

Zitierhinweis

Prażmowska, Anita: Rezension über: Mariusz Mazur, *The Mentality of Partisans of the Polish Anti-Communist Underground 1944–1956*, London / New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2023, in: *Zeitschrift für Ostmitteleuropa-Forschung (ZfO)*, 73 (2024), 4, S. 634-635, <https://recensio-stag.lorax.syslab.com/r/221d53fba9544e05b63177a16a40340c>



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crime (as per the Law of the IPN)“ eingestuft werden (S. 306). Im Gegensatz zu „Genozid“, „Ethnozid“ oder „Kriegsverbrechen“ gibt es für diesen Begriff außerhalb Polens aber keine rechtliche Definition.

Die Monografie schließt mit einem Überblick über die komplexe und hochpolitisierte polnisch-ukrainische Debatte über die Erinnerung an die Wolhynien-Massaker. Mit seiner englischsprachigen Ausgabe reicht das Werk nun aber über den regionalen Diskurs hinaus, der seit der Veröffentlichung der polnischen Ausgabe bereits einige Änderungen durchlebt hat. So hat das Institut für Nationales Gedenken (IPN) kürzlich beschlossen, die Untersuchung der Umsiedlungsaktionen im Rahmen der „Aktion Weichsel“ einzustellen, da es sich nicht um ein Verbrechen gegen die Menschlichkeit oder ein kommunistisches Verbrechen gehandelt habe. M. gehört zu den Verfassern eines offenen Protestbriefes gegen diese Entscheidung. Sowohl die Diskussionen als auch die Forschung zu diesem Thema sind also noch lange nicht abgeschlossen.

Von ukrainischer Seite hat insbesondere Volodymyr Vjatrovyč zu dieser Debatte beigetragen. Er bezeichnet die Ereignisse in Wolhynien im Jahr 1943 als „polnisch-ukrainischen Krieg“ und bestreitet die Existenz eines politischen Plans der UPA-Führung zur Vernichtung Polens.³ Die Tatsache, dass Vjatrovyč 2014–2019 das Ukrainische Institut für Nationales Gedächtnis geleitet hat, unterstreicht den primär politischen Charakter dieser Debatte, bei der die jeweiligen Erinnerungen bzw. nationalen Traumata der Polen und Ukrainer miteinander konkurrieren.

Die vorliegende Monografie bleibt nach wie vor die gründlichste Fachstudie zu diesen schwierigen Themen und leistet gleichzeitig einen wichtigen Beitrag zur Erforschung einer Auseinandersetzung im Rahmen des Zweiten Weltkriegs auf regionaler Ebene.

Münster

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³ Vgl. eine Gesprächsrunde mit Motyka und Vjatrovyč aus dem Jahr 2023: MAGDALENA PIGAMONTI: Wolyn 1943. Porozuminnia mozhlyve? [Volyn 1943. Ist gegenseitiges Verständnis möglich?], <https://novapolshcha.pl/article/primirennya-mozhlive-rozmova-provolin/> (15.04.2024).

Mariusz Mazur: The Mentality of Partisans of the Polish Anti-Communist Underground 1944-1956. (Routledge Histories of Central and Eastern Europe.) Routledge. London 2023. X, 345 S. ISBN 978-1-03-236163-5. (€ 148,95.)

The relatively neutral title of this book is not entirely correct because the key subject of this study is not so much the mentality but the descent from principles to sheer brutality, which by the early 1950s came to characterize the activities of anti-communist groups. But the key point made by the author is summarized on page 278 where he cites Patrick Money: “Man’s natural instinct is to throw off the moral demands imposed by society and to free himself of all inhibitions. War offers this possibility and endows the civilized being, hemmed in by laws, with extraordinary power [...] the process of regression is only a matter of time: the time necessary for the collapse of social and moral conventions.”

What Mariusz Mazur does in this book is to focus entirely on the way the post-war partisans felt about their situation, what motivated them, and what difficulties they faced in maintaining their commitment to the principle of fighting for an independent Poland once the communist regime was established. This is not a history book but a study of the psychology of groups that start with the premise that they are on a quest, but then gradually find themselves marginalized, bypassed, and finally overtaken by events. What happens to those men and what do they do next? A historian reading this book will be, in equal measures, frustrated and intrigued; frustrated because the author does not pay much attention to the historical events that defined the anti-communist opposition after the end of the war. He makes only passing references to the activities of the security services and the newly emerging state even though they are the focal point of the groups’ military activi-

ties. By 1947, state amnesties had weakened the cohesiveness of the anti-communist groups, but the author addresses the emotional consequences of state actions while ignoring their historic significance. At the same time, a historian reading this book will learn a lot about subjects that are not addressed at all in history books on that period. The reader will be informed of the ever-present problems of security and the presence of the anti-communist opposition during the period when the communists were consolidating their grip on power. The information that M. provides is focused on what the members of the underground experienced and what they thought about their objectives, personally and as a group, and finally, it outlines their demoralization, which resulted in their becoming robbing and pillaging bands. Historians who have traditionally focused on the politics of that period will benefit from a detailed study of the anti-communist opposition.

M. takes an unusual approach in focusing on the post-hostilities activities of the wartime opposition. The wartime underground resistance has been studied extensively and is the subject of Polish- and English-language publications that are too numerous to reference in this review. The post-war anti-communist resistance has been highlighted in recent years by the PiS government in Poland, which referred to them as men and women who did not give up and who in fact did not abandon the lofty principles of fighting for Poland's independence. What M. has shown by focusing on individuals' motives is that these partisans, most of whom were men, were as prone to moral bankruptcy and committing atrocities against innocent people as those against whom they were fighting. He does not engage with recent historical controversies, but the conclusions of this study are unmistakable. In the seven chapters in which he tries to understand and explain what drove those men, what their vision of the future was, and how they justified their own position and actions, the author conducts a study of post-conflict demoralization.

One might ask whether an opposition movement, which was disunited from the outset and which during the period 1945–1948 completely lost its sense of purpose, is of any value. The answer to this question is undeniably in the affirmative. The Polish wartime resistance movement was always important because of the severity of the occupation, the collapse of the main opposition groups after the Warsaw Uprising, and finally, because of the Soviet takeover of Poland. What followed was the gradual collapse of opposition groups, who, as this study shows, clung to illusory principles while descending into robbery and inertia. This is not a unique situation in Poland; in fact, this is probably the norm with all forms of post-hostility social normalization. The author has approached the subject as a psychological study, which means that the book goes beyond being a historical monograph and is clearly intended to be a study of the mentality of those who continued to defy the post-hostility normalization.

The book is based on an impressive analysis of sources (personal accounts, security service reports, and memoirs of those who defined themselves as members of the opposition) that throw light on the motives and actions of individual actors. M. is very meticulous in indicating how he has analyzed the information contained in the wide variety of sources he has used, but he also scrupulously acknowledges the limits of these sources.

For a historian this is an unusual monograph, but one that undisputedly will become a model for the study of societies in the wake of conflicts.

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