

In his Idea of Galicia, Larry Wolff, brilliantly and with vast erudition, explains how a place called Galicia was made; in his Kriegserfahrungen in einer multiethnischen Stadt, Christoph Mick, mainly through the prism of its former provincial capital, Lemberg (also known as Lwów, Lviv, or Lvov) tells us, in exhaustively-researched detail and a methodologically sophisticated manner, how it was unmade. Galicia’s making began with the late-eighteenth-century partition of Poland and coincided with an Enlightenment promise of rationality and progress through imperial modernity; its unmaking was completed during the mid-twentieth-century division of Europe and coincided with the continent’s modern dark ages of nationalism, authoritarianism, ethnic cleansing, genocide and total war. The academic rediscovery of Galicia’s history, as exemplified by the two books under review, became possible with the late-twentieth-century end of the long Cold War peace that had sealed Galicia’s abrupt disappearance from maps of state administration and national ambitions. No longer on the map, Galicia has always retained some place in memory, where it has featured as a site of Habsburg nostalgia, Jewish, Polish and Ukrainian identity, real and ascribed backwardness, a theatre of horrors, a historical ghost, a piece of an idealised Central Europe at its most Rothian and an intrusion of an orientalised Asia.

The first important point established by Larry Wolff’s book is that it was not only Galicia’s memory that was highly constructed, but also its very existence and history. Galicia was artificial not merely in retrospect, but from the beginning. At the same time, this made it no less real. Referencing Benedict Anderson and Edward Said, Wolff shows how the creation of an administrative entity out of Habsburg dynastic expansionism and modernising organisational needs (emphatically not local or national traditions) preceded and caused the emergence of a genuine, if contradictory and contested, provincial identity. He then traces its history over nearly two centuries. While Wolff’s book is clearly cultural (in fact, preponderantly high-cultural) history, this was a culture in constant and essential interaction with imperial domination and nationalist challenge. In that sense, it was, indeed ‘political’, as the subtitle indicates. Wolff carefully and thoroughly reconstructs several cases of these entangled relationships.

The initial Habsburg invention of Galicia could not have taken place (or, at least, not in the shape it did) without the particular civilising-mission can-do rationalism of the Josephinian variant of the Enlightenment. The comedies of one of Galicia’s (and Poland’s) most famous nineteenth-century writers and the post-Napoleonic strategies of Metternich shared a reliance on the Galicians’ lack of national character and malleability. The orientalising self-fashioning of Leopold von Sacher-Masoch was linked to the emergence of Ruthenian (later, Ukrainian) national culture, replacing the Habsburg-Polish (elite) relationship with an unstable triangle of Habsburg, Polish, and Ruthenian/Ukrainian projects. Violence had meaning—and a sinister as well as an imperial one. For Sacher-Masoch and Metternich, Galician peasants massacring Polish nobles,

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who were rebelling against Habsburg rule in 1846, were proving themselves loyal to the Habsburgs and immune to Polish identity. Even Galicia’s natural history, flora and fauna, was new and, in its all-important frame of reference, anything but natural.

Wolff’s often brilliant deconstruction of certain ideas of Galicia is an excellent antidote not only to various national mythologies. It is also fundamentally anti-sentimental and anti-nostalgic. Wolff makes it clear that Galicia was not a multi-cultural utopia avant le mot. More specifically, and more originally and incisively, he insists that Galicia was not viable even on its own terms. Wolff’s book can also be read as the history of an imagined community project which failed; in fact, of two such projects and two such failures, one nested within the other—the Habsburg Empire and its Galicia. Imagined as an ‘arena of competing ethnographic forces’, representing progress, backwardness, and their struggle, Galicia was built on tensions that could not be reconciled, ‘because the ideology of the empire in Galicia depended upon the political and cultural anxieties about civilisation at risk and barbarism at bay’. Wolff’s Galícia, put differently, may eventually have been murdered by nationalists and twentieth-century authoritarians from left and right, but it could not have survived its own contradictions even without them. In this regard, Wolff’s work makes an important, and perhaps not immediately obvious, contribution to a debate which frames the study of nations and nationalism. While his is a highly constructivist account, it can also be interpreted as, in fact, showing the limits of construction. Here is one nation that, though much lamented in retrospect, could not have worked, and, as Wolff demonstrates, it was not simply crushed by outside forces. What emerged in its stead was a landscape not only of authoritarianism, mass violence and high modernism, but also of, in Timothy Snyder’s apt prefix, re-constructed nations.

Wolff’s story is also a vehicle for many highly perceptive insights, such as his analysis of Metternich’s strategy to ‘make true Galicians’ as a sort of halfway house between Polish identity and full Germanisation, the making and limits of a distinctly provincial culture, or the Polish conservative elite’s trade-off between Habsburg and emperor loyalty and positioning Galicia as a Polish national sanctuary. Sometimes Wolff’s connections between historical context and individual author seem strikingly direct. In his rich chapter on Leopold von Sacher-Masoch’s ‘Galician childhood’, Sacher-Masoch’s self-constructing is curiously little questioned. His own explanation of his deep fascination, even infatuation, with Ruthenian (Ukrainian) peasant culture seems to be taken at face value, though Wolff also notes that it was ‘encouraged’ by the ‘spirit of European Romanticism’. Likewise, some readers will be sceptical about the straightforward ‘etiology of masochism’, by which, according to Wolff, the ‘slavery, despotism, and the stroke of the master’s whip’ of Galician serfdom ‘metamorphosed’ into Sacher-Masoch’s work (p. 139).

There are some small inaccuracies, which editors should have caught but which do not affect Wolff’s argument. Thus, the famous Ruthenian (or Ukrainian) opera singer was Solomiya Krushelnytska (in Polish: Salomea Kruszenicka), not Salomea Krusceniski. More importantly, from Wolff’s sketch of Soviet Ukrainian and satellite-Polish post-war population exchange expulsions (they started before the end of the war in Europe but were implemented mostly after it; they were formally voluntary but de facto not), the reader would not see that post-war Poland expelled hundreds of thousands

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of Ukrainians to post-war Soviet Ukraine. Also hard to understand is the fact that the Polish ‘Operation Vistula’ was something else (if related) again. This did not take place at the same time as the Ukrainian expulsion of Poles. Instead, the ‘Vistula’ strategy of uprooting and scattering remaining Ukrainians inside post-war Poland was due to the fact that it came later, when the option of driving Ukrainians out and east was already closed. In quantitative terms, ‘Vistula’, in fact, affected fewer Ukrainians than the preceding expulsions to post-war Soviet Ukraine itself. In post-war Ukraine, including in post-Lwów Lviv, expellees—with their own experiences and stories of Polish injustice and violence—were a repository of nationalising bitter memory. None of this diminishes Wolff’s key point that these expulsions sealed what he aptly terms the ‘demolition’ of Galicia begun in 1939 (as opposed to its mere ‘abolition’ after the First World War). This was a genuine, German-prepared and Soviet state-imposed historic turning-point. Together with the preceding German annihilation of Galicia’s Jews in the Holocaust, the expulsions made the eradication of Galicia irreversible. Now the past was a foreign, as well as a lost, country.

Yet, having produced a tour de force of precise, detailed and often ironic deconstruction, Wolff does not apply the same sceptical rigour to what seem to be post-war Ukrainian narratives of anti-Soviet resistance and dissent. It is true that western Ukraine, with so much former eastern Galicia in it (but also lost to it), remained special inside the Soviet Union. Clearly, some initial Soviet aims—in so far as they were clear or consistent—to make the new slice of Soviet Ukraine just the same as the rest, were not realised. Yet what happened does not fit a nationalising Ukrainian account either.

The former Galicians did not prove indigestible for something as omnivorous as the Soviet Union and they did not make any decisive contribution to its demise—notwithstanding their late actions between 1988 and 1991. David against Goliath this may have been to some extent: David defeating Goliath this was not at all. If there was a place that was indigestible, it was Poland, which did include the former western Galicia. Yet the former eastern Galicia was not part of it, precisely because it was now Ukrainian and its Poles were mostly gone. This may be a point far from the centre of Wolff’s argument, but it is not minor. To think of Galicia (or what was left of it in Ukraine) as making a dent in Soviet power underestimates the ambitions and capabilities of the Soviet regime—coming to western Ukraine in its most ruthless Stalinist shape not once but twice. Such a contention also means underestimating local post-war abilities—and needs—to adapt and integrate. Where, nowadays, Ukrainian nationalists may depict only victims and heroic resisters, and some Ukrainian intellectuals may remember above all dissidents or, at least, non-conformists, what Soviet power found and made (with immense violence at first) was, unsurprisingly and unexceptionally, a society of real, adaptable human beings. Initially, there was militant anti-Soviet nationalist resistance. The point is, however, that the Soviet state defeated it. Later Western Ukraine produced a disproportionately large share of dissidents and was also the home of the persistent underground Greek Catholic Church. Yet the Soviet state also managed to repress and control all of this for decades—arguably evidence of its brute power and resilience, not its weakness.

Moreover, Stalinism had something to offer to Ukrainian ethnic nationalism. It was Stalinism that completed the ‘unification’ of territories which nationalists

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and Stalinists agreed were Ukrainian, and it expelled and transferred hundreds of thousands of Poles to make land and people coincide even better, again taking up—more effectively if, in fact, less lethally—what Ukrainian nationalists had begun with their premeditated ethnic cleansing massacres of Poles in 1943 and 1944. Later, the Soviet grip loosened at the fringe when the centre would not hold any longer. And, among the peripheries, the former capital of the former Galicia was not among the first to enter the fray. In fact, the larger historical significance of Ukraine’s national and (mostly) democratic movement, (centred then indeed on Lviv) was not about the bringing down of the Soviet Union but about the striking of the post-Soviet deal with its last generation of defecting party-state elites which made independent Ukraine as we know it now, warts and all.

Focusing on Lviv, Christoph Mick’s Kriegserfahrungen is an essential work for understanding not the unravelling but the making of Soviet rule over much of what had once been Galicia, even if most of it addresses the period before 1944, that is, before the crucial transformative interventions of Soviet rule, the expulsion of Western Ukraine’s Poles, the full collectivisation of the peasants, and the industrialisation of Lviv. Clearly, as in the case of the Soviet collapse in 1991, the Soviet conquest of Lviv in 1939, and again in 1944, was driven by a central project of authoritarian-socialist modernity and central international strategies, depending on international politics far beyond Lviv itself. Yet the local circumstances of Sovietisation were shaped by the preceding decades. They, in turn, influenced the manner in which Soviet rule was established in Lviv and in what was turned into Western Ukraine. Soviet power dealt with and fed on what it found, even while implementing, after 1944, what Mick correctly identifies as an accelerated re-run of 1930s-style Stalinist ‘socialism building’. Local reactions to Sovietisation were conditioned not only by the experiences of the Second World War, but by decades marked by what Mick identifies as the central focus of his work, ‘the connection between war, nation-making, and the brutalization of ethnic conflict’.

The book systematically traces the history of Lviv from the nineteenth century to the aftermath of the Second World War, from inter-ethnic relationships and early nationalism in a Habsburg imperial city to post-war Sovietisation and Ukrainisation in a Soviet city, in which pre-war Jews and Poles were either dead or gone. Mick focuses on the years after the beginning of the First World War, and his narrative is structured by the regime changes (Herrschaftswechseln), conquests, occupations, demographic ruptures, social changes, and—in the case of the Second World War—genocide brought to the city by the two World Wars.

Mick’s main key to this complex topic is Erfahrungsgeschichte, a ‘history of experience’, privileging the careful exploration of a multitude of constructions of reality, usually by contemporaries, be they private individuals or officials, over the search for an objective reality against which to measure these experiences and their memories. Working closely with a large array of often primary sources in several languages, Mick, in fact, makes major contributions to our factual knowledge of events, developments, policies, and conflicts and his approach, through multiple and often mutually exclusive and contradictory perceptions, does not produce arbitrariness. It is effective in coping with the fact that Lviv and its region were nationally heterogeneous. As Mick points out, national identity, often linked to religious belief, was not the only identity

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that mattered, but it mattered most. In fact, Mick’s Lviv is a case-study in why and how it came to prevail over, for instance, social status or class.

The experiences and memories of war, for Mick, are the key elements of the answer. Lwów/Lviv was a prize and battlefield of competing Polish and Ukrainian nationalisms. The single most important contribution which his work offers may be its exemplary reconstruction of the interaction of outside and local actors under conditions of national conflict and imperial wars in a borderland. He shows that, by their fighting, nested in the warfare of outside empires (Romanov, Habsburg—including Hohenzollern allies—then Nazi German, Stalinist Soviet), Polish and Ukrainian national projects also constituted, reinvigorated and radicalised themselves and each other. Thus, clearly, the First World War was crucial for the city’s twentieth-century history. It destroyed the Habsburg Empire, while Russian occupation and Habsburg reconquest drove deep wedges of mutual recrimination and distrust between Lwów’s main national groups. Yet, as Mick demonstrates in his chapter on the competition of memories and the staking out of spaces of experience in the inter-war period, it was, in fact, not the Great War that stood at the centre of the city’s memories and commemorations, but the Polish-Ukrainian fighting that had followed it. At the same time, he also brings out in fine detail how outside rule set the crucial frameworks for these local processes and their outcomes.

Both Larry Wolff’s *Idea* and Christopher Mick’s *Kriegserfahrungen* mark trail-blazing additions to our knowledge of the modern history of one of East Central Europe’s major multi-national borderland regions and cities. Both effectively substitute more complexity for simpler accounts. Where Wolff’s book supersedes national as well as nostalgic narratives of Galicia’s history, Mick’s work is the first to detail the whole process—spanning two World Wars—of the twentieth-century destruction of Lviv—and, by extension, Galicia—and does so consistently from multiple perspectives.

TARIK CYRIL AMAR
*Columbia University*

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In 1980, Klaus Gotto and Konrad Reppen produced a definitive anthology on the Catholic Church under Nazism, with revised editions in 1983 and 1990. The volume under review here is meant to affirm the place of Reppen as the ‘doyen of church historical research’ on his eighty-fifth birthday. The editors, Karl-Joseph Hummel and Michael Kissener, aspire to continue in the same vein, albeit without, they assert, the clear moralising agenda of a previous generation of scholars. They hope in no uncertain terms that their research will have more to do with ‘science’ and a clear commitment to ‘new methodological approaches’. The question remains: aside from confidently proclaiming the unveiling of the latest methodological and archival departures, does this volume mark a qualitative leap into new interpretative terrain?

There are two introductory overviews by Michael Kissener and Christoph Köster respectively, followed by nine historiographical think-pieces regarding