Hans-Joachim Torke and John-Paul Himka, *German-Ukrainian Relations in Historical Perspective* (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, 1994)

Review by Troy R. E. Paddock, History, Sacred Heart University

The fourteen articles that comprise this volume were originally presented at a conference held in Garmisch-Patenkirchen in October 1986 devoted to the history of German-Ukrainian relations. The articles are organized chronologically, beginning in the early nineteenth century and extending up to the present day. If there is a consistent theme that runs through these articles, it is that virtually every aspect of German-Ukrainian relations, be it political, cultural, or social, could benefit from further historical research. The evidence that the contributors offer to support that contention is quite compelling.

The cultural relations between the two countries, the subject of articles by Edgar Hösch and John-Paul Himka, is the least-explored aspect of the German-Ukrainian relationship. One of the reasons for this lack of exploration is the tendency on the part of historians of Germany to treat the Ukraine as part of Russia or, later, the Soviet Union, and not as an independent entity. Historians have also had difficulty gaining access to records that, until the dissolution of the Soviet Union, were unavailable. Moreover, Soviet officials discouraged projects that emphasized Ukrainian peculiarity. Hösch and Himka examine two facets of that relationship (scholarly contacts and the influence of German culture on Ukrainian national consciousness, respectively) in the early nineteenth century. The latter half of the nineteenth century is an area that needs to be explored in far more detail.

German-Russian relations are a focal point for Wilhelmine German politics. How the Ukraine fit into the German-Russian cultural relations is an interesting question. Russophobic German academics (Theodor Schiemann and Max Lenz come to mind) did not distinguish between the Ukraine and Russia in their writings on Germany’s eastern neighbor. Culturally, they claimed, Russians were an Asiatic people not a part of occidental culture. In an attempt to combat this argument and prove that
Russians were indeed a European people, Otto Hoetzsch placed the cradle of Russian civilization in Kiev. This debate needs to be kept in mind in looking at the actions of Germans toward the Ukraine during the first World War. Ihor Kamenetsky points to Paul Rohrbach, who was president of the German-Ukrainian Society during the war, as an advocate of Ukrainian independence. However, Rohrbach's position must be viewed within the context of Rohrbach's two decades of anti-Russian agitation. His advocacy of a policy of fairness towards the Ukraine was motivated much more by his desire to see the Russian empire fall than by any desire to see an independent Ukraine. The role of the Ukraine in the argument over whether or not Russia was a European nation is a subject that merits further investigation.

The strength of this collection of essays lies in its historical breadth. The discussion of German-Ukrainian relations over a span of nearly two centuries gives rise to two historiographical issues that will undoubtedly be at the heart of future work in German-Ukrainian relations. The first is a question that remains central to German historiography: the continuity of German policy from the *Kaiserreich* through to the Third Reich. The second issue is one that cannot help but stir the passions of historians of the Ukraine: the nature and extent of Ukrainian collaboration with and resistance to the Third Reich.

The patterns that suggest a strong continuity in German relations to the Ukraine are in the convergence of economic interests and political relations between Germany and the Ukraine as they relate to agriculture in the Ukraine. The Ukraine's wealth of natural resources, especially its rich farmland, was always an object of envy and concern in Germany. Many Germans saw the incorporation of the Ukraine into the German sphere of influence as the solution to their worries about feeding a growing German population. At the same time, a Ukraine at the service of an industrialized Russia or Soviet Union was a cause of great anxiety in German circles. German encouragement of Ukrainian independence in both world wars was motivated as much by the desire to separate the Ukraine from Russia as by the hope of bringing it under German control.

The question of Ukrainian collaboration and resistance is bound to be an emotional one. The determination of Peter Potichnyj and Taras Hunczak to exonerate the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) and the Organization for Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN), respectively, testifies to the volatility of the issue. The resistance of these organizations to the Nazis is only one
facet of Ukrainian-German relations. The position that organizations like the UPA and OUN were clearly and consistently opposed to the Nazis does not take into account the fluid nature of these organizations. As the contributors on this topic demonstrate, people drifted in and out of the UPA and fluctuated between the Bandera and Melnyk wings of the OUN; in spite of the OUN's claim to represent an independent Ukraine, Ukrainians did not speak with a single voice. The OUN-B and the UPA may have consistently resisted the Nazis, but that does not explain how some 250,000 Ukrainians came to be in the service of the Osttruppen.

These essays are at their best when they are making modest contributions. For example, Detlef Brandes and Andreas Kappeler examine the impact of German colonists in the southern Ukraine. Brandes calls attention to the importance of Tsar Paul's reign on German immigration and notes that the two Mennonite colonies met with vastly different results. Due to the waves of German immigration during the reign of Catherine II and Alexander I and to the brevity of his reign, Paul's reforms of administrative offices and his assurance that settlers were given the money that had been promised to them are often overlooked. Kappeler compares German and Ukrainian populations in Katerynoslav, Kherson, and Tavria and observes that the estate and occupation similarities do not correspond to the socio-economic realities. Kappeler offers some hypotheses to explain the disparity, including literacy levels (much higher among the German population) and average size of land holdings (much larger for German colonists).

German colonists in the Ukraine became pawns in a political chess game during the two world wars. Ihor Kamenetsky compares Germany's plans for colonization in the Ukraine during the two wars and concludes that both could be partially described as "a belated version of Western imperialism of the previous centuries" (107). He notes that while a certain level of social Darwinism was used to justify the conquest of land belonging to "inferior peoples," the establishment of a German racial state in the Ukraine in 1918 was substantially different than the Nazi plan for a "New Order." The former plan insured the fundamental freedoms of the German colonists but still subordinated them to the host country. The Nazi plan had the Ukraine as a crucial part of an eastern Lebensraum in which the concerns of the German colonists, not to mention the native peoples, were subordinated to the needs of the "New Order."
The role of the Ukraine in World War II is the subject of five of the essays. The essays are primarily concerned with the nature of Ukrainian cooperation with the Nazis. Wolfdieter Bihl suggests that the Third Reich could have won over Ukrainian nationalists with a more farsighted policy, but that Nazi racial ideology and political blunders dissipated the Ukrainian good will that the Germans had simply because they were not Soviet Russia. Both Potichnyj’s investigation of the relationship between the UPA and German authorities and Hunczak’s look at OUN-German relations attempt to exonerate both groups from any cooperation with Nazi Germany. Potichnyj claims that the charges of collaboration with the Nazis on the part of the UPA is “spurious and constitutes the biggest challenge to all who want to approach this complex question with an open mind” (171). Most of the sources that Potichnyj consulted were from the Ukrainian underground. He explicitly acknowledges that he does not question the reliability of these sources, even though other historians have done so. Potichnyj must have his reasons for his faith in these sources, but he does not give them to the reader. The extreme nature of war and of underground movements, combined with the explicit goal of the Ukrainian underground (the political education and mobilization of the masses), suggest that the sources must be treated carefully.

This collection of essays provides an adequate introduction to the history of German-Ukrainian relations. Some of the contributors, notably Brandes and Potichnyj, have already published more in this field. As accessibility to Russian and Ukrainian sources increases, this trend will continue.

1. For a guide to the more recent literature, see Brandes’s Bibliographie zur Geschichte und Kultur der Russlanddeutschen (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 1994).


Review by Claire Nolte, History, Manhattan College

Although the debate about the existence, meaning, and extent of Central Europe that occupied Western scholars and Eastern dissidents in the 1980s lost much of its energy after the collapse of the Soviet bloc, it has not disappeared entirely, as this new book indicates. The long and not always distinguished history of Mitteleuropa dates from 1806, when Napoleon’s