

Christoph Mick. *Lemberg, Lwów, L'viv, 1914-1947: Violence and Ethnicity in a Contested City.* West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2015. 480 pp. \$59.95, paper, ISBN 978-1-55753-671-6.



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Christoph Mick's focused case study on a brief period in the history of L'viv successfully unravels decades of simplistic theories on nationalism and intolerance in the borderlands region of present-day Poland and Ukraine. He has captured one of the key metanarratives that explains how L'viv went from being a multiethnic city where Poles, Ukrainians, Germans, and Jews coexisted somewhat uncomfortably together (disagreeing whether to call their city by the German Lemberg, Polish Lwów, or Ukrainian L'viv) to an exclusively Ukrainian ethnospace (definitely L'viv, though many Russian speakers prefer Lvov) in only thirty-three years. He has uncovered a fascinating story of overlapping local, regional, national, and transnational identity politics that is useful for far more than those narrowly interested in L'viv. For example, since the breakup of the Soviet Union and its Eastern bloc satellites, Western historians have puzzled over the differences between Eastern and Western politics of World War II memories. In the West, the Holocaust became a dominant trope to justify the liberal postwar order,

while in the East, the suffering and colossal sacrifices of the Red Army similarly justified its postwar order. But, just under the surface a confusing array of counter-memories seemed to linger and Mick has done a fascinating job of excavating the relationship between these memories, politics, and ethnicity in the city of L'viv, ultimately showing that people in L'viv understood national politics according to intensely local narratives that served to interpret above all the moment of Austria-Hungary's ultimate defeat in the First World War. For Poles that narrative centered around the defense of Lwów from Ukrainian forces in November 1918. For Ukrainians it focused on the brief liberation of L'viv, or the "November Deed" of 1918 when L'viv was incorporated into the short-lived Western Ukrainian People's Republic. For Jews, an inability to effectively interpret the pogrom of 1918 predated two decades of increasing alienation from Polish and Ukrainian society, culminating with nowhere to turn and few allies during the horrors of the Shoah. The Polish and Ukrainian narratives, however, were power-

ful enough to make sense of the tumultuous interwar years and even served as a template for Poles to interpret the horrors of World War II.

The constructed nature of ethnicity has been a truism in academia since Benedict Anderson exploded into the literature, but the nuances in its construction continue to inspire researchers. In L'viv it was not so much the usual suspects of poets, academic elites, and narrow-minded nationalists who created a firestorm of ethnic intolerance; it was the need for ordinary people to understand their lives within a dizzying world of constant invasion and reinvasion over a thirty-three-year period of almost constant conflict that enflamed what might have remained subtle ethnonationalisms.

Mick traces memories of L'viv's three main groups: Poles, Ukrainians, and Jews, with all the confusion to period nationalists of Polish-speakers who worshipped with Greek Catholics, Ukrainian-speakers who were Roman Catholics, and Jews who tried very hard to assimilate into Polish, German, or very rarely, Ukrainian societies. The Russian capture of L'viv in 1914 is the first of the seven regime changes he covers. During this first change, Mick shows that largely competent Russian administrators won the support of most within the city, though when Austrians recaptured the city, Poles and Ukrainians tried to outdo each other in showing their loyalty to Austria while denouncing ethnically imagined others, especially Jews—who in reality felt they had the most to lose from a Russian administration that was far more anti-Semitic than the Austrian. In November of 1918 the Western Ukrainian People's Republic captured L'viv, which Mick calls the third regime change. The three-week resistance and subsequent recapture by Polish forces was a small-scale conflict that was greatly enlarged in Polish collective memories. The heroic defenders of L'viv occupied a memory space that built upon centuries of Polish templates of suffering and heroism, a template that Mick points out did not fit the far more

numerous Polish soldiers who died fighting in the First World War. These later soldiers remained almost entirely absent from interwar memory performances.

The real analytical meat of this book comes from Mick's investigation of competing memories of November 1918. While Poles remembered the heroism of the "Defense of Lwów," creating a ceremonial culture around the fallen as redeemers of centuries of Polish defeats, Ukrainians remembered the tolerance and order of their brief republic in contrast to the chauvinism and rampant ethnic violence inside the newly independent Polish state, while Jews preferred to forget November 1918 as they had no narrative template to make sense of the hundreds who died in a Polish-led pogrom where all segments of the Polish society most Jews hoped to join had participated and later refused to take responsibility. The inability of Jews to integrate into interwar Poland became increasingly problematic during the fifth regime change, when Soviets occupied L'viv as part of the Molotov-Ribbentrop agreement in 1939. Jews were ostracized by Poles and Ukrainians as traitors though hardly trusted by the Soviets, even though many Jews were afforded more career opportunities and perfunctory legal protections by the Soviets.

When Germans carried out the sixth regime change in 1941, Jews were immediate victims of the Holocaust, with those who survived the Einsatzgruppen slowly cut off from public life until most died in death camps. Only a small number were protected, by both Ukrainians and Poles. Some of those Jews who survived the Shoah were killed in a final postwar pogrom by Poles, showing their literal and symbolic removal from any imagined community in once multiethnic Lemberg. Through a combination of prewar and postwar Soviet population transfers, L'viv became an almost exclusively Ukrainian city by 1947, with Russians being the next most important ethnic group. After the final defeat of the Ukrainian na-

tionalist rebel groups who had first formed to protect Ukrainian peasants against Poles, then collaborated/fought alongside German forces, and finally resisted the Soviets, Soviet control of L'viv was complete. On a local level, however, the events of November 1918 remained dominant in group memories. Now the Ukrainians could restore the fair government of 1918, while the Polish exiles again tasted defeat, rendering the redemptive power of the Defense of Lwów narrative meaningless.

Mick extensively uses an astonishing array of primary sources. His use of Polish, Ukrainian, Imperial German, Austro-Hungarian, and Soviet archives serves as a corrective to previous histories of L'viv and the Kresy region in general that usually focused exclusively on Poles, Ukrainians or Jews. This book is a translation of a lengthier German original. Unfortunately Mick does not consider the extensive English-language literature on the Soviet borderlands as much as he might. Authors like Francine Hirsch, Benjamin Nathans, Kate Brown, and Mikhail Khodarkovsky have written brilliant social histories on the broader area around L'viv in the period Mick covers. However, none of these authors consider the astonishing breadth of sources that he uses. This book is a must-read for anyone interested in L'viv, twentieth-century ethnonationalism, or social histories of Poland, the late Habsburg Empire, Ukrainians, eastern late-imperial Russia, and the early Soviet Union. His encyclopedic coverage of the minutiae of everyday ethnonationalism will make this a valuable resource for generations of scholars. While it can take considerable effort to construct the book's argument from the amazing array of data he presents, this book serves as much as a guide to little-researched primary sources as it will stand on the merits of its scholarship.

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