8.1. *Decline of the Galician Community after the Second World War*

The face of Eastern Europe, and of Galicia as well, was completely changed as a result of the war, the ruin of pre-war life, the massacre of the local Slavic and Jewish population, and the new demarcation of state borders. In 1945 the city of Przemyśl with its surroundings, along with the western part and a small section of north-western Galicia were given back to Poland, whereas the rest of the Polish *Kresy* (Wilno region, Volhynia, and Galicia) were annexed by the Soviet Union. Galicia became a region in the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic. This territory embraced the *L'viv* (Lvów), Stanislav (Stanisławów; from 1962—*Ivano-Frankivs’k*), and Tarnopol’ regions (*oblasti*). Centuries-long inter-ethnic relations that were established in this region also underwent a transformation. The Jewish population, which had inhabited this land since the Middle Ages, was entirely annihilated by the Nazi *Endlösung* of the “Jewish question.” The majority of the Galician-Volhynian Poles emigrated to Poland after 1945. The Poles who decided to stay in Soviet Ukraine became gradually Ukrainianized, whereas the Ukrainians who remained in Poland were Polonized. Thus, the Polish-Ukrainian/Ruthenian-Jewish triangle, which had existed in Galicia-Volhynia for about six hundred years, was no more.

In addition to human losses, general devastation, and the disastrous economic situation, the psychological and moral climate of the region also changed irrevocably from that of the pre-war period. For many Jews who survived the Shoah, the Holocaust became a traumatic experience that forced them to abandon their religious and cultural traditions.¹ Ukrainian–Polish relations became much worse because of

¹ After the Holocaust, many Jews had a much more sceptical attitude to religion than before. It was mostly traditionally-raised families and religiously-educated people who preserved their faith in its original form (Sebastjan Rejak, “Jews in Contemporary Poland: Their Attitude towards Assimilation, Religion, and the Holocaust,” *Dialogue and Universalism* 11:5–6 (2001): 71–84).
the emergence of the militant Ukrainian nationalism of Stepan Bandera (1909–1959). The so-called “Banderovtsy,” followers of this separatist leader, killed thousands of Polish, Jewish, and Russian civilians during and after the war. Only the firm establishment of the Soviet regime in Galicia and Volhynia suppressed all manifestations of nationalist and religious sentiments in these regions.

After the war, the number of Karaites in Eastern Europe considerably decreased: some left with the retreating German army in 1944, some died during the war, some perished in concentration camps. Furthermore, even though there was no organized massacre of Karaites, in the whole of the Soviet Union (Ukraine: Kiev, Kharkiv; the Crimea: Eupatoria, Theodosia; Russia: Krasnodar, Novorossiisk; Lithuania: Poswol), according to my estimates, around 470 Karaites were killed by the Nazis in spite of all the directives from Berlin to spare their lives. Altogether, out of approximately twelve thousand Karaites living in Central and Eastern Europe before the war, perhaps as few as six to seven thousand survived. The East European Karaite community emerged from the war largely demoralized, especially in the Crimea, where some Karaites, together with their Tatar neighbours, had joined the ranks of the Wehrmacht. During the war, the Karaites were constantly forced to testify to Nazi officialdom regarding their non-association with Jewish civilisation and their non-adherence to the Jewish religion. Perhaps it is only in this period of Karaite history that the words “Judaism” and “Jewishness” became synonymous with mortal danger. This is why the post-war period became a time of firm establishment of a Turkic identity among the East European Karaites.

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2 Memorial stones of the Warsaw Karaite cemetery contain information about two Polish Karaites, Genowera and Jan Pilecki, who were taken to Auschwitz (as seen by M. Kizilov in March, 2001). Another Karaite, Isaiah Pilecki, was taken to Auschwitz as early as 1939 and died there ca. 1943; Lidia Szole-Karakasz was killed by the Germans on a street in Warsaw in 1943; Moses Nowicki died in Germany, where he had been taken for forced labour (“Pamieć tych, co odeszli,” 139–141). These are only a few examples of the Karaites’ sufferings from the Nazis during the war.

3 The reasons for murdering the Karaites were various: denunciations by neighbours; lack of knowledge on the part of the Nazis about the differences between Karaites and Rabbanites; their Mosaic religion. Many Karaites were simply killed as Soviet citizens during the massacres of Soviet civilians organised by the Nazis without consideration of ethnic origin.

4 In 1959 there were 5,727 Karaites living in the Soviet Union (mostly in the Crimea; 423 in Lithuania), and perhaps 400–500 in Poland.