

The Second World War left a big mark on the history of many countries, with Ukraine being one of the most affected. Numerous victims of Holocaust, forced labourers and army soldiers have suffered from the many-sided aspects of war. The German-Ukrainian Historical Commission organized its Fourth Annual Conference to highlight the latest research on this challenging field.

The conference was preceded by a presentation of the Project „A Leap in the Dark: The Prague Spring in the International Press“. Students of the Interdisciplinary Graduate Program for East European Studies of Ludwig-Maximilian-Universität München and Universität Regensburg. gave a multimedia performance to introduce their documentation portal to the audience.

In his welcome speech, Martin Schulze Wessel (Munich) introduced briefly to the topic, outlining the challenges it presents to researchers and explaining why it finds itself currently at the center of scholarly interest.

The conference's first panel focused on occupation policies and violence. The speakers presented findings on the devastating effects of war and occupation on, focusing on demography, ethnic perspectives and atrocities committed by the occupying power..

Oleksandr Gladun (Kyiv) gave an overview of the latest research on the demographic losses suffered by Ukraine during the Second World War, pointing out that quality and scarcity of the available data present the biggest challenges to research. Furthermore, he stressed the need for developing better methodologies. Gladun aimed at estimating Ukraine's demographic losses during the Second World War in the context of overall Soviet losses, relying on the reconstruction of population dynamics and own methodological approaches. Direct demographic losses or so-called excess deaths are estimated as the difference between the reconstructed numbers of actual wartime deaths and the (hypothetical) mortality rates Ukraine would have experienced in peacetime. His study included data from different archival sources, among them census data, vital statistics and migration data from 1926-59, official statistics on military casualties from the Ministry of Defence of the USSR and the Memory Books. The age distribution of deaths and migrants was reconstructed with the help of corrected vital statistics. Special demographic tables illustrated the population's life expectancy and the population balances of the Soviet republics. Using numerous charts, Gladun visualised different aspects of direct demographic losses of Ukraine and demonstrated that Ukraine's losses per 1,000 inhabitants were, on average, greater than the Soviet Union's average. Gladun also emphasized, that civilian casualties were much greater than military due to losses of a large number of young people with a big disproportion by gender what complicated the ability to start a family and restore the population. He concluded that Ukraine's population might be larger today by 10 million people if the Second World War had not occurred.

The second speaker, Johannes Spohr (Hamburg), presented aspects of his PhD research. His study concentrates on the local history of small towns and villages, mostly in the Vinnytsia Region, during the German retreat through Ukraine in 1943. Based on the personal stories, German sources, interviews, narratives of village history and Soviet archives, Spohr described the effects of war on both German soldiers and local communities, presenting eloquent examples of power abuse during massacres, which were often committed joyfully and enthusiastically, or of village burnings, which happened very frequently. Spohr counted 670 cases of villages that were burned to the ground. There was, however, some measure of resistance, which found its expression in the fact that a large part of the population tried escape and hid in the forests, but also in partisan attacks on German infrastructure. This resulted not only in terror against the local village population, which often manifested in public social humiliation, such as the refusal to bury the dead, but also in intensified propaganda. In this situation, people were forced to make contradictory decisions in order to survive, splitting up local communities: Some volunteered to help German military forces, others supported the partisan movement or did everything they could to avoid going to Germany for work. Spohr emphasized that the phenomenon of

resistance or adjustment as individual survival strategies has not been studied deeply enough. With his own study, he aims at changing the common perception of the local population, which was not just a victimized mass under the occupation, but produced actors within this framework, with their own ideology and intentions.

Vladyslav Hrynevych (Kyiv) focused on Stalinist national policy against Ukraine. The Ukrainian national question held an important place in Soviet ideology and propaganda, thus repeating a common pattern of state national policy in times of war. There are many examples of national conflicts in the army, of ethnic cleansing, emphasized chauvinism and ethnophobia, which were the exact opposite of the proclaimed “friendship of the nations”. Instead, the ideology of Russian nationalism was stressed with increasing authority, the titular nation (the great Russian people) glorified, and potential hostile nations repressed, while some concessions to national minorities were made. In Western Ukraine, evidence of Stalinist repression can be seen in the cleansing of “disloyal groups”, with the Caucasus Adzharians not recruited into the army and all Chechens being discharged. At the same time, some 900,000 out of the 1.5 million Soviet Germans were deported or eliminated. Other methods included strengthening the feeling of belonging to a super ethnos, inciting hatred of the enemy, aversion to their language, culture and way of life. According to Hrynevych, Ukraine constitutes a peculiar case because the war strongly contributed to strengthening the Soviet self-consciousness on the one hand, because it was partly seen as a struggle for national liberation. On the other hand, Stalin’s imperialism also instigated some form of Soviet-Ukrainian patriotism, which entailed the creation of certain governmental structures, such as the People's Commissariat of Defence of Ukraine.

Anatolii Pogorielov (Mykolaiv) presented a paper on terror, focussing mainly on the activities of Security Police (Sicherheitspolizei) and SD (Sicherheitsdienst). Atrocities against the population of the general district Mykolaiv, while little-known so far, were committed by mobile groups and SD. Thanks to the declassified archives of the SBU, all the heads of the SD could be identified, along with other key actors, especially among the guard personnel (Wachmänner), or even translators. Pogorielov established locations and purposes of important buildings, such as the quarters of SD police chiefs, the chancery, mass torture and execution sites, the officer’s hostel and canteen or the punishment cell. He also identified the main transportation routes. Mykolaiv SD consisted of the smaller department, which was mainly tasked with identifying Jews and other nationalities, but also OUN members; and a larger department, which was supposed to fight the partisan movement. Pogorielov presented documents which describe in detail not only abuse, physical exploitation, shootings and executions, but also reveal a specific encouragement system for the officers, which involved alcohol and good dinners after executions. He produced evidence that the entire staff of the SD, including translators, regularly took part in raids, arrests, and torture. Human bodies were never exhumed, even after the so-called “Mykolaiv Nuremberg”, an investigation process that took place after the war.

Dmytro Vakhromov (Tübingen) presented results of his bachelor’s thesis, demonstrating that certain aspects of German occupational practices can be explained by internal competition among various protagonists within the general structure of the occupation. Vakhromov focused on the competition between Sonderkommando Künsberg and the Reichsleiter Rosenberg Operations Centre. Based on the example of the Judaica collection from Kyiv, Vakhromov outlined how German authorities “exported” cultural treasures from the occupied country to the Reich. Kyiv held a special place in this process, because the city was known to be an important cultural and ecclesiastical centre, with a huge number of museum, church and library collections. German trophy organizations began almost immediately to organize the export of libraries and cultural treasures from the occupied city. However, there were no clearly defined goals or objectives for this policy, which left ample room for competition. While the question of how to deal with Jewish collections was highly controversial, Jewish property was seized all over German-occupied Ukraine. However, since the Germans were unable to transport the book fund before their defeat, huge collections remained at numerous cultural and educational institutions, for

instance at Central Jewish Library in the Brodsky synagogue. Vakhromov presented the operation process in detail, highlighting main figures and departments and providing details about their internal bureaucratic war. In the end, many books from that library were turned into waste paper, but some 60,000 books were taken to Frankfurt.

Gregory Aimaro (Bloomington) presented a previously published essay on of Ukraine under German Military Occupation, adding some new information from his latest findings and commenting on his previous conclusions. Highlighting individual cases, Aimaro traced the materials on sufferings and oppression of non-Jewish victims in the Pryluky region. He illustrated the brutality of German occupation in Ukraine using personal documents (private letters), thus challenging the notion that Ukrainians enjoyed a somewhat better reputation among Germans than other groups in the occupied country and showing that they suffered the same tragic fate as other despised minorities. Suffering of civilian population can be seen through German policy against Ukrainians which was implemented by overly hard treatments, killings and terror. Many execution victims were farmers, so-called collective farm workers, but the Germans often also executed people taken as random hostages. The partisan movement developed at the same time, probably provoked by first executions. The specifics of this part of history lies in the fact, that no documents on personal circumstances were left, and the events were reconstructed on the base of interviews and oral history collected from survivals. Further archival research revealed more accurate numbers of executed persons, partisans, their names and individual cases. Aimaro was also able to trace the partisan activity in Pryluky region, its main causes and consequences and to link the cases of extreme violence against Ukrainians to an ethnic factor.

The second panel examined the relationship between collaboration, cooperation and resistance during the Second World War. Various presentations explored the motives for collaboration, which could be attempts to adapt or to develop survival strategies. Furthermore, the speakers raised the question if the decision to collaborate could have resulted from a comparison of the pre-war Soviet regime with the German occupational regime.

Elena Korzun (Vinnitsya) presented a paper on cooperation of Ukrainian and German scientists in the field of agriculture. Main fields of this academic cooperation were the scientific justification for the use of bacterial fertilizers and finding out the physiological impact of new types of fertilizers on the development of main agricultural crops. Furthermore, German and Ukrainian scientists worked closely together on developing methods for chemical soil reclamation, improving calculation methods in the organization of irrigation management, implementing a system of agro-forest-meliorative measures under production conditions as well as on giving scientific substantiation and practical assistance to land meliorative organizations of the Ukrainian SSR. A lot of research on plant breeding and genetics among other things - continued after the war began thanks to personal contacts. The priorities of this research, however, changed and shifted towards a more effective exploitation. Korzun illustrated her presentation by an extensive list of agricultural experimental institutions evacuated to the East of the Soviet Union and agricultural research institutions which emerged in their place after 1942. There was academic cooperation in prominent institutions, including the Regional Institute of Soil Science, Plant Nutrition and Farming, the Regional Institute for Plant and Animal Pest Diseases and the Regional Institute of Breeding and Genetics, sometimes with negative results: In some cases, seed collections and breeding materials were seized and exported to Germany. The fear of violence and repression, but also the desire to serve the new regime, were among the main motives for cooperation. But there were also numerous other factors: There were compulsory labour duty or socio-economic motives, such as the constant need for financial resources, not to mention the opportunity to get food rations at the workplace or meals in the production canteen. Finally, there was the possibility to obtain labour cards with a work record, which gave a chance to avoid deportation to Germany while giving access to medical care and free transport. Korzun also stressed a sense of responsibility for scientific experiments in progress, and the

desire to preserve scientific objects as individual, and often-overlooked, motives for cooperation. In some small degree, cooperation also seemed to allow integration into European scientific thought.

Stefan Mashkevich (Kyiv) examined an individual case of collaboration by outlining Konstantin Shteppa's struggle during the war. As Head of the Department of Education and Culture of the Kyiv City Government, rector at Kyiv University and editor-in-chief of *Nove Ukrainske Slovo*, Shteppa was forced into making some difficult choices to ensure his own survival. Based on two previous publications and especially on an interview with Aglaya Gorman, Shteppa's daughter, Mashkevich shed some light on the reasons for Shteppa's choice to collaborate, why he himself and his family, as collaborators, decided to act (or not) in a certain way, and what eventually came of these choices. There are aspects to Shteppa's biography, such as his participation in the Russian Civil War and arrest, which may have inclined him towards finding an understanding with the Germans rather than with the Bolsheviks. When the Germans approached him, Shteppa agreed to collaborate with SD. He wrote few reports, wrote and approved "appropriate" articles in his newspaper but did not directly participate in repressions. The results of this choice were somewhat ambiguous at best: He gained an apartment in a prestigious building, but retained no freedom at all in his editorial work. His family was somewhat better off than average families in Ukraine, but still had to struggle to feed themselves, and was not exempt from forced labour, so it comes as no surprise that Shteppa was disappointed quickly and profoundly with the occupiers. Mashkevich concluded that Shteppa's only choice at this point was to leave or to stay, and explained his deliberate decision to collaborate mainly with his dissatisfaction with the Soviet power.

Albert Venger (Dnipro) also focused on collaboration with the German occupiers, but more on a group scale, by presenting attempts of the medical staff of the Igrensky psychiatric hospital of the Dnipropetrovsk region to collaborate and resist. Since the question of collaboration of doctors was not a matter of discussion in the Soviet Union, little is still known about the murder of hospital patients during the occupation. Only many years after, documents, sentences and appeal statements became sources for academic research. According to court records, there were 1,400 mental patients at Igrensky psychiatric hospital, most, but not all of which, were of Ukrainian nationality: there were also Germans (Volksdeutsche), Mennonites and Jews. Many of them were discharged when the Germans invaded, but since they often had no place to go, many decided to return to the hospital. The killing at Igrensky began when the Gestapo ordered the murder of all except 100 patients, and continued during the entire occupation period. The head of the hospital, Honcharov, did not take part in the mass murders himself, but delegated this task to his staff. Organizing the first killings, Professor Franc singled out the very sick and the Jews, a common procedure in such operations. When the hospital's morphine ran out, the staff resorted to cruder killing tools: ammonia injections, poisoned food and starvation. Patients of the paediatric ward were deliberately starved to death. Some members of the hospital staff tried to save patients by diluting ammonia with water, and succeeded only in prolonging their suffering for a day. Venger emphasised how the participants of these murder actions tried to displace responsibility during the after-war trials: doctors tended to blame the Gestapo, and only the Gestapo, while nurses tended to blame the doctors.

Yurii Radchenko (Kharkiv) examined collaboration of Ukrainian nationalists from OUN (m) basing on their biographies. Radchenko tried to reconstruct the data on them before and during the war and analyse their motivation, based on 53 applications for jobs in the police force or in self-government which were handed in by OUN (m) activists. They were mostly young men, and most of them had already been part of OUN (m) for some time, many were various labourers, and some had served in different military structures, e.g. the imperial Russian or Austria-Hungarian army. Only three had a religious background and attended the seminary. Several more had served in the Polish army, which was appreciated by the organisation. Some of the applicants took part in the Armed Uprising at the beginning of the Second World War, a local initiative of the OUN militants during which Polish and Jewish population was attacked. Melnyk's OUN department worked together with the Ukrainian Central

Committee (UCC) led by Kubiovich, to hold a conference on cooperation with the Germans and later started to work with World War I veterans. In 1940, they focused on creating a police force, which caused, over time, an increase in the number of police schools, which often gave training on persecuting Jews. But SD of the city of Stanislav participated not only in anti-Jewish but also in anti-Bandera actions. Radchenko especially stressed the motivation of veterans to join police structures, which included physical training and offered some measure of livelihood. He claimed that the activists also wanted to serve because of their political convictions, in order to carry out directives of Ukrainian nationalists, but also in the hope of furthering their own careers.

In contrast to such collaboration practices, there were also forms of resistance, which could manifest in the rescue of Jews. Ihor Shchupak (Dnipro) focused on the financial aspect of life-saving actions, and on the punishments that awaited those who tried to save Jews. Shchupak pointed out that the title of Righteous Among the Nations, awarded by Yad Vashem to those who succeeded in saving Jews from being murdered, is hardly, if at all, relevant for academic research because the award's criteria are only vaguely defined, and the process of actually confirming a successful rescue is very difficult, sometimes because of ideological reasons. Jews trying to escape their murderers were almost always, in one way or another, confronted with the challenge that their would-be rescuers needed, or demanded, some sort of financial compensation for their risk and effort. As a result, the more well-to-do were generally able to afford somewhat better chances of survival, but the risk discovery entailed was indeed very high: if found, the rescuers were often murdered together with the Jews they had been trying to protect. In some cases, Ukrainians were shot en masse, only because they had shown an intention to help. Some rescue efforts took place for entirely altruistic motives; others functioned on a compensation basis. In some cases, forms of a professionalized refuge business with an actual profit model can be observed. While research on rescue actions is possible thanks to memoirs and archival documents, all attempts to evaluate the obtained information need to factor in the origins of the available sources; German documents, for instance, tend to provide information only on rescue efforts that failed. Shchupak argued that most rescuers were ordinary people and often had rather low incomes. Many were women, motivated by a desire to help their relatives, friends, or colleagues. Protecting them may have been a part of self-affirmation for some, while partisans or nonconformists saw rescue operations as a part of their resistance against the occupiers. For many, rescue operations were a part of business strategy with clear financial motives. Shchupak concluded by pointing out that not a single Ukrainian political organization, nor the Soviet government came out in defence of the Jews.

After the second panel, Dieter Pohl (Klagenfurt) delivered a keynote speech on the rule of mass violence in Germany and Ukraine during World War II. Pohl focused on the criminal complexes of the war, among them the killing of Soviet elites, specifically of political functionaries, mass killings of (especially male) Jews, and starvation. Pohl pointed out that murder plans were initially short term, with the Wehrmacht concentrating on killing prisoners of war, and the police on killing civilians. While it remains difficult to see any form of logic to this violence, Pohl identified its most important factor: the majority of leaders had a de facto complete freedom to resort to violent means against the Ukrainian population, and they did, in fact, widely support mass violence, even though they had no specific orders to do so. While the mass murder of Jews did not provoke any noticeable protest, the commissar orders and the mass starvation of prisoners of war were matters of some debate on different levels. The mass murder was widespread due to the high density of Jewish population in Ukraine, but the murder of Soviet Roma population was no less systematic. It is a significant feature of the occupation period in Ukraine that protests against the German presence were, in comparison to other countries, relatively weak. However, the experience differed a lot in Eastern and Western Ukraine, and German mass violence attained different levels in different regions of Ukraine. Even though there is huge quantity of documents left, relatively little is known about the real numbers of civilian victims. The Holocaust was hardly documented until Jewish survivors began to give interviews during the 1980s and 1990s. In contrast, the Soviet government documented the killing of communists rather well, for ideological

reasons. The attitude of the population to German violence reveals a rather striking difference in the perception of victims: while prisoners of war were generally seen as “ours”, Jews were perceived as the “others”. In conclusion, Pohl argued in favour of focusing more on the history of society in the future, and expressed a need for microstudies and a comparative structural approach. The specific Ukrainian experience might thus become a universal example for all studies of occupation.

The last conference day opened with a presentation of the book "Traitors, Collaborators and Deserters in Contemporary European Politics of Memory: Formulas of Betrayal", edited by Gelinada Grinchenko (Kharkiv) & Eleonora Narvselius (Lund). Based on the definition of betrayal as a violation of trust and loyalty that endangers societal cohesion, the authors offer their own classifications based on an anthropological approach. The existing classification of betrayal includes cultural-psychological, sociological and political-ethical approaches, while collaborationism can be, according to existing classifications, neutral, unconditional, conditional and tactical. According to Soviet classifications, collaboration can be military, economic, administrative, ideological, intellectual etc., but the authors argue that none of these classifications can cover the complexity of real-life situations, since they neglect the importance, and inter-linking, of ideological and intellectual components. Their book therefore focuses on the conceptions of boundary-making, actors and memory and discusses exertion of political control over memory (e.g., selection, imposition, silencing or ideological “twisting” of facts) and usage of “formulas of betrayal” for the purpose of legitimising various memory regimes and ideologies. Suggesting the multidisciplinary approach, the authors work with rich and diverse empirical material to reconstruct the complexity of the betrayal through its prehistory, event, result and posthistory. One of their prominent examples are the unexpected consequences war propaganda had for women who returned home from forced labour and had to face charges of treason. While deported women had been depicted as disgraced victims to motivate soldiers for revenge, this message was apparently misunderstood and led to acts of violence against these women by their very liberators. Based on this example, both authors raised the complex question of how memory policy is being formed while the event to be remembered is still going on, and equally important, how such events should be remembered.

Matthias Kaltenbrunner (Vienna) then opened the third and last panel of the conference, which was dedicated to everyday life under the occupation. He presented a paper on agency and social space among Western Ukrainian Villagers. Working with individual Ostarbeiter cases, he identified the key issues the peasants faced during the Second World War. These included the recruitment for forced labour, which tended to affect especially those with smallest land property, the redistribution of land, recruitment into the SS-division Galicia (with property being confiscated and returned only after joining the division) and their professional biography. Kaltenbrunner mainly relied on criminal files from the Ivano-Frankivsk SBU archive, especially on interrogation protocols of witnesses, lists of Ostarbeiters of Extraordinary State Commission in Sniatyn county, documents of the “Sammelgemeinde” Stetseva, such as protocols of the sessions of the municipality council and lists of inhabitants with information on socio-economic status and oral history or the “common knowledge” village histories. Based on the biographies of Mykola Shovkoplias, Petro Malofij and Vasyl’ Plav’iuk, he concludes that the socio-economic position of individuals prior to 1939 determined their horizon of action during the war. As peasants faced the choice between different forms of forced labour, their personal decisions appear to be very important for the study, especially taking into account that the former Ostarbeiters and minor collaborators in many cases faced death sentences afterwards, with only few having career prospects if they had the “right” social origin.

Everyday relationships between the occupiers and the occupied were also at the center of Yuliya Krykun’s (Kyiv) presentation, who attempted to demonstrate positive aspects to the German occupation of Ukraine. Based on the field materials, Krykun claimed that despite the ideological hate to German soldiers in Soviet publications, the everyday experience of peasants may have been much less violent

than it used to be described. Oral history interviews show evidences of not only peaceful collaboration, but also of bilateral historical trauma and sympathetic understanding of common problems, which were even more emphasized in a contrast to the recent experience with Soviet soldiers. A widespread example was the discipline and public order under the German occupation with total prohibition of theft and deferential attitude to working hours and overtime. The availability of food left probably the strongest impression on those, who suffered from hunger years under the Soviet rule, especially in 1932-33, and respect to churches strengthened traumatic memories of Soviet religion elimination policy. Krykun concluded that it is important for researchers to see a human in the face of the enemy to avoid ideological influences.

Olha Marmilova (Vinnytsya) gave a presentation on the everyday history of forced labourers from the Donetsk region, based on their private correspondence. She relied on 120 letters from the Donetsk archive which were presumably given to the archive by local inhabitants of the area and declassified later. Almost all of these letters were written in 1943, when forced labour conditions were already easier, and people had gotten used to living in Germany. The main purpose of these letters was to reassure relatives that the authors were alive and healthy. Due to censorship, only information that did not contradict the official propaganda was allowed to pass, as numerous censorship stamps and blacked out text lines make evident. Correspondence had a big value in the life of forced labourers, they continuously asked their relatives to write as often as possible, asked many questions about health, clothing, and housing. As Ostarbeiters often could not get their earned money on-site, they frequently raised this topic, expressing hope that their earnings would reach their relatives in Ukraine. While working conditions on farms were described in great detail, specifics about the work in factories were probably prohibited to share. Another recurring theme were living conditions, personal relationships in the camps, but also, to a considerable extent, homesickness. Apparently, living together or communicating with fellow-country people was considered important, so addresses of friends were shared with others for further correspondence. While the letters are full of negative assessments of the writers' own situation, comments on their "masters" tended to be rather favourable, which was backed up by common photos. Marmilova summed up that letter writing held an important place in the life of Ostarbeiters. However, more accurate and detailed information, as well as their writing strategies remain to be researched.

The last presentation in the panel was given by Iryna Koval-Fuchylo (Kyiv), and dedicated to a woman discourse that appears in the diaries of the writer Olexandr Dovzhenko. Dovzhenko was able to go through the repression period mainly because he won the sympathy of Stalin and was chosen to make a film about Ukraine in the Second World War. Based on his personal diaries, Koval-Fuchylo established that the main influential factors on the woman topic in his plot were not only an aspiration to truth and the duty to please the state authorities, but also traditional patriarchal stereotypes, Soviet military propaganda and search for interesting subjects. While female characters are depicted mostly from a man's perspective, quite schematic and tendentious, spelled out mostly from a man's position, the influence of Soviet military propaganda is also clearly visible. As an example, in the first half of the war, Dovzhenko stresses the topic of rape and uses female imagery to create a personification of the Motherland's suffering. Although the writer is further concerned about the problem of voluntary sexual contacts between Ukrainian women and Germans, using references to the folklore texts, this topic has not been included in the plot. Koval-Fuchylo highlights deep-rooted patriarchal stereotypes in the filmmaker's position and traces similar arguments in other prominent works of the time. According to her, Dovzhenko's diaries have a special value because he is one of the few writers of the Stalin era who decided to leave an "ego document" to posterity. This allows not only to see the influence of the propaganda on a creative personality or societal attitude towards a woman, but also to track changes in author's position throughout the war period.

Tanja Penter (Heidelberg) offered concluding remarks, briefly summarizing all presentations and discussion points. She outlined the most prominent trends in current studies on Ukrainian during the Second World War. She observed that the conference reflected the opening up of Ukrainian archives, particularly of former KGB archives, which made huge amounts of new materials available to research and may influence the whole historiography of the occupation period. However, she pointed out the need to develop a strong methodology to support working with these new materials. Proper contextualization and historization should permit to avoid reproducing narratives from the past, and to never neglect the fact that oral history documents are artefacts of their time and need, as such, an analytical and critical approach. Furthermore, Penter observed three main shifts in Ukrainian historiography: from Holocaust studies to studies of neglected civilian groups and prisoners of war, from city to village studies and from the history of occupation policies and institutions to the history of everyday life during the Second World War. Many stereotypes and misunderstandings, carried on through the decades, still prevail in Ukrainian-German academia. As an example, she mentioned the Heidelberg monument to forced labourers, which misses both the ethnic point by misidentifying Ukrainian workers as “Russian”) and the gender composition of the forced labour workforce, by displaying men as the main actors, while the typical Ostarbeiters were actually young women). The difficult discussion about collaboration still appears to be in its early stages, and is still need of categorizations that allow for a certain fluidity. After all, people could display very different behaviour at different times, being defenders at one point, collaborators at another, and victims at the same time. Penter concluded that knowledge itself is a complex concept, which demands enormous accuracy when applied to Ukrainian history, and asked how this knowledge influences the history of Ukraine and Germany on various levels.

Conference report by Hanna Lehun, Humboldt University Berlin, Fellow of the German-Ukrainian Historical Commission in 2019