

<b>Institution:</b> Queen Mary University of London		
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 26B Modern Languages and Linguistics		
<b>Title of case study:</b> Transforming the Visual Record and Understanding of the Holocaust: The Discovery of Soviet War Footage		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> 2006-2010		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Name(s):</b>	<b>Role(s) (e.g. job title):</b>	<b>Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:</b>
Jeremy Hicks	Professor of Russian Culture and Film	Sept 1998-Present
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> 2013-2020		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014?</b> N		
<b>1. Summary of the impact</b>		
<p>Professor Hicks's discovery of Soviet war footage has changed public perceptions of the Holocaust internationally. His 2012 book revealed previously unseen or rare, Soviet-produced wartime footage depicting the Holocaust, and has become an invaluable resource for rethinking the Holocaust and its representation. Hicks' research has led to a change in understanding of the Holocaust by allowing for an expanded focus that includes not only the camps in Poland but also the mass shootings in the former Soviet territories, and the Soviets' recording of these crimes. Hicks brought this new perspective to a diverse public through consultancy on a film, a museum exhibition in Paris, film retrospectives (held in London, Hamburg, Illinois), and the restoration of footage from 1945 (with an accompanying film).</p>		
<b>2. Underpinning research</b>		
<p>The research, conducted between 2006-10, published in Hicks's 2012 book, <i>First Films of the Holocaust</i> [3.1], consisted of the discovery, corroboration and reappraisal of previously neglected film footage documenting Nazi's crimes during World War Two, including those committed against Jews.</p> <p>These images enabled a refocusing of the visual narrative of the Holocaust from the overwhelming focus on the extermination camps to the mass shootings that began with the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941 and claimed up to 2,000,000 Jewish victims on the territory of the former Soviet Union. This footage permitted a clearer sense of the systematic killings of the Holocaust in the context of the violence inflicted by the invading German forces upon the Soviet population and Soviet Prisoners of War, over 3,000,000 of whom were starved to death.</p> <p>Many of the films were documentary recordings of the uncovering of mass graves of tens of thousands of mostly Jewish victims shot by the Nazis, in places such as Kharkiv (Ukraine), Kerch, in the Crimea or Rostov-on-Don, in Southern Russia. In some cases, the recording of these events had been edited out of official newsreel releases, including images of the victims wearing star of David armbands, identifying them as Jewish as such images contradicted the universalist message of the Soviet wartime narrative. When these images are restored and the footage given its appropriate context, they broaden the scope and nuance of Holocaust cinema and public perceptions of the Holocaust.</p> <p>The films rediscovered by Hicks give a visual power to a wider reassessment of the Holocaust undertaken recently by a number of historians, that has contested the Cold-War era block on understanding it as a historical event linked with the Nazi invasion and conquest of the Soviet Union. This shift has been informed not only by changes in international politics since 1991, but also by increased access to archives in former Soviet countries such as Russia and Ukraine.</p>		

Likewise, Hicks's discoveries were the result of viewings in Russian film archives and work in other Russian archives containing the original treatments, correspondence between studios and frontline cameramen, memoirs and other materials.

These findings had to be cross-referenced and related to historical scholarship on the Holocaust, identifying what was depicted in the films, and situated with regard to work on the Soviet media and film history. Only through this process of corroboration and comparison could these films be recovered from the previously dominant claim (also linked to the context of Cold War enmity) that they were mere propagandist falsifications to be avoided.

### 3. References to the research

[3.1] Hicks, J. (2012). *First Films of the Holocaust: Soviet Cinema and the Genocide of the Jews, 1938–1946*. University of Pittsburgh Press. [doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvsn3pm8](https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvsn3pm8)

#### Evidence of the quality of the research

##### Grants

Hicks, J. [PI]. (2009-10). From Mamlock to Nuremberg. *Leverhulme Trust*. Research Fellowship. GBP44,824.

##### Awards/Prizes

Received top book prize in Slavic studies (Wayne C. Vucinich for most important contribution to the field from any discipline), from US learned society, Association for Slavic, East European and Eurasian Studies sponsored by Stanford University. This is the [citation](#).

'Outstanding Academic Title' for 2013 by *Choice Magazine*.

Shortlisted for Kraszna-Krausz Best Moving Image Book award 2013.

##### Other

Reviewed in: *Slavic Review*, *Russian Review*, *Sight and Sound*, *Choice Magazine*, *Slavonic and East European Review*, *Slavic and East European Journal*, 1895 (Paris), [H-Soz-Kult](#) (Berlin), *Historical Journal of Film Radio and Television*.

Single chapters translated into and published in Russian, French, and Spanish.

### 4. Details of the impact

Hicks's research broadened international public understanding of the Holocaust and widened the reach of museum film collections through consultations on films, exhibitions and screenings.

#### Research has been materialised for use in a major documentary film

The discovery of previously unknown Soviet film recordings of Nazi crimes [3.1] formed the central focus of a 2014 TV documentary *The Unseen Holocaust*, which dramatized Hicks's encounter with the footage, conveying it to audiences lacking in-depth knowledge of the subject [5.1]. Estimated viewing figures by March 2015 were: 5,200,000 viewers across UK, Europe, China, South Africa and South America [5.1]. The film has since been rescreened on Holocaust Memorial Day yearly in 24 countries, adding approximately 5,000,000 to these figures. Reactions to the film from its 2014 and subsequent TV screenings, to its 2016 DVD release, its streaming on Amazon Prime from 2019 and at a 2019 public screening, suggest many viewers had little idea as to the Holocaust beyond the camps. As one viewer at the 2019 screening says, it '[a]dds a new dimension to our knowledge of who documented the

Holocaust and its scale in the Soviet Union' [5.2; 5.11; 5.13].

Hicks was the historical consultant on the film, advising on selection of footage, and was the central interviewee. His contribution was indispensable to this film, as corroborated by Paul Clark, Unseen Holocaust producer [5.3]. The film also generated a budget of over GBP 140,000, and employment for approximately 20 people [5.3].

### **Enhanced understanding to underpin film restoration**

By reappraising and enriching knowledge of the Soviet footage of the camps, Hicks [3.1] enabled the Imperial War Museum to complete its restoration of a 1945 film intended by the British for re-education of the German population: German Concentration Camps Factual Survey (GCCFS), which received its world premiere at the 2014 Berlin film festival [5.9]. Named in the film credits, Hicks was a consultant at the preliminary test screening, spoke at the film's London premiere at the BFI in 2015 (recorded for the 2017 BFI DVD/BluRay), and contributed to the accompanying booklet. This won 'Best Special Features' category at the 2018 DVD awards of the International Film Restoration Festival, Bologna, where the judges' citation praised the historical context provided by the booklet. By September 2018, 1044 copies had been sold.

A film about the restoration of GCCFC, *Night Will Fall*, was released to cinemas in 2014. It subsequently aired to an audience of 2,000,000 on the UK's Channel 4 on 24 January 2015, and on major networks around the world, such as HBO (USA), winning prizes including an Emmy for best Documentary feature. Director André Singer testifies that Hicks's expertise and presence informed him factually and ensured emotional understanding when filming at Auschwitz [5.10].

### **Research has been materialised for use at an exhibition on Nazi war crimes**

Hicks's discovery and reappraisal of Soviet footage was crucial to the 2015 exhibition at Mémorial de la Shoah museum, Paris entitled 'Filming the War: The Soviets confront the Shoah 1941-1946'. As co-curators Valérie Pozner and Alexandr Sumpf write, Hicks [3.1] was central to the conceptualisation of the exhibition as was his advice on it [5.4, 5.5]. Running from January-September 2015, the exhibition brought Soviet footage and documents discovered by Hicks to a French national museum public, enabling reappraisal of the Soviet films and transformation of the visual record of the Holocaust. This then generated wider national media coverage of the exhibition in 29 TV and radio programmes and over 100 newspaper reports, notably in articles in *Le Figaro* and *Le Monde*, which stress that the novelty of the footage permits an appreciation of how the narrative of Nazi atrocity emerged (18-19.01.15; 27.01.15, Press Coverage for 'Filmer la guerre', pp. 61, 428) [5.6]. Hicks also contributed to the catalogue for the exhibition.

### **Research has been materialised for use on film screenings of Nazi atrocities**

In May 2015, German film historian, Thomas Tode, curated a retrospective entitled, 'Documenting Nazi Atrocities — Early Films on the Liberation of the Camps', running from May to June 2015 at the Goethe Institut London and Ciné Lumière, where Soviet footage reappraised by Hicks was screened. Hicks introduced the films and participated in a roundtable discussion. As Tode writes:

'The retrospective would not have occurred without [Hicks] valuable research which has pointed out to me and to the public the 'Russian gaze' concerning the films of the Liberation of the camps [...] it reached a non-specialist audience introducing to them the Soviet contribution to the representation of the Holocaust' [5.7, 5.8].

The research continues to inform film screenings, such as that conducted by Illinois Holocaust Museum and Holocaust Center in Skokie, Illinois in November 2018 [5.12].

### 5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- [5.1] [Data] Unseen Holocaust viewing figures, estimated by Executive producer, Paul Clark
- [5.2] [Feedback] Reactions to *Unseen Holocaust* i) from questionnaires filled in at 25.04.19 screening; ii) from twitter and amazon
- [5.3] [Testimonial] executive producer for *Unseen Holocaust* [Corroborator 1]
- [5.4] [Testimonial] co-curator, 'Filming the War' Exhibition [Corroborator 2]
- [5.5] [Testimonial] co-curator, 'Filming the War' Exhibition
- [5.6] [Press] Coverage Dossier, for 'Filming the War' Exhibition
- [5.7] [Testimonial] Curator for 'Documenting Nazi Atrocities. [Corroborator 3]
- [5.8] [Programme] Documenting Nazi Atrocities
- [5.9] [Testimonial] senior curator, Imperial War Museum [Corroborator 4]
- [5.10] [Testimonial] director *Night Will Fall* [Corroborator 5]
- [5.11] [Media] 'Set in the Past' Blogpost, 05.02.18 review of *Unseen Holocaust*
- [5.12] [Programme] Illinois Holocaust Museum programme
- [5.13] [Feedback] Transcribed Summary of Questionnaire Responses from *Unseen Holocaust* screening 25.04.19