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Vladimir Solonari. *A Satellite Empire: Romanian Rule in Southwestern Ukraine, 1941-1944.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2019. Illustrations, maps. 328 pp. $58.95, cloth, ISBN 978-1-5017-4318-4.

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Transnistria was the name for the strip of southwestern Ukraine between the Dniester River and the Bug River that was occupied and administered by Romania from August 1941 to March 1944. Today it is often confused with the much smaller breakaway region of Transnistria in Moldova. While wartime Transnistria may seem like an esoteric subject of interest to only a few, Vladimir Solonari's *A Satellite Empire* compels historians of the Second World War to pay more attention to Romanian rule in this forgotten region.

Romania was the only Axis power other than Nazi Germany to occupy and administer a relatively large and populated—over 2.3 million people—swath of the Soviet Union. (Finland seized the small region of eastern Karelia but it had less than 86,000 inhabitants following Soviet evacuation.) Consequently, Solonari points out, Transnistria can be used "as a foil against which to try and better grasp societal dynamics in the occupied USSR as a whole" (p. 1). A common refrain among historians of the eastern front is the supposed lost opportunity of Nazi Germany to win over local support through less harsh occupation policies because of widespread animosity toward Soviet power after decades of terror and famine. Transnistria provides an opportunity to test this counterfactual. Did Romania treat Soviet residents better and thereby enjoy greater local cooperation? The few preceding Western studies suggest that in comparison to the German occupation of other Soviet territories, the Romanian occupation of Transnistria was relatively benign. In contrast, earlier Soviet accounts saw no difference between the two occupiers. For the first time, Solonari uses extensive Romanian and Soviet primary sources, building on German secondary sources, to answer the question.

Noticeably absent are Jewish primary sources, however. Solonari writes that he initially planned to include the persecution of Jews and Roma (Gypsies) at the center of the book because Transnistria was the epicenter of the Holocaust in Romania. During the fall and winter of 1941-42, the province became a dumping ground for Jewish survivors of pogroms in Romanian territory reconquered from the Soviets; Odessa was the site of a terrible massacre of Jews after the city fell to the Romanian Army; several counties saw mass executions of Jews by Romanian gendarmes, Ukrainian police, and ethnic German militiamen; and in the rest of the region Jews died from starvation, disease, and exposure in camps and ghettos. Solonari argues that this story was too complex to include and "would make it lose effect among the other subjects covered." He also claims an "established norm" of historians focusing on either the Holocaust or occupation policies, not both (p. 5).

Yet works by Karel C. Berkhoff (***Harvest of Despair: Life and Death in Ukraine under Nazi Rule*** [2004]), Wendy Lower (***Nazi Empire-Building and the Holocaust in Ukraine*** [2005]), and other historians who incorporate the "Final Solution" into examinations of German occupation in the USSR indicate that just such a holistic approach is the new norm. The Holocaust was so bound up in the Romanian occupation of Transnistria that not including even a basic account of the Jewish experience in the region is a serious weakness. Nevertheless, ***A Satellite Empire*** is sure to be the new foundational work on the Transnistria Governorate.

The book consists of ten thematic chapters that are divided into three parts. Part 1 covers the creation and running of Transnistria, explaining how Marshal Ion Antonescu, dictator of Romania, managed to convince Adolf Hitler to cede Soviet territory to Romania at the start of the invasion of the USSR when Axis faith in final victory was high. Solonari emphasizes that the Tighina Agreement signed on August 30, 1941, "severely limited the sovereignty of Romania in Transnistria in all matters" (p. 37). The Germans maintained a sizable number of personnel, retained significant control over communication infrastructure, blocked expulsion of Jews farther east, and demanded a share of war booty and agricultural produce. Moreover, the German SS Sonderkommando-R, the primary agent for the Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle (Ethnic German Main Welfare Office) in Transnistria, claimed control over local ethnic Germans, limiting Romanian authority over ethnic German villages. Solonari spends a whole chapter exploring how the Antonescu regime adopted a new German-inspired administration in Transnistria, rather than applying the existing French-style bureaucratic system in Romania, to try to create a "model" province—continuing a story he began in his previous book (***Purifying the Nation: Population Exchange and Ethnic Cleansing in Nazi-Allied Romania*** [2010], especially chapter 8). Lastly, the structure of the mid- and low-level administrative apparatus, security services, and military justice system is laid out. Overall, this first part illustrates the constraints within which Romania operated as a satellite of Nazi Germany that shaped its occupation of Transnistria.

Part 2 focuses on Romania's effort to transform and exploit Transnistria. Solonari points out the tensions created by contradicting goals: "Romanianization" through resettlement schemes using "eastern Romanians" (Soviet Moldovans), "civilizing mission" focusing on uplifting the culture and religion of local peoples, and exploitation of resources to fuel Romania's economy and to line the pockets of Antonescu and his cronies. Unsurprisingly, as the war dragged on, the Romanian administration focused on squeezing as many economic resources out of Transnistria to the detriment of Romanianizing and civilizing projects. Solonari bursts the myth of wartime prosperity in Odessa once credited to Romanian policy encouraging private enterprise. Instead, a black market in looted Jewish goods and produce grown by privileged ethnic German villagers benefited a narrow few of well-off city folk. The Romanians did not enforce similar draconian economic policies as the Germans, leading to starvation and death of many civilians, however. This second part traces both the fantasy and pragmatism of Romania's empire-building efforts in Transnistria.

Finally, part 3 delves into how Soviet inhabitants responded to Romanian occupation. Dispelling old Soviet myths, Solonari shows how most Soviet civilians initially accommodated to the Romanian administration, with many former Soviet civil servants being rehired by the new Romanian masters. A few went further and collaborated, including a small but prominent group of intellectuals motivated by anticommunism and antisemitism who produced pro-Romanian and anti-Soviet propaganda for Russian-language publications. Solonari dedicates two chapters to the Soviet partisan movement in Transnistria. The initial local resistance in 1941-42 was a series of "virtually unmitigated disasters" (p. 211). However, Soviet vic-

tories on the battlefield and Romanian efforts to strip the province of all productive assets, food, and other resources before the enemy arrived —"Operation 1111"—triggered a resurgence of partisan activity in 1943-44. Thus, this third part concludes that the Romanians squandered whatever goodwill they had once enjoyed from the locals who eventually looked to the Soviets for deliverance.

By the end of ***A Satellite Empire*** it is clear the more moderate Romanian occupation in Transnistria was not that much more successful than German occupation elsewhere in the Soviet Union. The Antonescu regime was not driven by racial hatred of Slavs, so Soviet inhabitants of Transnistria did not endure the same privations as those under Nazi control and even benefited for a time from Romanian investments in local culture and religion. (A key exception of course was the brutal treatment of Jews by antisemitic Romanian authorities resulting in mass murder.) Consequently, the Soviet partisan movement—also handicapped by Transnistria's terrain that was not well suited for guerrilla warfare—initially floundered because the population provided it limited support. The increasing cupidity of the Transnistria Governorate, driven by military necessity, eventually caused locals to rethink their attitude toward the Romanians and turn again to the Soviets. "German and Romanian occupiers' mentalities and polices had only a limited effect on their relations with the locals," Solonari argues. "While it had taken longer for the Romanians to turn the population against them, the end result was quite similar in both zones of occupation" (p. 236). The cupidity of Romanian or German occupier radicalized by military necessity eventually alienated the Soviet occupied.

A few changes might have better supported Solonari's arguments. A more chronological approach would have been helpful because the thematic structure of ***A Satellite Empire*** makes it difficult for the reader to track the ups and downs of local responses to the changes of Romanian policies in Transnistria. This may have caused Solonari to somewhat underrate the early success of the Soviet partisans in Transnistria, including blowing up the Romanian military headquarters in Odessa killing a general and scores of other soldiers, but this accomplishment then triggered a horrific massacre of Jews in the city. Romanian authorities conflated Jews with partisans, but how this dynamic influenced Soviet resistance in Transnistria goes unexplored.

Solonari has produced an impressive work of scholarship that proves the importance of Transnistria. His mastery of Romanian, Moldovan, Russian, and German archives is particularly impressive. ***A Satellite Empire*** will interest specialists and nonspecialists alike as the stories told are fascinating and horrifying. This history of Romanian rule in Transnistria should stand as a reminder that Nazi Germany's efforts to forge a new European order found support in countries across the continent.

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