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978-1-107-06123-1 - The Holocaust and the Germanization of Ukraine

Eric C. Steinhart

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The Holocaust and the Germanization of Ukraine

The German invasion of the Soviet Union during the Second World War was central to Nazi plans for territorial expansion and genocidal demographic revolution. To create “living space,” Nazi Germany pursued two policies. The first was the systematic murder of millions of Jews, Slavs, Roma, and other groups that the Nazis found undesirable on racial, religious, ethnic, ideological, hereditary, or behavioral grounds. It also pursued a parallel, albeit smaller, program to mobilize supposedly Germanic residents of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union – so-called Volksdeutsche, or ethnic Germans – as the vanguard of German expansion. This study examines the intersection of these two projects in Transnistria, a portion of southern Ukraine that, because of its numerous Volksdeutsche communities, became an epicenter of both Nazi Volksdeutsche policy and the Holocaust in conquered Soviet territory. It ultimately asks why local residents, whom German authorities identified as Volksdeutsche, participated in the Holocaust with apparent enthusiasm.

Eric C. Steinhart earned a PhD in history from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 2010. His dissertation received the 2011 Fritz Stern Prize from the Friends of the German Historical Institute for best doctoral dissertation on German history written in North America. From 2009 until 2012, he worked as a historian, serving as the Curt C. and Else Silberman International Tracing Service Research Scholar for what is now the Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

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Published in association with the

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32 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10013-2473, USA

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www.cambridge.orgInformation on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781107061231

GERMAN HISTORICAL INSTITUTE

1607 New Hampshire Avenue, N.W., Washington, DC 20009, USA

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First published 2015

Printed in the United States of America

*A catalog record for this publication is available from the British Library.**Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data*

Steinhart, Eric Conrad, author.

The Holocaust and the Germanization of Ukraine / Eric C. Steinhart

pages cm – (Publications of the German Historical Institute)

“Published in association with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum”.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-107-06123-1 (hardback)

1. Holocaust, Jewish (1939–1945) – Ukraine – Transnistria (Territory under German and Romanian occupation, 1941–1944)
2. Jews – Ukraine – Transnistria (Territory under German and Romanian occupation, 1941–1944)
3. Germans – Ukraine – Transnistria (Territory under German and Romanian occupation, 1941–1944)
4. Germans – Ukraine – History – 20th century.
5. Transnistria (Ukraine : Territory under German and Romanian occupation, 1941–1944) – Ethnic relations. I. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. II. Title.

DS135.U4S74 2015

940.53'18094779–dc23 2014027827

ISBN 978-1-107-06123-1 Hardback

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Acknowledgments

This project would have been impossible without generous institutional support. The Holocaust Educational Foundation and the University of North Carolina supported my graduate studies in Chapel Hill. The University of North Carolina's Center for European Studies; Duke University's Center for Slavic, Eurasian, and Eastern European Studies; and the German Historical Institute Washington, D.C., funded invaluable language and research training. The German Academic Exchange Service supported archival research across Germany. Thanks to a Charles H. Revson Foundation Fellowship from what is now the Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, I was able to draw on the vast collections of the Museum and the United States National Archives and Records Administration in College Park, Maryland. The Holocaust Educational Foundation's Peter Hayes Holocaust Studies Fellowship permitted me to research in the British National Archives in Kew. Writing grants from the Conference on Jewish Material Claims against Germany and the Harry Frank Guggenheim Foundation afforded me concentrated time to write most of this study. I thank the Friends of the German Historical Institute for awarding the doctoral dissertation that was the basis for this study a 2011 Fritz Stern Dissertation Prize and for providing me with valuable feedback on my research at the 20th Annual Symposium of the Friends of the German Historical Institute.

Portions of this book contain greatly revised and expanded versions of "Policing the Boundaries of 'Germandom' in the East: SS Ethnic German Policy and Odessa's 'Volksdeutsche,' 1941–1944," *Central European History* 43, no. 1 (2010): 85–116; "Family, Fascists, and 'Volksdeutsche': The Bogdanovka Collective Farm and the Holocaust in Southern Ukraine, December 1941," in *The Holocaust and Local History*, edited by Thomas

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Acknowledgments

Kühne and Tom Lawson (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2011); and “Creating Killers: The Nazification of the Black Sea Germans and the Holocaust in Southern Ukraine, 1941–1944,” *Bulletin of the German Historical Institute* 50 (2012): 57–74. I am grateful to Cambridge University Press, Vallentine Mitchell Publishers, and the German Historical Institute, Washington, D.C., for permitting me to use some of this material here.

I thank the German Historical Institute, Washington, D.C., for the opportunity to publish this study as part of its series with Cambridge University Press. I am grateful to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum for its generous support for the book’s publication. The German Historical Institute’s David Lazar, who tirelessly pushed the manuscript through to publication, and Bryan Hart, who made the book’s maps, deserve particular thanks. Benton Arnovitz of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum read the entire manuscript and offered many helpful improvements. I also received editorial advice in the early stages of writing the book from Steven Feldman of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum’s Emerging Scholars Program.

Individuals on both sides of the Atlantic were instrumental in helping me formulate and carry out this project. Gerhard L. Weinberg and Richard Breitman brought to my attention the records of British signals intelligence – a key source in this book. Jared McBride helped me navigate the complexities of Russian and Ukrainian archives innumerable times. Klaus-Michael Mallmann of the University of Stuttgart’s Research Center in Ludwigsburg provided me with a most inviting intellectual home during my research in Germany. Andrej Angrick generously shared his research and alerted me to rich archival collections that I otherwise would have missed.

My former colleagues at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum deserve particular thanks. Vadim Altskan, Peter Black, Martin Dean, Robert Ehrenreich, Radu Ioanid, Jürgen Matthäus, and Lisa Pearl helped me mobilize the Museum’s immense resources and offered constructive criticism of my work. Paul Shapiro and Suzanne Brown-Fleming granted me a leave of absence, during which I composed the core of this study.

More than anyone else, I owe a tremendous debt to Christopher R. Browning, who nurtured the project from its genesis and supported me even as my career path changed. No student could ask for a more generous teacher and mentor or for a better example of an historian.

My family and friends deserve special thanks. My parents, Margot and Frank Steinhart, shared the joys and frustration of researching and writing a dissertation. In Chapel Hill, I relied on the two other members of our *troika*,

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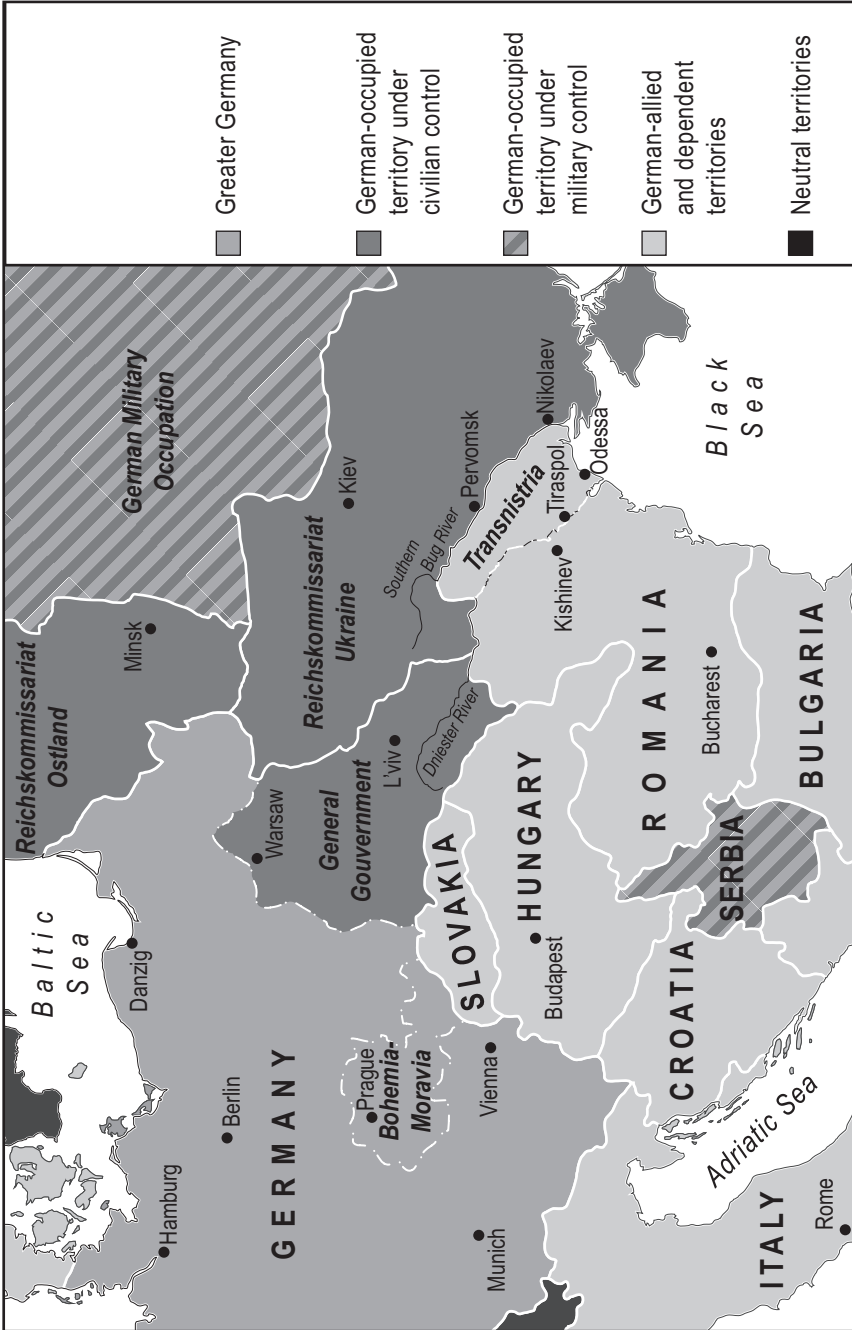
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Emily Baran and Michael Paulauskas, for a sympathetic ear. In Washington, D.C., my friends and former colleagues Emil Kerenji and Leah Wolfson taught me the meaning of the word *mensh*. Finally, I thank my wife, Jane Ricci, and our daughter, Anja, who suffered this book's completion with grace and patience. Any errors in the book are, of course, my own.



Map 1. German-occupied Europe, 1942. Map prepared by Bryan Hart.