

lective use of national history and the construction of patriotic historical narratives have been centralized and solidified under Putin's regime. The implementation of patriotic indoctrination bears elements of the most recent information strategies (e.g. viral YouTube videos) and old traditional Soviet propaganda (e.g. military parades). This chapter offers an insightful case study and excellent empirical material.

Finally, Sproede and Zabirko offer a take on Benedict Anderson's famous concept of "imagined communities" in their exploration of the construction of these communities in Russia. While earlier chapters in the book focus on the state-led patriotic education programs, this chapter explores private individuals' perception of state, homeland, and politics. In particular, it analyses the contribution of such contemporary Russian writers as Aleksandr Prokhanov and Zakhar Prilepin to the collective creation of an imagined community through literary works.

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Jacek Kurczewski (ed.), *Reconciliation in Bloodlands: Assessing Actions and Outcomes in Contemporary Central-Eastern Europe*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2014. 352 pp.

In the 1990s, the end of the Cold War and the broader global trend in historical apologies prompted a widespread push for reconciliation across Central and Eastern Europe. Until quite recently, one could have been forgiven for viewing this reconciliation process as a great success. Yet the latest political developments in the region and the growth in power of populist rhetoric and nationalist sentiments show the urgent need for a new conceptualization and understanding of reconciliation. Jacek Kurczewski, renowned Polish sociologist and the author of important books on the sociology of law and conflict, has taken up this challenge and, together with a group of regional specialists, has created a book that traces the meaning and possibility of mutual dialogue and understanding in the region. Although the book's title suggests a broad overview across the region of

the so-called “Bloodlands,” most of the chapters are in fact limited to the Polish borderlands. Still, despite the rather Polonocentric approach, *Reconciliation in Bloodlands* manages to paint a bigger picture, showing that reconciliation cannot be based on silence; it is rooted in dialogue and multicultural communication.

In the vast sociological literature, reconciliation is operationalized as a concept that is especially useful in violence and conflict studies. Understood as a multilayered process, reconciliation opens up discussions about the meaning of the violent and ethnically divisive past in order to establish a sense of justice for present societies. Although many academics seem to forget this, the concept of reconciliation is rooted first and foremost in Christian ideas of unity, community, and peace and, as such, has predominantly religious connotations (see Aneta Gawkowska’s article in the volume). Together with his co-authors, Kurczewski returns to this dimension and asks about the state of religious work on reconciliation conducted both by individuals and by Church institutions, and also about the status of inter-confessional relations. In the context of post-1989 Poland, this seems to be an especially relevant dimension, as throughout the socialist period the Church appeared to be—as Kurczewski rightly points out in the book’s introduction—an important custodian of forbidden historical truth and non-official moral stances.

Through the pages of fifteen well-crafted chapters, readers familiarize themselves step by step with comparative cases of “collective amnesia,” different actions taken towards reconciliation, and their outcomes. Although the term “Bloodlands” suggests a focus across the territories of Ukraine, Belarus, and Poland, the reader will find here rather a selection of studies geographically limited to Polish borderlands and culturally limited to the Polish view on reconciliation. As Paweł Śpiewak’s detailed analysis of present Polish–Jewish relations suggests, reconciliation is an important project undertaken by many Polish local communities and institutions. Thanks to the work of various local elites, cultural institutions dedicated to the study of the history of Jews in Poland, Judaism, and the Holocaust, and finally a growing number of volunteers taking part in the work of local associations, one can ob-

serve a significant change in attitudes towards Jews in Poland, and possibly shifts in Polish collective identity. Halina Rusek and Andrzej Kasperek, in their study of conflict and dialogue in the Polish–Czech borderland, point to memory as an inseparable element of the reconciliation process. As their study of the antagonistic representations of different memory sites in Zaolzie shows, reconciliation is important not only for the present communication and future coexistence of different national groups, but also for the reconfiguration of collective memory. In this regard, reconciliation process creates new senses and symbols and as such opens the possibility for the reinterpretation of the common past and the presence of particular society. Vladislav Volkov, in the only chapter in the volume that is not directly related to the Polish borderlands, takes a closer look at the inter-ethnic relations in the East Latvian city of Daugavpils and shows that although massive ethnic cleansing took place here in the “Europe between Hitler and Stalin,” still we can find here places in which multicultural life flourished. These are just a few of the cases that the volume presents. Even the delicate matter of reconciliation with Ukraine, recently an especially difficult and heated issue in Poland, receives a much needed airing here. Dariusz Wojakowski presents a series of case studies from the Polish–Ukrainian borderland, including a content analysis of the reception of the 2009 Stepan Bandera rally in the regional press, and qualitative research on the reconciliation conducted in Drohobycz and Lviv in Ukraine and Sanok in Poland in 2010–2011. Wojakowski’s chapter shows that speaking about the past and acknowledging suffering are not easy tasks. Although Polish–Ukrainian reconciliation is an important ideological element of the top-level rhetoric employed by successive governments on both sides, on the ground, reconciliation is more a practical, everyday concept (294) which proves the blurriness of identity lines among mixed borderland populations. No matter how difficult it may be, the culture of coexistence is possible once individuals understand that “boundaries are not outside, but on the inside” (303), as Krzysztof Czyzewski notes in what is probably the most humanistic chapter in the volume. Encountering the Other through positive and mutually enhancing multicultural dialogue, Czyzewski

suggests through his work on the Polish–Lithuanian–Belarusian borderland, is the only bridge through which connections between conflicted nations to their pasts and presents can be established.

As the authors of the volume show, the problems arising out of the ways in which societies deal with divisive pasts can be understood from the various academic perspectives of sociology, psychology, and history. The anthropological perspective, addressed by Joanna Kurczewska in her methodological chapter, seems to be the most relevant to understanding reconciliation as both a perspective useful to academics and a practical concept of value for those engaged in designing and implementing civic projects in post-conflict societies. Kurczewska rightly points out that reconciliation is a category of cultural practice—a set of values concerning relations between individuals and communities—as well as an important element of any nation-building project (p. 29). Perhaps more than any other sub-discipline, the sociology of reconciliation as a separate mode of inquiry can open up a dialogue between various theoretical approaches and everyday civic practice.

Reconciliation in Bloodlands shows that religiously inspired reconciliation can be a successful project; however, on the inter-ethnic relations front many barriers yet remain to be overcome. A reader unfamiliar with Polish history will find this volume a useful introduction to the various strategies which local communities use in their attempts to deal with conflicting but shared pasts and antagonistic collective memories. The material in *Bloodlands*, then, can serve as paradigmatic cases for other regions troubled by violent pasts. The volume would be even more valuable if it included more case studies from the region from the Belarusian, Ukrainian, and Russian perspectives. One would also appreciate a more universal and global thinking about reconciliation to go together with the book's exploration of the particulars of how this process has unfolded in the Central and East European region.

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