

**Tim Judah.** *In Wartime: Stories from Ukraine.* Penguin Books, 2016. xxx, 258 pp. Illustrations. Maps. Sources. \$21.99, paper.

**T**im Judah's book is different from many of the books reviewed in this journal. It is not a scholarly work but rather a first-hand report by a journalist, who tells the story of his time in Ukraine during the Maidan Revolution (2013-14) and during the war in eastern Ukraine that followed. The book focuses, as the title implies, on the reflections of Ukrainians themselves—reflections that have been derived from the many interviews that Judah carried out as he travelled around the country. As the author himself puts it, he wrote the book because “between journalism and academic books there was not much which explained Ukraine, that made it a vibrant place full of people who have something to say and to tell us” (xix). Although the book lacks traditional footnotes, it does have the section entitled “Sources” (see 247-53), which details some of the materials used in various chapters. And the work is enlivened by dozens of photos and maps.

The book is structured as a journey, both through time and through the various regions of Ukraine. An initial section, “Memory Wars” (1-36), introduces the theme of the use and misuse of history in present-day Ukraine. It addresses the ways in which historical figures, like Joseph Stalin and Stepan Bandera, and events, like World War II and the Holodomor of the 1930s, are remembered. In the sections that follow, the focus shifts to various Ukrainian regions: “Western Approaches” (Galicia [37-76]); “Fraying Edge” (Bessarabia [77-122]); “Eastern Approaches” (Donbas and the Crimea [123-58]); and “War Zone” (the combat zone around Donetsk and Luhansk [159-214]). Finally, in a section called “Escaping the Past” (215-44), Judah asks if the disparate views of history can be brought together in order to help unify present-day Ukraine.

The strength of this work is Judah's ability to convey the visceral experience of the sometimes-confusing world that he encountered—its sights, sounds, and smells. The “Introduction” (xiv-xxx) opens with a picture of a dead Ukrainian soldier, flung from his vehicle in a missile explosion and hanging draped over a power line (xiv-xv). From there, the reader is pulled headlong from one vivid experience to another. For example, Judah visits Lviv's Lonts'koho Street jail (see “The History Prison” [61-67]), where Ukrainian nationalists were held by Poland, Nazi Germany, and the Soviet Union; but in Lviv, he notes, there were also Ukrainians (for example, “[t]he Ukrainian mob”) who helped in the killings of Jews during World War II (63-64). Judah takes us to the illegal coal mines in the Donetsk region, where the bodies of miners who were killed in accidents are simply dumped somewhere (126). He leads us through the headquarters of the Azov

Battalion in Mariupol and of the government of the Donetsk People's Republic. Such striking vignettes help make the book a compelling read.

A particular strength of the book is its ability to link history to current events, as it does by comparing present-day Russian incursions into the Crimea and the Donbas to past Russian and Soviet expansion into other parts of Ukraine. In Bessarabia, for example, which was occupied by Romania during the interwar period, Soviet Russia helped organize a number of small revolts, including the formation of a short-lived "Moldovan People's Republic," which was proclaimed in the town of Tatarbunary in 1924. (Its leader adopted the nom de guerre *Nenin*, a name strikingly similar that of the Soviet leader of the time.) Judah quotes a 1927 book, saying that Bessarabia was

... honey combed with revolutionary organizations financed and directed from Soviet Russia. These exploited the post-war economic and political difficulties of the country, the mistakes of the new regime, all forms of discontent, intensified by financial stagnation and the drought; and indiscreet or corrupt Roumanian officials played into their hands. (90; ellipsis in original)

In short, it seems clear that the Moldovan "Republic" was created in much the same way as the so-called Donetsk People's Republic and Luhansk People's Republic ninety years later. And similarly, when the situation allowed the Kremlin to use military power directly, borders could suddenly shift—as happened in the Crimea in 2014 and also in western Ukraine in 1939. Judah believes that such historical precedents provide a "playbook" for the Putin government in the current Ukrainian conflict.

However, Judah always brings the focus back from historical trends and geopolitical considerations to the lives of the people on the ground who have been deeply affected by the conflict in Ukraine. For example, he profiles the Iemchenko (Yemchenko) family, the members of which were forced out of Donetsk for their pro-Ukrainian sympathies (188-94). He introduces us to Olena Maksymenko and Anna Iureva, two women who write passionate poetry about the Ukrainian war—but who stand on opposite sides of the conflict in the east (210-14). Again and again, Judah is able to show us that the stories of the people of Ukraine may well tell the world more about the tangled situation in that country than the statements of political leaders, scholarly analysts, and media pundits.

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