

**Vasyl Kuchabsky. *Western Ukraine in Conflict with Poland and Bolshevism, 1918–1923.*** Transl. by Gus Gafan. Edmonton and Toronto: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, 2009. [Originally published in German in 1934]. 361 pp. Maps. Bibliography. Index. \$59.95, cloth. \$59.95, paper.

This volume is a translation of a work published originally in German in 1934 by a former participant and one of the most productive historians of the Ukrainian national struggle of the 1920s. The book combines the author's first-hand accounts with compilations from other sources that are, for the most part, similar publications heavily based on personal memories and other materials authored by Ukrainian nationalists. Today's historians, who are aware of recent path-breaking studies of the revolutions and interwar developments in Eastern Europe, might open this volume wondering what use can be made of a study based on such a narrow source base and published in Hitler's Germany by a Ukrainian nationalist. However, this work offers more than it might suggest at first sight to a reader prepared to read it in the context of its times.

Kuchabsky opens the book with an overview of the Ukrainian "national revival" (p. 6) under Russian and Austrian rules, establishing the two overarching premises of the book:

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the purported national superiority of western Ukrainians over their eastern counterparts who remained “little Russian” peasants in their consciousness (p. 11), and the unshaken belief in the primordial “mutual hatred” (p. 14) of Poles and Ukrainians (p. 11). The first chapter deals with the proclamation of Western Ukraine as a state in eastern Galicia and the attempts at state-building activities in the fall of 1918, culminating in the battle for L'viv in November and concluding with the loss of this important urban centre. In the second chapter, describing the Western Ukrainian struggle for statehood, Kuchabsky focuses on rebutting partisan anti-Ukrainian views by Polish historians with his own no less partisan anti-Polish views. The third chapter discusses how the Paris Peace Conference dealt with the “Ukrainian question” while the Polish-Ukrainian war broke out in eastern Galicia. Here Kuchabsky centres his attention on the inadequacy of the Western Ukrainian leaders’ unshaken belief in Wilson’s proclaimed principle of “national self-determination” and their unfulfilled hope for support by the Entente, which was practising blatant *Realpolitik* rather than democratic principles. The last two chapters deal with the final agony of the two Ukrainian armies in their fight against Poland, the Bolsheviks, and Russian counterrevolutionary forces, and with the incorporation of eastern Galicia into Poland that followed their final defeat.

Along with the details of historical events, Kuchabsky spends a lot of time discussing alternative (and often contradictory) scenarios that, in his opinion, could have saved the Ukrainian cause at various points. For example, although he maintained western Ukrainian superiority, considered Eastern Ukraine not yet capable of nation-building (pp. 72–73), and stressed “primordial differences” (p.98) between the Eastern and Western Ukrainian lands, Kuchabsky still claimed that the very lack of unity and co-ordinated actions between these two entities caused the failure of the Ukrainian national struggle in the 1920s (p. 250). At the same time, although remaining a passionate believer in the Ukrainian national ideal, Kuchabsky demonstrates a great deal of open-mindedness in his political analysis. In fact, in his criticism of the Ukrainian national movement Kuchabsky points to some issues that were largely omitted from the later standard nationalist narrative of Ukrainian history and have been only recently addressed by scholars, particularly in the fields of borderland history and nationalism. For instance, rather than stressing the “treason” of the Ukrainians by the Entente leaders and victimization of the Ukrainian movements trapped between the great conflicting forces in Eastern Europe, he emphasized the inner weaknesses of the movement and particularly its failure to understand and address the great importance of mobilizing the masses for the success of the “national cause.” Having developed his views before the era of radical ethnicization of nationalist ideologies, Kuchabsky was rather frank in his political realism and on multiple occasions openly discussed what is now called the fluidity of popular identities and their dependence on manifold social and cultural factors. He also considered the stubborn clinging to the “ethnic borderlands” by Ukrainian leaders a big mistake, realizing the inevitably artificial nature of national state borders (pp.218, 230).

Kuchabsky’s historical analysis leaves the reader puzzled with a number of inconsistencies and open questions, reminding us once again that studies centred on national movements and nation states often disappoint students interested in the history of societies claimed and ruled by these movements and states. However, it is a document of its time and a rich primary source on the intellectual history of a very intricate period in Eastern Europe. As such, Kuchabsky’s work, supplemented with the editors’ explanatory notes and six maps, can be very useful for researchers and students, both at the graduate and upper undergraduate levels.

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