

**Marta Dyczok. *Ukraine's Euromaidan: Broadcasting Through Information Wars with Hromadske Radio*.** Preface by David R. Marples, E-International Relations Publishing, 2016, [www.e-ir.info/2016/03/22/open-access-book-ukraines-euromaidan-broadcasting-through-information-wars-with-hromadske-radio/](http://www.e-ir.info/2016/03/22/open-access-book-ukraines-euromaidan-broadcasting-through-information-wars-with-hromadske-radio/). E-IR Open Access, edited by Stephen McGlinchey. vi, 103 pp. Map. \$23.51, paper.

A thin line separates academy and activism. And standing on this thin line, a scholar is often left having to grapple with one of epistemology's inherent moral challenges. What should a scholar do during a crisis: maintain, at all costs, an "impartial" position and assume a spot at an academic lectern well away from the struggle; or take for granted that he/she has been charged with a public duty, knowing that such a position will, inevitably, lead to the taking of a side? Since 2013, many Ukraine experts and scholars have faced this dilemma.

Marta Dyczok's new book was made possible by the author-scholar's venture into the realm of activism. In the book, the well-known historian and media scholar (simultaneously affiliated with Western University, the University of Toronto, and the National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy) avoids most of the pitfalls that commitment to one cause can bring. But at the same time, her collection of 2014-15 media contributions shows a pronounced personal stance. Thus, the author strikes a fine balance. Full-scale offensives in the Donbas, Russia's annexation of the Crimea, and, most of all, the Euromaidan protests are so vividly portrayed that it is with a jolt that one realizes how far removed these events actually are from the current period of trench warfare in Ukraine. One can sense an almost discernable joy wafting between the book's sentences and links—the joy of future historians who will be encountering such an excellent source of information from, and about, that time. David R. Marples provides a solid justification for subjectivity with his compact and usefully contextualizing preface, but the book also speaks for itself.

The bulk of the book is made up of the transcripts of forty-two reports by the author that were broadcast by *Hromadske Radio* between 3 February 2014 and 7 August 2015; this collection is framed by short analytic sections—an introduction and a conclusion. The introduction (6-11) not only covers the story of *Hromadske Radio* and the author's collaboration with this outlet, but it also yields what is, in earnest, an outline for a yet-unwritten history of the Ukrainian media in 1991-2013, both concise and synthetically powerful. The conclusion (94-102) assesses post-Euromaidan developments within the context of political and media transformation, paying special attention to *Hromadske Radio's* expansion. Theoretically, the author thinks of media in the normative terms of Jürgen Habermas's theory of public

sphere and Antonio Gramsci's concept of hegemony. From this vantage point, the Ukrainian mediascape is seen as a politicized and heteronomous space of contention between power, vested interests, and professional and civic activism. Dyczok's restrained optimism in presenting the situation notes both more-successful grassroots initiatives and poorly organized reforms with a dangerous tendency to backslide.

The main part of the book reads more like a personal diary following the author's shuttle between Canada and Ukraine, and this change of settings and perspectives, together with a refreshing simplicity of style, makes reading the book especially rewarding. Ukraine is portrayed as a country held together by volunteerism—from art to media to church to the military, a nation of almost idyllic solidarity—and the author also partakes in it: "What I can do is share this information with you" (34). This contrasts with an image of the West treating Ukraine as an object or, simply, lacking the solidarity that Ukrainians long for: "Friends I met up with one evening wanted to tell me about their vacations, rather than hear about people being killed in some far away country" (54). Finally, there is some sporadic contact with the foe: the controversy surrounding the pianist Valentina Lisitsa and her Ukrainophobic views; and a personal encounter with a pro-Russian individual when "[t]he friendly eyes turned hard" (75)—an experience that many Ukrainians will find familiar.

However, the author also tries to look for tiny and not-so-small signs of unity and support. These include a Ukrainian film festival in Toronto and a Kyiv folk-music festival alternating with a Canadian counterpart with its mix of gourmet *varenyky* ("perogies") and political debates. There are words of support from an anonymous Canadian clerk and a touch of Quebec's experience in dealing with separatism. An elderly woman in Ukraine—a relative of Taras Shevchenko—donates to the Ukrainian army, while Canadian aid is hastened to the front line from both the government and the Ukrainian community. A number of reports centre on memory politics and practices, including Canadian commemorations of the Crimean Tatar deportation, the Holodomor, and the Heavenly Hundred juxtaposed to Remembrance Day rituals.

There are very solid pieces of journalistic fieldwork, such as a report on the porous border between Ukraine and Russia and an interview with Serhii Plokhii. Reports also have first-person elements. There are a few reports on official visits, which are informal and focused on reactions; similarly informal is a very personal profile of Canada's new ambassador to Ukraine. In the end, the book is defined by its fascinating human stories—for example, the intermingled perspectives of a female taxi driver in Kyiv and a migrant driver in Toronto; and a soldier's marriage following his return from captivity.

Even in the commentary sections, Dyczok's media-analyst background shows here and there, in her inspection of the Ukrainian media; Western media coverage; and Russian media narratives that are "deliberately framed in historical terms to open up old wounds, enflame divisions, and incite hatred" (36). This analysis, even though understandably unsystematic, sketchy, and impressionistic, offers ample interesting summaries and some insights.

Of course, the book has a few drawbacks as well. The heavy present-day focus makes some of the material prone to becoming quickly outdated (a notable example: *Ukraine Today* is mentioned more than twice, but it was short lived and out of business by early 2017). For some of the reports, links to both *Hromadske Radio's* website and *SoundCloud* are provided, but some other entries only contain links to the website. Three links (19 September 2014, 14 October 2014, and 7 August 2015) are corrupted; add to this the inevitable homeopathic dose of typos. But these are only minor flaws, and the book makes a useful addition to the corpus of sources on post-2014 Ukraine. It will be of use to historians, media scholars, political and social scientists, and a broader public interested in the situation in Ukraine.

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