

REVIEWS

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Annliese Nef, *Révolutions islamiques. Émergences de l'Islam en Méditerranée (VII^e–X^e siècle)*, Rome, 2021, École française de Rome, 225 pp., bibliography, lexicon; series: Lectures méditerranéennes

Published in 2021, *Révolutions islamiques* is an academic essay by Annliese Nef, Professor of Medieval History of the Islamic Mediterranean at the Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne University. The author synthesises the most recent discoveries of the dynamic field that is Early Islamic History, and arranges them in a coherent and explicit analytical model, borrowing key concepts from Pierre Bourdieu: the early Islamicate world is foremost understood as a new social world, with an original set of categories, representations and forms, born from a cultural revolution. By focusing her attention on the western part of the Islamic world, the author also shows the specific role of al-Andalus, the Maghreb and Ifriqiya in the social and cognitive processes.

The book contains 225 pages, arranged in four chapters preceded by an introduction, a conclusion, an annotated bibliography and a lexicon. In the introduction, Annliese Nef shortly presents the recent developments in the field of early Islamic Studies, namely the detailed surveys into the birth of both Islam as a religion and of Arabic identity. As both took form after the conquests and birth of the Empire (thus being more its products than makers), the author frames her subject as the revolutionary emergence of a new social world. Chapter one details those recent re-evaluations of the early history of Islam as a religion,¹ the birth of Arabic identity, and the link

¹ As the author points out, research into the birth of Islam has been extremely lively in the past years, driven by a renewal of both methods and objects of investigation. For an account of the foundation of Islam with a focus on its social and political aspects, see Alfred-Louis de Prémare, *Les fondations de l'Islam. Entre écriture et histoire* (Paris, 2002). For studies focused on epigraphic and non-Muslim narratives, see Frédéric Imbert, 'L'Islam des pierres: l'expression de la foi dans les graffiti arabes des premiers siècles', in *Revue des mondes musulmans et de la Méditerranée*, 129 (2011), 57–78, and Robert G. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It. A Survey and Evaluation of Christian, Jewish and Zoroastrian Writings on Early Islam* (Princeton, 1997). For a collective study of the history of the Coran, see Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi and Guillaume Dye (eds), *Le Coran des historiens. I. Études sur le contexte et la genèse du texte coranique* (Paris, 2019).

between those two. The author then highlights the need for a conceptual reframing of the beginnings of the Islamic world. What drove the conquerors is qualified as a “change of the relation towards the transcendent of a small group, rather than its enthusiasm for a religion that did not yet exist”.² A radical transformation of symbolic and cognitive structures, spreading with the authority of this small group, was to initiate a revolutionary cultural shift, the product of which was a new, Islamic social world.

In chapter two, the author focuses on the role of the newly emerged vision of the world in the cohesion of the Islamic Empire. The shared ways this new social world builds and justifies distinctions between groups and spaces are explored. Choosing examples from the Western Islamic world, Annliese Nef shows how the people from the Islamic *oikoumene* had their names and origins rewritten following one or several of three sets of narratives (of the sons of Noah, from other biblical traditions, or in connection with the origin narratives of the Arabic tribes), and how cartography, drawing from the Greek and Sassanian traditions, was used to represent the simultaneous unity and diversity of the Islamic Empire. Following the insights of Burbank and Cooper,³ the author highlights the universal claim to rule the inhabited world of the Islamic Empire, concurrent with the recognition of its manifold internal diversities.

Chapter three, drawing from other historical studies using a similar conceptual framework,⁴ details the epistemological, scientific, technical and artistic changes of the Islamic cultural revolution. First, Annliese Nef presents the emergence of an original ideal of the well-learned and well-mannered Islamic man, the *adīb*, whose ethos, the *adab*, became the state culture⁵ of the Islamic Empire. The author follows up with an exploration of the genealogies, classifications and uses of knowledge, shown to recognise, reuse and reference ancient writings in entirely different contexts, thus giving them new, original meanings. A very similar point is then made concerning artistic production.

In chapter four, the author applies her analytical model to the study of one of the medieval Islamic revolutionary aftershocks, namely, the Fatimid

² Annliese Nef, *Révolutions islamiques. Émergences de l’Islam en Méditerranée (VII^e–X^e siècle)* (Rome, 2021), 49.

³ Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper, *Empires in World History: Power and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton, 2011).

⁴ This part of the argument clearly draws from the influential Johann Chapoutot, *La révolution culturelle nazie* (Paris, 2016). For an example of the use of the concept of cultural revolution in Classics, see Claudia Moatti, *La raison de Rome. Naissance de l’esprit critique à la fin de la République (II^e–I^{er} siècle avant J.-C.)* (Paris, 1997).

⁵ State culture is, once again, following Bourdieu, a culture defined not by ‘the State’, but by individuals in the sphere of power who are seen as legitimate to define both the culture of reference and what the state should be.

Empire. The Fatimid period is qualified as revolutionary despite not having produced a new social world, as it brought a renewal of the elites and a change in cultural, artistic and intellectual production. Annliese Nef underlines the early Fatimid supporters' efforts to use Islamicate signifiers to further their goals by shifting from one polysemic meaning to another, more suitable one.

In conclusion, Nef calls for a different history of the medieval Islamicate world that would not be primarily defined by its supposed oriental or conservative character. She argues against the qualification of the medieval Islamicate world as conservative by essence, recalling the fundamentally revolutionary nature of any emerging social world, as well as the fact that the conquerors did not apply a preset order determined during Muhammad's life but rather co-produced new ways of interpreting the world with conquered populations. Echoing the fourth chapter, the author vehemently opposes the customary image of medieval Islam as having ossified in a classical, Abbasid culture and reminds her readers of the many phases of re-invention and transformation of the medieval Islamicate world. Finally, she underlines the very close relation between this new social world and the imperial form, putting forth the notion of imperial revolution.

Overall, Annliese Nef's *Révolutions islamiques* is an excellent publication. Thanks to a carefully and explicitly crafted interpretative model, which draws from both Bourdieu's sociology and a wide selection of modern historical scholarship, the book is dense, clear and inspiring. The author's use of the concept of 'revolution' allows a reinterpretation of early Islamic history that considers the progressive appearance of Islam as a religion and Arabness as an identity while underlining the originality of the developing social world and the key role of its imperial character. Annliese Nef's efforts to go beyond the simple opposition of continuity and change by showing the novel and creative reuse of past discourses and practices are as important as her arguments on the reciprocal influences of regions considered central and peripheral of the Islamicate world. To conclude, *Révolutions islamiques* holds value for specialists, students and the general audience, as it combines an interesting interpretative proposal, well-crafted references to past and ongoing debates (with annotated bibliographical references), and a broader effort to deconstruct the essentialist representations of Islam and the Islamicate world which have currency in public discussion.

Jan Jelinowski

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1096-6346>

Mihai Dragnea, *Christian Identity Formation across the Elbe in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries*, New York, 2021, Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., list of abbreviations, index, 118 pp.+viii; series: Christianity and Conversion in Scandinavia and the Baltic Region, ca 800–1600, 1

The book is the first volume in a series edited by Mihai Dragnea on Christianity and the process of Christianisation in the Baltic Sea basin between 800 and 1600. Dragnea's book, true to the series title, concerns the process of the emergence of Christian identity along the Elbe in the tenth and eleventh centuries. Its topic is not so much Christianisation itself as the emergence of a particular concrete identity of the people inhabiting the region, as seen by Dragnea. This is more of an introduction to the subject, as evidenced by the book's modest length: barely 111 pages if one does not include the index.

The work consists of an introduction, six concise chapters and a conclusion. Chapters one to four discuss the protagonists of the book, the Wends; a brief history of Christianity on the Elbe; the paganism of the Wends; and various forms of the prophecy of the future among Christians. The last two chapters are detailed studies: about foretelling the future using horses by the Lusatians and about Rethra as *sedes ydolatriae*, a centre of pagan religion.

The introduction conveys the book's spirit as it presents an overview of the concept of *sacrum* and *regnum*, the ideology behind the Carolingian kingdoms and the subsequent Ottonian rule. Dragnea does not detail his methodology and inspirations in the main text or the footnotes. He declares that his focus is on the source texts while pointing out that most of the material on the Wends was intended to portray them as the Other. This meant that the Wends were placed inside a dichotomy between the Christian and outside worlds. The apostasy of Wends, who had already been baptised, was perceived negatively. The works of Adam of Bremen, Helmold of Bosau and Thietmar of Merseburg serve as the source materials the author mentions most often, though nowhere they are described as a specific corpus.

Chapter one is the only place where Dragnea discusses the protagonists of his book in more detail. Unfortunately, this is not clearly laid out, and the inattentive reader may become confused as to who the Wends were and what was their relationship with other Slavic tribes. Dragnea refers to the German division into *Germania Slavica* I and II, according to which the first zone included the Slavs living between the Elbe, the Sava and the Oder, while the second reached "from the Oder up to Poland" including Pomerania, Neumark, Silesia and part of Prussia. This description, in view of contemporary maps, is a bit unclear. In this context, by using the term 'Wend', Dragnea refers to the Western Slavs, mainly the Obotrites and Lusatians. The book itself definitely would have benefited from the inclusion of a map, which is evident

when describing the distribution of the tribes. A reader unfamiliar with the subject matter will quickly become confused as to where which people lived and what relations they had with others. The chapter features an interesting discussion of the difference between *urbs* and *civitas*, the former term referring not to a city (in any sense) but a fortification surrounded by mostly smaller settlements-villages. However, questions about other important terms such as *rex* or *dux* are missing.

Chapter two serves as a brief history of Christianity across the Elbe, although a more appropriate title would be “the history of Polabian Slavs’ relations with Christianity and Christian rulers”. Dragnea devotes much space to wars, rebellions and purely political conflicts. Likewise, chapter three, described by the author as a discussion of the pagan religion of the Wends, is, in fact, more a depiction of armed conflicts and revolts against the East Frankish rulers and the episcopate.

Chapters four and five deal with foretelling the future. In the fourth, Dragnea discusses future prophecies in Christianity, first giving a general introduction and then the account of more specific issues. One of the topics is the definition of ‘divination’ by Isidore of Seville; Dragnea rightly recognises that it was used by later authors. However, the scholar’s surprise that Gratian uses it rather than offering his original term seems a little far-fetched. It would even be strange if, in this situation, Gratian did not refer to Isidore’s acknowledged authority, given that the *Decretum* was, by definition, a collection of authorities answering specific questions. In any case, Dragnea points out that although the practice of foretelling the future was not completely unknown in Christianity, it tended to be instead on the margins, and was treated increasingly negatively. In the chapter on Wendish beliefs, Dragnea writes about divination by means of horses used by the Lusatians. When introducing this issue, he also refers to other ways of foretelling the future, including human sacrifice, in Scandinavia and Kievan Rus. Dragnea writes about divination using Thietmar’s remarks about priests who cast lots: decisions regarding the matter at hand were based on them. These lots were then covered with green grass. Priests laid crossed spears on the grass, and a horse was led between them. If both predictions were obtained by casting lots and by observing the horse were the same, the prophecy became validated.

The final chapter deals with Rethra, which was the religious centre of the Slavic Redarians. However, we learn much more about the conflicts between the Lusatians and the East Frankish state and its episcopate than about Rethra itself, a similar discrepancy as in the previous chapters. It seems Dragnea is interested the most in showing how many Slavs, also after the revolt against the Saxon rule in 983, remained Christian, and also how different were how their Christianity mixed with pagan notions. The author sees this as a syncretism of the Christian religion with ancient pagan beliefs.

The book very clearly focuses on political issues, as Dragnea sees the conflict between the Saxons and the Slavs not as a religious clash but more as a political one between two clearly not equal powers. The conflict was only later justified by using theology and religion.

The book lacks references to literature on the subject in languages other than English and German. Of course, one cannot exclude the author's deliberate adaptation of the literature to the abilities of his potential readers: the book has an introductory character, i.e. it is tailored for a university course. From this point of view, the literature should be adapted to the students' abilities and linguistic competence. However, this premise does work to the disadvantage of the book. For example, it would definitely have benefited from citing an article by Robert Kasperski.¹ It discusses an earlier period, the ninth century, but many of Kasperski's comments address the fundamental issues raised by Dragnea. Works by Aleksander Gieysztor and many others are missing. This is partly explained by somewhat lean footnotes, which clearly reveal the adherence to the Anglo-Saxon school rather than to the German 'totality'. The treatise could also benefit from further readings, or at least a comprehensive bibliography, which would include publications that do not appear in the footnotes but are helpful to readers.

Also, the very choice of literature in the footnotes is puzzling, to say the least. The note that the name 'Poland' originates from the 'Polans' tribe refers to Joachim Herrmann's 1970 book *Die Slawen in Deutschland*. However, at this point, it would be worth noting that Przemysław Urbańczyk (I do not argue whether rightly or not) questioned the existence of the Polans.

The publication of Dragnea's book should be regarded as a positive event, and it is undoubtedly an interesting opening of a new publishing series. A separate issue is the question of secondary literature in languages other than English in future research. Looking at this and many other publications, one gets the impression that it is read only by local scholars. Various groups argue that this is to the detriment of the non-English literature on the subject, but it seems to be to the greater detriment not so much to the authors from Central and Eastern Europe, as to the authors from the larger English-speaking world.

transl. Krzysztof Heymer

Antoni Grabowski

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4056-7864>

¹ Rafał Kasperski, 'Frankowie i Obodryci: tworzenie "plemion" i "królów" na słowiańskim Połabiu w IX wieku', in Zbigniew Dalewski (ed.), *Granica wschodnia cywilizacji zachodniej w średniowieczu* (Warszawa, 2014), 55–113.

Nadja Weck, *Eisenbahn und Stadtentwicklung in Zentraleuropa: am Beispiel der Stadt Lemberg (Lwów, L'viv)*, Wiesbaden, 2020, Harrasowitz Verlag, 352 pp., tables, ills, maps, indexes of personal and geographical names, English sum.; series: Studien zur Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte Ostmitteleuropas, 29

The subject of nineteenth-century steam railways has shifted into the field of cultural history, as have so many others formerly dominated by the historical economic approach. One of the first historians to contribute to this reorientation was Wolfgang Schivelbusch, whose ground-breaking works include *The Railway Journey: The Industrialization of Time and Space in the 19th Century* (2014). The author of the book under review here (originally a university dissertation), *Eisenbahn und Stadtentwicklung in Zentraleuropa am Beispiel der Stadt Lemberg (Lwów, L'viv)*, Nadja Weck, a researcher from the Institut für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung at the University of Vienna, has followed in his footsteps. She aimed to analyse the impact of the railways on the capital of Austrian Galicia in the nineteenth century (before the First World War), but the result is more akin to an analysis of the physical and imaginary space, related – often loosely – to the railways. Moreover, she is not alone even in Lviv: the same year (2020) saw the appearance of a book on the history of the city's central railway station by Andriy Zayarnyuk (*Lviv's Uncertain Destination: A City and Its Train Terminal from Franz Joseph I to Brezhnev*); for chronological reasons, this work is not covered in Weck's literature review. To be sure, space has long been a subject of research by cultural historians, and one work that did much to trigger interest in it was Henri Lefebvre's seminal book *La production de l'espace* (1974). Not surprisingly, it was this book that Weck chose as the starting point for her thoughts and instrument with which to navigate the vastness of her topic, the space of the railways. This she conceptualises in three ways: as a perceived, conceived, and lived space, also after Lefebvre's model. Therefore, the main research questions are how the planners imagined the space related to the railways, how it was executed (or produced, to follow the French author), how it was perceived, and what role it played in people's lives. This was an ambitious undertaking, which proved hard to achieve, as we shall see below.

The book is divided into three parts. The first, 'Lemberg als Verkehrsknotenpunkt', deals with the plans for the construction of railway lines in Galicia, and what they could mean for the country, and hence here it was the Austrian decision-makers whose role was foregrounded (the state managed railroads even after the dawn of the autonomous era in 1867). The second, 'Die Eisenbahn verändert die Stadt', is about the decisions that affected the space within the boundaries of the Galician capital, Lviv: the location of stations, the impact of the railway on its municipal districts, and the economic situation

of the city. The third section, 'Grenzraum in der Stadt: Der Lemberger Hauptbahnhof', is devoted to individual sites, specifically the railway stations (chiefly the main station), their appearance, perceptions of them, and how they functioned in society, as well as how they as spaces were conceptualised in belles lettres. The focus gradually narrows: at first, the reader sees the region as a whole and ponders broad economic and strategic issues, then attention is turned to selected districts of the city and long-term changes in their space, and finally, the scale is reduced to that of the individual building, and observation of everyday life inside a single railway station. This fine-tuning may seduce the reader, but as a strategy, it also has a disadvantage: it renders the book somewhat incoherent.

Chapter one is based on a handful of written sources and maps, which are highly relevant to the subject and will undoubtedly be valuable for further scholarship. The documents written in 1836 by Franz Riepl, an Austrian railway pioneer, are analysed, with the conclusion that economic factors were of greatest importance at this early stage of the development of the railways. Riepl, a geologist and propagator of new iron-ore mines, was also interested in this new means of communication. He travelled to Great Britain to study, among others, the building of railways and developed a plan to link the major towns and cities and main industrial regions of the Austrian part of the monarchy by rail, his main aims being to connect cities with mines, boost trade, and transport the Galician grain output to the core Austrian lands. In a word, the railways had the potential to be an important instrument of state policy. At this point in the work, the author introduces the notion of the periodisation of the railway age in Austria. The era dawned around 1824, with the first paper projects by private entrepreneurs and visionaries (the 'first private period'), while Riepl's plans marked the beginning of the 'first state period' (ca 1841). The next documents cited, which date from 1839, were produced by two Galician aristocrats: Leon Sapieha, a politician and economic thinker, and Aleksander Fredro, a successful playwright with political ambitions. They conceived a plan to build a railway line without requiring extensive assistance from Vienna. The idea was to restore the region to its previous status as a commercial hub (as in the early modern period). This project had pre-positivist and emancipating undertones, as Weck highlights.

Here, the leitmotif of conceived space gives way to that of material space: the narration now switches to the execution of the plans. Sapieha's idea of forming a private consortium to see the project through fell on deaf ears, especially in Vienna, where almost no venture capitalists expressed any interest in the peripheral backwater that was Galicia. The central plan for railway lines, prepared in Vienna by Franz Bretschneider and coordinated in the *Hofkammer* by Karl Friedrich Kübeck, concentrated to a greater extent on the core parts of the monarchy and left Galicia with just a single link, to Cracow (intended to supersede the link between Cracow and Upper Silesia

and Warsaw). The point of departure is even more centralised here: the state's needs do not always overlap with those of its provinces, and the railways need not necessarily boost industry everywhere. Moreover, the railways were an exclusive state affair, so there was no place for private entrepreneurs as initiators in this vision. The new state period, by contrast, saw the involvement of new state actors. This only began in the mid-1850s, when the military authorities became interested in the business, the main factor here being the Crimean War. Railways, which during the second half of the nineteenth century were planned in compliance with the army's needs (see my article in *APH* 114/2016), were initially a commercial venture, which should not be forgotten. And how did the state fulfil its self-appointed task? Although plans to build a line to Lviv were voiced, by 1856, only the short, direct line to Cracow had been completed, which speaks for itself. Interestingly, Weck maintains (p. 65) that concerns about centrifugal forces in the provinces being strengthened by regional railways were responsible for the slow pace of development of the Austrian railways.

The realisation of this fact changed the situation. In around 1854, 'the second private period' began, and venture capitalists were again encouraged to form consortia to develop railways, and this development facilitated the building of local lines in Galicia. A pile of concessions was now granted, for as long as ninety years and with state-guaranteed profits, which helped to transform Lviv into a railway hub, with five lines 'radiating' from it. Most important was its link to Cracow, constructed by a company established by Sapieha and named after the emperor's brother, Karl Ludwig: in 1861, the city's residents saw the first locomotives. Then came a connection to the capital of Bukovina, Czernowitz (and then further to Iași in Moldavia), constructed by another company in 1866, with the aim of 'channelling' trade with Turkey, at the expense of Odessa. Among the remaining lines was the easternmost one, to Brody, a commercial hub traditionally favoured by the Viennese authorities. Austria took great pains to obtain a Russian agreement to have the line (completed in 1871) continued on the Russian side of the border. However, this was a rare situation; most stretches of the line that led to the state border ended there. The author notes that railway crossings with Russia tended to be located in the east of Galicia; no connections with the Kingdom of Poland were executed, except for the Cracow one, which was begun before the city fell into Austrian hands. A line to Tomaszów, planned in 1874, did not succeed because of the economic crisis.

The lived space is represented by the descriptions of railway lines in Galicia in three texts. That of the Kaiser Ferdinand line (Vienna–Cracow) in an 1885 railway guide by Hugo Warmholtz was intended as an overture for the issue of legitimisation in Galicia. Julius Jandaurek's 1884 text for the famous series 'Die Länder Österreich-Ungarns im Wort und Bild' offered a markedly positive view of the region and profiled its ethnic types. The modern tourist guide by

Mieczysław Orłowicz and Roman Kordys from 1914 was more detailed and portrayed a *Kronland* that had transformed itself from the unruly, dirty backwater of the letters of Franz Kratter from the late eighteenth century (also mentioned in the book) to a fascinating if still somewhat oriental tourist destination. What can be drawn from such a comparison? I believe not much. The texts were written for different purposes and/or at different times, so it is risky to use them to draw broader conclusions about how Galicia and its capital changed. Obviously, the railway itself had become more prosaic for the authors of the last text, and the larger number of more local lines made it possible to travel to more interesting places (e.g. mountain resorts), but this is hardly revealing. What is more interesting is how the author shows the railway becoming part of the description. The perspective of these texts is different than that of travelogues from the pre-railway era; the descriptions are more dynamic and have a broader focus (on the whole landscape, not only the foreground) so that the readers can imagine themselves also being in a railway carriage.

Chapter two is – again – about what was planned, what was executed, how it transformed the city, and how it functioned. The plans for the first station, made by Bretschneider as early as 1841–2 (and not in 1844 as may be found in the literature), differed considerably from the final design, which was selected from among six proposals, all showcased in this chapter. The discussions about its location may serve as an interesting case study for an urban historian. The government, the military, and the city council all had a say in it, and their agendas differed significantly, with the city seeking as central a station as possible for the convenience of travellers and to reduce the costs of transport to and from it, and the army wanting it to be as far out of the city as possible so that it could be excluded from the list of sites to be protected in case of war. Of these projects, that drawn up by Waław Prus-Jabłonowski (p. 143, depicting the station near the Northern Żółkiew district) was already accessible online, but Weck's narration supplements it with explanations, which is helpful. This section also helps us to understand why today's main railway station is located so far from the centre. As was often the case, the low cost of land outside the city and its previously undeveloped state is the answer: fewer plots had to be acquired, and almost no buildings were pulled down around this location in the late 1850s. The author shows that this decision was later criticised many times before 1914, and a plan to relocate the station was even proposed, but the same factors prevented this from happening: the costs of plots nearer the centre and the hundreds of buildings that had grown up around it by this time were turning any relocation into a utopia.

The case of the city's Czernowitz station highlights the peculiarities of the capitalist (or second private) phase of development. Rather than bringing the two lines (Lviv–Cracow and Lviv–Czernowitz) under one roof, a new station was built just 400 metres from the main railway building. Why? The two lines were operated by different private companies. This situation

was rationalised in the 'second state period' after 1873, when both lines (and many others) were nationalised in the 1890s. Thereafter, one station was used for passenger services and the other for freight traffic. The case of the station serving the line to Brody precipitated another struggle between the city and central decision-makers. This time the former won, and the station (Podzamcze) was situated on the slopes of the High Castle, just outside the centre. Weck thoroughly examines a memorandum written by delegates from the city council, which addresses general issues such as how the railways really influenced urban development. Her further narration shows that the decision to build the station on this site was later protested by some residents of the district, who claimed that the noise disturbed them a lot and that the railway embankments cut through a booming industrial district, complicating its further development. It is highly instructive to see that decisions regarding the railways did affect the development of certain districts and, as such, were made at their expense, as was also visible in the booming industrial hub of Łódź and its Widzew district, for instance. The claims of the residents of the Żółkiew district are less convincing material on which to conclude, however: the author happened to find a handful of them in the archive and treated them as representative of a wider sentiment, while they may have been isolated if rather obvious cases (who would want to live near a railway track?). Nevertheless, the decision to locate the third station so near the centre was scrutinised again when it came to building a second track alongside the first at the end of the century, and on that occasion, even the city officials expressed misgivings about it.

The next section deals with the impact of the railway on the city on the macro scale and is, in my opinion, weaker than the others. The author demonstrates the significance of the railways by analysing maps of Lviv from subsequent periods, claiming that the city did indeed develop mainly westwards (i.e., towards the station), but leaves some doubt as to the real reason for this: the reader would be justified in asking whether the railway was the most important factor in this development. The author strengthens these doubts when she describes the history of the Cracow district, pointing to other crucial factors, such as the fact that it had been developed earlier than other parts of the city. However, she fails to mention the geomorphological aspect of its career: the area to the west of the city's pre-existing built substance was flatter than those immediately to the north and east. Nonetheless, on the whole, she is right in showing that others reinforced this process, including the relocation of many public institutions from the historic centre to new districts or the impact of the municipal tramways, which – as was often the case – initially linked mainly railway stations with the centre and contributed to the development of the streets leading to them.

The following section, which deals with the issue of Lviv's economic development after 1861, is more convincing. Here the author relies more on

secondary sources: books and papers by authors including Roman Sandgruber and Klemens Kaps. Nonetheless, some doubts are similar: the railway positively influenced this aspect of the city's development, but the reader is given no clue as to what extent. More details are supplied by an analysis of the direct impact of the railways on the economy. They created jobs, in areas including the operation, maintenance, and repair of rolling stock, and in Lviv they were the largest employer, with 350 workers in the repair plant alone in 1870, and 836 in 1900 (p. 201). A long passage is devoted to the building industry in the city, and to its biggest construction company, that of Ivan Levyns'kyi (Jan Lewiński in Polish), in particular. This topic, which is not connected to the railway, is probably superfluous, while the railways' role in tourism is only briefly mentioned (p. 207), though this would probably be more relevant here. The last part of the chapter is related to urban planning in Lviv in the early twentieth century. The visions of such professionals as Ignacy Drexler and Tadeusz Tołwiński, which fall outside the temporal boundaries adhered to elsewhere in the book, are presented. Both these plans relied on large transportation rings around the centre and new railway stations, and neither was executed, owing to the lack of funds in the interwar period (when Lviv ceased to be the capital of an Austrian *Kronland*). While intended as an apt coda to the narration, this part leaves the reader with a feeling of incoherency.

Chapter three is all about railway stations. It begins with the author's frank confession that she could not write more about unusual situations that occurred at the main station (such as thefts) due to insufficient source accounts. Instead, the reader is given an insight into the appearance of the first main station and the Czernowitz station (both similar to medieval castles, like the Nordbahnhof in Vienna), as well as the second version of the main station by Władysław Sadłowski as rebuilt in 1904 (a more subtle design with Art Nouveau decoration and interiors by Alfred Zachariewicz). Here the conceived and perceived spaces are examined in parallel. This art-historical narration (in which the names of the styles and the authors of the designs are the main points) is intertwined with a culturalist one. The author seeks an answer to the question of how these buildings can be conceptualised and finds it in Yuriy Lotman's 'semiotic space', meaning here a liminal area or boundary space (pp. 224–6). The reader is given a glimpse into Sadłowski's building, and the description is combined with extensive iconography. The lavishness and intricacy of the design, and the large scale are shown in detail, only to be followed by the conclusion that railway architecture was always of dubious artistic quality (no experiments with more functionalist forms were allowed here). This resembles the modernist critique of historicism, which has luckily already given way to more nuanced views in art history.

The next section deals with the opening ceremonies of the various stations. The main focus is on the event in 1904: each official 'actor' speeches are briefly

but fairly analysed. Each one of them had his own intentions (all the speakers were male). The central authority did not try to use the occasion to legitimise the regime. Weck assures us that this was because the railway had already ceased to be a mind-boggling phenomenon, but other reasons could also have been at play. The ceremony is compared to the act of producing space (Lefebvre), but this intriguing proposal is not developed any further. Instead, the author moves on to the literary section, in which three pieces of belles lettres, penned by three authors born in Galicia, are showcased. Karl Emil Franzos' account of a trip from Vienna to Czernowitz (1875), with its description of the 'half-Asiatic' rumble at the main station, is a sign of the author's dissociation with the region and his adherence to what is in his eyes the higher German culture. The passage from the autobiography of the Jewish-born actor Alexander Granach gives a more positive description of the place, while Józef Wittlin's reminiscences from the city, written in 1946, are a true tribute to modernity of the station. As all three authors mention the heterogeneity of the poor incomers to the city, Weck interprets these texts as examples of semiotic activity per Lotman. If this thread had been developed at least a little more, it would be easier to grasp the whole idea.

The reader, already somewhat overwhelmed by all the topics and research approaches in this chapter, is now confronted with a final comparison: of Cracow's main railway station and Lviv's. All the issues that arose in connection with the Cracow building are raised here, albeit briefly: the decision as to its location and the factors at play; the style and author of the building; the opening ceremony in 1844, boycotted by the invited Austrian officials; and the refurbishments to the facility in 1871 and 1895. The conclusions drawn by the author are not surprising: there were many similarities in the two stories, of Cracow and Lviv, but also many differences.

It is easy to see that the book offers a great deal. The phenomenon of the railways can be interpreted in many ways, from many perspectives, and with the help of many scholarly approaches. In this book the reader may feel that they are being offered all of them at once. The author attempts to be an expert in economic history, urban planning, art history, cultural history, and literary studies – and succeeds in much of this. However, the reader is left overwhelmed and not necessarily convinced by any particular bold thesis. In employing so many perspectives, research approaches, and types of sources serving various aims, the author forfeits the chance to delve deeper into the analysis. Many interesting threads are closed down rapidly. Many comparisons stop at the descriptive stage. Several deeper conclusions are missed by sudden turns in narration. Nonetheless, the book is an ambitious experiment in narrating the urban space in a novel way. It is a record of many such attempts, which are testimony to the long and eventful journey made by the author, but it would be hard to decide which of them was more successful than the others. The book's first part makes the best impression:

as an accomplished analysis of selected official documents proving that the Austrian state did not shrink from its responsibility to build new railroads in Galicia. This part is hardly a cultural history, however.

The text's clear weakness is its handling of Polish and Ukrainian words, surnames and street names. Here, chaos reigns. The Polish versions of citations (in the footnotes) are proof of the author's unfamiliarity with the language (at least in writing). Polish and Ukrainian version of the names are sometimes confused (e.g. the Ukrainian 'vul.' Pusta is given instead of the Polish 'ul.' Pusta for a street built in the Polish period in the 1920s; this is also an issue in the German versions of street names: Horodetskastrasse sometimes replaces Gródekerstrasse). Ukrainian words permeate the translations from Polish: the Polish 'dzielnica' (district) on occasion becomes the Ukrainian 'rajon'. There are also inconsistencies in the street name forms: the Polish for 'street' is sometimes written 'ulica' but sometimes abbreviated to 'ul.', while the Ukrainian version is variously 'vulica' or 'vul', and given sometimes before and sometimes after the proper name. Some surnames have varying forms: Zacharjewicz and Zachariewicz, Kościuszko and Kosciusko, 'Vul. S. Bandera' and 'Vul. S. Bandery', 'ul. L. Sapięha' and 'ul. L. Sapięhy', or are transliterated in more than one way (e.g. Ukrainian street names end variously in '-koho' or '-kogo') and, worse still, both correct and misspelt names sometimes appear on the same page in the book. There is also one example of the correct form of a street name in a citation ('Ulica Leona Sapięhy') followed by a '(sic)' remark. In the era of digitalisation and easy text search, it is probably not too much to ask that names in the text be coherent. Other editorial shortcomings include the fact that some non-German and non-English book titles in the footnotes are translated into German and others are not; the quality of one of the maps (p. 189) is also poor. Moreover, I found one piece of misinformation: Lviv's electric tramway was not the first in Austria-Hungary (p. 177); it was preceded by those in Budapest and Prague, respectively, though I agree that it was still a remarkable achievement.

All in all, the book is an engaging, laborious, and richly illustrated story about the different faces of the railway imaginary and reality in Galicia. It gives detailed information and is a railway guide to the age of steam on the peripheries of Austria. However, it will not be revelatory to those who are more familiar with the region.

proofreading Jessica Taylor-Kucia

Aleksander Łupienko

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7568-7455>

Vojtěch Kessler and Josef Šrámek (eds), *Tváře války. Velká válka 1914–1918 očima českých účastníků*, Praha, 2020, Historický ústav AV ČR, 568 pp.; series: Editiones, Dějiny všedního dne, 1

According to the thought-provoking sentence by John Keegan, “war is always an expression of culture, often a determinant of cultural forms, in some societies the culture itself”.¹ The reader approaching this edited volume of memoirs, entitled in Czech *Tváře války*, *The Faces of the War* in English, should bear that in mind because the editors² of this monograph want to answer what place the Great War occupies in the Czech social memory. To achieve this, they edited nine journals written by Czech participants of the First World War. As a result, the volume allows the reader to get to know the personal experiences and stories of a relatively small number of social actors squeezed into a relatively small region of Europe (p. 110).

The published sources touch upon the Great War; some texts, where the authors assumed the war conflict was the main narrative framework of all their memories, are presented as a whole. Others are shortened and limited only to the period their creators spent on the fronts of the war. From the first words of the introduction, it is clear that the edition is meant not only for an academic reader but that this attempt at the everyday history of the Great War should be understandable and interesting for a general reader as well.

The book is composed of 12 parts. First is the general introduction to the series, written by Czech historian Milan Hlavačka. He introduces the reader to the idea of the history of the everyday, as stemming from the project entitled ‘Database of Everyday History’. It is at the core of this volume, an outcome of a joint project of the University of Vienna, the Institute of Czech History of the Faculty of Arts at Charles University, and the Institute of History of the Czech Academy of Sciences. The project aims to create a collection of memoirs, family chronicles, diaries and journals; thus, this monograph is the first step toward realising that goal.

One initial question concerns the wide-ranging nature of the project and, therefore, why it starts precisely with the memories of the Great War. There are several reasons, as listed by the editors. Firstly, the Great War is the finale of European modernisation that started in the long nineteenth century. It is also a time when the number of personal written sources expanded, especially when it comes to correspondence since the Austro-Hungarian post was free of charge; hence there are a lot of preserved letters. The spike in the production of sources has other reasons, such as the time for recording

¹ John Keegan, *A History of Warfare* (London, 2004), 12.

² Since my aim is to review not the texts of memoirs, but their edition, I differentiate between the authors and the editors throughout this text.

memories as a result of either the stabilisation of the front line after 1916 with no significant movements of the army or that many soldiers ended up as POWs with a lot of time to kill. Furthermore, a sense of purpose emerged among them: the war participant felt the duty to write about something as unusual as a mass war they experienced first-hand (p. 110).

We then get to the 'Introduction' written by the editors and the outline of the Czech research made to date on the First World War, which firmly embeds the volume within the local state of the art. The editors situate themselves within the research on historical memory made to date in the Czech Republic, however, they refer to the work made to date by various cultural and scientific Czech organisations quite randomly. We can find the references to activities of such institutions interested in the subject of memory in Czechia as the Oral History Centre at the Institute of Contemporary History of the Czech Academy of Sciences, the sociological journal *Biograf* or the Centre for Collective Memory Research (the joint collective of researchers from Faculty of Social Sciences, Philosophical Faculty and Faculty of Humanities, all of Charles University in Prague). Still, we will not find another similar project, such as 'Post bellum' project 'Paměť národa' [The Memory of the Nation],³ which is the largest publicly accessible database of testimonies in Europe, managed in cooperation with the Czech Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes and Czech Radio; or various activities of the NGOs such as Antikomplex, gathering the memories of people subjected to expulsion in the Czech lands after 1945. All in all, this part can be of value to beginners in the research on Czech history. However, a deepened study on how the memories of the First World War are mapped out in other national historiographies would be helpful. Even in Central Europe, it is worth mentioning, for instance, Katarzyna Sierakowska's works.

The two subsequent larger parts are composed firstly of the editors' introduction to various modes of living throughout the war, from the mobilisation of 1914 to the organisation of the army, to the ways of living on the front lines. The reader is informed about how the supply chains worked and how the nutritional needs of soldiers were met. On the other hand, we become familiar with the psychological needs of the war participants, with the information on how the soldiers coped with various forms of mortality they were exposed to, how they managed the war psychologically, through various coping mechanisms such as their own literary production, especially after the post office fees were waived. Finally, we can glimpse what life looked like in the hinterland, behind the front lines.

However, it is disappointing that the role of women and children, and their life in the war, is only briefly mentioned. It is the most problematic

³ See <https://www.postbellum.cz/co-delame/projekty/pamet-naroda/>.

part of this introduction. The sole focus on connecting and differentiating women with their roles during the war, and children in one piece is derogatory. This is visible in the editors' attempts to describe women as 'diversification of military life', which is anachronistic and seems like jamming of the discourse in the edited texts. Similarly, the editors do not problematise the subject of gender and colonisation when they touch upon the issue of women in the Carpathians. Also, when they write about war violence, instead of using the term 'rape', they omit it and try to substitute it with various euphemisms. However, they do not have similar objectives when it comes to men. Surprisingly, the editors' approach here is close to the attitude of the authors of the sources they critique: women on the front are seen as foreign, akin to something that does not belong there, and are treated with suspicion (p. 77). Similarly, the editors flag women in the memoirs as sexual objects, wives, and mothers, yet they do not operationalise these divisions. It is a pity because a different approach would at least partially compensate for the lack of female authors in the book. A bit more on the subject is said in the last part of the introduction, where the question of life in the hinterland is tackled. Here, the editors remark on women at work, claiming their role in emancipation is more pronounced than the job market in crisis. Moreover, they postulate that the situation is more complex than just a monochromatic division between 'women in hinterland' and 'men in front' (p. 82).

Yet, it is the next part of the analysis of edited texts that is truly worthy of reading to anyone interested in working with sources of everyday history. Here, the editors describe profiles of the authors of the texts comprised in the edition. They tackle the question of their social position, their attitude towards the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the war, the economic difficulties they were forced to face, their attitude towards the 'revolution' (i.e. the possible rise of the independent Czech state), the description of the front fights, their attitude towards other nationalities they met during their war wanderings, interests in international policy and finally, the form of their texts and their linguistic and literary quality. Then, after the editorial remarks and acknowledgements, the reader is confronted with the nine texts at the core of the volume. The book ends with a glossary, bibliography, a summary in English and German, and an index of places mentioned in the memoirs.

The nine texts included were chosen because they constitute a representative sample among the available sources. Yet, as the editors noted, what was of importance was also the differentiation of testimonies as well as some typology of texts and their authors. Therefore, we deal with "texts of various linguistic and literary levels, authors of various social or age groups and, last but not least, [containing] as many milieus and situations as possible that the Czech participants of the First World War may have encountered" (p. 87). Yet, as the editors admit, their choice is unbalanced in terms of gender (p. 87). The same is true about the social composition of the authors, which

is also incomplete, yet here the editors were at least trying to include various classes, ages and education. The lack of gender balance is justified by the limited source base and compared with another lack: there are no legionnaire memoirs included (p. 87). However, here the editors at least point the readers to other sources, completed in the Bibliography. Although I appreciate their good intentions, here the editors miss the general reader: the references are divided only according to their status of being either published or unpublished. A list of additional readings for those who are interested in questions that were not directly included in the book remains unaddressed. What, however, appeals directly to the general reader is the editors' decision to repeat the explanations in the footnotes for those who decide to read just some parts, instead of the whole volume.

The chosen memoirs were written by nine men, each with a different front experience: Karl Adamec, a farmer from Rataje in Haná; Jan Hejtmánek, a post officer; Josef Mlčoch (mostly anonymous); Václav Pechr, a bricklayer from Stodůlky (nowadays a part of Prague); Stanislav Spilka, a porcelain painter from Zruč by Pilsen; Jan Vojáček, a mechanical engineer from Prague; Alois Vystrčil, an accountant from Měřovice in Haná; Bedřich Žid, a shoemaker from Rychnovsko; and Ladislav Cvak, a forest worker from Rakovník. Their memoirs are different when it comes to linguistic and stylistic values, as well as when it comes to their length and style. Some are more like a full-fledged memoir or a journal; others resemble rather an assembly of notes gathered together in a hurry. Regarding these differences, the editors divided the texts into two groups: while Adamec, Hejtmánek, Mlčoch, Vojáček, and Žid have written memoirs, with a larger time interval between their experiences and the time they were writing them up, the authors such as Spilka, Cvak, and Vystrčil have kept journals. There is also Václav Pechr's in-between genre, where the author attempts to create a memoir with some hints to a form of a journal. When it comes to the social position of the authors, we can see the group of producers (Adamec) vis-à-vis consumers (Hejtmánek); village dwellers (Adamec) vis-à-vis town inhabitants (Hejtmánek); and well educated and already established men, like Vojáček, a mechanical engineer from Prague who "represents the highest society among the authors of the texts" (p. 95), and authors who did not have time to build their social position yet at the time of the war: young men like Pechr or Žid. The typical front soldier figure is here represented by Stanislav Spilka. One text, by Mlčoch, is an example of an almost anonymous memoir, stripped of clear indication of the author's position, his social class or origin.

The editors indicate that the aura of the time the authors were living in is a standard part of all the texts they have chosen. So, over the active feelings like patriotism and some enthusiasm for the war, they were dominated by a more passive approach of conservative respect for authorities and the system. Therefore, what is usually seen as a political activity, for instance, joining

the unit and going to the battle 'for the emperor and his family,' here has more the aura of a traditional duty. And all this in spite of the fact that most of the authors did not feel ethnically Austrian and did not warmly welcome the war (p. 99). Instead, the feeling that they shared the more the war was approaching its end, was the feeling that their state failed them (p. 100).

How do the editors handle the texts they included in the monography? Firstly, they oppose treating a literary source only as an encyclopaedic source of information (p. 12). Instead, they demand that an editor be someone who sees things differently than the author of a source: not more, but differently. It enables a dialogue between the editor and the author of the edited source (p. 12). As an outcome, we see the editors' attitude towards memoirs. Implicitly they included it in their statement: "First of all, memoirs are the reflection of experiences and emotions connected with them and not a reservoir of historical facts which should be exploited" (p. 16). Such an approach, where the sources and their authors are not only servants to some greater idea, such as historiography, but where they keep their own identity that peeps through the written words, is a step towards an anthropology-oriented and a culture-oriented history. It is also worth noting that whenever it was possible, the editors provided a photograph of the author or at least photos of places, things and activities related to the given author, which brings their subjectivity to the fore.

Such a positionality allows the editors to make an insightful critique of contemporary Czech studies on sources. According to them, other researchers still treat the sources mainly as a reservoir of information and do not see that historical facts are not the only thing we can abstract from them (p. 14). Hence, the title of the book *The Faces of the War* represents many war experiences, memories and possibilities of how to read them, which results in the dialogue between the editors and the authors of the memoirs included in the monography. The latter allows the former to embody different faces of the war and embellish them with concrete persons and curricula. The former gives the latter the voice they wanted, even if sometimes it was almost impossible because their writing was hidden, forgotten or just too anonymous to attract a potential general reader. The editors' approach is best visible in their leniency towards the authors, what they put into a phrase: "from these sources normal people speak. To say *who lived in the times of the World War* is not precise. Better is to say *who was trying to live when the War was lasting*" (p. 17).

Moreover, their different approach toward the research on the Great War is visible in the part of the book devoted to state of the art in Czech studies on the Great War. Here, the editors provide not a complete state of the art but rather an overview of the main trends and subjects. From the mention of the battle over the 'Czech soldier' as one of the main themes of Czech studies on the First World War, they move on to the idea of the war as a turning point.

Here, they quote Alessandro Catalano, who claims that, on the one hand, the Great War is seen as a thoughtless bloodbath, on the other as a turning point for many contemporary sites of memory. In other words, as something that changed the mental maps of Europeans. Yet, when it comes to the Czech studies on the war, still the main point of reference is Ivan Šedivý's book *Češi, české země a Velká válka 1914–1918* [Czechs, Czech Lands and the Great War of 1914–1918], and as another Czech historian, Jiří Pešek, has observed, in the centre of historians' attention are still more war operations than the everyday experiences of ordinary people (pp. 21–2). Therefore, as the editors noted, the military studies closed themselves into a "ghetto of specialisation" (p. 23). Yet, there are exceptions, like the works by Rudolf Kučera, David Pazdera, Jiří Hutěček or Dalibor Vácha. However, they bring along new subjects, not new methodological approaches (p. 29). Therefore, the editors shift their focus to the inner dimensions of the war and the possibility of developing the microhistorical perspectives. Only then new insights into 'dying for the homeland' can be gathered. And, as the editors write, "This is exactly the way we set out in dialogue with the texts presented in our edition" (p. 30).

The editors' agenda is clear and logical when it comes to one of the two larger parts of the introduction, entitled 'Everyday Life during the Great War'. From the description of the mobilisation and the organisation of life within the army, they push through to the short investigation of the reality of the war front. As they observe, "for today's reader, who is influenced by the obsession of military historiography on the history of combat operations, it is so surprising that the core memories of the participants of the Great War do not represent cruel fighting but the rather demotivating loss of time and waiting for eating, patrolling, relocating or waiting for the attack" (p. 42).

This everydayness of the presented memoirs is a guiding thread in the following parts of this chapter. The editors bring closer such elements of the life of soldiers as food supply chains and eating in front in general – and, what is inseparable, the excretion – or the cruelty of being sick and dying on the front lines. As the editors remark, "it is hard to reconstruct how the soldiers coped with death and above all with the simple fact that they themselves were here to kill others" (p. 55). From there, they move to the matter of the psychic condition of the soldiers. Here one surprising remark arises, as they claim that one of the ways of coping with the unusual front conditions was humour, which is not yet surprising. The editors' claim that the spirit was not primarily connected with the Great War is unexpected, especially in the Central European context, where we can easily evoke the literary works by Jaroslav Hašek, Karel Poláček or Kazimierz Sejda. But despite this fact, the editors address Paul Fussell's theory on irony as the main element of modern war memories, which is a possible explanation of their earlier surprising statement, as the line between humour and irony is very thin.

In conclusion, I would like to stress the editorial side of the volume. Firstly, the editors had approached the descendants and holders of copyrights whenever possible and requested their consent to provide both the text itself and personal data (p. 117). Moreover, the visual materials are complemented with maps (created by Jiří Martinek and Jiří Krejčí) to show the war paths of the authors of the texts. All in all, this allows the reader to imagine the surrounding, geographical localisation, and the authors' war and hinterland paths: how they have been or at least how they could have been.

proofreading Sylwia Szymańska-Smolkin

Karolina Cwiek-Rogalska

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6142-5609>

Michał Przeperski, *Mieczysław F. Rakowski. Biografia polityczna* [Mieczysław F. Rakowski: A Political Biography], Warszawa, 2021, Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 432 pp., 16 ills, list of abbreviations, bibliography, index of names; series: Monografie, 159

Mieczysław Rakowski was one of the more colourful leaders of the Polish communist party. In contrast to others, he had advanced education, spoke foreign languages, and visited the West on numerous trips. He left voluminous diaries – one of the most important sources for researchers of Polish political history since the Second World War – as well as many letters and memoranda, dozens of articles, a few books, and a theatre play. In his long career, he was editor-in-chief of *Polityka*, the party's most popular weekly, a leading commentator on Poland's international relations, and a trusted liaison in Polish-German talks. He served as Prime Minister and as a member of the *Politburo*, before finally becoming First Secretary of the party; in January 1990, he brought the party's history to an official close with the famous words: "bring out the banner of the Polish United Workers Party!"

Few people, and certainly not Rakowski himself, had envisaged such an ignominious end. The party had ruled Poland for more than forty years, and just a few months earlier, he still believed in its capacity for renewal and reform and in his ability to lead it. One of the paradoxes of Rakowski's life is that the bitter defeat which ended his political career paved the way for a biography of him, which would have been impossible if he had succeeded. *Mieczysław F. Rakowski: A Political Biography* is a solid, carefully researched, and well-written study of a rich and intriguing life.

It has taken more than 30 years for that biography to see the light of day, but the delay has allowed its author, Michał Przeperski, to build upon a broad and diverse corpus of primary and secondary sources. The impressive archival research undertaken for the book encompassed a dozen or so Polish archives containing public and private collections, which for the most part became

available after 2000 and a few archives abroad. In particular, the collection of greatest importance to this biography – Rakowski's personal papers kept in the Hoover Institution Archives – became accessible only after he died in 2008. Other notable primary sources include the 27 interviews with Rakowski's friends and comrades conducted by the author in 2015–17. The twenty-first century has also seen the publication of numerous books and articles relevant to the topic – from the memoirs of Rakowski and his comrades to scholarly analyses of the party. The bibliography included in the book runs to fifteen pages in small print. Finally, it should be noted that over those 30 years, a new generation of Polish historians has emerged for whom communist Poland has always been the past and never an everyday reality. Michał Przeperski, born in 1986, is one of them. The privilege of late birth is perhaps one source of Przeperski's commendable ability to write about Rakowski *sine ira et studio*, in a balanced and nuanced way. This is not always the case in Polish historiography of the communist period, especially when it comes to books published, like this one, by the Institute of National Remembrance. There the Polish-Polish 'war over the past' seems to continue unabated.

Rakowski was born into a farming family in northwest Poland in 1926; his formative period coincided with the Nazi occupation. His father, a local community leader, was murdered in the first wave of political killings in October 1939. Rakowski's hardship began at fourteen when he worked for a German who would beat him almost daily. He then took up employment in a rolling stock factory and entered the world of the industrial proletariat. There, he met a Polish socialist who introduced him to a new world of ideas that contributed to the abandonment of his religious faith. Rakowski hated the Germans. He regarded the Soviet army as the liberator, not a new occupier, and was happy to join the Polish army under communist command in the war's final weeks. That was enough for him to be sent to a school for political officers, where he made up for his lack of formal education with outstanding commitment, intelligence, and good communication skills. This is how, at the age of just twenty, he became a communist and an army officer, a position that a country lad in pre-war Poland could only have dreamed of. Becoming a communist and upward social mobility were the same for him.

The next step upward was journalism studies at the Central Party School. This elevated him to a position at the Central Committee's Press Department, where as a young apparatchik, he learned about the practicalities of party work. Noted for his intelligence, diligence and neophyte zeal, he entered the Institute for the Formation of Scientific Cadres, the Polish equivalent of the Soviet Institute of Red Professors. Although he had no academic ambitions, being at the Institute allowed him to meet some of the finest minds among faculty and students alike and develop critical thinking and forge personal contacts. The expansion of his social network acquired a new dimension when

he married Wanda Wilkomirska, a talented young violinist, who introduced him to the milieu of Warsaw's cultural elite.

Rakowski returned to the Press Department in the spring of 1956 and supported Władysław Gomułka on his return to the party leadership. His fascination with Gomułka and his relationship with the new leader secured his political position for the ensuing years. He was sent to propagate Gomułka's policy line in the newly-established *Polityka* weekly, becoming its editor-in-chief in 1958. Having attracted several outstanding media personalities, he gradually transformed *Polityka* into the party's most interesting and popular weekly, widely read among the intelligentsia. This took a few years of solid teamwork, and along the way Rakowski had to weather a few crises in his relations with the party leadership that almost destroyed his career, but eventually, it enabled *Polityka*, and Rakowski personally to assume a unique position in the media landscape of Poland, if not the whole Soviet bloc. In 1968 they dared to resist the 'anti-Zionist campaign', preserving their relative independence and protecting the Jewish members of their team. This secured Rakowski's reputation as a 'party liberal' for the next decade.

Rakowski's fascination with Edward Gierek, the party leader during the 1970s, lasted shorter than his fascination with Gomułka; it was kept alive for as long as Gierek's technocratic policies of rapid industrial development and opening up to the West fuelled hopes for a socialist and modernised Poland. Rakowski became a parliamentary deputy and a member of the Central Committee, but his advice and memoranda were increasingly ignored. By the late 1970s, hopes for a brighter future had been dashed, and the economy lay in ruins, leaving Rakowski deeply frustrated. His position as a 'liberal' was also weakened due to the rise of the democratic opposition, which publicly broached topics he dared not whisper about and drew some of his closest friends and collaborators away from him.

During the political crisis of 1980–1 Rakowski left *Polityka* and entered the highest political arena. To Moscow's displeasure, he became Deputy Prime Minister in charge of the government's relations with the trade unions. In this role, he was torn between the Scylla of Solidarity's demands, which he thought were unreasonable and dangerous, and the Charybdis of Soviet demands to defend the principles of the regime. The book shows how General Jaruzelski, the new First Secretary-cum-Prime Minister-cum-Minister of Defence, became Rakowski's last hope of saving socialism in Poland and the fatherly figure whom he obediently assisted throughout the next decade. Rakowski's tone and beliefs became increasingly defensive and uncompromising. His vocal support for Martial Law set him apart from most Poles, including some of his old friends. His wife divorced him and then emigrated, following in the wake of their two sons who had not returned from visits to the West. Limited, ineffective reforms and the slow decay of the Polish economy left him feeling frustrated. And to cap it all, Jaruzelski did not repay his loyalty: in 1985,

he moved Rakowski from the government to the largely ceremonial position of Deputy Speaker of the Sejm.

Gorbachev's *glasnost* reforms in the Soviet Union gave Rakowski a new lease of political life and reinvigorated his old dreams of an enlightened party dictatorship. In the new atmosphere, his bad reputation among the Soviet leadership as a suspect reformist suddenly turned into an unexpected asset. In December 1987, he was made a member of the *Politburo*. A few months later, he was appointed Central Committee secretary for propaganda, and in September 1988, he became Prime Minister. It seemed that the time had finally come for Rakowski to fulfil his ambition of becoming the great reformer of Polish socialism. His cabinet initiated some far-reaching economic reforms, but his plans were doomed to fail. He could not prevent the economy's downward spiral.

Moreover, the negotiations with Solidarity, which led to the semi-democratic elections of June 1989 and the party's humiliating electoral defeat, rendered those plans largely irrelevant. Under the deal with the opposition, Jaruzelski was to become President of the Republic of Poland, which required him to vacate his position as First Secretary of the party. These were the extraordinary circumstances which elevated Rakowski to that position, but at the same time, the party lost control of the government. By January, Poland had formally adopted a new political system and a new name. The party was politically and financially bankrupt. Rakowski had little choice but to follow the lead of his Hungarian and East German comrades, who dissolved their parties in October and December 1990, respectively. The party reinvented itself as a grouping known as Social Democracy of the Republic of Poland, but its new, younger leaders did not need or want Rakowski. In the following years, now as a retired and increasingly embittered politician, he published commentaries and memoirs and edited fragments of his voluminous diaries.

The biography presents his rich life against the backdrop of the changes in the party leadership and Rakowski's evolving social milieu. This combination is one of the book's strengths, for it reveals the role of social capital, that is, the personal networks of political figures, including people from outside the world of politics. The latter played a vital role in the 1960s, when Rakowski was building his reputation as an open and intelligent interlocutor, a good manager, and a loyal friend – qualities that were far from common among former apparatchiks and the *nomenklatura* of which he was part. In those years, he also worked on his most lasting achievement – *Polityka*, which has outlived both the party and himself and today remains the leading Polish weekly. The book also shows, very skillfully, Rakowski's evolution from a 'party liberal' into a vocal and confrontational opponent of the Solidarity movement. We see this change in his political decisions and his changing milieu, in which members of the open-minded intelligentsia eventually gave way to cynical apparatchiks. The political career Rakowski chose in 1981 gave him power, but it also brought him closer, and made him more similar, to the kinds of people

he had used to dislike. While Michał Przeperski is restrained in his judgments and attempts to understand Rakowski's various decisions throughout this process, readers may see it as a cautionary tale about the corrupting nature of power politics, growing hubris, and a declining sense of reality.

The book has just a few minor errors, and four missed opportunities. First, it does not sufficiently elaborate on the structural aspects of communist rule and its evolution during Rakowski's career. In particular, when he eventually made it to the party's top, it was no longer the centre of the regime as it had been in the 1960s and 1970s. In the 1980s, key decision-making was relocated to General Jaruzelski, the *de facto* dictator, and his closest associates. These two processes – Rakowski's personal evolution, which includes the positions he held and his social milieu, and the regime's evolution – eventually brought him to where his career ended. Second, his government's policies in 1988–9 deserve greater emphasis. The period was short, and many policies failed, but it was an important stage in Poland's shift away from communism. Third, I would have liked to learn more about Rakowski's reading, such as the books and authors that were important to him. For someone who produced many texts – articles and books, memoranda and letters – knowing the sources of his inspiration would have helped to position him better in the intellectual landscape of his times.

Last but not least, the book would have benefitted from a comparative analysis – i.e. Rakowski's journey in the light of the political biographies of other party leaders in the Soviet bloc – especially as it discusses the transnational dimension of Rakowski's career as a journalist, commentator, and political envoy. The book makes a few, not very systematic, comparisons with other prominent figures in communist Poland, but the international comparative aspect is missing. With the growing number of biographies of such figures in other countries of the former Soviet bloc, making such a comparison is nowadays more feasible.

This criticism should be tempered with praise, albeit self-contradictory, that the book manages to remain relatively short. It presents a long and diverse life in less than 400 pages of dense, factually rich prose, and is more reader-friendly than most biographies of Polish communists to date. It flows well, leaving the reader eager to learn more about Rakowski and his times, and proves that solid historiography does not have to be dry and dull. It has met with a positive response in the media from Rakowski's friends and foes alike – something rarely seen in the polarised atmosphere of today's Poland. The biography is a significant contribution to the history of communist Poland, setting the standard of balanced and nuanced writing about the country's recent past, which other young historians would do well to follow.

Christhardt Henschel (ed.), *Ostpreußens Kriegsbeute. Der Regierungsbezirk Zichenau 1939–1945*, Osnabrück, 2021, fibre Verlag, 221 pp., notes, bibliography, index

Ostpreußens Kriegsbeute. Der Regierungsbezirk Zichenau 1939–1945, a collected volume edited by Christhardt Henschel, and containing proceedings of the 2017 international conference held in the German Historical Institute in Warsaw, is the first thorough English-language inquiry into the functioning of Regierungsbezirk Zichenau (administrative district of Zichenau). The district, incorporated under the German occupation of Poland into the Province of Eastern Prussia, covered an area of around 13,5 thousand square kilometres with around 1 million inhabitants. Among them were about 80 thousand Jews, which constituted a higher percentage than in other areas annexed to the Reich and affected German policy in the district. Geographically, Regierungsbezirk Zichenau was comprised of northern Masovia (north of the rivers Vistula and Narew), with the region's capital established in the town of Ciechanów, renamed Zichenau.

The limited geographical area covered and the scarcity of significant prior research on the topic means that Henschel's volume is coherent and innovative, creating an important, timely, and well-integrated contribution to both microhistorical studies of Eastern annexed territories. Furthermore, to a large extent, incorporating a setting so different in significant details to those usually studied, it also challenges current views of broader Nazi policy in occupied Poland. As there is still no comprehensive monograph dealing with Nazi policies and local reactions to them in Regierungsbezirk Zichenau, this book forms an important and interesting starting point for an academic discussion.

The volume opens with Christhardt Henschel's strong historical overview of Nazi policy in northern Masovia and a broader look at its specifics in Regierungsbezirk Zichenau. The article provides both a topical and methodological setting of the volume and an introduction of the key concepts, demonstrating, in particular, the tension between the legal view of Regierungsbezirk Zichenau as part of the Reich and (to a large degree experimental) colonial policy pursued on its territory, which can be argued to be an overarching theme of the volume. This starting point provides the reader with a good grounding for tying together ideas which then appear in further 12 articles: case studies looking in detail into various aspects of the ideological character and everyday functioning of the occupational administration as well as reactions to repressions and survival strategies of the occupied population: Poles, Jews and descendants of German settlers as well as Volksdeutsche re-settled into the region.

Chapter one, dedicated to German administration of the area, begins with Ralf Meindl's study situating Regierungsbezirk Zichenau within the politics of Gauleiter of Eastern Prussia, Erich Koch, and his 'National Socialist' rebuilding of the annexed area. Afterwards, Marcin Przegiętka discusses the

formation and functioning of the Selbstschutz Südostpreussen as an organ of Gestapo Zichenau. This is followed by two articles regarding the Nazi legal system in the area. Janusz Piwowar uses documents of the Gestapo Zichenau/ Schröttersburg to investigate the daily activities of Standgerichts für den Regierungsbezirk Zichenau und den Kreis Sudauen, while Maximilian Becker discusses the German Judiciary in the annexed territories, focusing on the area of Regierungsbezirk Zichenau. The chapter ends with Christian Roher's discussion on the function and complex roles of Landesbauernschaft Ostpreußen and the policy towards settlers in the area.

Chapter two discusses society and daily life under the Nazi occupation. In the subsequent articles, Elżbieta Szubska-Bieroń looks at the contents and propaganda role of the German daily press in the southern parts of Regierungsbezirk Zichenau, Leszek Zynger provides a solid overview of Christian Churches (Roman Catholic, Lutheran, and Mariavite) and their place in (and reactions to) German policies. Finally, the editor of the volume, Christhardt Henschel, uses different and occasionally contrasting perspectives to discuss 'everyday life' in the area. Henschel looks at Regierungsbezirk Zichenau through the eyes of three sources: the diary of a Polish inhabitant of the city of Płock, Jadwiga Stypułkowska, Holocaust victim Simcha Guterman and finally, the church chronicle compiled by Catholic priest Marcei Przedpełski from Klukowo.

Chapter three looks at ethnic policies and repressions against the local populations of the district and their survival strategies when facing different types of violence: forced migration, imprisonment, and mass murder. In this context, Andreas Kossert discusses the radicalisation of Nazi policy against the Masurians. Paweł Kosiński looks specifically at the repressions in the town of Ciechanów and their links to the town's development into the district's capital. Frédéric Stroh discusses three sentences by Sondergericht Zichenau based on section 175 and 175a of the German Criminal Code, which become the basis for prosecuting homosexuals. The volume closes with Janusz Szczepański's discussion of the policy toward Jews: forced displacement, escalating persecution, including 'ghettoisation' from spring 1940, transfer between ghettos, forced labour and then mass murder in Treblinka and Auschwitz-Birkenau.

The volume undoubtedly encourages deeper scholarly reflection on this and other still neglected geographical locations, referred to by the editor as the 'periphery' of occupied Poland, and shows clearly to what extent local specifications can contribute to a broader understanding of the daily implementation of Nazi policy. Focusing on the 'uniqueness' of Regierungsbezirk Zichenau, several articles demonstrate, explicitly or implicitly, how Berlin's ideological and political policies were put in place and re-shaped (and to some extent even overruled by local administration) on the local level and how German administration's actions were linked not only to the orders from their headquarters but also to their perception of the specifics of the space in which they found themselves.

As Christhardt Henschel emphasises in his article (p. 227), despite the immense scope of research on the Second World War, daily life in mid-size cities in occupied Poland still requires more research. By incorporating voices of scholars of wider German occupational policy and historians focusing on their previous scholarship on the local area, this book, to a degree rare for edited volumes, significantly moves forward the English-language scholarship, if not scholarship in general. This is not, and cannot be an exhaustive study, but can be regarded as a call for further discussion, as well as, just as importantly, a demonstration of the scope of research still ahead for historians, both those focusing on local history and those incorporating Regierungsbezirk Zichenau into the history of Nazi policy and individual and institutional responses to it in occupied Poland.

proofreading Sylwia Szymańska-Smolkin

Katarzyna Person

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4733-4123>

Markus Krzoska, Kolja Lichy, and Konstantin Rometsch (eds), *Wende, Wandel, Weitermachen? Nachfragen zur Geschichtswissenschaft der 1990er Jahre in Deutschland, Polen und Europa*, Paderborn, 2021, Brill and Ferdinand Schöningh Verlag, 506 pp., ills; series: New Studies in Polish and Eastern European History, 4

Comprised of nineteen interviews with twenty historians exploring Polish history in its various intercultural entanglements, this book is both an unusual *Festschrift* for Hans-Jürgen Bömelburg's 60th anniversary as well as an attempt to understand better the dynamics of historical research conducted during the 1990s in Poland, Germany and beyond.

The extensive introduction by the volume's editors, Markus Krzoska, Kolja Lichy and Konstantin Rometsch, traces the main developments and debates shaping the last decade of the twentieth century, a period that was until recently explored only by anthropologists, economists, political scientists and sociologists, yet slowly but surely has become the object of historical research as well. A closer look at the various attempts at taking stock of the Polish-German cooperation in historiography since 1989 (pp. 41–4) and historians' efforts at historicising their own work in a longer historical perspective (pp. 44–52) are only two of the many issues addressed in this sophisticated overview. By linking the honouree's biography with institutional innovations which shaped the German historical research on East Central Europe in the 1990s (pp. 52–4), the editors set the stage for a productive reading of the entire volume.

The interviews with Bömelburg's intellectual friends are preceded by a paper written by the honouree himself. In 2020, *Kwartalnik Historyczny*,

the oldest Polish journal in history, conducted an international survey on the state of the discipline in Poland. However short, the German translation of Bömelburg's answer to the survey (2021, cxxviii, 1, pp. 35–40) provides valuable insights into both Polish historiography since the late 1980s and the author's intellectual trajectory (pp. 57–62).

Born in 1961 in the West German town of Höxter, Bömelburg studied history, German literature as well as Romanic and Slavic languages in Münster, Besançon and Mainz during the 1980s. In 1992, he defended his PhD thesis in history devoted to the transformation of Polish Prussia into a province of West Prussia, resulting from the partitions of Poland in the second half of the eighteenth century.¹ Between 1994 and 2003, Bömelburg worked at the German Historical Institute in Warsaw and, in the following three years, at the North-east Institute in Lüneburg. During this time, he completed his habilitation on the historical thinking in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.² Since 2007, Bömelburg has held a professorship for the history of East Central Europe at the University of Giessen – one of the most important universities in Germany to study the past and present of this region. The author and editor of several books shedding new light on Poland's early modern history,³ and a member of several institutions both enabling and stimulating the Polish-German cooperation in social sciences and humanities,⁴ Bömelburg is among the most renowned foreign historians of Poland.

Bömelburg's contribution to the survey conducted by *Kwartalnik Historyczny* can be read as a personal look back at his manifold encounters with Poland since 1986, when he began to learn Polish. Fascinated by the cosmopolitan mindset and linguistic versatility of Marian Biskup (1922–2012), Zenon Hubert Nowak (1934–99), Janusz Małek (b. 1937) and Stanisław Salmonowicz (1931–2022), whom he learned about during his extended stays in Toruń and other Polish cities around 1990, Bömelburg considers himself as “a child

¹ Hans-Jürgen Bömelburg, *Zwischen polnischer Ständegesellschaft und preußischem Obrigkeitsstaat. Vom Königlichen Preußen zu Westpreußen (1756–1806)* (München, 1995).

² Hans-Jürgen Bömelburg, *Frühneuzeitliche Nationen im östlichen Europa. Das polnische Geschichtsdenken und die Reichweite einer humanistischen Nationalgeschichte (1500–1700)* (Wiesbaden, 2006). Polish edition: *Polska myśl historyczna a humanistyczna historia narodowa (1500–1700)*, transl. Zdzisław Owczarek, with a foreword by Andreas Lawaty (Kraków, 2011).

³ Bömelburg's publications include, among others, two further monographs: *Friedrich II. zwischen Deutschland und Polen. Ereignis- und Erinnerungsgeschichte* (Stuttgart, 2011); *Altes Reich und Alte Republik. Deutsch-polnische Beziehungen und Verflechtungen 1500–1806* (Darmstadt, 2014) (with Edmund Kizik) and several collected volumes, e.g. in Polish: *Prusy – mity i rzeczywistości* (Poznań, 2016) (ed. with Andreas Lawaty).

⁴ To mention but a few examples, Bömelburg is co-chairman of the Joint German-Polish Textbook Commission, member of the Herder Research Council and the Commission for the History of Germans in Poland.

of the open, international and increasingly transnational atmosphere of the 1980s and 1990s” (58). Following the example of his academic advisor Klaus Zernack (1931–2017), who coined the notion of *Beziehungsgeschichte* in the 1970s,⁵ thus anticipating the spectacular career of connected and entangled history that began in the 1990s,⁶ Bömelburg has shown a particular interest in a broad understanding of Polish history informed by comparative and transnational approaches. It is therefore not surprising that he found major intellectual inspiration in works produced by Polish authors who explored Poland’s history through the lens of interregional and global entanglements – for example, Marian Małowist (1909–88) and his disciples, as well as Jacek Staszewski (1933–2013). Asked by *Kwartalnik Historyczny* about the main achievements of Polish historiography in the last thirty years, Bömelburg praises the post-1989 development of the interdisciplinary, multilingual and internationally connected Jewish studies.

Similarly, the interviews with Bömelburg’s British, Czech, French, German, Lithuanian and Polish friends and colleagues provide personal and professional insights into the writing of history beyond the nation. The oldest interviewee was born in 1933 and the youngest in 1968 (and only five of them are women), all German interviewees were born and raised in West Germany, all Polish interviewees lived and worked in a German-speaking country, all non-Polish interviewees spent an important part of their professional life in Poland, and, last but not least, all respondents feel – as Bömelburg himself – at home in many languages and cultures, even though only a few of them grew up in multicultural environments. In other words, the main forces driving them to explore comparative and entangled histories have been intellectual curiosity and methodological predilection for relational approaches.

In their concluding remarks, Friedrich Cain and Dietlind Hüchtker rightly point to a number of recurring motifs and blind spots which characterise the entire volume (pp. 446–53). Indeed, genuinely personal remarks about the practice of studying and writing history are a major theme of all the interviews. We learn a great deal about experiences collected in various libraries and “the allure of the archive”.⁷ We also learn a lot about the intellectual impact of Klaus Zernack and Marian Biskup on the subsequent generations of German and Polish historians as well as about the role of the Nicolaus

⁵ Klaus Zernack, ‘Das Jahrtausend deutsch-polnischer Beziehungsgeschichte als Problemfeld und Forschungsaufgabe’, in Wolfgang Hermann Fritze and Klaus Zernack (eds), *Grundfragen der geschichtlichen Beziehungen zwischen Deutschen, Polaben und Polen* (Berlin, 1976), 3–46.

⁶ Sönke Bauck and Thomas Maier, 2015, ‘Entangled History’, in InterAmerican Wiki: Terms – Concepts – Critical Perspectives, <https://uni-bielefeld.de/einrichtungen/cias/wiki/e/entangled-history.xml> [Accessed: 3 Jan. 2022].

⁷ Arlette Farge, *The Allure of the Archive*, transl. Thomas Schott-Railton, with a foreword by Nathalie Zemon Davis (New Haven, 2013).

Copernicus University in Toruń, the Joint German-Polish Textbook Commission and the German Historical Institute in Warsaw in stimulating Polish-German encounters. At the same time, the volume provides relatively little information about the precarious condition of female historians in the German academia and their relatively better standing in the Polish scholarly world, and virtually none about East German scholars. Most importantly, however, we learn how relative the meaning of 1989 as a turning point for historians actually was: whereas the Fall of Communism in Europe certainly had a major impact on the writing of contemporary history, its influence on exploring the history of other eras – for instance, the Middle Ages or the early modern period – remained minimal. From a historian's point of view, the 1990s were therefore shaped by both revolutionary changes and remarkable continuities.

Beyond these shared insights, the individual interviews not only provide a bulk of information about the biographies of the interviewed scholars, the flows of intellectual energy between them and the honouree, as well as their broader international and interdisciplinary networks. They also contain a wealth of unorthodox thoughts about the recent historiographical developments and the current state of the Polish-German cooperation. For example, as Włodzimierz Borodziej (1956–2021) argued, the traditional Polish-German asymmetry of knowledge has been reversed since 1989, as there are possibly many more original works on Polish history produced by German scholars than *vice versa* (p. 78). Norbert Kersken, in turn, draws attention to the persistence of a structural difference that continues to shape the Polish-German communication: the German subdiscipline of *Osteuropäische Geschichte* [History of Eastern Europe] has no equivalent in Poland, where the historical profession is organised around temporal rather than regional foci. This chrono-topical mismatch results in differently structured competencies, which often impedes bilateral cooperation (p. 207). By sharing her experience from the large-scale research project on the expulsion of Germans from Poland initiated by Włodzimierz Borodziej and Hans Lemberg (1933–2009),⁸ Claudia Kraft gives a vivid description of how gender and generational differences fashioned the cooperation between Polish and German historians in the 1990s (pp. 246–52). No less interesting are passages in the interview with Andreas Lawaty about his work on a monumental bibliography which records Polish and German publications from the twentieth century concerning the past and present of the Polish-German relations (pp. 285–6, 292–3).⁹

⁸ Polish edition: Włodzimierz Borodziej and Hans Lemberg (eds), *'Nasza ojczyzna stała się dla nas obcym państwem...'*. *Niemcy w Polsce 1945–1950. Wybór dokumentów*, i–iv (Warszawa, 2000–2001).

⁹ Andreas Lawaty and Wiesław Mincer, in cooperation with Anna Domańska (eds), *Deutsch-polnische Beziehungen in Geschichte und Gegenwart. 1900–1998*, i–iv (Wiesbaden, 2000).

Another thread of reflection recurring in some interviews relates to the impact of institutional settings – or the lack thereof – on transnational cooperation. Whereas the interviews with Hans Henning Hahn (147), Jürgen Hensel (pp. 162–6, 169–71) and Rex Rexheuser (pp. 346–56) yield interesting details about the establishment of the German Historical Institute in Warsaw in 1993 and the early period of its functioning, the conversation with Michael G. Müller includes stimulating remarks about the necessity to reinvent the very idea of the German Historical Institute abroad (pp. 302–4). Going beyond the bilateral perspective, Morgane Labbé recalls the various, mostly futile, attempts to invigorate the cooperation between Polish, German and French scholars (pp. 262–7), and interviews with Alvydas Nikžentaitis and Miloš Rezník demonstrate – from a Lithuanian (pp. 319–21) and Czech (366–8) perspective, respectively – how difficult it might be to launch transnational cooperation when there is virtually no institutional setup.

It is also worthwhile to take a closer look at the various responses to the question about the controversial notion of reconciliation kitsch [Versöhnungskitsch]. Coined in 1994 by the journalist Klaus Bachmann, this term was used to describe the “hollow gestures that are supposed to paste up differences of opinion with a lot of bittersweet soundtrack”, thus banalising the Polish-German relations and rendering a genuine bilateral dialogue impossible.¹⁰ When comparing their reactions to Bachmann’s harsh criticism at the time and their current perspectives on the state of the Polish-German affairs, many interviewees revise their optimistic forecasts about the future of the Polish-German neighbourhood.

On the whole, by combining very personal insights about the role of random events and encounters, intellectual alliances as well as similarities and differences between methodological and theoretical traditions regarding the development of historical research in the Polish-German context, with strictly professional reflections about the impact of structural asymmetries and macropolitical changes on the production of knowledge about the past, this volume is an important and inspiring collection of sources related to the study of history in the 1990s in, especially but not exclusively, East Central Europe.

proofreading Krzysztof Heymer

Kornelia Kończal

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8742-1291>

¹⁰ Klaus Bachmann, ‘Die Versöhnung muß von Polen ausgehen’, in *Die Tageszeitung* (5 Aug. 1994); Klaus Bachmann, ‘Niemieccy rewanzysty i polski antysemityzm, czyli kicz pojednania. Marnowane szanse dialogu’, *Rzeczpospolita* (22 Nov. 1994); see also: Hans Henning Hahn, Heidi Hein-Kircher, and Anna Kochanowska-Nieborak (eds), *Erinnerungskultur und Versöhnungskitsch* (Marburg, 2008).