

Andriy Zayarnyuk. *Framing the Ukrainian Peasantry in Habsburg Galicia 1846–1914*. Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, 2013. xxxii, 448 pp. Maps. Appendices. Bibliography. Index. \$34.95, paper.

This is an important book, which breaks new ground in the study of the Ukrainian nationalist movement in the Habsburg Monarchy, its impact on the Ruthene or Ukrainian-speaking peasantry of that province, and the degree to which the peasantry's own agency shaped national consciousness. It is also, however, very much a recycled doctoral dissertation, whose defects advertise the extent to which most PhD theses require editing before publication. In Andriy Zayarnyuk's case this obviously did not happen, and although he must bear principal responsibility, his publishers really should have been firmer with him. The result is a book that, while perfectly literate and in fact quite absorbing, is a very hard slog indeed.

Zayarnyuk's research is awe-inspiring, and demonstrates a forensic familiarity with largely primary sources. This is also an exercise in micro-history, in that the focus is on the region around Sambir, in south-central Galicia, and on individuals such as Ivan Mikhas (1864–1908), who were among the first authentic peasant voices in this period. But the book is about a hundred pages longer than it should be, since the author cannot resist telling us all he knows about the subject, which nearly buries the valuable substantive points being made. Typical is the first chapter, on the 1846 revolt in Galicia, and the role, or rather non-role, of the Ruthene peasantry in that episode. An innately fascinating story gets so overwhelmed by tedious narration of who said what to whom that the wood can scarcely be seen for the trees. The introduction is overloaded with theoretical jargon about "discourse" and "enframing," but succeeds in making clear the agenda of explaining how Ruthenian peasants "became national," and how their notions of both nation and class were literally constructed in this period.

Chapter 2, on "Languages of Emancipation," shows that not only were the foundations of a Ruthenian national consciousness laid well before the 1840s, but that the emerging Ruthenian national movement owed a great deal to enlightened absolutism, which started a system of universal education and "introduced peasants to the idea of state authority" (51). This meant that, in 1848, there was a small Ruthenian educated elite willing to speak up on behalf of the nation; but one of Zayarnyuk's more interesting findings is that Ruthenian peasants did not see it that way, being instinctively mistrustful of the Supreme Ruthenian Council founded at Lviv (Lemberg) in May. As a result, a division opened up between the nascent, but largely urban, nationalist movement, whose programme centred on

political autonomy, and the peasantry, whose main concern was with the abolition of *robot* and unfettered access to common land. It appears to have taken another generation for this divergence of aims to be resolved. Chapter 3, on "The Politics of Property," is largely concerned with the fall-out from peasant emancipation in 1848. One of the strengths of the book is the evidence it presents for concluding that Ruthenian peasants' real obsession was not with land ownership but with their customary terms of tenure. In the commutation of peasant servitudes which ensued, it transpired that there was serious resistance to the idea of commodification of land, something which the liberal urban elite considered eminently desirable. Among the factors that established a peasant national consciousness were the spread of reading clubs, which fostered literacy and with it political and cultural awareness; and the temperance movement, the success of which was rooted in its appeal to peasants' self-interest.

Chapter 4, on "The Politics of Paternalist Populism," is in many respects the most interesting section of the book because it suggests parallels with other peasant societies such as Serbia. The 1860s in particular, which saw the establishment of constitutional government across the Habsburg Monarchy, permitted the emergence of political parties, and the group initially claiming to speak on behalf of the Ruthenian peasantry was the St. George's Party, largely led by Greek Catholic clerics. As with the Vojvodina Serbs, however, it soon became obvious that Ruthenian peasants did not readily accept the guidance of the clergy; and the St. George's Party also found itself at odds with the educative agenda of Prosvita (literally "enlightenment"), the first Ruthenian literary society founded in 1868. Through the new reading clubs, battle was joined between paternalists and Prosvita, with the Russophile Kachkovs'kyi Society playing a secondary role in reaching out to the peasants. By the 1870s and 1880s, a first generation of educated peasant activists like Mikhas was finally emerging. These peasant activists are examined collectively in chapter 5, "Correspondents"; unfortunately, this, the longest chapter in the book (82 pages), is absurdly detailed, making it difficult for the reader to register the significance of it all. What emerges, foggily, is that peasant populism, embodied by the Radical Party, was a vehicle for both socialism and nationalism. Activists like Mikhas, whose career is examined in chapter 6, "A Peasant's Voice," tended to be anticlerical, ardent advocates of literacy and temperance, supporters of the co-operative movement, nationalist, and not so subtly racist and anti-Semitic. They were also conscious of the similarities between themselves and organizations like the Serbian Radical Party. By the early twentieth century, as chapter 7, "Sustaining the Nation's Body," makes clear, Ruthenian peasant nationalism had come of age, even if, as was the case across the Monarchy, it is also obvious that not every Ruthene was

a signed-up nationalist. Ruthenian peasants were culturally aware, politically engaged (especially after the implementation of universal male suffrage in 1907), and thanks to railways increasingly integrated economically into the global market. They were also influenced by developments elsewhere in the Monarchy, for instance, the Christian Social movement, and race-based explanations of the Ukrainian national character as “steppe half-breeds” (349–50).

In short, this book is a frustrating, if ultimately rewarding, read. It is full of interest, but also so crammed with detail as to risk stifling that interest, and inducing a rebellious, “who cares” attitude in even the most conscientious reader. If history is to survive as a “story” that people both want and need to study, then surely its cause is only imperfectly served by such a self-defeatingly soporific read.

Ian D. Armour
MacEwan University