
Reviewed by Michael S. Sherry, Northwestern University

Explaining the History of American Foreign Relations was originally published in 1991, and this new edition ably reflects the continued evolution of the field once known as diplomatic history. All the essays are deeply informed and highly professional, and most are lucidly written and well edited. Though sometimes critical of competing approaches, most also eschew the vituperation, condescension, and nitpicking often found in academic discourse. A spirit of sharing—scholars learning from each other even if disagreeing—infuses this volume. Because most essays appeared in earlier form in the first edition or in other venues, experts will find few surprises. Nonetheless, this book is outstanding as both an update for insiders and a primer for newcomers (graduate students preparing for examinations should grab it for its succinct summaries of a wealth of scholarship).

Long gone, this volume makes clear, are the days when a few stark oppositions—realist versus idealist, traditionalist versus revisionist—structured the field, when its boundaries were neat and tidy, and when the field seemed insular. Continuing to diminish is its focus on the state, and on the United States. Once the overriding preoccupation, the Cold War is still a major concern but in this volume never a stand-alone category, instead warranting analysis within other frameworks. Gone, too, editors Michael J. Hogan and Thomas G. Paterson proclaim, is the first edition’s “defensive tone” (p. vii) about the field, although the very denial of defensiveness sounds a tad defensive and contributors more often note how their specialty has borrowed from other fields than how it has influenced them. The volume celebrates a plethora of approaches to American foreign relations, and few authors make bold claims about which will stand the test of time. But some make their case better than others, among them a senior contributor, Akira Iriye, writing about “Culture and International History.”

Because no single volume can do everything, to note what this one neglects is less to criticize than to situate it. Explaining how the field has changed, the contributors stress intellectual currents within and beyond it but not the most obvious spur to change—transformations in the world in which they operate. Implicitly, they position themselves outside the world they observe, but perhaps no field is more engaged with it. A political history of the field would be useful in showing, for example, how the de-
clining focus on the state reflects the state’s wobbly recent fortunes, not merely the march of intellectual progress.

The volume’s democratic spirit also comes at a price. With so many roads for exploring American foreign relations, none emerges as a superhighway, although “the turn toward cultural history is perhaps the most significant transformation in the field since the first edition,” the editors note (p. 7). Likewise, the volume rarely singles out any grand narratives or interpretations for special attention. In many essays, how to do work in the field takes precedence over the conclusions then to be drawn. Titles define approaches to the field—from “Bureaucratic Politics” to “Theory, Language, and Metaphor”—more than grand themes in the history itself. Some familiar categories make scant appearance—no essay contains “war” or “empire” in its title, and few discuss them at length, with “hegemony” often preferred over “empire.”

In these regards, Explaining American Foreign Relations reflects the skepticism among historians generally in recent decades about synthesis and grand narrative. Jessica C. E. Gienow-Hecht seems happy that “there is no central paradigm” in her field of “Cultural Transfer” (p. 275). Frank Costigliola celebrates an approach that “rubs against the prevailing discourse in academic history: the authoritative narrator, who is assumed to have mastered the subject matter” (p. 286). Emily Rosenberg is delighted to cast into the dustbin of modernism “the habit of mind that seeks to impose an overarching, centralized, view-from-above upon the object of study,” preferring “reflexivity and multiple frames” (p. 192).

Though laudable, this skepticism has now operated so long that to flog authoritative grand narrative as a “prevailing discourse” seems tired; judged by this volume, it has ceased to be “prevailing.” The “overarching, centralized, view-from-above”—offered in other venues in modified form by many contributors to this volume—still has value. It forces historians to spell out their core arguments baldly—to takes sides rather than hide behind the multiple voices in the history they cover. It consolidates and spreads knowledge, and thereby also influences other fields whose scholars, like students, can only dip into a few volumes from any given field. It stimulates debate within the field as well. To have big targets of aspiration or attack—a Kolko thesis or a Williams thesis—provokes pointed interchange.

In his level-headed piece, Robert McMahon suggests that

American historians today are more comfortable lecturing to undergraduates about the impact of World Wars I and II on women and Americans than they are lecturing on why the United States entered those conflicts in the first place, or on what difference U.S. involvement had on America’s power and influence within the wider world. (p. 37)

I would add that students themselves are more interested in the first. The challenge of getting them and fellow scholars excited about the second remains—”to provide,” as McMahon puts it, “fresh synthetic and holistic accounts not just of American but of global history” (p. 50). Insofar as professional historians fail to provide those accounts, others will, sometimes to good effect. Like it or not, readers expect historians “to have mastered the subject matter”—that’s what extensive training, and for the fortunate,
comfortable salaries and teaching loads, enable them to do. Given the strides in the field, even more of its practitioners should, while attending to “multiple frames” and the like, write with the confidence that they have such mastery.


Reviewed by Gregg Herken, University of California, Merced

The saying goes that one should never loan money to or write about one’s friends, and Jeremy Bernstein has done the latter—which is both the strength and the weakness of this engagingly written little book. Bernstein knew and admired J. Robert Oppenheimer when both of them were at Princeton’s Institute of Advanced Studies in the late 1950s and Oppenheimer was the Institute’s director. Bernstein had earlier intended to write a profile of the late physicist for *The New Yorker*, where he was a staff writer until 1993, but he decided to wait—perhaps because he was still too close to his subject. As such, *Oppenheimer: Portrait of an Enigma* is essentially an homage and a belated defense of “Oppie” against all enemies, real and imagined. This reviewer is evidently included in that list, for reasons that will be noted later.

In one sense, Bernstein was the perfect choice to write a book about Oppenheimer insofar as both men were theoretical physicists and teachers: Oppenheimer at the University of California at Berkeley and the California Institute of Technology and Bernstein at Harvard University and the Stevens Institute of Technology. Not surprisingly, Bernstein’s account of Oppenheimer’s contribution to physics is the real strength of the book. In prose that is always accessible and sometime almost lyrical, Bernstein explains how Oppenheimer’s pioneering work in stellar evolution might well have led to a much earlier discovery of black holes—had not the nuclear bomb and the Second World War gotten in the way. Bernstein’s description of how a hydrogen bomb actually works is likewise the first time that I—an informed layperson, but not a scientist—have read an explanation of the bomb’s inner workings that is both understandable and technically right. (Note to al Qaeda: this explanation will do you no good.)

Bernstein’s book, however, is much less solid when it leaves science behind and gets into politics and history. His approach to historical research seems to consist of asking his famous friends—who were also Oppenheimer’s friends—what they remember. The obvious limitations of this approach are fully evident in *Oppenheimer*.

For example, Bernstein’s description of the so-called Chevalier incident, an admittedly complex episode in Oppenheimer’s life that would later have fateful consequences, is factually wrong. Declassified documents show that Oppenheimer actually gave three different and conflicting versions of what happened in the kitchen of his Berkeley home one evening in late 1942 or early 1943. Bernstein mentions only the two versions that Oppenheimer acknowledged at his 1954 security hearing, thereby
omitting a point that was key to the outcome of the hearing; namely, that the prosecution could count on Oppenheimer’s willingness to sacrifice himself to protect his brother.

In the spirit of full disclosure, I should note that Bernstein’s account and my own recent book, *Brotherhood of the Bomb: The Tangled Lives and Loyalties of Robert Oppenheimer, Ernest Lawrence, and Edward Teller* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 2002) part company on the subject of Oppenheimer at this point, which is evidently why Bernstein has included me on the Oppenheimer enemies list. Specifically, Bernstein and I disagree about whether Oppenheimer was a member of the Communist Party (or, at least, about how to define what it meant to be a “Communist”) and about whether Oppenheimer had an affair with Ruth Tolman, the wife of a colleague at Caltech. On the first question, Bernstein does not mention the recently discovered unpublished memoir by a former Berkeley history professor, Gordon Griffths, who confirms that Oppenheimer and his friend Haakon Chevalier belonged to a closed unit of the Communist Party’s professional section in the Bay Area from 1938 to 1942. In fairness, Bernstein may not have had access to this document prior to his book’s publication. On the second question, although Bernstein is gracious enough to thank me for providing copies of the letters between Oppenheimer and Ruth Tolman that he quotes in the book, his reason for denying that an affair took place is that Oppenheimer’s friends and fellow defenders at Caltech knew nothing about it. (On both questions, interested readers may want to consult the documents and decide for themselves. Portions of the Oppenheimer-Tolman letters are cited in Bernstein’s book, and the originals are stored in Oppenheimer’s papers at the Library of Congress, as is the recently donated memoir by Griffths. Excerpts from the Griffths memoir are also posted on the website for my book, http://www.brotherhoodofthebomb.com.)

Ironically, the very fact that Oppenheimer would belong to a secret unit of the Communist Party and carry on a clandestine romantic affair with the wife of a colleague and friend is what makes him the enigma of Bernstein’s book title. *Oppenheimer* was meant as a tribute rather than a scholarly analysis and therefore should not be judged by the standard of the latter. The book is a highly readable, often entertaining, and—in the realm of the sciences, at least—educational and informative encomium to a fascinating and enigmatic figure.


*Reviewed by Thomas Maddux, California State University, Northridge*

The fate of liberal reform in the United States after World War II has been extensively discussed by historians of the postwar period as well as by specialists on liberalism and conservatism. The legacy of the New Deal, the nature and results of President Harry S. Truman’s Fair Deal, the impact of anti-Communism as a domestic issue, and the
fragmentation of liberals before and during the 1948 election have been covered in depth. The resurgence of conservatism after the debacle of the 1964 presidential election has also been the subject of extensive and continuing study.

The problem that Jonathan Bell faces is whether another study of this topic adds any significantly new insights for historians. The answer is yes, albeit with some reservations. By focusing on the Cold War and how it forced both liberals and conservatives to shift their priorities and their views of key issues—the role of the state, opportunities to extend the New Deal welfare state into areas like federal health insurance, and the threat of Communist subversion and Soviet espionage—Bell makes a significant contribution to our understanding of the dynamics of postwar politics and reform.

Bell is particularly insightful in tracing the ideological and political shifts that conservatives and liberals alike made as postwar tensions with the Soviet Union escalated. Republican Senator Robert Taft of Ohio is one of Bell’s conservative examples. Having started with an anti-statist, anti-New Deal, isolationist outlook, Taft experienced significant ideological and political tension as he tried to cope with the new circumstances. He opposed Truman’s Fair Deal and advocated rolling back the New Deal, most significantly in the 1947 Taft-Hartley Act challenging the power of organized labor. But as Truman launched the Cold War revolution in U.S. foreign policy—a shift that sharply expanded the role and size of the federal state as well as its budgetary commitments and U.S. overseas involvement from the Truman Doctrine through the Marshall Plan and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization—Taft was forced, if only reluctantly, to reconcile his anti-statism with political realities. Anti-Communism became the swinging bridge used by Taft and other conservatives to make the transition and intensify their opposition to Truman’s Fair Deal and Democratic control of the White House and Congress. Anti-statism blended into anti-totalitarianism, as Bell points out, and liberals often had to run for cover from a conservative barrage of criticism and accusations.

Bell thoroughly assesses the 80th Congress and the elections of 1948 and 1950 at both the national and the state levels to show how liberals responded to the Cold War and the changed domestic context. He highlights the growing fractures among liberal groups such as the Americans for Democratic Action (ADA) and Henry Wallace’s Progressive Citizens for America, as well as the responses of individual liberal Democrats. Paul Douglas, a University of Chicago economist, loyal New Dealer, and World War II veteran, challenged the Wallace supporters in the Illinois senate primary. As Bell demonstrates, Douglas shifted away from the left to an anti-totalitarian stance that helped him defeat both the Progressive candidate and the Republican contender.

Bell is unpersuasive, however, when he claims that an opening emerged at the end of the war for renewed debate and political action addressing fundamental economic and class issues. Despite acknowledging the standard view that the New Deal was stalemated after 1938 and that Truman was unable to break the deadlock with his Fair Deal agenda, Bell still asserts that an opening for the left existed. He looks carefully at groups such as the Union for Democratic Action, at Henry Wallace, at congressional reformers such as Senator Claude Pepper of Florida and Congressman Jerry
Voorhis, and at labor organizations such as the Congress of Industrial Organizations and the United Auto Workers. But what he finds is that the necessary economic, social, and political conditions for successful reforms along the lines of the Labour government’s program in the United Kingdom were absent in the United States. Despite Bell’s wishes for an international social democratic experiment after the war, Americans merely wanted to enjoy the fruits of victory, take advantage of the GI Bill for veterans, acquire a new home in planned communities like Lakewood, California, and enjoy a little prosperity after seventeen years of depression and war.

Bell’s sympathies for the left and his endorsement of the belief that further federal New Deal reforms were not only feasible but desirable have an adverse effect on his analysis. Although Bell ultimately views Wallace’s bid for the presidency in 1948 as a disastrous campaign, he prefers the Progressives over ADA liberals or Truman supporters who helped the president thwart the Republican challenge in 1948 and aid Democrats to regain control of Congress. In retrospect the Wallace supporters appear about as astute as Ralph Nader’s backers in Florida in 2000. Although Bell specifically wants to eschew historiographical battles over the Cold War and domestic Communist issues, he is not entirely successful. His choice of sources on both topics clearly reflects a preference for left-wing revisionist interpretations that look for alternatives to the Cold War, put much of the responsibility on Truman’s shoulders, and minimize the role of Soviet espionage in the United States as well as Soviet manipulation of the American Communist Party and of united front activities such as Wallace’s Progressive campaign. Post-revisionist scholars and others whose perspective on these issues differs from Bell’s could easily turn the liberals loyal to the Democratic Party and Truman’s policies into the heroes of the story rather than the disloyal betrayers of a social and economic reform agenda that lacked political viability.


Reviewed by George Lewis, University of Leicester (UK)

In recent years, the historiographical treatment of the mechanics of both Southern segregation and domestic anti-Communism has developed apace. Some three-and-a-half decades after Numan V. Bartley’s pioneering work on “massive resistance” (The Rise of Massive Resistance: Race and Politics in the South during the 1950s) appeared, scholars are beginning to return to the subject of Southern segregation and to treat it with the nuance and subtlety that has long been the preserve of histories of the African-American side of the Freedom Struggle. Within the last decade, the traditional arguments of whether domestic anti-Communism in the United States was a “top-down” product of manipulative elites or a populist response to grassroots pressure have been augmented by some excellent state-by-state case studies, including those by M. J. Heale (McCarthy’s Americans: Red Scare Politics in State and Nation, 1935–1965)
and Philip Jenkins (*The Cold War at Home: The Red Scare in Pennsylvania, 1945–1960*). The focus of *Black Struggle, Red Scare* is the intersection of these two stimulating topics of postwar U.S. history. Woods readily acknowledges that the scale of his task, and the rich texture of the available source material, make the subject too vast for any single volume. He aims instead to examine the phenomenon of southern anti-Communism only at its most intense, from 1948 to 1968. In those years, he argues, the social and political turmoil generated by burgeoning civil rights activity in the region, and the white South’s determination to resist racial change, gave what he terms the “southern red scare” sufficient momentum to sustain the South’s peculiarly regional brand of McCarthyism. Segregation and anti-Communism continually reinforced each other during those decades, he argues, coalescing to form the backbone of an “extreme southern nationalism . . . a regional desire to protect the southern way of life.”

Woods bases many of his detailed findings on the official documents of Southern red-baiting committees, the personal papers of Southern red-baiters, and contemporary newspaper reports and editorials. The book uncovers much that is new about the previously murky world of segregationist propaganda and the distribution networks that underpinned politicians and other prominent figures who accused civil rights activists of Communist affiliations. Woods demonstrates that such activity retarded the progress of the civil rights movement by convincing many Americans that the leading proponents of civil rights were, at the least, sympathetic to Communism and even, at worst, acting on orders from Moscow. Ultimately, however, Southern anti-Communists failed to persuade a “critical mass” of their fellow citizens that Communism had actually corrupted the main focus of the Freedom Struggle. Woods’s conclusions are in line with the sensible findings of Richard Fried, who argues that anti-Communism hindered the civil rights movement by exacerbating splits within the movement’s ranks.

Perhaps because of the need to impose intellectual boundaries on this richest of historical topics, Woods’s study focuses most intently on the work of formal red-baiting agencies in the South and the intricate network of “local, state, and federal institutions [that] directed the southern red scare,” most of which were crafted as mirror images of the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC). As Sarah Hart Brown has shown, such committees sought to hound any individual in the South seeking to challenge the racial status quo and provided what might be termed the set pieces of segregationist anti-Communism. Although Woods’s decision to focus on these institutions is understandable, it leads to a number of conceptual problems. Such a focus, combined with the belief that HUAC was the “principal contributor” to the Southern red scare, surely negates the ex tempore red-baiting that characterized so much segregationist rhetoric in the two decades covered by the book. Bartley may have argued 37 years ago that resistance was driven by neo-bourbon elites, but this view was long ago superseded by a more complex appreciation of the make-up, dynamics, and strategies of resisters and resistance. Woods’s contention that “a conservative white-power elite led the southern red scare” is surprising in its starkness and sim-
plicity and is not sufficiently qualified by the caveat that “the scare could not have existed without popular support.”

More importantly, the depiction of organized committees as the driving force behind Southern anti-Communism gives the impression that Southern anti-Communism was strictly controlled and neatly confined. In the massive resistance years, however, anti-Communism was by no means hermetically sealed. Far from being deployed in isolation, it was used most often in conjunction with the other weapons in the resistance arsenal. Indeed, one of the reasons that massive resistance was able to forestall meaningful desegregation for over a decade was the sheer number of weapons available to resisters, of which anti-Communism was only one. These weapons were not deployed independently and were not crisply delineated and hard-edged. Rather, they blurred into one another. At times, the resisters used anti-Communism to bolster appeals to states’ rights in the region by drawing parallels between a strong U.S. federal government and a centralized Soviet system. At other times they used anti-Communism to magnify fears of social disintegration and miscegenation by referring to Communist treatises promoting egalitarian brotherhood.

In short, Woods has produced a well-researched, valuable study of a formalized brand of anti-Communism that was popularized in the South by organized bodies constructed in the image of earlier, federal models. However, this particular form of Southern anti-Communism was but one strand of a complex phenomenon. The myriad applications of Southern anti-Communism as a weapon of the white South cannot be fully understood in isolation from the other traditional defenses of the region that became part of the massive resistance repertoire. Although, as Woods shows here, Southern anti-Communism in some instances was controlled by elite-dominated committees, it was deployed at least as often on a pragmatic, ad hoc basis and was, in these latter instances, arguably at its most insistent, imaginative, and compelling.


Reviewed by Allan M. Winkler, Miami University of Ohio

Cowboys as Cold Warriors is a perceptive account of the connections between Westerns and foreign policy issues in the United States in the half-century following World War II. Stanley Corkin, a professor of English at the University of Cincinnati, provides useful historical background about the Cold War as he describes how a number of popular films reflected the mood of the day. He draws on the work of a number of first-rate historians—Thomas McCormick, Paul Boyer, Elaine Tyler May, and Walter LaFeber, among others—to provide context for his compelling discussion of such great movies as Red River, High Noon, Shane, and Gunfight at the OK Corral.

Corkin sets out to show how Westerns “are not only sensitive to the currents of historical change but also expressive of shifts in national mood and circumstance”
(p. 2). He persuasively argues that as the United States found itself locked in a bitter struggle with the Soviet Union, the films he analyzes were influenced by the changing relationship between the United States and the rest of the world. His thoughtful introductory chapter, “Westerns, U.S. History, and the Cold War,” deals with the way a number of key films in the genre helped to construct national identity at a time of “intense chauvinism and broad acceptance of a kind of economic and cultural hegemony” (p. 5). Corkin notes how the films simultaneously look backward and forward, combining nostalgia with an expression of America’s growing centrality in the world. In short, he argues that the Westerns need to be seen “as products of a distinct time and place” (p. 12).

Corkin uses history deftly. As he takes up the films *Red River* and *My Darling Clementine*, he draws on Immanuel Wallerstein’s world-systems theory, which deals with issues of capital and expansion as world trade helped define the relationship between states. Both films, he notes, describe economic outcomes that should emerge from the elements of American national identity. A cattle drive toward Abilene is a key part of *Red River*, and the effort to bring order out of chaos and establish a stable economy is an equally important element of *My Darling Clementine*. In both films, strong men seek to force conditions to bend to their will in the interests of freedom and individualism. These films, Corkin writes, “ask audiences to engage affectively in a view of the United States that allows for acts of empire or hegemony to be seen as the expression of a rational and moral imperative that will ensure progress and promote the development of civilization” (p. 29).

Turning to three other films—*Duel in the Sun*, *Pursued*, and *Fort Apache*—Corkin describes how they “emphasize the proper place of women” (p. 80, emphasis in original). He draws on Elaine Tyler May’s work in arguing that the prevailing culture of the early Cold War years demanded that women embrace domesticity in serving the nation, even when it meant economic marginalization. Corkin shows how the three films, all dealing with women’s domestic relations and emotional lives, reflected issues that were salient in the larger culture.

Corkin then takes up the issue of violence. He considers how films like *Broken Arrow* and *The Gunfighter* explore the question of whether violence was acceptable. Both films appeared as the United States was deciding how to respond to the Communist takeover in mainland China in 1949, and the concerns reflected in the films became even more compelling with the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950. The three films, he contends, underscore the “general perception that the world was an extraordinarily dangerous place” (p. 97). Violence is ugly, to be sure, but sometimes it may be needed.

In analyzing the so-called golden age of Westerns—the years from 1952 to 1956—Corkin vividly shows why films such as *High Noon* and *Shane* were so popular. Both movies tied liberal Cold War values to nationalistic symbols and featured a strong man standing up to bullies and winning the inevitable confrontation. Both films depicted a troubled world in which complicated problems have no simple solutions.

Corkin turns finally to *Gunfight at the OK Corral*, showing how the film reflects
the Cold War policy of containment. “In no other Western that I know of,” he writes, “is there such obsession with delineating a proper sphere of behavior and influence” (p. 173). Dodge City has rules stipulating where guns may be worn. Lines of demarcation mark where civilization takes over, just as rigid dividing lines marked both geographical and diplomatic boundaries during the Cold War.

*Cowboys as Cold Warriors*, a volume in the “Culture and the Moving Image” series edited by the film historian Robert Sklar, is a fascinating analysis of the Hollywood Western in its heyday. Because the films discussed in the book played such a salient role in American culture during the Cold War, Corkin sheds crucial light on the political context in which issues of economy and empire loomed so large in the latter half of the twentieth century.


Reviewed by Tony Shaw, University of Hertfordshire (UK)

Work on the cultural dimensions of the Cold War continues apace. *The Cultural Cold War in Western Europe* is an excellent collection of essays, arising from a conference held at the Roosevelt Study Centre in the Dutch city of Middleburg in October 2001. Contributors include some of the leaders in the field of cultural Cold War studies, such as Scott Lucas and Jessica Gienow-Hecht. They are joined by experts in intelligence, post-1945 European history, and contemporary American history. A pithy foreword by the writer and historian David Caute, author of *The Dancer Defects: The Struggle for Cultural Supremacy during the Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), warns readers of some of the book’s deficiencies, notably the absence of essays looking at the Soviet role in the cultural Cold War.

The book assumes, rightly one would hope, that all Cold War scholars now accept that the U.S.-Soviet conflict was a battle of ideas as much as a military standoff. Building on this notion, the book examines in depth the relationship between economic policies, political agendas, and cultural expression in one of the Cold War’s key regions, Western Europe, from 1945 to 1960. Case studies of the connections between overt/covert activities and cultural/political agendas in Western Europe are divided into five sections, titled “Intellectuals between Autonomy and Control,” “Public-Private Partnership,” “Target Groups: Youth and Women,” “Target Areas,” and “High Culture as Political Message.” The authors predominantly focus on the extent of American influence in Western Europe, but they also highlight the mix of American and European interests that were being expressed and demonstrate the varied and often unintended results of American involvement in European culture.

Readers hoping to find material relating to popular culture—magazines, newspapers, television, film, music—will be disappointed. The book concentrates primarily on the role of intellectuals, trade union leaders, politicians, and government propa-
ganda officials in the cultural Cold War. Plenty of material is included on the secret funding provided by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) to the Congress for Cultural Freedom and European student organisations, on the Marshall Plan and European labor, and on transatlantic organizations like the Bilderberg Group, but precious little on rock-and-roll or Hollywood. However, the volume’s tight focus allows for detailed consideration of several questions that stand at the heart of cultural Cold War studies and that are set out clearly in the introduction by Hans Krabbendam and Giles Scott-Smith: What were the boundaries to freedom in the West in the early phase of the Cold War, and how were they set? Did the defenders of the principle of a free society find the balance between “truth,” freedom of information, and efforts to direct and influence opinion? How far could “freedom” be instituted and promoted by official powers without having it collapse under its own contradictions into a mere semblance (or representation) of freedom? Was all culture, on both sides of the Cold War, simply an extension of politics? If so, how should this alter our perception of the conflict?

The Cultural Cold War in Western Europe is highly recommended for Cold War scholars. Most of the contributors offer fresh insights into the nature of what is often now called the “state-private networks” operating on various levels during the Cold War. Most of the essays are tightly argued, using primary sources culled from American and European archives. The contributors are rightly unwilling to take official claims of influence at face value. Thankfully, they eschew the esoteric jargon that all too frequently bedevils cultural studies.

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Reviewed by Loch K. Johnson, University of Georgia

Writing about intelligence is never easy, even in a democracy, because so much of the information about this subject remains in heavily guarded vaults inaccessible to outside researchers. Scandals and major intelligence failures are unfortunate experiences for a country, but they contain a silver lining for intelligence scholars. Subsequent inquiries by commissions and legislative committees bring into the public domain relatively large quantities of documents and data about once-secret operations. Government inquiries since the mid-1970s, most notably the Church Committee investigation in 1975 that exposed domestic spying and other abuses by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), the Hamilton-Inouye Committee that examined the Iran-Contra affair in 1987, the Aspin-Brown Commission study in 1995 of the Somalian and Aldrich Ames intelligence failures, and the 9/11 Commission probe of the September 2001 terrorist attacks, have led to the release of a mountain of formerly classified materials on intelligence.

Yet despite these research bonanzas, scholars and the public more generally still
have had access to only a thin layer of information about the activities of the hidden side of American government during and since the Cold War. This is especially true when it comes to covert action, the operations conducted by the CIA (and occasionally by other agencies) to influence events abroad without revealing the hand of the United States. Covert actions include clandestine propaganda activities, political and economic operations, and, at the extreme, paramilitary wars and assassination plots. The publication of a book written by someone with inside experience in the management of CIA covert actions is therefore bound to provoke interest.

William J. Daugherty, the author of *Executive Secrets: Covert Action and the Presidency*, was clearly well enough placed to write an informed account of covert actions during the Reagan administration (a period subsequently dubbed the “golden age” of covert action) when the U.S. government secretly spent large sums of money (“King George’s cavalry,” as British intelligence officers refer to funding for secret operations) on anti-Communist operations in Afghanistan to drive out the Soviet Army, in Nicaragua against the Marxist-leaning Sandinista regime, and in Poland to support the pro-democracy Solidarity labor organization. These and other covert actions were planned and implemented by what was then known as the CIA’s Directorate of Operations (DO), and Daugherty’s job for two years in the 1980s was to supervise every covert action carried out against the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. Of course, this does not mean that he is now at liberty to tell readers everything he learned about secret operations against the Soviet “Evil Empire.” Most of the operations remain classified, and Dougherty, as a former CIA employee, was obliged to submit his book manuscript to the agency’s Publication Review Board to remove anything its members deemed too sensitive to see the light of day.

Nor is *Executive Secrets* an angry look back by a disgruntled former intelligence officer who seeks to settle accounts with the CIA by denouncing its leaders and their decisions, an approach that can often produce for the public juicy insights into how the CIA operates. Although Daugherty is candid about some mistakes made by the agency and does settle a few scores against selected bureaucratic foes (the then CIA director John Deutch is a favorite target), he is generally proud of the CIA’s record and—within the constraints of protecting sensitive sources and methods—pleased to advertise its successes.

Dougherty’s primary objective, he states, is to demonstrate that the CIA throughout its existence has conducted covert actions solely on orders from the president. In 1975, Senator Frank Church, a Democrat from Idaho, chaired a committee that examined the role of the CIA in covert actions. Church accused the CIA of acting like a “rogue elephant” on a rampage, beyond the control of the White House or congressional overseers. Not so, according to Daugherty. He maintains that the CIA, far from being a rogue agency, was often reluctant when embarking on operations at the insistence of presidents, after warning them that the covert actions they proposed were risky and sometimes even foolhardy. In addition to developing this argument, Daugherty seeks to explain covert action to a general readership and to provide an accurate historical account of covert activities since the end of World War II.

Daugherty provides an informative and reliable account largely free of puffery,
depicting a record of covert action that is by no means unblemished. He notes, for example, that "there have been more failures in covert action efforts to reverse hostile regimes (Indonesia, Cuba, Guyana, Iraq) than there have been successes (Iran, Guatemala)" (p. 40). Daugherty concedes that secrecy restrictions have prevented him from offering more than a cursory overview of selected covert actions, but, even so, he provides a reasonably full account of how decisions on the matter are made and opens a few new windows on covert actions that are poorly understood by the public. He points to the CIA’s support of Solidarity as the most successful covert action during the Reagan administration, although the book offers no details about it.

Daugherty is successful in countering Senator Church’s “rogue elephant” allegation. Clearly, the senator (whom the reviewer served at the time as an assistant) did overstate the case on a television talk show soon after he had learned of the CIA’s involvement in foreign assassination plots. Few experts would gainsay Daugherty’s central conclusion that most covert actions have been approved by the White House since 1947.

Nonetheless, for the sake of full reporting, Daugherty might have noted some instances when the CIA did go beyond its initial authority. For example, the CIA continued to spy on U.S. citizens (in Operation Chaos) even after President Richard M. Nixon in 1970 rescinded the so-called Huston Plan that provided short-lived authority for such operations—not a covert action, but an illustration of a CIA not well-controlled by the White House. When the CIA was pursuing assassination plots in the early 1960s, it hired the mafia to assist its efforts to dispatch Fidel Castro, a dubious partnership never approved by President John F. Kennedy. During the Iran-contra affair, the highest officials in the CIA and some case officers in the field joined with staffers on the National Security Council to use covert actions against Nicaragua despite laws to the contrary and without express approval from the president. Earlier in the Reagan administration, a CIA assassination manual surfaced in Nicaragua, even though an executive order had been in effect since 1976 prohibiting the planning of assassination plots.

In the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, the CIA seems to have been granted wide approval from the White House to use lethal force as it sees fit against terrorists. In 2002, the agency launched a Hellfire missile from a Predator drone hovering at 30,000 feet above the deserts of Yemen, killing a car full of suspected terrorists, including an American citizen, without clear evidence of guilt or due process. This highly lethal paramilitary operation may not add up to a “rogue elephant,” but it does raise serious questions about presidential and congressional accountability over covert action. In another context, Senator John McCain accused the CIA in 2004 of “rogue elephant” behavior, this time because of what appeared to be widespread agency leaks criticizing President George W. Bush’s handling of the war in Iraq and against terrorists.

Daugherty claims that “not one president has ever accused the CIA of acting independently or of having its own secret agenda” (p. 26). But even at the beginning of the agency’s history, former President Truman said in an interview with Merle Miller, “Now, as nearly as I can make out, those fellows in the CIA don’t just report on wars
and the like, they go out and make their own, and there's nobody to keep track of what they're up to." Intelligence oversight has improved (somewhat) since those days, but the reins over America's secret agencies—the CIA and fifteen others—are still too loose, Daugherty's rejection of the rogue theory notwithstanding.

This volume provides an important look into one of the most secretive aspects of America's hidden foreign policy. Its administration-by-administration review of key covert actions since the Truman years, coupled with a step-by-step tracing of how covert actions are decided, makes the book a valuable addition to the literature on intelligence, as well as an engrossing primer for classroom use.


Reviewed by Verne W. Newton, Marist College

Walter Krivitsky may have been one of the few heroes, a tragic one to be sure, of that low, dishonest decade of the 1930s. His leftist revolutionary career ended when he openly denounced Josif Stalin for killing off the Old Bolsheviks in the Great Purges. In November 1938, after surviving two attempts on his life, Krivitsky fled to the United States. From then on, things got difficult. Hounded by U.S. immigration officials and stalked by Soviet assassins, he secretly provided invaluable intelligence to U.S. and British authorities in the hope of saving his wife and child.

In February 1940, Krivitsky visited Margarita and Eitel Dobert (who, like him, were European political refugees) at their secluded chicken farm in rural Virginia with the idea that he might eventually move there. At the end of the weekend, Margarita drove him to Washington, DC to catch the train bound for New York City. The next morning he was found in a hotel near Union Station with much of his head blown away. The Metropolitan police, in an investigation worthy of the Marx brothers, immediately ruled it a suicide.

Was it murder, suicide, or a “forced suicide”? Most of those who knew Krivitsky insisted that he never would have handed Stalin a propaganda victory by taking his own life, and they recalled how he had repeatedly warned that Soviet hit-men could arrange an assassination to look like a suicide. Sympathizers of Moscow asserted that Krivitsky's despair from betraying the Soviet Union and living in a capitalistic wasteland had driven him to self-destruction.

In *A Death in Washington* Gary Kern comes down on both sides, arguing that Krivitsky voluntarily pulled the trigger but in doing so had "outfoxed" Stalin (p. 378). The book can be divided into two parts. The first 345 pages are largely "spy vs. spy round and round" (p. 278). Kern combines a fluid writing style with some new sources to make this oft-told story more interesting, describing with moving insight the liquidation of the Old Bolsheviks in Stalin's atavistic world.

But that empathy turns to melancholia when Kern shifts from the blood-stained
cellars of the Lubyanka to the New Deal milieu in Washington. The meticulous research that characterizes much of the book is abandoned for the canards that have suffused anti-Roosevelt diatribes from Charles Beard to Ann Coulter, including Whittaker Chambers’s assertion that Franklin Roosevelt took umbrage at his warning that Alger Hiss was a Communist, (p. 230); that Roosevelt blurted out to Congressman Martin Dies (here an almost heroic figure), that Communism and Stalin were a good thing for Russia, (pp. 217–218); and that the “determined ignoramuses” Harry Hopkins and Henry Wallace were the equivalent of Soviet spies in an administration that essentially allowed the Soviet Union to steal documents “by the truckload, by the ton” (pp. 180, 230).

The second part of the book, roughly fifty pages long, seeks to solve the mystery of Krivitsky’s death. To do so Kern, a translator of Russian literature, crosses from non-fiction to fiction. He accepts the suicide verdict, as did the police, based largely on the Doberts’ assurances that Krivitsky wrote the suicide notes at their cabin the night before his death. Even if one were to put aside all the other reasons to doubt the Doberts’ often contradictory, inconsistent, and self-serving story, they had no earthly way of knowing what Krivitsky did in one room while they were asleep in another. They never claimed that he showed them the notes or mentioned them. If the Doberts are to be believed at all, the most that can be said is that they provided Krivitsky with the paper on which the notes were written. Whether he actually wrote them—and, if so, when and under what circumstances—remains, in spite of Kern’s efforts to smother all doubt, purely a matter of speculation.

Kern acknowledges that the Doberts’ account might seem suspicious “to the skeptical eye,” but he assures us that “in the psychological sense it is convincing.” (p. 374). This is not historical evidence; it is authorial fiat.

Essential to Kern’s thesis is that Krivitsky took his fatal trip to circumvent New York’s prohibitive gun laws after Eitel Dobert informed him that a non-citizen could legally buy a gun in Virginia. What Kern does not explain is what good this would have done. Had Krivitsky returned with a gun to New York—which is where the danger was—he would have been in possession of an illegal firearm that he could not have registered or obtained a permit to carry. As an alien, if he had caught with a gun, he and his family could have been deported. In other words, Krivitsky’s position would have been no different had he skipped the Virginia trip and simply bought a $5 gun illegally off the city streets.

Kern’s determination to explain away any contradictory evidence forces him to construct a flimsy bridge of assumptions: “Let us quickly sweep away a pile of false clues, false leads and false suppositions” (p. 347); “We can quickly dispense with past errors . . . with all this old baggage cleared away we can . . .” (p. 364); “Let us assume . . . assume further” (p. 373). The payoff is “a workable sequence based on Krivitsky’s psychological needs” (p. 331) that places Kern, à la Edmund Morris in his infamous book about Ronald Reagan, in room 532 of the Bellevue Hotel at the end. The climax is pure fiction:

He has to think it over . . . he smokes a final cigarette. He checks the gun, the bullets. It’s still dark outside, just before it starts to get light. By then you
can hear the trains. He looks at the photo of Alek and lifts the gun to his head. Blood splashes. . . . Somewhere down the hall, a person wakes up and grumbles: “What the hell.” (p. 377).

For Kern, history is subordinated, as in Stalin’s Soviet Union, to a greater cause, and the book’s real purpose is to serve as a platform for his hard-wired anti-Stalinist views. Unfortunately, the limited space for this review does not permit a listing and rebuttal of even the most egregious claims—or the most amusing—put forth by Kern, including the process by which he determined that Magda Lupescu, the mistress of King Carol II of Romania, was a Soviet agent.

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R. Bruce Craig, Treasonable Doubt: The Harry Dexter White Spy Case. Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2004. 496 pp. $34.95.

Reviewed by Vernon L. Pedersen, University of Great Falls

Harry Dexter White, who served as assistant secretary of the treasury under both Franklin Roosevelt and Harry Truman, is best known for being one of the highest-ranking government officials accused of espionage and for his stirring defense of himself before the House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC) in August 1948. However, White died only a few days after his testimony, diverting both contemporary and historical attention away from him. A measure of the relative neglect is that R. Bruce Craig’s biography of White is only the third, and by far the best researched, account of his life and work. Craig opens the book by declaring that the evidence that has emerged since the end of the Cold War, particularly some 3,000 Soviet intelligence cables from the 1930s and 1940s that were decrypted by U.S. signals intelligence analysts, indicates that White did indeed spy for the Soviet Union. A book that begins with an acknowledgment of the facts in order to develop a sophisticated understanding of the motives and character of the subject would be a welcome addition to the historical literature on American Communism. Unfortunately, that is not the type of book that Craig has written. Although his study is worth reading for its wealth of details, it suffers from a strange dichotomy, accepting proof of White’s espionage on the one hand while seeking to dismiss specific charges and generally minimize the extent of the espionage on the other. A subtheme running through the book suggests that White may not have been a spy at all but an unwitting agent manipulated by the real Communists and spies among his close friends and associates.

Craig treats his subject thematically, dividing the book into three broad sections. The first section, titled “The Making of a New Dealer,” presents a brief biography of White and details his early career at the Treasury Department. The next section, “Harry Dexter White and the Subversion of American Foreign Policy,” discusses the allegations that White used his government position to advance Soviet interests. The
final section, “The Search for Collaboration Five Decades and Beyond,” further examines the evidence against White. Craig’s arguments follow a set pattern. He begins a section by discussing a period of White’s life, acknowledges that White was engaged in “some form of espionage” at the time, and then presents the evidence a piece at a time while poking as many holes as possible in the individual pieces. In a chapter titled “Whittaker Chambers, Harry Dexter White, and the Washington, D.C., Communist Underground,” Craig traces White’s rapid rise in the Treasury Department thanks to his razor-sharp intelligence and despite his often abrasive personality. Craig then shifts gears and states: “It was during this period of Harry Dexter White’s rise to preeminence in the Treasury Department (1934–1938) that, according to Whittaker Chambers, White became entangled in the Communist underground” (p. 40).

Nothing in the paragraphs that came before this statement prepares the reader for the abrupt shift, and nothing in the record of White’s career as presented by Craig foreshadows such a development. However, Craig assures his audience that circumstantial evidence does support the claim and devotes the next thirty-eight pages to meticulously examining everything Whittaker Chambers and Elizabeth Bentley ever said about Harry Dexter White. He spends two full pages assessing the famous story of the Bukhara rugs, expensive central Asian carpets that Chambers’s controller asked him to present to his four most valuable agents as thanks from the Soviet people. Craig devotes another two pages to a close analysis of the “White memorandum,” a four-page document in White’s handwriting containing conversational comments on a number of issues united by the common thread of U.S. policy toward Japan. Craig dismisses both bits of evidence, noting that the rug was given to White by Chambers not as a gift from the Soviet people but as a present from his close friend and alleged agent controller, George Silverman, who claimed to have purchased it from Chambers. Craig concedes that White wrote the memorandum that bears his name, but he is willing to conclude only that “somehow, the document came into Chambers’ possession” (p. 51).

The sections in part two follow the same pattern. Craig minimizes White’s complicity in furthering the careers of the half-dozen or so secret Communists who passed through the Treasury Department, downplays White’s role in the transfer of occupation currency plates to the Soviet sector of Germany (an action that cost the United States hundreds of millions of dollars), and disparages claims that any of White’s work on the International Monetary Fund (IMF) could have benefited the Soviet Union. Craig concludes the book by returning to the place he began, White’s 1948 testimony before HUAC, and finally answering his initial question: How did White reconcile secret spying with support for American values? Craig asserts that White cared deeply about international cooperation, the agenda of the Democratic Party, and equal access to the world’s resources, all of which he believed would be advanced through active support of the Soviet Union. But when White was asked by HUAC whether he was a Communist, he made no attempt to defend his convictions and instead simply lied by declaring that he was not a Communist and that, believing what he believed, he could not be a Communist. White’s dishonesty, according to Craig, stemmed from his con-
cern that telling the truth would impair the cause of international peace, damage the Democratic Party, place his work on the World Bank and IMF in jeopardy, and endanger his friends. No doubt a more plausible motive for White’s decision to lie is that telling the truth would have put him in jail.


Reviewed by Jeffrey T. Richelson, National Security Archive

Aerospace historian Curtis Peebles has authored books on space and aerial reconnaissance, the controversy over unidentified flying objects, secret aircraft projects, and U.S. attempts to use balloons to spy on the Soviet Union. His latest book examines U.S. covert air operations during the Cold War—operations that included the insertion of spies and resistance personnel, the delivery of supplies (including weapons and equipment), and the extraction of aircraft crews and covert forces from hostile territory. Despite the book’s subtitle it covers far more than operations directed against the USSR.

By the time Peebles reaches his concluding chapter, he has described the insertion of spies and resistance groups into the Soviet Union, Albania, and Poland in the early years of the Cold War; air-drops of agents during the Korean War and their activities on the ground; the use of the Civil Air Transport corporation by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) for covert operations against Communist China; air operations in the clandestine guerrilla war over Tibet; the operations of two CIA proprietary companies, Intermountain Aviation and Air America, in the Congo and Southeast Asia respectively; and air-supported covert activities directed against North Vietnam. In addition, he provides an account of the B-17 and its skyhook system, featured in the 1965 James Bond film *Thunderball*, and its use in the recovery of U.S. naval personnel from an abandoned Soviet ice station they had been investigating.

One might expect that a book with a subtitle that begins “covert air operations” would, while keeping in mind the ultimate objective of the operations on the ground, devote significant attention to topics such as the aircraft employed and any special equipment onboard, the selection of air routes, the challenges and perils of flying covert missions, and the organizations involved in planning and carrying out such missions. Sometimes Peebles does discuss these topics—at least to some extent. He describes the origins and activities of Air America and other proprietary corporations and provides an account of the 8th Air Rescue Group and its SC-47 transport planes—which were key elements in the highly secret Strategic Aircrew Recovery Program (SARP). He describes the rescue group’s organization, the modifications to the SC-47, and the special training in low-level flight, night flying, and mountain flying provided to its pilots.

But in other instances Peebles’s focus is largely on the covert activities taking
place on the ground, with the air element being but a peripheral part of the account. As a result, the chapters on U.S. covert air operations against the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe (specifically, Albania and Poland) and North Vietnam are little more than summaries of previous, more detailed, studies of these covert actions. Another chapter, “Tinker, Tailor, Tourist, Spy,” seems even more out of place, being largely devoted to the collection of intelligence by Americans visiting the Soviet Union in the 1950s. At the end of the chapter Peebles does turn to tourist support of U-2 overflights—a topic that, like other aerial intelligence collection programs, is not covered (excluding brief references) elsewhere in the book.

Even more disconnected from the book’s title is Peebles’s concluding chapter, which briefly discusses the evolution of the Cold War and covert operations, without any significant discussion of the covert air element of the operations described in previous chapters. The final pages contain observations such as “The central role of the Internet in the global economy and society makes it difficult for a totalitarian state to counter it” (p. 300) and “The struggles during the Cold War were only one chapter in the historical struggle between the rights of the individual and state tyranny.” (p. 301) The problem is not the content of the observations but their essential irrelevance to the subject of his book.

That Peebles did not have more to say in the main body and conclusions of the book about the details of covert air operations during the Cold War and their ultimate significance would not come as a surprise if one had examined the notes section at the end of the book, which runs just a bit over eight pages in length.

Peebles includes no footnotes or endnotes and instead provides a list of sources for different topics discussed in each chapter. His research, as reflected in that list, was clearly limited, and he relies mainly on secondary sources. Although he lists several articles that appeared in the CIA’s Studies in Intelligence and alludes to roughly twenty declassified documents, that is the extent of his research. A library card and the Internet seem to be his two major research tools. No interviews with those involved in any aspect of the covert aerial operations, no other documents obtained under the Freedom of Information Act, and no other material gathered during visits to the National Archives or presidential libraries are cited.

Although Twilight Warriors may serve as a once-over lightly account of U.S. covert air operations during the Cold War, it provides few new details about such operations—undoubtedly far fewer than could be provided if the author had expended more time and effort. As a result, it does not constitute a significant addition to the literature about U.S. covert activities during the Cold War.

☆ ☆ ☆
Vietnam scholarship, despite all its original controversy, remains dominated by the critical vision of its first generation of writers: David Halberstam, Stanley Karnow, Neil Sheehan, and Frances Scott Fitzgerald. The war, these journalists argued, was unwinnable because Vietnamese culture was too unfathomable for the United States to impose its political will. The South Vietnamese government, according to many journalists, was hopelessly corrupt, and the people of South Vietnam were austere and indifferent. Others claimed that the Vietnamese had been “fighting for centuries” and were “fanatical nationalists” who would never be tamed by Western political sensibilities. In either scenario, defeat was inevitable. The roots of culture, tenacious in preserving distinctive national features, would inevitably defeat efforts to impose a political settlement from outside.

An alternative scholarly tradition, focusing on military activity, emerged in the wake of the Tet Offensive and eventually, in the early 1980s, became the most popular genre of works analyzing the war. (However, Stewart O’Nan’s 724-page anthology, *The Vietnam Reader: The Definitive Reader of Fiction and Nonfiction on the War*, published in 1998 by Anchor Books, contains no military accounts of the war and devotes only around thirty pages to individual “combat narratives.”) Often this was the history of the war as written by those who fought it. The new brand of scholarship avoided the teleology of political defeat by focusing on individual battles that generally resulted in American victories. The best of these books—for example, Philip Caputo’s *A Rumor of War* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1977) and the first part of Keith Nolan’s *Operation Buffalo: USMC Fight for the DMZ* (Novato, CA: Presidio, 1991)—have an aesthetic quality that goes beyond politics. The heroic struggle to stay alive made the petty disputes of Congress or the president appear insignificant.

Recent scholarship in the military genre has been innovative. Lewis Sorley and Ronald Spector have argued that the period after the Tet Offensive was actually one of military effectiveness. The media and the political left, they contend, got it wrong. The situation “on the ground,” in their view, was not hopeless and has been misunderstood. Sorley went so far as to claim that from a military standpoint the “war” had been won by early 1971. Andrew Krepinevich has taken this argument even further in asserting that the fight on the ground remained inconclusive only because U.S. military strategy was enmeshed in the political world of the Cold War. American military tactics, according to Krepinevich, became more effective at the very moment that U.S. troops began to depart. With the dismantling of the unified command for U.S. troops—known formally as the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam—a clear vision of what was really happening “on the ground” confronted General Creighton Abrams, the U.S. commander in Vietnam from 1968 to 1972, who responded effectively. Thus, according to these analysts, it was not until U.S. troops were leaving the country that they were finally permitted to fight effectively. What is striking about
these arguments is that they coincide in some respects with the political narrative of inevitable defeat.

This historiographic trend provides the backdrop for James Willbanks’s Abandoning Vietnam: How America Left and South Vietnam Lost Its War. Willbanks, a former U.S. military adviser who survived the 1972 battle of An Loc, has written what will be the best overview of the military and political situation in Vietnam in the post-Têt period. He has mastered the scholarship on the subject and recounts, in great detail, the Nixon administration’s flailing attempts to achieve “peace with honor.”

Nonetheless, Abandoning Vietnam suffers from the lack of a convincing thesis. Willbanks wants to argue that the policy of “Vietnamization” never had a chance to succeed and was more of a cover for its original appellation, “de-Americanization,” an excuse for abandoning Vietnam. It was, according to Willbanks, a “public relations coup” and a “way of mollifying the anti-war crowd.” Even though Defense Secretary Melvyn Laird, “always the politician,” realized that further U.S. military involvement in Southeast Asia was highly unlikely, he assured General Abrams that U.S. air support and other assistance would always be available to the South Vietnamese. Willbanks argues that the premise of Vietnamization could not be delivered and that Laird knew this.

Willbanks’s thesis is a variation on the “decent interval” argument put forth by Frank Snepp and others. To Willbanks, Laird is the villain, but it might just as easily have been Richard Nixon or Lyndon Johnson or anyone else. “Successful Vietnamization” is the yardstick against which these political figures must be measured, yet the only scholars who have taken Vietnamization seriously have been military historians such as Spector and Sorley, neither of whom claims that a new policy might have affected the war’s outcome.

Willbanks’s argument is self-contradictory. He contends that despite Laird’s maneuvering, Vietnamization was actually a great success. South Vietnamese units, he maintains, fought well in Cambodia, and “by 1970 Vietnamization had worked.” Willbanks even cites several U.S. advisers who dispute the implications of Lam Son 719, the South Vietnamese army’s disastrous final offensive in 1971 that ended with its troops fleeing in disarray. Yet Willbanks concedes that these very successes also brought about defeat. He notes that General Bruce Palmer, the U.S. Army’s vice chief of staff, advised against the Cambodia operation and that Secretary of State William Rogers opposed Lam Son 719 on political grounds, arguing that it would stir up new protests by antiwar activists and thereby undermine public support for “Vietnamization.”

In the end, I had to reread my notes several times to determine what Willbanks really thought of Vietnamization, and even now I am not sure of his view. Could a different military strategy have affected the political outcome of the Vietnam experience? Willbanks does not answer this question, and those who have raised the possibility—Spector, Sorley, and Krepinevich—he dismisses. Why, then, did Willbanks give his book its title? If the war was unwinnable, as he seems to believe, a better title for the book might have been Leaving Vietnam, and How South Vietnam Abandoned Its War. In this case Laird could be depicted as a hero precisely because of his maneuvering to

Reviewed by James J. Wirtz, Naval Postgraduate School

Strange as this may sound to the uninitiated, archival research can be exciting. As one pores over box after box of dusty documents, one not only gets a rich sense of the trials and tribulations suffered by policymakers but also a thrill at reading someone else’s “mail.” Occasionally, one stumbles across a critical decision-memorandum with much sought-after marginalia that gives additional insights into what was on the minds of high-level officials. Often documents of truly historic importance are mixed haphazardly with the minutiae of everyday life as office assistants close out the daily file for some future archive. Sometimes policymakers even plant evidence intended to throw the future researcher off track, or include a few jokes, or even deliberately leave behind information that supports their version of events. Archives, of course, also contain much information that former policymakers probably regret was preserved in the first place. Yet, despite the exciting detective work that goes into archival research, the vast majority of historians end up writing history; they do not just let the documents speak for themselves.

Jeffrey Kimball’s *The Vietnam War Files* is an exception to this rule. Kimball provides excerpts of selected documents from various archives, allowing them to speak for themselves, or at least to support his less-than-rosy depiction of the Nixon administration’s efforts to extract the United States from its disastrous military involvement in Southeast Asia. Kimball begins *The Vietnam War Files* with an introductory chapter that describes several contemporary debates about the Nixon administration. The remainder of the volume offers a series of short commentaries about key events during the Nixon administration’s war effort, supplemented by excerpts from declassified documents to justify Kimball’s assessment of the way foreign policy was conducted by Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger.

Kimball seems especially interested in providing documentary evidence that Nixon attempted to put into practice the “mad man” theory of diplomacy. Borrowing from what was then cutting-edge thinking about deterrence, Nixon apparently attempted to signal to Moscow, Beijing, and Hanoi that he was becoming increasingly desperate and willing to undertake “irrational” escalation of the Vietnam War to bring it to a conclusion on terms minimally acceptable to the United States. We still have little way of knowing what impact, if any, Nixon’s “mad man” posturing had on Communist leaders’ perceptions of the developing situation. Indeed, we can not yet be sure
that they even noticed the various signals generated by Washington, including a U.S. nuclear alert intended to gain Moscow’s attention. Although Kimball seems most interested in using the documentary evidence to demonstrate that Nixon was in fact “mad” in seeking to create the impression that he was becoming increasingly irrational, the president’s effort to make credible threats of irrational behavior is consistent with mainstream deterrence theory. In any case, Nixon’s approach reveals the lengths to which he and Kissinger were willing to go—and the limits of the instruments available to them—to find some sort of face-saving way to extract the United States from Vietnam.

What actually emerges from the fragments of documents in the book is a rather favorable image of the Nixon-Kissinger grand strategy. Both men realized that Chinese and Soviet officials were willing to fight in Vietnam to the last North Vietnamese soldier and that the key to a reasonable settlement in Southeast Asia was to detach Moscow and Beijing from Hanoi. Once the North Vietnamese were deprived of their great-power patrons, the thinking went, they alone would have to face the brunt of U.S. military power, a prospect that Nixon and Kissinger believed would spur Hanoi to end the conflict. To this end, they pursued triangular diplomacy, linkage, and détente while making irrational threats and launching military operations to demonstrate their willingness to use large-scale violence to terminate the conflict. As the documentary evidence testifies, their deliberations about what to do were as messy and unsightly as the making of sausages (or legislation), but it also demonstrates that Nixon and Kissinger were masterful practitioners of realpolitik. Both men felt at ease as actors on a world stage, interacting with foreign leaders like Mao Zedong, making veiled nuclear threats, and trying to harness political trends and other states’ foreign and defense policies to suit U.S. interests. Kissinger also emerges as a consummate diplomat, undertaking surprisingly cordial discussions of world events with Soviet, Chinese, and even North Vietnamese officials.

Kimball’s introductory commentary on the documents fails to offer a sustained narrative of the Nixon administration’s effort to end U.S. involvement in Vietnam. One cannot help but wonder whether contradictory evidence was excluded from the book in favor of documents that support Kimball’s interpretation of the Nixon administration’s conduct of foreign affairs and defense policy. Despite these shortcomings, or maybe because of them, The Vietnam War Files offers a surprising glimpse into policymaking as U.S. leaders searched for ways to terminate a counterinsurgency operation that had gone on too long.

✣✣✣
This readable and well-edited book is neither a text nor a comprehensive history of war, nor does it have much to do with the Cold War as covered by this journal. Rather, it is a combination of diverse elements, including some truly harrowing accounts of combat experience at the most human and bewildering level and as prisoners of war; some rather potted but interesting capsule histories of World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War; two essays on the Cold War; and two brief discussions of terrorism and insurgency, past and present. The book thus offers a potpourri of reflections on war, mostly hot wars and mostly by retired U.S. military officers. In a way, it amounts to a set of Cliff’s Notes on the U.S. experience in war (except for David Glantz’s chapter about the Soviet role in World War II), though it is an incomplete set.

The chapters by Roy Appleton, John Luckadoo, David Braden, Edwin Simmons, Henry Gole, and David Winn provide the views of those who have come under hostile fire. Appleton and Gole were grunts in the U.S. Army in World War II and Korea, respectively. Luckadoo and Braden dropped bombs on Germany and Japan, respectively. Simmons fought on the ground in Korea but provides a broader history of that war. Winn, a prisoner of war in Vietnam, conveys all the desperation and hope displayed by those unfortunate soldiers. On the ground and from the air, the human slaughter was immense, both of soldiers and of civilians. The enormous attrition of bombers in World War II, both to enemy fire and to malfunction, is astounding. The message that comes across in all these chapters is the mindlessness of it all—at least to the participants in day-to-day conflict, whether on the ground, in the air, or in prison. None of them knew the political leaders who sent them to war or the goals they were supposedly pursuing when making their sacrifices.

The histories written from a more detached perspective are mere capsules, with useful footnotes added by the editors. Glantz covers the immense battles between the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany, recounting the terrible slaughter of that war. Simmons provides a short history of the Korean War. Russell Dougherty’s chapter on the early Cold War is mostly a paean to General Curtis LeMay. Charles Hamm recalls his tour as U.S. defense attaché in Moscow during the late Cold War, when, it seems, nothing happened unless the KGB state security forces (he does not mention Soviet military intelligence or the Internal Affairs Ministry) let it happen. What Dougherty does not say is that LeMay, the commander of bombing campaigns against Japan who later was eager to bomb the Soviet Union, was gradually marginalized as the concept of deterrence acquired greater sophistication. By the time of the Cuban Missile Crisis, he was left grumbling in the back row.

The historian Robert Divine provides a compact description of the wartime context in which President Harry Truman decided to drop two nuclear bombs on Japan. He wryly notes that one of the benefits of Truman’s decision is that the bombings pro-
vided true-life evidence about the unprecedented horror that nuclear weapons could cause, a horror that eclipses even the gruesome experiences recounted by the former infantrymen and bomber pilots earlier in the book. The historian George Herring provides a good, concise account of the agony that Lyndon Johnson suffered over Vietnam—with Johnson acknowledging that it was his war. We can ponder this admission as the Bush administration’s war in Iraq stretches as long as Johnson’s war in Vietnam. In the latter case, the grunts and pilots, including the one prisoner, who contributed to this book hardly knew what the politicians on high were thinking about.

Finally, unconventional forms of warfare are covered by Norman Itzkowitz on terrorism and Brian Linn on insurgency. Itzkowitz’s contribution is only a short one amid the vast and growing literature on terrorism, but he provides interesting insights. The chapter by Linn may be worth the price of the whole book. He contrasts the insurgency in the early 1900s in the Philippines with the current insurgency in Iraq. The Philippines is portrayed by some as an exemplary case of nation-building, but the difficulties of getting a coherent program going and the attendant slaughter of innocents in the meantime are laid out in exquisite detail in Linn’s chapter.

For the most part, the contribution of this book, including the two chapters covering aspects of the Cold War, to Cold War historiography is not readily apparent—except perhaps for the reminder that the Cold War, when it remained cold, was a lot better than any hot wars.


Reviewed by Gregory Mitrovich, Independent Scholar

The mobilization of U.S. military power initiated by President Harry S. Truman in 1950 was one of the most crucial decisions in American history, a decision that led in a remarkably short time to a profound transformation of U.S. national security policy. Prior to 1950, the United States premised its military strategy on the insularity afforded by two wide oceans, on the invulnerability of the continental United States to direct attack, and on the vast strength of what George Kennan (in PPS 33, “Factors Affecting the Nature of the U.S. Defense Arrangements in the Light of Soviet Policies”) labeled the “North American Industrial Potential.” Until 1950, U.S. leaders assumed that in any global conflict the United States would have the time and resources needed to build its military capabilities from scratch, as it had in World Wars I and II. They were confident that U.S. security could be maintained without a large peacetime military establishment that itself might pose the risk of creating a “garrison state” and undermining democratic institutions and values.

Beginnings of the Cold War Arms Race by Raymond P. Ojserkis ably captures this tumultuous period in American history. Ojserkis, who completed his doctorate at the
London School of Economics, synthesizes a wide array of sources, both archival and secondary, to analyze the diplomatic, military, and economic impact of the post-1950 military mobilization. He lays out a series of seven questions but quickly focuses on the most important one: Why could the Truman administration not initiate the mobilization called for by NSC 68 in April 1950 without the intervention of the Korean War? This is not a new question, but it is a crucial one. For decades, the Korean War and NSC 68 have been fused together, so much so that Korea is often considered an extension of NSC 68. Ojserkis does an excellent job of separating the two. He demonstrates that the scope of the mobilization called for in NSC 68 went far beyond the needs of the Korean conflict but that the outbreak of the war was a necessary condition to break the bureaucratic logjam that would have strangled the effort.

Ojserkis divides his narrative into six main chapters: Demobilization, Consolidation, Reconsideration, Transformation, Globalization, and Actualization. The first two chapters discuss the rapid contraction of the early postwar military establishment, as the vast World War II force of 1945 shrank to a rump organization in 1948 that was heavily dependent on a limited stockpile of nuclear weapons. The remaining four chapters study the origins, implementation, and impact of the arms buildup. After recounting the initial calls for rearmament in 1949 in the aftermath of the Soviet nuclear bomb test and the Communist victory in the Chinese civil war, Ojserkis discusses the struggles between Secretary of State Dean Acheson and Secretary of Defense Louis Johnson during the NSC 68 deliberations, the impact of the North Korean attack on South Korea, and the radical shift of Truman’s foreign policy outlook.

Ojserkis conveys well the sense of shock and alarm that suffused the U.S. government in the aftermath of the North Korean attack and how it led to fundamental changes in the U.S. force posture. The tables he provides in his final chapter, “Actualization,” are powerful indeed. Before 25 June 1950 the U.S. military was composed of 10 Army and 2 Marine divisions, 48 Air Force wings, approximately 200 warships, and 7 carrier groups. By 1 January 1953 that force had doubled in size to 21 Army and 3 Marine divisions, 100 Air Force wings, 400 warships, and 16 carrier groups. Ojserkis is quick to remind us that the numerical increases tell only part of the story. He contends, correctly, that the mobilization led to a total technological transformation of the U.S. military, as jet aircraft quickly replaced World War II–style turboprop planes, new and faster tanks overcame the threat posed by Soviet-made T-34s in Korea, and the 76,000-ton Forrestal-class aircraft carrier ushered in a new era of super carriers that would dominate the world’s seas. The keel for the world’s first nuclear-powered submarine was laid in 1952; advances in nuclear technology led to the development of battlefield nuclear weapons; and the first studies were undertaken regarding the feasibility of intercontinental ballistic missiles.

Ojserkis is especially effective at bridging the gap between domestic politics and national security decision-making. He does an excellent job of discussing the impact of the military buildup on the U.S. economy and the debate that arose about resorting to new taxes or deficit spending to pay for the buildup. He also provides fascinating details about the reimposition of wage and price freezes, the reconversion of industrial
plants for war production, and the creation of governmental boards similar to those created during World War II to organize the effort.

Ojserkis is less effective when he discusses U.S. containment strategy, relying as he does on older academic studies or often unreliable popular studies rather than on the works of Melvyn Leffler and Marc Trachtenberg. Similarly, his assessment of the Truman administration’s nuclear weapons policy is hampered by his neglect of the writings of David Alan Rosenberg and Barton Bernstein, the two preeminent scholars on the topic. His analysis of President Dwight D. Eisenhower’s New Look policy would have benefited greatly from a careful review of publications by Richard Immerman and Robert Bowie, particularly their book *Waging Peace: How Eisenhower Shaped an Enduring Cold War Strategy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

Despite these weak points, Ojserkis provides a useful, well-written study of a complicated and difficult topic, and does so in 150 pages. Although much of the material is not new, the volume ably synthesizes a great deal of information that will be of use to undergraduates, graduate students, and established scholars.

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Reviewed by Irwin Wall, New York University

Tourism, according to Christopher Endy, added a consumerist dimension to U.S.-French relations that has been neglected by historians. This is certainly true, and to the extent that Endy’s book fills the proverbial gap it is welcome. Tourism is equally important as an aspect of modern globalization, and because France for much of its recent history has been—and still is—the world’s most visited country, a study of U.S. tourism in France is of value in trying to understand global capitalism. American tourism in general became a mass industry during the Cold War and was heavily influenced by it. U.S.-French relations were also shaped in peculiar and distinctive ways by the Cold War, and American tourism in France necessarily reflected that. The U.S. government was extremely sensitive to the possibility that American tourists abroad might exacerbate anti-American feeling in countries like France, where partisan politics often seemed a domestic Cold War battleground. But did tourism in turn affect all the Cold War issues and high-level diplomacy between the two countries, as Endy asserts? This seems a much more doubtful proposition, and Endy seems to have demonstrated the reverse. Tourism was influenced by the Cold War but had a minor impact, if that, on the actual course of U.S.-French relations.

In the immediate post-1945 period, U.S. tourists in France were few in number and not particularly welcome because they competed for scarce resources. They also tended to be put off by the country’s poverty and by the strength of the French Communist Party. But as the economy swiftly recovered to prewar production levels and the Marshall Plan took hold, tourism revived, and Marshall Plan officials in France
encouraged it. Tourism was a valuable source of revenue for the French economy, and it came in the form of private enterprise rather than a government dole—"trade, not aid"—and therefore was welcomed by conservatives in the U.S. Congress. Many in the United States who encouraged tourism hoped that American visitors in France would be ambassadors of goodwill and welcome guests who could help cement good relations between the two countries through people-to-people exchanges. Many also hoped that the presence of these tourists would highlight the superiority of the American economy and the capitalist system in the face of the Communist threat. The French, for their part, encouraged tourism as a matter of national pride and a testament to the rayonnement (radiance) of French culture and civilization as well as an additional source of income and jobs. A symbiosis rapidly developed between the travel industries of the two countries, encouraged in turn by governments and a cooperative media. Technological improvements in air travel facilitated a huge expansion of the industry, elevating it to its current status as one of the hallmarks of globalization.

Endy is particularly good at showing how the tourism industry evolved. The introduction of tourist-class travel by Pan American Airlines in 1956 and the introduction of passenger jets two years later produced a great spurt of growth for the industry. Guidebooks became standard in interpreting France for Americans, and mass tourism shifted from the luxury hotels to budget travel, pioneered by Arthur Frommer's Europe on $5 a Day. Marshall Plan officials in France helped modernize the French hotel industry, and the French took it from there. Under Charles de Gaulle, tourism became a mass phenomenon in France; many modern hotels were built with government aid; French tourist offices were established in U.S. cities; and the French government encouraged tourist workers to be efficient, friendly, and courteous. De Gaulle encouraged American tourism in France even after he began discouraging U.S. investment there. Yet France developed the reputation in this period for being rude and unwelcoming to Americans. This trope was entirely constructed, according to Endy. In some of the most insightful portions of the book he attributes France's reputation for rudeness to de Gaulle's independent and seemingly arrogant foreign policies and the adverse reactions of U.S. government officials and journalists to those policies. Endy is less clear in explaining how the debate between modernizing and streamlining the tourism industry, on the one hand, and stressing its artisan and traditional character, on the other, also fueled that reputation, but he does show that the French government was itself responsible by bemoaning the industry and campaigning for its workers to put on a friendly face.

Regardless of France's reputation, most American tourists expressed satisfaction with their visits to France, and their numbers continuously increased. Even when commentators in the United States responded to de Gaulle by calling for boycotts of French products and for Americans to avoid traveling to France, tourists from the United States still came. The Johnson administration's attempts to curb tourism to France (and other European countries) when the United States developed balance-of-payments problems in the 1960s failed dismally. In 1965, Congress refused requests for restrictions on tourists, and in 1968 President Lyndon Johnson's exhortations to American tourists to visit their own country made hardly a dent. The most the airlines
would do was to encourage more tourists to fly on American carriers. Travel writers suggested that the administration could more easily save dollars by withdrawing from Vietnam instead. Even Richard Nixon’s devaluation of the dollar and retreat from the gold standard in 1971 failed to affect the travel industry’s growth.

How did tourism affect U.S.-French relations? Endy’s account does not make clear that it did have much of an effect. Many U.S. officials had hoped that American tourists in France would be ambassadors of good will and contribute to a spirit of Atlanticism, but instead many visitors became, in the parlance of the day, “Ugly Americans,” resistant to government and industry cajoling about proper forms of behavior abroad. De Gaulle withdrew from the integrated military command of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and denounced the Vietnam War more loudly than Jacques Chirac did the 2003 Iraq War, but in both instances the American tourists still came. The travel industries in the two countries created global networks of international economic cooperation, but the confrontation of peoples with one another on their travels paradoxically reinforced their sense of individual identities. Too often as a consequence of their encounters with Americans, the French sought to define what it was that made them peculiarly French. Endy has not demonstrated his thesis of a “tension” between leisure culture and foreign policy, but he has contributed an important piece to the story of contemporary globalization. That is no mean feat.


Reviewed by Christian Nuenlist, Center for Security Studies, ETH Zurich

Andreas W. Daum incorporates his micro-history of John F. Kennedy’s eight hours in West Berlin on 26 June 1963 into a broader framework of the interdependence of politics, culture, and public opinion. Kennedy’s triumphal ride through West Berlin offers a good example of the interplay between realpolitik and culture. The staging of politics and the mobilization of emotions through symbolic acts played a major role during the Cold War. For this reason, Daum not only evaluates diplomatic documents from twenty-two archives in the United States and Germany, but is also interested in symbols, images, language, and ideas as historical factors (p. 205).

Following a cursory review of Kennedy’s policy on Germany and Berlin and of Berlin’s role in the evolving Cold War, Daum provides a detailed discussion of the Berlin trips of Lyndon B. Johnson and Robert F. Kennedy in 1961 and 1962, as well as Charles de Gaulle’s visit to West Germany in September 1962 (following Konrad Adenauer’s visit to France in July 1962), setting the stage for the first trip by a U.S. president to Berlin after 1945.

Daum describes the complex domestic and foreign policy challenges facing the Kennedy administration in the spring and summer of 1963—circumstances that made the president’s trip to Europe a risky undertaking. In Italy and Great Britain—
the two countries in addition to West Germany and Ireland that Kennedy and his entourage visited—the domestic situation was also unfavorable. In Italy the Communists had obtained more than 25 percent of the vote in parliamentary elections in late April on a platform that, among other things, opposed the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the presence of U.S. missiles in the country. The British political landscape was dominated in early June by the forced resignation of John Profumo, who had been involved in a sex scandal and lied to Parliament about it, severely damaging the authority of Prime Minister Harold Macmillan.

Daum sees three main objectives of Kennedy’s European trip. First, the president wanted to demonstrate the unity of the transatlantic community in the face of growing obstreperousness on the part of French President Charles de Gaulle (as France was not included in the itinerary). After the French-German Elysée Treaty of January 1963, U.S. officials feared that de Gaulle would seek to undermine American hegemony in Europe. Second, Kennedy was hoping to convince the West European governments to support his détente policy with Moscow and, in particular, his quest for a nuclear test ban treaty. On 10 June, shortly before leaving Washington for Europe, Kennedy had given a “peace speech” proposing to recast U.S. policy toward the Soviet Union. Third, Kennedy was eager to reduce the large and growing U.S. balance-of-payments deficit (p. 71).

Kennedy’s visit, as Daum convincingly argues, was choreographed and implemented like a theater play. To make the president’s stay in West Berlin a success, U.S. planners concentrated on the “Primat der Sichtbarkeit” (p. 103). They took steps to ensure, in cooperation with the media and television stations, that Kennedy would be widely seen and that reports on his visit would be disseminated around the globe by the mass media. More than 1,500 journalists had registered for the event. Kennedy’s visit was one of the early magical moments of live coverage on West German television—in fact, it was the first joint live report ever broadcast by ARD and ZDF, the two main television stations in West Germany. The Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS) network in the United States sent more than 100 special correspondents to West Berlin.

Despite the month-long planning for the visit, the script was abandoned on 26 June shortly after 1:00 p.m. during Kennedy’s speech at the Rathaus Schöneberg. Drawing on new evidence, Daum tells a fascinating story that has been little known even among Kennedy experts (pp. 120–127). When the president began his speech, he apparently did not read from the carefully drafted manuscript and instead delivered the first part of it almost extemporaneously. Just minutes earlier, Kennedy had reviewed his speech cards together with National Security Advisor McGeorge Bundy and two German translators in the office of West Berlin’s mayor, adding last-minute handwritten notes. According to the original plan, Kennedy was to have repeated the minimal position of the three “Essentials” for West Berlin. By citing these principles, the administration had been trying since July 1961 to defuse the Berlin problem and to link it internationally with the need for peaceful coexistence with the Soviet Union.

Kennedy, however, in fact said just the opposite and denounced Communism, apparently shaken by his experience at the Berlin Wall. Drawing from the works of
Cicero, Kennedy announced that in the Free World the proudest boast was “Ich bin ein Berliner.” He also spontaneously added the following, subsequently famous, passages that were completely at odds with his peace speech of 10 June. The president used skilled rhetoric to emphasize how deeply divided the West and the Communist worlds were. Calling the Berlin Wall “the most obvious and vivid demonstration of the failure of the Communist system” was hardly in line with his talk of détente to obtain a nuclear test ban treaty with Moscow.

Just as fascinating is Daum’s analysis of the true origins of the phrase “Ich bin ein Berliner.” He presents entirely overlooked facts on the background of the exclamation. Neither Kennedy’s speechwriter Theodore Sorensen nor Bundy—in Brandt’s study—invented the phrase. Apparently Kennedy himself came up with it. On 18 June at the White House, the president discussed his upcoming Berlin trip with translator Robert H. Lochner. On a draft paper resulting from that meeting, Daum found the sentence “I am a Berliner” in Kennedy’s handwriting (p. 133). Daum also refers to a speech by Kennedy in New Orleans on 4 May 1962 in which he remarked, “Two thousand years ago the proudest boast was to say ‘I am a citizen of Rome.’ . . . I believe, in 1962 the proudest boast is to say, ‘I am a citizen of the United States.’” Daum argues, plausibly, that Kennedy remembered this phrase in June 1963 and decided to adapt it (p. 135).

Andreas Daum’s innovative book demonstrates that by using a new approach and drawing on previously overlooked sources, one can write a fascinating micro-history even about one of the best known and widely discussed episodes in the Cold War.


Reviewed by Stephen F. Szabo, Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), founded in April 1949, is the only major U.S. alliance to survive the Cold War. Other American-led alliances such as the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization, the Central Treaty Organization, and the Rio Pact did not make it through the 1970s. NATO has not only survived but has expanded and continues to grow even with the defeat and dissolution of its main adversaries, the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact.

NATO represented a significant break in U.S. diplomatic practice and its traditional aversion to “entangling alliances” as well as a fundamental transformation of the European security system. Nationale Aussen- und Bündnispolitik der NATO-Mitgliedstaaten looks at the origins of this unique alliance from the perspective of the sixteen original member-states during the period from the end of the Second World War through 1956. The book provides a comparative perspective on such common formative events as the coup in Prague in 1948, the Korean war, the Suez cri-
sis, and the Hungarian revolution. The Korean War was decisive in ensuring that NATO would become an integrated military alliance focused on a substantial U.S. military presence in Europe. After Suez and Hungary in 1956, the postwar European order was stabilized until the end of the Soviet Union in 1991.

The book is intended to fill a gap in historical research on what the editors call, “Atlantic politics,” treating NATO history in the same manner as that of European integration. The editors argue that NATO is more than a traditional military alliance and is rather like the European Union (EU), a political and economic community of states sharing liberal democratic values. The nature of this new type of association could be seen in its formative years when a variety of national interests and political cultures of small, medium, and large states were brought together to create this new form of alliance.

The chapters in the book, written by historians from each of the countries involved, examine the domestic politics and strategic cultures of the sixteen states and demonstrate how remarkable it was that a transatlantic consensus could emerge. The volume is part of a series commissioned by the the German Bundeswehr’s Militärgeschichtliches Forschungsamt (MGFA), the military historical research institute based in Potsdam, and makes good use of archival materials, many of which have only recently been made available to researchers, including documents released by NATO to the MGFA. The volume is a good example of comparative contemporary history.

The elements of continuity in this history are remarkable. The preference for NATO over a European defense force, as was made clear with the defeat of the proposed European Defense Community in the mid-1950s, seems to persist in the post–Cold War era. The interests and motives of decision-makers in the 1940s and 1950s remain familiar in the twenty-first century. Alcide De Gasperi’s desire for Italy’s equal status with the other European powers after World War II was the same motive behind many of Silvio Berlusconi’s policies. in 2001–2006 France’s preference for a European alternative, and its insistence on being part of a small leading directorate of powers in any transatlantic structure that might be set up, long preceded Charles de Gaulle and the Fifth Republic. Britain’s overriding wish to keep the United States engaged in European security in order to offset Soviet power and contain Germany’s desire for both security and a recovery of its status and sovereignty was a consistent theme no matter who was in power. The desire of smaller states such as Norway, Denmark, Belgium, and the Netherlands to enjoy the protection of a distant great power in order to compensate for their own lack of military strength still exists today.

The splits that emerged over the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq in 2003 have raised fundamental questions about the viability of NATO. Does the alliance have a convincing rationale after the end of the Cold War and the demise of the Soviet Union? Will the movement toward broader and deeper European integration result in a European security and defense force independent of NATO? Has the United States lost interest in European security under the pressure of new threats? Does the huge and growing gap in military capabilities between the United States and its European allies undermine NATO’s military raison d’être?
This volume can help us to answer many of these questions. Although the Soviet threat was a major unifying factor, it was not the only or decisive one in several national contexts. The smaller states and the states of Eastern Europe continue to have important interests in maintaining a U.S. presence as a counterweight against the larger European powers, especially Russia and the Franco-German condominium. France can now pursue its European preference with less restraint, and Germany’s ties to NATO have weakened with the end of the Soviet threat, the reunification of the nation, and the restoration of full sovereignty. The splits that emerged over Iraq are not likely to fade away and will continue to be seen in the debate over NATO versus a European security identity.

The bigger question concerns the United States. The end of the Soviet threat and the displacement of U.S. security concerns to the greater Middle East and East Asia mean a strategic devaluation of Europe in Washington, DC, regardless of the administration in power. Plans to remove most of the remaining U.S. military presence in Europe are under way (though some troops are being redeployed to new NATO member-states in Eastern Europe). It is difficult to see how NATO can survive this long-term strategic shift unless it broadens its area of concern and operations into the regions of new concern to the United States. Moreover, even if the alliance’s coverage expands, the question capabilities will remain. The lackluster performance of European NATO states in Afghanistan in 2006 gives little ground for optimism. The split between “old” and “new” Europe, as perceived in Washington, also brings into question America’s long-standing support for a unified Europe at a time when EU enlargement is creating a more fluid political context.


Reviewed by David Clay Large, Montana State University

At the founding ceremony for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in Washington, DC in April 1949, a military band struck up the song “I’ve Got Plenty of Nothin’” from George Gershwin’s opera Porgy and Bess. The choice of tunes could not have been more appropriate. NATO at its birth and for some time thereafter was, in the words of Charles Maier, a “paper alliance,” grandiose in conception but lacking the integrated military forces and command structure necessary to live up to its charter. Above all it lacked a consensus on how to finance the alliance’s ambitious arms buildup program, which became all the more urgent following the outbreak of the Korean War. How would the defense spending burden be shared among NATO’s twelve charter members, and how could the needs of military rearmament be squared with the imperatives of rebuilding Western Europe’s civilian economies and laying the foundation for the welfare state?
Helmut R. Hammerich's fine book recounts NATO's struggle to find a solution to its internal financial and structural dilemmas, eventually coming up with a "recipe for success" that not only got the infant alliance through its teething crisis of the early 1950s but also established the groundwork for the genuine multinational cooperation that has served NATO so well over the past half-century.

The first part of Jeder für sich und Amerika gegen alle? examines the manifold tensions between economic revival and rearmament as they played out in the Atlantic world from 1947 to 1951. Although the ground Hammerich covers here is familiar to students of the postwar security scene, he provides the most sophisticated analysis to date of the conflicting visions and agendas within the fledgling alliance. Hammerich points out that the original procedure for sharing the defense burden within NATO proved unworkable because it used the partners' defense budgets as baselines, but these budgets differed so significantly in their composition that they were not really comparable. For example, Great Britain included military pensions in its defense budgets, whereas in some other states such costs were part of the social welfare budget. Until a more equitable mechanism for assessing the partners' varying financial capacities and responsibilities could be devised, the European states doggedly resisted U.S. demands for large increases in defense spending and focused instead on civilian reconstruction. The French and British in particular insisted that they would not undermine their socioeconomic health in pursuit of defense measures whose purpose, after all, was to protect the societies in question. The United States, for its part, threatened a substantial reduction in its military and financial commitments to Europe unless the Europeans did more for their own defense.

The solution to NATO's burden-sharing dilemma was worked out in late 1951 and 1952 by the Temporary Council Committee (TCC), which was established at the Ottawa meeting of the North Atlantic Council in September 1951. Despite this committee's crucial contribution to the success of the NATO enterprise, its work was largely ignored by scholars until Hammerich made it the centerpiece of Jeder für sich und Amerika gegen alle? Dubbed by Dean Acheson "Operation Wise Men," the TCC was composed of single delegates from each of the alliance members (equality was an imperative here) operating under an executive bureau with three chairmen—the three "Wise Men." The delegates were all figures of substance—cabinet members, ambassadors, high government officials—and the three wise men were among the most prominent individuals in postwar transatlantic politics: W. Averell Harriman, Sir Edwin Plowden, and Jean Monnet. Attached to the executive bureau was a screening and costing staff composed of high-level military and economic experts. Existing NATO agencies were ordered to assist the TCC, which had the authority to deal directly with the member governments. This, in other words, was a bureaucracy with bite.

The TCC's task was hugely complex, and in taking us through its deliberations Hammerich does justice to the complexity without (at least most of the time) bogging us down in needless detail. The essence of the TCC's accomplishment, as set forth in recommendations approved at NATO's Lisbon meeting in February 1952, was to link defense expenditures within the alliance to each partner's gross domestic product rather than to targets established by the military. The TCC's screening and costing
staff came up with defense spending recommendations based on sophisticated studies of each state’s economic resources. The fact that the defense spending and military force targets still proved overly optimistic did not detract from the success of the operation. Flexibility was now built into the system, and the TCC set a precedent for future multilateral negotiations on troop strength, strategy, and burden-sharing. Indeed, the enshrinement of multilateralism was probably the TCC’s greatest legacy. The principle of consensus, no matter how vexing at times to some states, has helped hold the alliance together during its many trials over the years. Even Washington, reluctant at first to concede so much leverage to the other NATO powers, embraced this principle. The crucial linkage of defense expenditures to national incomes meant also that NATO became an economic as well as military alliance. Within Europe the TCC deserves to be included among the embryonic multilateral innovations like the European Coal and Steel Community that paved the way for European integration. Hammerich is thus justified in concluding his study with a quotation from a U.S. State Department official who predicted that “history may someday list the TCC as a major milestone on the road to the full unity of the Western democracies” (p. 371).
Canada was always a lesser power bearing little of the direct military burden. Canadians therefore had plenty of opportunity to fret and debate their country’s policy. As Erika Simpson puts it in NATO and the Bomb: “During the Cold War, Canada’s stance toward . . . [NATO] was one of shifting commitment. Canadian leaders often contemplated changes in the level of Canada’s commitment to the military alliance, and at times made them, often abruptly” (p. 3). Most famously (in Canada at least), this occurred with respect to Canada’s commitments in the late 1950s and early 1960s to equip the Canadian military in Europe and North America with U.S. nuclear weapons.

Simpson focuses her book on the Canadian nuclear weapons debate in 1957–1963, especially the controversy that arose during the tenure of Prime Minister John G. Diefenbaker, whose government ultimately was brought down by the issue. This was a daring step on Simpson’s part. The nuclear weapons question has received far more scholarly attention than any other issue in Canadian defense policy since 1945. Nonetheless, Simpson pulls it off and makes a significant contribution to our understanding of the nuclear debate as well as of Canadian defense policy more broadly during the rest of the Cold War and into the early 1990s. She does this by arguing that Canada’s defense policy was shaped by a continuing debate within the most senior levels of the Canadian government between adherents of two broad belief systems: the “defenders,” whose most important belief “was that the close ties among the allies would be threatened unless Canada maintained or strengthened its NATO defence commitments” (p. 41); and the “critics,” who “were suspicious about the likelihood and possible consequences of the allies drawing Canada into an armed confrontation and had doubts about NATO undertakings, particularly strategic objectives” (p. 72). These two schools are close to what Glenn Snyder has referred to as the two “alliance dilemmas”: fear of abandonment and fear of entrapment.

Simpson skillfully deploys her simple but useful model, allowing the reader to follow who over the years argued what and with whom. She identifies the longevity in Ottawa of both ways of thinking, as well as clusters of decision-makers (cabinet members and senior bureaucrats) within both schools. Fortunately, she is aware of the limitations of her model. She points out in particular the difficulties of accommodating the approaches to defense policy taken by Canadian prime ministers. One of the most important conclusions she reaches is that “contrary to conventional wisdom, senior officials in the Diefenbaker government, including the prime minister after 1961, were not necessarily confused by the strategic environment, nor naïve about their defence responsibilities and NATO obligations” (p. 224). They disagreed with one another and sought to buy time.

For the most part, Simpson deals with both schools of thought in a straightforward and direct manner, but her heart seems to be with the “critics,” and she makes a few disparaging remarks about the other side. She claims, for example, that the “defenders” had an “undue faith in the Alliance’s nuclear capabilities” (p. 60), and she subjects the “defenders” but not the “critics” to a brief psychological analysis of why they thought the way they did. These departures from an even-handed approach are unfortunate. The book could also have benefited from more rigorous editing at points.
to smooth its way from a dissertation to a published work, although it is all but free of stifling jargon.

Minor flaws aside, NATO and the Bomb is well worth reading. Readers who are familiar with the history of Canadian defense policy during the Cold War will be pleasantly surprised by how Simpson’s model allows them to see old and well-known terrain in a new light. For newcomers to the field, Simpson’s book, with its focus on internal debates at the expense of the broader situation, should probably not be the first one to read. But it would serve well as the second.


Reviewed by Donette Murray, Royal Military Academy Sandhurst

Some seventeen years have passed since the Berlin Wall was finally breached, but scholars are still debating the perceptions, policies, and personalities that dominated the Cold War. The essays in Cold War Britain offer many fresh and revealing insights into the early period of East-West tensions, drawing mostly on newly available British archival material and documents from a number of other countries, including the United States, Sweden, and Australia.

The book seeks to develop three themes traceable in each of the fourteen chapters: first, that although the Cold War provided an overarching framework for Britain’s foreign policy during the first two decades of the Cold War, the country’s national interest remained a dominant force; second, that British policymakers at the outset of the Cold War still believed that it was both possible and desirable to remain a global power; and third, that, despite the first two factors, Britain’s commitment to fighting the Cold War domestically and in the international arena was unreserved. In the final analysis, as the editors put it, Britain was “the coldest—and the most international—of the Cold Warriors in Western Europe” (p. 4).

One of the real strengths of this collection is the consistently high quality of the chapters—a goal that often eludes edited volumes that cover a wide range of topics and issues. In Part I, Erik Goldstein usefully sets the scene by reviewing the nature of Anglo-Soviet relations in the first quarter of the twentieth century, concluding that “chilly aloofness” gave way to a much “frostier” relationship after 1945. This point is taken further in Part II by Michael Hopkins and Michael Kandiah who assess the evolution of the Cold War at home and abroad. By focusing on the role of Foreign Secretary Herbert Morrison (in the essay by Hopkins) and the impact of the Cold War on the construction of “New Conservatism” (the chapter by Kandiah), they pursue familiar issues through hitherto unexplored paths. Part III examines four themes in diplomacy, beginning with economics. Ian Jackson in his chapter argues that Britain took a robust position vis-à-vis the restrictive U.S. legislation that penalized states unwilling to countenance a comprehensive embargo against the Soviet Union and threatened to
limit the supply of non-strategic imports necessary for the economic recovery of Western Europe (p. 41). John Jenks explores the political and propaganda dimension of East-West relations by focusing on the British government’s campaign against the Peace Partisans. He concludes that the Soviet Union’s “ham-fisted” manipulation and “shrill polemics” did much to aid the British government in making peace “a dirty word” (p. 66). In chapter 6, Juhana Aunesluoma examines the “specialness” of Anglo-Swedish relations, revealing why, in contrast to the United States, Britain accepted the Scandinavian country’s officially proclaimed policy of neutrality. In the last chapter on a diplomatic theme, Spencer Mawby considers how and to what extent British foreign policymaking continued to be dominated by the German problem despite the emergence of the Cold War. In Part IV, Ian Spellar assesses the post-1945 role of the Royal Navy, arguing that Britain, by failing to establish a modern naval deterrent, lost one of its major potential advantages. Martin Longden explores British political and military decisions with regard to Europe in the period 1945–1948, and Wayne Reynolds traces the role of the Empire in British defense policy, especially policy on nuclear weapons. Finally, Part V consists of four regional studies, beginning with Sean Greenwood’s chapter on the government’s effort to decide whether to allocate the significant coal resources of the Ruhr to France or use them instead to buttress the failing economy in the British zone of occupation. Gillian Staerck examines diplomatic relations among the United States, Britain, and France against the backdrop of the French war in Algeria, and Stephen Blackwell assesses British attitudes toward the “special relationship” with the United States and Cold War strategy in the Middle East after the 1956 Suez debacle. Personalities, Blackwell argues, were of vital importance, but strategic concerns were undoubtedly the main imperative behind the swift repair of U.S.-British relations after 1956. Peter Busch completes Part V with an analysis of the formation of Malaysia and the repercussions of this development for Anglo-American relations and Southeast Asia in general.

Useful as the book is, the editors can be faulted for not writing a solid conceptual introduction. The existing introduction is brief and could have been augmented to provide a strong analytical framework for the individual chapters. More disappointing perhaps is the absence of a conclusion. The reader is left without the benefit of having the myriad case studies, issues, and new information tied together in support of the themes briefly outlined at the outset.

Despite these gaps, the contributors to the book offer valuable new perspectives on the early Cold War by revisiting a number of familiar issues and themes in the light of newly released archival material. These chapters are further contextualised and complimented by analyses of several lesser-known subjects, such as Anglo-Swedish relations. The result is an eclectic survey of British politics and policies in the early Cold War period that clearly establishes the nature and significance of both the “special relationship” and Britain’s place in the world.

Reviewed by Richard J. Aldrich, University of Nottingham (UK)

Changing Direction is one of the most interesting books ever written about the early Cold War. It truly is “secret history,” in more than one sense. Part of the fascination is that the process of researching and writing the book itself interweaves the history of Cold War restrictions. In the 1980s, when Julian Lewis embarked on this study, British historians who specialized on the post-1945 period worked under a suffocating blanket of secrecy. Although the majority of files relating to foreign policy and defense were declassified after thirty years and made their way to the Public Record Office (now called the National Archives) in Kew Gardens, many other files were deemed too sensitive to be released to the public. A significant number of important documents at the time were designated for “retention in department” on national security grounds or were closed for fifty or even a hundred years because of their supposedly secret contents. During this same period the British government decided, also on grounds of national security, against the publication of the final book in the multivolume official history of British intelligence. As a result, publication of the final volume, written by the distinguished historian Michael Howard, was delayed by ten years. Such was the cold climate of the 1980s.

In the mid-1990s British government policy thawed. Perhaps embarrassed that the degree of “openness” seemed to be greater in post-Soviet Russia (at least for a while) than in Britain, or perhaps driven by a need to reduce storage in order to sell off more government buildings in the center of London, the British government undertook a major review of declassification policy that became known as the Open Government Initiative. Accordingly, during the mid-1990s, many national security files closed for fifty years or more began to find their way into the PRO. Closing these documents for a long time had suited the mandarins. Much of the first wave of history of the 1940s had already been written, and many international historians had moved on to later decades. Moreover, most of the officials who had taken part in the events had also “moved on” to a place where they were beyond the reach of enterprising interviewers.

Lewis’s book is closely interwoven with these dramas of secrecy and revelation. Published in its first edition in 1988, it was one of the few books to penetrate the wall of secrecy that existed in the 1980s. Lewis, together with Bradley Smith and David Stafford, were among a handful of historians who really knew how to work the archives and how to circumnavigate the oppressive systems of secrecy. Poring over countless files, they found that even Top Secret documents with a “specially restricted circulation” were often sent to a dozen recipients. These valiant historical detectives—the “Lone Gunmen” of the PRO—then followed the circulation lists and chased down additional copies in obscure runs of files that had often been neglected by the declassification reviewers (weeders). Copies of documents that were closed in the Cab-
Cabinet series were readily available in the files of, say, the Directorate of Combined Operations.

Lewis meticulously culled obscure files from the Air Ministry, War Office, and Admiralty to assess official British views of the Soviet Union in the period 1944–1947. He reconstructs the history of key Cabinet subcommittees on strategic planning, intelligence, and new scientific methods of war using papers that were supposedly closed. This allowed him to tell the extraordinary story of a war within Whitehall between “hawks” and “doves” over the future direction of Soviet policy and the ways Britain should react. The drama centered on the post-hostilities planning committee, a joint Foreign Office–Chiefs of Staff planning unit that in 1944 tore itself apart over the desire of the military to rearm Germany against the Soviet Union. Field Marshal Sir Alan Brooke recorded in his diary at the time that the Soviet Union “cannot fail to become the main threat fifteen years from now. Therefore foster Germany, gradually build her up.” The diplomats were horrified and accused the military of “fascist assumptions.” Part of this struggle focused on efforts to shape assessments of future Soviet behavior produced by the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC). The result was deadlock, and the JIC produced almost no assessments of the Soviet Union during the vital period from late 1944 through early 1946. Lewis leaves no doubt that the military hawks were right and the diplomatic doves were wrong.

Lewis also traces the early history of British thinking about nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons. He demonstrates how an early appreciation of the importance of these new weapons, together with the enhanced value of air power, led to a reorientation of British strategy. In 1946 the Chiefs of Staff, especially Montgomery, wanted to hold on to the Middle East, in part because of the strategic airfields in Palestine and Egypt and their proximity to potential high-value targets inside the southern Soviet Union. The advent of the nuclear age lent renewed value to old imperial bases. A bitter fight ensued between the Chiefs of Staff and a new Labour government led by Clement Attlee, who was determined to escape from empire.

In the mid-1990s many of these hitherto “closed” files were finally released under the Open Government Initiative. The belated declassification revealed that Lewis had missed little and had uncovered most of their contents long before. However, the new releases did allow him to publish a second edition, which further develops certain important themes. Remarkable additions include the story of the continuation of wartime deception-planning mechanisms for use against the Soviet Union and the story of “Operation Unthinkable,” a detailed planning exercise for a war against the USSR in the early summer of 1945, ordered by Churchill but recognized by the Chiefs of Staff as impossible, even with the use of rearmed German forces. Lewis’s book is a triumph of dedicated research and sheds light on key episodes in the Cold War whose importance is still perhaps not fully appreciated. The second edition offers an indispensable guide to some of the most fascinating and secretive aspects of early Cold War history.

Reviewed by Bernd Bonwetsch, Deutsches Historisches Institut Moskau

The war in Korea—is it really forgotten? Of course it is not, as Rolf Steininger, a professor of contemporary history at the University of Innsbruck, explains in his conclusion. But public memory, much like individual memory, is subject to many unintended influences and variations that depend on changes in the perception of the outside world. Memory also depends on public commemoration. In South Korea, for example, where the army is kept on almost permanent alert and officers even today are constantly ready to defend against a surprise attack, the “War” has never left people’s minds. The war and its commemoration are omnipresent in daily life. But in the United States, as Steininger plausibly argues, the Korean War at least for a time left public memory, “forgotten” between the memory of the “good” World War II and the “bad” war in Vietnam.

Historical memory is not the subject of Steininger’s book on the Korean War, but in a way the aim of *Der vergessene Krieg* is to bring the Korean War back to the public memory in German-speaking countries. The book is addressed to a general, modern reader who wants a concise account drawing on the latest scholarly research available—not the least from Internet and electronic sources. The book is relatively compact (140 pages of text, including document facsimiles), reads easily, and puts notes, glossary, biographical comments, and observations on sources at the end allowing readers to maintain the illusion of reading a thriller.

But this is no work of fiction, unlike many other books (and films and television series) on the Korean War. Instead, the reader has much to gain from Steininger’s deep knowledge of the matter and from his ability to differentiate between important and unimportant details, a welcome skill in such a compact book. Steininger is particularly familiar with the latest research on Western, especially U.S. and West German, policies. His discussion of U.S. policies is especially lively, often reading like a thriller. On many crucial questions—proposals to limit the war to the Korean peninsula or extend it beyond the Yalu to China and thus, possibly, turn it into a third world war; the possible use of tactical and strategic nuclear weapons; the conflict between Truman and MacArthur; Korea and its consequences for West German rearmament; Korea and the development of the bipolar international system—Steininger is well informed and conveys the material well.

The other “side of the moon” does not remain “dark,” but it is considerably less illuminated. Josif Stalin’s plans and ambitions in East Asia, Western Europe, and the United States are mentioned only fragmentarily and without the same level of knowledge and information. Stalin’s strange decision to order the Soviet ambassador to the United Nations (UN), Yakov Malik, to boycott the UN Security Council session on 27 June 1950, against the strong advice of the Soviet Foreign Ministry, goes unmentioned here. Stalin’s decision in January 1951 to order the East European states to embark on crash buildups of their armed forces—an action that was first disclosed in the
late 1970s in the book 30 ans de secrets du Bloc Soviétique by the Czech historian Karel Kaplan, based on documents he had seen in the Czechoslovak Communist Party archives in 1968—might have been “something like the counterpart to Washington’s NSC 68” (p. 183), as Steininger suggests. But at this point no one really knows. The same applies to Stalin’s apparent role in preventing the armistice talks from making any headway after July 1951. Steininger’s assumption that Stalin wanted to keep China dependent on the Soviet Union is similar to his assumption that Stalin wanted to keep the United States engaged in what General Omar Bradley famously described as the “wrong war” at the wrong place and the wrong time with the wrong enemy (pp. 182–183). But whether it was really Stalin and only Stalin who was responsible for the prolongation of the war, Steininger cannot tell us. The inaccessibility of key documents means that these and many other crucial aspects of Soviet policies, not to mention Chinese and North Korean plans and actions, are as yet unknowable.

When discussing the Communist side of the war, Steininger writes mainly on the basis of what has been published since the break-up of the Soviet Union and the transfer of declassified Soviet documents to the South Korean government in the 1990s. The content of these documents is still not widely known and is therefore useful to include here, though it is sometimes contradictory and rarely verified. Compared with the enormous amount of information about Western policies, what we know (or think we know) about the Communist states is minimal. The book tells us nothing about possible differences among the Soviet Union, China, and North Korea or about possible disagreements within the leading political bodies of these states. The unavailability of requisite sources largely accounts for these gaps, though perhaps Steininger could have done more with what is currently accessible.

This reviewer detected only one factual mistake in the book: Terentii Shtrykov, the Soviet ambassador in Pyongyang before and during the first months of the war, was never a “supreme commander.” Although he held the formal rank of a general, he was not a professional military officer. Instead, he made his career in the Communist Party and had served as a political officer in the Soviet armed forces (p. 32).

One can only express admiration for Steininger’s ability to present the Korean War in its historical context as informatively and attractively as he does. Der vergessene Krieg is recommended reading for everyone interested but not specialized in the history of the Korean War.


Reviewed by Gordon H. Chang, Stanford University

This is a smart and ambitious book that explores more terrain than the title suggests. It also delivers less than it promises. Traditional diplomatic historians of the Cold War will find portions useful and insightful, especially about the domestic popular culture
of the times, but they will find other parts overreaching in interpretation and imprecise. Nevertheless, *Cold War Orientalism* is a substantial contribution to the rapidly growing body of literature that goes beyond the formal diplomatic record to examine the broad ideological context of America’s confrontation with Communism.

The core of this book examines in some depth the work of several producers of culture in the Cold War era: *Reader’s Digest*, Norman Cousins of *The Saturday Review*, James Michener, *The Ugly American*, and the Chinese American author C. Y. Lee also make appearances. Christina Klein believes that by studying the work of these culture producers, we can understand the Cold War in new ways. In her view, the Cold War was not just about “confrontation” or “containment” but also about “integration” of non-Communist Asians into an American order and about notions of international racial harmony. She provides fascinating readings of a selection of novels, plays, films, and commentaries directed at a wide, educated audience that envisioned the world in ways that she sees as new and generally liberal. Her “middlebrow” culture producers hoped that their work would help the American public become more tolerant of non-whites and accept an enlightened internationalist role in Asia. Indeed, the portrayal of Asia, Asians, and Americans in East Asia in the texts she studies stands in marked contrast to the “yellow peril” literature of the prewar years and the belligerent rhetoric of militant Cold Warriors. The Cold War, Klein reminds us, was not just about opposing Communism but also about befriending peoples Americans had once disdained. Prominent liberal writers regarded the earlier arrogance and racism as neither helpful nor smart nor humane.

The intellectual highpoint of *Cold War Orientalism* is an extended study of the musical, and later film, *The King and I*. Klein skillfully shows that these iconic pieces of American culture evolved out of myth and history to serve a Cold War politics that encouraged Americans to accept a new responsibility for spreading democracy in a decolonizing world and to do so with a firm understanding of the equality of peoples. The Rodgers and Hammerstein version of the famous story of Anna and the king of Siam (now Thailand) came a long way from the original anecdotal stories of the British tutor Anna Leonowens, who worked for the king in the 1870s and was principally concerned about women’s rights and concubinage. By 1951, when the updated musical was staged in New York, the story had been transformed into one of modernization, internationalism, and racial inclusion in a liberal American order. Klein begins her book with a Richard Rodgers comment about another of his musicals, the *Flower Drum Song*: “What’s the show about? Well, it’s the story of the confrontation of the Far Eastern and American civilizations. . . The usual thing you hear, you know, is East is East, and West is West, and all that nonsense. We show that East and West can get together with a little adjustment.” (p. vii). One can take this as a statement of what Klein’s book is all about.

Klein deftly and provocatively links imagination with social practice in showing that the cultural workers she studies not only preached racial integration but practiced it as well. Transracial adoption, which was little known before World War II, became increasingly common during the Cold War. Rodgers and Hammerstein made it a fo-
cus of their *South Pacific*, a widely admired piece of popular culture in the 1950s based on stories by James Michener. Interestingly, the families of Buck, Cousins, Michener, Hammerstein, and Rodgers all adopted children from Asia or were actively involved in Welcome House, Buck’s pioneering effort to encourage American adoption of children from Asia. Yul Brynner, the star of the *King and I* both on Broadway and in the film, adopted two girls from Vietnam in the 1970s (p. 174). Klein believes that these actions not only reflected changing social attitudes but also were representative of an American “maternalist” approach toward Asia. The Cold War produced not just a “masculinist” thrust toward East Asia, as other cultural historians of the period have argued. American global power was also “often figured in maternal, adoptive, and familial terms” (p. 218).

As these brief summaries of some of the rich discussion in Klein’s book show, her work is far more than just an interpretation of a few fictional texts from the Cold War era. She advances new visions and configurations of the entire period. She boldly suggests early in the book that a speech by Francis Wilcox, a mid-level State Department official, presented to a group of educators in Philadelphia about global interdependence and the need for Americans to understand the people of other lands better if they want to compete successfully with the Soviet Union should stand with the Truman Doctrine as equally emblematic of the Cold War. Most diplomatic historians would find this claim a stretch. She also curiously circumscribes her book to the years 1945 to 1961 and argues that after 1961 America’s “expansive material and symbolic investment in Asia and the Pacific” began “to narrow down.” One of the reasons she cites is the “war in Vietnam” (pp. 5–6). But U.S. military, economic, political, and ideological attention to all of Asia soared with the commitment to fight a showdown with Communism in Southeast Asia. Although the popularity of Klein’s liberal culture producers did indeed diminish in the 1960s, this was not because attention shifted away from Asia. Instead, it was because the Cold War erupted into a hot war in Asia, dispelling the fuzzy sentimentality and hopefulness that Klein well shows imbued the imagination of her “middlebrow” producers of culture.


Reviewed by Jonathan D. Pollack, U.S. Naval War College

*China’s Techno-Warriors* discusses the complex interaction of defense planning, technological development, and political-economic policymaking in China after the Communist Party’s assumption of power in 1949. Drawing extensively on the memoirs of senior officials responsible for national defense, science policy, and economic planning, Evan Feigenbaum shows how technological issues repeatedly shaped upper-level policy deliberations within China. He asserts that the history and achievements
of the strategic nuclear weapons program—arguably the singular technological feat of the Maoist era—largely defined future patterns of scientific, economic, and weapons development.

Feigenbaum contends that pursuit of long-term technological autonomy and “a uniquely military approach to China’s development” in service of the state (what he terms “technonationalism”) have been dominant over the past half-century. He traces these phenomena through the careers and decisions of senior policymakers and the scientific and technical personnel favored by them. However, it is never clear in his account whether technonationalism is best regarded as a coherent set of beliefs animating the actions of China’s scientific and military elites or a metaphor and political symbol invoked to legitimate research & development (R&D) goals and resource allocations. If the latter is the case, technonationalism succeeded brilliantly. If the former, the legacy is far more problematic.

Although Feigenbaum endeavors to write an integrated history, his book encompasses three separate periods with very different domestic and international characteristics: (1) deliberations and decisions on military R&D priorities during the late 1950s and early 1960s; (2) Deng Xiaoping’s efforts to redirect China’s defense and economic policies following the death of Mao Zedong; and (3) the maturation of science and technology policy in the 1980s and 1990s. The depth and detail in each of his case studies are admirable. Few scholars have been as diligent in mining the wealth of new primary sources published over the past two decades.

Nevertheless, Feigenbaum’s reliance on memoir literature is both a strength and a liability. The reminiscences of various defense planners and scientists have enormously enriched our understanding of the decisions and policy conflicts in which they were involved. This literature also highlights the pivotal importance of personal relations (extending to the offspring of various leaders and to marriage ties) across the decades. But some of these accounts possess an air-brushed quality, and Feigenbaum often accepts them far too uncritically. The implications of various crises and controversies are often lacking (notably, the impact of the Tiananmen crisis on U.S. technology transfer policy), and some of the less endearing features of the system (including corruption, nepotism, and Chinese missile sales to the Third World) receive scant or no attention. At other times, Feigenbaum’s account of various policy controversies seems much too seamless and orderly, with the winners of various bureaucratic and policy battles repeatedly overcoming the shortsightedness of their predecessors through organizational and conceptual fixes.

Two figures dominate Feigenbaum’s account: Marshal Nie Rongzhen, who led China’s nuclear weapons program from its infancy to its fruition; and Deng Xiaoping, who was primarily responsible for undoing much of the pathology of the Maoist era and again valuing scientific and intellectual expertise. Both were extraordinarily talented and determined leaders, and their single-mindedness no doubt accounts for much of their success. Feigenbaum admirably imparts how both Nie and Deng were able to overcome daunting obstacles, present their arguments, and recruit political allies.

Somewhat puzzlingly, however, two major figures are either largely or totally ab-
sent from the book: Mao Zedong and Jiang Zemin, China’s paramount leaders for nearly three-quarters of China’s post-1949 history. Mao dominated all major decisions in China for more than twenty-five years. He was one of the earliest and strongest advocates of nuclear weapons development (ensuring that the program received massive infusions of scarce resources and that key personnel were insulated as much as possible from China’s wrenching internal upheavals), and he actively sought to undermine and then dismantle the Sino-Soviet alliance. Yet, more often than not, Mao is a remote figure in Feigenbaum’s account.

Nowhere is Mao more conspicuously absent from the book than in the decade-and-a-half between the collapse of the Sino-Soviet alliance and his death in 1976. Feigenbaum concludes his account of the defense debates of the late 1950s and early 1960s with the supposed ascendance of Nie Rongzhen and the singular priority attached to the nuclear weapons program. The next part of the book begins in the mid-1970s, when Deng was having to address the pervasive militarization of the Chinese economy, burdened as it was with redundant defense enterprises, bloated military forces, and a dysfunctional R&D system for conventional weapons programs. All were a perversion of what Nie had earlier sought, and all reflected Mao’s skewed priorities and outright paranoia during the Cultural Revolution.

Jiang Zemin, a Soviet-trained engineer who presided over the most dynamic period of the country’s post-1949 economic development, does not receive even a single mention in the book. Jiang was clearly among the principal advocates of high-visibility, capital-intensive scientific and infrastructural commitments undertaken during the 1990s, although the projects themselves were overseen by senior science and technology planners. It seems wholly implausible that Jiang was a disengaged or irrelevant figure in this process, especially if we bear in mind his sustained effort to legitimate his own political standing through China’s economic and scientific successes. Or is Feigenbaum arguing that the extraordinary economic and technical achievements of the past two decades have enabled China’s scientific visionaries to transcend their political superiors? We are not told one way or the other.

Feigenbaum does a far better job of addressing the problematic and constricted legacy of the nuclear weapons program. China’s early nuclear successes were attributable to unique circumstances that cannot be replicated. In the 1950s and 1960s, China was a true mobilization system led by senior political and military figures of towering stature, with a nuclear weapons program that moved ahead in the face of acute security imperatives and grievous economic privation, walled off physically and politically from most of the upheaval afflicting China at the time. Although some echoes of this past persisted into the 1970s and 1980s, the pervasive grip of the early Maoist history continues to fade, with China ever more enmeshed in the globalization process. Perhaps most ironically, the record of China’s success over the past two decades casts severe doubt on the presumed relevance of a technonationalist vision. Feigenbaum argues that China has succeeded economically, scientifically, and technologically by opening its doors and linking the country’s destinies to the outside world. This is most assuredly not what Mao Zedong had in mind, and we are in Feigenbaum’s debt for explaining many of the reasons why.

Reviewed by Hua-yu Li, Oregon State University

In this meticulously researched and carefully argued book, Shen Zhihua, a leading Chinese scholar on Sino-Soviet relations, writes about an important but inadequately researched subject: the contributions of Soviet experts to China’s development and their experiences during a time of great change in Sino-Soviet relations, from 1948 to 1960. Shen has written widely on high-level relations between the two countries, but in this volume he focuses on non-elite interactions in order to provide a fuller picture of the Sino-Soviet relationship (pp. 3–6). Shen addresses three sets of questions: Why did Soviet leaders send experts to the other socialist countries, and what impact did the experts have in those countries? Why did Nikita Khrushchev withdraw Soviet experts from China in 1960, and what were the consequences of this action? What were the main features of relations among the socialist countries, especially ties between the Soviet Union and the other socialist states?

Although Shen wanted mainly to write a book about Soviet experts in China, he also discusses the reasons for the Sino-Soviet split, arguing that it was the almost inevitable outcome of the personality clash between the leaders of the two countries. An emotional and unpredictable Khrushchev collided with an unruly Mao Zedong, and they eventually came to dislike each other so much that they could no longer work together. By 1960, Khrushchev was unwilling to tolerate a “student” who had once been eager and humble but had now become increasingly independent and arrogant despite still having to depend on the “teacher” in certain areas.

The book is impressively researched and well documented. The richness of information and insights Shen presents was possible because of the three major sources he used: Russian archival materials; declassified Chinese documents from local archives in Xinjiang, Inner Mongolia, Heilongjiang, Jilin, Changchun, Liaoning, and Fujian, where many Soviet experts lived and worked; and interviews with retired Chinese Communist Party (CCP) officials, military officers, educators, editors, Russian-language interpreters, scientists, technicians, and laborers who had worked with the Soviet experts.

The structure of the book’s coverage of Sino-Soviet relations is chronological, with the four chapters divided equally between the two main Soviet leaders during this period—Josif Stalin (chapters 1 and 2—“Getting Closer, 1948–1949” and “Forming Alliances, 1949–1953”) and Nikita Khrushchev (chapters 3 and 4—“The Honeymoon, 1953–1957” and “Moving toward the Split, 1958–1960”). Within each chapter, Shen proceeds thematically as well as chronologically. In addition to discussing the Soviet experts in China, he compares their experiences with those of Soviet experts in other socialist countries.

In dealing with this extremely complicated subject, Shen skillfully brings to-
gether many factors: elite politics; political upheavals and conflicts within the Communist world; China's desperate need for Soviet expertise in a wide range of areas, especially military technology; the domestic political context of both countries' policies concerning Soviet experts; the important contributions Soviet experts made to China's scientific, technological, and economic prowess; and, of course, the human dramas of the Soviet experts and the Chinese who worked with them. Many of the Soviet advisors developed warm relations with the Chinese they encountered, and most of the Chinese whom Shen interviewed still expressed fondness for the Soviet experts they knew in those days. To be sure, some problems occasionally arose between the Soviet advisors and the Chinese, and people on both sides sometimes acted rudely and arrogantly.

Why did Soviet leaders send experts to the other socialist states? Shen argues that Soviet policy on this matter reflected a fundamental difference between the East European countries on the one hand and China on the other. In Eastern Europe, according to Shen, Soviet experts were used as “one of the tools to control and supervise those countries” (p. 13). In the case of China, however, they were sent at the request of the CCP. As a result, Chinese leaders were able to control the flow of Soviet experts to meet the country's needs until 1958 (p. 413). But as the conflicts between Mao and Khrushchev intensified during the Taiwan Straits crisis of 1958, Khrushchev decided to be less cooperative (pp. 413–414). Shen highlights a difference between Stalin and Khrushchev with regard to their motives for sending experts to China: For Stalin, the motivation was primarily economic, whereas for Khrushchev, it was mainly political. Shen avers that Stalin used China as a dumping ground for obsolete Soviet military weapons and made money off the Soviet experts he sent to China (pp. 411–412). What Shen fails to note, however, is that Stalin also provided substantial aid to China during this time. Khrushchev, on the other hand, according to Shen, increased the number of Soviet experts sent to China to win Mao's support and thereby gain extra leverage against his domestic political rivals in Moscow. Shen contends that Khrushchev ended up promising more to China than he could actually deliver (p. 412).

Why did Khrushchev withdraw Soviet experts from China in 1960, and what were the consequences? Shen argues that Khrushchev acted emotionally and that it is not clear what he was trying to accomplish in removing the experts (p. 414). Departing from the conventional wisdom, Shen takes the position that the withdrawal of Soviet experts did not impair China's economy as severely as many scholars have believed. He maintains that the number of Soviet experts in China had already been declining since late 1956, initially at the Chinese leaders' own request (p. 413). Shen believes that Khrushchev was foolish to take all the experts out of China, for in doing so he made it possible for Mao to blame Khrushchev for damaging relations between the two countries (p. 414).

Shen identifies two fundamental weaknesses in the relationship between the Soviet Union and China—and by extension, between the Soviet Union and other socialist countries. First, despite sharing a commitment to the ideals of Communist internationalism, Soviet and Chinese leaders differed in their interpretations of these ideals and their expectations about the role each side should play in promoting them. In
Shen’s view, Chinese leaders believed that the Soviet Union, as the leader of the Communist world, should provide experts to China. In contrast, Khrushchev tried to use increases and decreases in the number of Soviet experts as a way to compel Chinese leaders to accept his position whenever ideological and policy disputes arose (pp. 414–416).

The second weakness highlighted by Shen is the rigidity of the hierarchical relationship between the Soviet Union and other socialist states. Soviet dominance spawned numerous problems when national interests came into conflict (pp. 416–417). Shen is right to point out this deficiency in the world Communist system; but he should also have noted that relations between the Soviet Union and other socialist states also suffered from personality conflicts between party leaders—as in the problems that arose and escalated between Mao and Khrushchev, culminating in the Sino-Soviet split.

One particular point made by Shen in the book needs reconsideration. He errs in claiming that the CCP was in the driver’s seat vis-à-vis the Soviet Union on the issue of Soviet advisers until 1958 (p. 413). In reality, Stalin had the upper hand throughout the late 1940s and early 1950s, and Mao had to make concessions to him on this issue. Shen’s view may be more accurate in describing the relationship between Khrushchev and Mao on the issue of Soviet experts from 1953 through 1958.

Overall, Shen’s book is notable for its first-rate scholarship. He is thorough, careful, and fair in dealing with complex topics, and he enlivens and gives persuasive power to his account by the richness of the materials he has gathered in his research and incorporated into his account. His book makes important contributions to our understanding of Sino-Soviet relations and the Cold War.


Reviewed by Sumit Ganguly, Indiana University

The dispute over the status of the state of Jammu and Kashmir has bedeviled relations between India and Pakistan since their emergence as independent states from the collapse of the British Indian empire. The initial Indian and Pakistani claims to this Muslim-majority state stemmed from their respective state-building enterprises. Pakistan had been created as the putative homeland for the Muslims of South Asia. Because Kashmir abutted Pakistan, the Pakistani elite had an irredentist claim on the state. India, which, despite being a predominantly Hindu state, had been fashioned as a secular and civic polity, laid claim to this Muslim-majority state to demonstrate its secular credentials. In the wake of the partition of the British Indian empire in 1947, the two sides became embroiled in a war over the status of the state. The war was of brief duration and was brought to a close through the intervention of the United Nations (UN). When a ceasefire was reached on 1 January 1949, Pakistan controlled one-third of the
state and India about two-thirds. Subsequently, after the failure of extensive and tortured negotiations for nearly two decades at the UN and the lack of any progress in bilateral talks, Pakistan orchestrated another attack on Kashmir in 1965. The war this time ended in a stalemate. The United States by then had largely disengaged from South Asia, prompting the Soviet Union to step into the breach and negotiate a post-war settlement in Tashkent.

In 1971 Pakistan found itself embroiled in a brutal civil war when the Pakistani military ruthlessly cracked down on an autonomist movement in East Pakistan. As the Bengali-speaking population of East Pakistan fled to neighboring India to escape from the Pakistani army, India intervened in the civil war, facilitating the creation of the independent state of Bangladesh. The breakup of Pakistan in 1971 demonstrated that religion alone could not serve as the basis of state-making in South Asia. India, on the other hand, maintained its constitutional dispensation as a secular state. However, its practice of secularism started to decline from the 1980s as craven politicians responded to the exigencies of electoral politics. Today both states seek to incorporate the disputed Kashmiri territory for reasons of statecraft and not on the basis of their loftier moral posturing.

After a long and peaceful hiatus, an ethnoreligious insurgency erupted in the Indian-controlled portion of Kashmir in 1989. The origins of this insurgency were indigenous, resulting from a tragic pattern of Indian electoral malfeasance in the state and the emergence of a new generation of politically sophisticated Kashmiris unwilling to countenance such political chicanery. With the onset of the insurgency, the Pakistanis promptly entered the fray and bolstered the most vicious, unyielding, and ruthless insurgent groups. In the process, they helped to undermine the notionally secular, grassroots separatist organization, the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front. In the years since then, well over 50,000 people have been killed, a figure greater than the total battle deaths in all four Indo-Pakistani wars. Despite the overt nuclearization of the region after May 1998, the Pakistani military under General Pervez Musharraf precipitated another conflict with India in 1999. Pakistan's incursion into northern Kashmir, though tactically successful, failed to accomplish its main goal of exerting international pressure on India to settle the Kashmir question. Following the 1999 conflict, a number of attempts to resolve the crisis in Kashmir have proven futile, and the Indian government has met with only limited success in restoring political normalcy to the troubled region.

Sumantra Bose's book is a curiously uneven analysis of the forces that led to the current state of the dispute and the possibilities of its eventual settlement. At one level, the book provides a succinct and largely accurate account of the development of ethnonationalist sentiment in Kashmir from the early part of the twentieth century. Bose displays a supple understanding of the political eddies and currents that swirled in Kashmir in the decades immediately before the independence of India and Pakistan. His account of the origins of the insurgency, though it treads mostly well-worn ground, is also well-documented and mostly dispassionate.

Despite these significant strengths, the book has two important drawbacks. For a scholarly volume, it is far too chatty and anecdotal. More importantly, Bose, an other-
wise astute scholar, uncritically reproduces a number of sweeping claims and assertions that were presumably reported to him by local Kashmiri political activists. Why should these bald-faced assertions made by obviously partisan individuals be trotted out as reliable evidence? The transgressions of the Indian state in Kashmir, as Bose and many other scholars of contemporary Kashmiri politics have amply documented, are legion. How is our intellectual understanding of the tragedy of this state enhanced through the recounting of a litany of unsupported claims made by individuals who have no record of dispassion on this subject?

A second important shortcoming of the book lies in Bose’s seemingly sensible policy prescriptions. The eventual political outcomes proposed by Bose are sound enough, even though they will not meet the maximal Indian or Pakistani goals. He argues for a significant form of political devolution in the Indian-controlled portion of the state and a joint acceptance of the line of control (the de facto international border) as the international boundary. He avers that the two states could then establish bilateral institutional arrangements for the joint development of the original, unified state of Jammu and Kashmir. Bose contends that, in moving to this endpoint, India should address questions of human rights, political prisoners, and policing arrangements. These policy prescriptions would make sense to most fair-minded political analysts interested in seeing an end to the sanguinary conflict. But the problem lies in Bose’s pathway to this desired end state. He calls for the institutionalization of a dialogue, the inclusion of Kashmiri representatives from both sides of the border, and the acceptance of Pakistan as a legitimate partner in the discussions. In principle, all three suggestions are reasonable. What they fail to recognize, however, is the carefully tended hostility on the Kashmir question that permeates much of the Pakistani polity. Over several decades, a range of repressive military regimes and ineffectual civilian governments in Pakistan have fostered unyielding public hostility toward India through the use of textbooks, films, and television. Even after four wars and multiple crises, the Pakistani military is no closer to realizing its long-standing goal of wresting Kashmir from India. But despite this record of failure, the army is still the institution in Pakistan that sets the bounds of policy toward Kashmir. The notion that a military-dominated regime in Islamabad could be a viable, honest, and sensible negotiating partner is chimerical. Although a resolution of the Kashmir dispute would be highly desirable for regional—and possibly global—peace, the careful crafting of diplomatic strategies to resolve the issue will amount to little so long as the Pakistani military remains intransigent.

Reviewed by Peter C. Caldwell, Rice University

Like all state-socialist regimes, the German Democratic Republic (GDR) had trouble organizing the production of consumer goods. Unlike the other Soviet-bloc states, however, the GDR was at the front line of the Cold War, and its citizens were able to compare East to West directly, usually to the detriment of the East. The leaders of East Germany’s Socialist Unity Party (SED) were well aware that they faced a challenge. After all, before the Berlin Wall was built, hundreds of thousands had fled from East Germany, in part because of the higher standard of living in the West. Mark Landsman’s new book examines the East German regime’s attempts to respond to the demand for consumer goods from 1947 to 1961 through pricing policy, rationing, central planning, analysis of consumer needs, exhortation of workers to produce more, and, finally, the Berlin Wall itself.

Landsman shows that in the desperate years following World War II, consumer goods in eastern Germany, including food, clothing, and housing, were scarce. Moscow’s policy of removing industrial plants and extracting high reparations from the Soviet occupation zone in Germany exacerbated the situation. The first elements of economic planning developed in response to chaos and shortage. Attempts to increase worker productivity by piecework pay, moral suasion, or special rations failed to produce the desired result. Before long, more money was chasing fewer goods, and price-setting and more stringent rationing were the necessary responses. Although consumer goods were scarce in the east well into the 1950s, shop windows in the western zones of Germany were filled with goods after 1947. East German leaders offered some goods at special stores (*Handelsorganisationen* or HOs) at high prices to soak up extra purchasing power, while still trying to provide basic goods at low prices. But Landsman demonstrates that shortages remained, and the crisis continued. The systemic failure to provide goods and the regime’s heavy-handed attempts to increase labor output finally led to the workers’ uprising in June 1953. Following that debacle, the regime attempted to shift investment funds to consumer items. Landsman documents the creation of new research units seeking to determine the objective needs of consumers (*Bedarfsforschung*) rather than rely on subjective, individualistic demand (*Nachfrage*). But when decisions on how to allocate scarce resources were made, the SED tended to favor big industrial projects and guns over consumer goods. A new crisis of production after 1958, precipitated by the East German regime’s decisions to push ahead with agricultural collectivization and a military buildup that took funds away from other investment, led to a flood of émigrés to the West—and eventually to the Berlin Wall.

Landsman successfully links the GDR’s weak legitimacy with the “political consequences of frustrated desire” (p. 2). The book would have gained, however, from a clarification of the causes of this failure to respond to consumer demand. On the one hand, Landsman seems to argue that the cultural ideals of Communism kept
policymakers from responding to demand. Cultural images of the active, sacrificing, productive, male worker, part of the “proletarian mystique” of the Soviet model, drove policy, he says (p. 5). On the other hand, he paints a regime overwhelmed by both the circumstances of scarcity in the postwar era and the deficiencies of centralized planning. In this depiction, calls for republican austerity may have been intended to put a good face on a bad situation. Landsman ends by arguing that the Erich Honecker’s regime drove the country into economic collapse by expending money on consumer goods rather than productive investment. If so, then the problem seems to be one primarily of economic necessity, not cultural ideals.

Landsman may also at times underestimate the ideological apparatus of Marxist-Leninist economics. In 1958, as Landsman notes, Walter Ulbricht made the absurd suggestion that within a few short years production in the GDR would “overtake and surpass” that of West Germany, a statement echoing Nikita Khrushchev’s prediction about the Soviet Union’s ability to overtake the United States. Landsman argues that “the available evidence suggests that the SED leadership not for a moment believed in the possibility of realizing” this goal and indeed most likely did not even consider it desirable (p. 205). Had they been serious about increasing production of consumer items, Landsman argues, they would not have implemented another round of forced collectivization, which in fact led to a decrease in consumer goods and more emigration. On this point, Landsman overstates his case. Marxist-Leninist economic theory predicted that the capitalist system would soon collapse and that collectivization and socialization would increase output under socialism. The notion that West Germany had engaged in a long-term, successful process of economic expansion under capitalism that would raise workers’ living standards was not part of orthodox Marxism-Leninism. It may well be, as Landsman argues, that some high-level SED officials did not believe they could realize their goals; but they would have found it politically difficult to argue against Ulbricht without sounding like an apologist for capitalism.

Landsman’s book provides a compelling argument for the centrality of consumerism to the history of East Germany. He sheds useful light on the forms of administration and control of the East German state and on the cultural ideals of state socialism and their relationship to the economy. His work is part of a growing body of literature that helps to document the larger history of the transformation of European countries, East and West, into consumer-oriented societies during the Cold War.

Reviewed by Susan L. Woodward, Graduate Center, City University of New York

War generates attention. The vast number of books published since 1991 on the former Yugoslavia—the five wars and many smaller battles and skirmishes during its
breakup and the innumerable rounds of diplomatic negotiation, criminal trials, and international declarations and rulings—attests to the widespread fascination with war. This outpouring has included many memoirs, particularly by diplomats and generals, but only a few memoirs from Yugoslavs themselves are available to English-language readers. This is the only translated memoir I know of by a non-political, average Yugoslav.

But after reading the book, I am not sure why it was published. Alternately tedious and engaging, filled with factual inaccuracies and contradictions, politically naive and insular, A Muslim Woman in Tito’s Yugoslavia is at its best when it is intensely personal. Nonetheless, for those who knew the former Yugoslavia and still care to know about it, the book offers a remarkable trip down memory lane. Most interesting is the way it reinforces older interpretations of the Yugoslav federal system and its decline over the interpretations that have come to dominate the public debate and mass media portrayals since 1991.

According to Stjepan Meštrović, the series editor, and Sabrina Ramet, who wrote the foreword, the reasons to publish the book were two. For Meštrović, the “outsider” anthropological literature that emphasized a prewar life of multiethnic accommodation and even harmony in Bosnia and Hercegovina (represented for him by Tone Bringa) needs an authentic corrective from an “insider.” The book shows how “Serb-dominated Yugoslavia was perennially anti-Muslim” and “how this oppressive attitude was experienced emotionally by Bosnian Muslims in general, and Bosnian Muslim women in particular” (p. xi). (The book even contains a “Glossary of Bosnian Terms.”) The goal of “authenticity” is also key for Ramet, but in its ethical, existentialist sense. A Muslim Woman in Tito’s Yugoslavia is a vehicle for framing the entire sweep of Yugoslav history from 1918 to 1991 as a story of “injustice”—in this case, of injustice by “Serbs toward Muslims,” the “Communist party toward honest people,” and a man (the father of Hadžišehović’s son) toward a woman (p. xv).

A primary goal for Hadžišehović in writing the book was evidently to convey her changing Muslim identity, from her upbringing in a traditional, post-Ottoman family in small-town, interwar Yugoslavia (she was born in 1933) and then under Italian and German occupation, to her “separation... from the old way of life” (p. 146) through her education and Communist party membership, to her urban middle-class life as an “independent,” “emancipated” woman (p. 188) in Belgrade as an experimental scientist at the Boris Kidrić (now Vinča) Institute of Nuclear Sciences, and ultimately a growing personal “leaning toward Islam” (p. 177). The Serbian title of the book, Muslimanka, underlines this theme of changing identity. All too often, however, the raw honesty of the narrative gets in the way, revealing a far more complex and confusing (and familiar) portrait of tumultuous social and cultural change. Despite repeated attempts to make this a Bosnian story, it is actually a much rarer view from the Sandžak region. Childhood revolved around the delights of countryside, villages, and family rituals, without regard for the later federal distinctions of Serbia, Montenegro, and Bosnia. Life before and during World War II paralleled much of Tone Bringa’s Bosnian story half a century later. Sent to Sarajevo for senior high school, Hadžišehović felt like a “newcomer” (p. 149) and was singled out for her Ekavian (a
version of Serbian) dialect. Despite opportunities to return to Sarajevo after attending university in Belgrade, she chose “science” over politics. Her son, a physician, moved to Sarajevo in the late 1980s.

Although Hadžišehović suffered deeply from an official punishment that seems unjust (she is apparently oblivious to the political context that motivated it), the Communist party organization and appointees time and again came to her rescue (and she sought their help) with education, scholarships, a search for housing as a single mother, and nasty workplace intrigues. Colleagues at work and neighbors, regardless of their ethnoreligious identity, offered mutual support and succor that characterized all of socialist Yugoslavia, while its health insurance paid for the French doctor, the hospital, and the yearlong sick leave that saved her life. The one constant in her life, a sensitivity to social status, appears to be the strongest explanation for her eventual disillusionment with the system when the decentralization of the 1970s and financial crises of the 1980s threatened to undermine the financing and projects of her research institute. Fearing that the state was penalizing science and the educated class and seeing a “new class” of privilege among politicians, she joined many of her generation in pinning the blame on ethnic or religious discrimination. Yet in describing the increasing political polarization in Belgrade once the wars began in 1991–1992, she concludes with an astounding frankness, both personal and political: “It seemed as though people had grown tired of the accumulation of problems in Yugoslavia since Tito’s death and the end of Communist rule. They found themselves in a vacuum and now were discharging their frustration” (p. 225).

Readers will find what they want in this raw, unprocessed diary. As a charming supplement in courses that enable students to distinguish fact from quotidian prejudice and use analytical frameworks to grasp its story, *A Muslim Woman in Tito’s Yugoslavia* beautifully illustrates how individuals navigate and benefit from rapid social change by retaining and reevaluating childhood experiences. But readers will do the book and its author an injustice if they merely seek confirmation of the stated goals of the editor and introducer.

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*Reviewed by Gale Stokes, Rice University*

“Transnational” is in. There are some good reasons for this. In modern times historians have often (though not always) worked within and even on behalf of states dominated by national traditions. Broad scholarly investigations are often framed by the notion of the nation-state, such as international studies or comparative history in which phenomena within two or more national entities are compared. But with the acceleration of global communication and business over the past fifty years, issues such as migration, trade, and cultural interaction have seemed to call for less limited
framing. Many historians have chosen the term “transnational” to describe studies that seek to avoid the particularism of the national approach. The editors of *Transnational Moments of Change* seek to provide some concrete examples of what the potentials, limitations, and problems of this approach might be for the study of post–World War II Europe. To sharpen the analysis, they have made the excellent decision to focus on three significant moments of change: 1945, 1968, and 1989.

Unfortunately, only a few of the twelve essays in the book provide powerful examples of the transnational approach. The best of these is in the section on 1989. Padraic Kenney, building on his earlier work about the “carnival of revolution,” specifies six modes of contact, as he calls them, that constitute a typology of cultural diffusion: command (high politics); text (writings of engaged intellectuals); legend (response to stories heard); pilgrimage (visits to “holy” sites); courier (specifically arranged visits for interchange); and convocation (holding conferences, assemblies, etc.). A great strength of Kenney’s argument is the detailed specificity of the examples he uses to illustrate these modes of contact. Even though he is dealing with the diffusion of revolutionary ideas and enthusiasms among dissidents and opposition activists in only a few countries of East Central Europe in the 1980s, Kenney’s typology should prove useful in the investigation of other forms of cultural diffusion as well.

Jarle Simensen seeks to put the 1989 revolutions in Eastern Europe into a global perspective. He argues that they were part of a larger wave of democratization that took place in an increasingly integrated global economic system, of which the centrally planned economies were not a part. Thus integration into the world economy, in which human rights and multiparty elections had become the accepted modes of political organization (at least among industrialized countries), was seen as a solution in Eastern Europe. Although this is not a particularly new argument, it does have the advantage of being broadly conceived. Simensen fears that in certain situations the democratization process may ultimately give way to the creation of merely formal democracies, with globalization providing cover for authoritarian regimes.

Gerd-Rainer Horn argues that the initial aim of transnational history must simply be to show that similarities exist in various areas of the world (or in his case, Europe). Only when similarities are known can one attempt to provide structural explanations for them. Horn’s point underscores one of the difficulties facing transnational historians as they attempt to differentiate their work from that of other historians: What is so new about their approach if its starting point is to look for similarities such as those emphasized by comparative historians? Horn in the rest of his chapter compares workers’ movements in France and Italy in 1968 and finds that a profound change of consciousness took place in both movements, leading to the establishment of new forms of representation (e.g., factory councils). Horn devotes considerable attention to the movement for worker self-management, but perhaps a more truly transnational (instead of comparative) approach to this subject would have introduced experiences from Yugoslavia and Scandinavia.

Arthur Marwick discusses the student movements of 1968, drawing on his earlier work that highlighted sixteen distinctive features of the cultural revolution from 1958 to 1974. His major contribution here is to condense these into four broad phenom-
ena: an enormous proliferation of movements, especially youth movements; the spread of sexual freedoms; what he calls “measured judgment,” which means an increased respect for authority; and a sudden extension of the consumer society to those previously outside it. Marwick, like the other authors, devotes little attention to the new-left ideology that inspired young people from Yugoslavia to San Francisco. In Marwick’s case, this is because he wishes to move beyond the dramatic but short-term upheavals of 1968 itself to the more structural transformations in which those upheavals were embedded.

The weakest section of the book is the first, which looks at the dramatic changes sweeping through Europe at the end of World War II. The editors acknowledge that their intention is not to resolve all the issues of this enormously complex historical moment, but the essays on postwar Communist parties, the myth of labor unity, and regional partisan movements in Italy and France seem to be included mainly because the authors have been working on those particular topics rather than because of their intrinsic significance, or even because of their salience for transnational studies. Indeed, it is not even clear what the transnational dimension is in Juan José Gómez Gutiérrez’s interesting and useful essay about socialist realism in Italy.

The idea behind this book was a good one—to investigate three key historical moments from a transnational standpoint—which is probably why the Rockefeller Foundation at Bellagio hosted the conference from which the book emerged. But with the exception of Padraic Kenney’s essay and Arthur Marwick’s summary of his earlier work, much of the collection suggests more about the problems and limitations of transnational history than about its potential.


Reviewed by Timothy Snyder, Yale University

This is a fascinating account of the Sovietization of the territories of Soviet Ukraine along the border with Poland in the 1920s and 1930s and of the German occupation of the region during the Second World War. Kate Brown has carried out impressive work in Moscow, Kyiv, and Zhytomyr and joins a number of younger scholars who contend that the encounter of Soviet power with multiethnicity led to the construction of a modern state. Brown’s approach to modernity is disarmingly broad. She treats interrogations as an instance of the triumph of the literary language over oral tradition. She argues that the simple movement of human beings by deportation was a kind of ersatz progress in the Soviet Union of the 1920s and 1930s, direction becoming a bureaucratic shorthand for a sense of direction. In Brown’s view, the Soviet state in the 1920s was weak, and the challenges it faced in its western borderlands were quite real.

By presenting a coherent image of borderland culture, Brown prevents the reader
from seeing the absence of robust national identity as an absence of society. In her account, the religious rhetoric of resistance to collectivization seems quite natural, given the importance of miracle cults in Ukraine. Brown makes another series of connections: of collectivization (1929–1930) to the famine (1932–1933), to the purges of the “Polish Military Organization” (1933–1935), and to ethnic cleansing (1936) and the Great Terror (1937–1938). Switching from the perspective of the peasants to that of the Soviet secret police (GPU), Brown describes a chain of cause and effect that seems persuasive (and harmonizes with recent arguments of Ukrainian historians). Although the Soviet image of border-crossing Polish spies is ever present, she makes little mention of the interwar Polish state, and some of what she says is misleading.

Despite the book’s Russifying tendency (Ukrainian and Polish surnames and toponyms are sometimes misspelled or rendered in Russian), its narrative is best placed in a grand tradition of Polish travel writing: that of emigrants from lost lands of the east. A Biography of No Place exemplifies this tradition in its subject matter (old lands of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth not incorporated by later Polish states), its grounding in personal experience, its resort to the first person singular, its use of conversations with locals, its fine (sometime very fine) prose, and its odd moment of grand nostalgia. Brown seems not to have exploited the work of Daniel Beauvois, a pioneer in the study of the region, whose two books revealed inter- and intra-communal conflict in central and western Ukraine during the period of Russian Imperial rule. Beauvois was writing against Polish nostalgia about these borderlands, and his critique was the more devastating for being more thorough than any comparable Polish study.

The grace of the book permits the reader to overlook its main achievement as a work of twentieth-century history: to have treated simultaneously contentious issues of Ukrainian, Polish, and Jewish history against the background of Soviet rule and, in the final chapter, Nazi occupation. Brown is fair-minded in her judgments and alert to the possibility that all sides in historiographical disputes may be wrong. She can stand above the fray because she has built her own perch.


Reviewed by Gijs Kessler, International Institute of Social History

Harvest of Despair is a wide-ranging study of life in the occupied territories of the Soviet Union that formed the Reichskommissariat Ukraine, the largest colony of Nazi Germany, from 1941 to 1944. Karel Berkhoff specifically aims to write a territorial history rather than a history of Ukraine under the Nazi occupation. He convincingly argues that this is the best framework for studying Europe during World War II. Nazi policies and occupation regimes, although based on the same principles, differed
markedly from one administrative region to another. Nevertheless, the book is not meant to be a study of Nazi policies vis-à-vis Ukraine. *Harvest of Despair* is a narrative history from below that recounts the wartime experience of the unfortunate lands that suffered at the hands of both of the great totalitarian dictatorships of twentieth-century Europe.

The book makes for some disturbing reading, bringing the horror of those years to life in a way that has a strong ring of authenticity. In less than three years the population of the Reichskommissariat Ukraine witnessed, consecutively, mass executions of political prisoners and “unreliable elements” by retreating Soviet secret police (NKVD) forces, Nazi maltreatment and executions of Soviet prisoners of war, the extermination of the Jewish and Roma populations, Nazi deportations of able-bodied workers to the Reich at gunpoint, ethnic cleansing of Polish villages by Ukrainian partisans, and massacres and rampages by retreating German troops. In addition, ad-hoc executions and brutal violence by the Nazi occupation forces and their local auxiliaries were the order of the day. Drawing on an impressive source base, Berkhoff minutely reconstructs these events, offering conflicting evidence and interpretations where available. Although the book’s narrative approach obviously pays off here, some issues could probably have done with a more systematic treatment—notably, the role of local civil and military auxiliaries in the system of Nazi rule in Ukraine. Just as in other occupied parts of Europe, local involvement in the Nazi administration in Ukraine was substantial, and it would be interesting to know more about those who collaborated and the place they had occupied in Soviet society in the 1930s. Information of this sort might well enhance our understanding of the striking continuity in state-inflicted violence between the Soviet and Nazi regimes in Ukraine.

*Harvest of Despair* makes a contribution to historiography in two fields. For those who study the comparative history of Nazi occupation regimes in Europe, the importance of this book can hardly be overstated. Because of the inaccessibility of sources and the lack of a non-ideological local historiography, the Nazi occupation regimes in Eastern Europe have long received scant attention from Western historians, even though, as Berkhoff painfully demonstrates, the Nazi administrations in Eastern Europe were fundamentally different from those in France, the Netherlands, and even the Balkans. Reading this book, one is left with an overpowering sense that taking in the wanton brutality of Nazi rule in the East is crucial when attempting to answer questions about the origin, place, and role of Nazism in European history. Berkhoff’s well-written study can be expected to find the broader audience required for this endeavor.

Secondly, the book raises the question of how the gruesome events it describes should be incorporated into our understanding of Soviet history. Berkhoff reaches back to the Stalinist terror of the 1930s to explain certain developments of the wartime years. Central to his argument is the claim that widespread mistrust and self-centeredness inherited from the prewar period were instrumental in creating the social disunity that prevented the population of the Reichskommissariat, whether Ukrainian, Russian or Jewish, from countering Nazi oppression. In this atomized society the Nazis effectively deployed their wide range of repressive techniques, co-opting some...
groups and pitting them against the others. At the same time, the book also enhances our understanding of some key events of the 1930s, in particular the famine of 1932–1933, in which millions of people perished in Ukraine and neighboring regions. Barely eight years later, the famine still was the uppermost thing on people’s mind, particularly in the villages. The book records how, when finally allowed to speak, people would talk about it for days on end, both to each other and to visitors.

Of equal importance is the question of what consequences the experience of the Nazi period had after the Ukrainian territories were reintegrated into the Soviet Union. The book addresses only one issue in this respect: whether the Nazi period, with its emphasis on nationality and ethnicity, affected a growing Ukrainian national consciousness. Berkhoff answers this question in the negative. Prewar mental attitudes prevailed, which defined identity primarily in terms of “ours” (nashi) and “others” (chuzhie). This distinction did not necessarily coincide with ethnic boundaries, as was evidenced by the plight of ethnic Ukrainians from former Polish Galicia, who were not generally seen as “ours” by Ukrainians from the former Ukrainian SSR. Also, among most parts of the population German racist violence and repression effectively eroded any sympathy that might initially have existed for the idea of ethnicity as an ordering principle.

Somewhat surprisingly, Berkhoff does not take up another question that inevitably presents itself—what the consequences were of the grisly experiences of the Nazi period for the society that took shape in Soviet Ukraine after the war. One can only guess at the trauma caused by the horrific violence described in Harvest of Despair, particularly if one takes into account that for many it came atop other, often still fresh mental wounds inflicted by the famine and terror of the prewar decade. Ukraine was ravaged by the violence of the first half of Europe’s twentieth century, and one of the great merits of Berkoff’s book is that it brings this suffering to the attention of Western historians, who must take full account of these events if they wish to understand later developments.

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Reviewed by Anna D. Jaroszyńska-Kirchmann, Eastern Connecticut State University

Tadeusz Piotrowski is a professor of sociology at the University of New Hampshire at Manchester, and he is passionate about the history he seeks to uncover, explain, and preserve. His latest book is an attempt to bring to English-language readers a complicated story of ethnic relations in the eastern lands of Poland during World War II. The Polish Deportees is a selection of primary sources, both published and unpublished, that provide first-hand accounts of the experience of Soviet deportations, forced labor
in Siberia, exodus from the Soviet Union, and sojourn in refugee camps scattered around the globe.

As a consequence of the non-aggression treaty signed on 23 August 1939 by Germany and the Soviet Union and the subsequent German-Soviet Boundary and Friendship Treaty, Soviet troops seized control of Poland’s eastern lands, where they subjected the Polish population to a reign of terror. Violent persecution reached its climax in the four major waves of deportations of Polish citizens in February, April, and June 1940, and in June 1941 until the German invasion of the USSR on the 22nd of that month. Estimates of the scale of the deportations vary, ranging from 320,000 people deported on the low end to more than 1.5 million on the high end. The majority of those deported were ethnic Poles. Jewish, Ukrainian, Belorussian, and Lithuanian citizens of Poland accounted for the rest.

The deportees were transferred by cattle cars to Arkhangelsk, Komi, and Kolyma in the north; to Siberia; or to the border regions of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. Living in conditions defying imagination and subjected to back-breaking labor in harsh climes, the deportees remained in exile until the end of July 1941 when the Soviet and exiled Polish governments signed an agreement providing “amnesty” to all Poles in Soviet custody. Amid a chaotic and tragic exodus, most deportees made their way southward, crossed the Soviet border, and found themselves in refugee camps scattered from India and New Zealand to Mexico, Iran, Lebanon, Palestine, and South Africa.

At the end of the war, the refugees from Communism became one of the central issues in Cold War diplomacy, and both sides repeatedly used these people as bargaining chips or for propaganda benefit. The exiles themselves constituted a vehemently anti-Communist group who sought to promote and lead an international struggle to free their countries from Soviet domination. In the early postwar period, the International Refugee Organization resettled nearly 400,000 Poles in forty-seven countries, with sizeable populations settling in Great Britain, Australia, Canada, and the United States. The Siberian deportees, together with Poles from the displaced-persons camps in Germany and Polish civilian refugees and veterans of the Polish armed forces in the West, accounted for the bulk of the Polish postwar diaspora and were in the forefront of the struggle against Communism. Yet the exiles’ wartime plight is still not widely recognized either in scholarship or in collective memory, and Piotrowski attributes this to a “conspiracy of silence” among the Western allies after the Yalta agreement allowed the Soviet Union to “preserve the ‘good name’ of . . . [the] evil empire” (p. 12).

Piotrowski sets out to break the silence with voices coming from people who were eyewitnesses to the human toll of the deportations. He deftly translates into English 124 accounts from roughly fifteen Polish-language sources. In eight chapters arranged chronologically (Deportation, Soviet Union, Amnesty, Near and Middle East, India, Africa, New Zealand, and Mexico), Piotrowski chronicles the experiences of men, women, and children who tell the reader in their own words about the exhaustion, hunger, and disease that decimated their ranks, as well as about the strength, love, sacrifice, and resourcefulness that allowed them to survive. Some accounts are es-
pecially striking because they describe an ever-present tragedy in an almost dispassionate way. The children’s recollections vividly attest to their inner strength and vitality. Among many gripping accounts, a memoir of the Milewski family, which is quoted in longer excerpts in several of the chapters, is an exceptionally interesting document. The entries written by the mother and daughter during exile report in detail on day-to-day experiences and feelings, allowing for rare intimacy and insight.

*The Polish Deportees of World War II* contributes to the international scholarship that in recent years has increasingly focused on the history of displacement and exile both during and after World War II. This scholarship has been prompted by the inevitable passing of generations, by the collapse of Communism, and by the partial opening of the Soviet archives. Piotrowski’s excellent translation of primary documents will make the story of deportees accessible to readers beyond the Polish community. His decision to include accounts from refugee camps is laudable. Although the camps were an intrinsic part of the exiles’ odyssey, they are probably its least known aspect. History is already writing a new chapter in the deportees’ saga, as the surviving Poles and their families stranded in Kazakhstan during the exodus from the Soviet Union in the 1940s have only recently been able to dig out their prewar Polish passports and migrate back to an independent, non-Communist Poland.

The book includes a name index and a rich bibliography of secondary sources in both Polish and English, but no separate listing of primary sources. In addition to the introduction, which provides valuable historical context, the book contains four documents from Soviet and English archival sources with instructions and policy details regarding deportations and reporting on the conditions of exiles. The poignant photograph on the cover of Piotrowski’s book was also used for the cover of a book published around the same time by Katherine Jolluck, *Exile and Identity: Polish Women in the Soviet Union during World War II* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2002), which focuses on the experiences of Polish women deported to Siberia. Regrettably, Piotrowski’s volume does not include other photographic documentation. One could also wish for a map, which would help to place many destinations of the Polish exiles within a better-defined geographical context.

*The Polish Deportees of World War II* can be used as an excellent teaching tool and will likely be of great interest to historians of World War II and the Cold War, as well as scholars interested in refugee studies and the history of forced migration and ethnicity.

Reviewed by Karl Hall, Central European University

That the Bolsheviks sought to enroll science in the Soviet experiment is hardly news. Whole forests have been felled both to demonstrate and to refute the Bolsheviks’ claims to “scienticity” in interpreting philosophy and the historical process. Historians of science have investigated the complex interactions of natural scientists with their would-be Soviet patrons, often finding affinities in political and philosophical outlook but just as often pointing to Soviet scientists who viewed science as the one sure alternative claim to authoritative knowledge in the face of the Bolsheviks’ world-historical pretensions. Scholars like Michael David-Fox have also offered crucial insights into the institution building that the Bolsheviks hoped would transform the “sciences” (in the sense of _Wissenschaft_ because by far the greatest attention has been devoted to the social sciences and humanities). With James Andrews’s _Science for the Masses_, we finally have the first thorough study in English focusing on the broader audience for all these aspirations to scienticity. Andrews covers the natural sciences and technology, showing that “scientization” of public discourse was more than simply the result of a category mistake by usurpers of the authority of science. Rather, it was the product of an ongoing transformation of the cultural role of expert knowledge among the lay populace. In developing this theme, Andrews makes an important contribution to the history of Soviet science broadly construed, as well as to the history of Soviet popular culture.

Andrews is careful to highlight the historical continuities in science popularization across the revolutionary divide. He opens with a description of eighteenth-century attempts to present natural philosophy to a larger Russian audience and devotes an all-too-brief second chapter to the scientific societies and museums of the late Tsarist era that were crucial venues for the propagation of science as a virtuous civic activity. In the Soviet period, Glavnauka (the Science Department of the Ministry of Education) became the principal overseer of these activities, and Andrews nicely illustrates how the local societies both benefited from and were caught up in the ongoing centralization of bureaucratic control over the provinces. From voluntary educational technical groups like _Technology for the Masses_ (TekhMass) to journals like _Nauka i tekhnika_ (Science and Technology), a remarkable number of new institutions were set up to compete for the attentions of the populace. _Science for the Masses_ is at its best in capturing this welter of competing agendas during the 1920s.

Andrews devotes a chapter to scientific print culture in the 1920s, including descriptions of the private and cooperative publishing houses that managed to survive and even thrive for a time. Not only the variety of the offerings, but the diversity of the constituencies for popular science, come across clearly in his account. To his credit, Andrews also marshals the spotty evidence available that might give us some sense of reader responses to this barrage of scientific literature. Not surprisingly, the ef-
fects in rural areas seem to have been tenuous, except when science could be linked with agriculture. Here and elsewhere in the book, by far the most important print media for Andrews’s discussion are journals, pamphlets, and newspapers, from which he has sampled widely and to good effect. I would like to have seen a more systematic treatment of the mechanics of publishing, however. The editorial processes that governed science popularization are largely absent, along with any clear sense of how resources were allocated at higher levels. Moreover, the most prominent Bolshevik scientist to play a role in Soviet publishing, the mathematician and explorer Otto Schmidt, makes no appearance. Schmidt not only ran the State Publishing House for a time but also served as chief editor of the Great Soviet Encyclopedia, itself a fascinating venue for science popularization that could well have justified some discussion of it in the book.

Andrews ranges widely in discussing themes more susceptible to popularization (air flight) and those that resonated less successfully (evolution, in service to campaigns for atheism). Surprisingly, aside from a few insightful remarks on Vladimir Obruchev’s geography stories as a species of science fiction, Andrews shies away from exploring the connection between science popularization and science fiction. Given that an entire book could easily be written on the latter subject, Andrews can hardly be faulted for pragmatically limiting his mandate. Yet the topic of space exploration, at the least, begs for treatment along both axes at once. The fascinating heritage of Nikolai Fedorov and Konstantin Tsiolkovskii, the Biocosmists of the 1920s, is included in the narrative, but we learn neither about the potential feasibility of their schemes nor about how they reflected contemporary experiences of scarce resources. These imagined worlds, at once scientific and fantastic, should have been fodder for Andrews’s project, given what they tell us about authorial and readerly perceptions of contemporary Soviet life.

Although science as disciplinary practice plays no role in the book, historians of science will appreciate the many illustrations of just how broadly the notion of “applied science” could be valorized in the context of science popularization. Even leisure activities like photography became occasions for instructing workers in the ways of science, simultaneously softening the tendentious dichotomy of “pure” vs. “applied” and repeatedly remixing the utilitarian and educational aspects of the Soviet experiment.

Academic ritual dictates that the reviewer demonstrate his pedantry by reciting trivial errors in the text. Although such errors can be found here (e.g., the incorrect identification of the Lick Observatory on p. 87), one of the indicators of the high quality of Science for the Masses is that it is largely unburdened by such missteps. With its clear exposition, it can be read profitably by specialists and students alike.
David Engerman’s compact but thorough study offers an uncommon perspective on central themes in the history of modern Russia through the eyes of contemporary American observers. By telling us what was lost and found in translation of Russian experience from the late nineteenth century to 1940, and especially in the interwar decades, Engerman helps us understand the genesis of decision-making patterns and rhetoric that prevailed in the subsequent decades of the Cold War. The book, despite its coverage of Russia, is mainly about Americans: “The way Americans understood the process of social change shaped the way they envisioned their own nation” (p. 3). The book’s broader significance transcends its temporal and geographic boundaries. Soviet Russia was the first example of rapid modernization enforced by a dictatorial government. Attitudes and judgments that emerged in the West about pre–World War II Russian and Soviet economic development were and are reproduced to a certain extent with respect to other developing countries. Therefore this book provides important insight into the history of ideas underlying recent and current development policies and international relations. How much political freedom can be exchanged for economic welfare? What is the acceptable cost of modernization? These and similar questions were first raised by the American intellectuals featured in *Modernization from the Other Shore*.

Engerman treats in parallel two subjects: (1) the evolution of American interpretations of Russia, notably the gradual replacement of particularist, national-character views by a universalist modernization discourse; and (2) the development of an institutional framework for this interpretation, including academic centers of expertise on Russia and the Soviet Union. Parts I and II of the book cover five decades, from the 1870s to the early 1920s, the period when European-born stereotypes of a unique Russian national character were adapted for the American public. Part III—more than half of the book’s total length—is devoted to a much shorter period, from the mid-1920s to 1940. This imbalance is justified both by the scale of economic change in the Soviet Union—the “communist experiment”—and the importance of the period in shaping views of economic development issues that came to prominence after World War II: the role of government in economic development, the “right” pace of economic change, and the costs of modernization.

Part III progresses chronologically, with the focus shifting over time from social scientists (chs. 7 and 8) to journalists (ch. 9, discussing the U.S. media’s coverage of the 1932–1933 famine in the Soviet Union) to diplomats (ch. 10, focusing on the period after the U.S. government’s official recognition of the USSR in 1933). The succession of main characters reflects the order of the intellectual relay: Social scientists developed ideas and concepts in their study rooms and in the field; journalists pro-
cessed and transmitted news from the USSR through filters shaped by the academics’ theories; and government officials, taught by the social scientists and influenced by journalists, formulated policies.

The title of Chapter 8 is a variation on the title of the book: “The Romance of Economic Development.” This pivotal chapter focuses on assessments at the time of the apparent Soviet economic success story, which looked impressive against the backdrop of the Great Depression in the United States. The variety of opinion discussed in this chapter, represented by such famous names as the philosopher John Dewey and the economist cum politician Paul Douglas, is substantial. Yet, astoundingly, we find that intellectuals of different (and sometimes diametrically opposed) political views were largely in agreement about the supposed merits of Soviet policies during the First Five-Year plan. They believed that the USSR was on the right track in pursuing forced industrialization at a fast rate, despite the significant human cost. The common expectation was that the Soviet Union, through these policies, would rapidly ascend to the position of a world power. Observers on the left end of the political spectrum welcomed this development, whereas conservatives feared that a rapidly growing Soviet Union would pose a threat to Western democracies.

The root of this perception can be found in the combination of the centuries-old stereotype of “naive, . . . lazy and inconsistent” Russians (p. 164) with the developmental enthusiasm presuming that every country should become something like the United States—the sooner the better. The combination of these two factors led to the conclusion that only a strong government allegedly advised by economic experts could drag an economically backward country like Russia into the light of modernity. Not only liberal intellectuals expressed their admiration of planning (e.g. Paul Douglas, Stuart Chase), but even some conservatives voiced approval of collectivization, justifying the sacrifice of lives in the name of the future. The willful obliviousness to the scale of famine in 1932–1933 and the reluctance to reevaluate Soviet policies afterward were therefore not surprising.

The notion of a “benevolent dictator” has become quite popular since that time, owing in part to memories of the Soviet “successes” of the 1930s. This notion lies behind the tacit support for dictatorial regimes that allegedly pursue growth-oriented policies. However, the American intellectuals who condoned dictatorial solutions for developing countries were never inclined to contemplate such an arrangement for their own country even during the Great Depression. What was deemed acceptable for a latecomer to modernization was quite avoidable in a developed country, even one in a state of deep economic crisis. Even the greatest enthusiasts of big government such as Stuart Chase—who would have welcomed the implementation of an upgraded version of Soviet economic planning in the United States in the 1930s and believed that the cost of modernization was worth paying—"hoped that the United States would never see the bill" (p. 165). They could not understand that “costly” development by a dictatorship leads ultimately to a dead end and ever higher costs, and that the only reason the United States did not ultimately have to “see the bill” is that it never turned into a dictatorship.

The material in the book is well-organized, and Engerman’s account is easy to
read despite the broad scope that calls for frequent switching between names and themes. Readers interested in the economic and intellectual history of the twentieth century will find *Modernization from the Other Shore* significant and illuminating.


Reviewed by Michael David-Fox, University of Maryland

This ambitious and forcefully argued book contains three distinct but related elements: a carefully documented study of the transformation of Soviet newspapers from the mid-1920s to the early 1930s; a broader interpretation of the emergence of Stalinist culture; and an attempt to describe Stalinism more generally as a form of “neo-traditionalism” rather than a variation on modernity. Lenoe’s archive-based historical account is an impressive accomplishment; his use of it to interpret Stalinist culture is problematic but deserves attention and debate; and his case for neo-traditionalism has obvious flaws.

The book emphasizes how the “mass journalism” of the 1920s pioneered a style of exhortative, shrill directives and slogans set within a vocabulary of war and struggle. In newspapers such as *Rabochaya Moskva*, *Rabochaya gazeta*, and *Komsomol’skaya pravda*, mass journalism was intended to mobilize rank-and-file party activists for political and economic tasks. In the late 1920s the mass-journalism paradigm became attractive to Soviet leaders as an effective way of reaching key cadres, scapegoating enemies, and mobilizing workers for the industrialization drive. During Josif Stalin’s “Great Break,” mass journalism took over the central press, chiefly *Pravda* and *Izvestiya*, altering their tone, layout, and coverage in significant ways. Lenoe’s study is noteworthy for its systemic coverage of the Soviet newspaper network and for its analysis of economic as well as political-ideological factors shaping the press, operating as it did within the emerging command economy of shortages. The book is also notable for its biographical portraits of key journalists. Archival research illuminates with unprecedented clarity the political battles and processes behind the “Stalinization” of the press, especially during the self-criticism campaign of 1928–1929 and Stalin’s consolidation of power. Lenoe goes well beyond a top-down explanatory framework, stressing the institutional base created by mass journalism in the 1920s and the social similarities of mass journalists themselves to the *vydvizhentsy*, the cadres promoted by Stalin in what is described as a state-sponsored social revolution.

Intertwined with this account of the changes in Soviet newspapers is a set of arguments about the emergence of Stalinist culture. The most important of these revolves around the demise of what Lenoe calls the “NEP mass enlightenment project,” which involved utopian goals of shaping a “new person” and a commitment to studying reader response in order to shape the outlook of the differentiated “masses.” Stalinism jettisoned this agenda and turned instead to “pragmatic methods of mass
mobilization” (p. 248). Not only did the press system become more homogenous, but the new party elite (which Lenoe a bit misleadingly conflates with obshchestvennost’, a broader rubric) became the prime audience. Far from trying to transform the nature of man, therefore, the Communist Party under Stalin selectively released information, often through institutional or collective newspaper subscriptions, to a hierarchy of status groups. Indeed, Pravda and Izvestiya were not even available in kiosks in the mid-1930s. For Lenoe, then, the year 1930 is the “key break point” (p. 248), and the changes of the late 1930s and the rest of the Stalin period flowed from it.

This two-stage model shifting on a 1930 axis creates dichotomies that are oversimplified and ultimately unsustainable. The most important of these is the opposition between the “enlightenment” of the New Economic Policy (NEP) and the “mobilization” of Stalinism. Aside from the fact that “enlightenment” was a contested term in the Bolshevik lexicon from the outset (it was associated with populism), Lenoe’s construct implies that the primacy of mass enlightenment as pursued in the press and the concern with reader-response studies during the NEP were integral parts of “NEP Bolshevism” as a whole (p. 12). Lenoe’s blunt style avoids all phenomena that do not fit his framework. The legacy of the agitational journalism during the Russian Civil War barely enters into the account (p. 33), and he ignores the kul’turnost’ (culturedness) drive of Stalinism, perhaps the most successful Soviet “project” ever—a project that had its roots in NEP-era agendas. In short, there was plenty of “pragmatism” and mobilization before 1930, and neither utopianism nor “enlightenment” disappeared after that date.

More significant, however, resting the big edifice of “Stalinist culture” on the relatively narrow base of print journalism during less than a decade limits the effectiveness of Lenoe’s generalizations. The book does not incorporate large bodies of scholarship on other forms of cultural production, nor does it take account of studies of Soviet cultural change (such as in Katerina Clark’s 1995 book, Petersburg: Crucible of Cultural Revolution) that explain the dynamics and pace of transformation as the components of a cultural ecosystem. Lenoe does provide a convincing and suggestive chapter showing how mass journalism’s heroic tales of achievement affected the formation of the doctrine of Socialist Realism in the early 1930s. It is ironic, then, that he shows no recognition of the importance of literature as a new locus for widespread engagement with the “new Soviet man,” especially for the “1930s generation.” He also displays little understanding of how the first Five-Year Plan was in many ways an exceptional rather than seminal period of Soviet history. All the great changes during other phases of the Stalin era, such as the purges, the Great Terror, World War II, and the postwar years—changes long understood to present a key problem for the definition of “Stalinism” itself—are shoehorned into the 1930 turning point.

For example, his claim that Pravda was rationed to party cadres throughout the Stalin period in a fashion similar to the period around 1930 (p. 275 n. 64), when regime survival was at stake at the height of the forced industrialization and collectivization drives, rings hollow for a newspaper whose circulation was 2.7 million in 1940 and climbed an average of 50 percent each decade thereafter. Clearly, the Stalin era entrenched many orthodoxies that differed vastly from the first revolutionary decade,
but Lenoe’s two-stage conceptual framework is not flexible or expansive enough to grapple fully with the lines of continuity and change.

Finally, Lenoe does not limit himself to Soviet newspapers or Stalinist culture but takes the opportunity to propagate a theory of Stalinism as a form of “neotraditionalism.” Adopting Weberian categories, Lenoe argues that the early Soviet regime was based on the party’s “impersonal charisma,” as opposed to the rational-legal order of the liberal West. This charisma then degenerated under Stalin to “neotraditional” forms of state and society, in particular “a hierarchical society divided into a number of status groups or estates” (p. 251). For theoretical inspiration, Lenoe relies primarily on a 1983 essay by the political scientist Ken Jowitt and a 1986 study of Chinese industry written by the sociologist Andrew Walder.

Jowitt and Walder were reacting to the theories of modernization and convergence that were then still in vogue. Both of them embraced notions of neotraditionalism to distinguish Communist societies from the liberal West. Yet they wrote in a period before a large body of scholarship in the social sciences and history began positing multiple roads to modernity and examining non-Western and illiberal modernities. Lenoe appears unfamiliar with these developments as he belabors the differences between Leninism and liberal democracy. He also attempts to tar recent historians of Soviet modernity with the brush of postmodernism, which he reduces to Michel Foucault and discourse analysis. But this is at best an oversimplification. Far from all scholars using the category of modernity can meaningfully be considered postmodern. The uniqueness and comparability of Russia and the USSR is one of those “cursed questions” that will never be definitively resolved, and “modernity” is a notoriously amorphous concept. But one hopes that those who enter the debate will anticipate reactions, profit from opposing views, and be fully cognizant of the state of the field.

After I completed this review, Lenoe’s book became the subject of some controversy involving Jeffrey Brooks, the author of an important study of Soviet newspapers and Stalinism, Thank You, Comrade Stalin! Soviet Public Culture from Revolution to Cold War (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999). Brooks did not draw on archival sources for his book, but in the April 2005 issue of the American Historical Review he wrote a hostile review of Closer to the Masses, accusing Lenoe of appropriating ideas from Thank You, Comrade Stalin! The charge was then the subject of a sharp exchange between Sheila Fitzpatrick and Jan Plamper in the July 2006 letters section of Russian Review. In my view, scholars should have no trouble ascertaining that the studies of Lenoe and Brooks, despite their shared focus on the history of print media in the USSR, are as different as apples and oranges. Brooks’s puzzling accusation was unaccompanied by hard evidence. By contrast, Lenoe’s response in the correspondence section of the October 2005 issue of the American Historical Review was convincing and factual. Despite my own criticisms of Lenoe’s work, Closer to the Masses is one of the more important studies of the origins of Stalinism to appear in recent years.
Since the early 1990s, when most of the former Soviet archives became at least partly accessible, a vast literature has appeared in both Russian and English about the gulag system. Detailed time series are now available about the number of prisoners (including those who were able-bodied), their social and educational origins, and their occupations in the gulag, as well as many details about death and morbidity rates, the number who escaped, and the number recaptured. Hundreds of memoirs by former prisoners have presented the “view from below” of the harrowing conditions under which they lived and the way they coped with them.

Thus far, however, little information or analysis has appeared about the economics of the gulag system. This informative volume with essays by Russian and Western scholars is a pioneering work. Chapters by Paul Gregory, Andrei Sokolov, and Oleg Khlevnyuk consider the economics of the system as a whole. These chapters have now been supplemented by Khlevnyuk’s monograph on the subject, *The History of the Gulag: From Collectivization to the Great Terror* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004). (Khlevnyuk is also a co-editor of the Russian edition of the volume under review.) *The Economics of Forced Labor* provides case studies of major gulag projects, including a chapter by Mikhael Morukov on the White Sea–Baltic Canal, the first substantial construction undertaken by forced labor; a chapter by Simon Ertz and Leonid Borodkin on Noril’sk, a major center for non-ferrous metals; and a chapter by David Nordlander on Dal’stroi in the Far East, noted for its gold production. A further chapter by Christopher Joyce examines the role of the gulag in the Soviet republic of Karelia.

The translations of the Russian chapters read well, but some minor errors have crept in during the translation. The historian John D. Barber appears as John J. Barber (p. 29), the historian Elena Zubkova as Zubkov (p. 34), and the camp administrator A. P. Zavenyagin as Zaveryagin (p. 97, though his surname appears correctly on pp. 141–143). The footnotes frequently give the source as “Ukaz. soch.,” which should be translated as “Op. cit.” or “Ibid.” The most important slip is the statement that workers sentenced to corrective labor at their place of work “were reduced to one-quarter pay” (p. 28). In fact their pay was reduced by one quarter, that is, to three-quarters of the previous level.

This book successfully covers a great deal of ground, but it is not a comprehensive survey of the forced labor system. The authors deal with labor in the camps and colonies and with “forced labor at the place of work,” a penalty introduced on the eve of the war and continued until 1951 for anyone charged with flitting, absenteeism, or lateness. The book has little to say about “special settlers,” a rubric encompassing the “kulak” peasants exiled in 1930–1931 and the nationalities that were deported en masse during and immediately after the war for alleged disloyalty.

The authors reach important and convincing conclusions. First, they reject the
widely held view that the gulag system was launched for economic reasons and was a necessary part of Soviet industrialization. They show that both in the early 1930s and during the “Great Purge” of 1937–1938 and later the repressions were carried out for political not economic reasons. Having incarcerated people for political reasons, “Stalin and his political allies regarded the resulting pool of inmates as a remarkable [economic] opportunity” (p. 21).

Second, the book shows that although the gulag system played a significant role in Soviet industrialization, this role was not major or essential. The contrary view, advocated before the archives were opened by economists such as Steven Rosefeld (who appears here as “Rosenfeld”), was based on greatly exaggerated estimates of the number of prisoners. To be sure, the gulag system was extremely important for certain economic activities, especially production of non-ferrous metals (the gulag accounted for up to one-quarter of all nickel production), precious metals (the gulag’s gold production was a major source of foreign currency), and timber. The system also provided up to one-fifth of all construction workers, playing a major role in the building of remote railway lines. Nonetheless, as Khlevnyuk points out, the total number of employees in industry and construction in the gulag system at its height “was probably not much higher than 2 million,” whereas the total number of civilians employed on these activities was 18.6 million (p. 60).

Third, the authors provide strong (though not yet conclusive) evidence that the use of coercive labor was economically inefficient. Many ambitious projects of dubious value were started because prisoners were available, and a lot of these projects were never finished. The gulag authorities increasingly found it necessary to use positive economic incentives to encourage efficient work. The allocation of credits (zachety)—time taken off the sentence for good work—was ended in 1939 but was partly restored even before the death of Iosif Stalin. Monetary bonuses were increasingly provided as a work incentive. Then in 1950 money wages were introduced for prisoners. After a charge was deducted from the wage for food and accommodation, prisoners received on average 15 per cent of a free person’s wage. Wage scales in the gulag were differentiated by skill and productivity, as in civilian industry. The proportion of civilian workers (often former prisoners) working on gulag projects substantially increased.

Fourth, and most remarkable of all, as Aleksei Tikhonov demonstrates, the notion that all Soviet organizations sought to maximize the size of their own empires is contradicted by the behavior of Lavrentii Beria and the gulag authorities after the war. They sought to rid themselves of a large part of their “empire.” In 1949, four years before Stalin’s death, a deputy minister of internal affairs proposed that the gulag system be replaced by an exile labor force (p. 68). Then, just three weeks after Stalin died, Beria successfully proposed to the Communist Party’s Presidium (as the Politburo had been renamed) that a large part of the gulag labor force should be released. Some 1.5 million prisoners, 60 per cent of the total, were released within three months.

Much research remains to be undertaken, as the authors of this stimulating book point out. We do not yet have a systematic account of the changing structure of gulag employment. Neither the productivity of prisoners in different periods nor the extent
to which they worked on useless or abortive projects has been carefully estimated. These questions are complicated, and the experts themselves sometimes differ. For example, when discussing the value of gulag projects, Khlevnyuk cites Ya. Kilin, a respected historian of the White Sea–Baltic Canal, who concluded that “strategically, the waterway’s value was negligible” (p. 62). On the other hand, Morukov argues that the canal conveyed many ships of the Red Navy before 1941 and that actual and potential enemies of the USSR regarded the canal as “an essential part of the USSR’s naval military power” (pp. 161–162).

Nor do we yet know in detail the total cost of forced labor. A huge number of investigators were employed to provide the “evidence” to cast victims into the gulag. An elaborate system of paid guards sought to keep them there. The expenditures on these people need to be factored in if we are to estimate the total cost of maintaining the camps and their prisoners. To assess the efficiency of the gulag system, these total costs have to be set against the estimated value of the production of the camps. This “cost-benefit” analysis of the gulag system could then be compared with a similar exercise for Soviet civilian industry to address a fundamental question. Was all that suffering “worthwhile,” even from a cold-blooded economic point of view?


Reviewed by Walter D. Connor, Boston University

“[V]ictory had not brought the relief and freedom that were expected at the end of the war.” So observed Boris Pasternak’s narrator at the end of Doctor Zhivago. The novel, published in 1958 during the early post-Stalin “thaw,” reflected an optimism that was somewhat contradicted by the subsequent fate of the book in the USSR, and of Pasternak’s Nobel Prize in literature, which the Soviet authorities prevented him from accepting.

The narrator of Doctor Zhivago had not been alone in such expectations. The better postwar future anticipated—in vain—by so many from a Josif Stalin whose genuine charisma and popularity were probably never higher than in 1945 has often been a theme of history and memoir. Donald Filtzer’s detailed, exhaustive book, his fourth since 1982 on Soviet workers, explores the hows and whys of the return to repression after 1945.

What Stalin did from 1945 on was neither build “social consensus” nor achieve an “organic hegemony in the Gramscian sense,” but subjugate society. Repression and Zhdanovshchina (a crackdown on culture and literature) held the urban intelligentsia in check, while other segments of society encountered “mass impoverishment, restrictions on the freedom of movement, and harsh criminal sanctions for those who found these conditions intolerable or unacceptable” (p. 264). Filtzer details a brutaliz-
ing time, when many of the regime's economic goals and its own institutional coher-
ence were compromised in the bid to reimpose control, creating a situation that all of
Stalin's heirs, no matter how complicit, sought to escape after March 1953.

The food crisis—decree by nature and exacerbated by the regime—made a hard
time harder, but eventually it abated. With the immediate crisis over, the Soviet Union
entered on a period of “attenuated recovery,” the attenuation a product of resource
shortages and allocation decisions that chronically starved non-priority sectors but
also under-rewarded those who worked in “priority” sectors (the adjective having
more to do with valuation of the end-product than the welfare of its producers). The
reconstruction of the industrial labor force—redeploying survivors from prewar times,
breaking in young, predominantly rural and peasant recruits, and abandoning the
looser management practices of the war years to return largely to the discipline, sanc-
tions and maximal demands characteristic of the 1930s—is the main focus of the
book. Filtzer draws on a great deal of archival research to produce a grim, detailed pic-
ture of factories and workers’ lives in the postwar years to 1953.

Stalin aimed to exert rigid control over the “free” labor force and to extract maxi-
mum output from workers for minimal compensation. Largely he succeeded, as evi-
denced by Filtzer’s account of atrocious factory conditions, pitiful wages, unaffordable
prices (often even for rationed goods), ghastly crowding in wretched housing, and
chronic shortages of everything from socks to soap. The daily material struggle of
workers old and young (but especially the latter) under such extreme conditions
sapped their capacities for even individual forms of resistance. Control was thus all the
easier for the Stalinist system that well before the war had deprived workers of any
possibility of organized collective resistance.

Yet control was anything but total. Despite the state’s reserves of economic and
administrative coercion, people in massive numbers broke the rules, evaded their work
assignments, and left—or failed to arrive at—the plants and localities to which they
had been assigned. Job-changing of sorts illegal under the tightened “mobilization”
rules took place and often went unprosecuted. “Society” could not really resist and
“act” on its own, but segments could and did re-act to the demands from above.

Filtzer notes that “hundreds of thousands” broke harsh laws on labor desertion, a
sign of the magnitude of peasants’ and workers’ “desperation . . . during the worst
postwar years,” and yet they escaped major sanction, in part because “the very harsh-
ness of the laws” engendered “laxness and inconsistency with which officials applied
them” (p. 177). People who escaped bad work situations, as Filtzer makes clear, did not
have to disappear altogether to avoid punishment. Typically, they returned to the
rural areas from which they had been “mobilized,” and authorities in those areast
knew where they were. But efforts to locate them were hindered by the “unwilling-
ness” of procuracy and police officials in those locales “to enforce the law” and by the
broad networks of local officials (heads of collective farms, local councils, and even lo-
cal Communist Party committees) who were “determined to prevent the arrest and
imprisonment of people who were well known and part of the village community, and
whose labour power in any case they sorely needed” (p. 182).
Overworked by the socialism that had taken shape in the USSR, the workers were underserved by it in the sectors that supposedly provided public goods—housing, education, and health care. Examples abound in Filtzer’s book, one of the most compelling a large regional hospital at Perovo that had “a bad record of patients contracting infections. . . . Toilets were never cleaned and in the maternity ward even had faeces on the walls. Dirty linen was not disinfected. . . . Clean linen was dried in the hospital’s boiler room. . . . The polyclinic did not have a sewage system.” (p. 113) Horrendous as these conditions were, “it is doubtful,” as Filtzer observes, “that the Perovo hospital was an extreme case.”

The period covered by the book was an extreme time in an extreme case—the Soviet system as it existed from the late 1920s on. That system had formed the Soviet people—a new, distinct entity. During the war they had been accorded, in their daily work, more “slack” than before it, and they came to expect that this might be permanent. But hopes for “a calm, even if slow, advance forward were dashed forever” (p. 76). Workers were helpless as the regime took in the slack, but they resisted as they could, cooperating and colluding to blunt some of the worst effects, at least when the potential costs of doing so were not too prohibitive. Thus, a regime that did not hesitate to violate its own “pro-people” regulations on health, safety, and housing and that routinely reneged on its promises found that ordinary people—often its own agents—connived to blunt the effect of its anti-people laws. Although no large-size heroes of resistance emerged, the “many millions of acts of small-scale heroism” in the Soviet Union more than half a century ago surely deserve the “awe and respect” Filtzer accords to them.


Reviewed by Henry E. Hale, George Washington University

Edward Walker has produced an excellent book that makes a unique contribution to the large and growing literature on the downfall of the Soviet Union. In focusing attention on the importance of notions of sovereignty in a concise, readable way, Walker’s book is well suited not only for the edification of expert readers but also for assignment in university courses on Soviet history and issues related to nationalism and federalism.

After an introduction summarizing the argument, Walker discusses the institutions and norms of federalism in the USSR. He skillfully describes how Lenin came to advocate ethnoterritorial federalism, which was subsequently enshrined in the Soviet constitution. Walker particularly emphasizes the union republics’ formal right to secede, which was affirmed in every Soviet constitution from 1924 on, and the norm that each union republic was in reality a “sovereign state.” He notes that not only
Mikhail Gorbachev but many others in the Soviet Union came to believe that the "nationalities problem" had essentially been solved by the 1980s.

Walker then demonstrates that these formal norms on sovereignty and secession became central to the discourse of perestroika. The Baltic republics, for one thing, began their drive for independence by calling for the restoration of "Leninist norms of federalism," which implied a right to secession. The fact that ideas of republic sovereignty and the right to secede actually were central to formal Soviet thinking on center-periphery relations, Walker argues, greatly complicated the ability of pro-union forces to reject calls for ever more autonomy. In the late 1980s and 1990, the term "sovereignty" became the central term of the separatist cause, a term that was valuable precisely because its vagueness enabled it to be supported by both radical nationalists and moderates wanting merely to redress the hypercentralization of the Soviet state. Sovereignty even emerged as the rallying cry of Boris Yeltsin, who invoked it to unite both democrats and moderate Communists in Russia in a struggle for power with Gorbachev's central government. In 1990, Yeltsin took the notion to what appeared to be an extreme bordering on anarchy, as he proposed that sovereignty should be given first and foremost to individuals and only then be delegated "from the ground up" to various levels of government. One of the great strengths of Walker's book is its attention to the ethnically designated autonomous republics, regions, and districts in Russia, whose allegiance Yeltsin was attempting to secure in his battle with the Soviet regime.

By all indications, Gorbachev, in responding to Yeltsin, genuinely believed Leninist words that were never meant to be taken literally. Rather than formulate a reasonable law enabling secession and legislating a new union structure that would have rid the USSR of the troublesome Baltic states and kept the most important republics firmly in line, the Soviet leader opened a Pandora's box by attempting to negotiate a new union treaty that would have to be signed by all of the USSR's multifarious republics. Walker devotes most of chapter 5 to describing this as a hopeless endeavor, doomed to failure from the outset because of the various economic and political crises facing the union as well as conflicting interests among the union republics.

The August 1991 coup attempt only hastened what Walker believes was the inevitable disintegration of the union. After the coup, Gorbachev resurrected his effort to forge a new union treaty, believing that formal Leninist norms of federalism could be achieved without the use of force that had been essential to the USSR's actual practice of interrepublic relations. Walker convincingly rejects arguments that Yeltsin himself had worked to destroy the USSR all along, arguing that he opted for its dissolution only after learning of Ukraine's referendum vote for independence. Ukraine's leader Leonid Kravchuk, for his part, used the ambiguity of terms like "sovereignty" and even "independence" to win the referendum vote and to lull Gorbachev into supposing that Ukraine would not actually secede in the end.

Another of the book's strengths is its attention to the role of the international community. Walker argues that Western governments were willing to accept independence for the union republics but not for the autonomous republics because only the former had the formal right to secede according to the USSR's own constitution.
He acknowledges, however, that only after the central government collapsed did the international community generally recognize the union republics’ independence (with the exception of the Baltic republics, whose independence was endorsed sooner).

Although the book is generally well argued and convincing, certain points are problematic. Some readers may wonder why Walker repeatedly uses words like “catastrophic,” “disastrous,” or “naïve” to describe Gorbachev’s effort prior to August 1991 to forge a new union treaty. Although Walker notes that the ethnoterritorial federations of Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia also were dissolved, he does not make clear whether the leaders of those countries adopted strategies similar to that of Gorbachev. If they did pursue essentially the same strategy, one suspects that deeper structural causes may have forced them in this direction, making the pejorative reference to Gorbachev’s decision-making inappropriate. If they did not adopt the same strategy, then the strategy itself would not seem to have been causally important insofar as different strategies all led to the same result—dissolution. In fact, Gorbachev’s strategy might have prevented the kind of bloody outcome witnessed in Yugoslavia.

Overall, Walker has produced an exceedingly valuable contribution to the growing literature on the demise of the Soviet Union. His stress on the role of ideas of sovereignty is particularly important, as is his discussion of how this normative discourse interacted with the autonomous republics and international community to facilitate the dissolution of the USSR.