

*Western Ukraine in Conflict with Poland and Bolshevism, 1918-1923*, by Vasyl Kuchabsky. Translated by Gus Fagan. Toronto, Ontario, Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, 2009. xxix, 361 pp. \$59.95 Cdn (cloth), \$34.95 Cdn (paper).

Vasyl Kuchabsky, as a young man in his twenties, fought for the independence of his country and was therefore a minor participant, and certainly an interested observer in the events that he describes in this book. In the 1920s Kuchabsky studied at the University of Berlin, and he received his doctorate in Slavic philology in 1930. He published the book under review in German in 1934, but had to wait for an English translation for 75 years. The questions arise: was it worthwhile to translate such an old book? Has not modern scholarship made such a study obsolete? What kind of readership did the publishers envisage? The answers to these questions are not obvious. On the one hand, Kuchabsky is clearly a competent historian who discusses confusing events in a very complex part of the world. By writing about events relatively shortly after they occurred he provides a contemporary perspective that could be useful for modern scholars. On the other hand, it is unlikely that a non-professional reader, even a nationalist Ukrainian, would want to wade through this long and extremely detailed book that is inevitably dated. Scholars dealing with this topic should be able to read it in the original.

Kuchabsky's point of view, as a Galician native, is that of a West Ukrainian patriot. He set for himself the task of examining the causes of the failure of West

Ukrainians to establish their state. Rather unrealistically, he had high hopes for the establishment of a state centred on Lviv rather than Kyiv, largely because the relatively democratic Austro-Hungarian monarchy that ruled Galicia produced politicians more capable of creating a functioning administration than those areas of Ukraine that had belonged to the Russian Empire. Kuchabsky's interesting proposition is that for success it was on the one hand necessary to mobilize the lower classes, something that Skoropadsky in Kyiv spectacularly failed to do, but at the same time not to pursue a "demagogic" policy, as represented by Petliura, that would alienate the elite, whose support was also essential for success. It was in this respect that the Western half of Ukraine, which avoided demagoguery, was more promising.

To be sure, Ukrainians were responsible for failure, for not being able to bring the two halves together, for not understanding the larger trends in European affairs, for not concentrating on one enemy at a time. In Kuchabsky's view, however, it was for reasons beyond their control that Ukrainians did not succeed. They faced two implacable enemies, the Bolsheviks in the East and the Poles on the West. It was impossible to come to terms with the Bolsheviks, people that Kuchabsky regarded as no better than the Mongol hordes in the age of Genghis Khan. The nationalist Poles, especially the followers of Roman Dmowski, were also bitter enemies because they wanted to eradicate Ukrainian nationalist consciousness. Understandably, Kuchabsky writes with great hostility about both of these enemies; however, he gives them credit for superior political leadership.

Since he is writing about Western Ukraine, Kuchabsky gives much more attention to the Poles than to the Soviets. He is convincing in arguing that Polish politics was clever in the short run by attracting support from outsiders and in maintaining a national unity, a unity that Ukrainians were not capable of creating. In the long run, however, the policy of national exclusiveness, the lack of understanding that other nationalities were just as desirous of asserting themselves as the Poles themselves, ultimately harmed their own interests. Or to put it another way, the Poles bit off more than they could digest. Reading this book undermines one's sympathy for the Poles, who were greatly indignant in 1945 for losing territories that they had incorporated very much against the wishes of the majority of the people.

But the ultimate cause of the Western Ukrainians to establish their own state was the politics of the great powers. Wilson gave false hopes to national minorities. British and American "experts" saw the world through Polish eyes, and the French, who paid most attention to Eastern Europe, believed that a large Poland would be a strong Poland. In Kuchabsky's view an independent Ukraine would have been a stronger force for European security than an autocratic Poland that included a substantial resentful minority.

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