

Kuchabsky, Vasyl'. *Western Ukraine in Conflict with Poland and Bolshevism, 1918-1923*. Edmonton-Toronto: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, 2009. Pp. xxx, 361. ISBN: 9781894865128

Vasyl' Kuchabsky's book addresses one of the most complex subjects of East European history - the nation-building in the immediate aftermath of World War I in the German, Austro-Hungarian, and Russian imperial borderlands. Whereas in November 1918 all became "quiet on the Western Front," in a pattern similar to the domino-effect of the 1848-1849 turmoil in the Austrian Empire, the borderlands were caught up in the quagmire of national revolutions, civil wars, and ethnic conflicts that involved multiple contestants and ideologies and subsided only in the fall of 1920.

Although the book title implies that it encompasses the entire historical region of Western Ukraine (which also includes western Volhynia, Bukovina, and Transcarpathia), the author's main focus is on East Galicia. Such a choice seems justifiable since it was in East Galicia where by 1914 the Ukrainian national movement had succeeded in acquiring wider access to politics and the cultural and educational system. In fact, the deep causes of ethnic conflict in East Galicia were rooted in its particularities as a "classic" borderland, where a pyramidal socio-economic and political structure was superimposed on ethnicity, religion, and culture. The Ukrainians, who largely belonged to the Greek-Catholic (Uniate) rite, constituted the demographic majority and made their living by agriculture.

The Polish nobility, which had possessed the legacy of the historic kingdom in the past, was "appeased" by the Austrian government and held a virtual monopoly over the provincial state apparatus, economy, and the education system, while the social substratum between the Ukrainians and Poles was filled by Jews, who dominated petty trade, commerce, and artisanship.

Although the majority of the Ukrainians faced limited opportunities for upward social mobility, the emancipation of peasants and the industrialization drive opened up Galician society to new political and cultural encounters and facilitated the nation-building process. Concerned about the potential of Polish irredentism, the Austrian (Austro-Hungarian) government encouraged the expansion of Ukrainian socio-economic and cultural networks and active Ukrainian participation in provincial and national politics. Consequently, in contrast to their kinsmen in Tsarist Ukraine, who suffered from abusive Russification policies, Galician Ukrainians largely appreciated the Habsburg rule and considered Galicia their "Piedmont" — the cradle of Ukrainian national culture. The outbreak of World War I offered both Poles and Ukrainians the opportunity to articulate political and socio-economic demands in a national form. The collapse of the Central Powers and the Entente's support for national self-determination in Eastern Europe set the stage for a civil war, which ended up with the incorporation of East Galicia into the Second Polish Republic.

An active participant in the Polish-Ukrainian conflict, Kuchabsky concentrates on seeking explanations for the Ukrainian defeat, particularly since by the end of the World War both sides seemed to have had equal opportunities, having created political institutions and armed forces necessary for state-formation. Kuchabsky demonstrates, however, that the Great Powers consistently favored the better organized and more politically mature Poles. In November 1916 the German and Austro-Hungarian Emperors issued a declaration that provided for the creation of a Polish state under German and Austrian auspices. Not only did such a development provide the Poles with the nucleus of a political infrastructure, but it made the Polish question a top priority for the Central Powers and the Entente. Indeed, the two prominent personalities — Roman Dmowski in Paris and the famous pianist Ignacy Paderewski in America — successfully promoted the Polish cause among the Entente leaders (115-120). In contrast, the Ukrainian question remained too complicated and obscure for Western politicians and diplomats who had to deal with more pressing matters of the prosecution of the war and the revolutionary situation in Russia (137-139).

Nevertheless, on the battlefield the Ukrainians initially held the upper hand. On November 1, 1918 they went on the offensive, capturing the capital city of East Galicia, L'viv (Lwów); soon after the Ukrainian troops captured Przemyśl, the crucial city-junction between West and East Galicia. Created in October, the Ukrainian National Council proclaimed Ukrainian statehood in the form of the West Ukrainian National Republic (ZUNR), whose political platform reflected the parliamentary traditions of the Austro-

Hungarian monarchy as well as the Russian revolutionary trends. It granted the population equal civil and political rights and distributed parliamentary seats proportionally according to ethnic demographics, with the Ukrainians in the majority, followed by Poles, Jews, and the Germans (57).

Despite ZUNR's successes Kuchabsky is highly critical of its leadership's "lost opportunities." The support from eastern Ukraine proved illusory, for, hard-pressed by the Bolsheviks and the White-Russians, the national Ukrainian government in Kiev was fighting for its own survival. In fact, the union between Western and eastern Ukraine (announced in January 1919) effectively plunged the ZUNR into the midst of the Russian civil wars. In addition to the Polish-Ukrainian war, the ZUNR thus acquired two additional formidable foes. Kuchabsky is similarly disgusted with the "socialist-revolutionary" experiments of the two Ukrainian governments. In his opinion, their land-reforms alienated the nationally-conscious small-landholding peasants and attracted the landless proletarian elements that were much more concerned with economic than national-revolutionary issues (87-89). As equally detrimental, Kuchabsky laments the lack of dominant personalities among the Ukrainian leadership. In his opinion, neither Yevhen Petrushevych nor Simon Petliura (respectively, the leaders of the Western and Eastern Ukrainian governments) possessed the will, the abilities, and the political credentials of the two Polish leaders — Roman Dmowski and Józef Piłsudski. Only a "Ukrainian" Ghengis Khan or Lenin could have tipped the scale of the struggle (105).

The author's personal experiences, and his involvement with the Ukrainian radical organization (UVO) in interwar Poland as well as the potential influence of the Nazi take-over (the study was first published in 1934 in Germany) may have affected his accentuation of military force as the crucial factor in the attempt to found the Ukrainian state (262). In this regard, Kuchabsky's position is not exceptional, for most of the "successor-states" in Eastern Europe won their independence by the force of arms and ascribed excessive weight to the use of force and strong-arm methods rather than to democratic experiments. Kuchabsky thus overemphasizes the military and political preparedness of the Poles in East Galicia on the eve of the Polish-Ukrainian war (27-29). In reality, however, by November 1, 1918 political power in the province literally lay in the gutter to be picked up by the more determined side. In fact, the Ukrainian coup caught the Polish side quite unprepared and it was a brave, desperate, and disconcerted resistance of the Polish "little eagles" — school and university students — that afforded the Polish command precious time to organize a counteroffensive. Eventually, Kuchabsky concedes that the Polish resistance in L'viv (Lwów) was more driven by "national temperament than [by] political calculation" (124).

In his critique of the Ukrainian governments' "socialist" reforms Kuchabsky sidelines the fact that for the predominantly agricultural and ill-educated Ukrainian communities, social and economic reforms were more

attractive than the dim vision of national independence (as was the case in Belarus and Bessarabia). He is correct, however, in stressing the decisive role of the Entente in supporting Poland as a crucial link in the *cordon sanitaire* against Russia. In Paris, where the Allied commissions struggled through the ethnic tapestry of the borderlands, the Polish diplomatic missions succeeded in portraying the ZUNR as the Bolshevik springboard to Europe. The French, who favored a strong Poland as leverage against Germany, facilitated the transfer of the so-called "Blue Army" to the Polish-Ukrainian front, where it eventually determined the outcome of the war. The international isolation of the ZUNR was complete in May 1919 when the Romanian army (acting upon the behest of the Entente against the potential Bolshevik thrust through Galicia into the revolutionary Hungary) occupied the southern part of the province (177). Ukrainian self-determination was sacrificed for the *Realpolitik* of the Great Powers.

Kuchabsky's book opens up interesting perspectives on the history of the imperial borderlands, where by the end of World War I national aspirations, traditionally in the realm of dreams, had become a reality. The implementation of these aspirations, however, depended on the will of the Great Powers and on historical opportunities, created by the collapse of the German, Austro-Hungarian, and Russian empires. The events in East Galicia in 1918-1920 became but one episode of the "frontier wars," the third stage of Miroslav Hroch's classic formula of national awakening — popular mobilization along ethnic lines.