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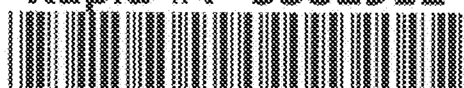

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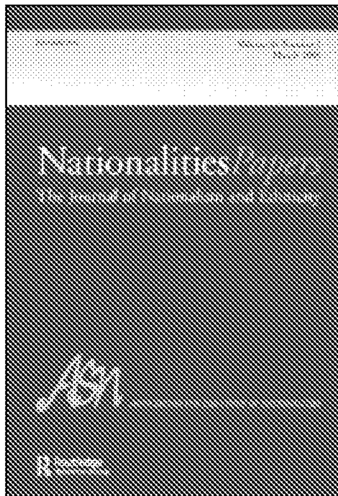

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BOOK REVIEWS

Laura L. Adams [a]; Chip Gagnon [b]; Jelena Subotic [c]; David M. Crowe [d]; Grigory Ioffe [e];Hiroaki Kuromiya [f]
[a] Harvard University, [b] Ithaca College, [c] Georgia State University, [d] Elon University, [e] Radford University, [f] Indiana University,

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BOOK REVIEWS

Russian Eurasianism: an ideology of empire, by Marlène Laruelle, Washington, DC, Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2008, 269 pp. (hardback), ISBN 978-0415484466

Since the end of the Cold War, the term Eurasia has been used in English mainly to denote the *space* of the former Soviet Union and its near neighbors. But among Russian-speaking elites, the term is associated with a complex and sometimes contradictory set of doctrines that tries to pin down Eurasia as a *place* with a special role in world history. In her book *Russian Eurasianism*, Marlène Laruelle provides us with a critical but respectful deconstruction of the various strands of Eurasianist discourse in Russia and beyond, and locates these ideas in their philosophical and political contexts. Scholars of Russian nationalism will appreciate the subtlety of Laruelle's analysis, and scholars interested in the rest of Eurasia will gain new insights into how non-Russians articulate their perspectives on Eurasianism.

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Contemporary Russian Eurasianism, Laruelle argues, is primarily an intellectual (rather than political) movement that has a small but growing influence on public opinion in Russia. Eurasianist doctrine, Laruelle writes, "offers a simplistic reading of the conflicts of the post-bipolar world and of Russia's place on the international scene" (10). Eurasianists view contemporary conflicts not in terms of economic or social struggle but as

> a clash between the cultural essences of peoples; religion is the foundation of civilizations and provides them with an unchangeable nature; and civilizations, rather than individuals or social groups, are the true driving force of history ... The Neo-Eurasianist "sciences" thus serve to justify a kind of cultural fundamentalism. (12)

Although Eurasianism is neither cohesive nor particularly influential, its adherents find in it a powerful challenge to Western hegemony and a path to spiritual renewal for their people.

The book's introduction provides a brief historical overview of how the concept of Eurasianism evolved, and Chapter 1 deals with the philosophical and political strands of Eurasianism in the 1920s–1930s and the struggles of its proponents with accommodating communism and fascism. Early Eurasianists introduced iconoclastic ideas such as the geographically-imposed common destiny of Russian and "Turanian" (Turkic and Mongolian) peoples and the valorization of nomadic cultures (especially the empire of Genghis Khan), both of which stemmed from a desire to reject Europe and the "epistemological imperialism" of the West. These early Eurasianists argued that "Europe obfuscates the diversity of civilizations and establishes a benchmark for measuring political and economic backwardness. However, Europe does not represent a state of development that all nations must reach but a specific mode of development that cannot be reproduced" (31). In the era of backlash against shock therapy and globalization, of mourning the loss of empire, these ideas about Russia's unique historical role between Europe and Asia took on new significance.

Subsequent chapters deal separately with the works of specific Russian thinkers associated with neo-Eurasianism: Lev Gumilev (ch. 2), Aleksandr Panarin (ch. 3), and Aleksandr Dugin (ch. 4). Laruelle does not just explore the writings of these authors but also examines their motives and the effects of their work on the Russian political scene. Gumilev is most famous for his theory of ethnogenesis, which explains social change using the tools of biology and ecology. Challenging Gumilev's status as an academic hero in places such as Kazakhstan, Laruelle portrays his philosophy as pseudo-scientific and logically inconsistent.

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Panarin focuses on the inherent value and immutability of civilizational differences. Laruelle shows that Panarin is the most sophisticated of the neo-Eurasianists, yet he still expresses the core ideas held by all versions of Russian Eurasianism: extreme cultural relativism that challenges Western universalism; religio-civilizational differences as causal of macrosocial events; an orientation towards Western romanticism and scientism paired with an anti-industrial, ecological eschatology; and a rhetoric of national diversity and common destiny that is ultimately Russocentric and aimed toward the restoration of empire. Dugin embraces a more geopolitical perspective and is probably the most politically successful neo-Eurasianist. Laruelle provides a correction to those who caricature Dugin simply as a "new right" nationalist, but she is no fan. She portrays Dugin as a self-promoting political opportunist who has nonetheless remained doctrinally consistent in his esoteric and anti-Atlanticist views. She says of Dugin, "Using networks that are difficult to trace, he is disseminating the myth of Russian great power, accompanied by imperialist, racialist, Aryanist, and occultist beliefs that are expressed in a euphemistic way and whose scope remains unclear, but that cannot remain without consequences" (143). Dugin's varied political career serves as a case in point for Laruelle's claims about Eurasianism's flexibility in adapting to whatever context it finds itself in.

The fifth and sixth chapters examine the way Eurasianist ideas have been expressed in non-Russian contexts. In Chapter 5, Laruelle explores the rhetoric of the Eurasianist Party of Russia, the discourse of Russia's Islamic authorities, the neo-Jadidism of "Tatar Euro-Islam," and Yakutian Eurasianism's resource-centered strategy. Chapter 6 looks at Eurasianism in Turkey and Kazakhstan, where it is a fundamental component of official national ideology. Non-Russian Eurasianism is also culturalist, but is much more interested in universalism than cultural relativism, shows a much stronger attachment to Soviet-style federalism and internationalism, and expresses little of the anti-industrial and messianic discourse of Russian Eurasianism. Non-Russian Eurasianism in Russia is concerned with regional autonomy and a re-centering of Eurasianist ideas on

> the paradoxes of Russianness: The Tatars, they argue, have been "internal" to Russian identity for centuries; they have been a part of everyday life in Russia for five hundred years; and, indeed, the state ruled from Moscow could not exist without the Turkic and Muslim peoples. (163)

In Kazakhstan and Turkey, as in Russia, Eurasianism serves to elevate the narrowly defined ethnic nation as the center of a restored empire, rather than transcending Western paradigms of the nation-state.

Compared to Russian nationalism as a whole, neo-Eurasianism is relatively mild, free of tsarist (though not Stalinist) nostalgia and disapproving of violent xenophobia. Laruelle's misgivings about Eurasianist theories come instead from their cultural fundamentalism. They all

> submit humanity to a totality that transcends individual persons and to which they belong *by essence* . . . People can only fully realize their potential by respecting political, social, and cultural hierarchies . . . where no element may be questioned without destabilizing the whole: for example, rejecting autocracy as the *natural* political system for Russia would be tantamount to negating Russia's national identity and Orthodox religion, and vice versa. (209)

Although Eurasianism presents a refreshing perspective on Euro-American hegemony, it is also just one of many ideologies that are being used in the region to justify paternalism and autocracy.

Laura L. Adams
Harvard University
lladams2@earthlink.net
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Serbia's antibureaucratic revolution: Milošević, the fall of communism, and nationalist mobilization, by Nebojša Vladisavljević, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2008, ix + 235 pp. (hardback), ISBN 978-0230205215

This book is a much-needed look at the events leading up to Milošević's rise to power and the outbreak of the Yugoslav wars of the 1990s. As the author himself notes, previous scholarly work on the "antibureaucratic revolution" – street demonstrations in Serbia, Vojvodina, Montenegro and Kosovo in the mid- to late 1980s – tends to assume that it was driven mainly by nationalism, and that it was very much a top-down, elite-driven affair. What Vladisavljević shows is that neither generalization is true.

He begins by describing how the Yugoslav system differed in fundamental ways from other state socialist countries in the realm of expression of dissent, especially by workers. Yugoslav ideology allowed open expression of discontent, provided it wasn't ideological, and especially when it was expressed by industrial workers. Because of this, and the fact that the ruling party tended to listen and compromise when faced with such discontent, processes in Yugoslavia took a much different turn from in the rest of the region.

In the case of the antibureaucratic revolution, demonstrators did not call for the overthrow of the socialist system or ruling party; rather, they called for reform of the existing system and for the party leadership to live up to its own expressed ideals. These calls, Vladisavljević shows, came from authentically grassroots sources. He describes how the various social movements of the 1980s started with a grassroots movement of Kosovo Serbs, who had significant grievances, and were later joined by industrial workers, whose concerns focused on the socio-economic situation and the specific conditions within their firms. Thus, these demonstrations were driven by local actors, and focused on specific issues of immediate concern to them, rather than on nationalism. Only in early 1989 did the demonstrations shift towards an exclusively nationalist focus, and at that time, Vladisavljević asserts, they became much more of a top-down affair.

Vladisavljević argues that Milošević's mentor, Ivan Stambolić, was ousted at the 8th Plenum because he had alienated the younger generation of party leaders with his personal leadership style and his flouting of party norms of multicandidate elections. Milošević's success at the Plenum built on that alienation, but also came because of his control of the Serbian media, and support from some of the older generation of party leaders who were also alienated by Stambolić's leadership style. Thus, Milošević's rise to power in the Serbian party was due to "his personal merits and ... the fact that ... he reflected the values and concerns of his generation better than his rivals" (76). These concerns were institutional, not nationalist. This explains why Stipe Šuvar, chief party ideologue of the Croatian party, supported Milošević at this time.

Once in power, Milošević's role in the antibureaucratic revolution is portrayed as basically passive. He managed to gain credibility among the protesters by criticizing the use of force against them, and he established relations with the grassroots Kosovo Serb protest group early on. But while he allowed the demonstrations to take place, and at times provided minor assistance, Vladisavljević argues that not until quite late was he actively supporting and directing them. He thus contends that the antibureaucratic revolution was a grassroots movement, and received only logistical support from the Serbian authorities, especially for the demonstrations in Vojvodina and Montenegro (in central Serbia Vladisavljević concedes that the movement was much more top down). Only in early 1989, he argues, did nationalist themes come to dominate, and the demonstrations became a largely elite orchestrated affair.

Vladisavljević's story thus minimizes Milošević's role, and asserts that the demonstrations were not part of any strategic plan on his part. Indeed, in much of this story Milošević is absent. It leaves this reader wanting to know more. Part of the reason for this lacuna may be the reliance on interviews with officials who took part in events, who are, perhaps, still reticent to go into details. But there is much evidence that points to a much more active and intentional role on the part of Milošević. One example: one of the leaders of the Kosovo Serb movement and of the antibureaucratic revolution, Miroslav Šolević, in an interview with the newspaper *Nasi Dani* (21 June 1991, 20), notes that they had planned to move the demonstrations to Jajce in Bosnia in September 1988, but did not do so because the Serbian party struck a deal with the Bosnian party leadership whereby Bosnia would vote with Serbia in the federal party leadership. This seems to indicate that, while the impetus of the antibureaucratic revolution may have originated in grassroots concerns, the Serbian leadership was using it to achieve political goals, and thus the movement itself cannot be fully understood without looking at elite involvement and strategic goals even in the period prior to when Vladisavljević claims it became top down. Indeed, another gap in the story is the demonstrations in central Serbia; while he concedes that they were top-down affairs, we do not hear much about them, nor about their relationship to demonstrations in other regions.

That said, this book is an extremely important contribution to our knowledge of Serbia and Yugoslavia in the late 1980s. By drawing on interviews with participants, as well as on other primary source material from the period, Vladisavljević gives us a much deeper understanding of the political system in Yugoslavia and how fundamentally different it was from other state socialist countries; of the social, economic and political processes that were taking place in Serbia and Yugoslavia; and of the dynamics of intra-party processes within the Serbian party. He also gives us interesting details not only about the Kosovo Serb movement but also about the Albanian Kosovo side of the story, including within the Kosovo party organization, as well as how the Kosovo Albanians reacted to the growing mobilizations in Serbia. Vladisavljević thus gives us a fuller understanding of subsequent events. This book is a must-read for anyone interested not only in the anti-bureaucratic revolution, Yugoslavia's system, and the Yugoslav wars but also in questions of social movements and civil society in authoritarian states.

Chip Gagnon
Ithaca College
vganon@ithaca.edu
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A free city in the Balkans: reconstructing a divided society in Bosnia, by Matthew Parish, New York, I.B. Tauris, 2009, xvii + 256 pp. + maps, illustrations (hardback), ISBN 978-1848850026

A Free City in the Balkans is an unusual book. It is a very detailed, yet for the most part quite readable account of an international political experiment in state building in post-war Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is unusual because it sits, at times awkwardly, at the intersection of a few different genres: it is part institutional memoir, part international legal treatise, part analysis of theories of state building, and part a history of international engagement in Bosnia.

The title "free city" comes from a unique institutional arrangement the international community designed for a small town of Brčko in the aftermath of the Bosnian war. Unwilling or unready to decide on the final status of the city – should it be allocated to the Bosniac-Croat federation or the Serb Republic – the international administrators decided to compromise. They created a "free city," an internationalized territory politically separate from either of the two Bosnian entities. The "Brčko District" therefore became something of a city-state, a strange and ultimately unsustainable solution to the intractable territorial dispute between Bosnia's two post-war political entities.

What makes Brčko so interesting, however, is that this tiny enclave turned out to be surprisingly successful in the first post-war decade (1995–2005). The internationally supervised District enjoyed impressive economic and political development and was way ahead of the rest of Bosnia in areas such as judicial reform, economic liberalization, public administration and even passed a progressive city constitution. Since 2006, however, the political fortunes of the city District began to turn and the independent enclave de facto collapsed, swept up in the political uncertainty and turmoil that has followed the international community's decision to leave Bosnia and disband the international governing body, the Office of the High Representative (OHR).

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A Free City in the Balkans sets out to tell the story of the rise and fall of the Brčko District. The unique perspective that Matthew Parish brings is that of a first-hand participant. Parish is an international lawyer who was the head of the legal department in the Office of the Brčko Supervisor. He therefore had unique and seemingly expansive access to important decision making in the District. Perhaps the strongest aspects of the book are Parish's intimate knowledge of the District's institutions and his detailed tracing of the painstaking process of setting up, and then governing, this strange quasi-state within a state.

As an international lawyer, Parish's principal interest is in the legal institutions that were created to govern Bosnia in the aftermath of the devastating war. Specifically, he is concerned with the apparently unrestricted powers international administrators gave themselves as they designed mechanisms to rule over what for all intents and purposes was an international protectorate, not a fully functioning state. Disappointed with the choice of legal instruments the international administrators designed and implemented in Bosnia, Parish even offers a new possible legal framework that would regulate the powers of international supervisors in charge of domestic political institutions (233).

Parish is uncomfortable with the strength and expanse of international governance in post-conflict states, and at times he sounds as if he is uncomfortable with the very concept of state building. The book's first chapter, a theoretical overview of the concept of state building, even begins with the statement that intervention in failed states is a "fad" of international relations (1). Parish successfully dispatches with the now largely discredited naïveté of the democratic peace theory and its catastrophic application by the neo-conservative ideologues in the wars of Iraq and Afghanistan. He is on safe ground when he argues that the idea that promoting democracy in post-conflict states in the Western or US image is a disaster and will not lead to sustainable peace. But his treatment of alternative state-building theories is too curt and at times too dismissive. He complains that the international relations (IR) literature on state building is "abstruse" and lacking in practical relevance (2), yet he needs to build on the existing literature himself to make his argument persuasive. His summaries of major IR debates between realism, liberalism, and constructivism are too simplistic to be of value to serious scholars of international peace building, yet they may also sound too abstract to policy makers. It would have probably been wiser not to attempt to situate the work so directly within the theoretical debates as

the author does not claim either a particular interest in or much patience with scholarly back and forth.

This is not necessarily an indictment of the work. In fact, where the book is strongest is in the detailed account of the practical day-to-day activities of an international bureaucracy in a confused and unsettled post-war environment. Within those narrower confines, the book is quite a success. It paints a vivid and at times very disturbing picture of multiple layers of institutional, cultural and political misunderstandings at all levels of Bosnian government – international, state, and local. Perhaps Parish's greatest insight is in noting the huge and unbridgeable gap that exists between what the international community and local Bosnian actors understood the war's end – and the Dayton Peace Accords – to actually mean. Indeed, this is the most profound problem of post-war Bosnia – to grasp what Dayton actually meant, and what kind of state Bosnia was to be. Parish portrays, in a succession of vignettes (at times one-sided, even gossipy and petty, but often quite interesting), the institutional consequences of this misunderstanding: the international community thought it was creating a multiethnic state that needs to be ruled by a strong international hand to protect it from itself, while Bosniac, Serbian and Croat political leaders understood Dayton to be a half-way house to establishing monoethnic political entities, in due course and with proper trappings of statehood. To see how these contradictory visions of the state conflicted in a local institutional setting is what makes *A Free City in the Balkans* particularly useful today as Bosnia again is plunged into political uncertainty and disarray.

Jelena Subotic
Georgia State University
jsubotic@gsu.edu
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Zwischen Erziehung und Vernichtung: Zigeunerpolitik und Zigeunerforschung im Europa des 20. Jahrhunderts, edited by Michael Zimmermann, Stuttgart, Franz Steiner, 2007, 591 pp. (hardback), ISBN 978-3515089173

This edited collection on the plight of the Roma in twentieth century Europe is edited by and dedicated to Professor Michael Zimmermann, who passed away before its publication. His untimely death touched all of us who had the privilege of working with him over the years. This work is an appropriate memorial to his contributions to Roma studies, and, along with his seminal work *Rassenutopie und Genozid: Die nationalsozialistische "Lösung der Zigeunerfrage* (1996), is a must-read for those interested in the history of the Roma in Europe over the past century. Zimmermann wrote the introductory essay to this collection, which deals with the complexity of the "Roma question" in Europe in the twentieth century. It begins with a look at Nazi policies and treatment of the Roma from 1933 to 1945 and then discusses the broader questions of Roma categorization, pointing out that the Roma, known in the English-speaking world as Gypsies, are not a monolithic group. He traces the history of the Roma in Europe, emphasizing that the prejudices that came to be so much a part of Roma history arose from a distorted view of this nomadic group that once hailed from India. In this section, two other essays by Klaus-Michael Bogdal and Jakob Tanner provide a deeper look at the Roma in pre-twentieth-century Europe from a literary and historical perspective.

The second portion of this work, "Zigeunerpolitik und Zigeunerdiskurse im 20. Jahrhundert. Länderstudien," looks at policies towards the Roma in Austria, Bulgaria, England, France, Hungary, the Netherlands, Romania, and Spain during the twentieth century. None of the articles tells a very positive story, and what emerges, whether it be in Gerhard Baumgartner and Florian Freund's discussion of the fate of Austrian Roma during the Holocaust or Leo Lucassen's study of the interrelationship between research on the Roma and its impact on policies towards this group from 1850 to 1970, is a sad story of constant discrimination. Even in the UK, with its somewhat enlightened policies towards the Roma, David Mayall notes that age-old differentiation between native Roma and foreign or "alien" Roma remains a problem. In Nazi Germany, Heinrich Himmler drew strong distinctions between the native-born Sinti and the Roma, recent immigrants from Eastern Europe. It is sad that such distinctions, in a different guise, still exist in parts of Europe today.

The third part of the study focuses on the plight of the Roma during the Holocaust. Like the Jews, the Nazis viewed the Roma both as *azoials* with *artfremdes blut* (alien blood) who were a core threat to Hitler's goal of creating an Aryan-pure Germany and later an Aryan-pure Europe. But it would be a mistake to lump the Roma and the Jews together, since the Germans saw the Jews as a much greater threat to society and the world than the Roma. Anti-Semitism was a core part of Nazi racial thinking, whereas Nazi policies towards the Roma were something that developed slowly after Hitler took power in 1933. As Guenter Lewy points out in his essay, Hitler did not even mention the Roma in *Mein Kampf*, indicating that the *Führer* seemed to have no interest in this small group. Lewy might have added the fact that the Jews are mentioned constantly in *Mein Kampf* and seen as the cause of everything gone awry in Germany during and after World War I. In Hitler's mind, communism was nothing more than a Jewish plot to take over the world.

So what was the basis of the Germans' deep hatred of the Roma? If the Jews represented power and greed, the Roma, resting as they were at the lowest level of Nazi Germany's socioeconomic ladder, were seen as a group of lazy thieves and itinerants. From the Nazis' perspective, the Roma contradicted everything they taught about hard work, honor, and other traditional values. At first, the Nazis simply adopted the highly restrictive anti-Roma policies in practice in the various German states since early in the twentieth century. Yet they remained so troubled by the existence of this small minority that numbered no more than 20,000–26,000 in 1933 that they decided soon after the issuances of the Nuremberg Laws in 1935 to begin to include the Roma in the list of restrictions originally forced on the Jews.

More importantly, as Martin Luchterhands points out, they decided to try to develop a better racial categorization scheme for dealing with the Roma that hopefully would help them to develop a more mature set of Roma policies. In 1936, Nazi officials created the Reichszentrale zur Bekämpfung des Zigeunerwesens (Reich Center for Combating the Gypsy Plague) in Berlin. The same year, the Reich Health Office created the Rassenhygienischen und bevölkerungsbiologischen Forschungstelle (Research Institute for Racial Hygiene and Population Biology) under Dr. Robert Ritter, who was tasked with developing a complex scheme for determining who was a "Gypsy." It took five years, but Ritter finally developed a detailed racial classification system with five categories that ranged from full-bloodied Gypsies to non-Gypsy. Though Ritter did not see the Roma threat in the same light as the Jews, he did advocate the sterilization of Roma *mischlinge*. Such differentiation, though, did little to save the lives of most Roma in Nazi Germany. As Michael Zimmermann points out in his article on the controversy surrounding the Auschwitz decree on 16 December 1942, little could be done to save the Roma even after Himmler seemingly got Hitler to

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support his efforts to save some Sinti from death. Ultimately, 22,600 Roma were sent to Auschwitz, and most would die there.

The final part of this collection deals with the fate of the Roma in post-1945 West Germany. Those German Roma who managed to survive the Holocaust soon found themselves facing the same social hatreds they had encountered before the war. The police used Nazi-era data to harass Roma, while courts continually turned down Roma efforts to seek reparations for their suffering during the Holocaust. In 1963, West Germany's Bundesgerichthof (Federal Supreme Court) finally ruled that from 1938 on, the Roma had been, like the Jews, racial victims of Nazi persecution. This decision, unfortunately, did little to help West Germany's small group of Roma Holocaust survivors or, for that matter, the large Roma populations in Central and Eastern Europe, where governments refused, for the most part, to recognize individual or ethnic suffering during the Holocaust.

David M. Crowe
Elon University
crowed@elon.edu
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Yevrei v Turove: Istoriya Mestechka Mozyrskogo Polessya [Jews in Turov: the history of a shtetl in Mozyr Polessye], by Leonid Smilovitsky, Jerusalem, Tsur-Ot Press, 2008, 800 pp. + maps, illustrations (hardback), ISBN 978-965-555-352-9

Leonid Smilovitsky has written an 800-page book devoted to the 1800–1960 history and cultural anthropology of the Jewish community in Turov, Belarus. Once the center of a princedom, Turov lost its glory and was sidelined by industrial development, major roads, and railway lines. In 1897, Jews accounted for 52.3% of its population of 4290 people; by the first Soviet census of 1926 that share had declined to 40.3% while the total population had grown to 5387. Located amidst the Pale of Settlement installed in 1791 and outlawed in 1918, Turov was much like other incorporated towns of Belarus: Jews were numerous, particularly in the town centers, and Belarusians dominated the towns' periphery and the surrounding countryside. Even in Minsk, Jews in 1926 made up 41% of the total population. If anything, Turov's specificity is marked by its peripheral location within Belarus amidst the Pripet marshes (Europe's largest marshland). Also, from 1921 to 1939, Turov was next door to the border with Poland, which the Soviets regarded as a hostile country.

The book consists of four chapters describing developments in chronological order: from 1800 to World War I; between the two world wars; World War II; and the post-war period. No Jews survived the war in Turov, and though a couple of dozen Jewish families from among the 1941 evacuees and surviving members of the Soviet army chose to return to Turov in 1945, none remained there past the 1950s. Consequently, Smilovitsky's book is an elaborate, powerful, and fascinating monument to a world that no longer exists. As such, it resonates with the famed photo album *A Vanished World* by Roman Vishniac (1986) and to some extent with Kate Brown's *A Biography of No Place* (2004), and it overlaps slightly with Martin Dean's *Collaboration in the Holocaust: Crimes of the Local Police in Belarus and Ukraine, 1941–1944* (2000).

Against the backdrop of these and many other books, Smilovitsky's volume stands out as a more encyclopedic, thorough, and meticulous description of every aspect of Jewish life in provincial Belarus than any other book I know of. Among these aspects are religion,

dress, personal hygiene and health care, language, Yiddish and Belarusian publishing, the natural setting, education, firefighting, emigration, domestic migration, land use, participation in official Soviet life, etc. Many readers will probably pay special attention to the circumstances of the pogroms of 1918–1921, the Stalinist purges of the 1930s, and the Holocaust as they affected Turov and nearby shtetls.

Smilovitsky's book is a captivating read. I was mesmerized by family and personal stories: of the Gobermans, children of a Turov mill owner, who in the late 1920s were deprived of much of their living space as the shtetl's former upper class and left for the Crimea only to perish there under the Nazis; of the revenge by a communist leader in Mozyr rayon – a Jew – on another Jew, a shoemaker who had the gall to demand pay for his work; and of yet another shoemaker who did not use his brother's invitation to immigrate to America and became a GULAG prisoner in the Far East, which almost killed him but saved him from the Holocaust.

Readers with specialization in various social sciences and humanities will find many parts of the discussion of considerable interest. Given my own interest in cultural geography, I found eye-opening the descriptions of the Jews in Turov, of mutual relationships between Jews and Belarusians (including mutual linguistic influences), and of the switch of secularized Jews to Russian but not Belarusian in the late 1920s. As the author notes shrewdly, Belarusians first became involved in nation building only in the twentieth century, and there has been no single literary standard of spoken Belarusian while Russian never stopped being the language of prestige among Belarusians themselves. It is also revealing that "in contrast to their brethren in Ukraine and western Russia, Belarusian Jewry did not experience oppression from the titular national group" (696). One has to wonder whether there is a cause-and-effect relationship between the unusually delayed Belarusian nationalism and relatively limited anti-Semitism. "One has to wonder" because the author does not always develop causal links that go beyond the trivial. Occasionally he overplays the card of Soviet anti-Semitism. Given the alleged Doctor's plot,[1] the closure of Jewish schools, job discrimination, and the constant suspicion of disloyalty, this card is hard to overplay. But the author's claims that it was the policy of state anti-Semitism alone that forced Jews to give up their traditional names, and that the Soviet government withheld information that might have increased the number of willing evacuees (that is, it did not publicly single out Jews – soon after the start of the German invasion on 22 June 1941 – as the primary German targets), come across as overstatements. As for changing names, many Jews did the same in admittedly more tolerant Western countries, the most important factor at work being the desire of Jews to integrate in the mainstream and advance their socio-economic status.

As for the emergency evacuation, considering the sudden start of the war, the inferior transportation networks, and the ideological rigidities of the time, it is amazing how many people did manage to take advantage of the state assistance in evacuation and thus escaped death at the hands of Nazis or their local collaborators.

These few arguable points do not belittle Smilovitsky's effort but will serve to facilitate a debate. The amount of data that he has processed is truly amazing, as is his dedication to the subject, and the outcome will definitely reward the reader.

Note

1 This was an alleged conspiracy to eliminate the leadership of the Soviet Union by means of a number of identified and mostly Jewish doctors poisoning the top leadership. After the death of Joseph Stalin in March 1953, the new Soviet leaders declared that the case had been fabricated.

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Grigory Ioffe
Radford University
gioffe@radford.edu
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Hunger by design: the great Ukrainian famine and its Soviet context, edited by Halyna Hryn, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 2008, xii + 150 pp. + maps, illustrations (paperback), ISBN 978-1932650051

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No one can deny that millions of people starved to death in the Soviet Union in 1932/1933. The famine affected the entire country, hitting Ukraine and Kazakhstan particularly hard. The big bone of contention is, and has been, whether the famine was premeditated by Moscow. In his classic work *The Harvest of Sorrow* (1986), Robert Conquest suggests that Moscow intentionally caused the famine in order to punish the peasantry. Later, in *The Years of Hunger* (2004) by R.W. Davies and Stephen G. Wheatcroft, Conquest is quoted as having refined his opinion: he no longer believes that "Stalin purposely inflicted the 1933 famine. No, what I argue is that with resulting famine imminent, he could have prevented it, but put 'Soviet interest' other than feeding the starving first – thus consciously abetting it" (331). If so, does it constitute a case of genocide?

The title "Hunger by Design" suggests that at least in the case of Ukraine the famine was a premeditated crime. The lead essay by Andrea Graziosi "The Soviet 1931–1933 Famines and the Ukrainian Holodomor," notes with subtle reservations: "This genocide was the product of a famine that was not willfully caused with such aim in mind, but was willfully maneuvered towards this end once it came about as the unanticipated result of the regime policies" (11). By contrast, in his "Holodomor and Memory," George Grabowiz states more categorically that the famine or Holodomor (killing by famine) was a premeditated genocide and therefore "reflects and fulfills even the narrowly drawn terms or conditions of the original 1948 UN Genocide Convention" (142). Although the famine affected many parts of the country, including Russia per se, it hit Ukraine and Kazakhstan incomparably harder. If anything, Kazakhstan was even harder hit than Ukraine was. Still, this volume does not see the Kazakh famine as a genocide. It is difficult, however, not to see anti-Kazakh, anti-nomadic elements in the Kazakh famine. As Niccolò Pianciola shows in his fine essay "The Collectivization Famine in Kazakhstan, 1931–1933," the grain-producing Slavs were saved and the grain-consuming "natives" (nomadic Kazakhs) were willfully left to starve to death. It is understandable that today's independent Kazakhstan opposes Ukraine's exclusive claim to the famine-genocide.

The critical difference between Ukraine and Kazakhstan, this volume suggests, is that the famine in Ukraine from the summer of 1932 onward constituted an essentially different sort of famine from that in Kazakhstan and elsewhere in the country: Moscow willfully used the famine to kill Ukrainian peasants. It was then, in the summer of 1932, that Moscow began to interpret the famine as a "national question." From late 1932 Moscow began to impose an economic embargo on Ukraine to punish the Ukrainian peasantry. As a result, millions starved to death.

These arguments are not entirely convincing to the present reviewer. The key document of the summer 1932 that Graziosi uses supposedly pointing to the "national" interpretation of the famine in Ukraine was in fact more concerned with the political situation in Kazakhstan and the "national districts" in the Northern Caucasus than Ukraine per se. (These "national districts" almost certainly were not Ukrainian.) There was nothing new in interpreting all kinds of problems in Ukraine as "national." The economic embargo was indeed imposed in Ukraine from late 1932 onwards. Russian historians claim, though evidence is scant, that such an embargo was also enforced in Russia. (Graziosi mentions that the situation in the German autonomous republic in Russia was possibly similar to that in Ukraine, but does not elaborate.)

The present volume ignores the curious fact that while Moscow imposed an economic embargo on villages in Ukraine, the politburo also adopted several secret resolutions to extend seed and food assistance to starving Ukraine and the North Caucasus. It goes without saying that these measures were too limited to save millions of lives. Although the measures taken had long remained secret, they are now well known to specialists, thanks to the partial opening of formerly secret archives in Moscow. Moscow's secret assistance is not discussed at all in this volume. Why were such measures necessary if Moscow meant to "maneuver" the famine situation to cause a genocide in Ukraine? Was the assistance merely intended for public consumption, window dressing, or some kind of deception? If so, why were these resolutions secret?

Many questions remain. For instance, were ethnic Ukrainians intentionally killed and ethnic Russians intentionally saved in Ukraine, just as Slavs were saved and Kazakhs left to die in Kazakhstan? Did the border control discriminate between ethnic Ukrainians and ethnic Russians in an effort to prevent them from seeking grain outside Ukraine?

The volume contains three other fine essays. Hennadii Boriak's "Sources and Resources on the Famine in Ukraine's State Archival System" demonstrates that the Soviet government destroyed some critical archival documents regarding the famine. Sergei Maksudov's "Victory over the Peasantry" suggests that the famine was not necessarily an assault on particular national groups such as the Ukrainian peasantry but on the peasantry as a whole. Gijs Kessler's "The 1932–1933 Crisis and its Aftermath beyond the Epicenter of Famine: The Urals Region" shows that the famine also affected Russia severely, but nowhere as severely as it did Ukraine.

While this book will serve to remind the scholarly community that the Great Famine is a neglected yet extremely important subject and that the Ukrainian national factor cannot be neglected, the jury is still out as to the question of premeditation. Whilst not suitable for the "general reader," this book should be read by specialists of Ukraine and the Soviet Union.

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Hiroaki Kuromiya
Indiana University
hkuromiy@indiana.edu
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