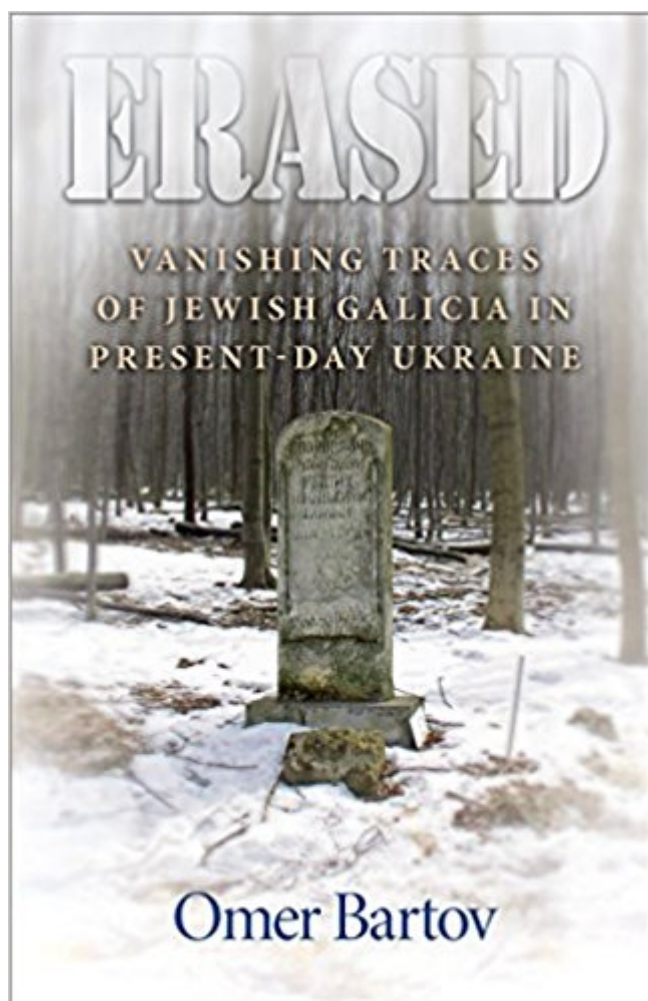


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# Erased: Vanishing Traces Of Jewish Galicia In Present-Day Ukraine



## Synopsis

In *Erased*, Omer Bartov uncovers the rapidly disappearing vestiges of the Jews of western Ukraine, who were rounded up and murdered by the Nazis during World War II with help from the local populace. What begins as a deeply personal chronicle of the Holocaust in his mother's hometown of Buchach--in former Eastern Galicia--carries him on a journey across the region and back through history. This poignant travelogue reveals the complete erasure of the Jews and their removal from public memory, a blatant act of forgetting done in the service of a fiercely aggressive Ukrainian nationalism. Bartov, a leading Holocaust scholar, discovers that to make sense of the heartbreaking events of the war, he must first grapple with the complex interethnic relationships and conflicts that have existed there for centuries. Visiting twenty Ukrainian towns, he recreates the histories of the vibrant Jewish and Polish communities who once lived there--and describes what is left today following their brutal and complete destruction. Bartov encounters Jewish cemeteries turned into marketplaces, synagogues made into garbage dumps, and unmarked burial pits from the mass killings. He bears witness to the hastily erected monuments following Ukraine's independence in 1991, memorials that glorify leaders who collaborated with the Nazis in the murder of Jews. He finds that the newly independent Ukraine--with its ethnically cleansed and deeply anti-Semitic population--has recreated its past by suppressing all memory of its victims. Illustrated with dozens of hauntingly beautiful photographs from Bartov's travels, *Erased* forces us to recognize the shocking intimacy of genocide.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Bartov tells us in *Erased*...that his tour was prompted by a wish to rediscover the Jewish world his mother had known as a child and to establish how the region's Jews had died. But as his inquiry proceeds, its focus changed. Instead of adding to the vast corpus of Holocaust literature or celebrating the heyday of Galician Jewry, he has produced a study of collective denial and the means by which embarrassing facts about the past can be expunged from local memory. Bartov's account of his experiences in the field makes a disturbing story"--Philip Longworth, *Times Literary Supplement*"This small volume is an important addition to contemporary Jewish travel literature. Bartov writes with clarity and palpable outrage, as he describes the pattern he found repeated almost everywhere: Virtually all traces of the Jews and their history have been erased. This book is an often brilliant and impassioned response to the annihilation from memory of the last traces of the Jews who lived for generations in the Ukraine. It is a valuable book both about the destruction of the past and an attempt to preserve memory into the future."--Jewish Book World"A book that in its mixture of description and emotional commentary seeks to bring to light the sheer success of efforts to expunge the Jewish past from eastern Galicia."--Simon J. Rabinovitch, *Haaretz*"An unsettling and highly revealing book. . . . The local people [of Buchach, Ukraine], while devoted to their nation's history, have developed an amnesia about their one-time Jewish neighbours. Bartov writes about this phenomenon with an understated emotion, fact piled upon fact, until his evidence becomes overwhelming. . . . There are Ukrainians today who refuse to take part in consigning the local Jews to oblivion, just as (Bartov notes) there were Ukrainians who risked everything to save Jews during the Holocaust. . . . But, in Bartov's account, the silence is close to deafening and the reasons for it are painfully obvious."--Robert Fulford, *The National Post*"Because so many of us have roots in Galicia, and because it is a very readable and yet a scholarly, well researched work, the book is recommended for every Jewish library--in synagogues, schools or centers--and certainly for large Judaica collections."--Michlean L. Amir, *AJL Newsletter*"[T]his is an excellent study of interest not only to former Pinskens and professional consumers of historical literature, but to virtually everybody interested in the Jewish past, Eastern Europe (Jewish and non-Jewish alike), urban history and many cognate fields. It is also an extremely powerful commemoration of the once vibrant Jewish community of Pinsk, offering a detailed yet comprehensive picture of its life and showing the world that once existed without resorting to sentimental clichés of shtetl life."--Marcin Wodzinski, *East European Jewish Affairs*"This is an unusual work, one that resonates in more than one direction. It is also a study that Bartov is extremely well qualified to write, based on his credentials as historian, his family background (an important leitmotif in the book), and his engagement in questions of collective memory and narrative."--T. Hunt Tooley, *Central European History*"In telling his 'story of

discovery,' Bartov moves seamlessly between personal observations and penetrating analysis."--Erich Haberer, Holocaust Genocide Studies"[W]hatever one thinks of referring to nations as such in historiography, Omer Bartov's new book is a worthy, very personal sequel to his earlier work as a prominent historian of the Holocaust."--Kristian Gerner, European Legacy"The many photographs in the book attest clearly--sometimes shockingly--to the validity of Bartov's observations."--Zvi Y. Gitelman, Journal of Modern History"A fascinating book."--Thomas C. Wolfe, Patterns of Prejudice

"The Jews of East Galicia were obliterated twice: physically by the Nazis, and in memory by the Soviets and in independent Ukraine. Omer Bartov's tour of what remains of a once-vital civilization shows how unwelcome Jews still are in the region, even if only as an artifact of a distant past."--David Engel, New York University"This will be of interest to a great many Europeans and probably Israelis, as well as American readers of travel literature and students of the region."--Timothy Snyder, author of Sketches from a Secret War"Bartov's is a unique type of travelogue, one that records the sites of horrible massacres and extreme brutality. As he goes from town to town in Ukraine, Bartov describes the landscapes of Jewish life and death: cemeteries, synagogues, schools, killing fields, and neighborhoods. The book is also personal-about his search for his family's past. There is nothing quite like it."--Norman M. Naimark, Stanford University

This book fulfills, in my mind, an important need of preserving the memory of the Jews of East Galicia, which were almost totally obliterated during the Holocaust. The roots of my father's family, that part of them where among the victims, stem from this region.

I have searched for years to find factual information about Galicia and the smaller towns surrounding Lwow in Poland and the bordering towns of Ukraine. This book solved the missing puzzle piece for my geneology study and integrated the info into the Ukraine of today. A must read for those with interest in post World War II and eastern Europe.

Good book for understanding what happened during the Holocaust. Lessons to be learned from the past, for fear it may happen again in the future. Many people have family ties to the past, so this may also be used as a part of your history.

As expected

This book explained the extremely sad situation of the erasure of Jewish heritage in the Ukraine. It is quite thorough on the towns that were visited. It is a must read for anyone with roots in the former Galicia.

Omer Bartov is a scholar of the Holocaust, best known for his book *Hitler's Army*, which illustrates how complicit "regular" German troops were in the extermination of the Jews. In *Erased: Vanishing Traces of Jewish Galicia in Present-Day Ukraine*, Bartov goes out into the field, to find the disappearing vestiges of Jewish life in Eastern Europe. Of course, what he finds are sad remnants. Synagogues barely standing, or used for other purposes; shops where Yiddish signs are still visible beneath the paint. Houses with the imprint of long gone mezuzot. And worse: mass graves poorly tended, or not tended at all, cemeteries desecrated or abandoned. All in all, a lost world, whose faint imprint is quickly fading. Bartov seeks to prove again and again how modern Ukrainians, and their government, have failed to reckon with the destruction of their Jews. In the tumultuous years since the fall of the Soviet Union, Ukrainian nationalism has reached new heights, and many of the heroes of that nationalism were anti-Semites, often collaborating with the Nazi occupiers for their extinction. It is a brutal and polluted legacy, according to Bartov, and it is expressed in the neglect of Ukraine's Jewish legacy. And it will only get worse.

As the world has come to learn about each and every depopulated Palestinian village and record their names and the Nakhsba (*All That Remains: The Palestinian Villages Occupied and Depopulated by Israel in 1948*, or *A Sacred Landscape: The Buried History of the Holy Land since 1948* (Honorable Mention for the Albert Hourani Award, Middle Eastern Studies Association)) it is interesting to learn how Europeans, the same Europeans who value every inch of Palestinian history, obliterated, destroyed and crushed the Jewish history of eastern Europe, in this case Galicia. The book tells how the Jews were first destroyed and then their history, through neglect, communistic anti-semitism and finally Ukrainian nationalism, was forgotten and pushed aside. This is one of the few testaments to a vanished people. While German Jewry has been done justice in numerous important publications (*The Pity of It All: A Portrait of the German-Jewish Epoch, 1743-1933*), there has been comparatively little interest in the Yiddish civilization and the Jews of the Pale of Settlement or Galicia. Outside of the *Annihilation of Lithuanian Jewry* and *Synagogues Without Jews* this history has simply vanished. This is such an important book not only for Jews whose ancestors came from these places but also for all the Jews

whose roots are in Eastern Europe and Russia, and for Europeans who might one day want to recall this vanished people who once lived among them. A very sad book that describes a hidden history that, while most recall the holocaust, few can see the physical traces of the once vibrant, warm, loving communities that were crushed under the Nazi boot and then erased to make way for modernity. Seth J. Frantzman

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