

the impulse to transcend nationalistic categories, and the author's continual return to the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth as a common point of reference for Ukrainians, Belarusians, and Poles aims to further undermine the all-Russian school of Russian and Soviet History that has characterized much Russian thinking about Ukraine since the nineteenth century. Indeed, the author's ecumenical idea of Ukraine and the Polish-Lithuanian heritage in some senses anticipates a discourse about Ukraine among Ukrainian historians that has only become more pronounced since the invasion of 2022. At the same time, though, Prymak does at various times acknowledge a boundary between Ukrainians and non-Ukrainians living in the contemporary borders of Ukraine. Crimean Tatars, for example, appear as part of "The Middle East," but the Tatar scholar Ahatanhel Krymsky, who "accepted Ukrainian national identity" figures as a Ukrainian. Meanwhile Jan Potocki appears as a Ukrainian because he owned an estate in Ukraine, even though his family played a key role in suppressing the Ukrainian *hajdamak* uprising and Potocki identified himself exclusively with Polish and French culture. By refusing to offer clear limits to his subject, Prymak creates the impression that a Ukrainian is any person whom he chooses.

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***Life and Death in Revolutionary Ukraine: Living Conditions, Violence, and Demographic Catastrophe, 1917–1923.*** By Stephen Velychenko. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2021. 314 pp. Appendix. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Illustrations. Tables. \$95.00, hard bound.  
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Stephen Velychenko's latest work falls into two genres and, for this reason, might well be divided into two distinct parts. Its first three chapters investigate—to borrow the title of Igor Narskii's study—*zhizn' v katastrofe* (life amid catastrophe, 2001). It opens with a general survey of public health in the nineteenth and early twentieth-century Russian empire, focusing on state authorities' efforts to ameliorate its subjects' living conditions. The author then explores the consequences of the war-driven degradation and subsequent collapse of the state for the daily life of denizens of the Ukrainian provinces, exposed to the metaphorical and literal decay of the dead empire. This tableau—replete with images of infrastructural collapse, uncontrolled epidemics of typhus, cholera and venereal diseases, recurrent famine, and, finally, Babylonian towers of unattended waste and excrement—is best described as Stygian. The well-documented account of the breakdown of conditions and mores serves to emphasize the centrality of material existence in analyzing political, diplomatic, and military developments of "Russia's continuum of crisis" (Peter Holquist, *Making War, Forging Revolution*, 2002).

The second part represents an exploration of violence or, more precisely, violence committed against civilians by the combatants. Chapter 4 enumerates various practices of terror under the Bolshevik government. Dealing with the Cheka, "international brigades," and others, the chapter appears to adopt an ethnic lens, interpreting Bolshevik measures as an attempt to suppress the resistance of the Ukrainians as *Ukrainians*. Entitled "Violence against Civilians: Ukrainian and Polish Government," Chapter 5 contains very little on the activities of the Poles, but discusses at length the origins and meaning of modern antisemitism. Somewhat at odds with the rest of the narrative, this demarche functions to bolster the historian's major point: namely, that ideology, including that of antisemitism, played only a secondary

role in prodding people to violence against others. A scholar's task, Velychenko reminds us, consists in giving nuances of localism, individual motives, and contingent perceptions their due weight. The book ends with a conclusion on the long-term demographic and psychological ramifications of the Civil War and a helpful appendix (a signature mark of all Velychenko's publications) with apposite primary documents translated into English.

Astounding as it is, the wealth of facts amassed by the author serves as a double-edged sword. This is particularly true for the first part about everyday life. The logical connections between examples are often vague, producing an impression of repetitiveness. The problem stems from the filter employed by the author, whereby experiences are categorized by the governments—Bolshevik or Ukrainian—where they were “registered.” This approach does not appear warranted given, as Velychenko concedes, how unstable, transitory, and tenacious control over the swaths of Ukraine's territory between 1918 and 1921 was. One begins to wonder what was specifically Bolshevik or UNR about typhus in the Kyiv province or Podilia. It would have been appropriate to let the metaphor of the horsemen of the apocalypse (employed by the author) unfold into a thematic discussion of mortality, epidemics, and mores. That, in turn, could have underpinned an elaboration of different views held and policies promoted by the contenders to address or, at times, instigate the disasters of war and revolution.

This brings us to the issue of responsibility, at the heart of the book's second part. Velychenko seems content to blame the Bolsheviks for the violence because their leaders' utterings jibed with the activities of the agents on the ground (who thus acted “in the spirit of Bolshevism”). The absence of such statements from the UNR leaders, without necessarily exculpating them, substantiates the author's intention to produce a much more complex explanation of violence. It is questionable how the administrative collapse resulting in the emergence of autonomous, violence-prone agents on all sides justifies this unequal treatment of the principal belligerents. In the context of labile, shifting loyalties reference to reified identities and clear-cut dichotomies, such as “observant Jews” and “apostates,” “Russians” and “Russified elements,” and even “Ukrainians” also seems unjustified.

An epistemological gap runs between the two parts of the book. Whereas the first part ties the degradation of living conditions to state collapse, the second seeks explicitly to reintroduce the state—or governments—in promoting patterns of violence. This is not to insist that one needs to side either with a faceless “statelessness” or with state-connected violent entrepreneurs in framing experiences of the civilians. Rather, this suggests that a bridge between political actors and their fortunes on the one hand and the overarching humanitarian collapse on the other has not yet been established. The book does not accomplish this task, but it makes important steps in this direction.

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***The Austro-Hungarian Army and the First World War.*** By Graydon A. Tunstall. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021. x, 466 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Photographs. Maps. \$34.99, paper.  
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During the First World War, Austria-Hungary faced enemies on more fronts than any of the other great powers of Europe. Graydon Tunstall argues that “Habsburg armed forces were, quite simply, incapable of conducting modern warfare” at a level needed