in fragments that we are encouraged to inspect. Endeavouring to give names to anonymous faces to honour the memory of the victims and hold to account the perpetrators, the book has been compared to a detective story. A more fitting comparison, however, might be with a postmortem examination which attempts to establish the circumstances of death. Most of *The Ravine* is a dissection of the photograph, dated October 13, 1941 and taken in the town of Miropol (Myropil' in Ukrainian) in Nazi-occupied Ukraine.

Lower was presented with the image in 2009 while researching at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. An experienced historian, she knew this was a rare find: the "photographic record of the Holocaust is greater than that of any other genocide, incriminating photographs like this that catch the killers in the act are rare" (2). Not only does the photograph have the potential to bring those responsible for the crime to justice – it can also reveal much about the way such mass murders were made possible. The perpetrators depicted include an SS man as well as non-German collaborators, including Ukrainians, thus shedding light on the killing machine that relied on local cooperation.

As the narrative develops, however, the separation of people into perpetrators and victims proves difficult. The photographer is the first to challenge this neat division. We learn that Lubomir Škrovina was a soldier in the Slovak army, allied with Germany.

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