
Reviewed by Robert G. Moeller, University of California, Irvine

Matthew D. Hockenos argues that in the immediate aftermath of World War II most Germans did not focus on the war that Germany had started in Europe or on the murder of millions of Jews and other non-combatants by German soldiers and police. Rather, the majority of Germans were primarily concerned with their own suffering, measured in cubic meters of rubble in cities leveled by Allied bomb attacks, staggeringly high military and civilian death tolls, the raping of German women (particularly by Soviet soldiers), and the displacement of millions from bombed-out housing or from their homes in Eastern Europe as they fled in advance of the Red Army in late 1944 and early 1945. Those to whom many Germans turned for guidance in troubled times—Protestant ministers—tended most often to confirm, not challenge, their parishioners’ image of themselves as victims of measures no less severe than those perpetrated by the Nazi regime against Jews. In the words of Bishop Theophil Wurm, writing in an open letter “To the Christians of England” in December 1945: “To pack the German people into a still more narrow space, to cut off as far as possible the material basis of their very existence, is no different, in essentials, from Hitler’s plan to stamp out the existence of the Jewish race” (p. 150). Allied charges that the Germans were collectively responsible for Nazi crimes were met by Germans’ insistence that the Allies had plenty of blood on their own hands.

Hockenos establishes that conservative Protestant clerical leaders grounded this rhetoric of German victimization in an understanding of scripture and theology: Christians could not be held responsible for the Nazi regime because of “the doctrine of two kingdoms”—a spiritual kingdom to which Christians owed allegiance and a temporal kingdom over which they could have little influence. Although the “Stuttgart Declaration of Guilt” in October 1945 confessed a “great solidarity of guilt” for the “endless suffering . . . brought to many peoples and countries” (p. 187), Hockenos reminds us that this pronouncement was directed primarily at a foreign audience—representatives of the World Council of Churches—and triggered an enormously negative domestic response. Conservatives in Germany argued that Nazism triumphed because too many Germans had turned away from the faith, leaving themselves susceptible to the temptations of an all-too-worldly regime. Germany’s devastating defeat was a sign of “God’s righteous judgement” (p. 3). But God could mete out not only judgment but forgiveness, and whatever guilt Germans should confess was to...
heavenly powers, not to the Allies. By the late 1940s, conservative church leaders were also more focused on containing the threat of Communism than on explaining their responsibility for National Socialism.

Such self-exculpatory views were prevalent among a majority of Protestant leaders after the war. However, as Hockenos demonstrates, their views came under vehement challenge from reform-minded theologians like Martin Niemöller, himself a concentration camp inmate from 1937 to 1945, and Karl Barth. These critical theologians described a troubling legacy that could be overcome only by a commitment to become involved in politics as well as theology. Barth’s call in the 1930s for Protestants to reject the separation of “Gospel and Law” resounded through the early postwar years, and Hockenos carefully describes how postwar splits within Protestantism were prefigured in the Third Reich. It is not surprising, he argues, that immediately after the war Germans were far more likely to see themselves as victims than as perpetrators. This entrenched outlook makes all the more remarkable the moral courage of those who were calling for acknowledgment of past crimes, accountability, and a thoroughgoing reform of the church, lest past mistakes be repeated. The lesson of National Socialism, reformers argued after 1945, was that Protestants should not permit the “two kingdoms” to remain distinct. Not many Germans took part in the crimes of the Nazi regime, but all Germans were accountable because they had looked the other way or had simply failed to see where things were heading. Although these views were never more than a minority position during the immediate postwar period, they paved the way for the emergence of a progressive, activist Protestant leadership in the 1950s that supported campaigns against West German rearmament and against plans to station U.S. nuclear weapons on German soil. By the 1960s, Protestant leaders were calling for reconciliation between West Germany and its eastern European neighbors in ways that laid the groundwork for Willy Brandt’s Ostpolitik.

Hockenos closely examines how Protestant leaders addressed the “Jewish question,” and he finds that precious few made even the slightest effort to analyze past instances of German anti-Semitism or to prevent its recurrence. Although church officials did take account of the needs of “Jewish Christians”—Jews who had converted to Christianity but did not escape persecution by the Nazis—these converts were “viewed as outsiders on account of their race” (p. 138). Missionaries also remained convinced that the conversion of other Jews to Christianity was not only possible but highly desirable. For Jews in Germany who resisted such appeals, the Protestant Church provided no assistance, assuming that international relief agencies were doing more than enough. Again, the dismal record Hockenos outlines is leavened by exceptional individuals like Heinrich Grüber, who spent time in concentration camps under the Nazis for aiding victims of the regime and who worked tirelessly on behalf of “racially persecuted Christians.” Nonetheless, “many church leaders continued to perceive Jewish Christians as a racial and cultural entity different from German Gentiles” (p. 148). Even the theologians who began to examine Protestantism’s history of anti-Semitism did not link it to the attitudes that made possible the systematic persecution and murder of Jews by the Nazis.

Hockenos argues that “the silence of church conservatives about their role in the
Nazi past was . . . a noisy affair” (p. 9), and he lets us hear some of the ruckus by carefully analyzing theology, the position papers drafted by Protestant leaders, and the motivations of key individuals in the church. His book is thus an important contribution to a growing literature that has questioned the conclusion of Theodor Adorno and Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich that in the immediate aftermath of the war Germans “had neither the desire nor the energy to discuss, confront, or reflect on their role in the twelve years of National Socialist rule” (p. 11).

Extremely important as well is Hockenos’s illumination of the critical voices that called for the Protestant Church to acknowledge its responsibility for the triumph of National Socialism and the crimes perpetrated by the Nazi regime. Their self-critical approach led in due course to demands for political engagement and activism. Less clear in Hockenos’s analysis, however, is the extent to which the theological debates surrounding the question of German guilt informed Protestant political practice and filtered into the postwar Christian Democratic Union, the umbrella party that encompassed both Protestants and Catholics. Also treated only on the margins is the impact of religious discourse on political debates concerning the best way to address the needs of German victims and to commemorate and mourn the dead. Protestant leaders spoke with authority because, as Hockenos stresses, churches were “the only institutions that had not collapsed” (p. 90). But the credibility of the churches rested on their deeds as well as their words. The Cold War framed the discussions within the church, but Hockenos does relatively little to show how the Soviet occupation of eastern Germany affected the practice of the Protestant clerical establishment in what was to become the German Democratic Republic.

Understanding these other parts of the story of the church’s reemergence in postwar Germany will be possible only if we are willing to take seriously the extent to which the actions of Protestant church leaders were firmly grounded in theology in general and Lutheran beliefs in particular. In a convincing, clearly argued fashion, Hockenos’s important book demonstrates that these beliefs provided the framework within which Protestants interpreted National Socialism and sought to come to terms with its legacy.


Reviewed by Oliver Bange, Mannheim University

In mid-1959 the United States and West Germany signed an agreement on the exchange of strategic nuclear information. Months later, the new West German defense minister, Franz Josef Strauß, complained to Lauris Norstad, the U.S. general who was serving as commander of all forces deployed by the North Atlantic Treaty
Organization (NATO), that the West German government had still not received any information about NATO’s “Atomic Strike Plan.” After considerable hesitation, the NATO commander finally agreed that the West German chief of staff, Albert Schnez, might receive oral instructions at NATO’s headquarters which he could then report—also orally—to Defense Minister Strauß. The effect of this information was a huge shock, and the shock was compounded in September 1959 when NATO held its SIDE STEP planning exercises that gave the West Germans their first sense of NATO’s nuclear strategy in case of an all-out East-West conflict. The exercise scenario stipulated that West German territory would be struck by more than 400 Warsaw Pact nuclear warheads and a sizable number of NATO warheads. NATO’s self-announced task to reestablish control over territory lost during the first days of the conflict would be utterly impossible in the midst of this devastation. After visiting Fontainebleau, General Schnez was understandably shaken by NATO’s war plans and reported to Strauß that any such war would be tantamount to a “Golgatha of the German nation.”

Powerful images such as this are few and far between in Bruno Thoß’s book. NATO-Strategie und nationale Verteidigungsplanung is a professorial German monograph—full of sources and details, and utterly void of the high-flying, stylish rhetoric so en vogue in Anglo-American historiography these days. Nevertheless, those making the effort to work their way through 800 pages (in German) will be fully rewarded. NATO-Strategie und nationale Verteidigungsplanung goes against the grain of recent books by Odd Arne Westad and other scholars who have sought to relocate the Cold War to the Third World. Thoß instead convincingly shows that Europe was “the central arena of the conflict of systems between East and West” (p. 5). No doubt, Thoß did not aspire to become involved in historiographical debates. Rather, he simply set out to deliver a thorough study of his more focused topic: the buildup of the West German Bundeswehr under the shadow of a potential nuclear confrontation. Barely a decade after the crushing of Nazi Germany, the creation of the Bundeswehr raised fundamental questions about West Germany’s role in NATO, about nuclear deployments on West German territory, and about the veto rights—if any—that the West German government might have if a nuclear confrontation seemed likely to occur on its own (and East Germany’s) territory. A narrow approach focused solely on national history would clearly be inadequate to deal with this topic. Thoß does full justice to the wider international framework by drawing on rich archival sources not only in Germany but also in the United States, Great Britain, and NATO headquarters.

The strength of the book lies in its coverage of developments in the late 1950s and 1960. Thoß provides a wealth of hitherto unknown details regarding the Bundeswehr’s equipment (particularly its missiles and nuclear-capable aircraft), Konrad Adenauer’s hollow renunciation of A-, B-, and C-weapons from 1954 on, and the nature of “Live Oak” (NATO’s contingency planning for a serious confrontation over Berlin that would have necessitated the use of nuclear weapons even at a relatively early stage). These issues continued in one form or another after 1960—but when Thoß’s narrative extends into the 1960s, the evidence he was able to gather becomes
thinner, occasionally raising doubts about some of his assertions and conclusions. Because of the Christian Democrats’ lingering interest in acquiring nuclear weapons, the Grand Coalition government did not sign the Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) in 1968 (as Thoß claims on p. 484). Not until after a new Social Democratic–led government was formed by Willy Brandt in October 1969 did Germany sign the NPT to clear the way for the new Ostpolitik. Thoß’s blunt assumption that Strauß did not want to pursue a national nuclear capability (p. 496) is dubious. In reality, the West German defense minister was kept from this course by a lack of political options rather than a lack of will (as Thoß himself acknowledges later in the book).

Thoß is one of the leading scholars at the German Defense Ministry’s prestigious Institute for Military History. When writing this book, he enjoyed essentially unrestricted archival access not only in Germany but also at NATO, where he was able to examine documents of NATO’s Supreme Allied Commander in Europe (SACEUR, always an American general) and other materials from NATO’s international secretariat, from the headquarters of the United States Army in Europe, and from the Supreme Headquarters of the Allied Powers in Europe (SHAPE). Of particular importance to his overall thesis—the connection between Western nuclear defense planning and the buildup of the Bundeswehr—was his ability, as a senior employee of a government institution, to rely on still-classified papers of the German Defense Ministry. Because the vast majority of documents related to nuclear weapons planning are still classified, and because Thoß was not allowed to cite directly from these documents or even to give their archival numbers, some of the crucial arguments in his book appear somewhat under-documented. Only by reading between the lines can one try to determine which parts of his account are actually based on documents or are paraphrasing a source he cannot explicitly mention.

This is, of course, a very unsatisfactory state of affairs for Thoß, who is prevented from offering sufficient evidence for some of his theses. It is even more annoying for readers who, after finishing the book, would like to plunge into the thick of things and continue the work started here. Thoß is certainly not to blame for this miserable situation. Neither are the German military archives in Freiburg, with their apparent under-staffing or lack of personnel for the post-1945 period. Many classified West German documents from the 1950s and 1960s are still retained by German federal ministries and departments, whereas East German documents—with the noticeable exception of East German diplomatic papers—are all freely accessible. Regarding nuclear weapons, the situation is further complicated by the mixed national authorship of documents generated in or around NATO offices. For one reason or another, comprehensive documentary access according to the international thirty-year rule, which German federal archives are supposed to observe, remains an illusion. What is sorely needed in Germany is the introduction of a regulation similar to the standard introduced by most other West European countries. This would entail a fundamental reversal of the declassification process based on a completely different understanding of whose papers these actually are. Tony Blair’s “Open Government Act” did exactly this nearly a decade ago in Great Britain. By introducing automatic declassification after thirty years unless the department makes a specific case to retain a certain docu-
ment, the Open Government Act places government papers in the hands of those who have actually financed them in the first place, thus allowing the public a chance to learn about things past and to incorporate them into their respective national memories. Similar legislation is long overdue in Germany.


Reviewed by Padraic Kenney, University of Colorado

Robin Okey has written a fine, concise evaluation of the revolutions of 1989 in Eastern Europe. He is a historian rather than a transitologist, and *The Demise of Communism* provides a corrective to the narrower perspective that has dominated social-science discussions over the last decade. Okey’s view of 1989 is not only deep, placing the end of Communism in the contexts of other revolutionary moments and of Communism itself, but also wide, ranging across the region with ease.

Eastern Europe, as depicted here, comprises the countries that were independent in 1989, from Poland and East Germany through Yugoslavia and Albania, without the western Soviet Union. One of the great strengths of the book is its judicious treatment of the Communist period. As Okey argues, a serious review of that era is necessary in order “to show the successive stages by which illusion after illusion was stripped away until the original energy sustaining the experiment had burned itself out” (p. 73). Indeed, the willingness of Communist leaders to give up the ghost so quickly and quietly makes sense only in this context. At the same time, Okey follows all the threads leading to 1989: the squandering of reformist projects, the economic failures, and the emergence of vibrant oppositions nearly everywhere in the region. Although he pays due attention to the role of Mikhail Gorbachev and other international factors, the book’s focus is decidedly domestic. Okey has a feel for social, economic, and demographic trends and has unearthed a wealth of tidbits that illustrate a decline that was at once inexorable and eminently avoidable.

Okey also sets the moment of 1989 in a socioeconomic context. He treats events in Poland and Hungary as preludes to the upheavals of that autumn and suggests that, without the downfall of the hardline regime in East Germany, one could imagine that reforms in Poland and Hungary would have remained confined to those two countries. The decisive moment, in his view, was Hungary’s decision in early September to open its borders, letting out East Germans eager to emigrate. This step, Okey avers, “set in train the fall of dominoes in the socialist camp” (p. 85). His argument here situates change amid international pressures and decisions by Communist reformers, and away from the people (though Okey could have acknowledged the extent to which pressure in Hungary to open the borders for the refugees came from below). Nevertheless, Okey makes clear that 1989 was a revolutionary year in three respects. First, his analysis draws attention to the dramatic ideological change that Communists
underwent as they sat down to negotiate with the opposition. Second, in contrast to those who emphasize the lack of violence in 1989, Okey draws attention to the constant threat of violence as a marker of revolutionary change. Third, he notes that the events of 1989 moved with the rapidity characteristic of revolution. His frequent references back to 1789 help to make these points persuasive.

In the second half of the book, Okey examines the post-Communist transformation of polities and economies but takes his story only through the early 1990s. He does not pretend to offer a thorough survey of post-Communist events and, indeed, does not even provide a brief narrative of the Yugoslav wars. Readers with any knowledge of the region will find nothing new here, and one wishes that Okey had been able to look at the transition as a (more or less) completed process—which arguably it was by 2004.

The book will occasionally be rocky going for undergraduates, who are the presumed audience. Okey scatters the text with hundreds of illustrative bits of data, sometimes spanning the region in the course of a paragraph—a style that can be frustrating even for the specialist. On the whole, though, this book can serve as an introduction to the collapse of East European Communism. With its emphasis on social and economic trends, it is a good counterweight to the diplomatic and political focus dominant in the post-Communist literature.

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Reviewed by Anna M. Cienciala, University of Kansas

Norman Davies, the most prominent British historian of Poland, has written a blockbuster of a book about the longest, most destructive, and most heroic episode of urban warfare in German-occupied Europe. The battle waged by the Polish Home Army (Armia Krajowa, or AK) against the Germans in Warsaw from 1 August to 2 October 1944 was the culmination of five years of armed resistance against the German occupation. At the same time, the Polish fighters were striving for an independent Poland—and not a Communist state dominated by the USSR, whose Red Army was advancing through Poland with a subservient “Polish Committee of National Liberation” in tow.

The dual nature of the rising was difficult for contemporary Western observers and later Western historians to understand. In the West, the Warsaw uprising was often overshadowed by the equally heroic, though much smaller Warsaw Ghetto uprising of April–May 1943. Only now, with the publication of Norman Davies’s study, does the English-speaking reader have access to a comprehensive account of the fighting in Warsaw in the summer of 1944, which forms the core of the book. Earlier, readers could turn to Janusz Zawodny’s excellent though brief account, *Nothing but Honour: The Story of the Warsaw Uprising, 1944* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution
Press, 1978), and to Joanna K. M. Hanson’s fine book, *The Civilian Population and the Warsaw Uprising of 1944* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982). Also available were accounts by Neil D. Orpen, *Airlift to Warsaw: The Rising of 1944* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1984), which focuses on the abortive Western re-supply efforts; and George Bruce, *The Warsaw Uprising, 1 August–2 October 1944* (London: Hart-Davis, 1972). Jan M. Ciechanowski’s study, *The Warsaw Rising of 1944* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1974), deals not with the fighting itself but with the Home Army commanders, their strategic plans, and above all their decision—approved by the Polish government-in-exile in London—to rise up in the capital, which originally had been excluded from the plans for a general uprising against the retreating Germans. Ciechanowski condemns both the AK leaders and the Polish government in London for having decided to fight without securing a guarantee of Soviet support. He blames them for the destruction of the city and the enormous loss of life, estimated at 150,000–200,000 people.

Davies, by contrast, convincingly argues that the Home Army commanders made their decision at a time when the German Army Group Center was collapsing; when news had come in of the attempt to assassinate Hitler (an attempt that, while unsuccessful, suggested that the Führer was losing support among his army leaders); and when Marshal Konstantin Rokossovskii’s tanks were sighted on the outskirts of “Praga,” the part of Warsaw located on the eastern bank of the Vistula (pp. 620–621). Indeed, Rokossovskii had orders to take Praga by 8 August, and the Polish-language radio on the Soviet side called on the people of Warsaw to help the Red Army by rising up against the Germans.

However, after a German counterattack unexpectedly rebuffed Rokossovskii’s vanguard, the Soviet plans changed. The Soviet leader Josif Stalin determined that the Warsaw uprising was being led by the political enemies of his Polish Committee. Also, Polish Prime Minister Stanislaw Mikołajczyk, who was in Moscow from 30 July to 9 August 1944, could not accept either the Polish-Soviet frontier demanded by Stalin (which would have forced Poland to give up one-third of its territory with no guarantee of receiving territorial compensation at Germany’s expense) or the minority role Stalin envisaged for Mikołajczyk’s Peasant Party (the largest party in Poland) in a new Polish government. Mikołajczyk’s rejection of these demands, especially the frontier—which was unacceptable not only to his government and the AK commanders but also to the overwhelming majority of Poles at the time—induced Stalin to withhold Soviet military support for the Warsaw uprising. In late August, the Polish government-in-exile proposed free elections and negotiations on the frontier at war’s end, but Stalin found this unacceptable. He gave only symbolic help to the insurgents while refusing permission for British and American planes to land behind Soviet lines after dropping supplies on Warsaw. He made one exception for a flight of U.S. Flying Fortresses from Britain in mid-September 1944, coming just after Rokossovskii finally captured Praga. The AK capitulated on 1 October, but the Red Army and the First Polish Army attached to it did not enter the ruins of Warsaw until 17 January 1945. The Soviet and Polish Communist governments condemned the Warsaw uprising as a criminal “adventure,” though in subsequent years the Polish Communists found it politically
necessary to acknowledge the heroism of the AK soldiers and the civilian population, while still condemning the decision-makers. A modified version of this view has been taken up by some historians in post-Communist Poland, though in August 2004 the Polish people celebrated the sixtieth anniversary of the uprising by honoring all its participants.

Davies can be criticized for blaming the defeat of the uprising mainly on the failure of Poland’s Western Allies to secure a promise of Soviet help ahead of time and then their failure to exert sufficient pressure on Stalin during the uprising itself (pp. 622–623). One may also question Davies’s claim that the Warsaw uprising played a prominent part in the origins of the Cold War (p. 618). In other respects, however, the book succeeds admirably. Davies’s extended account of the fighting is a spellbinder, presenting it in three dimensions: a linear account (background, the uprising, Communist Poland and its interpretations, and the post-Communist period); capsules (brief accounts of individual experiences); and appendices (cartoons, documents, literature, and maps). This is similar to the format he used in his *Europe: A History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996) and is highly successful in *Rising ’44*, even though three separate sets of notes can be daunting for readers who might wish to look up sources. The format used in the much longer Polish edition of the book, *Jak powstało Powstanie ’44*, trans. by Elżbieta Tabakowska (Kraków: Znak, 2005), is better, with all notes provided at the bottom of each cited text and capsule. To minimize the use of Polish diacritics and double consonants that he thought might scare away English-language readers, Davies has anglicized Polish personal and place names (and provided the originals in appendix 35). One may wonder whether this will really make much difference to readers courageous enough to buy a large book dealing with military-political events that are largely unknown in the West. Format aside, Davies’s book is the first comprehensive, exhaustively researched, and highly readable English-language account of the heroic struggle waged by the Polish Home Army and civilian population against the Germans and their subsidiaries in Warsaw in August–September 1944. Davies not only colorfully recounts the fighting but also explains the political aspects of the uprising and its interpretations. Let us hope that his book will make the Warsaw Rising of ’44 widely known in the English-speaking world.


*Reviewed by Jane L. Curry, Santa Clara University*

Poland’s wartime history has most often been pictured in black-and-white terms—the good and the bad, the nationalist Armia Krajowa (Homeland Army) versus the Communists. Anita Prazmowska’s careful examination of archival evidence pertaining to the various parties and underground groups puts an end to this simplistic dichotomy.
Prazmowska thoughtfully shows who did what and for what purpose from the middle of World War II to the establishment of Communist rule. In so doing, she makes sense of many of the postwar tensions that are still around today.

The one thing that can be said with confidence about wartime Polish politics is that it was not simple. Prazmowska traces the words, realities, and expectations of the various Communist and non-Communist groups that argued with each other, fought the Germans, and dealt with their respective governments-in-exile (one in London and the other in the Soviet Union). She does this by looking not only at their strategies in fighting the Germans but also at their goals for Poland after the war and their attempts to elicit support for these goals not only from their allies but from the population at large. Prazmowska uses the various parties’ assessments of the population’s mood to build a picture of “public opinion.” To this end, she highlights the intelligence collected by each party about its opponents and potential allies. She shows that although Poles thought beyond the brutalities of the war, they disagreed about the best arrangements to pursue. The one thing they were sure about is that they wanted neither Communism nor a state of large landowners, rich industrialists, and poor peasants and workers.

Prazmowska describes the conflicts within the London government-in-exile and between the government-in-exile and the various underground parties and fighters in Poland. Communications between those who were inside Poland and those who were outside were difficult but not impossible. The thorniest issue was how to deal with the Soviet Union. On this question another set of players—the British, French, and Americans—were also involved. Although the Poles assumed that their contribution of troops to the Allied war effort and their heroism at home would make their freedom a priority for the Allies, the Allies were in fact more interested in pleasing the Soviet Union than in Poland’s fate. As Prazmowska knits together the many strands of Polish émigré politics and shows how the leading Polish politicians kept in contact with the Western allies and with their men and women on the ground, she defuses the myth of a “sellout at Yalta.” Clearly, a great deal had happened before the Yalta talks that undercut Poland’s standing and gave a decisive advantage to the Soviet Union. Prazmowska also underscores how difficult it was to maintain close ties between those fighting in wartime Poland and those in London.

Prazmowska deals only briefly with the Warsaw uprising of 1944 and does not discuss the ghetto uprisings at all. She concurs with other scholars who have found that the Warsaw uprising was far from well planned and coordinated even among the non-Communist underground groups.

Soviet control of Poland after the war was, in retrospect, a given. The decision to shift Poland’s borders to the west had almost no support in Poland but was decided by the Allies. At the time, Polish-Soviet relations were precarious. Soviet and Polish Communist officials initially disagreed about the country’s priorities and how to manage the chaos in Poland’s new western territories. If Prazmowska is right, it was initially the Polish Communists who wanted to crack down and establish Stalinist rule. Josif Stalin himself appears to have believed that a coalition would be better as the occupation began. His concern was to ensure that the new Polish government would estab-
lish control in the former German territories and stem the mass migration of displaced people from East to West. For the time being, the question of setting up a Stalinist regime in Poland was subordinated to the needs of the Soviet troops in Germany.

The darkest chapter of postwar Polish history is the way the Polish authorities dealt with minorities—Germans, Ukrainians, and the surviving Jews—right after the fighting ended. Amid the destruction and chaos left by the war, Poles turned on these “others.” Having been persecuted, the Poles launched their own campaign of persecution. The forced resettlement of Ukrainians and Germans has often been depicted as one of Communist Poland’s few claims to popular support, but Prazmowska shows that it was a far more destructive and vicious undertaking than the depictions one finds in broader-brush histories of Poland like Norman Davies’s *God’s Playground: A History of Poland*, 2 vols. (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1982), as well as in Davies’s more recent book coauthored with Roger Moorhouse, *Microcosm: Portrait of a Central European City* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2002). The full extent of this brutality has become clear only recently with the availability of archival materials about the mass expulsions of Germans and Ukrainians from Poland. Jews, too, were tarred with the “alien” label and subjected to appalling cruelties, including pogroms that left large numbers dead, as Jan Tomasz Gross vividly recounts in *Fear: Anti-Semitism in Poland after Auschwitz* (New York: Random House, 2006). The atrocities perpetrated against Jews were all the more tragic considering that the vast majority of Polish Jews had been annihilated during the war and that the survivors had just emerged from concentration camps and hiding. Prazmowska is the first scholar to bring together the international and ground-level reality of the postwar campaigns against minorities in Poland and the stark choices facing individuals as they sought to find a place for themselves or to settle accounts after the war.

In exploding myths and tracing the conflicting understandings of the various Polish groups that fought in Poland—and on behalf of Poland from abroad—this book adds much to our understanding of the difficulties of establishing a postwar order and the great obstacles Poland faced in resisting Soviet domination. Prazmowska admirably describes how the Polish groups, even when they shared a common enemy, fought not just to survive or defeat the Germans but with a clear idea of the Poland they wanted to rise out of the ashes. Her treatment of all these issues is a tour de force.

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Reviewed by Alexander Statiev, Waterloo University (Canada)

Timothy Snyder traces the life of Henryk Józewski, a senior Polish intelligence officer who became governor of Volhynia, a borderland region seized by Poland during the Soviet-Polish war of 1920 and then occupied by the Soviet Union along with the rest
of eastern Poland in September 1939. The title of the book promises a spy story, but Snyder's analysis of Volhynian society and the political struggle among Poland, the Soviet Union, and Ukrainian radicals for influence in the region overshadows the book's biographical aspects and the descriptions of covert operations launched by Polish and Soviet intelligence services.

As is typical of borderlands, Volhynia was inhabited by people of mixed ethnic, religious, and cultural identities. Although Ukrainians were a minority in Poland overall, they were the majority in Volhynia, and they strove for equality with privileged Poles in the region. The authorities in Warsaw regarded the Poles in Volhynia as the mainstay of Poland's power there and rewarded them with choice government positions and the best lands. Volhynia experienced ethnic, agrarian, and religious tensions that periodically escalated to small-scale guerrilla warfare and finally exploded in one of the most horrible incidents of ethnic cleansing in twentieth-century Europe.

Snyder draws on Polish, Ukrainian, and Russian primary sources that have only recently been made available. Such a broad source base enables him to analyze the perspective of every major political actor, effectively tackling sensitive issues that have traditionally been the subject of interpretations marred by nationalist agendas, ideological bias, and political correctness. Snyder offers an exceptionally thorough and balanced analysis of the many nettlesome problems tormenting Volhynia. He details the challenges facing the Polish administration as it sought to integrate a large, restive national minority into mainstream society. Snyder demonstrates that this problem had no easy solutions. The government wavered between the options of polonizing Ukrainians by force, which was bound to spark resistance, or adopting multiculturalism that could over time spur the growth of ethnic self-consciousness and separatism. As events unfolded, the Polish regime was not authoritarian and ruthless enough to adopt the first option consistently, nor was it willing to carry out radical social and economic reforms that could have borne fruit within a multicultural framework. Instead, the Polish authorities tried to maintain their grip by relying on election fraud, repression (though without the severity that would have been needed to quell dissent), and the sponsorship of Polish military colonists whose influx aggravated the existing social tensions. The Ukrainians in the region were increasingly frustrated by the impossibility of improving their lot through legal channels, and they began to support national Communist and fascist revolutionaries.

Snyder's path-breaking research highlights Volhynian leftists who discarded conventional Marxist rhetoric and rallied urban Jews and rural Ukrainians under slogans of ethnic equality and agrarian reform. In the late 1930s the leftists began to experience increasing competition from the opposite side of the political spectrum. The Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) called for the ethnic cleansing of Poles and other non-Ukrainians. OUN began to implement its program during the Nazi occupation, which led to the mutual extermination of Poles and Ukrainians. Snyder examined the roots of this calamity in two previous articles, “The Causes of Ukrainian-Polish Ethnic Cleansing, 1943,” Past and Present, No. 179 (May 2003), pp. 197–234; and “To Resolve the Ukrainian Question Once and for All: The Ethnic Cleansing of Ukrainians in Poland, 1943–1947,” Journal of Cold War Studies, Vol. 1,
No. 2 (Spring 1999), pp. 86–120. In *Sketches from a Secret War* he traces the earlier, futile attempts of the Polish government to defuse the escalating tensions. Henryk Józewski was one of the civil servants entrusted with this endeavor.

Snyder found excellent sources pertaining to Józewski’s career, including memoirs, protocols of Józewski’s interrogations in Communist Poland, testimonies of his former colleagues, the reports of an informer who shared a cell with Józewski, and a host of Polish documents related to Volhynia. Snyder argues that Józewski was pursuing two major goals. First, he sought to mitigate the ethnic conflict in eastern Poland by offering limited concessions to Ukrainian culture; and second, he tried to precipitate the disintegration of the Soviet Union by facilitating covert anti-Soviet operations aimed at destabilizing the Soviet polity and provoking a chain reaction of nationalist uprisings. Józewski hoped that this latter objective would deliver a fatal blow to international Communism. Until the mid-1930s, Poland and the Soviet Union confronted each other and regarded themselves as potential adversaries, and their intelligence services spared no effort to undermine the other side. Snyder reveals many fascinating details about these operations.

An author who bases a biography largely on memoirs may, if only inadvertently, come to sympathize with his subject, thus detracting from his objectivity. The use of unedited interrogation minutes poses a similar danger, and Snyder does not always escape this problem. He portrays Józewski as an ardent patriot, an outstanding intelligence officer, an enlightened administrator, and an imaginative intellectual who, despite some notable limitations, could have improved ethnic relations in eastern Poland if his superiors had been more receptive to his initiatives. But the facts as presented by Snyder reveal a more complicated picture, showing Józewski to have been a stubborn failure and a man who regularly mistook wishful thinking for reality and whose projects invariably ended in fiascos. The Volhynia Experiment initiated by Józewski was merely a series of cosmetic and therefore ineffective reforms. To be fair, the Warsaw authorities would not have allowed a more radical policy, but Snyder’s narrative does not suggest that Józewski intended to offer greater concessions to Ukrainians than he actually did. The number of Ukrainian secondary schools declined dramatically during his tenure; he suspended the activities of the major Ukrainian educational society, Prosvita; and he closed popular Ukrainian cooperatives. The agrarian reform he supervised had no positive impact on relations between Poles and Ukrainians because it benefited mainly the Poles. His flirtation with ukrainianization of the Orthodox Church, a move intended to facilitate the accommodation of Ukrainians into the Polish state, backfired by stimulating the rise of Ukrainian nationalism. Józewski misunderstood the political dynamics within the Ukrainian community and gravely underestimated OUN’s appeal and potential. His effort to destabilize Soviet Ukraine produced no tangible results and instead merely amplified the growing suspicion in Moscow about the allegiances of Soviet Poles, helping to spur the Soviet government’s brutal crackdown on them.

Snyder argues that Józewski’s goal was the liberation of Soviet Ukraine, yet nowhere does he mention the type of regime that Józewski envisioned for this future state. The fading loyalty of the Ukrainian minority meant that it would have been sui-
cidual for Poland to wish for an independent Ukraine with an attractive social system. Furthermore, Józewski’s statement that “from the window of my office I see Kyiv” (p. 156) and his dreams of a second Polish crusade against the Soviet Union in 1935 suggest that he preferred to incorporate Soviet Ukraine into Poland. These expectations were so unrealistic for the time that Józewski merited the scornful remark that Winston Churchill later addressed to Stanisław Mikołajczyk, the prime minister of the Polish government-in-exile: “If you think you can conquer Russia, well, you are crazy. You ought to be in a lunatic asylum.” (Janusz Zawodny, *Nothing but Honour: The Story of the Warsaw Uprising, 1944* [Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1978], p. 90.) The Polish authorities’ ethnocentric perception of the international situation led to strategic miscalculations. Until 1939, Józewski was so blinded by anti-Communism that he failed to appreciate the menace posed by Nazi Germany—a glaring blunder for a politician of such caliber. Snyder claims that Józewski was a leader of the anti-Nazi resistance, but does not explain how he actually resisted after early 1942. The biographies of political failures are often fascinating, and this book proves no exception, but Snyder gives Józewski more credit than he deserved.

Ultimately, however, this is a minor point. Snyder uses Józewski’s biography as a prism through which readers can clearly view the social strains in eastern Poland and the response of the Polish government to formidable challenges. His analysis of these issues is superb.


 Reviewed by Galia Golan, Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Victor Israelyan describes himself as a soldier in the Cold War. His memoir demonstrates that although he was not a policymaker, he was indeed a loyal soldier in the conduct of Soviet foreign policy during the Cold War. His memoir is honest, if a bit dry, and generally devoid of self-aggrandizement. If anything, the very blandness of his account confirms what was generally believed all along in the West about the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and its diplomats: namely, that they had little to do with, and often no knowledge of, actual Soviet foreign policy—making. Decisions on all consequential matters were made by the leading organs of the Soviet Communist Party (CPSU)—the Politburo, Secretariat, and Central Committee. In the early 1960s, according to Israelyan, Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko proposed that the MFA draft national foreign policy objectives on a continuing basis, but the leaders of the CPSU promptly and “firmly rejected” the idea. Israelyan adds, “The idea of planning and projecting Soviet foreign policy outside the CPSU Central Committee [was seen] as blasphemous” (p. 87).

Israelyan’s account makes clear that the input of the MFA trailed far behind that of the CPSU, the State Security Committee (KGB), and the military, although he
gives few if any insights into the contributions of these last two bodies. Particularly revealing, though not surprising, are the numerous examples of decisions or policies about which even the most senior diplomats remained ignorant. They received no concrete information or instructions from Moscow about such crucial matters as the invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968 and the expulsion of the Soviet military contingent from Egypt in July 1972. The Soviet delegation to the United Nations (UN) remained uninformed about what its own foreign minister was about to present as Moscow’s “Key Issue” for the year in his speech before the UN General Assembly (p. 199). Even relatively high-level MFA officials could do no more than guess at the motives behind Soviet decisions concerning the 1962 Cuban missile crisis and the 1956 invasion of Hungary. With regard to the latter, Israelyan does at least provide an interesting anecdote based on his experience at the time as a loyal but uninformed diplomat. Having been asked to write an explanation of the Hungarian events, he produced a pamphlet that echoed the official line attributing the revolution to the efforts of “American imperialism.” But the Soviet ambassador to Budapest, Yurii Andropov, off-handedly told him that this was “nonsense. The events in Hungary took the Americans by surprise” (p. 59). Israelyan also notes (as others have) that MFA specialists on the United States were not consulted by the leaders of the CPSU prior to such steps as the placement of nuclear missiles in Cuba or the 1979 invasion of Afghanistan. Even within the MFA Collegium (the ministry’s highest collective body), we are told, people were “afraid of saying anything ‘out of line’ . . . [or at] variance with the party line” (p. 272).

In all fairness, as Israelyan points out, Gromyko himself did urge ministry officials to voice new ideas. The book includes some interesting and often colorful accounts of various personalities, although the description of Arkadii Shevchenko, the Soviet diplomat who defected to the West, as “a drunkard” known for “his exaggerated opinion of himself, his over-ambitiousness and his know-it-all attitude” sounds a lot like the standard Soviet propaganda regarding defectors. What is more disappointing in the book is the dearth of revelations—new information about Soviet behavior or decision-making or internal discussions during the Cold War. The most that Israelyan provides are some interesting accounts of the difficulties facing Soviet diplomats at the UN, including the problems of handling the Sino-Soviet dispute after China finally received a seat on the UN Security Council, the dilemma posed by Moscow’s orders to accommodate India during the Indo-Pakistani war of 1971 by vetoing ceasefire resolutions in the UN Security Council (an action that ran contrary to what the Soviet Union actually wanted); and the need for Soviet diplomats to restrain themselves during UN General Assembly debates in 1972 condemning the United States for its actions in Vietnam at a time when the CPSU Politburo was making preparations for the first U.S.-Soviet détente-era summit in Moscow. Similarly, Israelyan describes the conduct of the disarmament talks, which he conducted for the Soviet side, in some interesting though not particularly revealing detail.

Thus, On the Battlefields of the Cold War is disappointing when compared with Israelyan’s previous book, Inside the Kremlin during the Yom Kippur War (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995), which dealt with Soviet policy
during the Mideast war of October 1973, when he was present at many of the Politburo discussions as a member of a task force under First Deputy Foreign Minister Vasilii Kuznetsov. Having discussed that episode elsewhere, Israelyan offers only one or two additional insights in this volume. He confirms that the Egyptians did not tell Soviet officials the exact date or time of their plans to attack Israel, and he also confirms that the Soviet Union opposed those plans. But he then claims, contrary to other sources, that the Syrians also did not reveal the timing. Israelyan maintains that the Soviet government learned of the timing from other, non-official sources that are still unknown. (According to Arab sources in 1974, one of which even purported to be quoting the Soviet ambassador to Egypt, the Syrians did inform the Soviet Union on 4 October 1973 of the exact date and time of the planned attack—requesting that Moscow seek a ceasefire after 48 hours.) Israelyan recounts here, as he did in his previous book, the CPSU Politburo discussion following the U.S. government’s DEFCON III alert on the night of 24–25 October 1973. He claims, as he did in Inside the Kremlin during the Yom Kippur War, that Soviet Defense Minister Marshal Andrei Grechko was interested in dispatching a large Soviet military force to the region. Oddly, though, Israelyan says here that Grechko wanted to send the troops to the Golan Heights in order to save Syria. In his 1995 book, he correctly reported that the proposed destination was the Egyptian front and that the reason was to save the Egyptian third army. In any case, here, too, Israelyan confirms that the Politburo unanimously opposed the sending of troops (particularly after Grechko conceded that Soviet troops were not prepared for such a move); and he also states again that the Politburo was surprised by the U.S. decision to declare a nuclear alert when U.S. intelligence agencies must have known that the Soviet Union was making no preparations to intervene militarily.

On the whole, Israelyan’s memoir reflects a certain tension between, on the one hand, a personality accustomed to a lifetime of loyal service to Soviet foreign policy—as is apparent, for example, in the dissatisfaction he seems to feel for what he sees as Gorbachev’s abandonment of the Communist regimes in Eastern Europe—and, on the other hand, an intellectual honesty (possibly influenced by post-Soviet experiences) that not only acknowledges at least a few specific Soviet policy mistakes but also rejects almost the entire basis of Moscow’s Cold War with the West.


Reviewed by Eduard Mark, U.S. Department of the Air Force

Within the covers of Michael Cassella-Blackburn’s new biography of William C. Bullitt, two quite different books vie with each other. The kernel is a well-researched
study of Bullitt’s public career. That kernel, however, is embedded in an interpretation of U.S.-Soviet relations that contains many errors and is conceptually deficient.

Bullitt’s career has about it the fascination of tragedy. He was a sort of American Alcibiades—a man of great gifts undone by defects of personality and character. He possessed many of the traits of an excellent diplomat: intelligence, charm, mastery of languages, and at times almost prophetic powers of discernment. But he sabotaged his public career with tactless outbursts and acts of insubordination that owed much to a passionate nature and deep convictions—and to arrogance and deficient self-control. He performed many acts of kindness, but envy and ambition prompted him to launch a vicious and ill-conceived attack on Sumner Welles that miscarried badly, permanently alienating President Franklin Roosevelt and removing Bullitt from the corridors of power. He had reached a point where few trusted him. In that respect, too, he was like Alcibiades.

It is scarcely surprising that such a gifted but deeply flawed figure has attracted the attention of many scholars. Cassella-Blackburn’s study is, however, the first to make extensive use of the Russian archives. With the help of newly available documents his book gives us the most complete account available in English of the negotiations that led to U.S. recognition of the Soviet Union. (He shows, for example, that, as has long been suspected, the overriding consideration for the Soviet Union was to win some kind of American support against the Japanese, although a loan from the United States was not a negligible consideration, either.) Cassella-Blackburn’s assessment of the controversial issues between the United States and the Soviet Union is balanced. (He shows that Soviet officials were probably justified in arguing that the United States promised credits rather than a loan during Soviet Foreign Minister Maksim Litvinov’s visit in 1933, but he allows that they were plainly disingenuous when they pledged not to interfere in America’s internal affairs.) Particularly interesting is the portrayal of Bullitt as not simply a diplomatic intermediary but an aspiring policymaker who brought to these disputes his personal values and demons, not always to good effect.

The less satisfactory part of the book is Cassella-Blackburn’s depiction of the international setting through which Bullitt worked his tortuous way. He presents the foreign policies of the United States and the Soviet Union as mere caricatures. He argues that U.S. policies were a function of “international liberalism,” whereas those of the Soviet Union were driven by a simple need for security. In this there is an implicit argument: As American policy embodied an active principle (the transformational ideology of “international liberalism”) and the Soviet policy a passive one (security), the United States was ipso facto more responsible for the Cold War.

Casella-Blackburn cites Melvyn P. Leffler’s A Preponderance of Power: National Security, the Truman Administration, and the Cold War (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1992), but he seems unaware of what made that book so important—namely, its demonstration that the European balance of power was no less significant for the United States than for the Soviet Union. The perception that the United States could neither prosper nor be safe if Europe fell into hostile hand was crucial in shap-
ing American statecraft from the late 1930s through the early Cold War. The salience of this view does not afford a complete explanation of American foreign policy, but it does offer a sufficient explanation insofar as policy would have been little different even if no other motives had been present.

But because the book focuses on Bullitt, the more pertinent issue is Cassella-Blackburn’s misrepresentation of Soviet policy. He states that the victory of the “thoughtful” Joseph Stalin over Leon Trotsky represented the triumph of “the more moderate elements of the Right and Left” and the de-emphasis of world revolution in favor of “building the first socialist state” (p. 63). In reality, Stalin merely used one wing of the Communist Party and then the other to establish his personal supremacy. After achieving that goal, he embarked on domestic policies quite similar to those for which Trotsky had called earlier. Moreover, in the mid-1920s Stalin arguably showed in practice at least as much interest in fomenting revolution abroad as Trotsky did.

The view of Stalin as an essentially conservative state-builder whose main concern in foreign policy was security leads Cassella-Blackburn to declare confidently about the postwar period that “overwhelming evidence reveals that the Soviets sought first and foremost security, not expansion.” He does not consider the possibility that for Stalin—whose suspicions of the Western allies were so pronounced that he evidently believed they were bombing Germany primarily to cripple an economic competitor—security meant the spread of Communism. This notion is what prompted Ivan Maiskii to write in his famous tour d’horizon of 10 January 1945 that Soviet security required that “Europe, at least continental Europe,” should “succeed in becoming socialist, excluding in that way the very possibility of a war in this part of the world.”

Bullitt, whose views on the Soviet Union are dismissed by Cassella-Blackburn as “paranoid” (p. x), made a similar argument. But was Bullitt really paranoid to argue that the USSR’s revived popular-front strategy at the end of the war represented “the tactics of the trojan horse”? After all, just days before Bullitt issued that warning, the Soviet Union’s International Information Department (Otdel Mezhdunarodnoi Informatsii) had explained to the Polish Communist Party that “the correct policy for a national front requires a series of concessions and compromises that will split our opponents without fundamentally altering our aims: satisfying the major demands of the masses and creating a situation favorable to our long-term plans.” Was Bullitt paranoid to warn Roosevelt in November 1942 that Stalin had not abandoned his hostility to the capitalist West and that any suggestion to the contrary was positing a transformation “as striking as the conversion of Saul on the road to Damascus”? Stalin himself told Georgi Dimitrov on the eve of the Yalta conference that although the USSR was for the moment allied with the democratic faction of capitalism against the fascist faction, “in the future we will be against the first faction of capitalists, too.”

The Athenians might not have lost the Peloponnesian War if they had heeded Alcibiades’s warning that their fleet lay dangerously exposed at Aegospotami. Perhaps the greatest tragedy of Bullitt’s life is that he, like Alcibiades, was for reasons of his own making not heeded when he spoke most usefully.

Reviewed by Matthew Evangelista, Cornell University

The Chautauqua Institution was founded in 1874 in the western Finger Lakes region of upstate New York as a summer camp for Sunday school teachers. Throughout its history it has combined religion, education, recreation, and the arts. According to this official account, Chautauqua made its mark on Cold War history in the second half of the 1980s by sponsoring five meetings between representatives of the Soviet Union and the United States. The events, each of about a week’s duration, included formal lectures by representatives of each government, question-and-answer sessions with members of the audience, and performances of music and dance by leading artists from each country. Ross Mackenzie, the “historian emeritus” of the Chautauqua Institution, has written a clear, well-organized account of the five Soviet-American conferences, based mainly on transcripts of the meetings and interviews with participants. Mackenzie suggests that the meetings contributed to the peaceful resolution of the Cold War by encouraging representatives of each country to appreciate the basic humanity of those on the other side. “In the five Chautauqua conferences,” he writes, “it became possible to see that behind the public appearance of Soviet communism or of American capitalism were human beings ‘just like us,’ to use the phrase of the woman who first met the Soviet visitors as they fled through Buffalo airport” (p. 179).

By the 1980s many other participants in U.S.-Soviet discussions—from diplomats negotiating arms control to scientists in the Pugwash movement to academics and former government officials in the Dartmouth conferences—had long since recognized that their counterparts were genuine human beings. The novelty of the Chautauqua phenomenon was that it made this insight available to larger numbers of ordinary “citizen diplomats.” The five conferences, held each year from 1985 through 1989, took place first at the Chautauqua Institution, then near Riga, Latvia, then back at Chautauqua, then in Tbilisi, Georgia, and finally at the University of Pittsburgh. The last three conferences, in particular, included “home stays” that enabled the visiting U.S. or Soviet citizens to lodge with local families. As many as a few hundred visitors during a given conference thus had the opportunity to see how people on the “other side” lived and to develop close personal bonds with them.

The personal dimension of the Chautauqua meetings was probably more meaningful than the formal political lectures. The lectures evinced a certain set-piece quality, as the representatives presented the familiar and time-worn arguments of their respective governments. The result often was mutual recriminations about the origins of the Cold War. The Soviet representatives would complain about the Western allies’ delay in opening a second front, thereby obliging the Red Army to bear the brunt of fighting against Hitler’s forces. The U.S. representatives, for their part, blamed the Soviet side for using the presence of its occupation troops to install Communist regimes throughout Eastern Europe. The frequent direct quotations from the confer-
ence transcripts reveal historical inaccuracies in many of the responses during the question-and-answer sessions as well as in the formal presentations of both sides—as when Paul Nitze, one of the chief arms-control officials during the Reagan administration, made rather disingenuous arguments about the extent of Soviet defenses against U.S. nuclear attack in order to justify pursuit of the administration’s Strategic Defense Initiative. Soviet officials (at least in the first couple of meetings, before Mikhail Gorbachev’s policy of glasnost allowed them to speak somewhat more candidly) glossed over their country’s human rights violations and restrictions on information, claiming falsely, for example, that copies of *The New York Times* “were easily accessible in libraries” (pp. 59–60). These polemical exchanges hardly make for compelling reading. But readers who are too young to remember being bombarded by such arguments on a regular basis may find it useful to have these exchanges reproduced here.

Far more interesting is Mackenzie’s discussion of the political context of each meeting, during a time of rapid change in East-West relations. The first meeting was held in the United States, and the main challenge was simply to persuade the Soviet side to participate—no easy task considering that the invitation from Chautauqua representatives arrived in December 1984, a low point in Soviet-American relations. The second meeting, in Jurmala near Riga, Latvia, was put in jeopardy twice—first when the Soviet State Security Committee (KGB) arrested a U.S. journalist, Nicholas Daniloff, and later when the American Latvian Association protested the meeting out of concern that official U.S. participation would imply acceptance of the illegal Soviet incorporation of Latvia into the USSR during World War II. But as it turned out, the Latvian nationalist cause was helped rather than harmed by the meeting. Local Latvians, bolstered by the support of their kin in the U.S. delegation, turned the event to their advantage. The Americans criticized the restrictive attendance policy of the Soviet hosts and convinced them to open up the events to ordinary Latvian citizens. Latvian-speaking Americans passed out lapel pins with U.S. and Latvian flags, the latter of which had been banned by the Soviet authorities since 1940. The 1987 conference at Chautauqua received wide media coverage in the United States and helped expose Americans to the changes under way in the Soviet Union. The 1988 meeting in Tbilisi bore the fruit of Gorbachev’s policy of glasnost, as the Georgian participants expressed sharp public criticism of the Soviet army and government.

The Chautauqua organizers always accorded importance to the cultural dimension of their programs, and the U.S.-Soviet meetings were no exception. The poets Andrei Voznesenskii and Evgenii Evtushenko, the violinist Eugene Fodor, the jazz saxophonist Grover Washington Jr., and members of prominent U.S. and Soviet ballet troupes were typical of the high quality of the performers.

Mackenzie concludes his informative study with an assessment of the impact of the U.S.-Soviet meetings: “Chautauqua confirmed that the people-to-people track of diplomacy is a force to be reckoned with in political life” (p. 192). He gives due credit to the leaders of both countries for encouraging the exchanges and particularly acknowledges Gorbachev. Considering that the meetings were held in public and that the official U.S. representatives usually offered harsh assessments of Soviet policy,
Gorbachev, Mackenzie writes, deserves praise “for taking the risk and for his courage in determining that the government and the nation were willing to face this kind of criticism” (p. 192). Mackenzie speculates about the Soviet leader’s motives, but he could have provided a more convincing discussion of this matter if he had delved into the voluminous archival and memoir sources to ascertain Gorbachev’s views on Chautauqua and similar “dual-track” initiatives. Despite this shortcoming, Mackenzie’s book is a valuable study of one aspect of a crucial period in the history of the Cold War.

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Reviewed by John Prados, National Security Archive

May Day in 1960 became a turning point for many things. The Cold War seemed to spin out of control; a summit conference broke up; and new crises followed within weeks, first in Berlin and then in Laos (which the Eisenhower administration attributed to Soviet meddling more than internal politics or U.S. activities). The most dramatic event of that day occurred over Sverdlovsk in the Russian republic of the Soviet Union, where Soviet air defense missiles downed a U-2 reconnaissance aircraft piloted by Francis Gary Powers, who was flying it for the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). Operation Overflight is Powers’s own account of the events of 1 May 1960 and of his role in the CIA program that led up to it.

This book is a reissue of the Powers memoir, originally published by Holt, Rinehart & Winston, which had been out of print since the mid-1970s. The new edition includes a brief preface by the esteemed military specialist Norman Polmar and an afterword by Francis Gary Powers Jr., who was five years old when the original edition of Operation Overflight appeared and who has been working over the past decade to create a Cold War museum in the United States. An important book on the subject coauthored by David Wise and Thomas B. Ross appeared even before Powers’s memoir was published. In subsequent years, Michael Beschloss, Jeffrey Richelson, and others, including me, have written books on this subject. The Soviet government published the proceedings of the Powers trial. The CIA has declassified Powers’s debriefing upon his return from prison in the USSR, reports done on the pilot and the affair, and contemporaneous documents on the treatment of the incident and its antecedents. The agency has also released its official history of the U-2 program and accompanying documents. Aviation technical writers have added a plethora of accounts to this pile. In view of this existing mass of material, the first question has to be: why another U-2 book?

Although at first I was of two minds on this question, re-reading Operation Overflight has brought me solidly around in support of the new edition. The book has stood up well over all this time precisely because of what it is—an aviator’s personal
recollection. Powers never had the “big picture,” but none of the outside commentators on the subject really had the small one. Snippets of personal U-2 material are out there—occasional interviews, recorded transcripts of radio chatter during the first test flights, accounts from U-2 pilots in the Cuban missile crisis—but Powers is still the only participant in the early overflight program who produced a full account, especially of the events of that fateful May Day. Beschloss may have used the material, but it comes from Powers.

In one fleeting moment on one day, through no fault of his own, Powers went from dedicated secret warrior to orphan of the Cold War. The CIA never really trusted him again, its suspicions a subtext in the declassified record. After returning, Powers was exiled to the CIA training facility at The Farm to talk about responding under interrogation, and he was essentially ignored until he had had enough. He went on to work for Kelly Johnson, the Lockheed aircraft designer who had built the U-2. Francis, Jr., in a significant contribution to the original, tells us from family lore that the CIA secretly paid Powers’s salary at Lockheed, cutting him off when the agency learned he was about to publish Operation Overflight. Powers ended up as a helicopter traffic reporter for Los Angeles radio and television stations and died when his helicopter malfunctioned on 1 August 1977. A tragic end for a tragic figure. His book, Operation Overflight, continues to illuminate the issues that existed in the field for intrusive aerial intelligence operators throughout the Cold War and continues to be a crucial resource for understanding this facet of the struggle.


Reviewed by Jeffrey A. Larsen, Larsen Consulting Group (Colorado Springs)

Someday the definitive book will be written on Ronald Reagan’s Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) and its role in ending the Cold War in the 1980s. This is not that day, however, and this is definitely not that book.

Obviously adapted from an undergraduate or master’s-level thesis, The Strategic Defence Initiative is a dense collection of quotations representing personal recollections of and international media reaction to the events that began with Reagan’s March 1983 SDI speech through the December 1988 summit meeting in New York City between Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev. During this period the world experienced a roller coaster of emotional highs and lows as the two superpowers shifted from a warlike stance to a steady improvement of relations. The Soviet Union then essentially gave up the fight and surrendered. To what extent was SDI responsible for that drastic change in the international security environment? According to Mira Duric, we cannot be certain. Indeed, following the roller-coaster structure of her book is as unnerving as the Cold War once was. The book consists of five chapters in roughly
chronological order, although this structural approach does not apply to the material in each chapter.

When you first pick up the book, it appears to be a nice, quick read, with well under 200 pages. One might expect to find a concise but thorough accounting of events from 1983 through the breakup of the Soviet Union. But as it turns out, the book includes 70 pages of endnotes and index, meaning that the actual text is skimpy. Despite the brevity of The Strategic Defence Initiative, the convoluted style makes reading it most challenging, let alone trying to follow its train of thought. Enthusiastically documented and extensively researched, the book nevertheless suffers from a number of serious flaws. Its structure, which appears so logical in the table of contents, is anything but. Seemingly random thoughts and “oh, yes, this was interesting” anecdotes appear in the most surprising places. Duric relies too heavily on a handful of notes from a small number of people she interviewed on one trip to the United States in late 1998, some of whom have well-known parochial political leanings. Worse yet, the book is poorly edited, showing the publisher’s manifold lack of concern for a tightly argued text that reflects a high standard of English usage. One suspects that English is not Duric’s first language, yet nobody spent much time fixing her prose before the book made it into print.

Grammatical errors occur throughout the text. The blame for most of these rests with the publisher, but Duric’s writing style also leaves much to be desired. The first sentence of the introduction gives some indication of the convoluted style and confused logic that typify the book: “Located in an endnote in the back of this book, The United States and the End of the Cold War: Implications, Reconsiderations, Provocations, one of the leading scholars in US foreign policy John Lewis Gaddis, makes a striking (and wholly accurate) claim” (p. 1). Several pages later we are treated to this not-so-remarkable revelation: “Attention focused on strategic defence only when the idea was mentioned” (p. 10). When describing Gorbachev’s visit to the United Nations (UN) in 1988, Duric is probably correct in saying that his speech “signaled the end of ideological conflict” and that “the unilateral arms cutbacks that Gorbachev announced were historic.” But she then says that “Gorbachev [at the UN] disbanded the Warsaw Pact” (p. 124), a statement that is patently erroneous. The military structures of the Warsaw Pact survived until February 1991, and the political components of the Pact were not dissolved until the end of June 1991. Given the myriad grammatical and factual errors in the book, I am amazed that the publisher allowed it to get into print. The quality of some of the writing is more suitable to an undergraduate research paper than a published book, as this sample indicates: “America’s ally Israel tested its new Arrow interceptor missile system on January 5 2003. Soon, other nations could follow. Given time, other nations will follow. Perhaps there is nowhere else for nuclear proliferation to go. Perhaps the future strategic policies of nations will be based on defensive rather than offensive systems. A defensive oriented deterrent” (p. 158).

The story appears to end after the fourth chapter with the symbolism of three leaders linking arms as Reagan, Gorbachev, and President-Elect George H. W. Bush meet in New York City. This would have been a fine place to finish a history of one of
the major international security stories of the 1980s. But the publisher must have de-
manded a final chapter to attempt to bring the book up to date. Duric does not pull it
off well. After a cursory examination of the period from 1990 through 1993 looking
at George H. W. Bush’s Global Protection Against Limited Strikes and Bill Clinton’s
theater missile-defense program, Duric skips ahead five years to a few comments
about 1998, followed by a couple of pages describing the international security situation
through 2002. She provides little description or analysis of the changing nature
of international threats and the growing consensus about the need for a limited mis-
sile-defense system. Her cursory and spotty examination of the first twelve years after
the Soviet Union barely mentions the rich tapestry of political events surrounding the
National Missile Defense program under Clinton, a program that evolved into the
missile-defense program being deployed by George W. Bush. That story has been ad-
mirably recounted in major books by Bradley Graham (Hit to Kill: The New Battle
over Shielding America from Missile Attack), Anthony H. Cordesman (Strategic Threats
and National Missile Defenses: Defending the U.S. Homeland), and Michael E.
O’Hanlon and James M. Lindsay (Defending America: The Case for Limited National
Missile Defense), as well as in a book I coedited with James J. Wirtz (Rockets’ Red Glare:
Missile Defenses and the Future of World Politics), but it merits almost no attention in
Duric’s book.

I did garner a few nuggets of new information while reading The Strategic Defence
Initiative. The book is chock full of quotations and reminiscences gleaned from inter-
views with some of the key thinkers or policymakers involved in the SDI program.
Duric’s conclusion is actually not bad and is the only place in the book that presents
any genuine analysis. If you can overlook the stylistic and editing problems, the book
contains a lot of material to appreciate, and it is handsomely printed and bound. Yet
this small hardcover book by a niche British publishing house is outrageously expen-
sive, particularly given the weak dollar and the current exchange rate. Overall, there-
fore, The Strategic Defence Initiative is worth purchasing only by true aficionados of
SDI or by historians covering the 1980s. Everyone else would be better served buying
the four books mentioned in the previous paragraph from amazon.com, leaving you
with enough money to read them over a nice lunch.

D. A. Romanov, Fire at Sea: The Tragedy of the Soviet Submarine Komsomolets.

Reviewed by D. C. F. Daniel, Georgetown University

Komsomolets (K-278) was a large, deep-diving, nuclear-powered submarine of unique
design with a titanium hull. On 25 February 1989, it set off on its first independent
patrol for the Soviet Northern Fleet, but it never came back to base. During its return
leg on 7 April, the submerged Komsomolets experienced a fire in its stern compart-
ment. The fire triggered a series of events that led to the loss of the ship and 42 of its
64 crew members. Afterward, the Soviet Navy commissioned an investigation to determine what went wrong and why and to make recommendations to prevent similar accidents. A statement by the Soviet Main Naval Staff summarized the results as follows: “As far as causes ... are concerned, numerous technical imperfections in the submarine’s ... systems should be mentioned first. These ... may be attributed entirely to things left undone by the designers and shipbuilders” (p. xv). The crew was essentially absolved of responsibility and praised for its self-sacrifice and technical competence in the face of an impossible situation. Not surprisingly, the investigation’s recommendations concentrated on design and equipment improvements.

The author of *Fire at Sea*, D. A. Romanov, is a civilian who was the assistant chief designer of *Komsomolets*. Distressed by the investigation’s conclusions, he wrote his book to present the real story as he sees it. He argues that the official investigation was a whitewash intended to preserve the honor of the Soviet Navy, its commanders, and sailors by pinning the blame on the designers. Analyzing a list of design peculiarities and imperfections that the Navy singled out as contributing to the loss of the vessel and personnel, Romanov counters that none of the alleged shortcomings caused the loss of the submarine and that the real problem lay with the crew and the Navy’s hierarchy. Specifically, too many *Komsomolet*s sailors, he argues, did not possess the right qualifications or training, and their leaders made too many poor decisions both before and during the deployment, including when the mishaps arose. The Navy’s refusal to acknowledge these deficiencies, Romanov contends, has resulted in a misguided approach to submarine safety, focusing on design instead of personnel.

Romanov’s book is detailed and technically dense, and it reads like a plaintiff’s brief rather than the analysis of a dispassionate observer. The book does not make for easy going and will appeal mainly to submariners and to those fascinated by the internal workings of the Soviet Navy and its Russian successor. Romanov has done his homework. He repeatedly cites specific naval regulations in order to make the case that the material conditions aboard the ship, the qualifications of its crew members, and the practices in which they engaged were not in conformity with the regulations. For example, article 173 prohibits going to sea when “faults in the hull, technical equipment, or rescue devices” are present (p. 6), yet the ship evidently was operating with an inaccurate oxygen gas analyzer in the compartment in which the fire started (excess oxygen probably contributed to the fire) and without television monitors that could have helped command personnel grasp the seriousness of the situation once the fire started. Romanov also walks the reader through the ship’s log for the day of the fire (often pointing out lacunae and inconsistencies) to document the response both of on-scene responders and the ship’s command.

Romanov does not hesitate to acknowledge deficiencies in equipment, but he turns the argument to his advantage when he writes, for instance, that such items “were designed on the basis of specifications of the Navy’s institutes, and under their observation and leadership. The Navy accepted this equipment” (p. 213). In showing how a buildup of oxygen fed the fire, Romanov’s argument is double-barreled. He points out that the crew allowed the level of oxygen to be higher than it should have been based on the Navy’s own requirements. He also maintains that even this require-
ment was too high. "In other words," he concludes, "an elevated danger of fire . . . was 'pre-planned' by the Naval Institute No. 1, which developed those requirements" (p. 32). In support of his argument, he notes that the institute lowered its own standard in the aftermath of the Komsomolets disaster.

Romanov is an excellent advocate. It is difficult not to credit his indictment of the crew and also of the Navy's pre-deployment decisions and post-deployment investigation. But his book ultimately remains a plaintiff's brief, and one is left to wonder about the rest of the story. Anyone who has served aboard a naval ship knows that it is not unusual to deploy with equipment that does not fully work the way it is supposed to or with a ship's company that is neither fully manned nor fully qualified. Nor is it unusual, in the interest of accomplishing a mission, to forgo strict compliance with certain regulations and directives. It does not come as a great surprise to learn that Soviet sailors behaved in a similar manner. Yet the fact remains that the Soviet Navy encountered more than its share of problems. From 1958, when the first Soviet nuclear submarine entered service, through the early 1990s, at least nineteen Soviet submarines experienced major accidents, and many others suffered lesser damage. Romanov himself refers to the sinking of nearly ten submarines. Design flaws certainly must have played a role in at least some of these. Indeed, Soviet naval nuclear reactors had a well-known reputation for being "widow-makers." (The film K-19, starring Harrison Ford and Liam Neeson and based on the real-life disaster in 1961, well illustrated the point.)

In short, the definitive book on the Komsomolets disaster has yet to be written. The real story is surely somewhere in between the Soviet Navy's official investigation and Romanov's spirited critique of its results.

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Reviewed by Norman Polmar

Martin Bollinger has written an excellent book. He addresses a little known subject that is significant for students of the Stalinist gulag and Soviet maritime operations; his research efforts are impressive; and the book is highly readable.

Bollinger, a management consultant “by day,”researches and writes maritime history. He got the idea for Stalin's Slave Ships after watching a television show about the Soviet merchant ship Cheyulkin, which was frozen in Arctic ice in 1933. Soviet aviators who were dispatched to help the Cheyulkin's crew traveled westward from Moscow even though the ship was east of their starting point. The reason, according to the show, was that a slave labor ship was also frozen in the ice, west of the Cheyulkin.

Intrigued, Bollinger began tracking the histories of the six principal ships operated by the Soviet state security apparatus that carried at least three million prisoners
to the infamous “camps” of the Kolyma region of eastern Siberia (between the Arctic Ocean and the Sea of Okhotsk) from 1932 to 1953. Some estimates of prisoners transported by sea are much higher, and the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency reported (in 1985) that more than three million people died in the Kolyma camps (p. 82). Even if we use the estimate of just under one million “slaves”—130,000 deaths—based on data gathered by a noted Soviet historian, this figure, as Bollinger writes, is “not only a statistic but a tragedy” (p. 86).

Significantly, according to Bollinger’s research, the privations and death toll in the Kolyma area during its initial years as a prison were not extraordinary. By 1937, however, it became an “industrial enterprise” of mass brutality, as hundreds of men (and women) died every day from “exposure, overwork, or diets that were kept below sustenance levels for all but the most productive workers” (p. 15). By some estimates, up to one-third of the prison population died every year (p. 16). Prisoners also died aboard the slave ships themselves. Reportedly, the transport ship Khabarovsk was carrying some 12,000 prisoners when it got trapped in Arctic ice in the winter of 1933–1934. Reports differ as to whether the entire “cargo” froze or starved or was taken off the ship when it docked at the Arctic port of Ambarchik in 1933. By all indications, thousands of other prisoners died aboard the slave ships even before they reached the “camps.” The Gulag story is still replete with many unknowns.

Kolyma contains rich deposits of gold, tin, and uranium. By 1937 it was transformed from a prison to an invaluable source of minerals. The lack of roads and rails in the region meant that ships were needed to bring in the prisoners and provisions and carry out the few released prisoners and the products of their labors.

Bollinger has identified the six slave ships that were the core of the Soviet Gulag fleet. His detailed history of these ships, with photos and drawings, is fascinating and a tribute to his research. Significantly, all six vessels were built in the West—three in the Netherlands, and one each in Sweden, Scotland, and England. Several other ships, including ones transferred from the United States to the Soviet Union under the Lend-Lease program during World War II, apparently carried prisoners to the area and are identified in the book. With meticulous detail—and almost delight—Bollinger describes how the slave ships called at U.S. and Canadian West coast ports for overhauls and modifications as well as to load Lend-Lease war supplies for the Red Army. Each of the slave ships made port calls on the U.S. West coast an average of a dozen times from 1942 to 1945.

The penultimate chapter (“What Did the West Know and When Did It Know It?”) follows an undertone present throughout the book. But as Bollinger writes: “At best, there is indirect evidence to support either the complicity or ignorance of the West prior to the end of World War II, though it is now clear that unambiguous and ample evidence existed in late 1945 to make clear the situation in Kolyma and the role of the transport ships” (p. 119).

Fine. The scanty indications of the Kolyma Gulag during World War II were obviously lost in the noise of savage fighting on multiple fronts. In late 1945 the massive drawdown of U.S. forces, the return of millions of troops to the United States, the handling of millions of recently liberated military and civilian prisoners, the return to
a peacetime economy, and the beginning of the Cold War made those indications of minor significance. Thus, “the role of the West,” as indicated in the book’s title, seems of little significance to the story.

Bollinger’s story is well told and, in some respects, can serve as a model of how to address such obscure but significant aspects of Soviet and maritime history. Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn wrote in *The Gulag Archipelago*: “Actually, I almost left Kolyma out of this book. Kolyma was a whole separate continent of the Archipelago, and it deserves its own separate histories.” *Stalin’s Slave Ships* is certainly a valuable contribution to those histories.

Bollinger’s book is further strengthened by the thirty-two pages of endnotes (from English- and Russian-language sources), a bibliography, index, illustrations, maps, and tables. Unfortunately, the publisher’s decision to charge a relatively high price for the book will likely deter many potential buyers.

Marco Buttino, *La rivoluzione capovolta: L’Asia centrale tra il crollo dell’impero zarista e la formazione dell’Urss* [The Revolution Turned Upside Down: Central Asia between the Collapse of the Tsarist Empire and the Formation of the USSR]. Naples: L’ancora del mediterraneo, 2003. 491 pp. €30.00

Reviewed by Andrea Graziosi, Università di Napoli “Federico II” (Italy)

This remarkable book, based on years of work in a number of countries and archives, challenges many traditional interpretations and makes it impossible to look at 1917 in the usual way. *La rivoluzione capovolta* focuses on three cases in Central Asia, analyzed over three periods: the colonial, culminating in the great revolt of 1916; the “Russians’ revolution” of 1917; and the civil war.

The first case is Tashkent, with its two cities, the white and the native, and its “revolution turned upside down.” The second is Semirech’e, where white colonization, the tensions among the colonists’ different groups, and their collective struggle against the nomads were stronger. The final case is Fergana, the valley of cotton, where local Slav, Armenian, and Muslim powers fought each other and switched sides depending on contingencies (the entire book is a lesson in the fragility of ideological affiliations during turbulent times, without excluding that they may eventually grow into firmer commitments).

Everywhere the presence of a third player—the natives—causes unexpected changes in perspective. The food riots led by Slavic women in Tashkent in 1916, which were similar to the riots in many European cities that same year, soon degenerated into assaults against the Muslim bazaar. Even more than in the multilingual regions of Eastern Europe, colonialism turned the diverse ethnic and religious groups in Central Asia into a multiplier of violence.

Similar stories abound. We read of colonists who demanded land and freedom but attacked the nomads to grab that very land (plus water resources) that in Russia
they had seized from landlords. We read of Cossacks who defended their privileges from landless colonists by uniting with natives against the “Bolshevik hooligans” who were attacking the Cossacks and slaughtering the natives; and we learn of the difficult position in which the local revolutionaries, supported by the colonists’ lower strata, found themselves when Moscow adopted extreme anti-peasant policies in 1920. Such policies, directed in Russia against the overwhelming majority of the population and thus profoundly unpopular, became “popular” in Central Asia by helping the Muslim Communists’ efforts to impose the formation of indigenous power structures and armed units.

The legacy of the great revolt of 1916, which broke the weakest part (the internal colony) of the weakest link (the Tsarist empire), was felt everywhere. Without taking into account the fear it generated among “Russians,” it is impossible to understand the events of those years, including the massacres perpetrated by soldiers and colonists against nomads, who in their turn terrorized Slavic settlements and families. The massacres were followed by “ethnic cleansing”—the mass deportation of the surviving natives. The revolt also deepened the food problem and caused famine among the defeated nomads and later among the population at large. Control over grain thus became in Turkestan—to a greater extent and earlier than elsewhere—the axis around which the civil war turned.

Thus, in Central Asia, which anticipated “pan-Russian” events, the collapse of the old regime led to even greater hunger and fear than before. Initially, many high-ranking local officials and ordinary people joyfully welcomed the demise of the old order, but before long, as the 1916 food riots adumbrated, the problems with supplies made the relationships between “Russians” and “Muslims” increasingly difficult, causing price regulations and anti-market feelings to take on “ethnic” overtones. The Tashkent Soviet formed a committee to seize reserves and crack down on profiteers, especially at the bazaar. Muslim and Slavic peasants defended free trade as the only way out of the crisis, but their pleas were drowned out by the more powerful actors who vied with one another to impose their own vision of the state and to establish control over resources and their allocation.

In this context, Slavic leaders came to perceive democracy as a threat. Although they extolled democracy’s virtues, they “were ready to criticize the [Muslims’] extravagant pretenses” (p. 180). Although the ulemas won 85 percent of the votes in the old city during the election for the Tashkent Duma in the summer of 1917, the Slavic voters, as in the rest of the empire, gave an overwhelming majority to socialist parties. Revolutionaries were quick to accuse the Muslim “reactionary” leaders of being “as dangerous as hunger and cholera” (p. 185). In September, well before the Bolsheviks seized Petrograd, anti-Muslim policies in the region were being transformed into revolutionary actions (and vice versa). The local soviet—the “Russians”—seized power, as Buttino describes: “A strange revolution had taken place in the colony. It was an immigrants’ internal affair; it exhibited openly anti-native feelings; and it was animated by the quest for a strong state capable of defending the colonial minority from the threat posed by hunger and the Muslim majority. It was a revolution turned upside-down because its protagonists were members of the ruling minority, and it was a
counterrevolution because it put an end to the democratic [and pro-native] course followed by the provisional government” (p. 191).

Hooligans who became self-styled revolutionaries played a leading role. The same was to happen in Semirech’e, where an “armed minority” pillaged the bazaar and attacked the Kirgiz population. Buttino deals here with the crucial question of the involvement of criminal elements all over the former empire in the competing attempts at state-building. He shows that the local revolutionaries were convinced that the only way to solve their own problems was by grabbing other people’s resources—a mentality that also guided the Bolsheviks as they stormed the Winter Palace. The Bolsheviks in Petrograd, like the revolutionaries in Tashkent, promised to solve the “capitalistic” crisis by imposing state control over the economy, no matter how much force it took. The fact that in Tashkent this led directly to fierce assaults on the native population helps us to grasp the essence of a much more general phenomenon.

A few months later, the Tashkent Bolsheviks, supported by colonists and Armenians who were eager to take revenge against the Muslim and Turkish populations, destroyed Kokand, where native and Russian reformists had formed a moderate government. A local leader wrote that “the October revolution . . . has brought Kazaks only terror” (p. 234), and a socialist internationalist who had sided with the Bolsheviks screamed to his colleagues, “You are not socialist, you are imperialist and organizers of pogroms [against the natives]” (p. 298).

The book opens new perspectives on a number of other important questions, such as the use of alternative political rhetoric by groups that tried to legitimize themselves in different ways depending on the circumstances. Buttino shows that the context often dictated the meaning and the choice of words used by the contending groups. But even if this is so, ideologies did count for something. The Bolsheviks won in part because of the power of their ideology and not just because it was convenient.

Buttino’s analysis of the role of hunger and his discussion of the way that state-building projects (including the Muslim version) focused on control over supplies are convincing. He is also persuasive in explaining the initial success and subsequent failure of the Muslim Communists, who in 1919–1920 were able to enlist the anti-peasant and anti-trade policies promoted by Moscow in their own local struggle against Slavic colonists and Armenian communities. Their request for a proportional Muslim representation in both state and party organs fit well with Vladimir Lenin’s position on the national question after the Ukrainian revolt of 1919. (However, Moscow’s temporary support for the Muslim Communists was also determined by international factors, such as the support for Atatürk.) The disbandment of Armenian units put power into the hands of the armed forces controlled by Muslim Communists. In the meantime, the Red peasant army, shocked by the Bolsheviks’ policy of forced requisitions, switched sides and sought an alliance with the Muslim anti-Bolshevik groups.

The book’s many strengths make one regret its faults, such as the repeated references to a “Muslim church” and the far-fetched connections Buttino draws to current-day events. This latter shortcoming is especially regrettable because he could have easily highlighted some extremely interesting questions in his account that are of wider
temporal and geographic relevance. Among these is the problem of the limits and potential dangers of democracy under certain conditions—Tashkent ulemas were indeed “reactionary.” These limits and dangers were just as evident in many subsequent events, including in Iran, Algeria, the former Soviet Union, and the Arab Middle East. They were also evident in many earlier instances in Europe, including in the nineteenth-century Italian kingdom, which for decades refused to enfranchise the Catholic rural masses.

Buttino’s decision not to deal explicitly with general problems that remain embedded in his story is confirmed by the scant attention he pays to scholars who dealt with such problems in the past. Among those whose ideas seem especially relevant are Mykhailo Drahomanov, who discovered the spontaneous growth of “national socialism” in multilingual territories; Ludwig von Mises, who understood so well the fragility of democracy within such regions; and Lewis Namier, who first described the dynamics of democracy’s fragility by studying German-Polish relations in 1848. Possibly for the same reason, the book lacks comparisons with the other “regions” of the former empire. The year 1917 in Kyiv was no less atypical and paradoxical than in Tashkent. A reference to the Ukrainian partizanshchina of 1919 would have permitted a better understanding of the vicissitudes of the Muslim army in 1920. Also missing is any meaningful discussion of Moscow, whose choices remain hazy and distant for the reader. By all indications, Buttino decided to focus solely on his particular region. This choice allows him to construct his story with impressive detail, but it prevents him from depicting historical events as part of a general picture to which they belong.

In the first section of the book, Buttino includes long descriptions rather than supplying data that would enrich his story. He devotes only two lines to the quadrupling of Tashkent old city’s population in the decades before 1917 and says nothing about its impact on family and property structures or on ethnic and religious relations. One would also have liked to learn more about the inner articulations—ethnic, religious, linguistic—of both the Muslim and the white societies.

We thus arrive at a fundamental question. Is it proper, at least for a historian so well aware of differences and details, to resort to generic categories such as “Russians” and “Muslims”? These communities did of course exist, and they fought against and spoke of each other also in these terms. But what about relations among “Russians, Ukrainians, Poles, Western Jews, and others” (p. 21) or among Dungans, Taranks, and Muslim nomads and peasants? Muslim society in particular remains opaque. The story Buttino tells, being a story of conflicts and thus of simplifications, holds up overall, but the Islamic world’s inner life and own evolution are conspicuously absent in the book, in the tradition of the Bennigsen school to which the book is related, albeit distantly.

Also notably absent are other important actors such as political parties and representatives of the various sects or schools of thought within each community. This is a pity insofar as these individuals at times voiced ideas that contradicted the logic requiring them to be either “Russians” or “Muslims.” Consider, for example, the chairman of the Turkestan Soldiers’ Soviet who asked Kerenskii to guarantee the right of
the Kirghiz to return to the areas they had inhabited before the revolt, or the former Bolshevik leader who accused his party of having turned “workers . . . into rapists and murderers” (p. 334). Armenians, too, play only a small role in the book. They were certainly responsible for serious violence, and it would have been desirable to know more about their past experiences, their options, and their fears.

Buttino thus to a certain degree preserves the structures in which individuals too often were imprisoned. Perhaps, however, this was precisely one of the tragic legacies of the civil war. Regardless, we can be grateful to Buttino for all the evidence and analysis he provides, making it possible to revise old, untenable clichés.


Reviewed by Christoph Neidhart, Independent Scholar

When studying the mechanics of Soviet-style societies, Western scholars and journalists have focused far too often on police terror and dissidents, Zlatko Anguelov rightly argues. Plus the ubiquitous shortages of goods, we might add.

In *Communism and the Remorse of an Innocent Victimizer*, Anguelov, a Bulgarian-born medical writer now living in the United States, paints life under socialism as rather carefree though morally corrupted and himself as a cheerful, self-centered, and naïve subject of his native Soviet-dominated country. It took him a long time to realize “my own contamination with communism, which I am exposing throughout this book” (p. 153).

Anguelov’s Bulgaria under Communism is the dull, provincial place typical of Soviet-style socialist societies. The village penetrated the universities, not the other way round, as propaganda would have it. Bulgarians were neither heroes nor villains but compliant citizens ignoring politics and ignorant of any alternative system or the outside world. Their party’s ideology was irrelevant to them, as well as to the party itself. Communism “did not consist only or mostly of conventional cruelty, abuse of human rights, and political violence. It was, in fact, a most ordinary lie” (p. 63). As long as the system seemed stable, Bulgarians perceived their lives as normal.

Anguelov, who was the son of a privileged family, was born in 1946 and became “a spoiled brat” (p. 80). He attended a school for children of the privileged elite and went on to study medicine. At the age of 28, he became a professor of anatomy. Later, he moved on to work as a medical journalist. When Communism collapsed, he briefly engaged in the pro-democracy movement but soon lost interest because “politics is practical action, not theory or wishful thinking” (p. 172). He “retreated into [his] former apathy and applied for immigration to Canada” (p. 172) and now lives in Iowa City.

Anguelov never joined the Communist Party—not because of a “conscious rejection of communism as a social program” (p. 104) but because he was reluctant “to be
in the same pot with the people [emphasis in original] who embodied the Communist Party” (p. 104).

*Communism and the Remorse of an Innocent Victimizer* tells the epic story of Anguelov’s family, reaching as far back as his great-grandparents. We learn minute details about his three marriages, his divorces, his love for his six children, and his experience of living in a cottage. Almost as an aside, he mentions that he cooperated for some years with the Bulgarian secret police (the notorious DS) as an informer. “The truth is,” he insists, “I reported nonsense” (p. 127) and never caused harm to anybody. Or so he wishes us to believe. He claims that “no report was ever based on a true story or had even a remote association with the real activities of the people mentioned” (p. 127), though it would be interesting to check this assertion against the documentary record.

Anguelov sketches a realistic picture of everyday life in a Soviet-style society with himself as the book’s leading opportunist. Having lived in Communist-era Poland and in the Soviet Union myself, I met many of his likes: journalists, professors, writers who operated smoothly in the official power structures but did not become fawning acolytes of the regime and therefore considered themselves morally superior. With the cracks in the system widening, they began to present themselves as the critical intelligentsia—Anguelov eventually started to work as a freelancer for Radio Free Europe—and when this became fashionable, they recast themselves as former dissidents, especially when speaking to Western journalists.

Students of Communist societies will not learn anything new from this narcissistic insider’s narrative. It is full of sentimentality but short on insights. Readers who are unfamiliar with the Communist dictatorship’s effect on the individual would be better served by an analytical text, or else a true novel. With a host of colorful family stories, Anguelov had the material for a major novel on hand. Yet, he chose to write a memoir, self-absorbed, self-excusing, and often trite: “Unchained from communism, I live in harmony . . . with myself” (p. 199). He concludes that “although excised from my motherland, I am thankful and full of love. I know that my children come after me. They will carry on my experience, my cosmopolitanism, my love, and the memory of me” (p. 199). This woefully banal passage is all too typical of the book as a whole.


*Reviewed by Arthur Eckstein, University of Maryland*

In 1981, Paul Hollander, a professor of sociology at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, published *Political Pilgrims: Travels of Western Intellectuals to the Soviet Union, China, and Cuba, 1928–1978* (New York: Harper Colophon), a groundbreaking study of Western intellectuals who had visited Communist totalitarian states and
came back with eyewitness reports about the wonderful conditions they supposedly found. Hollander, who had grown up in Communist Hungary, knew the terrible and ugly truth about these regimes, and *Political Pilgrims* is filled with anger and bitter comedy. The Western intellectuals, mostly Americans and Britons who prided themselves on their ability to see beneath the smiling surface of liberal capitalism to the dark controlling reality, appeared to have lost all analytical ability once they entered the Communist paradises and marveled at the humanitarian delights of the Stalinist gulag. *Political Pilgrims* also came with a serious sociological analysis, which explained the grotesquely naive behavior of these intellectuals. Hollander underlined their essentially religious need to believe in something greater than the satisfaction of their personal needs, to believe in something greater than the pedestrian virtues of economic prosperity and free elections, to believe in—and serve—something life-shaking, world-shaking, and millenarian. In the absence of traditional religious belief (which they rejected with scorn), these intellectuals turned to the most extreme of socialist ideologies in order to find their needed visions of community fulfillment and individual meaning in life. *Political Pilgrims* was one of the first neoconservative assaults on the intellectual left that had come to dominate American culture since the 1960s, and it had a major impact. The book has gone through four separate editions since its initial publication, each time including additional bitterly hilarious stories of the antics of the dupes and fools who constitute what Hollander calls “the adversary culture.”

*Political Pilgrims* was a study of commitment so intense and emotional that all analytical capacity disappeared. More than a quarter of a century later, Hollander has published a companion piece to *Political Pilgrims* addressing the question of why some of these committed intellectuals eventually lost their commitment to Communist idealism. This new book is an important study, in part because so little has been written about disillusionment with Communism since *The God That Failed*—the famous collection of essays by disillusioned leftist intellectuals (including Richard Wright, Stephen Spender, and Arthur Koestler) first published in 1949.

Individually, the life-stories collected in Hollander’s new book are interesting, the intellectual trajectories often intriguing. Many of the people interviewed for the book, or whose biographies are engaged via their writings, come from Communist countries. Hence, to a great extent this is a study of defectors, exiles, and dissidents. The defectors had the (dubious) advantage of actually living their lives under the harsh and in some cases horrific conditions of the Communist regimes. Their personal experiences, innate intelligence, or innate rebelliousness allowed them to overcome the daily flood of government propaganda designed to numb them to the grim daily reality they actually encountered, or (worse) to accept it as paradisiacal. The other general category Hollander discusses in the new study is Western intellectuals who became disillusioned with the Communist dream without having to live the harsh reality. In these cases, individual personality counted more, and hence few unifying themes emerge. Students of radical Islam have pointed out that while the reasons for adhering to extremist Islamic teachings may be fairly uniform, individuals leave Islam for a wide variety of individual reasons: a bad personal experience with a mullah, a re-reading of the Koran, a careful reconsideration of the West. A similar diversity appears here with
Western intellectuals’ disillusionment with Communism. In the end, the stories of disillusionment are too diverse to create a unified or coherent package. The result often seems to be merely a list of interesting people and their interesting but differing experiences, with no general analytical conclusion possible. Perhaps this is a problem inherent in the study of rebels rather than conformists.

Some of the figures interviewed for the book abandoned their radical beliefs because of traumatic personal experiences that became moments of revelation. The most famous such incident is the December 1974 murder by the Black Panthers of Betty van Patter, an accountant for Ramparts, the prominent leftist magazine managed over the previous seven years by David Horowitz, a radical leftist who was a close friend of Van Patter. Van Patter had discovered irregularities in the finances of the Oakland branch of the Panthers run by Elaine Brown. The murder—combined with the radical left’s studied ignoring of it—turned Horowitz, in horror, against the left for good. Sometimes the precipitating incident was not so much personally traumatic as weirdly humorous: Ronald Radosh’s doubts about Cuba came to fruition when a Cuban psychiatrist explained to him on his guided tour that socialist electroshock therapy was different from and better than capitalist electroshock therapy. Later on, when Radosh—a professor and trained historian—published evidence that Julius Rosenberg, who had been accused of spying on the Manhattan Project for the Soviet Union, was actually guilty of espionage, Radosh was shocked by the savage response from leftists, many of whom, including the university left, had long regarded the Rosenbergs as innocent martyrs to McCarthyism. Radosh’s findings were met not merely by a refusal to consider the facts he had discovered but by bitter personal attacks on Radosh himself, who subsequently found it difficult to get a position in the university world.

Perhaps the most interesting case is that of the novelist Doris Lessing. Attracted to Communism because of its social idealism and because the Communists were leaders in the anti-racism fight in her native Rhodesia, the sensitive Lessing (who eventually moved to London) came to discover that many Communists—including her second husband—were ice-cold as human beings. Given her anti-racist passion, she was prepared, for instance, to adore Paul Robeson and his wife—only to find that both of the Robesons spoke, in public and private, exclusively in steel-plated Stalinist jargon, just like a Soviet state security (KGB) general she had once met. Lessing broke with the Communist Party after the suppression of the Hungarian Revolution in 1956—and experienced the same ostracism and savage hostility from her former “friends” that others experienced as well. Hollander argues that Lessing’s break with Communism was made easier by the fact that she always identified herself primarily as a writer rather than a purely political person. Amazingly, John Leonard in a recent review of two new books by Lessing—“The Adventures of Doris Lessing,” The New York Review of Books, Vol. 53, No. 19 (30 November 2006), pp. ss—attacked her change of heart about Communism, depicting it as a renunciation of any concern about social justice. Lessing’s own explanation for Leonard’s sentimentality about Communism is that people on the left see opposition to their policies not as a political issue but as a
deficiency of character: With their idealism and their certainty about their own moral superiority, they deny that anyone who opposes them can be a good person (p. 205).

The stories of the defectors and the disillusioned Westerners are, by their very nature, tales with a relatively happy ending. To be sure, the disillusioned Western intellectuals in this book suffered many broken friendships because of their changed political beliefs—a tragic aspect of the disillusionment phenomenon and one that Hollander emphasizes is an important mechanism of social enforcement on the left—but they also came to possess a greatly heightened sense of personal integrity and authenticity. This sense of personal authenticity was increased—as is natural among rebels—by the price they had to pay for expressing their honest differences with *bien-pensant* opinion.

The cases that are most striking in *The End of Commitment*, however, are a selection of people who never did become disillusioned with extreme leftist beliefs. When discussing these cases, Hollander’s writing achieves the bitter power that characterized *Political Pilgrims*. Hollander emphasizes throughout that the dropping of adherence to Communism was a long and difficult intellectual and emotional process, often painful even for those who achieved it. In part, this was because adherence to extreme leftist beliefs was rooted in a hatred of mostly true injustices in Western society. Hence, enormous hope in the possibility of some alternative to capitalist society was lost when disillusionment set in with Communism. But Hollander’s anger at the men and women who remained “true to the Cause” is palpable, and he is capable of involving the reader’s anger as well—though one may also note that Hollander was granted interviews by some surprising people, including Herbert A. Aptheker, the dean of American Communist historians (who is properly thanked). A typical case is Eric Hobsbawm, one of the great figures in the historical profession in Britain. Undeterred by the scale of human suffering caused in the Soviet Union, or the ultimate failure of the entire Soviet project, Hobsbawm once made the appalling statement that the deaths of millions of people (in fact, 100 million) was a worthwhile price to pay in the attempt to forge a socialist society (p. 289). William Ayers, the one-time leader of the terrorist Weatherman organization in the United States, said that his only regret was that he had not set off enough bombs—a statement that appeared in an interview in *The New York Times* on 11 September 2001, the very day that even the most oblivious Americans came to realize the consequences of fanatical terrorists. (Ayers was then and is still a Distinguished Professor of Education at the University of Illinois, Chicago.) Some cases are directly reminiscent of the bitter comedy of *Political Pilgrims*—for instance, the British woman whom Hollander calls “M.D.” He gained access to her long political autobiography (pp. 245–250) and found that she regarded Stalinist Bulgaria as heaven on earth and therefore immigrated there. The collapse of Communism in 1989–1991, far from shaking her beliefs, only made her sad. Perhaps, given her privileged position within Bulgarian society, where she lived for years—a position provided to her by the regime for propaganda purposes—Bulgaria was indeed a paradise for her. When I mentioned this woman to a student at my university who had actually grown up in ordinary Bulgarian society, she reacted not with sympathy for the woman’s misguided idealism but with ferocious contempt for the woman’s naïveté.
Hollander’s useful and important book on the difficulties of withdrawal of commitment to “socialism” comes with a marvelous cover illustration: the world and its peoples “Under the Leadership of the Great Stalin,” a Soviet poster from 1951. The poster shows Stalin pointing with his upraised right hand to the glorious future, an image eerily similar to the famous statue of Saddam Hussein that once stood in Baghdad. Ultimately the book is not limited to a study of the West and the socialist world. Hollander is explicit about the meaning of his findings for the future. Noting how difficult it was for even trained intellectuals to wean themselves from socialist idealism and essentially religious emotion in the face of floods of disconfirming information, he holds out little hope that Muslim extremists will be any more amenable to change (p. 29).


Reviewed by Michael Bernhard, Pennsylvania State University

Tomasz Kizny is a highly talented and politically engaged photographer from Poland. In the 1980s he co-founded the “Dementi” photographic agency that documented the struggle between the Polish Communist regime and its opposition. He is also well known for a series of photographic installations called “Passengers. Moscow, Warsaw, Berlin, Paris,” which consists of large portraits of subway riders from these four European capitals (see http://fototapeta.art.pl/fti-metro.html for a sample). The collection is in ways reminiscent of the pictures of the interwar German photographer, August Sander, who took large numbers of photographs of people from different occupational and social categories. Kizny does not pose questions about society in the way that Sander did; instead, he deals with national character (or at least its construction).

Another major vein in Kizny’s work is the photographic documentation of the Soviet gulag. Some circles of the Polish underground in the 1980s became fascinated by the place of the Poles among the victims of Stalinism in the Soviet Union. This issue was raised in a number of contexts, breaking the silence over the massacre of Polish officers by the Soviet secret police (NKVD) in Katyn Forest and at other camps in the Smolensk area, the brutal Soviet occupation of eastern Poland from 1939 to 1941, and the fate of Polish prisoners and deportees in the USSR from 1939 to 1953. Since 1989 these issues have been raised anew in a number of contexts; including by the Polish Institute for National Memory (IPN) and in the pages of the highly professional journal *Karta*, for which Kizny now works. Kizny’s photographic fascination with the gulag has two important aspects. First, as an active photographer he has traveled extensively in the former Soviet Union and taken photographs of the ruins of the Gulag Archipelago (some of this work was displayed in the show “Time of Empire”). Second, Kizny is a collector. He has assembled an extensive collection of photographs of the gulag from the time of its operation. Many but not all of these were smuggled out
of the USSR by Polish survivors of the camps who were repatriated to Poland or stranded in the West after World War II (e.g., members of the Anders Army or the government-in-exile) or returnees who came back to Poland following de-Stalinization in the USSR. Both veins of Kizny’s work are on display in Gulag.

The book itself, like its subject, is monumental. Oversized at 12.5 inches by 11 inches, it numbers some five hundred pages with 550 different photographs. It includes three short prefaces written by important public figures—the historian Norman Davies, the writer Jorge Semprun, and the Russian human rights activist Sergei Kovalev. The book is organized into several chapters, most of which are devoted to individual camps or camp complexes (Solovki, Kolyma, Vaigach Island, and Vorkuta), major construction projects (the White Sea Canal, the Great Northern Railroad), and the phenomenon of camp theater. Each chapter begins with a short factual overview of the subject, followed by a section devoted to historical photographs and a short historical chronology of the campsite in question. The final part of each chapter is devoted to Kizny’s contemporary photographs. The presentation of the photographs is diverse, ranging from snapshot size to a full two pages. Some of the photographs require no captioning, whereas others depend on more elaborate texts to render them comprehensible. How does one make sense of boats frozen in a river next to a pack of reindeer in a barren patch of Kolyma landscape? The answer lies in differing seasonal methods of transporting gold.

The selection of experiences is quite illuminating. The Solovki camp, located on the Solovetsky Islands in the White Sea, was home to an extensive monastery complex and was one of the earliest camps to be established. Prisoners were sent there in the aftermath of the civil war and succession struggles of the 1920s. The Solovki inmates enjoyed greater freedom than prisoners elsewhere because of remnants of the “rotten liberalism” of Tsarist prisons. Many of the early historical photographs are picturesque, displaying the beauty of the monastic buildings and the poses assumed by many visiting dignitaries, including Maxim Gorky (who knew—or should have known—better). The growing restrictiveness of the Solovki camp regime over time parallels how the system of punishment and incarceration became harsher once Josif Stalin came to power.

The White Sea Canal was a Stalinist construction project that connected the White Sea with Lake Onega, making it possible for ships to move from the White Sea to the Baltic without going around Scandinavia and through the North Sea. The canal is an important piece of infrastructure, yet it exacted a high toll in human suffering. Constructed largely from 1931 to 1933, the project involved some 60,000 to 100,000 prisoners a year, and an estimated 15,000 perished. The construction of the giant trench, the reinforcement of its sides, and the construction of its locks were carried out not so much by heavy machinery as by prisoners using hand tools. The photographs of the actual construction are some of the most striking in the book, resembling something out of the imagination of Hieronymus Bosch. They prefigure contemporary photographs of Third World labor, such as Sebastião Salgado’s work on gold mining in Brazil.

The Vaigach Expedition was a small part of the camp experience in the Soviet
Union. Vaigach is another of the myriad islands off Russian’s Arctic coast, in this case separating the Kara and Barents Seas. The camp was small, never holding more than 1,500 inmates. It was a mining camp, and although zinc and lead were abundant there, the Soviet gulag administration also expected to find mythical deposits of gold. What is interesting about Vaigach is the relatively non-punitive fashion in which the prisoners were treated. They were allowed to roam freely around the island, were paid wages, and were even allowed to bring their families to settle with them. Prisoners interacted routinely with free workers and with the native Nenets. We see photographs of prisoners carrying small arms with permission from the camp authorities to protect themselves from wolves. In many ways, this experience was more like forced exile in Tsarist times. The Vaigach prisoners were treated better than many expellees of the Soviet period (compare this to the inhumane conditions recorded by a deported Estonian citizen, Anna Lehtmets, in her 1994 memoir, Sentence: Siberia, published by Wakefield Press in Australia).

No experience is more emblematic of the gulag than Kolyma, the Arctic camps located on the northern shore of the Sea of Okhotsk. This is probably because of the scale of death and suffering inflicted on the prisoners there, as well as the commemoration of the camps in some of the greatest writing on the gulag. Both the two-volume memoir of Evgeniya Ginzburg (Journey into the Whirlwind, and Within the Whirlwind) and Varlam Shalamov’s short stories (The Kolyma Tales) are set there and have had a strong influence on perceptions of the gulag. No two authors could have been more different in their narrative voices—Ginzburg, the sensitive female intellectual who shares her feelings and fears; Shalamov, who maintains the critical distance of a Primo Levi, describing in minute detail the regimen of the camps and how and why things worked as they did. Kizny’s photographs help us to understand Kolyma even better. Most striking are photographs of the mines, which for both Ginzburg and Shalamov were a source of utter dread. Shalamov never actually describes the mines, though we know he spent time there. Rather he describes their effect on his body—how he became emaciated and how his hands became deformed so that for months they were frozen in a grip-like position even though he no longer wielded a pick. Also jarring is a contemporary picture of a bust of Eduard Berzin, the camp commandant, on Maxim Gorky Square in front of the municipal building in Magadan, the administrative center of Kolyma district. It is like seeing a statue of Rudolf Hoess in front of the town hall in Oświęcim (Auschwitz).

Not unlike Kolyma in its severity and scope was the camp complex centered in Vorkuta, where the Ural Mountains meet the Arctic Ocean. This campsite, located 150 kilometers north of the Arctic Circle, housed more than 50,000 prisoners. Like most of the Arctic camps, it was involved with mining, but in this case for coal. Camp labor was used not only in the mines but in building the complex itself from scratch. One is immediately struck by the absurdity of this whole enterprise. Why in the Soviet Union, even with an inexhaustible supply of free labor, would coal of all things be mined in the Arctic when it was readily available in other parts of the country? At least in Kolyma, the mines extracted rare and lucrative ores like gold and uranium. The Vorkuta section of the book is one that benefits from a large collection of photographs.
from Polish inmates. In the postwar era the camp housed a substantial number of soldiers from the Polish Home Army after they were captured or had surrendered to the Soviet secret police.

In a book that bulges with examples of waste and irrationality, an apogee is reached with the chapter devoted to the “Road of Death,” Stalin’s failed attempt to build a railroad north of the Arctic Circle from Pechora to Noril’sk. The project, undertaken after World War II, was huge in scale and faced impossible climatic conditions. In the winter, temperatures dropped to minus 50 degrees Celsius, and the snow fell without end. With each spring thaw and winter freeze the track beds and the rails themselves moved out of position. Progress on the project was slow, work was shoddy, and the poor state of affairs was kept secret from Moscow. The railroad project at its height involved at least 80,000 prisoners. Eventually, all but small sections of the planned route were abandoned, and the Noril’sk Metallurgical Complex dismantled and reused most of the ties and rails from its end of the line. The photographs from the contemporary era are haunting. The futility of the project is evident in the images of rails twisted into utter, but aesthetic, uselessness and of pine forests engulfing abandoned locomotives, watchtowers, and construction camps.

The chapter on camp theater initially may strike readers as an anomaly, but its inclusion illuminates many important aspects of the whole gulag experience. The cultural nature of the activity reminds us that the endeavor was cloaked in an ideology of reeducation and rehabilitation through labor, even though the reality was little more than punishment and death through excruciating labor. The book reminds us that the only way to avoid decrepitude and certain death in the camps, particularly for those who were political prisoners sentenced under Article 58, was to find a plum job that would keep one out of the elements, a job away from harsh guards and overseers, and one that did not burn more calories than the meager camp rations provided. The absurdity of the camps is never more obvious than when one reads about some urka whose connections allowed him or her to manage the camp performance troupe or run the camp library. We know from memoirs (e.g., Valentina Grigorievna Ievleva-Pavlenko’s account in the collection edited by Veronica Shapovalov, Remembering the Darkness, published by Rowman & Littlefield in 2001) that jobs in the cultural section were coveted for this very reason.

In a review of Kizny’s book in The New York Review of Books, Vol. 52, No. 2 (24 March 2005), Anne Applebaum laments the fact that the photographic record of the gulag is still so incomplete that even Kizny’s efforts leave much to the imagination of the reader. Indeed, as Stéphane Courtois noted in his introduction to The Black Book of Communism, the meager photographic record of the gulag pales by comparison to the extensive visual record of the Holocaust, including photographs of corpses stacked outside the gas chambers, of the emaciated survivors at Nazi concentration camps, and of the Nazi Einsatzgruppen at work killing Jews. By contrast, in the former Soviet Union we have no heart-wrenching photographs of prisoners being rounded up, debased, and killed by jackbooted NKVD thugs; no images (let alone newsreel footage) of Soviet troops burying masses of corpses with a bulldozer; no single photograph that presents a memorable, indelible iconic image comparable to that of the German sol-
dier from one of the Einsatzgruppen raising his carbine at point blank range to shoot a young mother who clutches an infant to her breast. The moment just before this bullet from a Nazi gun wiped out both mother and child is frozen in time and has become emblematic of the Holocaust. One can only hope that someday the photographs in private hands or in some obscure collection gathering dust in an archive in the former Soviet Union will emerge and enrich the photographic record of the gulag.

Despite this, Kizny’s book represents the best effort yet to present a photographic portrait of the gulag. Editions of the book have appeared widely in the West (not only in English, but also German, Spanish, French, and Italian). As the generation that lived through these events dies, perpetuation of historical memory of the events is essential. Knowledge of the gulag in the West today is strikingly lacking outside expert and highly educated circles. On college campuses most students have a notion that the former Soviet Union was a bad place, but they rarely know why they should come to that judgment. This stands in marked contrast to the level of popular knowledge about the Holocaust. Also puzzling is the fact that Kizny’s book has not been published in any of the countries of Eastern Europe or the former Soviet Union. His photographs have been on display, as far as I could tell from the Internet, in Warsaw, Budapest, and Moscow. Given the popular rehabilitation in current-day Russia of Stalin for his wartime leadership and even his alleged success in maintaining “law and order,” a crying need exists for a Russian edition of the book as well.


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 others, it 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 GDR. The leaders of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (SED) knew well that they faced a challenge. After all, until the Berlin Wall was built hundreds of thousands left East Germany, in part because of the higher standard of living in the West. Mark Landsman’s new book documents the SED regime’s attempts to respond to the demand for consumer goods from 1947 to 1961 through pricing policy, rationing, planning, research into consumer needs, exhortations to workers to produce more, and finally the Berlin Wall itself.

As Landsman narrates, in the desperate years following World War II, consumer goods, including staples such as food, clothing, and housing, were scarce. The Soviet Union’s policy of removing industrial plants and extracting high reparations from the Soviet zone of occupation exacerbated the situation. Landsman shows how 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 continued rationing were the necessary responses. Consumer goods remained scarce in the Soviet zone long after shop windows in the West filled with goods in the wake of the Marshall Plan. East German leaders offered some goods at special stores (Handelsorganisationen, or HO) at high prices to soak up extra purchasing power while still trying to provide basic goods at low prices. But Landsman shows that shortages persisted, and the crisis continued. The systemic failure to provide goods and heavy-handed attempts to increase labor output finally led to the uprising of 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 (Bedarfforschung) rather than subjective, individualistic demand (Nachfrage). But when decisions on how to allocate scarce resources were made, the state-socialist regime tended to prefer big industrial projects and guns to consumer goods, as Landsman shows. A new crisis of production after 1958, precipitated by SED 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 succeeds in linking the GDR’s weak legitimacy with the “political consequences of frustrated desire” (p. 2). But the book would have gained 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 (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. Amid these problems, calls for republican austerity may simply have been an attempt to put a good face on a bad situation. Landsman ends by arguing that the regime of Erich Honecker 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, Landsman notes, Ulbricht made the absurd suggestion that within a few short years production in the GDR would “overtake and surpass” that of West Germany, echoing the prediction made by the Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev. Landsman states that “the available evidence suggests that the SED leadership not for a moment believed in the possibility of realizing” this goal and might not even have considered 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 led to a decrease in consumer goods and more emigration. On this point, Landsman overstates his case. Marxist economic theory predicted the imminent collapse of the capitalist system and promised that collectivization and socialization would increase output under socialism. Accepting that West Germany had engaged in a long-term, successful process of economic expansion under capitalism that would raise the standard of living of workers was not part of or-
thodox Marxist-Leninist economics. It may well be, as Landsman argues, that the leaders of the SED did not believe they could realize their goals; but it would have been 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. In doing so, Dictatorship and Demand contributes to a history of the forms of administration and control of the East German state and to the elaboration of the cultural ideals of state socialism and their relationship to the economy. Finally, the book is part of a growing body of literature that helps to document the larger history of the transformation of Europe, east and west, into a consumer-oriented society during the Cold War.


Reviewed by George O. Liber, University of Alabama, Birmingham


Instead, Lewin presents several aspects of the Soviet system, drawing on his work in the former Soviet archives and on recent Russian scholarship. The 27 chapters of the book are divided into three parts. Part One concentrates on the Stalinist period; Part Two on the post-Stalin era; and Part Three, the most successful, on the “Soviet century” as a whole.

This book clearly demonstrates Lewin’s erudition and strengths as a historian. His deft appraisal of Josif Stalin’s slogan “the cadres decide everything,” first enunciated at the Thirteenth Party Congress in 1924, provides fresh insight into the Soviet dictator’s view of the world. Lewin argues that the slogan contains an important political subtext, that it implies that cadres are responsible for creating the brave new Communist world but are not the ones who make decisions. Instead, they merely implement them. The leader sets the agenda, and his policies are always infallible. No one can hold him accountable for the subsequent setbacks or unintended consequences. Failures result not from the leader’s defiance of objective conditions but from the actions or inactions of the leader’s followers (p. 33).

Lewin’s effort to investigate the history of the Soviet Union over a long period (the longue durée) remains the bedrock of this book. By uncovering the Soviet system’s
mechanisms and underpinnings as well as the impact of industrialization and urbanization—“the commanding factor” in the history of the USSR (p. 202)—he points out the regime’s internal contradictions and the institutional and socioeconomic restraints on the implementation of policies decided in Moscow. He puts forward an excellent assessment of the Soviet bureaucratic maze, the workings of the nomenklatura (privileged elite), and—after Stalin’s death—the “emancipation of the bureaucracy” (p. 217), an institution that overlapped with and in his view replaced the Communist Party as the most influential entity in the USSR. He carefully weighs the number of political prisoners, the economic role of the gulag prison system, and the population losses under Soviet and Russian rule in the twentieth century. He also superbly analyzes the shadow economy and gives a nuanced assessment of influential Soviet leaders such as Andrei Gromyko, Nikita Khrushchev, Anastas Mikoyan, Aleksei Kosygin, and Yurii Andropov.

Nonetheless, The Soviet Century also demonstrates Lewin’s limitations. Although the second chapter deals with the autonomization and federalization debates on the eve of the creation of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in December 1922, Lewin does not convey the overall importance of policies concerning the non-Russians and the complexity of their implementation over seven decades. He does not perceive, as Richard Pipes did more than fifty years ago, that by granting the minorities extensive linguistic autonomy and by placing the national-territorial principle at the base of the state’s political administration, the Communists gave constitutional recognition to the multinational structure of the Soviet population. In view of the importance which language and territory have for the development of national consciousness—particularly for people who, like the Russian minorities during the Revolution, have had some experience of self-rule—this purely formal feature of the Soviet Constitution may well prove to have been historically one of the most consequential aspects of the formation of the Soviet Union” (Richard Pipes, The Formation of the Soviet Union: Nationalism and Communism, 1917–1923, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1954, p. 297)

In light of Lewin’s emphasis on the institutional and structural constraints on the Soviet political system, it is surprising that he does not discuss center-periphery relations in the USSR. Although he provides an extensive discussion of collectivization, he barely mentions the famine of 1932–1933, the purges in the non-Russian republics, or the impact of World War II on the Soviet Union, especially in Ukraine, Belarus, and western Russia. Lewin generally presents the USSR as coterminous with Moscow and Petrograd/Leningrad/St. Petersburg. In keeping with this logic, he does not make use of archives outside Moscow.

In focusing on Soviet-era archives stored in Moscow and on recent Russian scholarship, Lewin does not evaluate recent Western scholarship such as Anne Applebaum’s and Oleg Khlevniuk’s studies of the gulag, Amy Knight’s book on the assassination of Sergei Kirov, or the many articles appearing in this journal and numerous others. To what extent does he agree with their conclusions? To what extent does he disagree? We
are left without the benefit of his examination of these works, and we are the poorer for it.

Despite these limitations, *The Soviet Century* is worth reading. By delineating the impact of social and economic changes on the political and institutional architecture of the Soviet state, Lewin reveals a larger proportion of the entire Soviet iceberg than the small mass visible above the water.


Reviewed by Zvi Gitelman, University of Michigan

From the late 1960s on, successive Soviet governments were confronted by Jewish citizens’ demands to emigrate—demands supported by many in the West. Perhaps surprisingly, the Soviet regime took these demands seriously. True, Jews had the highest levels of education of any Soviet nationality and were almost completely urbanized, placing them near the levers of power, though few could actually approach them. On the other hand, Jews constituted less than 2 percent of the population in every Soviet republic, and they had long since abandoned or been deprived of all their political, social, and cultural institutions. The documents in this volume demonstrate that in Ukraine, which had well over a third of the Soviet Jewish population, officials in the Communist Party, the State Security Committee (KGB), and government took very seriously the challenge posed by the would-be émigrés. The authorities mobilized the mass media, party and state organs, economic enterprises, and domestic and foreign opinion to try to counter the demands of the Jewish activists. As A. Grigorenko, a secretary of the Chernivtsi oblast party committee, wrote in 1967: “The Party obkoms [provincial committees], gorkoms [city committees], raikoms [district or rural committees], together with the primary [Communist] Party organizations at . . . enterprises . . . and institutions are carefully studying the attitudes and remarks of citizens of Jewish nationality” (p. 156). Because the regime had no intention of satisfying Jewish aspirations or demands, Jews saw this “study” as harassment, and it probably spurred their attempts to emigrate. At times, Soviet officials seemed to believe their own myths and propaganda, but they were fully aware that the movement for emigration could spill over to other Soviet groups and weaken the system as a whole.

In March 1971, Petro Shelest, the first secretary of the Ukrainian Communist Party, wrote to the Soviet Politburo (of which he was a full member) that despite the rejection of two of every three applications to emigrate, the prospective emigrants continued to “send large numbers of letters and complaints and to engage in provocative conversations. These are then used by Zionist elements to incite anti-Soviet sentiments among the Jewish population.” Shelest indicated that the “relevant organs” were “reviewing the earlier denials of exit visas for those who are not valuable specialists or privy to state secrets, or who incite on behalf of pro-emigration groups”
(p. 186). Essentially, Shelest was admitting that persistence and the campaign for emigration were effective. He was also outlining categories of those who later became known as “refuseniks,” though in this period the authorities permitted most of the leaders of the emigration movement to leave for Israel. From this period until 1980, large numbers of Jews were allowed to leave.

Vladimir Khanin has done a commendable service in selecting and transcribing well-translated documents, mainly from the Central State Archive of Public Organizations in Ukraine. The book serves as a companion volume to Boris Morozov’s *Documents on Soviet Jewish Emigration* (London: Frank Cass, 1999), which provided insights into Politburo discussions of emigration and the impact on U.S.-Soviet relations, among other issues. The reader must be cautioned that Khanin’s volume is a selection of documents, and therefore a double bias is unavoidable—that introduced by the perceptions of Soviet Ukrainian officials and what they chose to report, and that produced by the editor’s selection.

The book comprises three sections, each introduced by a short overview of the period: Jewish responses to the Holocaust and postwar anti-Semitism (1945–1953); the impact of the post-Stalinist “thaw” on Jewish life in Ukraine until the June 1967 Middle East war (1953–1967); and the period in which emigration became the major issue (from 1967). The documents in the first section vividly illustrate Jews’ reactions to the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 and to the “anti-cosmopolitan” and other anti-Semitic campaigns in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Open corruption and arbitrary use of power seemed quite widespread among employees of the internal security organs during this period. One is also struck by the sheer ignorance of some officials. For example, the secretary of the Kyiv *obkom* describes a biblical book as an “anti-Soviet Zionist book.”

According to Khanin, principles guided the Ukrainian Communist Party’s policy toward Jews. The party wanted to ensure its control over society, even if this required the instrumental use of anti-Semitism; preventing the rise of Jewish nationalism and formulating a “final solution” (an unfortunate choice of terms) to the country’s “Jewish question”; and using Jews as “hostages” to relations with the United States and Israel. Khanin provides a good survey of policies on emigration and correctly rejects the generalization that those who immigrated to Israel were ideologically motivated whereas those who went to the United States or West Germany were motivated by material considerations. V. Dyuskarov, a secretary of the Chernivtsi Party Committee, wrote that the “real reasons” for the émigrés wanting to leave are that “the bulk of emigrants to Israel are descendants of shopkeepers, petty traders and entrepreneurs, in which the private proprietary instinct [sic] was quite developed. It still is” (p. 223). Either Dyuskarov and others never considered that anti-Semitism, cultural deprivation, political repression, and ethnic and family connections might have something to do with Jewish emigration, or they could not admit these reasons, perhaps even to themselves.

Leonid Kravchuk, who was then head of the Propaganda and Agitation Department of the Ukrainian Communist Party’s Central Committee and in late 1991 was elected the first president of Ukraine, was less interested in motivation. He wrote sim-
ply: “Emigration is a subversive action pursued by a class enemy” (p. 313). But the same Kravchuk was sensitive to the anti-Semitic potential of the anti-Zionist campaign. He recommended that “individuals of Jewish nationality should be actively involved in this work” (p. 313). “One must remember the extreme sensitivity of these issues and not give cause for provocations. Some pro-Zionist[s] . . . try to entrap party and state officials in imprudent or unqualified statements [and] to provoke remarks that could be interpreted as anti-Semitic” (p. 314).

The rector of the Kyiv Technical College of Light Industry inadvertently provided insight into Soviet thinking when he wrote to party officials explaining why a father and son on the faculty should not be allowed to leave for Israel. He argued that they would be made into heroes in the West, especially because the father had been a prisoner in a labor camp. Moreover, the two Jews, the rector insisted, would pass on secret information to which they had some indirect access years before, and they would also use their expertise to help Israel (p. 202 ff.) Similar reasoning lay behind the refusals given to several thousand other applicants for emigration.

Khanin’s introductions to each section are more descriptive than analytic. He does not clearly specify the criteria he used in selecting the documents. Many more documents from the Chernivtsi region are included than from anywhere else. Almost none are from eastern Ukraine (e.g., Kharkiv, Donets’k). Some of the information in Communist Party reports calls for commentary and explanation—for example, on the considerable variation in the proportion of successful émigrés in different oblasts. Unfortunately, Khanin fails to provide any explanation. Nonetheless, aside from some small errors, this is a well-produced and valuable volume that makes for fascinating and illuminating reading.


Reviewed by Katherine R. Jolluck, Stanford University

The history of Poland during the Second World War has been the subject of acrimonious debate. One side holds that the Polish people put up noble resistance to the Nazis, while the other condemns the Poles as unsympathetic spectators, even collaborators, in the Holocaust. Some Poles have accused Jews of aiding the Soviet Union in the establishment of Communist control over Poland, both in 1939 and again at the war’s end, thus instituting a regime with which ethnic Poles wanted nothing to do. Over the past fifteen years researchers have produced a great deal of new scholarship that allows us to see the wartime experience in Poland with more nuance, moving beyond the rigid dichotomies that have long held sway. Marek Chodakiewicz’s study contributes to this endeavor.

Making extensive use of Polish archival records, published document collections, periodicals, and memoirs, Chodakiewicz provides a detailed study of one region in
central Poland, the county of Janów Lubelski, as a way to deal with these controversies. This area was part of the Generalgouvernement from 1939 until the Red Army drove out the Germans in 1944. Breaking from standard wartime histories, Chodakiewicz considers the period from 1939 to 1947, including postwar Soviet domination and the establishment of a native Communist regime, in one long narrative of occupation—a sensible approach from the perspective of local inhabitants. He focuses on the reactions of the population, including the majority Polish peasants as well as the Jewish, Ukrainian, and German minorities, to the harsh events that overtook their lives.

In so doing, Chodakiewicz moves away from the dichotomy of resistance or collaboration to the grayer and more prevalent category of accommodation. He argues that under both the Nazi and the Soviet occupations, “accommodation was the natural reflex for most, and resistance for a few” (p. 319). This holds true, with different timing and varying degrees of intensity, for the Polish majority as well as the minorities. Chodakiewicz further argues that the occupiers’ use of terror—more brutal under the Nazis but nearly as bad under the Soviet forces—drove most of those who initially accommodated into some form of resistance. For Jews this meant (early in the war) turning to the black market; for peasants of all nationalities it meant not fulfilling the food delivery quotas or avoiding the corvée; and for elites in the new administration it meant either performing their duties badly or shielding the population from the most harmful effects of Nazi policies. Of course some individuals also joined the underground with the aim of undermining the system.

Chodakiewicz discusses the question of accommodation and resistance with subtlety and sympathy for the choices people had to make. His argument that individuals could both accommodate and resist, and that sometimes the former was necessary to mask one’s activities in the underground, complicates the usual picture. At the same time, he tends to downplay Polish collaboration, assuming, for example, that most elites who cooperated with the Nazis strove to help the subject population. Likewise, he calls any level of non-compliance with Nazi policies “resistance,” including cheating on food quotas, something many peasants had to do in order to provide adequate sustenance for their families. Despite the detailed discussion of accommodation, Chodakiewicz’s loose definition of resistance renders nearly the entire population resisters. To my mind, the intentions behind an act are critical to whether one can truly label it resistance. Actions motivated purely by survival, or, in some cases, greed, cannot be lumped together with those stemming from selfless moral or political motivation. Just as Chodakiewicz defines collaboration as a narrow category of political acts of treason, he would do well to maintain a distinction between ideologically minded acts of resistance and self-interested refusals to comply, not to mention simple self-defense.

Chodakiewicz sometimes makes questionable conclusions about the motives behind his subjects’ actions. This points to a larger problem with some of his assertions: They are his own interpretations and are unsupported by the evidence. This problem occurs particularly in relation to the topic of Poles’ treatment of the Jews. Chodakiewicz makes the dubious claim that “the Nazis introduced the death penalty for assisting Jews because so many Poles had been willing to aid Jewish resistance” (p. 148).
He provides no evidence for this assertion. The “assistance” to which he refers is black-market dealings, which one can hardly conclude were intended to aid the Jews. Although Chodakiewicz admits that anti-Semitism was widespread among the Polish population, he insists that except in a few instances it was not the cause of hostile actions against the Jews. Instead, he attributes Polish violence against Jews to greed and impunity or to self-defense (against Jewish fugitives who robbed peasants in order to survive). He is reluctant to admit that Polish anti-Semitism actually made a difference, insisting that Nazi terror determined Polish attitudes and actions toward the Jews. In reality, both factors were at play. Certainly the Poles were reacting to brutal Nazi policies, but such policies accentuated and hardened underlying Polish hostility toward the Jews.

Despite these and other shortcomings (e.g., the 65 appendices would have been much more helpful if they had been linked to the relevant analysis in the text), the book provides a wealth of information regarding the status and activities of the population of Janów County under Nazi and Soviet rule. Chodakiewicz shows how increasing terror under the Nazis gradually made accommodation difficult and how Nazi depredations increased the sense of nationalism among the peasant population. Discussing the years 1944–1947, he demonstrates that the Communists held little authority in the countryside. Because the Communists initially stayed out of non-political aspects of life, Polish elites and peasants found it easy to accommodate the Soviet forces and their Polish proxies (Jews, he rightly notes, were not as prominent in the administration or security forces as sometimes asserted). As Communist intervention and terror increased, the price of resistance became too high, and the “independentists,” as Chodakiewicz calls them, lost support. Janów County cannot be taken to represent all of Poland, whose various regions differed in ethnic makeup and economic development. Moreover, the regions of Poland suffered diverse fates in 1939. Some were annexed to the Third Reich, others were occupied by the Nazis, and still others were incorporated into the USSR. Still, Chodakiewicz’s study offers a much-needed piece of local history over an extended period and provides data and insights that can help us reach a deeper understanding of wartime Poland.


Reviewed by Steven I. Levine, University of Montana

In September 1953 the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) chairman, Mao Zedong, announced his “general line for socialist transition” that set the People’s Republic of China (PRC) on a disastrous course of revolutionary economic and social transformation, ending only with Mao’s death 23 years later. This course was a radical departure from the relatively moderate and socially inclusive policies of the New Democracy, the approach espoused by the CCP to rally non-Communist forces to its banner during
the Chinese civil war (1946–1949) and the first four years of the PRC. Hua-yu Li’s tightly focused monograph, a revised Columbia University political science dissertation, addresses the question of why and how this fateful shift in CCP policy occurred. Her answer (a three-character answer in Chinese) is Mao Zedong.

Li’s thesis is that Mao reproduced in China the Soviet development trajectory of the late 1920s and 1930s charted by the Soviet dictator Josif Stalin, who defined the economic system of socialism as consisting of the forced collectivization of agriculture, state-run industrialization focused on heavy industry, and the total elimination of capitalism and the capitalist class. This course was spelled out in perhaps the most notorious book ever to appear in the USSR, the *Short Course of the History of the All-Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik)*, published in Moscow in 1937 and eventually translated into 67 languages. A Chinese edition of the book, which Stalinists revered as a holy text, was rushed into print in 1938 and served as a major reference work for Mao Zedong.

Over the past fifteen years, documentary evidence from Soviet archives and a variety of Chinese sources has destroyed the long prevalent notion—a notion consistent with the CCP’s own version of its history—that Mao Zedong was an independent-minded and innovative Marxist thinker who creatively adapted the Stalinist version of Marxism-Leninism to Chinese circumstances. Li correctly insists that Mao was a devoted Stalinist whose ascendance to the leadership of the CCP was promoted and endorsed by the Soviet-dominated Communist International and who regularly sought and usually followed Stalin’s political advice during the civil war and the early years of the PRC until Stalin’s death in March 1953. In instituting the general line for socialist transition in China, Mao was merely following a trail pioneered by the great Stalin, a man whom he simultaneously worshipped and resented.

This political-psychological perspective is at the heart of a paradox about which Li can only speculate because the available evidence permits no definitive answer. Stalin himself, in his advice to Mao and other CCP leaders after 1949, consistently urged a moderate course of development. He specifically warned the Chinese against replicating the radical policies of the first Soviet Five Year plan, particularly his unrelenting use of ruthless violence against the so-called kulaks (wealthier peasants), a policy from which Soviet agriculture never fully recovered. Yet Mao ignored the advice of the living Stalin and instead followed the example of the radical Stalin as distilled in the pages of the *Short Course*. Li argues that Mao, who was ambivalent toward Stalin and possessed at best a rudimentary understanding of Marxism-Leninism, chose the version of Stalin that accorded with his own desire to accelerate China’s transition to socialism. Mao waited until after Stalin died to embark on the economic Stalinization of China—a course that Stalin himself had thought premature and ill-considered.

Although Li is given to understatement and cautious judgment, the Mao that emerges from the pages of her book is a thoroughly unattractive political operator. The moderate program of the New Democracy that he himself devised was simply an attractive form of bait to lure the unwary into the Venus flytrap embrace of the CCP from which no escape was possible. Mao kept his own counsel and often concealed his innermost thoughts and plans even from his closest political confederates. He
crammed his policy of the general line of socialist transition down the mostly reluctant throats of the party leadership, to say nothing of the Chinese population as a whole. He had no compunctions about threatening, bullying, humiliating, and destroying anyone who stood in his way. Another once-prevalent notion that has dissolved in the acid bath of reality is that the early years of the PRC—the period until the Great Leap Forward—were a time of collective leadership, collegial policymaking, and a Mao who was no more than *primus inter pares*. To the contrary, from the beginning Mao demonstrated the impetuous, irrational, and domineering character that led to much worse disasters than those occasioned by the general line of socialist transition in 1953. What Li does not adequately explore is the shallowness and narrowness of Mao’s socialism, a concept that for him meant only the abolition of capitalism and was devoid of such notions as social justice, equity, democracy, and humaneness.

Yet another theorem that Li’s work disproves is the idea that the abandonment of New Democracy and the radicalization of CCP policy was a response to the political isolation and economic trauma occasioned by the Korean War, which China entered in October 1950. The general line of socialist transition was a policy of choice, not necessity, and the major consequence, as Li reminds us, was “the postponement of China’s economic development for a quarter of a century” (p. 186).

Li’s analysis is rather abstract and often takes the form of textual exegesis. One gets little if any feeling of the actual historical circumstances of China in the period covered, apart from the closed circle of Mao and his lieutenants. Yet, in providing a lucid and persuasive explanation for a key historical turning point, Li makes a significant contribution to our understanding of the history of the PRC.


Reviewed by Dennis Deletant, University College, London

Jean Ancel is the foremost scholar of the Holocaust in Romania, and it is therefore no surprise that this study of the pogrom in the Romanian city of Iași at the end of June 1941 should cast fresh light on some of the most appalling acts perpetrated against the Jews by the Romanian authorities during the Second World War. By convention, the term “pogrom” has come to refer to the full succession of events—including deportations of Jews by train—that took place in Iași from 29 June to 6 July 1941, even though, strictly speaking, the actual pogrom spanned only the days 29 and 30 June. Ancel follows convention and examines the broader period.

Reconstructing these events is no simple matter. Scholars have given estimates ranging from 1,000 to 14,000 for the number of Jews massacred in Iași and a further 2,713 who died during deportation by train southward. The numbers of those shot in the city are the subject of particular dispute. The self-serving nature of official reports—which sometimes contradict one another in essential details—and the absence
of an accurate record of the number of victims are impediments to providing a clear account of the murderous behavior of the German and Romanian forces and of the criminal incompetence of the Romanian military authorities. Ancel puts the figure of Jews murdered at “around a third of the Jews in the city, more than 14,000” (p. 11) but does not clearly explain how he reached this figure.

Since 1989, ultranationalists in Romania have been exalting Romania’s wartime pro-German leader Marshal Ion Antonescu and minimizing his responsibility for the death of more than 250,000 Jews. Ancel, who rejects this historical whitewashing, should have gone out of his way to explain the context in which the events of late June 1941 occurred. In particular, he should have noted that in preparation for the German-Romanian attack on the Soviet Union on 22 June 1941, the three armies in the “General Antonescu Army Group” took up a position along the river Prut. The city of Iași came within the area of deployment of the German Eleventh Army, and consequently Antonescu declared it a German military zone on the understanding that Romanian civil authorities would continue to administer it. On 21 June 1941, General Hans von Salmuth, commander of the German 30th Corps, issued an order establishing his command over all the Romanian forces in Iași. German patrols took to the streets, in effect establishing a rival authority to that of the Romanian police. At the same time, Antonescu, at the request of the Romanian Fourth Army, took steps to secure the Prut and the area behind it.

The Jews in Moldova were targeted by Antonescu because the army harbored strong doubts about the Jews’ loyalty to the Romanian state. On 21 June 1941, the Romanian Army General Staff sent the army, police, gendarmerie, and prefects a telegram from Antonescu ordering that all able-bodied Jews aged 18 to 60 should be moved immediately from the villages in the frontier area between the Siret and the Prut to the camp in Târgu-Jiu in the south and to the surrounding villages. The remaining Jews from the area, as well as Jews from other villages in Moldova, were to be deported with their necessary belongings within 48 hours to towns in the province.

Ancel excels in recounting the events in Iași during the period 26–30 June. He has an impressive command of detail and has meticulously examined archival material recently made available in the Holocaust Memorial Museum in the United States. He harbors no doubts about Ion Antonescu’s responsibility for the Iași pogrom: “The Iași pogrom took place following a decision of the Antonescu regime to liquidate the majority of Jews in a city that, in the eyes of Romanian nationalists and anti-Semites, symbolized (for more than a hundred years) the Jewish existence in Romania” (p. 11).

The first reports from Romanian officials to reach Antonescu explained the events in Iași as a response by the Germans to the actions of Communist agents parachuted in to make contact with the Jews in order to carry out sabotage behind German-Romanian lines. Under the influence of such reports, Antonescu issued a retaliatory order that was relayed to units in Iași late on the night of 30 June: “General Antonescu ordered that all the Jewish Communists in Iași, and all those found with red flags and firearms are to be executed tonight” (cited in R. Ioanid, “The Antonescu Era,” in Randolph L. Braham, ed., The Tragedy of Romanian Jewry, New York: The Rosenthal Institute for Holocaust Studies, 1994, p. 157). Deputy Prime Minister
Mihai Antonescu, acting on behalf of Ion Antonescu (to whom he was not related), authorized the publication of a communiqué on 2 July that read, “In Iaşi 500 Judeo-Communists, who fired on German and Romanian troops from their houses have been executed.” (cited in Alex Mihai Stoenescu, Armata, Marealul şi Evrei: Cazurile Dorohoi, Bucureşti, Iaşi, Odessa, Bucharest: RAO, 1998, p. 255).

The day before this communiqué appeared, Antonescu had ordered General Emanoil Leoveanu, the chief of police, to investigate the violence. Leoveanu duly compiled his report, but historians like Ancel are faced by an extraordinary situation: the existence of two reports written and signed by the same person—Leoveanu—bearing the same date and number but containing wildly different information. One report argues that the pogrom was a response to provocations by Jews who fired on German and Romanian troops and exculpates the Romanian authorities of any wrongdoing. The other makes no mention of Jewish provocation, lays the blame for the attacks on the Romanian Fascist Iron Guard, and shows that the German commandant was incorrect in claiming that his men had suffered casualties. In the latter report the Romanian authorities are praised for carrying out their duty. An analysis of the reports indicates that the latter was written shortly after the former on instruction from Antonescu, who was angered by the Germans’ behavior.

In the light of these conflicting accounts—and they are but a sample of the problems confronting Ancel—it is no wonder that the total number of victims of the Iaşi pogrom, including on the two “death” trains, is difficult to establish. The deaths on the trains through suffocation have been computed with relative accuracy at between 2,700 and 2,800 Jews, and a further 1,000 Jews are estimated to have been slaughtered in the police courtyard in Iaşi, but it is not at all clear how many Jews were murdered elsewhere in the city from 26 to 30 June. German diplomats in Bucharest estimated that at least 4,000 Jews were killed in Iaşi, and figures as high as 8,000 to 10,000 and, now with Ancel, 14,000 have also been advanced. A discussion about the number of victims, important as it is, should not obscure the value of this rigorous book. Ancel’s Preludiu will become a benchmark against which future studies of the murders in Iaşi at the end of June and the beginning of July 1941 will be judged.


Reviewed by Peter Grose, Harvard University

The rather pathetic story of intelligence operations conducted in postwar Europe by the United States and Soviet Union—murky missions that amounted to the opening clashes of the Cold War—is gradually coming into focus. During this period, an “iron curtain” was falling across the center of Europe. Policymakers pretended that the World War II alliance was surviving into the peace. In most capitals, “de-Nazification” of defeated Germany was the priority, but on the ground Soviet and Western occupa-
tion armies confronted each other as rivals, and even open enemies. The target—and prize—in their competition was success in recruiting former Nazis from the fascist intelligence networks to serve new masters.

It was a bleak era, a dark age, in American intelligence history. From October 1945 to September 1947, the United States was, in effect, unilaterally disarmed in the field of espionage. The new president, Harry S. Truman, was distrustful of Franklin Roosevelt’s wartime spymaster, the daring (and Republican) William J. Donovan. Truman therefore at war’s end abolished the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), the civilian intelligence organization that Donovan had created. Not until two years later was Truman sufficiently convinced of the Soviet threat that he agreed to restore a civilian intelligence capability in the form of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).

Declassification of official documents in both the United States and post-Soviet Russia is of little help in tracing the kinds of things that went on during that two-year interregnum. These operations, quite intentionally, were not recorded in any written documentation. On the American side the efforts were so naïve and ineffective that most of the practitioners have had little incentive to produce inspirational memoirs recounting their exploits.

Into this void comes Richard Cutler, who has written an engaging and credible memoir of a forgotten transition that is difficult for a new generation to picture. Cutler, a native Midwesterner who had joined Donovan’s New York law firm before the war as a young associate, was a “news junkie and history buff” (p. xi), blessed with a natural curiosity and a gift for learning languages—an ideal candidate for the OSS. After the war, Cutler, unlike most of his colleagues, chose to stay on in the business of intelligence. The challenges of old-world espionage seemed an attractive career alternative to a life in corporate law.

In November 1945, Cutler found himself in Berlin leading a five-man counterintelligence team, the sole remnant of abandoned OSS networks that by then were working uneasily under the authority of the War Department in a bureaucratic stepchild called the Strategic Services Unit. Several years ago I sought out General William Quinn, who had served as head of the SSU early in his long and stormy military career, at his comfortable retirement apartment near the Pentagon. He seemed pleasantly incredulous upon learning what I wanted to discuss with him, and remarked cheerfully “It’s been 40 years since anyone has asked me about the SSU days.”

Cutler’s mission was to try to reassemble the OSS wartime networks on the spot and discreetly redirect their targets of scrutiny from Nazi Germany to the Soviet Union. This was the era of the “fabricators,” creative entrepreneurs who perfected techniques of telling new masters what they wanted to hear. The more professional spymaster whom the Americans eventually relied on, General Reinhard Gehlen, was hors de combat, under “protection” at the U.S. Army’s interrogation center in Fort Hunt, Virginia, between tours as a prisoner of war and the powerful head of the CIA spy apparatus in Germany.

Thus, Cutler became a case officer running a motley stable of agents like Heinz Krull, codenamed Zigzag, a former Abwehr agent who amassed no less than fifteen sets of identity documents as he roaming the streets of occupied Berlin seeking out former
comrades in Nazi intelligence. Most were unemployed and desperate for work, and re-
spectability was not a prime requirement. Many had already been recruited by Soviet
intelligence—just fine for Krull’s purposes. He had plenty of money for those who
were willing to double-cross their new Soviet associates and keep the Americans in-
formed of Soviet intelligence interests.

Cutler received proprietorship of a splendid town villa at 5 Promenadenstrasse in
the Steglitz district of Berlin. There his secret agents of a dozen nationalities could
catch their breath, as guests of the U.S. Army, and enjoy some physical comfort be-
tween dangerous missions. The soldiers called it “the Joe house,” and for the young
American lieutenant it offered a pleasant boost in living standards “in the middle of a
grim, collapsed city.” Cutler wrote to his mother back home in Connecticut: “I live in
a house with a big radio, hot water, and heat. I am even sleeping between sheets for
the first time in five months. Besides a fairly good cook, we have five maids and a
handyman. . . . When my car doesn’t start in the morning, all the gals file out and
push it down the drive” (pp. 106–107).

Cutler relished his role presiding, like a college master, over “a fascinating variety
dinner guests,” typically minor politicians, Catholic bishops, a businessman from
Dresden, even one of the new jet pilots in the former Luftwaffe. “Intellectual talk
flowed in our Joe house drawing room over cognac and coffee. The agents, between
their furtive stints under Soviet occupation, were starved for free flowing conversa-
tion,” Cutler reminisced, adding: “I didn’t know that many of these agents would be
captured by the Soviets in the fall of 1946” (p. 107).

Cutler’s story bridges the timeline between the newfangled signals intelligence
developed during World War II and the more traditional human intelligence for con-
fronting a new enemy. In the OSS, Cutler had become familiar with the Nazis’
Enigma ciphering machine and the near-miraculous deciphering response developed
by British intelligence. But when it came to human intelligence—spies and net-
works—the Western allies were flat-footed compared with the Soviet Union, and the
Western governments were slow in exploiting their superior technology.

Historians of intelligence have long understood that official documentation is
politely reticent about what was really going on. Instead, the memoirs, even a few nov-
elts informed by their authors’ experiences, can help. Somerset Maugham’s Ashenden,
published in 1927, still stands as a classic depiction of a case officer’s role: “The work
he was doing was evidently necessary, but it could not be called anything but monoto-
nous.”

Two of the best pioneering accounts of the new human intelligence in the early
postwar period are A Short Course in the Secret War (New York: Dutton, 1963), pub-
lished by James McCargar writing under the pseudonym Christopher Felix. Often
overlooked are valuable chapters in William Sloane Coffin’s memoir Once to Every
Man: A Memoir (New York: Atheneum, 1977), replete with euphemisms and circum-
locutions easily penetrated by an attentive reader.

With the end of the Cold War came the monumental Battleground Berlin: CIA
versus KGB in the Cold War (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), a collaboration
of David E. Murphy and Sergei A. Kondrashev, case officers on opposite sides of the
Iron Curtain, along with George Bailey. But even their thoroughness allowed little attention to the SSU years, the oblivion noted wryly by the unit’s one-time commander, General Quinn.

This is where Cutler’s memoir fits in. Its cheerful and matter-of-fact style, lacking all melodrama, reinforces its authority. This is not a secret agent attempting to exaggerate either boldness or derring-do. Yet Cutler offers on almost every other page the bare bones of a real-life episode, the stuff for a good spy novel.


Reviewed by Mark Atwood Lawrence, University of Texas at Austin.

“Who controls the past, controls the future; who controls the present, controls the past.” So wrote George Orwell in *1984,* the chilling novel in which propagandists continually rewrite history in order to legitimize a brutally repressive political system. Scholars have remarked for years that Orwell’s novel, published in 1949, was pretty close to the mark in describing the behavior of totalitarian governments, both rightist and leftist, across the twentieth century. Like Orwell’s Big Brother, dictators from Chile to China readily understood the need to manipulate the past to bolster their frequently dubious claims to power.

In his stellar new book, Christoph Giebel examines how one poorly understood regime—the Communist government of Vietnam—wrote and rewrote history periodically after 1945 to serve its ever-shifting needs. More specifically, Giebel describes how Vietnamese politicians and scholars have narrated the life of a single individual, Ton Duc Thang, the president of Communist Vietnam from 1969 until his death in 1980. *Imagined Ancestries of Vietnamese Communism: Ton Duc Thang and the Politics of History and Memory* persuasively shows that propagandists found Ton’s long life remarkably malleable as they repeatedly recast the Vietnamese past. Although the book aims partly to uncover the “real” Ton Duc Thang, Giebel asserts that his study is no mere biography. “Rather,” Giebel writes (on p. xviii), the book “is also an investigation into the history of Vietnamese communism: how did the party think of itself and shape its self-identity, how did it portray itself—in concrete and symbolic ways—to the outside, and how did it explain that it had a legitimate claim to power?”

In answering these questions, Giebel has crafted a deeply researched, clearly written, and sharply argued book that demands the attention of scholars in multiple fields. Historians of Vietnam will be impressed not only by Giebel’s deft blending of Vietnamese and French sources but also by his skill in opening a window onto the intellectual life of Vietnamese Communism. In addition, the book holds value as a methodological model for scholars interested in the complex relationship between history and
memory. Especially notable in this regard is Giebel’s willingness to reach beyond his sources to speculate about the connection between political motives and the manipulation of civic memory when “smoking gun” evidence is lacking (p. xxii). Rigid empiricists may find this practice objectionable, but most readers will surely credit Giebel for adroit use of his imagination to fill evidentiary gaps.

For scholars of the Cold War who are not specialists on Vietnam, the book is only slightly less successful. Giebel offers a striking case study into a question of great significance: How did Communist regimes justify their rule and explain the relationship between their national experiences and the transnational movement of which they were allegedly part? In the answer surely lies a key to understanding the robustness and longevity of Communist states. Unfortunately, Giebel leaves it to the reader to draw conclusions along these lines. For all its methodological boldness, the book is curiously timid about spelling out its larger implications. To what extent was the regime’s manipulation of Ton Duc Thang’s life representative of its more general (mis)use of history? How was the Vietnamese regime’s recasting of Ton’s life like or unlike the manipulation of history in other Communist states (or, for that matter, leftist or even democratic states)? Giebel provides little guidance.

Imagined Ancestries of Vietnamese Communism consists of three sections, each of which focuses on a particular way in which Communist authorities took liberties with Ton Duc Thang’s biography. Part I explores how the regime told the story of Ton’s alleged participation in the “Black Sea Mutiny,” the 1919 rebellion that broke out aboard French warships supporting White armies against the Bolshevik revolution. Giebel demonstrates that Ton never served in the Black Sea but probably heard stories of the mutinies while serving as a French conscript in Toulon. After returning to Saigon, however, Ton began claiming that he had actually participated in the mutiny, most likely as a way to boost his stature within the small radical movement there. In later years, the story spread far beyond Ton’s circle and became a key element in the official history of Vietnamese Communism—a key “imagined ancestry,” that is, of the state founded by Ho Chi Minh in 1945. Giebel argues persuasively that leaders of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam found various versions of the story useful as they worked in the 1940s and 1950s to highlight Vietnam’s solidarity with Moscow and to attract support from the Communist bloc. Ton’s story, after all, suggested that Vietnamese had long shown dedication to the international revolution and merited the solidarity of others.

Part II explores how the Communists manipulated Ton’s involvement in a strike at a Saigon shipyard in 1925. Giebel shows that the strike was, in fact, a fairly modest affair—a spontaneous and ultimately unsuccessful bid by a few hundred workers to protest changes in their working conditions. In Communist lore, however, the strike grew into something much more significant. Official histories described the event as nothing less than Vietnam’s first union-organized strike and as an early manifestation of an internationalist revolutionary sensibility. Giebel goes on to show that Communists from southern Vietnam were especially insistent on this view following the unification of Vietnam in 1976. By locating such a landmark event in Saigon, south-
erners could subtly protest the marginalization of their region by claiming that their part of the country had played a key role in the development of Vietnamese Communism.

In part III, Giebel turns his attention to the state’s memorialization of Ton Duc Thang after his death. Examining a party-sanctioned biography published in 1982 and a museum opened at Ton’s birthplace in 1988, Giebel argues that the Socialist Republic of Vietnam cast Ton as a “flawless revolutionary” (p. 154) in order to provide a reassuring model for a population struggling through the difficult years that followed Vietnamese unification. In sharp contrast to the prevailing stagnation and corruption, Ton Duc Thang was celebrated as “humble, committed and uncorrupted” (p. 178), a sort of “hero spirit” (p. 175) who both helped legitimize a faltering government and gave hope that the revolution might rediscover the noble qualities that had inspired Ton.