

Western Ukraine in Conflict with Poland and Bolshevism, 1918–1923. By VASYL KUCHABSKY. Translated by GUS FAGAN. Pp. 346. Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press. 2009. C\$34.95. Paperback. ISBN: 978-1894865135.

Vasyl Kuchabsky reviews the topic of Ukrainian independence at the end of the First World War, and the issues that both Ukrainian governments, but in particular the government of the Western Ukrainian National Republic, had with establishing their statehood while fighting the Polish military, Bolshevism and internal disunity. Kuchabsky himself was involved in some of the events he details: he was a member of the *Sich Riflemen* before travelling around Eastern Europe, briefly staying in Lviv before moving to Germany and enrolling at the University of Berlin, where he completed a doctorate in history and Slavic philology in 1930. The book, a translation from the German, was originally published in 1934 in Berlin and is reflective not only of his personal experiences, but also of his academic training.

The greater part of the book focuses on the actions of the Western Ukrainian government during the Ukrainian Revolution. While Kuchabsky allots significant space to Eastern Ukrainians, he primarily deals with their relations to their western neighbours. The book opens in and focuses on Eastern Galicia as the main battleground in both the military and diplomatic contexts. This is important because of the main arguments that Kuchabsky promotes throughout his book. Ukrainian statehood, he argues, failed as a result of the Western Ukrainian leadership's poor decision-making and their insistence on trusting the Entente nations to uphold the principle of self-determination of nations. This was especially pertinent with regards to Eastern Galicia, a Ukrainian region that had been part of the Austrian Empire since 1772 and hence lay outside the former Russian Empire.

This is supplemented by the further assertion that it was the war with Poland that delivered the death-blow to Ukrainian independence. At great length, Kuchabsky discusses how the Poles demonstrated their diplomatic prowess and utilized their favoured position with the Entente to portray the Ukrainians as a non-historic nationality incapable of building a state. His portrayal of Polish and Ukrainian diplomacy towards one another and towards Entente nations is handled well. This is in stark contrast to some of his earlier discussion of nationalist sentiment in Eastern Ukraine, which is unclear and unsystematic. Notably, while the book characterizes Western Ukraine as caught between Poland and the Bolsheviks, the Bolsheviks are frequently treated only as a force that is acted against. When Kuchabsky discusses the 'rectangle of death', an area where the Ukrainians held a small pocket of territory and were surrounded by the Bolsheviks, Denikin's White Army, the Poles and the Romanians, the focus changes to their survival and he takes a more general approach. Kuchabsky also includes a series of maps of the events he describes. Reproduced in full colour from their originals, they prove invaluable and are an important addition to the book.

The volume is of far greater value as a primary source than as a piece of academic history. Kuchabsky's biases are clear throughout, and his pride in the military is obvious as he forcefully promotes the honour with which many served. He rarely denigrates the achievements of any force, instead placing blame on their leadership and the military's general disorganization. He is quick to criticize a wide variety of leaders for their inability to see beyond the immediate. Ukrainian leaders

such as Yevhen Petrushevych or Mykhailo Omelianovych-Pavlenko are commended for their character, but criticized severely for their inability to make the decisions necessary to further the struggle. He hails Aleksandr Grekov as a hero and exactly the person the Ukrainians needed, and treats his dismissal as an indictment of the lack of vision of the Western Ukrainians. Kuchabsky expresses regret at the lack of foresight on the part of the Ukrainians and presents counterfactual theories and interesting philosophies about the Ukrainian revolution, including the viability of a three-state balance of power in Eastern Europe. These passages provide an interesting glimpse into the thought processes of someone who lived through the times he describes.

This is not a book for those unfamiliar with the events to pick up in the hope of understanding Ukrainian nationalism or the conflicts in the Ukrainian region. Given that Kuchabsky attempts to tackle an extensive topic in one volume, he frequently finds himself using repetitions and shifting topics. However, scholars well acquainted with studies of Ukrainian nationalism, the postwar settlement in Eastern Europe or, to a lesser extent, the Allied Intervention and Entente politics against Bolshevism in Eastern Europe, will find this to be an intriguing and unique addition to their libraries.

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