

Tarik Cyril Amar. *The Paradox of Ukrainian Lviv: A Borderland City between Stalinists, Nazis, and Nationalists.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015. 368 pp. Illustrations. \$35.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-8014-5391-5.

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The history of the modern Ukrainian state is inextricably linked to the history of the Soviet Union. Its borders are the result of the Soviet victory in the Second World War and of decisions made in Moscow. For centuries, central and eastern Ukraine had been part of the Russian Empire before it became the Ukrainian Socialist Soviet Republic and part of the Soviet Union. The western Ukrainian lands, however, had been dominated by other states or empires and had experienced Hungarian and Polish, Austrian and Romanian rule.

Tarik Amar, assistant professor at Columbia University, focuses in this book on the transformation of the urban center of western Ukraine, multiethnic but Polish-dominated Lwów, into Ukrainian, or rather Soviet Ukrainian, Lviv. In the first of eight chapters Amar gives a short overview of the history of the city before the Second World War. The second chapter deals with the first Soviet occupation between 1939 and 1941. In this period, Lviv experienced large-scale deportations and numerous executions but the Soviet authorities did not fundamentally change the ethnic composition of the city. They did, however, destroy civil society and turned the traditional social, ethnic, and political hierarchies upside down. This first occupation marked the beginning of a traumatic period

in the history of the city, which reached its low point under Nazi rule. The third chapter covers the period of German occupation. Nazi Germany murdered Lviv's Jewish population (more than a hundred thousand people) and imposed a brutal occupation regime on the city's Polish and Ukrainian inhabitants.

Amar does not offer a comprehensive history of the city but concentrates on how regime changes and occupation policies affected ethnic relations. In his war chapters he also discusses the participation of local Ukrainians in anti-Jewish violence and refers to the strong anti-Semitic views and actions of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists. The second and third chapters are partly based on primary sources but Amar's account does not go beyond the existing literature on the history of wartime Lviv.

The most innovative parts of the book are chapters 4-8, which look at the Sovietization of Lviv after 1944. Amar contends that Soviet rule shaped Lviv's Ukrainian or rather western Ukrainian identity. In 1950, more than 80 percent of the Lviv population were newcomers, many of them Russian-speakers who joined the few remaining tens of thousands of prewar Ukrainian and Polish residents. Other Ukrainians came from the west and had been resettled following the

population exchange between Poland and the Soviet Union. The industrialization of Lviv also brought tens of thousands of Ukrainian peasants from the region to the city. Soviet social engineering aimed to transform these new city-dwellers into new Soviet Ukrainian men and women.

The book does not offer a full account of Sovietization. Amar offers many insights into postwar Lviv but also ignores some key events. The most important omission is the forced unification of the Greek Catholic Church with the Russian Orthodox Church. Amar covers the period until 1962 but follows some threads up until the most recent past. He tells the story of the closing of the last synagogue in Lviv, and shows how the party drew on anti-Semitic stereotypes by linking the synagogue to speculation and private trade. The new authorities tried to create their own narrative of Lviv's past, presenting Sovietization as the high point of its history and emphasizing the modernizing effect of Soviet rule. The party was, however, less successful in its attempt to give its role historical depth. It failed to convince the population that there had been a strong western Ukrainian Communist movement in the interwar period. Amar rightly points out the forgetting and marginalization of the Polish and Jewish parts of the history of Lviv, but tens of thousands of Roman Catholic Poles continued to live in the city. The Latin cathedral was one of two Roman Catholic churches in Lviv not shut down under Soviet rule. The monument to the Polish national poet Adam Mickiewicz was still in the heart of the city and the Kiliński monument still stood in Stryjskij Park.

Amar relies heavily on documents and sources from local and regional party organizations and from the Communist Party leadership in Kyiv. He also uses some contemporary Soviet publications, including novels and plays. The heavy reliance on official Soviet documents would not be a problem if Amar merely wanted to give the Soviet perspective on the city, but he aspires to do more. Amar makes claims about the mentality of

Lviv inhabitants and their western Ukrainian "identity," which he sees as a product of Sovietization. He challenges the self-perception of today's Lvivians who emphasize the non-Soviet elements of their identity and speak of a specific western Ukrainian consciousness, which was shaped by the prewar Ukrainian national movement and wartime nationalist resistance but also older Polish and Austrian influences. Amar's line of argumentation does not fully convince, as he does not sufficiently take the bias of party documents into account. It would have been good if Amar had complemented his source base with other accounts—for example, oral history sources—or if he had made greater use of memoirs and diaries of local residents who lived through the period. He also does not address the question of whether the urban environment with its distinctive central European architecture affected identity formation.

Amar has written an important contribution to the history of Lviv. He shows that Soviet influences were strong and had a lasting impact on the formation of a peculiar western Ukrainian identity in Lviv; other influences are, however, under-represented.

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