

**Olesya Khromeychuk. *'Undetermined' Ukrainians: Post-War Narratives of the Waffen SS 'Galicia' Division*.** Nationalisms across the Globe 11. Eds. Tomasz Kamusella and Krzysztof Jaskułowski. Oxford: Peter Lang, 2013. xix, 197 pp. Foreword by David R. Marples. Illustrations. Bibliography. Index. SFR 60, paper.

In this book, Olesya Khromeychuk writes about a controversial issue with as much balance and careful judgment as the sources and historiography allow. She picks her terminology carefully. She notes in her introduction that her subject, the largest Ukrainian military unit in German service during the Second World War, has been called by various names. Those sympathetic to it call it the 1<sup>st</sup> Ukrainian Division of the Ukrainian Army or Division Halychyna, leaving out the initials SS, while those who condemn it prefer to call it SS Galizien, leaving out the Waffen before the SS (19). Khromeychuk calls it the Waffen SS "Galicia" Division. Although she weighs evidence and comes to certain conclusions about the history of the Waffen SS "Galicia," she operates under the disclaimer that her book is really about narratives, not about the construction of "another 'truth'" (15). Indeed, she is restricted in arriving at "another 'truth'" by a highly polarized historiography and the absence of crucial sources; the Division's archive was deliberately destroyed near the end of World War II (64). Throughout her book, Khromeychuk calls for more research on the unit.

Also in her introduction, she states that the narratives she investigates in the book "unfold in several contexts at once (i.e., Ukrainian nationalism, collaboration, the state-building process)" and that she will be examining each of these contexts (16). She accomplishes this task well in the remainder of the book. However, I would have liked to see the contexts broadened to include some more general European perspectives. For example, a major debate broke out in Germany in 1986, the so-called *Historikerstreit*, which touched on issues relevant to the Waffen SS "Galicia" Division. In particular, the sociologist Jürgen Habermas criticized the historian Andreas Hillgruber for identifying with the German soldiers who were trying to save the German population from the ravages of the Red Army after the eastern front collapsed. Habermas linked halting the advance of Soviet forces to the continuation of the activities of German death camps. Indeed, in the period since the establishment of "Galicia" in spring 1943 to fight on the eastern front until it surrendered to the Americans in May 1945, the Germans were able to destroy the Jewish population of Hungary and level Warsaw, as well as complete the liquidation of Galician Jews and commit many other crimes. Just in the first four months of 1945, about three hundred thousand inmates of German concentration camps (as distinct from death camps) perished. The

questions raised by Habermas and others in the *Historikerstreit* have yet to be integrated into the debates about the Division.

Chapter 1 is a very useful outline of efforts by Ukrainian nationalists to establish their own armed force, efforts which eventually culminated in the establishment of the Division as well as of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA). One could have added more, however. In mid-January 1942, some Ukrainian leaders, including Metropolitan Andrei Sheptyts'kyi and the head of one of the factions of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN), Andrii Mel'nyk, sent a letter of protest to Hitler; among their complaints was that the Germans had failed to establish a Ukrainian military unit to fight the Bolsheviks. Also, both factions of OUN, in order to militarize their movement, co-operated in the establishment of police forces in German service throughout Ukraine in the summer of 1941, and the Bandera faction was very successful in infiltrating the police forces in Galicia and Volhynia. (These forces later became a major component of UPA.)

Chapter 2 concerns war crimes and their investigation. Khromeychuk discards previously discredited claims, such as that the Division was involved with death camps or the suppression of the Warsaw Uprising. On the massacre at Huta Pieniacka she concludes that a police force loosely attached to and later integrated into the Division murdered the village's inhabitants. On the massacres in villages in Slovakia she comes to no firm conclusion but does note that the Ukrainian unit worked closely there with the notorious Dirlewanger Brigade (also a Waffen SS division). Like a number of other investigators, she finds that there is insufficient evidence to link the unit as such to concrete atrocities but argues that police and punitive units as well as individuals who did perpetrate war crimes were subsequently incorporated into the Division. She also offers a critical discussion of the Deschênes Commission (68-77), which did not consider all the factors brought to its attention and may have reached its conclusions with an eye to the vocal Ukrainian community in Canada.

Chapters 3 and 4 concern the postwar fate of the members of the Division: the threat of Soviet repatriation, the superficial screening of the unit by the British, and the migration to Canada. These chapters are particularly interesting from the perspective of the formulation of narratives, and Khromeychuk does an excellent job of teasing out the spins that the relevant parties put on the Division's story.

Chapter 5 concerns the views on the Division and on World War II more generally in contemporary Ukraine. In her view, the various governments in Ukraine have done a poor job of dealing with a contested past. "... Instead of encouraging an open and critical approach to the collective national memory, successive Ukrainian governments replace one set of interpretations with another, leaving no room for a neutral discussion of Ukraine's controversial

historical pages and thereby complicating further the unresolved conflicts with regard to the national past and the Ukrainian identity” (166).

In her short conclusions, Khromeychuk argues for the need to contextualize the Division's past. She looks at history as something too complex to be boiled down to simplified causalities. The Division has to be understood within the various contexts in which it emerged and functioned.

In sum, here and there the book might have been improved by expansion, but overall Khromeychuk dances brilliantly in a minefield.

John-Paul Himka  
*University of Alberta*

