

Zitierhinweis

Borovyk, Mykola: Rezension über: Guido Hausmann / Iryna Jevhenivna Sklokina (eds.), The Political Cult of the Dead in Ukraine. Traditions and Dimensions from the First World War to Today, Göttingen: V&R unipress, 2021, in: Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas / jgo.e-reviews, JGO 70 (2022), 3-4, S. 622-625, <https://recensio-stag.lorax.syslab.com/r/a3e149e7da624823b24ac9f150bb8727>



Franz Steiner Verlag

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populär war das Genre in den 1920er und 1930er Jahren, und entsprechend populär wurde es aber wiederum mit den 1940er Jahren und der Mobilisierung von Gefühlen jeglicher Art im Namen des Krieges.

Insgesamt hat Anna Toropova eine kurzweilige und informative Geschichte der Gefühle im stalinistischen Kino vorgelegt. Auch wenn der psychoanalytisch inspirierte Zugang nicht an jeder Stelle überzeugen konnte, so sind die Erkenntnisse dieses Buches, ob nun über Psychoanalyse vermittelt oder nicht, durchaus lesens- und bedenkenswert. Die getroffene Filmauswahl ist herausragend, sie beschränkt sich keineswegs auf die Klassiker und wartet daher immer wieder mit überraschenden Einsichten und Beispielen auf. Und zu guter Letzt macht das Buch Lust auf das stalinistische Kino, was zumal in diesen Zeiten, eine Leistung der ganz eigenen Art ist.

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JGO 70, 2022/3–4, 622–625

The Political Cult of the Dead in Ukraine. Traditions and Dimensions from the First World War to Today

Ed. by Guido Hausmann and Iryna Sklokina. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2021. 302 S., 67 Abb. = Kultur- und Sozialgeschichte Osteuropas – Cultural and Social History of Eastern Europe, 14. ISBN: 978-3-8471-1383-6.

The book under review is a collection of research papers compiled from the proceedings of an academic conference held in Munich in 2015. Methodologically, this book is an attempt to apply the concept of the “political cult of the dead” to Ukrainian material. Proposed by Reinhart Koselleck and George Mosse, this concept focuses on the political instrumentalization of massive military losses in the modern era through their presentation as holy sacrifices in the name of the nation. This kind of deconstruction – and, thus, desacralization of the cult – has become an organic part of a new way of dealing with the past, which, according to Aleida Assmann, is often called the “new culture of memory”. This culture is directed against nationalism and militarism. It rejects and condemns war as a means of politics, no matter the goals it pursues.

The emergence of such a mode of remembrance is generally considered the result of a reckoning with the catastrophic experience of the Second World War. However, this understanding came relatively late. This new culture of remembrance became dominant in the Western world only after the end of the Cold War. At that time, the dominance of the West in the world was so uncontested that it might well have seemed as if danger to freedom and democracy could only come from within and that war would only be a matter of choice.

For Ukraine, as well as for Eastern Europe as a whole (but not Russia), the adoption of this approach to the past was seen as a gateway to the democratic world. “The old demons of Europe,” which had already been expelled from the West, were to be exorcised in that way from Ukraine (Zayarnyuk, Andriy: *Historians As Enablers? Historiography, Imperialism, and the Legitimization of*

Russian Aggression, in: *East/West. Journal of Ukrainian Studies* 9 [2022], 2, pp. 191–212, here p. 199). The reviewed collection also intends to contribute to this goal.

It is noteworthy that five of the twelve chapters presented in the book in some way problematize the glorification of the Ukrainian radical nationalist movement, primarily the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) and the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA): OKSANA MYSHLOVSKA chose the “cult” of one of the OUN’s leaders, Stepan Bandera, as the focus of her critical review of memory policy in Ukraine. Myshlovska condemns the “sacralization of statehood and nationhood” in Ukraine, assessing such a policy “against the international normative regime delegitimizing war as a means of international politics, advocating accountability for past crimes and democratization of memory” (p. 271). No less critical is OLESYA KHROMEYCHUK. In her research on the memorialization of the fallen soldiers of the Waffen SS Division “Galicia”, she comes to criticize the memory laws adopted after the victory of the Euromaidan Revolution (the so-called decommunization laws). Although the legislation did not include the “Galicia” Division among the organizations whose memory had to be honored, Khromeychuk believes that it leaves “potential” (p. 192) for its glorification. She also considers the glorification of the OUN and the UPA by the “post-Maidan Ukrainian regime” no less problematic, as these organizations are “just as controversial” as the Waffen SS Division (p. 195).

The contradictory role of women in the patriarchal world of twentieth-century radical Ukrainian nationalism in the context of an ideology of personal sacrifice for the nation is the subject of OLENA PETRENKO’s study. YULIYA YURCHUK analyzes the instrumentalization and “privatization” of the memory of UPA soldiers who died in the struggle against the Soviet regime, noting the role of modern nationalist organizations and the Ukrainian Church in efforts to commemorate the largest battle between UPA units and NKVD troops, including the design of the memorial dedicated thereto.

Another interesting case of the national cult of the dead that also touches on the topic of Ukrainian radical nationalism is ANDRII LIUBARETS’s examination of the cult of the “Kruty Heroes”, young people who died in 1918 defending Kyiv – then the capital of the first Ukrainian nation-state, the Ukrainian People’s Republic – from the Bolshevik offensive. This essay also shows how the memory of the fallen became a convenient tool for various political purposes (p. 48).

The authors of all these papers analyze commemoration primarily as political acts – and they certainly were. But is this an exhaustive characterization of them? These studies contain references to grassroots initiatives to memorialize the fallen. Regrettably, these themes were not discussed in depth. What was the source of this kind of grassroots, spontaneous memorialization (as in the case of the construction of mounds in memory of fallen nationalists, for example)? The nation is often interpreted at the psychological level as a tool for overcoming the finitude of human life in a secular society. In their studies, Yurchuk and Petrenko interpret the cults they analyze as partly derived from religion. To me, it would be interesting to analyze these cults as a substitute for religion.

The slogan “Heroes do not die” is very revealing in this sense, as it became one of the main tools for comprehending the sacrifice of the “Heavenly Hundred” – the protesters who died in a confrontation with the police during the Euromaidan Revolution. This slogan appealed to the theme of immortality through belonging to the “collective body” of the nation. SERHY YEKELCHYK, in his overview of the memorialization of the Heavenly Hundred, also focuses primarily on how the “survivors and beneficiaries of the revolution” invested “its martyrs with symbolic meaning”

(p. 298). At the same time, his careful chronicling of the discussions on the memorialization of the revolution's martyrs also shows that, at least at the beginning, a spontaneous initiative from below dominated the process, even existing for some time in opposition to the efforts of political actors (p. 291). Whether this initiative was more than a political act remains the subject of further discussion.

Another important thematic block of the reviewed volume consists of papers analyzing Soviet commemorative practices. This diversity is one of the biggest strengths of the collection. In this sense, it departs from the reduction of twentieth-century Ukrainian history to the theme of nationalism, which is typical of Western historiography and provides rich opportunities for examining variants of the "political cult of the dead" in comparative perspective.

In particular, one of the volume's co-editors, IRYNA SKLOKINA, analyzes Soviet commemorative practices concerning the fallen of the Second World War at the local level. She focuses mainly on material from the Ukrainian SSR but also includes illustrative cases from outside the republic. Her paper shows how little official Soviet memorial policy resonated outside of certain special interest groups, such as the Soviet military and veterans of the war. KATERYNA KOBCHENKO offers an insightful analysis of the construction of images of Heroines of the Soviet Union and their remaking in independent Ukraine. The author emphasizes the persistence and proliferation of Soviet symbolic language in the Ukrainian national memorial landscape (p. 133). Similar conclusions were also reached by POLINA BARVINSKA in her analysis of the formation and transformation of the Soviet cult of fallen soldiers in the city of Odesa.

And finally, another chapter by EKATERINA MAKHOTINA and PHILIPP BÜRGER offers an overview of Soviet and current Russian commemorative practices. They believe that state attempts to form a distinct Soviet identity had very limited success. The question of why this happened, to which the authors do not offer any answer, could serve as the topic of an entire volume. It seems that the Soviet discourse of memory on the "Great Patriotic War", which has always been characterized by a certain tension between its socialist (Marxist) and nationalist (Russian) components, has never found a solution to this problem.

Elsewhere, the volume entails a productive theorizing of the complexity of the functioning of the cult of the dead within the "imperial situation" (for an overview of the results of a discussion on the problems of memory in the "imperial situation" see: From the Editors, *Memories at Peace? Reconciliation with and through the Past*, in *Ab Imperio* [2004], 4, pp. 17–20). JAGODA WIERZEJSKA's chapter on the "Cult of the Eagles" in interwar Lviv adds interesting nuances to the overall picture in this regard. Whereas, as Makhotina and Bürger show, the Soviet state tried to avoid the explicit nationalization of the memory of the Second World War and promote some version of a supranational identity (pp. 208 f.), the Polish state invested resources in an exclusivist Polish national cult. Both cases show how difficult it can be for such cults to cross (or ignore) national boundaries.

In general, the book under review offers good incentive to reflect on the impact of contemporary events on the perception of the past. One of the co-editors of this volume, GUIDO HAUSMANN, assessed in his introduction the dominant narrative underlying the politics of memory in today's Ukraine as exclusionary and offering little perspective for a peaceful future with Ukraine's neighbors, in particular Russia (p. 26). When the book was written, the proposals of its authors to rethink war as such, to abandon its glorification, and thus to view fallen soldiers as victims rather than heroes or martyrs, might indeed have looked like an attempt at modernization and an advance-

ment of Central and Western European trends. However, even at that time, discussion about the Ukrainian policy of memory only made sense because there were people who were ready to defend their country with force. Many of them died. Many more are dying today. Some of the fallen had political views with which we may not agree. Many were inspired by the cult of people such as Bandera. Politicians will inevitably instrumentalize their deaths. It is not, however, these manipulations that should be of central importance in this story, but what they died for and why. It seems to me that the very concept of the “political cult of the dead” is problematic in the sense that it implicitly erases the differences between the goals for which war is being fought and, in many cases, shifts the blame from the aggressor to the aggrieved.

War is always terrible. But not all wars are the same. Auschwitz would hardly have happened without the war (although not necessarily – the decision would have always been Hitler’s). But Auschwitz could only be stopped through war (Scholz, Stephan: *Kommentar: Erinnerungskultur in der “Zeitenwende”. Die deutsche Weltkriegserinnerung und der Ukrainekrieg* [<https://www.bpb.de/themen/europa/ukraine-analysen/nr-270/509751/kommentar-erinnerungskultur-in-der-zeitenwende-die-deutsche-weltkriegserinnerung-und-der-ukrainekrieg/>, 29.03.2023]). A general condemnation of the war as such leads, for example, to equating the deaths of Ukrainian and Russian soldiers today. Such an approach, I am convinced, is immoral and dehumanizing, as it denies a human being the ability to make a choice between good and evil. Those who made it in favour of the former and gave their lives for it deserve more than just compassion.

The cult of the military dead is not just a political act. It satisfies also the deeper psychological needs of their imagined descendants. At the same time, shaping and reshaping such cults are highly dependent on the historical situation and can lead to unexpected results. Thus, the rise in popularity of figures like Stepan Bandera surprisingly did not add to the popularity of right-wing radical groups in Ukraine, but rather served as symbols of self-sacrifice in the fight against Russian imperialism. The collective memory of nations is a dynamic process. It is to be expected that the current war will change the Ukrainian memory landscape. The book under review can be seen as another invitation to think about what the memory of the dead should look like.

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