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Omer Bartov. *Erased: Vanishing Traces of Jewish Galicia in Present-Day Ukraine.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007. 256 pp. $26.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-691-13121-4.

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Uncovering Jewish Loss in Eastern Galicia

Omer Bartov's *Erased* is an examination of the history and contemporary cultural politics of eastern Galicia, an area now in western Ukraine. The book recounts two erasures: the physical annihilation of Galician Jews in the Second World War and its immediate aftermath and the erasure of Jewish culture since the postwar and post-communist periods. As Bartov explains, the book had its origins in both research and familial interests. Among the research impulses for Bartov's study of Eastern Galicia was the desire to overcome the "bifurcated" schema of victims and perpetrators he sees in Holocaust studies (pp. xiv-xv). By uncovering the buried world in which Galician Jews lived and died, Bartov fills a gaping hole in the national and local histories of Ukraine. *Erased* also functions as an initial snapshot of Bartov's larger ongoing project, in which he focuses on the town of Buchach, where his mother's family lived before the Second World War. The book hence reveals the historian's personal grappling with his experience of the continuing erasure of Galicia's Jewish past.

The book's first chapter, "Borderland," briefly explores the history and historiography of eastern Galicia. Despite the general poverty of the region, Galicia had been a wellspring of political and ideological movements for Poles, Jews, and Ukrainians alike. Given this historical context, Bartov seeks to understand why today's Ukrainians have not sufficiently acknowledged Galicia's polyethnic past. Chapter 2, "Travels in the Borderland," covers Bartov's journey through twenty towns of varying sizes, in effect providing a collective biography of eastern Galicia. He gives a brief history of each town, focusing especially on its former Jewish population and how each town came to be "declared *Judenrein*" during the Second World War (pp. 78, 84, 96, 99, 112, 143, 154). The reader may begin to blur the individual accounts, but each sketch reveals in its own way the magnitude of the Holocaust from the ground up. In particular, Bartov emphasizes how Ukrainian nationalists collaborated with German occupiers and thus played an instrumental (and by some accounts more brutal) role in the destruction of their Jewish neighbors. He also relates the plight of Poles mistreated and murdered by Ukrainian nationalists and describes the situation of Poles and Ukrainians who sheltered Jews.

The focus of chapter 2, however, falls upon the author's assessment of the current state of Jewish cultural and Holocaust sites in each particular town. Often, these sites do not survive or have been allowed to fall into ruin. Buildings that still stand are used for other functions, including synagogues that have been converted into a sports center, a tanners' club, and a furniture store. Bartov also pays close attention to the use of language, especially in regard to signs that mark (or do not mark) Jewish sites. These signs are sometimes written only in Ukrainian, but often in multiple languages including Hebrew, Yiddish, and English. Although the Ukrainian-only plaques themselves are problematic, the multilingual signs often make important omissions in different languages, allowing the same plaque to tell different stories. For example, the plaque at the Great Synagogue in Horodenka mentions a nearby mass killing of Jews only in Yiddish and Hebrew, but not in English or Ukrainian. By showing many similar cases elsewhere, Bartov reveals that local nationalists, writers, and officials have created an atmosphere that is effectively erasing the Jewish past from Galicia's history.

Bartov argues that this erasure is not due the lack of a "memory renaissance" or "culture of memory" in eastern Galicia (pp. 137, 180). Rather, numerous post-communist monuments reveal a surge in memory politics as local leaders have attempted to rehabilitate wartime Ukrainian nationalists. Those commemorated include members of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) and the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA), whose members were involved in persecuting Jews during the war. Their participation in the Holocaust makes the acknowledgement of Jewish suffering difficult in today's Ukraine, where a widespread belief in Jewish collaboration with Soviet authorities and of Jewish crimes against the Ukrainian people still persists. The insensitivity to Jewish victims is expressed tangibly at the site of the former Drohobych ghetto, where a statue of OUN leader Stepan Bandera now stands. The book's third and final chapter, "Return," briefly compares Ukraine's approach to the legacy of the Holocaust with the experiences of France, West Germany, and Poland. Bartov hints that the Polish-Jewish process of reconciliation could best serve as a model for Ukrainians as they move forward in their post-communist transition. Hence, the book is more than just a warning that Jewish cultural heritage in western Ukraine is disappearing, but also indicates that the situation can be improved.

Erased is an important and valuable work for Holocaust studies because it examines the long-term impact of genocide and collaboration on the regions where Jews once lived. Other towns and countries in central and eastern Europe may encounter similar issues of erasure, even when the Jewish past is to a significant extent acknowledged and (problematically) celebrated, as in Cracow. The examination of the Jewish erasure in eastern Galicia also poses many interesting points of comparison for examining antisemitism and Holocaust commemoration in comparative context. Why, for example, do today's Ukainian Galicians appear to have more respect for the Polish or Roman Catholic sites than for the Jewish ones? Besides antisemitism, are geographical proximity, market forces, or religious affinity at work here? The book also reveals that the politics of memorialization are not just local, but have transnational and global implications as well. For example, among the organizations involved in assessing the state of cultural sites are the United States Embassy and the United States Commission for the Preservation of America's Heritage Abroad. At the same time, Bartov notes that developments in Ukraine are not necessarily exceptional in the European context, but rather represent a more exposed example of how other Europeans have dealt with their past.

Erased hence offers much food for thought for scholars examining Germany's *VergangenheitsbewÃ¤ltigung* and the question whether it may have been exceptional. Bartov, for example, suggests that a genuine acknowledgement of eastern Galicia's Jewish past will allow the country to recover its historical role and move forward successfully; readers may be drawn to ask what postwar white spots and historical distortions were hidden or exacerbated in the atmosphere of the so-called "economic miracle" in West Germany. Bartov also cogently discusses continuing debates over German crimes and victimhood. How do German responsibility and perpetrator status make the experience of the German expellees different, and do *Heimattouristen* experience a similar disappointment in their "erased" cultural sites in eastern Europe?

Despite its brevity, *Erased* successfully combines several books in one. The main narrative itself blends a monograph on Jewish-Ukrainian relations with a travelogue in which the author provides personal details and reactions. A kind of second book appears via the copious footnotes that support the main narrative. In them, Bartov provides some of his most illuminating accounts and insights. For example, he elaborates on the fate of Bruno Schulz's murals in Drohobych in several footnotes, where he also assesses the role of Yad Vashem in this affair. At the same time, Bartov exploits a rich variety

of sources, including many resources from the internet (with the occasional citation from Wikipedia). This reliance on websites stems in part from the contemporary aspects of his study, but a discussion of his sources in general would have been appropriate in the introduction and/or in the footnotes.

As an overview that prioritizes the current situation of Eastern Galicia, *Erased* raises many intriguing issues of religion and nationalism. Bartov notes that the "religious teachings" (p. 35) and "religious prejudices" (p. 89) of Greek Catholicism interacted with modern antisemitism. This development did not prevent Metropolitan Andrei Sheptyts'kyi from saving up to 150 Jews during the war, however, and some Ukrainians today tout Sheptyts'kyi as a "good Ukrainian" to disprove claims of Ukrainian antisemitism. Here, a discussion of the relationship between Greek Catholicism and wartime nationalism would have been helpful. Bartov suggests that the communists used nationalism strategically in the postwar period, and it would have been interesting to know whether and how Ukrainian antisemitism and the destruction of the Jews contributed to the establishment of communism in postwar Ukraine–a hypothesis advanced by Jan Tomasz Gross for events involving the murder of Jews by their Polish neighbors in Jedwabne in German-occupied Poland.[1] Bartov's plans to examine Buchach more intensively in future works may answer some of these questions brought up here, but it will also certainly raise important new issues.

Overall, Bartov's *Erased* is a highly readable account, richly illustrated and with helpful maps, that is accessible for a general audience and at the same time replete with insights for those who study Jewish, Ukrainian, Polish, and German history. The book is relevant not just for scholars in Holocaust Studies, but is a valuable addition to the study of memory and politics in central and eastern Europe. By examining why Ukrainian nationalism is so antagonistic to the notion of Jewish suffering, Bartov shows that understanding today's Galicia is relevant wherever societies have to deal with the legacy of genocide.

Note

[1]. Jan Tomasz Gross, *Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland* (New York: Penguin, 2002), especially 111-112.