

Wolfram Dornik et al. *The Emergence of Ukraine: Self-Determination, Occupation, and War in Ukraine, 1917-1922*. Translated by Gus Fagan, CIUS P, 2015. xxx, 442 pp. Maps. Illustrations. Appendix (including Sources). Index. \$39.95, paper.

This book is a slightly shortened translation of a German-language work that was produced as part of an Austrian project (initiated in 2009). The objective of the original book (*Die Ukraine: Zwischen Selbstbestimmung und Fremdherrschaft 1917-1922* [*Ukraine: Between Self-Determination and Foreign Rule 1917-1922*], published in 2011) and the one under review is to reconceptualize what is understood by the term “Russian Civil War.” Here, this type of reconceptualization ends up having a secondary role. Designations of this sort are made on the basis of one’s perspective on certain events. In this case, the Austrian perspective dominates, but not completely. In the end, the book’s multiple perspectives make it interesting.

When it comes to the facts, however, the authors, importantly, take an unbiased analytic look at the situation in lands where, according to some interpretations, the “Ukrainian Revolution” took place (fortunately, this term is not used by the authors). Although the latter part of the book includes contributions on later historical developments, the main topic (and asset) of the book is a thorough study of the Ukrainian situation in 1918. The study has been undertaken using mainly Austrian archival documents, which show the approach of the lesser partner in the German/Austrian intrusion into Ukraine. Peter Lieb and Wolfram Dornik document perfectly how both the Austrian and the German “Eastern policies” during World War I were unsystematic and really did not take into account all that could be expected after the spontaneous successes of the 1917 revolutions. The extensive use of first-hand reports is by far the most impressive aspect of the authors’ investigations (and the project overall). In earlier years, there was general dissatisfaction about historiography’s treatment of the Ukrainian People’s Republic (UNR) and Pavlo Skoropads’kyi’s government as Kyiv-centred phenomena; in more recent years, this centrist approach has been countered by regional studies introducing more diversified analyses. From the Austrian military perspective, which was absent until now in scholarship, Kyiv is a distant factor: since the Austrians were operating in the south, far from Kyiv, their reports present a different picture. It is not so much the topic of “Ukrainization” that dominates the narrative of the book but, rather, the social question—that is, peasant revolts in many villages (not only by supporters of Nestor Makhno) and the reactions of the invaders (which included the killing of prisoners). At the same time, we have numerous examples of co-operation between the soldiers and different types of local inhabitants, which contradicts the Communist picture of exclusively

“imperialist” behaviour on the part of foreign-army invaders. Very well documented in the book, as well, is the complete failure of the economic-exploitation plans that the Central Powers had nurtured.

Georgiy Kasianov’s essay also serves to demythologize this period. He shows how the UNR was in an absolutely chaotic state. It had no support after Skoropads'kyi’s escape, and neither did any of the other parties or the side-switching otamans, the latter of whom made themselves known to the peasants mainly by stealing their agricultural products or killing them. Thus, revolts were not so much politically motivated but were, simply, self-defence efforts undertaken for the purpose of surviving the “storm.”

Vasyl Rasevych introduces the Galician perspective. He documents the Galicians’ loyalty to the Habsburgs, the mutual contempt between western and eastern Ukrainians, and the Entente factor—that is, the countries of the Entente were unfamiliar with Ukrainians and open to the suggestion that Ukrainians were a “German invention”—and with this he clearly shows how the chances for closer co-operation were slim. The author seems a little anxious about creating controversy: he does not mention that the Polish National Democrats did a great deal to make the Ruthenians look pro-German. Nor does he clearly show how Galician soldiers even preferred to go over to Anton Denikin’s side or later to side with the Reds, in 1919-20, rather than to stay with the UNR army. Rasevych, in his second essay, is much more outspoken: life under the 1918 occupation in the east is shown matter-of-factly and with the additional interesting aspect of Skoropads'kyi’s aversion to “ukrainizing” Austrian soldiers in his Hetmanate. The Russian historian Alexei Miller sheds light on a previously unknown aspect of tsarist policy: he documents that separate Austrian and German POW camps for Ukrainians were known to the Russians and that in late 1916, the tsarist government made cautious plans to recognize Ukrainian political ambitions. These plans were soon shattered by the February Revolution. Bogdan Musial’s essay on the Bolsheviks’ policy toward Ukraine clearly shows that their autonomy proposals were a sham. However, his text on Poland is a bit too friendly: the Lviv pogrom of November 1918 was perpetrated by Polish soldiers—the pogrom is mentioned but its perpetrators are not; and the neutrality declaration made by Jewish leaders is ignored. Furthermore, Józef Piłsudski’s “pseudo-federalism” and the continual activities of pro-UNR Ukrainians in interwar Poland are not discussed. Apart from this, other essays in the book mention only in passing the pogroms in post-Russian Ukraine, which were committed by all sides and which badly tarnished Ukraine’s image.

One of the best passages in the book is the text on Allied “strategies”; this material is a compilation of various articles from the German edition. It was a good idea to gather together these articles: now one can see the

divergences, mutual jealousies, and colonial and imperial objectives that dominated the thoughts of Entente politicians and the military.

The title of the book is a bit of a misnomer. This is not a book about an “emerging” Ukraine. Its contents are much more reminiscent of the plot of an ancient Greek tragedy: one can clearly see how the incompatible efforts to shape a future dwindled when confronted with very different social, economic, and imperial objectives. The foreign perspectives in the book are the dominant ones: we learn about Germans, Austrians, Russians, Bolsheviks, Poles, and the Entente and their activities and thoughts in and on Ukraine. National-minded Ukrainians of various political affiliations do not appear as independent actors; to a large degree, they react to the situations imposed on them by the outside world. However, such insight is also valuable.

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Works Cited

Dornik, Wolfram, et al. *Die Ukraine: Zwischen Selbstbestimmung und Fremdherrschaft 1917-1922* [*Ukraine: Between Self-Determination and Foreign Rule 1917-1922*]. Leykam Buchverlag, 2011. Veröffentlichungen des Ludwig Boltzmann-Instituts für Kriegsfolgen-Forschung [Publications of the Ludwig Boltzmann Institute for Warfare Research] 13, edited by Stefan Karner.