

Reviews

Wendy Lower, *Nazi Empire-Building and the Holocaust in Ukraine*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004, xviii + 307 pp., £49.95 h/b.

WENDY LOWER TRIES TO DO THREE MAIN THINGS IN THIS AMBITIOUS BOOK. First, she seeks to provide a ‘narrative of German colonial fantasies’ in the region, ‘within a broader European context of exploration, conquest, migration, and mass destruction of indigenous peoples’ (p. 19). In particular, she develops the comparison often made by Hitler himself with British rule in India, though ultimately she finds it wanting. It is this ‘ideological framework’ (p. 10) that she claims distinguishes her book from Karel Berkhoff’s bottom-up social history, which focuses more specifically on the experience of the local Ukrainian population under occupation. Lower’s study mainly focuses on Zhytomyr, but she makes brief reference to the Right Bank in the preceding inter-war period.

Lower’s second broad aim is to provide a micro-study of the Holocaust in Zhytomyr, where ‘the Germans and their local collaborators killed as many as 180,000 Jews between the summer of 1941 and the autumn of 1943’ (p. 70). Third, Lower looks at German plans for the colonisation of Ukraine, and for Zhytomyr in particular (an abundant agricultural land—its Ukrainian name means ‘wheat-universe’ or ‘rye-paradise’). Zhytomyr was uniquely important because Hitler’s ‘Werewolf’ field headquarters was in the region, as was Himmler’s more modest residence.

As regards Hitler’s statement that ‘what India was for England the territories of Russia will be for us’ (quoted on p. 24), Lower initially seeks to argue that ‘the Nazi concept of empire-building... drew its strength from völkisch utopian fantasies, the Lebensraum tradition of continental migration, and the imperialistic Weltpolitik tradition of economic exploitation’ (pp. 23–24). However, she only refers briefly to the previous German occupation of Ukraine in 1918 (the ‘puppet regime’ of Pavlo Skoropads’kyi—p. 21), and her remarks about the economic exploitation of Ukraine in 1941–43 are also relatively brief (pp. 114–117). Lower quickly decides that the analogy with British rule in India does not really work. Ultimately, racial policy trumped these plans.

Nazi policies and practices in Ukraine took a course that veered dramatically from British rule in India. As patronising as German leaders were, they totally ruled out a ‘civilizing mission’ of peoples they deemed racially inferior. They destroyed the local elites and depopulated the territory (p. 27).

Hitler’s priority was ‘to break the giant [Soviet] cake into manageable pieces, so that we can, first, *govern*, secondly *administer*, and thirdly *exploit* it’ (quoted on p. 98, emphasis in original).

However, it was in this area that the ‘fly-by night atmosphere of the regional administration’ (p. 100) was most apparent. Different agencies pursued different policies, but overall there was nothing remotely resembling a project even capable of reconciling Ukrainians to passive obedience. The Church was initially given more freedom, but the occupiers failed to deliver on

early promises to abolish the collective farms. Many Ukrainians collaborated, but mainly for negative reasons, or simply to survive. Lower argues that ‘the Germans did not conquer a Ukrainian government, and this fact made it all the easier for many Ukrainians to join the German administration without feeling as if they were national traitors’ (p. 205). Many of course resisted, but Lower sensibly does not make this the main story. Her remarks about the Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) are sensible and skilfully sidestep entrenched propaganda positions.

Because of Hitler’s and Himmler’s frequent presence in Zhytomyr, the percentage of local Jews who perished in the Holocaust was appallingly high. Moreover, as Lower points out, ‘the vast majority died at gunpoint. They were not deported to distant locales; instead, they perished in or near their home-towns... there was nothing impersonal about the Nazi killing process here, in contrast to the factory-style gassing facilities of Auschwitz-Birkenau’ (p. 69). Local forces were chillingly zealous, even after the *Einsatzgruppen* had moved on as the front-line advanced. Initially the SS-Police provided the main stimulus, but a collaborative division of labour enmeshed the *Wehrmacht* too (pp. 78–83). ‘Even in the final hours of their rule, [in January 1944] German officials continued to hunt for every last Jew’ (p. 200). Lower does not allow the many truly appalling individuals who drove the implementation of the Holocaust in Ukraine to escape from moral censure—like the Higher SS and Police head Friedrich Jeckeln and Paul Blobel the chief of *Sonderkommando 4a* (who ‘demanded that all members of his staff—including cooks, drivers and clerks—take on the role of executioner’, p. 73).

Zhytomyr was also central to Nazi colonisation plans in Ukraine. Himmler imagined long-term German settlement around L’viv as a spillover from occupied Poland, in Crimea (‘Gotenland’) and in east Ukraine (‘Halbstadt’). Zhytomyr was also envisaged as a *judenfreie* model settlement for *Volksdeutschen* from Ukraine, dubbed ‘Hegewald’, or ‘game reserve’. Lower’s insightful judgement, however, is that

when regional leaders approached the more vaguely defined project of ‘Germanization’ they proved to be less capable of realizing the elite’s intentions... at the lower levels a typical German official knew how to ‘deal with the Jews’ and was generally willing to do what was expected of him. The ethnic German policy, on the other hand, did not generate the same kind of consensus; it stimulated, instead, improvisation and chaos (p. 204).

Only 10,000 *Volksdeutschen* were persuaded, or coerced, to settle in Hegewald rather than the planned 40,000. Even they were shunted around; few were ‘protected’ from reprisals in 1943. German administrators often preferred ethnic Ukrainians, who were thought to be more diligent or better educated (p. 42).

The book is actually quite short for a study of this type. It is not always obvious how the three main themes interact. Many Ukrainians participated in the Holocaust, but how many more did it repel? More than 100,000 POWs died at Bogun’ia near Berdychiv (p. 100), most of whom were Ukrainian. The Holocaust was obviously both an integral part of, and an obstacle to the successful implementation of, *Generalplan Ost*. One reason why the Holocaust was so appalling in the region was the desire to prepare the ground for Hegewald, and to impress the visiting Hitler. Nevertheless, Wendy Lower has provided an excellent study that bravely attempts to put the Nazi occupation of Ukraine in comparative context, and uses newly opened archives to extend our knowledge of the true horror of the era.

Regina Smyth, *Candidate Strategies and Electoral Competition in the Russian Federation: Democracy without Foundation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, 260 pp., £48.00 h/b.

REGINA SMYTH HAS PRODUCED A SOPHISTICATED STUDY OF AN important and hitherto unexamined aspect of Russian electoral behaviour, the choices made by candidates in Russian *Duma* elections. Smyth argues that the Russian experience highlights a flaw in the theory of democratic consolidation by showing that electoral competition is not sufficient to ensure successful consolidation. She argues that although there have now been four competitive legislative elections since the collapse of communism, Russia has moved in an authoritarian direction rather than towards the consolidation of democracy. She seeks to explain this by looking at the choices candidates make with regard to four issues: whether or not to run for office, whether to affiliate with a party or run as an independent, whether to run only in a single member district, only on a party list or on both, and what to emphasise during the campaign—personal qualities, personal policy preferences or party platform. Her argument is that the choices candidates make on these four issues can either contribute to the strengthening of key electoral and representative institutions of democracy (what she calls electoral infrastructure), or undermine them, and that in Russia those choices have mainly had the latter effect. So this is an argument that assumes that the cumulative effect of individual candidates' decisions has led to the inchoate and undeveloped party system in Russia, and that this has been a principal factor in propelling the system in an authoritarian direction.

There is much to recommend this argument. To the extent that candidates refuse either to join parties or, when they do, to tailor their behaviour to the party to which they belong, the outcome of their actions is to weaken the party system. For example, a party-affiliated candidate who emphasises their own policy preferences and qualities rather than the party programme, who gains resources (and thereby obligations) to mount their election campaign from sources other than the party's, and who changes their party affiliation either during the campaign or once they are in the legislature, weakens both the party's image in the electorate and its capacity to function as an effective party. By acting as quasi-autonomous agents, candidates undercut party development, thereby hampering the growth of institutions essential for democracy and weakening the barriers against attempts by Putin to decrease the competitiveness of the Russian electoral process.

This is an excellent analysis of major trends in the political process at the ground level, and it is a convincing explanation of how candidates' choices affect the development of electoral infrastructure. However the more general argument appears exaggerated in three ways. First, few would argue that competitive elections alone are sufficient to bring about democratic consolidation. Other things are clearly necessary, including most importantly the growth of civil society, and all that that involves. The growth of civil society is fundamental for the development of a truly competitive electoral system, and regardless of how formally democratic the electoral engineering is, unless such a society exists as its basis, that electoral machinery is likely to founder. Indeed, the absence of civil society, and of defined interest constituencies, is one reason why Russian candidates act in the way Smyth describes. In this sense, candidates' choices are in part a result of broader social factors which themselves hinder democratic development.

Second, it is clear that the drift in an authoritarian direction has been propelled in significant measure by decisions taken by political elites. Smyth has pointed to the important part played by President Putin and those around him in shaping Russia's more recent trajectory in an authoritarian direction, but she fails to acknowledge the way in which the inchoateness of the party system is also a function of decisions made at the top, not just the bottom. The structure of the formal election system and its manipulation for partisan ends, which has undercut its

integrity and hindered its democratic growth, stem from decisions made by successive presidents and their supporters. This has compromised the whole structure. Furthermore party leaders have also been important. Two examples highlight this. The lack of definition of what a party stands for may in part be a function of the failure of the leader to articulate a clear policy. In the lead up to the 1995 election, Communist leader Zyuganov clearly tailored his message to his audience, saying quite different things to the Moscow business constituency compared with what he was saying to workers in the rust-bucket factories of southern Russia. And the failure of the liberals to develop any stable coordination or cooperation, let alone a single party structure, in part results from the personal positions and actions taken by leading liberal politicians like Yabloko leader Grigorii Yavlinsky.

Third it is also not clear that all candidates have the sort of freedom to choose on the issues under review that Smyth suggests. In her own work she acknowledges the way in which regional governors were co-opted into United Russia and were then propelled into the legislature. There has been widespread recruitment of candidates and would-be candidates by party officials. Similarly many governors were able to develop political machines through which they controlled their regions, including structuring the electoral context in those regions. Both are examples of the way in which decisions about candidates' electoral strategies were structured by higher level authorities rather than being simply a function of the self-regarding actions of the candidates themselves.

Notwithstanding these points, this is an excellent study of candidates and the strategies they adopt and is a major contribution to our understanding of the development of the Russian electoral system.

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GRAEME GILL

Roger Gough, *A Good Comrade. János Kádár, Communism and Hungary*. London & New York: I. B. Tauris, 2006, xii + 323 pp., £24.50 h/b.

THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE 1956 HUNGARIAN REVOLUTION HAS SEEN the publication of numerous books examining the fateful events of that October and November. Of these books, Roger Gough's, *A Good Comrade*, goes beyond merely describing the revolution, and sets the event within the context of the broader, political career of one of its key figures, János Kádár.

Biographies are by their nature notoriously difficult to write, but when they are expertly researched and written, as Gough's book is, they should provide not only an intimate insight into the life of the individual in question, but they should also inform the reader of the events which shaped that life. For Kádár, the events that shaped his life and in particular his political life—the trial and execution of László Rajk in 1949, the 1956 revolution, the execution of Imre Nagy in 1958 and the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968—are all covered by Gough. It is this that makes *A Good Comrade* much more than just a biography.

Gough generally avoids falling into the 'bias' trap of most biographers and as such provides a critical yet sympathetic account of Kádár as a man who appeared to constantly compromise as a means to move Hungary forward on the road to becoming a successful socialist state. The reader is left in no doubt that there was an element of ideological desire on the part of Kádár for this to be achieved. But at the same time, Gough is very clear in acknowledging that this ideological desire was not in the same 'international socialist' vein as that of other political leaders, including Hungary's infamous Mátyás Rákosi. Gough acknowledges a theme that Kádár himself recounted on many an occasion, which suggested that building a socialist society was not for the sake of ideology, but 'because it ensures a better life for the people, and that the country and the

nation flourish' (p. 135). Although Gough does not draw direct comparisons, his commentary on Kádár's early life and in particular the difficulties faced by a young Kádár, responsible for his mother and step-brother, encourages the reader to believe that there may have been a degree of truth to Kádár's sweetened perception of the socialist road. If this can be construed as bias, thus portraying Kádár in a particular light, then it is entirely unintentional on the part of the author.

Where Gough is determined to inform the opinion of the reader is with regard to the impact that the political events, as detailed above, had on Kádár in terms of the decisions he made and the relationships he formed with other senior political figures in Central and Eastern Europe, and more importantly with the Soviet leadership in Moscow. What is interesting is that Gough does not necessarily play to the suggestion held by over half of the respondents in a survey, published 15 years after the country's transition, that Kádár was a 'victim of circumstance' (p. 255). Gough clearly acknowledges that Kádár himself made the decision to accept the Soviet offer of leadership in 1956, to allow the trial and execution of Nagy to take place in 1958, and to support the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia. He made his choices because he believed that they were the right ones at that time. As Kádár said of his own actions concerning the role he played in the events of 1956, in a speech to the UN General Assembly in New York (1960) and subsequently carved into his tombstone: 'I was where I had to be, and I did what I had to do' (p. 131 & 258).

It is not only the key historical events that Gough covers. He also examines the more mundane, but equally important aspects of running a state, such as coordinating economic policy and preventing the factionalisation of the party. These issues are significant because in the end, as Gough notes, it was as much Kádár's inability to successfully manage these domestic concerns, such as his failure to keep the country's rising economic debt burden in check, as it was his age and failing health, that ultimately led to his downfall.

Gough proficiently utilises many sources of information, including material from archives in Hungary, Russia and the USA; interviews with and documents belonging to Kádár's colleagues and associates such as György Aczél; and more conventional published primary and secondary documents. In doing so he has produced an engaging and readable biography detailing a skilful politician who, during 32 years of leadership in Hungary, successfully consolidated his political position in the aftermath of 1956, began to develop relations with the West while managing to prevent an excessive reaction from the Soviet leadership akin to that of 1956 or 1968 in Czechoslovakia, and who introduced reforms that gave Hungarians a greater degree of freedom than any other Eastern bloc nation. Gough also portrays Kádár's emotional side, as a man influenced by the women in his life—his mother, Borbála, and his wife, Mária—and as someone who often employed a degree of wit and indeed sarcasm when dealing with colleagues and acquaintances. For example, Gough recounts the comment made by Kádár to former UK ambassador to Hungary, Peter Unwin; when Unwin made reference to Kádár's clerical opponent Cardinal József Mindszenty; 'Are you a Catholic or an Anglican?' and upon Unwin's reply of Catholic, 'We won't tell them that in Whitehall' (p. 231).

As a final comment, Kádár, ironically, has much in common with Mindszenty—something which, if he were still alive, he would no doubt not be pleased to hear. Following Mindszenty's death in 1976, Pope Paul VI commented that he 'was and certainly will continue to be a contradictory figure, the object of veneration and of violent attacks'. For many this could also describe Kádár, a man vilified for his involvement in betraying and crushing the 1956 Hungarian Revolution, but who in 1999 was still voted the greatest twentieth century Hungarian figure (p. xi). This, as Gough rightly notes, suggests a degree of 'schizophrenia' surrounding the perception of Kádár within contemporary Hungarian society (p. 254). Undoubtedly, Gough's book goes some way towards successfully explaining the reasons for this; but at the same time,

Gough, unintentionally, raises the question of whether Hungary has yet properly come to terms with Kádár and his 'leading role' within the country's communist past.

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EAMONN BUTLER

Bülent Gökay, *Soviet Eastern Policy and Turkey, 1920–1991: Soviet Foreign Policy, Turkey and Communism*. Abingdon: Routledge, 2006, xiv + 184 pp., £70.00 h/b.

THE POLICIES OF THE SOVIET UNION TOWARDS TURKEY AND the relationship between the Turkish leftist parties and the USSR have failed to attract scholarly attention over the years. This neglect is a by-product of ideological confusion and deep divisions embedded in Turkey's radical politics. It is also linked to the long and harsh harassment the Turkish left suffered throughout the Cold War years. Since the dissolution of the USSR there has been a considerable relaxation, but that has not brought about scholarly research on the Turkish Communist Party (TKP) and its place in the leftist politics of Turkey and Europe.

This lack of interest is awkward in many ways. Turkey occupied one of the most turbulent NATO borders with the Soviet Union for almost a half-century. It also had early contact with the Bolsheviks and nurtured a strong leftist movement, which especially flourished under the confrontational politics of the 1970s. In the light of this, Bülent Gökay's book is a very timely effort. Gökay provides a promising start with interesting questions about the bi-partisan Soviet policies that supported indigenous communist movements while at the same time deepening ties with their local enemies, the national liberalisation movements. However, the book loses its flair soon after the first two chapters and reverts to a mere descriptive chronology.

One main shortcoming is its weak conceptualisation of Turkish communism and its relationship with the USSR. Another is its lack of a diversity of sources and a generally weak research methodology. There is no theoretical perspective to assist in interpreting the descriptions, and no guide as to how we might learn from this case. Although the book starts with an international relations approach blended with a sociology of the actors of change, in the latter parts this gives way to a more vaguely general treatment of leftist politics. Similarly, the analysis of the Soviet Union's relationship with the Turkish Communist Party and other leftist youth and trade union movements remains shallow and descriptive. The story turns into a mundane treatment of two parallel histories, of Soviet foreign policy and of Turkey's domestic political changes.

Major questions remain untouched. We never learn to what extent the USSR had an influence on the chronic fragmentation of the Turkish left. We would certainly like to know what influence they had on the spiralling self-destructive militancy of the 1970s. And every observer of the scene would seek insight into the critical question of the roots of inter-ethnic violence, which later fed into the Kurdish separatist guerrilla movement, the PKK. The PKK's ideology first emerged within the communist and leftist camps and it hardened as the movement grew after the 1980 military coup. Gökay does touch on the involvement of the state and its intelligence organisations in the militarisation and mobilisation of the nationalist right and fascist groups, but no special insight is offered. That, too, is a missed opportunity when so much needs to be explained about the nature and extent of reactionaries in the so-called 'deep state'. The book cites some new documents in relation to early Turkish–Soviet relations. However, overall Gökay is strangely weak on Soviet sources on foreign policy and Turkish politics. His heavy reliance on partisan newspapers and campaigning websites exposes his clear biases.

Gökay makes many claims based on flimsy evidence. For example, he asserts that contrary to the 'official history', many Turkish Jews were handed over to the Nazis during the Second World

War, a consequence of a form of Pan-Turkism that cultivated Nazi sympathy. Since there are many non-official academic studies of Turkish and European Jews and the degree of protection they received from Turkish officials (See, for example Stanford Shaw, *Turkey and the Holocaust. Turkey's role in rescuing Turkish and European Jewry from Nazi persecution 1933–1945*, NYU Press, 1993), the author is amiss in failing to take these into account, especially since he fails to reference his claims (on pp. 56 and 57).

Similarly, while all semi-academic accounts of the 1925 Şeyh Said uprising in eastern Turkey either take the view that it was at root a local militant religious revival or that Şeyh Said was a proto-Kurdish nationalist, it is wrong for Gökay (pp. 40–41) to call it a symbol of Kurdish nationalism without any supporting evidence. Given the strong religious rhetoric and tribal allegiances that characterised the movement, the reader hopes to see more evidence to support this claim and its implied link with the political left. A similar uprising, the Basmachi revolts in the Fergana Valley of Soviet Central Asia, took Soviet troops 10 years to suppress fully but despite its apparent parallels it is never addressed in this book. That uprising was explicitly an expression of religious and nationalistic resistance to Soviet power consolidation in Central Asia and was much influenced by Tatar and Turkish intellectuals. One episode in this series of revolts is briefly mentioned merely as a reaction to the maltreatment of Islamic traditions and attacks on veiled women by the Bolshevik forces (p. 37).

Anecdotes and snippets of interviews are scattered throughout the book but their rationale and the methodology of their collection and selection are not at all obvious. A long transcription of Henry Kissinger's conversation on Cyprus could have been an appendix, since the author does not provide any textual analysis of it (p. 102). However, the selection criteria of the four long appendices are also not obvious and some are not well linked to the main text.

Given the intricacies of communist and left wing activities in the 1970s, one would expect a robust treatment of central actors and ideological factions in the latter parts of the book. Gökay's poetic ending provides food for thought about a country and its intellectuals that have a long history of ideological confrontation whose parameters have very often been determined by outsiders, but the most interesting questions remain unanswered.

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GÜL BERNA ÖZCAN

George Sanford, *Katyn and the Soviet Massacre of 1940: Truth, Justice and Memory*, BASEES/Routledge Series on Russian and East European Studies. London & New York: Routledge, 2005, xvi + 250 pp., £65.00 h/b.

AN ENGLISH-LANGUAGE MONOGRAPH ON THE 1940 MASSACRE OF 21,856 POLISH officers and civilians at Katyn and other sites in the former Soviet Union is long overdue. George Sanford's volume is more than a valuable companion to the plethora of documents on 'Katyn' published in Warsaw and Moscow since 1992. His commentary on the many facets of this compelling story of murder, cover-up, exploitation, betrayal and indifference is insightful and, if not always persuasive, worthy of consideration and debate.

The truth about 'Katyn' is no longer in dispute. In March 1940 the ruling elite of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks)—Andreyev, Beria, Khrushchev, Kaganovich, Kalinin, Mikoyan, Molotov and Zhdanov—following Stalin's orders, collectively authorised the security organs of the Soviet state to murder Polish prisoners of war. For the next two months approximately 11% of the 200,000 POWs captured by the Red Army from September 1939 were shot, one by one, in the back of the head. The victims, primarily reserve officers, mostly professional men called up in the aftermath of the Nazi–Soviet invasions of their country, were

buried in great secrecy. The NKVD operation was not unusual by Soviet standards. About 7,300 Poles imprisoned in NKVD facilities in Ukraine and Belarus met their fate in the cellars. The other 14,700 came from three POW camps. The men of Starobelsk were transported to the NKVD prison in Kharkov, shot, and buried in a nearby park. Those from Ostashkov, including 5,000 ordinary policemen, were executed in Kalinin, now Tver, shipped back across the Volga, and buried in the village of Mednoe. The remains of the 4,400 prisoners from Kozelsk were buried near Smolensk in the Katyn forest. Among the dead was the lone woman slaughtered in the massacres, Sub-lieutenant Janina Lewandowska, as well as Jakub Wajda, the father of the celebrated film director Andrzej Wajda.

The mass grave at Katyn, discovered in April 1943 by the Germans, who exploited the tragedy to deflect attention away from their atrocities in the east, became the subject of numerous international inquiries and intrigues during the Second World War and the Cold War. The Kremlin (later supported by their Polish communist allies) naturally blamed the Nazis for the massacre. The Anglo-American allies betrayed their junior partner, the Polish government-in-exile, and opted instead to join the conspiracy to pervert the course of justice. *Realpolitik*—moralism cum indifference—ruled the day. Appeals for justice by the London Poles and the relatives of the victims fell on deaf ears until 1952, when the US congress finally condemned the Soviet war crime. British officials, ‘defending the indefensible’ (p. 166), Sanford reminds us, were among the most stubborn of those holding out. But it is here that Sanford also falters. Unwilling to take the next step, he does not consider the possibility that the Foreign Office and a good portion of British academic opinion at the time, and well into the 1980s, was anti-Polish and anti-Soviet. Why is this important? Because I agree with Sanford, that ‘larger historical outcomes’ cannot explain the 1940 massacre ‘and that one has to focus strictly on the context of the time’ (p. 84).

On Stalin’s motives, discussed in the latter part of Chapter 4, Sanford’s reasoning is frustrating. After dismissing numerous interpretations offered to date, some odd and others serious, he concludes, upon reviewing the NKVD documents, that the Soviets found the Polish reservists fiercely independent, hopelessly anti-communist, and unwilling to collaborate in large enough numbers. In the eyes of the perpetrators, this made them unsuitable as forced labour in the European parts of the Soviet empire while the cost of maintaining them in the camps or moving them elsewhere was prohibitive. Shooting them was cost-effective. Here, Sanford places too much emphasis on Stalin as a rational actor. I too have followed the new evidence about Stalin and three facts about the dictator have become crystal clear to me: (1) sometime before the Great Terror Stalin became clinically paranoid; (2) around the same time he began to manifest a latent anti-Semitism; and (3) the archives that have been reviewed by scholars to date do not contain unequivocal evidence to prove point (1) or (2). Still, can we reject paranoia and anti-Semitism as explanations (and as a motive), even if others exist, for example, of Stalin’s murderous obsession with non-existent ‘Trotskyite’ conspiracies? How about Stalin’s determination to pursue the 1952 secret trial of the Jewish Antifascist Committee or his decision to pursue the ‘Jewish’ Doctors’ Plot of 1953? Nationality mattered to these people and ethnic hatred, what Sanford calls ‘Stalin’s polonophobia and resentments concerning the 1920 war’ (p. 83), also played its part.

If historical complexity and nuance is the victim when arguing that the Soviet leadership massacred their Polish prisoners of war because they were Poles, it is no less simplistic to trumpet the cries of communist fanatics who place the blame firmly on the victims because of an ideological predisposition to view them as bourgeois counter-revolutionaries and enemies of the people (and, therefore, technically outside the parameters of the Genocide Convention of 1948). Racism and xenophobia, just like anti-Semitism, did not disappear in Soviet Russia in 1917. In 1940 it was alive and well inside the Kremlin and throughout the multinational empire Stalin created. The fact that Stalin airbrushed out of existence many of his own racist and anti-Semitic

remarks from the historical record he so keenly controlled and managed should tell us something. The new evidence—the archival record—does indeed place a burden on historians and social scientists to limit their imaginations, but that record should not be used to cleanse other truths because political correctness, then and now, conveniently helps to obfuscate what people really thought about others—neighbours—they were killing.

The most original and the best part of the book (from Chapter 6 to the Conclusion) deals with the sordid attempts by politicians and bureaucrats, who represented all kinds of political persuasions, to erase, manipulate, manage and control the memory of this horrendous war crime. This part is especially worth reading and rereading.

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