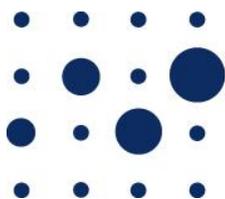




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Bilateral Historical Research Project

Violence against Civilians on the Eastern Front of World War II



VolkswagenStiftung

Contact

General information

http://www.uni-heidelberg.de/fakultaeten/philosophie/zegk/sog/forschung/aktuelle_forschung.html

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About the Project

The project focuses on the crimes against civilians in the occupied and liberated territories of the Soviet Union, particular in Ukraine, during World War II. It involves scholars of Soviet History and World War II from the University of Heidelberg and the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine (Kiev, Ukraine). Both experienced researchers and Ph.D. candidates from Germany and Ukraine countries are involved.

The project builds upon recent developments in the historiography that include burgeoning studies of the local practices of German occupation, including the Holocaust in the East, and growing interest in the repressive actions of the Soviet regime during the war, as well as wartime Stalinism. The project emphasizes six major areas: 1) the study of experiences of civilians under specific German occupation regimes and the study of violence as particular method of rule; 2) a focus on local contexts of violence and correlation with the ideology and politics, including the decentralized violence of partisan units and different nationalist formations; 3) study of the Holocaust in conjunction with other major forms of violence; 4) study of violence in the Soviet home front areas as reaction to the German invasion; 5) study of violence as part of liberation practices by the Red Army and re-Sovietization; 6) study of local cultures of violence. The local contexts are analyzed within the framework the Nazi war of annihilation in the East and repressive policies of wartime Stalinism. The researchers utilize materials from newly opened Ukrainian former KGB archives, some of that are accessible for the first time since the fall of the Soviet Union.

Besides furthering a purely scholarly agenda, the project aims to bring groups of scholars of World War II and Stalinism Germany and Ukraine into close interaction. This will strengthen cross-border cooperation and further a scholarly dialogue on a topic that remains highly politicized in post-Soviet space.

About the Program

The project is funded by the Volkswagenstiftung within the framework of the program **“Trilateral Partnerships – Cooperation Projects between Scholars and Scientists from Ukraine, Russia and Germany”**. This program provides funding to researchers from all disciplines, i.e. natural, life and engineering sciences as well as humanities and social sciences.

The program aims to strengthen cross-border cooperation between scholars, scientists, and academic institutions from Germany, Russia and Ukraine. All partners cooperate on equal terms in this project.

Between 1992 and 2007, the Volkswagen Foundation already supported cooperative projects between German and Eastern European / Russian scientists and scholars in a wide range of disciplines. As a reaction to the recent events in Ukraine, the Foundation decided to initiate a specific offer for trilateral scientific cooperation between the Eastern European conflicting parties and Germany.

Within this framework, our project “Violence against Civilians on the Eastern Front of World War II” is funded by Volkswagen foundation for the years 2016–2023.

Since the beginning of the Russian invasion in Ukraine, projects funded within this framework are exclusively bilateral German-Ukrainian.

Additional information about the program

<https://www.volkswagenstiftung.de/en/funding/trilateral-partnerships-%E2%80%93-cooperation-projects-between-scholars-and-scientists-from-ukraine-russia-and-germany>

Additional information about the Volkswagen Foundation

<https://www.volkswagenstiftung.de/en.html>

Participants

Senior Researchers	
Tanja Penter	Germany
Roman Podkur	Ukraine
Valeryi Vasiliev	Ukraine

Junior Researchers	
Serhii Hula	Ukraine
Andrii Khoptiar	Ukraine
Olena Lysenko	Ukraine
Wolfgang Schneider	Germany

Publications prepared within the project as of August 2020:

Boryak, Gennadyi; Budnitskii, Oleg; Khlevniuk, Oleg; Kogut, Aleksandr; Novikova, Liudmila; Penter, Tanja; Podkur, Roman; Schneider, Wolfgang; Vasylyev, Valeryi (2019), Violence Against the Civilian Population in Ukraine. Documents of German and Soviet Secret Services, 1941-1945 (<http://resource.history.org.ua/item/0014212>).

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Tanja Penter

Since 2013, Tanja Penter is Professor of Eastern European History at Heidelberg University's Institute of History. She is a member of both the German-Russian, as well as the German-Ukrainian Historical Commissions and a member of the advisory board of the German Historical Institute Moscow. A detailed curriculum vitae can be found [here](#).



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Publications

Odessa 1917. Revolution an der Peripherie, Beiträge zur Geschichte Osteuropas Bd. 32, Köln 2000.

Kohle für Stalin und Hitler. Leben und Arbeiten im Donbass 1929-1953, Essen 2010.

„Instrumentalisiert, verdrängt, ignoriert. Der Holodomor im Bewusstsein der Deutschen“, in: *Osteuropa* 70. Jg., 3-4 (2020), p. 193-214. (with Guido Hausmann)

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Tanja Penter's research project

The murder of disabled and ill people in occupied Ukraine under Nazi rule (1941-1944)

In the framework of the national-socialist Euthanasia program around 250,000 mentally ill and disabled people were murdered within the German Reich between 1940 and 1945. Roughly 70,000 of them were murdered by gas, whereas the rest were either murdered by lethal injection or died as a result of neglect and hunger. Jewish patients and disabled persons, who were dually stigmatized, first fell victim to the NS 'Euthanasia.' Research has pointed to a correlation between the NS-Euthanasia program and the murder of the European Jews: The former represents a background experience for a number of the perpetrators of the Shoah.

While the euthanasia murders on Reich territory today can be considered well researched, this does not apply equally to the occupied Soviet territories. The number of victims here exceeds several tens of thousands. In the memory cultures of the successor states of the Soviet Union, this group of victims is almost absent. Recently opened Soviet files from the archives of the Ukrainian secret service make it possible for the first time to investigate these NS crimes in more detail. On the basis of several case studies, the project examines the murder of sick and disabled people in Ukraine under German occupation and the judicial processing of these crimes in the post-war period.

Roman Podkur

Roman Podkur senior Research Fellow, Institute of History of Ukraine National Academy of Science of Ukraine, Candidate of Historical Sciences (Ph.D. in History), executive secretary of the Main Editorial Board of the scientific and documentary series of books "Rehabilitated by history". He was Senior Research Fellow at State archive Vinnitsa's region, Lector, Department of History, Vinnitsa's Pedagogical University. Participated in international projects (Stanford university) about everyday life Vinnytsia region in the period of Nazi occupation, the activities of the political leadership 1938-1989. (Indiana university, Stanford university)



Publications

Chernihiv region during the Nazi occupation. Co-editor O.Kovalenko, R.Podkur, O.Lysenko. Chernigov, 2013. – 494 pp. (in Ukrainian).

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Roman Podkur's research project

Edited volumes of archival documents

In the current project Roman Podkur prepares for publication documents on violence against the civilian population in 1941-1945, conducts a source study of documents of the Soviet special services that are used in the project.

Valeryi Vasyliev

Current employment:

Institute of History of Ukraine National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine

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Professional experience:

2010-2017 - Head of Centre of Historical and Encyclopedic Research, Institute of History of Ukraine, Doctor of History

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Publications

Valeryi Vasiliev. Politychne kerivnytstvo USSR and Ukr.SSR: dynamica vidnocyn "center-subcentre" vlady (1917-1938). - K .: Institute of History of Ukraine, 2014.

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Valeryi Vasylyev 's research project

Edited volumes of archival documents

In this project, Vasilyev identifies and studies archival documents that are kept in central and regional state archives, as well as in the sectors of archival support of the Security Service of Ukraine. The archival research is being carried out in Zaporizhzhya, Sumy and Rivne regions. A series of edited volumes containing documents on the violence of the Nazis and their allies against civilians in these regions during the German-Soviet war are being prepared for publication, as well as a documentary publication on Soviet violence in Ukraine in 1941–1945.

Serhii Hula

Born in 1991. Serhii Hula completed his postgraduate studies at the Institute of the History of Ukraine of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine in 2018 and receive his PhD in 2019 for his research on "The functioning of Soviet state security bodies in Podolia (1928-1938)". Since 2019 he is deputy head of the municipal "CENTER FOR VINNYTSIA HISTORY". Serhii Gula also served as a legal counsel for the Vinnytsia Trade and Economic College between 2013 and 2019. He currently teaches introductory seminars in History at the same institution. Since 2016, he participates in the project "Violence against Civilian Victims on the Eastern Front of World War II".



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Publications

The struggle of the NKVD-NKDB ranks of the UkrSSR with anti-Soviet elements in the Vinnytsia's region (1944–1945) / *From archives of VUChK–GPU–NKVD–KGB*. 1 (49). 2018. P.149–208. [in Ukrainian].

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Andrii Khoptiar

Phd (2015)

Andrii Khoptiar is a historian based in Kamianets-Podilskyi, Ukraine. He received his PhD in History in 2015 from the National Ivan Ohienko University in Kamianets-Podilskyi. Since 2015, he is head researcher of the Kamianets-Podilskyi State Historical Museum-Reserve.



Since 2018, he is Senior Lecturer in Economics at the Faculty of Economics, Kamianets-Podilskyi National University.

Khoptiar's research focusses on genocide studies, his wider research interests include Modern European History, Genocide Studies, Ukrainian History and the Holocaust. Between September and December, 2019, Andrii Khoptiar was a research program fellow at the Yahad-In Unum Holocaust research center in Saint-Ouen, Paris, France.

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Publications

«Dialnist Partii sotsialistiv-revoliutsioneriv u Pravoberezhnii Ukraini v 1896-1907 rr.», Kamianets-Podilskyi: PP Zvoleiko D.H., 2016. (In Ukrainian).

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«Utvorennia ta rozvytok viiskovoho mistechka na zaliznychnii stantsii Yarmolyntsi (1930-1940 rr.)», in: Naukovi pratsi Kamianets-Podilskoho natsionalnoho universytetu imeni Ivana Ohienka: Istorychni nauky. Kamianets-Podilskyi: Kamianets-Podilskyi natsionalnyi universytet imeni Ivana Ohienka, 2020, p. 387-396. (In Ukrainian);

«Holokost na Yarmolynechchyni u 1941-1942 rr. Peredumovy, khid, naslidky», in: Materialy Mizhnarodnoi naukovo praktychnoi konferentsii «Arkhivistyka: teoriia, metodyka, praktyka», Kamianets-Podilskyi: Kamianets-Podilskyi natsionalnyi universytet imeni Ivana Ohienka, 2019, p.141-149. (In Ukrainian);

«Holocaust and methods of extermination of the Jewish population in the Khmelnytskyi oblast in 1941-1943», in: East European Historical Bulletin. (In English) (In progress of publication)

«Holokost u Kamianets-Podilskii oblasti: khronolohiia, mekhanizmy ta metody vynyshchennia yevreiskoho naseleattia (lypen 1941-sichen 1943 rr.)», in: Ukrainskyi istorychnyi zhurnal, № 3, 2020. (In Ukrainian) (In progress of publication).

Andrii Khoptiar's research project

Holocaust in Kamianets-Podilskyi oblast: chronology, mechanisms and methods of extermination of the Jewish population

The project focuses on some aspects of Holocaust history in a particular region of Ukraine – Kamianets-Podilskyi (now – Khmelnytskyi) oblast in 1941-1943. The author of the investigation is using a significant amount of published and still unpublished materials while preparing this study. General information on the Holocaust in the region is contained in the documents of the «Extraordinary State Commission for the Detection and Investigation of the Atrocities of German-fascist Invaders and Their Associates», concentrated in the funds of the State Archives of the Russian Federation (GARF). A large body of documentary material (in particular, criminal cases and indictments against Holocaust executors from a number of local collaborators) is stored in the funds of the Khmelnytskyi Sectoral Archive of the Special service of Ukraine (SBU) as well as the State Historical Archives of the Khmelnytskyi region. One of the defining complex set of sources used in this article, a group of narrative sources and eyewitness-survivors of the Holocaust are from the Research Center «Yahad - in Unum» (France).

Olena Lysenko

PhD

Olena Lysenko is a junior research staff member at the Department for the Study of State Terror of the Soviet Period at the Ukrainian Academy of Science's Institute of Ukrainian History. Lysenko received her higher education at the Taras Shevchenko Pedagogical University in Chernihiv and completed her PhD at the Ukrainian Academy of Science's Institute of Ukrainian History. She co-edited the documentary volume "Rehabilitated by History. Chernihiv region". Furthermore, Lysenko also co-edited the collected volumes "Partisans' Glory – Chernihiv region.", dedicated to the study of the region's partisan movement, and "Chernihiv region under Nazi occupation, 1941–1943.", a complementary volume exploring the functioning of the Nazi occupation regime in this region.



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Olena Lysenko's research project

Burned villages in the Chernihiv region

Within the framework of the project, Olena Lysenko studies Nazi occupation politics in the Chernihiv region which were aimed at eliminating civilians. Lysenko examines the participation both of occupation organs, as well as local armed formations in the extermination of those deemed "racial" and ideological enemies of the Third Reich. Specifically, Lysenko studies the motives and causes that led to the burning of villages and the destruction of their inhabitants, as well as the personalities of the perpetrators in these punitive operations..

Publications

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Enemies or witnesses: punishment of UNKVD officers in Chernihiv region after the end of the Great Terror // From the archives of the VUCHK-GPU-NKVD-KGB. - 2019. - № 1 (51). - P. 194-219. (in Ukrainian)

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Wolfgang Schneider

PhD

Graduated from the University of Heidelberg in 2016 (History/Slavonic Studies).

10/2015-06/2016 Research project for the Documentation and Cultural Centre of German Sinti and Roma: “Recovering the names of the Roma killed in the “liquidation” of the Romani family camp in Auschwitz”



Since 06/2016: PhD-candidate and research assistant for the trilateral research project “Violence Against Civilian Victims on the Eastern Front of World War II”. Academic advisor: Prof. Dr. Tanja Penter. Working title of the PhD-Dissertation: “From Gray Zones to Red Courts – Soviet Collaboration Trials of Jewish Council Members and Ghetto Policemen from Transnistria.”

2017–2018 Edith Milman Fellow, at the Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (December 2017 through July 2018)

2018 Young scholars grant awarded by the Moshe Mirilashvili Center for Research on the Holocaust in the Soviet Union (Yad Vashem, Israel)

2022 PhD in History, University of Heidelberg, Department of History; Thesis title: “From Gray Zones to Red Courts. Soviet Collaboration Trials of Jewish Ghetto Functionaries from Transnistria, 1944–1949”. Academic advisor: Prof. Dr. Tanja Penter, Chair of Eastern European History, University of Heidelberg, Department of History; second advisor: Prof. Dr. Frank Grüner, Chair of Eastern European History, University of Bielefeld, Department of History

since 04/2023 Lecturer in Eastern European History, University of Heidelberg, Department of History

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Publications

“From the Ghetto to the Gulag, from the Ghetto to Israel – Soviet collaboration trials against the Shargorod ghetto’s Jewish Council”, in: *Journal of Modern European History* 1/17 (2019), p. 83–97. (<https://doi.org/10.1177/1611894418820266>)

Wolfgang Schneider's research project

From Gray Zones to Red Courts – Soviet Collaboration Trials of Jewish Council Members and Ghetto Policemen from Transnistria

The research project “From Gray Zones to Red Courts” examines Soviet trials of Jewish Council members of Transnistrian ghettos charged with collaboration. Analyzing sociopolitical implications of these trials, the project primarily draws on recently declassified Soviet secret services’ investigation and trial documents as well as memoirs and oral history interviews. Taking on a perspective “from above” as well as one “from below”, the judicial proceedings are conceptualized as a “locus for interaction” between Soviet state and Holocaust survivors, who constituted the majority of witnesses. For survivors, the trials offered an opportunity to voice demands for justice and retribution and to try to come to terms with the recent past. Here, the project also asks about the influence of social conflicts in the ghetto upon witnesses’ perceptions of defendants. The Jewish Councils in Transnistria were mainly recruited from among the deportees from Romania, while the local Ukrainian Jews were excluded from such positions. This led to a partial “nationalization” of the structural opposition between Jewish Councils and ghetto inhabitants, which is echoed in witness’ testimonies. The investigation and trial records thus offer unique insights into survivors’ perceptions of the role of Jewish Councils and their experiences during the Holocaust from the immediate post-liberation period.

The Soviet judiciary met survivors’ demands and perceptions “from below” with its own agenda. The trials allowed the Soviet authorities to prosecute political enemies, such as some rather “bourgeois” defendants, who had been educated Jewish community leaders in Romania. Furthermore, the trials enabled the judiciary to present Soviet rule as legitimate legal rule by adhering to a “demonstrative lawfulness”. Both approaches aimed at facilitating the re-Sovietization of reconquered territories. Branding defendants’ behavior as “treason to the Soviet Motherland”, authorities also established an official version of what had happened in the ghetto, which constituted a judicial form of “politics of history”. The trials examined in the project were held primarily in the Ukrainian and Moldovan Soviet Republics between 1944 and 1951, a transitional period between liberation and the “black years” of late-Stalinist anti-Semitic campaigns. The project thus focusses on an unstudied aspect of Soviet-Jewish relations during this period.