

Lecture Timothy Snyder (Yale University, Fall 2022)

The Making of Modern Ukraine

16 - Colonization - Extermination - Ethnic Cleansing

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pi0wyvuNn4A>

00:00 Okay. Greetings everyone.

Thank you for joining me on this beautiful day when there are so many lovely things that you could be doing outside.

Where did the picnic tables come from? What's up with the picnic tables? Where do those.

- [Student] Morse College was closed.

So commons went sideways.

- Okay.

Okay, okay.

- [Student] It went this way.

- Okay.

Right. Class.

So, again, I would take you guys outside if it weren't for the fact that there's this technology which is keeping me fixed right here.

The way that I wanna talk about the subject today is to broaden it a bit and think about the German factor in Ukrainian political history.

01:03 Because the German factor has a kind of strange shape to it where actually Germany, German culture, the German language doesn't mean very much in Ukrainian history until quite late in the day, until the 19th and especially the 20th century.

And then suddenly it means quite a lot and most of it quite negative.

Most of it quite destructive.

So, I wanted to start by just going back over a few of the themes from previous lectures just to set the stage for this kind of sudden on rush of Germany in Ukrainian history.

Because I have this, I have the feeling that if I just start with 1939 or 1941 in a way that will be too abrupt and we won't understand the depth of the contrast.

'Cause something new really begins in the 20th century.

There isn't...

When Germany begins to contact Ukraine, something new happens and to see the novelty I think we have to start earlier on.

02:06 So, I'm just gonna now just do a real quick series of stopping points along the previous several centuries.

Oh, sorry, the other thing I wanna tell you guys in case you haven't figured it out is I have a cold, so I'm at like 85%.

So hopefully I'll go at 85% speed and that will be more appropriate and everybody will be happy.

I always feel stupid when it's nice outside and I have a cold, right? (students laughing)
You know what I mean? I don't feel stupid when it's like January and I feel great but

when it's like, anyway.

So, what I'm gonna do is I'm gonna review the last six or seven centuries and just remind us of some of the stopping points that we've marked.

One of them is the Holy Roman Empire.

So if you think back to the beginning of the class and the conjuncture in which the Kyivan state is formed, Christianity is coming from two directions, from the west and from the south, from the Holy Roman Empire and from Byzantium.

03:01 And roughly speaking, all of the new states that are formed then are either in a relationship to the Holy Roman Empire like Poland because Western Christian or to the Byzantium because Eastern Christian or what we're later gonna call orthodoxy.

So, that rivalry, the presence of Holy Roman Empire does have something to do with our story.

And that rivalry generated this contest for Moravia back in the eighth century where those gentlemen, Cyril and Methodius made that trip northwards to Moravia and they brought the language with them.

They brought the language with them which we call Old Church Slavonic.

And they were the ones who created an alphabet for Slavic languages.

That has to do with the German factor in some sense because it's this contest between Western and Eastern Christianity, the friction between them, which forces people to be creative and come up with new solutions like for example, Church Slavonic, like the Cyrillic language which comes, the Cyrillic alphabet which comes a bit later.

04:05 It's a bit of a stretch but I hope you'll buy it if I say that the Viking factor is also in some way the Germanic world.

So the Scandinavian languages, except for Finnish of course, the Scandinavian languages are Germanic languages.

And so Kyivan Rus' is in some way connected to a broadly speaking Germanic world by way of Scandinavia, by way of the Vikings, by way of the Viking contact which begins eighth century, ninth century, and has to do with the creation of a state in the 10th and especially in the 11th century.

And so you can think of Ukraine as being part of a kind of crescent of Scandinavian or Viking state building attempts which ranges from England through Scandinavia itself, and then all the way down to Kyiv.

The next moment which I didn't really bring out is the Reformation.

So, the Reformation is largely a German and then Swiss and then French event at the beginning.

05:03 The Reformation, the emergence of versions of Christianity is relevant to Ukraine, is relevant to our story because it is that friction between Protestantism and Catholicism.

The Reformation in later the Catholic, in later Counter-Reformation, the Catholic Reformation, which forces our churchmen in places like Chernihiv in Kyiv to take up many languages, to take up the Renaissance, to take up Disputation, right? It is those things which make those churchmen in Kyiv, Chernihiv different, for example, than Churchmen in Moscow who don't have contact with the Reformation, don't have contact with the Renaissance.

And will eventually have contact with those things but by way of Kyiv itself.

It's also interesting in that Protestantism and Orthodoxy sometimes formed a kind of alliance, at least a kind of brief practical alliance where the Orthodox would borrow arguments from the, the Orthodox would borrow arguments from the Protestants against the Catholics.

06:03 So there was some kind of cross-fertilization and there were also very, there were some very important Ukrainian families, families of Ukrainian magnates, wealthy magnates from old Rus who converted to Protestantism.

But in general, that only lasted for one generation and the next generation they converted to Catholicism, and then are remembered as Polish families.

So, that's interesting.

I hope you agree but it's relatively meager.

The connection if we compare it to the connection with the Grand Duchy of Lithuania or with Poland, right, or with Byzantium, the connection with Germany is fairly meager until we get into the modern period, the modern period of the nation state.

And it's here where Germany starts to become very important because Germany's not the most imperial, most important imperial power in Europe.

Never, right? Germany, this is a key fact about Germany.

07:02 Here come your five minutes of modern German history.

A key fact about Germany is that it comes into being after the world has been colonized.

And this is something that the Germans themselves are very aware of.

The German unification of January 1871 takes place at a time when almost all of the world that's going to be colonized is already colonized from the European point of view.

There are a couple of more decades of the Race for Africa that Germany takes part in.

It has colonies in Southeastern and Southwestern Africa.

But in general, the world has already been divided up by the time that Germany becomes a state in the late 19th century.

So you remember some points on the basic trajectory of this that Germany is unified not from Vienna, not from our Hapsburg friends, but by Prussia.

I've been trying to kinda note along the way in each lecture when Prussia turns up because eventually Prussia is going to be important.

08:03 The Ducal Prussia breaks free of Poland in 1657 during a difficult time for Poland, a few years after the Cossacks have rebelled that Prussia declares itself to be a kingdom in 1701.

And then you may, you remember this fellow Frederick the Great of Prussia who's ruling from 1740 to 1780, he turned up in our class as the rival of Maria Theresa of Hapsburg, when Maria Theresa of Hapsburg becomes the first female ruler of the Hapsburgs.

He challenges her, he declares war.

They come to power about the same time, he immediately declares war as one does on the logic that he's just protecting her as one says.

And that period of Prussian history is the moment when Prussia begins to gather in other important lands such as Silesia.

This moment in Prussian history is also, if I can just make a brief connection to the history of philosophy, this is also the moment of the great German philosopher Immanuel Kant, who you just might have heard of in some other class, the foundational philosopher of ethics and many other things at least in the western tradition in the modern period.

09:17 Kant is the fellow who argued among many other interesting things that when you act, you should act as though you were making a rule.

So that as though everything you do, you should be able to categorize and think of it as a rule.

So for example, for example, if you're watching this class not live but on video and there are 3 million views of this class, and every single person who watches it sends me an email and expects me to respond, the rule that you are creating is that Timothy Snyder should spend 60 years responding to your emails.

I've done the math.

10:01 (students laugh) So that's an example of Kantian reasoning.

If you think it would be a good world in which Timothy Snyder spent no time with his children, didn't sleep, didn't eat, did no research, but responded to emails for the next 60 years, then what you should do individually is write me an email and expect me to respond.

I say that with a smile, I appreciate your nice emails, but just think about the rule that it

would be created.

So then to think of a different rule.

If every time someone watched a video from this class, they made a donation to Razom, R-A-Z-O-M, you would be creating a rule that Ukrainians should get warm clothing over the winter.

Or if every time you watched a video of this class, you went to my United24 site and made a donation, you'd be making a rule that Ukrainians can protect themselves from drones.

So there are lots of rules that you can make, right? It's up to you.

11:02 Okay. That was Kant.

(students laughing) That was Kant.

So even those of you haven't taken intellectual history are now gonna remember Kant and acting as though all of your actions create a rule.

Okay.

So Kant is the great 18th century philosopher, So you'll remember that the Prussians and the Hapsburgs are rivals for the unification of Germany, right? They're rivals for the unification of Germany and it's the Prussians, surprisingly, who win.

They beat the Hapsburgs in the war in 1866.

They unified Germany then they beat the French in 1870, and then they unified Germany at the Hall of Mirrors in Versailles.

They sign a treaty unified Germany in January of 1871.

So that's where Germany comes into being.

But even in those decades, it's less Germany and more the Hapsburg monarchy that matters for Ukraine, right? Insofar as there's a German factor in Ukrainian history in the 1870s, 1880s, 1890s, 1900s, it's the one that we studied under the rubric of the Hapsburgs.

12:05 When the German language comes into what's now Western Ukraine, it's by way of the Hapsburgs.

When the idea of enlightenment comes in, it's by way of the Hapsburgs, precisely.

I say I warn you all up with this just because I want you to see how drastic the change is in the 20th century when it comes.

In the First World War, as we've already seen, there is a moment when Germany controls most of Ukraine.

There's a moment in 19, from early 1918 to the middle of 1918 when Germany and the Hapsburgs together control most of Ukraine, occupy most of Ukraine.

Theoretically, what they are doing is national self-determination.

So this whole, this national self-determination business as you know and as you've seen in this class can work out in lots of different ways.

The German version of national self-determination was we are going to recognize you.

13:03 No one else is going to recognize you but we will.

And in exchange we want you to deliver X million amount, X million tons of grain.

And then in practice that grain was very often forcibly requisitioned from Ukrainian peasants who very successfully resisted those requisitions.

So, what the Germans were after and the Austrians too was food from Ukraine in 1918 which would allow them to win the First World War.

That's very crucial to the First World War and what comes next.

It's not the kind of thing which we, if you're studying the war from a British or French or American point of view you're gonna be thinking about Ukraine and the food and that the Germans might win in 1918.

But from the point of view of Central and Eastern Europe, this idea that Ukraine was a

(speaks in foreign language), that Ukraine was like an endless chamber filled with food, right? Like it was a barn, a cornucopia.

It was an endless supply of food.

That notion is very important, right? Because the idea that a land is not about its people, but it's about all the things you can extract from it is a very attractive colonial idea.

14:11 And that idea is only going to be intensified in the mind of a German soldier who served not on the Eastern but on the western front, and that would be Adolf Hitler.

So, the way that Adolf Hitler thinks about Ukraine becomes intensely important in 1941, '42, 1943 because that's when Germany's going to invade the Eastern Europe again.

I wanna step back here and try to give you a portrait of how Hitler saw Ukraine and how he came to power and then what, then we'll see what the Germans actually did.

So there is one way in which what happens in the east affects Hitler.

He's not a soldier in the east but he does have this general idea that German soldiers generally have which was that we didn't lose the war in the east which they didn't.

15:06 They didn't lose the war in the east.

What happened in the east? Well, the version of what happened in the east that they get is very often coming from refugees coming from the east.

So namely from the people we call white Russians which is kind of an unfortunate name in a number of ways but by white Russian what is meant are the people who are fighting for the restoration of the empire and lost.

And so now many of them end up in France or in Germany.

And some of these white Russian emigres bring with them an interesting idea about, interesting for Hitler I mean, interesting idea about Bolshevism, about communism, which is that it is all a Jewish plot.

So this for Hitler and for the development of German extreme right ideology is a very important piece of what turns out to be Hitler's coherent worldview.

16:02 Up until that time, Hitler had been saying that the Jews were responsible for capitalism, right? That capitalism was a Jewish conspiracy.

After 1919 or so, he begins also to say that the Jews are responsible for communism.

And the reason and so then this is sort of an old punchline, like how can they be both the capitalist and the communists? But from Hitler's point of view, this isn't actually contradictory at all because what Hitler argues in his book "Mein Kampf" is that the Jews are responsible for all ideas which allow humans to regard one another as humans.

And so, capitalism with its social contract and so on, capitalism with its contracts, capitalism with its legal recognition and so on is one way that we see each other in non-racial terms.

17:03 Likewise, communism with its class solidarity and its idea of revolution and so on is a way of seeing ourselves in non-racial terms.

For Hitler, any way of seeing ourselves in non-racial terms is Jewish and anti-human and anti natural.

So the Jews are responsible also for Christianity.

I mean, you can multiply, I mean there may be a stronger argument there actually but you can multiply the list of things that Jews are responsible for.

They're responsible in Hitler's mind for any notion which sets us apart from racial competition.

Because for Hitler, and this is a crucial thing, the racial competition is nature.

That's the way we're supposed to be.

We are divided up into races, races are like species.

They shouldn't be interbreeding, they should just be starving one another to death.

That is good, that's natural.

That's the way nature is supposed to work.

That's what the future's going to look like.

And that's going to be as good as things get.

18:01 So, how does this lead to Ukraine? Oh, so just to make this clear, this is why Hitler's antisemitism is so intense because what he's saying about the Jews is not, as you sometimes read, he's not saying they're like racially inferior or anything like that.

What he is saying is that the Jews have a kind of supernatural power to turn the humans into non-racial brain slaves basically with their communism, with their capitalism, with their Christianity, with whatever it might be.

They come and they take the healthy humans who should be engaged in racial combat the entire time 'cause that's what they're supposed to be doing, that's what nature says, and turn them into beings who are capable of conversation and so on, right? So, the Jews have spoiled nature.

He's very clear about this.

And what follows from that is that the Jews then have to be removed from the planet one way or another, right? They rule by way of ideas and you can't extract the ideas from everyone's mind without physically getting rid of the Jews.

All this logic is entirely clear and explicit in "Mein Kampf." What does it have to do with Ukraine? Has a lot to do with Ukraine.

19:08 Because the racial element of all this leads to Ukraine.

From Hitler's point of view, Ukraine is (speaking German) Like (speaking German) is one of these German words that you have to know.

It just means living space or habitat, right? So, in ecological context it would just mean habitat.

So (speaking German) means like, oh, or ecological niche.

Like it's where a species, or in Hitler's mind, a race belongs.

Living space.

It literally means living space, space for life.

Ukraine is the best (speaking German) because it has the most fertile territory, right? It has the most productive agricultural soil, the black earth.

And therefore the Germans should be there because the Germans are the superior race.

And if the Germans are not there, then that requires some explanation which appeals to the Jewish factor, right? So the reason the Germans are not there, the reason we lost the First World War, for example, is that there was a Jewish conspiracy, the Jews stabbed us in the back behind the lines.

20:10 Whatever it might be, right? The Jews were behind the British and their blockade.

Whatever it might be.

If the Germans have not achieved what they should be achieving, it must be the fault of the Jews.

So the idea of (speaking German) leads directly to Ukraine.

Hitler's notion is that Germany's gonna become a large empire or a frontier empire.

He compares it to the United States more than once.

The idea is that Germany is gonna control a frontier, dominate a frontier, and the central part of that frontier is going to be Ukraine.

Ukraine is also very important in the antisemitic part of this analysis.

Why? Because Hitler thinks it's going to be relatively easy to seize Ukraine.

Why? Because in his way of seeing the world, the Soviet Union is a kind of Jewish empire, right? From his point of view, the communists are all Jews, the Jews are all communists, and therefore the Soviet state is a kind of Jewish exploitation of the simple Slavic and other masses, right? The simple Slavic and other masses, those are the racially inferior people from Hitler's point of view, incapable of politics, incapable of serious culture, ripe for colonization.

21:21 Not capable of anything besides being colonized.
 But they will probably prefer German colonization to Jewish colonization.
 And Hitler's ideas about this are quite, I mean, they're really straightforward.
 We'll come, we may be starving them to death.
 Actually we're planning to starve tens of millions of them to death.
 But if we give them beads, they'll be happy.
 And also if we have, if we put up a pole in the middle of the village and put a radio on it and play music, they'll be astonished and they'll dance around the pole and they'll be happy.
 That sort of thing, right? That sort of thing.
 His notion is that the Soviet Union seems strong but it's weak.
 And the reason it's weak is that it's just governed by the Jews.

22:02 The Jews govern with ideas.
 And if you hit them with violence, the whole edifice will collapse and then the happy masses will accept a new colonial master because it's better than the old colonial master.
 I note the strong structural resemblance of this to the Russian war planning of late 2021 where the assumption again was that there wasn't really Ukrainian state, there was just a kind of exotic elite which was perching on top, and one burst of violence would destroy that exotic elite.
 And then the happy masses would accept a new colonial master, okay? Closed parenthesis.
 So both by way of the antisemitism and by way of a (speaking German), Hitler's ideas lead directly to Ukraine.
 Very briefly, how does Hitler come to power? How does Hitler come to power? How does Hitler come to Ukraine? One of the nice things about teaching Ukrainian history instead of German history is that I don't have to spend all this time on like German public opinion and like all these debates, ugh.

23:06 That's in another class.
 No, it's an important thing because if you take a class, okay, now I'll make a serious point.
 If you take a class about Nazi Germany or about the Holocaust, it's gonna be about Germany, Germany, Germany, Germany, Germany, Germany, Germany.
 And the thing about that is that there aren't that many Jews in Germany, and most of them survive.
 And so, if you wanna be serious about understanding the Holocaust, you have to understand something about the countries beyond Germany where the Jews actually lived like Poland or like Ukraine or like Belarus, or like Lithuania or Hungary or Czechoslovakia, right? So I'm giving Germany far too short shrift here, of course, but there is a kind of justification for all of this, which is that you can't actually figure out the Holocaust just by looking at Germany and German Jews.
 You have to move into German colonization and the German destruction or attempt to destroy neighboring states because that's where the territory is where Jews live and that's where the territory is that Jews die.

24:03 So I'm gonna give this the rise, Hitler's rise to power, very short shrift.
 The one factor which enables it is the Great Depression.
 Germany is formed as a republic.
 It is a moderately successful republic in the 1920s.
 It has a hard time with the Great Depression in which 6 million people roughly are unemployed.
 Political factor.
 The left is divided between the socialist party and the communist party.

That makes it much easier for Hitler to come to power.

This, by the way, is a sort of universal tactical political lesson that the 21st century is supposed to take from the 20th, which is that when there's a far right threat, the left should not be divided, right? No, I mean that, I mean, like I'm just stating what is out.

Like that's something, that is a lesson that people, 21st century tacticians have tried to learn from the 20th century, and this is sort of exhibit A of this.

25:01 Now, the reason why the German left was divided is a bit, is interesting from our point of view because the German left had to be divided because the German communists were not permitted to cooperate with the German socialists.

The German communists were told what to do by Moscow and because...

How does this hook up? It hooks up because at this time the Soviet Union is trying to build socialism in one country.

It has to defend itself, right? It very nervously looks on the actions of communist parties in Europe.

And what it tells them to do is almost always determined by what it thinks Soviet security interests are.

And those things change, right? But they don't change in a way which makes it very easy for communist parties to do well inside their own countries, let alone take power.

So the socialists are divided, that's another important thing.

The third important thing is that the German republic had already significantly compromised itself.

It was being run largely by emergency decrees.

The parliament had already been largely marginalized.

26:02 So, when Hitler is named as chancellor in early 1933, he inherits a situation where executive power was already inflated, legislative power had been suppressed, and all he really needed was one good crisis, which he got with the Reichstag fire, the burning of the German parliament, which he uses to declare a state of emergency, which stays in power until until he dies.

By the summer of 1933, they've established primitive concentration camps.

They're hunting the socialists and the communists and the Nazis are the only legal party.

From our point of view, the more interesting shift or equally interesting is the shift in foreign affairs.

Where to put it slightly brutally, much of Europe swings in the direction of this new Nazi German state.

That's not how people like to talk about it in retrospect.

In retrospect, we were all in the resistance.

We're always all in the resistance in retrospect, right? But at the time, this seemingly innovative, dynamic, new German colossus drew a lot of positive attention even when it wasn't positive.

27:08 People compromised in its direction one way or another.

So, the Germans rearmed and nobody stopped them.

The Germans took back some territory that the French were supposed to be occupying. Nobody stopped them.

The East European countries, which if you'll remember from what I said about Poland, the East European countries who are having a hard time as agrarian economies during the depression, some of them tend towards Germany because Germany is the rare country right in the middle of Europe, then as now, which needs to import food, but it has lots of industrial goods to export.

And so Germany makes deals with Hungary and Romania in which they agree to buy German industrial output, and Germany agrees to buy their food at a certain price, which during the depression is incredibly attractive.

In March of 1938, everyone looks away as Austria is absorbed by Germany in the famous Anschluss which is another one of those German words you have to know.

28:13 In September of 1938, Italy, Great Britain, France, and Germany agree that Czechoslovakia has to be partitioned in Germany's favor in the famous agreement at Munich which the Czechs always call the (speaks in foreign language) the betrayal at Munich.

So in all of these different ways which I'm just kind of skimming over, everyone is tilting towards Germany, if not necessarily ideologically then maybe economically.

But if economically, the ideologically tends to follow.

Not necessarily ideologically but maybe geopolitically.

But then once you've made the geopolitical deal then maybe your partner isn't so unreasonable, and maybe the Bolsheviks are much worse which is how a lot of people saw it at the time.

But speaking of the Bolsheviks, the most radical tilt towards Germany was 1939 when the Soviets and the Germans signed in August and September in two different agreements, a de facto military alliance and agreement, an agreement how to occupy Poland and the Baltic, and the Baltic states.

29:19 So everyone looking back, we all resisted of course looking back and then looking back, everyone has a different history.

But there is this general drift which interestingly often braces almost everybody in some way or another from the British to the Soviets to the French.

Everyone is drifting in some way towards Germany.

And this only stops or this only changes tone I should say when someone agrees to fight a war.

And that someone in this case agrees to fight a war is kind of a strange way to put it, but the country that resists Germany is Poland.

And this matters hugely for Ukrainian history.

It's hard to say exactly how but the reason why it matters is that Hitler's plan for Ukraine was we ally, we the Germans ally with Poland.

30:09 And together with Poland, we invade the Soviet Union.

After which of course we marginalize the Poles, keep them under control, occupy their country, whatever.

But that's the basic idea.

The war for Hitler is the war in the East.

This is something that's very hard for Western people to understand.

Like if I say that France was a second rate concern for Hitler and that he didn't wanna fight the British at all, people don't...

Obviously now it's very important in French and British memory but from Hitler's point of view, that was secondary.

The only reason he needed to fight the French from his point of view was to make sure that he didn't have a second front when he went to Eastern Europe.

That's why he had to fight the French.

And he only had to fight the British because they came in on the side of, oh yes, the Poles.

Okay, so the reason why the Poles are so important in the story is that by not agreeing to be a German ally, they force Hitler to change his plans.

31:06 And how does Hitler change his plans? He changes his plans by hastily making an alliance with the Soviet Union.

Not what he meant to do, right? But he does so in August and September of 1939.

So instead of invading the Soviets with the Poles as an ally, he invades Poland with the Soviets as an ally in September of 1939, right? Not how he meant for it to happen.

But because it happened that way, then Ukrainian history will take a certain turn which I'm gonna return to in just a second.

I wanna repeat the thing I said a moment ago.

If the Poles don't fight in 1939 then it's unclear at what point the French or the British ever would've gotten into the war.

Because the reason the French and the British got into the Second World War was that they had by that time given Poland a security guarantee which they honored in a very abstract way.

32:00 The French, this is literally true.

The French went into Germany a couple of miles and then pulled back out, and so then they had technically honored the terms of their agreement to set up a second front.

The British didn't do anything at first but they waited for a while, decided what to do.

But the crucial thing is they got into the war.

And if the British and the French don't get into the war in 1939, it's unclear when they would ever have gotten into the war.

And if the British don't get into the war, it's very, very unclear how the Americans ever get into the war.

Maybe the Americans get into a war in Asia with the Japanese, but without Britain it's hard to see how Roosevelt gets the Americans into the war in Europe.

It's hard to see what line leads to that.

And if the Americans don't get into the war in Europe, it's not only just that you don't have the Americans fighting, it's also that you don't have the Americans supplying the Soviets which is a huge X factor which everyone forgets about 'cause it's very inconvenient.

But the reason why the Soviets or one of the reasons why the Soviets were able to hold back the Germans at all was that the Americans were hugely supplying them with Studebaker and Jeeps and all kinds of other things across the Pacific Ocean.

33:07 So, if the Poles don't fight in 1939, it's a very different world war.

I just wanna just note that and now we'll go back to Ukraine, okay? So for Ukrainian history, what this means is that we get this strange period from 1939 to 1941 of what you could think of as Molotov-Ribbentrop Europe, Molotov-Ribbentrop were the commissar for foreign Affairs, the foreign minister of the Soviet Union and of Germany.

They're the ones who signed the pact, August 23, 1939.

The notorious, people call it the Hitler-Stalin Pact.

The Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact is usually what it's called.

This creates a world where for almost two years, the Soviets and the Germans are de facto allies and the country and most significantly for our region, the country of Poland is destroyed.

34:01 Poland wiped off the map.

The Poles resist the Germans for about six weeks with actually much more skill and dedication than they're usually given credit for, taking significant losses.

But they're facing an army attacking them from, not only from the west, but from the north, from Prussia.

Sorry about the geography.

But Germany actually was north of Poland as well as west of Poland because of Prussia.

They were also attacking from the south because Czechoslovakia had been dismantled.

And Slovak soldiers joined in the invasion on the German side.

And Czech tank, the Czechs had the best military industry at the time.

The best tanks, best explosives.

So the Germans were invading Poland with Czechoslovak tanks.

All of that mitigated against Poland even before, so the Soviet Union joined in the invasion on the 17th of September.

So the Polish state is destroyed which is not a trivial thing.

It wasn't actually, it's not actually normal.

It seems normal, I mean, again, there's a parallel here with 2022 and the idea of the state doesn't exist and destroy the state, right? But it's not actually normal to invade countries and then say they don't exist unless you're a colonizing power.

35:11 So Europeans constantly invaded countries and then said they didn't exist.

That's the history of the Americas and Africa, right? But for European countries to invade other European countries and say that they didn't exist, that was something new.

And that's what the, both the Germans and the Soviets did that with Poland.

They invaded the country then they said it didn't really exist.

And therefore, this is important, what we're doing is not an occupation because you can only occupy a country.

Which may just seem like a word game but it's actually, it's a legal maneuver or an extra legal maneuver.

Because if there's not a country there, then what you're doing is not an occupation.

You're not bound by the laws of occupation, by the conventions on occupation, by the customs of occupation.

You're just saying that where you are is a kind of undefined place inhabited by autochthonous peoples, right, who we don't really know very much about.

36:01 That is the German legal approach to the invasion of Poland.

The Soviet approach was a little bit different.

The Soviet approach was that there was a class war going on.

The Ukrainian and the yellow Russian peasants were being oppressed by the Polish lords.

The Polish state had collapsed and therefore we just came in to aid our class allies.

But again, the Soviets were also careful to say that there wasn't a Polish state anymore.

The Polish state they claimed had been destroyed.

This wasn't an occupation, this was just territory where there was a class war going on.

So, from the point of view of Ukrainian history, what follows is that the Ukrainian Soviet republic expands very significantly to the west, pretty much to the borders that it has now.

The Molotov-Ribbentrop borders of 1939 are pretty much identical to the western borders of the independent Ukrainian state now.

Another thing which happens on these territories is a kind of rapidly, like a fast forward version of the Bolshevik policies from 1917 to the 1930s.

37:03 There the territories are next and then there are four waves of deportations.

The deportations tend to affect above all people associated with the Polish state.

So more Poles than anybody else, although later on there are quite a few Jews who didn't wanna take Soviet passports.

But the basic idea is destroy the Polish state and then take the people who have anything to do with the Polish state.

The colonists, the landowners, the bureaucrats, the soldiers, the foresters, and get those people to Kazakhstan.

Get them to Kazakhstan, get them to Siberia where they won't cause any trouble.

And then the notion was that now we're carrying out a revolution and so we are going to transfer land from these people to the oppressed Ukrainian and yellow Russian peasants.

This revolution is really for you.

Which is if you'll remember, that's a lot like the 1920s in the Soviet Union where the

peasants are brought in, invited into the revolution by the notion that they're gonna get land.

And as you remember, the most important political question in this part of the world in the first half of the 20th century is precisely land.

38:05 So the terrain is de-Polandized.

Poles are deported from it and Poles lose their land which is a bit like what had happened in 1937, in 1938.

If you did the reading in chapter three I think it is of "Bloodlands," the most important national action in the Soviet terror was the Polish action in which 100,000 or around 100,000 Poles were shot.

About twice as many were deported.

And so, Poles are being removed from these terrains where historically there had been Poles, right, in sort of wave after wave after wave.

But I said this was accelerated.

Not long after that in 1940, so the peasants get the land in early 1940 and then collectivization starts in late 1940.

So, the stage is very short and peasants are generally disillusioned by collectivization.

And even many West Ukrainian communists are disillusioned by this.

39:02 The West Ukrainian communists who had been part of the Polish Communist Party had been telling their people that Soviet Ukraine is Ukrainian state, that you're all gonna get land, and our national culture is going to be respected.

Collectivization disillusioned them.

The fake elections also disillusioned many of them.

And they tend to fade from any kind of significance in the region.

The reason I mention that is to try to suggest something which is gonna be important in the next lecture, which is that there had been Ukrainian political life.

Not in the Soviet Union, right, but in Poland.

It had been stunted and oppressed but it existed.

There were Ukrainian churches, there was Ukrainian civil society, there was Ukrainian educational society, there were Ukrainian cooperatives, the Ukrainian newspapers.

All of that.

Under Soviet rule that becomes impossible, right? There is a Soviet, it's called Soviet Ukraine but independent forms of civil society from whatever they might be are not allowed.

40:00 The way that Leninism works is that everything that one might think of a civil society has to be part of one larger structure, has to be part of the state or of the party.

So all of the legal political parties that had existed under Poland are now dissolved.

The communists are now discredited which leaves who? Hmm? - Jewish nationalists.

- Okay, among Ukrainian political parties.

- [Student] The nationalists.

- The nationalists, right? The situation has selected for the nationalists.

And you'll see why that's important later on but I just wanna mark it right now.

Okay.

So, the last stage of this and where I'm gonna leave you is Operation Barbarossa itself.

Which is the Operation Barbarossa is the invasion of the Soviet Union.

It's when Hitler finally gets to do the thing which he wanted to do which is invade the Soviet Union, try to seize Ukrainian grain, also try to seize the Azerbaijani oil fields, that's a secondary objection.

Destroy the Soviet state as such.

There are three larger policies attached to this invasion that are formulated by the Germans.

41:03 The first is what they call the Final Solution, which is initially the idea that the Jews will somehow be deported out of the way to Madagascar or to Siberia, who knows, but somehow made to vanish.

The final solution over the course of this war will become more immediate, more proximate, and more directly lethal.

Over the course of the war, it will move from this kind of vague notion of deportation to killing them first over pits and then eventually in gas chambers.

The second larger policy is what they call the Hunger Plan.

By the terms of the Hunger Plan, the Germans were going to keep the Stalinist collective farm.

They were going to try to control Ukrainian and general Soviet agriculture but direct the surpluses from Ukraine to Germany, right? In a way, the same dream of the First World War, direct the surpluses, colonial exploit.

Direct the surpluses from Ukraine back to Germany and to the rest of Europe.

42:02 And this will also be carried out in the sense that cities are going to be starved, most notably Leningrad which is in Soviet Russia, but also tens of thousands of people will die in Ukrainian cities such as Kharkiv and Kyiv.

It's carried out most notably in the prisoner of war camps where through early 1942, the Germans carry out a policy of deliberately starving Soviet prisoners of war, almost regardless of ethnicity.

Some ethnicities are treated a little bit differently than others.

Jews are treated much worse.

But in general, Soviet prisoners of war starved.

About 3.1 million die of hunger and related diseases which is a huge number, it's a terrifying number.

By the end of, at the end of 1941, this was actually the most lethal German policy.

More people were starved to death in these open air prison, not even camps, so just enclosures where people are left to die basically.

Camp in a way dignifies it too much.

More people had died this way than in the Holocaust as of the end of 1941.

43:02 In 1942, the Holocaust, the Final Solution will pass in part because the Germans begin to think they have to recruit people from these camps in order to do various kinds of police work and other work for them.

Which by the way means that many of the local collaborators in the Holocaust had been extracted from these camps, right, which gives you a sort of sense of some of the choices that or non-choice that people faced.

The third major policy was called Generalplan Ost and that was the larger notion of colonization that over the course of the next decades, tens of millions of Slavs would be moved out of the way, starved or dispersed, what we would call ethnically cleansed.

The Jews by now would be gone some way or another and Germany would establish a whole series of nice small towns, everything very well-organized, white picket fences.

The Ukrainians or the Slavs significantly reduced in numbers but working as de facto slaves.

That was the basic idea, that was the blueprint.

They never got there, right, because they lost the war.

44:08 The Holocaust which is the last thing I wanna talk about is the one of these three policies which actually, so to speak, is worse than it was planned, right? The general idea was that we're going to starve out everybody or disperse everybody that the Germans are never quite able to do that.

They do starve quite a large number of people, as you see in "Bloodlands." They do disperse quite a large number of people but the most focus killing policy and the one that accelerates consistently over the course of the war is the Holocaust.

So I just wanna leave you with a couple of thoughts about it and then we'll be done.

The first thought about this is that the Holocaust has to do with not only Hitler's general idea that the Jews are responsible for everything, but the particular idea which follows from this, that if we're losing the war, it must be the fault of the Jews.

45:00 So for example, if we invade the Soviet Union and the British and the Americans come in on the side of the Soviets, that must be explained not by Pearl Harbor or anything else, it must be explained by the fact that the Jews are in charge on Wall Street and Fleet Street, as well as in the Kremlin, right? So, defeat in war makes the conspiracy theory more necessary and more pervasive.

And also it should be said more sociologically useful to the German population as a whole.

The conspiratorial antisemitism becomes more important for Germans during the war, especially after they start to lose.

So this is specific to the end of 1941.

When Germany, when it's clear that the Germans have lost the war that they planned to fight which is 1941, that's when Hitler shifts the idea that all the Jew are to be killed, late 1941, early 1942.

When I say the German, the war they thought they were gonna fight, this is very important, right? So this is not a military history class.

46:03 You've heard me bemoan that there's not enough military history.

I'm just gonna make one little military history point which is that the wars never go the way you think they're gonna go.

They never go the way you think they're gonna go.

And looking back, it's almost impossible to overstate just how dramatic that truth is.

The Germans invaded the Soviet Union thinking that it would fall within 12 weeks on the outside.

Six to 12 weeks, the Soviet Union was going to collapse.

All of their preparations were made on that assumption.

They didn't have supply lines planned, they didn't bring winter clothing.

The whole assumption is that this is gonna collapse within a couple of months, right? And of course it didn't do that and they couldn't admit that they failed, and they kept fighting and so on as one does.

And they blame someone else and that's part of the history of the Holocaust, right? But it's irrelevant for the politics of all this.

When I say they didn't, they lost the war they thought they were fighting, that's what I mean, right? They expected the Soviet Union to collapse in a couple of months.

The World War from Hitler's point of view is the war that happens because they didn't destroy the Soviet Union immediately.

47:06 Their thought was the Soviet Union falls immediately.

There's nothing anyone can do about it.

But it turned out that was not true.

The second point I wanna make about the Holocaust and then we'll be done is that even in the Holocaust, and this is the reading in "Black Earth" which I hope you'll do carefully, but even in the Holocaust, or I should say even especially in the Holocaust, there's never a moment when politics ceases to matter.

There's never a moment where you get into some sphere of pure evil or pure ethics or something where human experience and human calculations don't matter.

The way that people behave during the Holocaust has to do not just with German

intentions and German policies of mass killing, but also with their own calculations about what might work out the best for them.

And in the case of the population of the Soviet Union, of the prewar Soviet Union where this is most relevant is Hitler's idea that Jews are communists and communists are Jews.

48:00 Now, most Soviet citizens know that there are certainly some anti-Semites in the Soviet Union but in general, most Soviet citizens know that's not true because it's kind of their everyday experience, right? Like they're communists, right? The vast majority of communists were actually not Jews, right? And if you're in the Soviet Union, you know that.

But the politics of this is that if the Germans come into the Soviet Union and they say, all the communists were Jews and you're a communist, what do you say? I mean, unless you're heroic or you fled, you say, yes, they were.

Right? Because that shifts the responsibility from you for this thing which is supposedly doomed communism onto the Jews.

That's a form of politics, right? The Germans were fooled by this.

They sort of fooled themselves and other people fooled them.

But that's a form of politics.

The Germans come in with an idea of the way the world works.

People adapt to that idea of the way the world works in a way that suits them by shifting the responsibility for the Soviet system onto the Jews.

49:03 That's part of the history of the Holocaust.

And then of course, in the Soviet Union as elsewhere, the vast majority of the work that's done in the Holocaust is not done by the Germans.

It's done by local people.

And in taking part in this policy, they're also expressing a kind of personal commitment to a certain view of the world, which is that the Jews are communists, the communists are Jews, the Soviet Union has to be destroyed.

All of this is incredibly awkward after Soviet power comes back.

And how Stalinism deals with all of this, this very messy record of collaboration and resistance during the Holocaust and during Soviet occupation in general, how Stalinism deals with this is gonna be our subject when we come back next week.

So, thank you very much.