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BOOK SYMPOSIUM

Nationalization through Total War

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The Paradox of Ukrainian Lviv: A Borderland City between Stalinists, Nazis, and Nationalists, by Tarik Cyril Amar, Ithaca, New York, Cornell University Press, 2015, $26.95 (paperback), ISBN 9781501735806, $36.00 (hardcover), ISBN 9780801453915

In the age of multinational dynastic empires, patriots of the so-called "stateless" nations in Eastern Europe often lamented the alien character of their large cities. In contrast to the relatively homogenous countryside—even if the peasants had yet to be taught about their membership in a modern nation—the cities stood out as speaking the language of lords and officialdom, and they were dominated by other ethnic groups. Patriotic intellectuals believed that the logic of history would correct this injustice. Later historians also often treated the process of reclaiming cities for the nation as "natural." Tarik Amar's book undermines this nationalistic reading of the past by showing that the nationalization of Eastern European cities involved "violent ethnic reordering" (11), often initiated by great powers in pursuit of their own social engineering agendas.

Amar's book was bound to cause controversy because of its subject matter, the western Ukrainian city of Lviv, which in late- and post-Soviet times served as a beacon of Ukrainian cultural life, the only major Ukrainophone city in post-communist Ukraine. It was tempting for Ukrainian scholars to ascribe the persistence of Ukrainian culture in Lviv to the logic of history, the primordial virility of peasant culture, or, in more academic terms, successful national mobilization in eastern Galicia under Habsburg rule. Amar restores to prominence a different, crucial component of Lviv's story: the homogenizing effect of World War II. Moreover, he is not satisfied with blaming everything on the Nazi and Stalinist regimes but seeks to understand the complex interaction between the city's residents and the occupying powers. This symbiosis imbued the locals with some agency but also made possible genocide, state terror, and the rewriting of ethnic hierarchies.

The point about the intertwining of Hitler and Stalin's policies in Eastern Europe has been made in more general terms by Timothy Snyder in *Bloodlands* and *Black Earth* and before that by Amir Weiner in his case study of the Vinnytsia region in the Ukrainian SSR (*Making Sense of War*). Yet, Lviv, with its unique background as a recently absorbed multinational city, which Stalin soon lost to Hitler but reconquered three years later, allows Amar to draw out more clearly the essential resonance and mutual reinforcement between the two dictators' policies as implemented on the ground. In this sense, Amar's study is both local and transnational, which is often true of works focusing on borderlands in times of social or political turmoil.

He begins his narrative at the perfect moment, when Soviet secret policemen must coordinate their actions with their Nazi counterparts. Following the absorption of eastern Galicia in 1939, the NKVD (People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs) organized several waves of deportations, officially targeting exploiters, army officers, and state servants but unofficially disproportionately impacting Poles and Jews. Even if the ethnic bias was not always articulated, it clearly informed the actions of NKVD personnel. For example, the April 1940 deportation of 7,200 people from Lviv targeted the families of the Polish prisoners of war in Soviet captivity, including those recently murdered in Katyn. An estimated 90 percent of the deportees were ethnic Poles (56). In June 1940

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the NKVD deported to Siberia 22,000 people who had crossed to the Soviet zone as refugees from Nazi rule, roughly four-fifths of them Jewish (57). One can see a cruel irony in the fact that they were being punished for their unwillingness to participate in a massive population exchange between the Soviet and Nazi occupation zones, which sent some 66,000 people westward and 34,000 eastward across the new border. Moreover, those who did apply to return to the Nazi zone—and many Jews did, a fact that both Soviet and German officials found puzzling—were rejected by the Nazi side and thus ended up being exiled to Siberia. Local ethnic Ukrainians, too, received their share of the NKVD's undivided attention, especially during the April 1941 deportation, which removed "several hundred" from Lviv and about 2,000 from its environs (57).

However, Amar argues that it was the transfer of 6,600 ethnic Germans to the German zone that "explicitly introduced ethnicity as a key criterion" (60). Of course, one could also note that by then the Soviet Union had its own experience of ethnic deportations, such as that of Koreans in 1937 or Poles from the western border regions in 1936. Yet, the Lviv case introduced a new and potentially murderous dynamic, with the Hitler and Stalin regimes comparing their books on the issue of ethnic reordering for the first time.

Deportation was not the only instrument in the Soviet social engineering agenda. In their drive to transform human nature, Stalinist functionaries in Lviv had different prescriptions for different ethnic groups. Indeed, one of the most interesting episodes that Amar uncovers concerns the encounter between the Soviets and Lviv Jews. Polish contemporaries often presented the Jews as the main supporters of the Red Army. Just like the rumors that circulated in 1914 about Galician Jews kissing the enemy's horses, in 1939 it was alleged that they had kissed Soviet tanks (46). The Soviets saw the "liberation" as an opportunity "to ascribe backwardness and inferiority" (64), a colonizing attitude that was more visible in the Jewish case than it was in the Ukrainian one. This process went beyond abolishing the autonomy of Jewish communities and replacing the "reactionary" Hebrew language in Jewish schools with the "progressive" Yiddish language. Soviet journalists also painted Jewish life in Galicia as backward and local Jews, as psychologically, if not also physically, different from their Soviet brethren. Viktor Shklovsky claimed that he was asked by Lviv Jews why the Jews arriving with the Red Army had a "non-Jewish expression" on their faces (79). Many local community leaders with the "Jewish" facial expression were already on their way to Siberian exile.

Modern social and cultural history sees the performative aspect of historical events as important for placing them into an appropriate social context. Thus, the story of the Holocaust often begins with a description of Kristallnacht. Amar's narrative is sensitive to such moments of public spectacle heralding the advent of state terror. In June 1940 the Soviet mass deportation of refugees from the German zone, most of them Jewish, produced a morbid urban spectacle, with roundups on the streets and carts filled with detainees slowly wending their way through the city. This operation frightened into submission the city's residents, who whispered about box cars being readied for an even more comprehensive purge (57). Likewise, the deadly Jewish pogrom of late June and early July 1941, immediately after the Germans captured the city, served as a public spectacle preparing and justifying the Holocaust. Scripted by the Germans but implemented by the locals, it was filmed as "evidence" of the population's spontaneous desire to take revenge on Judeo-Bolshevism after the discovery of the bodies of Ukrainian political prisoners, whom the NKVD had executed before evacuating from Lviv. The script conveniently overlooked the fact that the massacred prisoners comprised a multinational group that included the Jews, and both Hitler and Goebbels praised the resulting footage (94–95). One could only add here Timothy Snyder's perceptive observation from *Black Earth,* that the German-initiated pogroms also allowed the locals a chance to erase their collaboration with the Stalin regime that was not, of course, limited to Jews.

The Nazi extermination machine in Lviv used several methods to kill the city's Jews. They were herded into a ghetto and a local concentration camp, both of which would be emptied by several waves of executions. Some Jews were also shipped off to death camps elsewhere; others perished in summary mass shootings. Against the background of such a large-scale slaughter, one cannot read as innocent the exaltations in the city's Ukrainian-language newspaper *Lvivski visti* in October 1941

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about the German occupation presenting Ukrainians with "a historic opportunity to create a Ukrainian *mishchanstvo*" (urban middle class) or to give "our cities" their "real face" (116). If the Soviet deportations started the process of Lviv's nationalization, the Nazi executions advanced it with deadly force. The Ukrainian share in the city's business life indeed increased by the spring of 1942 from 7.4 percent to 44 percent. When replacing Jews in the city's commercial life, German administrators apparently gave preference to Ukrainians who had been repressed by the Soviets, as well as invalids (136).

Jews were not the only targets of Nazi policies. Amar mentions only in passing the infamous POW camp for Red Army soldiers that was in the city's citadel and could be designated a "death camp" as well, and the food scarcity in the city, the result of Nazi restrictions. However, Nazi policies on the prisoners of war and starving the cities—both genocidal in their essence—are well known from Karel Berkhoff's book about Kyiv under the German occupation. Instead, Amar highlights a Galician peculiarity: the unusually high percentage of people who were sent to Germany as slave labor (*Ostarbeiter*). He estimates that some 325,000 *Ostarbeiter* were sent from District Galizien—30,000 from Lviv alone. As many as 60,000 Lviv residents avoided collecting their official rations in order not to be captured at a distribution point (118–19).

Amar sensibly prefaces his discussion of the Ukrainian nationalists' relations with the German authorities by the statement that the former's actions "are inexplicable if their drive for national statehood is omitted" (120). Indeed, his text shows just how few concessions the Ukrainian elites—represented first of all by Volodymyr Kubijovyč and his Ukrainian Central Committee—managed to extract from the Nazi administrators: some expansion of the Ukrainian kindergarten and school system, some assistance to Ukrainian prisoners of war from the 1939 German-Polish war, the preservation of the Lviv Polytechnic in the form of *Fachkurse* for Ukrainian students and, when it was too little and too late, the SS Division Galizien. The numbers Amar cites show that the Nazis' demotion of Poles and promotion of Ukrainians in the administration and the police were relative, not a complete deconstruction of Polish dominance, which is sometimes assumed in Ukrainian historical surveys.

Indeed, it was the Polish Home Army that fought the retreating German forces in 1944, attempting to liberate Lviv before the Red Army did. In the city where ethnic Poles now constituted a large majority (as a result of the Holocaust and the influx of refugees from the countryside), Polish Home Army units managed to take over some police precincts, in the process arresting and killing Ukrainians (146), while some Ukrainian policemen were killing Polish youth in order to escape the Soviets by using their identifications (137). Yet, the Polish-Ukrainian conflict did not develop in Lviv because a third—overwhelming—force entered the scene: Stalin's army and secret police. Amar finds interesting examples of the city's Polish residents engaging in symbolic resistance, such as the thousands of Poles gathering at Lychakiv Cemetery on November 1, 1944, to mark the anniversary of the 1918 Defense of Lwów against the forces of the Western Ukrainian People's Republic. Shouts of "Death to the Bolsheviks" established a connection with the 1920 defense of the city during the Polish-Soviet war, as well as with the city returning to Soviet-Ukrainian control in 1944 (155).

The ostensibly "voluntary" population exchanges between Poland and the Soviet Union in 1944–46 finally created a Ukrainian majority in Lviv through the removal of some 105,000 Poles. One could compare this act of Stalinist population management, as Amar does, to ethnic cleansing conceived by nationalist contemporaries, but it is important not to lose sight of what kind of Ukraine these Stalinist policies shaped. Other reviewers of Amar's book have noted correctly that the policy of *Ukrainization* in 1939 and, even more so, in 1946 was very different from the original Ukrainization of the 1920s. As Mayhill C. Fowler shows in her dissertation and forthcoming book, mature Stalinism channelled Ukrainian culture into a safe folkloric mode punctuated by obligatory expressions of gratitude to the Russian elder brother. Indeed, the postwar campaign of forcing Lviv's Ukrainian intellectuals to learn these tropes is precisely what Amar discusses in the latter part of his book. Thus, the city's Ukrainization under Stalin was not completing any nationalist project. With

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some 70 percent of the residents in the late 1940s being recent arrivals "from the east"—which in contemporary Stalinist parlance included both the rest of Soviet Ukraine and the Soviet Union in general—and 22,000 demobilized army officers who chose to settle in the city (161, 163), Lviv during Stalin's last decade was mostly Russophone.

It was also a city amid a war, this time the Soviet war against Ukrainian nationalist insurgents. The Lviv-based Russian writer and journalist Vladimir Beliaev illustrated well the Soviet paranoia about nationalist penetration of the city by proposing to the Moscow authorities the idea of replacing all local yard keepers with party members from elsewhere who would spy on the population (172). Army units stationed in the city also treated it as enemy territory by destroying parks, brutalizing the population, and participating in drunken shoot-outs. Indeed, the same Beliaev complained about the "widely held view" among Soviet military personnel that there was no difference between liberated Lviv and occupied Dresden (177).

One of the concluding chapters, with the beautiful title "A Soviet Borderland of Time," analyzes how the Soviet authorities supervised the production of memory about wartime Lviv. It shows how a single undergraduate organization named after a major Ukrainian writer, the Ivan Franko People's Guard, was cleansed of its Polish roots and Polish line of command to create a symbol of so-called Ukrainian pro-Soviet resistance, which was badly needed because of the all-too-familiar scale of anti-Soviet Ukrainian resistance. In the process, Soviet ideologists stumbled upon uncomfortable details of everyday urban life under the German occupation, such as the distribution of leaflets in a packed cinema (291)—not the picture of the occupation that Soviet textbooks painted.

All in all, Amar's book provides a rich analysis of the first, violent stage in Lviv's transformation into a Ukrainian city. His overall argument about the creation of the Ukrainian city, however, refers to the entire postwar period, which included the mass influx into Lviv of Ukrainophone, "already nationalized Ukrainian peasants" (322) from the Galician countryside during the 1950s and 1960s. When placed into this larger context, the author's statements about the Soviet authorities "not attempting to Russify" Lviv (4, 322) acquire another coloring because it is no longer the Kremlin's designs that we are dealing with; it is also the effects of social processes that the Kremlin thought it had controlled. On this note, one would like to hear more from Amar about the intriguing category of the "local" and the way it could serve both as a disciplinary and empowering tool in wartime and during the postwar reconstruction. After all, by the time the reader reaches the book's last paragraph, the authorities had already "conceded" to a distinct Soviet western Ukrainian identity and even "promoted it" (322). It was a long road stretching from the violent, top-down wartime reshaping of Lviv's ethnic order to the acknowledgment, by the late Soviet period, that the city possessed a specific Ukrainian identity. Lviv set out on this road in 1939, but not all its eventual turns followed the wartime roadmap. Tarik Amar's important book prepares its readers well for tracing this road.

This review was written in 2016.

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