

Religion and the Rise of Nationalism: A Profile of an East-Central European City (Religion and Politics)

Robert Alvis



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Currently part of Poland, the city of Poznan straddled an ethnic border zone of sorts prior to World War II, on the edge of a predominantly German sphere of settlement to the west and a predominantly Polish sphere to the east. This juxtaposition of cultures helped stimulate the development of vigorous nationalist movements in the first half of the nineteenth century, and Poznan emerged as an important center of such activity among Germans and Poles alike. Robert E. Alvis tracks the rise of nationalism in Poznan and examines how religious affiliation factored into the process. Drawing upon a wealth of archival data, including memoirs, police and government correspondence, and parish and archdiocesan records, the author reconstructs evolving patterns of collective identity during a time of rapid socioeconomic change and political, religious, and cultural ferment. He concludes that in Poznan, religion provided critical foundations for the development of Polish and German nationalist movements and enhanced their appeal across a broad demographic spectrum. This book encourages a rethinking of the widely held view that early European nationalism was largely a secular phenomenon at odds with religion.

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