

***Courage and Fear.*** By Ola Hnatiuk. Ewa Siwak, trans. Ukrainian Studies series. Boston: Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute/Academic Studies Press, 2019. xviii, 534 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Illustrations. Photographs. \$32.00, paper.

*Courage and Fear* is an ambitious, significant, and uneven work. Its intentions are humane, its detail is impressive; the scope of research into ego-documents, such as diaries or memoirs, outstanding. At its best it offers empathic renditions of individual experiences embedded in webs of personal connections and intellectual and artistic influences—shaped, of course, by Ola Hnatiuk’s priorities. The stories of, for instance, L’viv university’s [renamed Ivan Franko by the Soviets] first Soviet head, a Polish movie star, or a Jazz band in the storms of World War II are vivid, complex, and enlightening. Hnatiuk strives to avoid nostalgia (xvi) and is laudably clear about what Ukrainian nationalists and their Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) did to Poles, namely murder “on a mass scale” and conduct “ethnic cleansing” (379, 381).

Attentive reading, however, reveals problems and limits. Minor flaws include sometimes over-stating the obvious, such as “nationality did not determine. . . culpability in advance” (179). Hnatiuk’s implication that it is *Courage and Fear* that—finally?—makes “mutually exclusive national narratives recede” (x) is exaggerated, as claims to originality often are. That is a task perhaps never-ending but certainly long recognized and undertaken.

The marshaling of detail and anecdote through “nested storytelling” (xvi) often works well but by no means always: repeatedly, over-ramification and digressions—sometimes ending on a telling “let us return to”—overwhelm Hnatiuk’s structure. Here, cramming in what seems like almost every detail (and name) unearthed diminishes efficiency; readers not familiar with this history will struggle, despite a helpful index of capsule biographies.

The focus and scope of *Courage and Fear* remain unclear: its English edition claims to “tell the history of [the now western Ukrainian city of] Lviv during World War Two” (ix), which it does not; Hnatiuk certainly does not see her work as merely a study of select elite figures either. Whatever the exact goal, it is pursued through a sample of intellectuals “selected. . . on the basis of the narratives they left behind,” or that were left behind by others. Yet not even all intellectuals self-narrate (or are well covered by others), although some do so exhaustively.

Hnatiuk is too sure of some assumptions: she disputes a memoir account because, she believes, a Soviet officer “decorated with medals like a Christmas Tree” could not have been present at a deportation (247). This memoirist may well have mis-remembered. But the Soviet Gulag victim Evgeniia Ginzburg recalled that, when she was put on a train from Kazan’ to Moscow, officers wore uniforms with “blinking buttons” and, some, with “decorations” (except

an outlier in an elegant suit).<sup>1</sup> Likewise, some popular mock variations on Sovietized songs prove to Hnatiuk “that even in everyday life,” L’viv rejected the Soviet order (281), a dissonant claim in a work not exploring everyday life, and certainly not beyond an elite. Giving the impression, in passing, that the soldiers of the Ukrainian Waffen-SS Division “Galizien”—a collaborating (by any reasonable definition of the term) unit (at least parts of which committed severe crimes)—were “drafted” (304) or “conscript[ed]” (379) is misleading; in reality, it was established with large numbers of volunteers, as can be easily ascertained in the available literature, including by scholars such as Per Anders Rudling or Olesya Khromeychuk.<sup>2</sup> But Hnatiuk tiptoes around this fact in a confusing manner, stating the exception instead of the rule by telling readers that *some* of this putative “conscription” was “compulsory” (379).

*Courage and Fear* comes with multiple caveats: Hnatiuk’s “most personal book” (xiii) does *not* “follow the convention of ‘scholarly objectivity’” (xiii)—although it is aimed at “truly seeing” (xi); it does *not* “focus on unearthing new information” (xiv), is *not* a monograph, and, puzzlingly, is *not* meant to “focus on particular figures” (xv), although that is, in reality, its key technique.

Instead Hnatiuk’s declared intention is to “paint a picture of relationships among protagonists of different nationalities” and “refocus from a national to a personal narrative” (xv). She acknowledges that her selection of cases may well be exceptional but, she insists, they can carry an important moral message (xv). True, but at a price: that message is fundamental and the research serves it.

Hnatiuk has covered—in principle but not evenly—the three main national/ethnic, but not equally large or influential, groups of prewar and wartime L’viv: Ukrainians, Poles, and Jews. *Courage and Fear*, however, seems to have grown out of a sympathetic study of (mostly) L’viv’s Ukrainian intelligentsia—with special attention to the failure of Polish elites to treat Ukrainians in a fair manner—that was then, laudably, expanded. But its original core is still clearly visible.

Hnatiuk seeks to “transcend categories of nationality, religion, race [this reviewer cannot identify “races” here, disregarding the general fragility of the concept], and politics.” These categories, Hnatiuk warns, “can distort our understanding” and “prevent us from truly seeing what motivates solidarity—is it love for thy neighbor or simply human loyalty. . .?” (xi). In this quasi-Platonic quest to shed the (seemingly) inessential to reach a higher truth, attesting “to human courage and. . .the will to confront evil,” Hnatiuk makes a claim about exactly one outcome of such a revelation, namely “solidarity.”

It is to her credit that she also often reports other behaviors, but this agenda cannot but restrict *Courage and Fear*’s capacity for capturing historical reality, since, as Hnatiuk herself states (in a discussion of L’viv writers), “solidarity”

1. Evgeniia Ginzburg, *Krutoi Marshrut* (Moscow, 2007), 126.

2. For instance, Per Anders Rudling, “‘They Defended Ukraine’: The 14. Waffen-Grenadier-Division der SS (Galizische Nr. 1) Revisited,” *Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, vol. 25, no. 3 (July-September 2012): 338; Olesya Khromeychuk, “Ukrainians in the German Armed Forces During the Second World War,” *History: The Journal of the Historical Association*, vol. 100, no. 5 (343) (December 2015): 720.

was “rare,” while “as a rule, Ukrainian and Jewish writers kept to themselves, each nationality entrenched in its own milieu” (331). Indeed, *Courage and Fear* repeatedly recognizes that contact, solidarity, and even the scope of Hnatiuk’s crucial ego-documents were restricted along national lines (for instance, 336, 349, and 345).

Hnatiuk gestures in passing toward some English-language literature pertinent to her topic, but does not engage with it, and certainly not transparently. In general, there is a tendency to polemicize with shadows by not referencing what is rejected. For example, Hnatiuk asserts that memoirists and “historians maintained that. . .until fall 1940 the Soviet authorities favored local Ukrainians and played them against the Poles. Grzegorz Hryciuk [a historian of Lviv] offers a more judicious evaluation, pointing to cases of reprisals against Ukrainians” (144). This is a non-sequitur (not the only one in *Courage and Fear*): “cases of reprisals” do not exclude a policy of favoring and certainly not under the Soviets. More problematically, the only reference is to Hryciuk (in a volume co-edited by Hnatiuk).

Likewise, Hnatiuk declares that “broad support for the Soviets [here, among Ukrainian intellectuals in Lviv] no longer appears unequivocal” (145), but it is unclear who has made this simplistic claim. Contemporary observers or memoirists? Historians she seeks to revise? While not a monograph, *Courage and Fear* does have footnotes (thankfully). Nonetheless, its lack of transparency diminishes its capacity for dialogue.

Hnatiuk warns that we cannot take “official documents” at “face value” (144). True. But who does, at least among halfway serious scholars? There may be a deeper methodological problem: she believes that these documents are no more valuable for post-facto analysis than a Soviet propaganda publication (144). If “documents” here refers to the copious archive left behind by institutions of Soviet rule (and not only the Secret Police), that is a basic mistake: documents originally produced not for the public are not the same as propaganda; and while neither should be taken “at face value,” they need to be treated differently. While Hnatiuk has “delved into archival collections” (xv), including that of L’viv’s university, given the scope of her work she herself seems to have retrieved comparatively few documents from some essential archives and used them mostly to illustrate or confirm points she derived from elsewhere. The strength of *Courage and Fear*’s source base are ego-documents, not the use of archives.

Hnatiuk minimizes Soviet Ukrainization policies in L’viv, stressing how they disappointed the local Ukrainian elite, and occasionally adopting the claim that they really amounted to a (badly) masked *de*-Ukrainization (221, 350). The conceptual—not evidentiary (that is her select sample)—problem with this assertion is that disappointment with *how* the Soviets Ukrainianized L’viv actually does not translate into the absence of Ukrainization. The underlying historical issue, namely that Ukrainization came from a regime and in a manner L’viv’s inhabitants often had every reason to reject but was still real, and the underlying conceptual issue, namely the need to adapt the notion of Ukrainization to historical reality (and not vice versa) go beyond this review’s scope. *Courage and Fear*, in any case, misses this key issue by mostly endorsing a national-normative manner of evading it: in essence, if Ukrainian

elites were disappointed, it cannot have been real Ukrainization; hence, no *real* Soviet Ukrainization and no challenging issue to conceptualize. Thus, despite Hnatiuk's "background in national identity studies" (xv), her work does not reflect what we know—from, for instance, Francine Hirsch and Yuri Slezkine—about the interaction of Soviet nation-repressing, nation-fostering, and nation-manipulation.<sup>3</sup>

Hnatiuk's defending many of her protagonists, especially but not only from the Ukrainian intelligentsia, against charges of collaboration (with Nazis or Soviets) is a leitmotif of *Courage and Fear*. Thus, it is a pity that there is no explicit statement on what would, for Hnatiuk, actually qualify as collaboration. Instead, it pervades *Courage and Fear*, but preponderantly as a stereotype to be refuted: again and again readers learn that this or that person, community, or activity has been accused of collaboration and why Hnatiuk disagrees.

Clearly, Hnatiuk does not want to jettison the category of collaboration entirely: a Dutch Nazi collaborator, for instance, seems to be acknowledged as just that (50), an NKVD collaborator definitely is (195); occasionally, something is described as almost "crossing the line" toward collaboration (371). But we are never told where Hnatiuk sees that line. This matters because sorting cases along it (if mostly to one side) structures much of her book. Clearly, and rightly, Hnatiuk will not simply take the Soviets' word on who was a collaborator (or a nationalist). But that cannot tell us much about her own *de facto* central yet never explicated idea of collaboration.

*Courage and Fear* does not gain from its unrelenting drive to indict the Soviets. There is no doubt about the great violence, mendacity, and oppression they brought to L'viv (and elsewhere). But with Hnatiuk, analysis yields to prosecution and even the recycling of clichés, such as "Soviet tools of mind control" (139), "mass brainwashing" (141), or "playbook" (326, 349, and 386). Hnatiuk's blaming of even a recent revival of nationalist narratives on a late "triumph" of "Soviet propaganda" (209) shows the cost of this approach: missing that what is surging now is a nationalism which the Soviets *also* sought to use but which is older and has its own continuing trajectories. Misunderstanding it as a legacy of Soviet propaganda will not help reduce it.

Hnatiuk puts *Courage and Fear* in the company of Timothy Snyder's *Bloodlands*, while applying a "micro lens" (x). But *Bloodlands* relies on its sweep. A more original micro study should have left open the option of revising, rather than supplementing it. Clearly, Hnatiuk's intention is, akin to Snyder's, to highlight the responsibility of invaders and occupiers. But unlike Snyder she also seeks to prove the lack of responsibility of local actors (instead of largely disregarding the micro level). Yet that sits badly with her select sample: exceptions may carry a moral message but cannot explain the non-exceptional, which is to say, most of reality.

3. Francine Hirsch, *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union* (Ithaca, 2005); Yuri Slezkine, "The USSR as a Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism," *Slavic Review*, vol. 53, no. 2 (Summer 1994): 414–452.

Yet Hnatiuk also seems to stake a claim to “reframing the overall image” (xv). Hnatiuk’s source base and insistence on the exceptional and personal do not match that intention. Moreover, *Courage and Fear* suffers from underestimating a third, disturbing possibility: that totalitarian evil “from above” did not exist in a zero-sum balance with local agency “from below.”

*Courage and Fear* fails when addressing the fate of L’viv’s Jews, a third of the prewar population, shaping the pre-Holocaust city second-to-none, and the only one of L’viv’s three main groups to be exterminated during the war. Hnatiuk does not, of course, deny the facts of their murder, the pogroms, the ghetto, and a camp close to L’viv’s city center. But her narrative seems to display a pattern of avoidance: we meet Janina Heschel as a rescued Jewish girl (425); her memoirs’ mention of schemes to blackmail and defraud Jews is missing. At the same time, Hnatiuk highlights a memoirist’s statement that “in many instances. . . help for Jews also came from people who had been anti-Semites before the war (35).”

Readers learn that “the Nazis” or “the occupier” reduced and dissolved the ghetto by mass murder, hunting down survivors (15, 377, and 379). Yet it is well-known that L’viv had a large Ukrainian auxiliary police force, serving the Nazis in general and in the murder of Jews—as, for instance, David Alan Rich has shown—and thus forming a key part of what Gabriel Finder and Alexander V. Prusin have plausibly called “the institutional epicenter of Ukrainian collusion with the Nazis in this region in the destruction of the Jews.”<sup>4</sup> Hnatiuk mentions its help in searching for Jews (12) but without any elaboration; its role remains greatly understated.

Hnatiuk notes Ukrainian nationalists followed the Nazis in their 1941 invasion of the Soviet Union, without “permission of the Nazi administration” (357)—in reality, they acted with, at the very least, German initial de facto toleration—but she finds no place here to mention the “Nachtigall” Battalion, a Ukrainian-nationalist unit of Third Reich auxiliaries marching into L’viv with the Germans, as detailed most recently by Olesya Khromeychuk.<sup>5</sup> When Nachtigall does make an appearance, it is to highlight the politicized nature of Soviet Cold War accusations (42) and in the context of an elaborate argument seeking to shake the perception that Ukrainians were especially active in greeting the Nazis (75). Readers will have to learn elsewhere about the crimes Nachtigall and its successors committed.

In a surprising bypass, Hnatiuk mentions the pogrom at the beginning of the Nazi occupation, when contesting Ukrainians’ prominence during the welcome to the Germans, but then announces that she does “not intend to quote either the accounts or the arguments” about it (78). By that choice she avoids engaging with the fact that there is a clear consensus among experts—such as Wendy Lower, John-Paul Himka, and Kai Struve—that this pogrom featured significant local participation, a curious strategy for a work

4. David Alan Rich, “Armed Ukrainians in L’viv: Ukrainian Militia, Ukrainian Police, 1941 to 1942” *Canadian-American Slavic Studies*, vol. 48, no. 3 (January 2014): 271–87; Gabriel N. Finder and Alexander V. Prusin, “Collaboration in Eastern Galicia: The Ukrainian Police and the Holocaust,” *East European Jewish Affairs*, vol. 34, no. 2 (August 2004): 96.

5. Khromeychuk, “Ukrainians in the German Armed Forces,” 711–13.



privileging “solidarity” since it, in effect, evades one of the worst examples of the opposite.<sup>6</sup>

Instead, Hnatiuk states the truism that the Nazis would have found achieving their murderous goals harder without local participation (79). She then adds that the same Nazis were not “able to *immediately force* L’vivians to assist in their atrocities” (79, my emphasis) and, later, that the pogroms of the summer of 1941 “filled *the city* with horror” (355, my emphasis)—phrases that should not have escaped editing. In reality, the first pogrom happened at the very beginning of the Nazi occupation and we have long known that the Germans certainly incited (assisted by Ukrainian nationalists) but did *not* have to “force” local participation in it. Thus, it is impossible that “the city,” as a whole was, “filled with horror.” Here, Hnatiuk falls back on misleading simplifications experts have long discarded.

The leader of the collaborating (again, by any sensible definition of the term) Ukrainian *Hauptausschuss* (or “Ukrainian Central Committee,” not to be confused with anything Soviet) Volodymyr Kubyiovych appears in passing, making a highly untypical (and unsuccessful) effort to moderate violence (380), but we learn nothing about his well-documented attempts to not only protect, in his strictly ethno-nationalist and authoritarian manner, what he saw as Ukrainian interests but to do so by leveraging influence with Nazis against Poles and Jews. Similarly, the *Hauptausschuss* branch in L’viv is rendered in a misleadingly unproblematic way.

There is a deep inconsistency in Hnatiuk’s posture: with a certain pathos, she strives for a “universal perspective of humanity” to “transcend” national biases (x). But in practice, she seems unclear about what that means: illustrating the (uncontroversial) claim that national identities *could* be less important than other factors in shaping actions? Or arguing that without Nazis and Stalinists ethnicity “would have played only a minor role” in her protagonists’ lives (xv), which is a brittle counter-factual contradicted by some of Hnatiuk’s own evidence (because “minor” is not the same as “different”)? Or insisting that most of her protagonists—especially Ukrainian intellectuals—were not nationalists?

Secondly, Hnatiuk, who warns us that we cannot simply “overcome stereotypes” (xv), strikes some notes of national sensitivities herself. Although seeking a standpoint between (or above?) the national narratives of (especially) Poles and Ukrainians, she is clearly particularly concerned to correct Polish accusations against Ukrainians, and she is occasionally inconsistent in her attempt to avoid generalizations. For instance, she states that “the opinion of the educated class” (here, Poles) that Ukrainians collaborated with the

6. Wendy Lower, “Pogroms, Mob Violence and Genocide in Western Ukraine, Summer 1941: Varied Histories, Explanations and Comparisons,” *Journal of Genocide Research*, vol. 13, no. 3 (September 2011): 217–46; John-Paul Himka, “The Lviv Pogrom of 1941: The Germans, Ukrainian Nationalists, and the Carnival Crowd,” *Canadian Slavonic Papers*, vol. 53, no. 2-4 (June 2011): 209–43; Kai Struve, “The OUN(b), the Germans, and Anti-Jewish Violence in Eastern Galicia during Summer 1941,” *Journal of Soviet and Post-Soviet Politics and Society*, vol. 6, no. 1 (2020): 205–235 [a summary of idem, *Deutsche Herrschaft, ukrainischer Nationalismus, antijüdische Gewalt. Der Sommer 1941 in der Westukraine* (Berlin, 2015)].

Soviets conformed to a “stereotype” (152), but when she describes some Polish professors’ irritated response to an initiative of their Ukrainian colleagues, she concludes with what comes close to a flat generalization: that “apparently, Poles could not stomach a gesture of solidarity from Ukrainian academics” (153). Hnatiuk is not alone in not entirely escaping the pull of national identity. But readers should understand that this force complicates her book, too.

In sum, this is a significant book based on impressive, though not flawless, research and makes useful contributions. It also has substantial shortcomings. Experts should certainly read it, attentively and critically. Its rejection of “scholarly objectivity” hints at non-experts, but they will find some of it hard going and should read well beyond it.

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