Czech, German and Polish nationalisms developed in the adjacent regions of Moravia, Prussian Silesia and Galicia. These ethnic ideologies deeply tied to language burst over Teschen Silesia in the second half of the nineteenth century. The nationalisms contested Teschen Silesia through the use of their respective standard languages in education, administration and public life. In the process the West Slavic dialectal continuum was deemed to converge with the Czech and Polish languages, respectively, while the West Germanic continuum was identified with German. The national movements also appropriated political and ecclesiastical boundaries together with pre-national regional and confessional identities as instruments to make the Teschen Sile-sians into Czechs, Germans or Poles.

Hannan deftly and in depth analyzes this process as contextualized against the broader background of East Central Europe. In the interdisciplinary manner he successfully combines insights of historiography, linguistics, sociolinguistics and anthropology. As students of ethnicity and nationalism know well, any other approach to such a problematic lends itself all too easily to the needs of this or that nationalism.

The use of sources and literature in Czech, English, German, Polish and Slovak allows the author to see through various national prejudices vis-à-vis Teschen Silesia that tend to be ingrained in these texts. The work is enhanced by numerous maps and tables, several dialectal texts, a chronology, and index that make the book “user-friendly.”

The work is destined to become a classic for students of Central Europe, sociolinguistics, ethnicity and nationalism.

Tomasz Kamusella

Opole University, Opole, Poland


Timothy Snyder’s book is a political and intellectual biography of Kazimierz Kelles-Krauz, a leading Polish socialist in Paris at the turn of the twentieth century. A neglected figure in history, and one who almost always differed from mainstream socialist thought, Kelles-Krauz, nonetheless, articulated “modern” and “progressive” ideas for “national development.” Chronologically organized in four chapters, this well-documented book provides an excellent narrative of Kelles-Krauz’s personal, academic, and political beliefs and accomplishments in his short life from 1872-1905.

Born in Russian Poland into a declasse noble family, Kelles-Krauz first became acquainted with socialist ideas while attending school in Radom. The pressures of russification, especially in the realm of education, forced the students to form clandestine self-education circles where they could discuss the “modern” forms of intellectual thought and organizational activity. Increasingly disenchanted with the passivity of their elders in the aftermath of the 1863 insurrection, the younger generation, including Kelles-Krauz himself, read the available emigre socialist writings and voiced the
need to reject “Warsaw positivism’s call to anti-politics in favor of socialism’s call to action” (p. 17).

Having been expelled from school in Radom and then from the Imperial University of Warsaw, Kelles-Krauz decided to emigrate to France in 1891. The daily life of emigrant Poles in Paris was hard. The lack of financial support and the constant fear of arrest made politics a dangerous preoccupation for the Poles. Normal life was extraordinary, and the Polish emigres, both old and young, had to deal with gossip, paranoia, and spies of the Russian Okhrana. In this environment of poverty and political conspiracy, Kelles-Krauz earned his living by “literary prostitution” and pseudonymous socialist writing.

Kelles-Krauz’s socialist views differed from those of other prominent socialist thinkers and revolutionaries. For example, Rosa Luxemberg’s SDKP (Social Democrats of the Kingdom of Poland) believed in a sudden and radical political change which would result in the creation of an international socialist republic. Hence, Luxemberg opposed the cause of Polish national independence on the grounds that it would weaken the international movement. Kelles-Krauz, on the other hand, believed that meaningful political change would be gradual and dependent on local conditions. For this reason, he maintained that class and national consciousness were integrally connected and that the formation of a Polish democratic nation-state was necessary for the attainment of socialism in Poland.

Kelles-Krauz was deeply disillusioned with the French, Austrian and German socialists for their neglect of the “Polish question.” For European socialists, the question of Polish independence suggested the loss of German territory and possible war with Russia. Kelles-Krauz remained frustrated with the French socialists’ passive stance on the Franco-Russian alliance and the German socialists’ domineering relations with the Polish Socialist Party of the Prussian Partition. He disagreed with what he thought to be Karl Kautsky’s “unplanned” revolutionary goals and Bernstein’s “progressive,” albeit “indeterminate” plan of socialist action. Kelles-Krauz also forecasted the imminent collapse of the Austrian empire and wanted Austrian socialists to recognize the right of the nationalities of the empire to secede.

Kelles-Krauz differed with his colleagues in the Polish Socialist Party (PPS) as well. He concurred on the need to expel the non-socialists from the party, but emphasized the importance of more openness and freedom of speech within the organization. He also expressed concern that the Russian socialists would not adequately address the “Polish question.” During the revolutionary upheaval of 1905, Kelles-Krauz tried to mediate between the right and left wings of the PPS that disagreed over revolutionary goals and priorities. However, his premature death in June 1905 undermined this effort at intra party reconciliation.

In consonance with his belief that the rights of minorities needed to be protected, Kelles-Krauz took a keen interest in the “Jewish question.” He believed that “neither Jewish assimilation was inevitable nor that anti-semitism would naturally lead to simple anti-capitalism” (p. 200). As an opponent of anti-semitism, Kelles-Krauz wanted a future Polish republic to recognize the national rights and autonomy of its Jewish population.