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BOOK SYMPOSIUM

Making Lviv Soviet

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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, $35.00 (hardback), ISBN 9780801453915, $26.95 (paperback), ISBN 9781501735806, $12.99 (ebook), ISBN 9781501700835

The study of Soviet history used to be an academic version of the *Hunger Games.* Sharpened by the student protests of the 1960s and the debacle of the Vietnam War, debates over whether socialism was actually possible drove research agendas, political stances, and personal relationships between historians. Whether Stalin was Lenin 2.0 or an aberration had contemporary resonance for political futures. Yet after the 1991 collapse, when it was clear that socialism had failed, at least in Russia and Eastern Europe, those personal, political, and scholarly debates transformed as the field of Soviet history fractured without the unifying circumstances of the Cold War. The rise of scholarship on nations, nationalities, and nationalism now charged the field, catapulting the Association for the Studies of Nationalities conference, for example, to international status.

Where was Ukraine in these field fractures? Was Ukraine part of Soviet history, Russian history, or Eastern European history? The war in Ukraine today has accentuated the problematic place of Ukraine in its greater fields: historians of the Soviet Union may consider work focused largely on Ukraine or using only Ukrainian archives as Ukrainianist; for historians of Ukraine, many of whom are themselves Ukrainian, those who study the Soviet period should focus only on opposition or the teleological emergence of the nation. And if not, these studies can be seen as overly Sovietophile. There is a black-and-white opposition between the Soviet and the Ukrainian that makes it complicated to research Soviet Ukraine.

And it is here in the messy intersection of Soviet, Ukrainian, and Eastern European historiography that we find Tarik Cyril Amar's deeply researched contribution. The scholarly reactions so far have highlighted the way the Soviet legacy is still a polarizing question in Ukraine today. Yet reviews have largely been undertaken by scholars in Ukraine or of Ukrainian history (this author included); I would rather discuss the book in the context of Soviet history and how it moves that field forwards.

The argument of the book is in the title: a Ukrainian Lviv is a paradox. Paradoxically, processes destructive of the nation and the local—specifically, the Soviet Stalinist and Nazi projects—created the nation and the local. The Nazi and Soviet projects destroyed the city; Amar argues that it was precisely the violence and implication in totalitarian projects that created the Lviv we know today. The destruction of the Jewish population and the removal of the Polish population, and the powerful Soviet project bringing Ukrainians from the countryside to the city, made Lemberg-Lwow into Ukrainian Lviv.

The book begins with the failure of the interwar Polish state to handle its minorities, and then moves to describe how the first Soviet (1939–1941) and Nazi (1941–1944) occupations during World War II destroyed the multiethnic city fabric. Chapter 4, "After Lemberg: The End of the End of Lwow and the Making of Lviv," details the de-Polonization efforts of the Soviet state and the ushering in of Soviet power. Amar then focuses on four areas of Sovietization: industry, intellectuals, remaining Jewish life, and historical memory itself. The thrust of the book, to this reader, is in

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the chapters on the immediate postwar period, when Amar traces the emergence of Soviet Western Ukrainian identity. The argument is that the Western Ukrainian identity was not a remnant lingering on despite oppressive regimes, but that Sovietization itself created a local identity. Lviv is actually a result of the Soviet phenomenon.

This is how Amar's story contributes to work on Sovietization and nationalities policy, because he shows how, at least in this case, local identities do not persist despite Sovietization, but actually emerge through the Sovietization process. Moreover, instead of a focus on "Ukrainians" versus "Soviets," Amar breaks down the categories to show multiple categories of Ukrainians: there was a tension between "locals," who were pre-1939 subjects of Poland, and "easterners" who were pre-1939 Soviet Ukrainians, a "meeting point between different ways of being Ukrainian" (19). The transformation of this category of "local" ultimately both created and allowed a "Western Ukrainian" identity.

Amar's study also contributes to Sovietization studies by focusing on a slightly different chronology and different actors and stakeholders. Amar refers to the "sharp line missing in reality and drawn thickly in memory" (130) that scholars and contemporaries so often use to distinguish the *us* from the *them*, the Soviets from the Nazis from the nationalists. And it is particularly revealing to examine the line "drawn thickly in memory" in Lviv.

Drawing a line "thickly in memory" generally means intervening in agency, suggesting a new cast of characters between the Soviet, Nazi, and postwar Soviet eras. The thick line in memory then draws in macro-structures as actors. Interestingly, and I believe, importantly, Hitler and Stalin do not feature much in Amar's work. Stalin has only two page number references in the index, and Hitler does not appear in the index at all. Rather, new actors reveal new stories. The main characters in this study are local actors involved and implicated in the larger regimes. Ivan Hrushetskyi, the *obkom* head in the postwar period, features much more than Stalin, or even Khrushchev. Hrushetskyi's actions and his choices shape the story, as much as the regime under which he worked. Similarly, Vladimir Beliaev, a hack writer and Soviet propagandist, appears to have been a crucial agent in reporting on the changing demography and political reliability of the city to his superiors. Beliaev and Hrushetskyi embody the regime on the ground. Of course, they operated in larger structures that circumscribed and shaped their actions, but analysis of these choices shows how these regimes were able to impact society in such a transformative way; there was no way not to be involved. "But what did Sovietization mean for the Sovietiziers?" (7) asks Amar, and a focus on the micro-level shows.

Another example of the way a shift of focus on new actors offers a fresh lens on Sovietization is through Amar's examination of two murders. The first is in chapter 4, on the immediate postwar process of de-Polonization, a protracted and painful process from 1944 to March 1947. Amar cites the Lviv obkom data from December 1944 that 946 Poles had left, but there were 84,681 left to go (152). This coerced expulsion of the Poles profoundly shaped the city and illustrates an important point of distinction with the 1939–1941 Soviet occupation. That first encounter with the Soviets was violent and destructive in its own way, of course, but the Sovietizers at that time accepted the multi-ethnic quality of the city. One could stay, whether Polish or Jewish or Ukrainian, as long as one became sufficiently Soviet. But the postwar Sovietization had an important ethnic component: Poles had to leave Soviet Ukraine.

Janusz Witwicki was a Polish engineer and architectural historian who built a model of the city, a City Panorama, focusing on its pre-Habsburg Polishness. That is, he claimed a Polish—not Ukrainian, not Soviet—past for the city. Amidst a debacle about whether he could take the City Panorama with him to Poland, he was murdered in 1946. His wife, in the end, removed the model to Poland, and Witwicki's murder never received proper investigation and was never solved. But, along with Witwicki's murder and the removal of his work to Poland, so, too, was the Polish identity of the city actively destroyed, removed, and re-narrated. Witwicki's model and his murder allows for a focus on this moment at war's end when it was still Polish Lwow, and shows the contingency and violence in removing the Polishness.

Yet Lwow became Lviv thanks to new arrivals. Many "easterners" came to the city. Hrushetskyi estimated that over 70 percent of the population was from the east (161). Importantly, easterners could be Russian or Ukrainian, Russophone or not—but they came from the pre-1939 Soviet world and, as such, were categorized differently than the newly Soviet. Lviv was a destination both in the "vast restaffing operation" (161), as Amar describes, and in the story of undocumented postwar migrants coming to the city for a fresh start. This massive demographic surge is crucial because the category that the state used was "local," and while in 1945 a Pole could be "local," in a few years "local" meant "local Ukrainian"—and the "locals" needed to become Soviet, which they did.

The second murder is that of writer Yaroslav Halan, in chapter VI on the intelligentsia. Halan—"bludgeoned to death with an ax" (242) by two young male nationalists—breaks down a dichotomy of Ukrainian intelligentsia versus Soviet power. Halan was a "local," a Galician native, left-wing writer, Soviet war correspondent, who then "became the most prominent local propagandist, launching public attacks on Ukrainian nationalism and the Greek Catholic Church in covert coordination with the secret police" (240). Halan's murder afforded the authorities the opportunity to purge the old intelligentsia as well as students, further creating the local: "Locals changed, but what they changed into was a new iteration of the local" (260). These two murders of local figures, one a Pole the other a Ukrainian, show the micro-level transformation of Lemberg-Lwow-Lviv/Lvov, and show both the violence and the engagement of the on-the-ground Sovietization process.

Lviv is a special place. But that specialness is not separate from the Soviet phenomenon (that is, it is not special, as some might have it, because it was not Soviet or was protected from the Soviet), but because of the way that Sovietization created this new Soviet Western Ukrainian identity: "Sovietized and Ukrainian, but also somehow apart and different. This was neither a coincidence nor due merely to the persistence of pre-Soviet difference but was the result of Soviet policies after 1939" (322).

Where does research go from here? Amar's study raises two larger research agendas that should inspire further work. First, a question arises about other local identities. How did the Soviet state, after the war, with the "vast restaffing operation," reestablish, or transform, local identities in Dnipro, in Donetsk, in Kharkiv? Certainly, there are local identities in other places in Ukraine, so how are those stories different from this one? Secondly, is Lviv a metonym for Western Ukraine in general, or how might the Uzhhorod or Ivano-Frankivsk identities differ from the Lviv one? Thirdly, what about the relationship with Moscow? Did Moscow realize that they had allowed the creation of a local Western Ukrainian identity?

These are not critiques, rather ways that this study should drive further investigations. Indeed, the war today only shows the importance of analyzing the analysis of categories of Ukrainians and locals. Easterners today are a real category once again, shaped and created by the historical understandings and resonances from the immediate postwar period in Amar's study. Finally, what "Ukrainian" means is changing, one would hope, from a national to a civic understanding, but that cannot happen without an understanding of the historical context to the contingency of Ukraine.

This review was written in 2016.

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