

BOOK REVIEWS

Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin. By Timothy Snyder. New York: Basic Books, 2010. xix + 524 pp.

Soviet style Communism may not have lost all of its appeal. Stockholm “boasts” a bar aptly named KGB after the dreaded Soviet political police and dedicated to the Soviet Union. The walls are adorned with tasteless communist memorabilia. Would a public place commemorating the Gestapo, complete with swastikas and Nazi memorabilia, be conceivable? In a brilliant analysis, Timothy Snyder explains two of the worst genocides in modern history as products in part of interaction between the two most repressive and tyrannical regimes. The nature of this interaction is exemplified by the fact that “Stalinism had displaced east European Jews from their historical position as victims of the Germans, and embedded them instead in an account of an imperialist conspiracy against communism. From there, it was but a small step to present them as part of a conspiracy of their own. And thus the communists’ hesitation to distinguish and define Hitler’s major crime tended, as the decades passed, to confirm an aspect of Hitler’s worldview” (p.376).

Timothy Snyder’s now almost iconic *Bloodlands* has debunked Stalin and the communist leadership of the Soviet Union as the perpetrators of one of the most massive crimes against humanity in history and the rulers of a terroristic state rivaled in Europe only by Hitler’s regime —after 1939. The novelty is not the comparison of the two states and tyrannical systems, but the analysis of the two regimes without the usual bias towards the Soviet Union and the focus on the role of the dynamics of Soviet and German policies in the escalation of mass killings, which yields the revelation that the ideologically motivated quest for (absurdly conceived) security led them both to mass murder. The implication of Snyder’s work is that in the competitive quest between the Stalinist Soviet Union and National Socialist Germany for the creation of an ideologically grounded empire and the attainment of world domination, the Soviet Union was in no way a morally superior system. Both were equally monstrous, tyrannical, oppressive, disdainful of human dignity and murderous. Stalin had no desire to oppose Hitler. Had he had a choice, he would have chosen cooperation with the Nazis. Hence Hitler’s attack does not make the Soviet system more virtuous than the National Socialist, which does not diminish the merit of the efforts mounted

by Soviet citizens in fighting the German invaders for their home and sheer survival. Stalin's war against Hitler was not a crusade against tyranny, but a life and death struggle for the survival of his regime. The defeat of Hitlerism was a result of this struggle for self-preservation; the liberation of Europe from the Nazi yoke was not the motivating factor in Stalin's war. After all, in 1937 Stalin toasted "the complete destruction of all enemies, themselves and their kin" (p.72) and declared that "people belonging to national minorities should be... shot like mad dogs." By then he and his entourage had murdered millions. The question was why. One of the main merits of Snyder's work is to show that Stalinist genocides targeted both class enemies *and* ethnic minorities to an equal extent.¹

However, some of the arguments in the book are problematic. Snyder asserts that Stalin was "abandoning" the kind of Marxism according to which people "opposed the revolution because of their class background." According to Snyder, "with Stalinism something was changing; normal state security concerns had infused the Marxist language and changed it unalterably." In the show trials the accused were charged with having betrayed the Soviet Union to foreign powers: "Theirs was a class struggle, according to the accusation, only in the most indirect and attenuated sense: they supposedly had aided states that represented the imperialist states that encircled the homeland of Communism" (p.85). In fact Snyder concludes that existence "no longer preceded essence," "politics was no longer comprehensible in terms of class struggle," (p.109) and most emphatically, "the Soviet Union was no longer an ideological state" (p.116). Of course if one reduces Marxist/Stalinist ideology to the dimension of *internal* (but not external) security, Snyder's argument could be plausible. Even then it would be good to see a *sociological* analysis of the *national* victims of Stalin's killings. Yet "ideology" and "class struggle" were not uni-dimensional. For anyone who was educated in a communist state, the proposition that state security is part and parcel of class struggle does not sound like the antithesis of class struggle at all. On the contrary, the extension of the enemy status to ethnic groups allegedly in the service of foreign powers plotting to undermine communism was the logical conclusion of the struggle against class enemies, resistance to which, according to Stalinist logic, intensified even though the

1 In an important book on Hitler's rule in Europe, Mark Mazower contrasted national socialist killing to Stalinist killing by claiming that the purpose of Soviet policy was "social revolution and not national purification." Mark Mazower, *Hitler's Empire: How the Nazis Ruled Europe* (New York: Penguin Press, 2008), 98.

relentless struggle against them allegedly diminished their numbers. The script of the Rajk trial in Hungary demonstrated this link. Leninism and Stalinism extended class struggle to the international scene, and in fact the “theory” of communism encompassed an international struggle between the progressive forces of history and retrograde imperialism. The Novikov telegram (Novikov was the Soviet ambassador in Washington at the time, but the ideas put forth in the document are usually attributed to Vyacheslav Molotov), which was penned in 1946 in order to underpin ideologically the Bolshevization of Eastern Europe and the schism with the West, attests to this logic. Communism was more than a struggle with domestic enemies: it was conceived as a global struggle. In addition, communist ideology was more than a fight against enemies.

Stalin’s absurd security concerns stemmed from the fact that he looked at the world through the lens of a communist ideology that he himself formulated. Moreover, communism encompassed more than just class struggle. It was a belief in progress towards “communism,” which meant the withering away of the state, the ability of economic planning to overcome economic cycles, unemployment and exploitation. One would have to overlook the mountains of evidence and the history of the Soviet export of communism to Eastern Europe to claim that the Soviet Union was not an ideological state. Societies in Stalin’s USSR and in Eastern Europe, where the Stalinist system was transplanted, were permeated with communist ideology, and plenty of people cherished a belief in communist ideology. As the historian Peter Kenez, who grew up in Stalinist Hungary, put it, “Many were careerists... but... genuine hypocrisy is difficult... It is better and easier to convince ourselves that what we say is true. There was a group of people who had become Communists long ago and had spent their lives remaining faithful to their original commitments.” Kenez also noted that in the Soviet Union “the people who consciously and completely repudiated the lies that are at the foundation of every repressive society were in a tiny minority.”² Economic history also underscores the fact that the Soviet Union adhered to Marxist notions to the end of its existence, although it should be noted that economic development did have a security dimension. Let it suffice to say that when in 1946 Eugene (Jenő) Varga revised a basic tenet of Marxist economic thought, he was forced to revoke his thesis.

2 Peter Kenez, “Dealing with Discredited Beliefs,” *Kritika: Exploration in Russian and Eurasian History* 4, no. 2 (Spring 2003): 369–77, 376.

Bloodlands attributes the two greatest genocides in modern history, Stalinist and Nazi killings, to Stalin and Hitler's attempts to construct a self-sufficient empire. They both targeted agriculture, albeit for different reasons. Stalin murdered kulaks to promote collectivization in order to support Soviet industrialization; Hitler turned east to provide a lasting source of food for Germans through colonization and the murder of the indigenous population. In Poland both Hitlerites and Stalinists first targeted the same group for extinction: the Polish intelligentsia. In the Ukraine, Belorussia and the Baltics, German liquidation squads committed mass murders in the very places where the NKVD had done so before them, sometimes killing the sole family member to have survived Soviet slaughters. Nazi and Soviet systems interacted to produce the mass killings. Mayhem descended into an irrational vortex in the murderous German occupation of the Soviet Union, in which the initial support enjoyed by the occupiers was fueled by the locals' hatred of the system to which many of their friends and family members had fallen victim before the Germans came. "Germans killed Jews as partisans, and many Jews became partisans. The Jews who became partisans were serving the Soviet regime, and were taking part in a Soviet policy to bring retributions upon civilians." The partisan war in Belarus was "a perversely interactive effort of Hitler and Stalin" (p.250).

Snyder is at his best in his interpretation of the dynamics of the events; the escalation of Stalinist murder, the interactions that brought about the brutalization of the war in the east to levels unmatched in Europe's not terribly peaceful history. However his explanation of Hitler's decision to attack the Soviet Union and the related German decision to annihilate European Jewry is weakened by contradictions within his argument.

How could so many lives be brought to a violent end? Snyder seems to say that the killings were products of failed policies. In his assessment, the failure of collectivization in the USSR and the failure of Operation Barbarossa brought about the Holocaust. Thus genocide appears to have happened almost by default as a result of Hitler's and Stalin's botched utopic visions: "they brought about catastrophes, blamed the enemy of their choice, and then used the death of millions to make the case that their policies were necessary or desirable. Each of them had a transformative Utopia, a group to be blamed when its realisation proved impossible, and then a policy of mass murder that could be proclaimed as a kind of ersatz victory" (pp.387–88). Yet the death of millions may not have been *ersatz* victory for the two dictators, but their primary purpose. Furthermore, they did not act alone, but required the collaboration and cooperation of countless

people from many walks of life in order to carry out the mass murders, and these murders were often committed with great enthusiasm or opportunism. The broad array of motives (greed, ideological zeal, racial, national and ethnic hatred) remain largely unexplored, so the killings are not sufficiently explained.³ Is it convincing to argue that the failure of collectivization caused Stalin's policy of starvation, or that Hitler shifted to mass murder and presented it as an end in itself after the defeat in Moscow and the United States' entry into the war?

The narrative leading up to Snyder's explanation of the Final Solution starts with the road to war. The author takes it for granted that Hitler's aim was to colonize the East, meaning Poland and parts of the Soviet Union, in order to satisfy his vision of German colonization there. Yet if this was the case, why did Hitler first wish to destroy not Poland but Czechoslovakia, and preferably by way of war? At first glance, this might seem irrelevant to Snyder's narrative, but if these were indeed Hitler's long-term goals, he was taking a risk regarding their attainment. If colonization in the East was what he sought, why risk defeat in Czechoslovakia? One should remember that on paper at least Czechoslovakia was guaranteed by France and the Soviet Union. Czechoslovakia had absolutely no importance in a future campaign against Poland or the Soviet Union. Thus it was an odd choice to take on one of Central Europe's strongest military powers when the Wehrmacht was not yet ready. Furthermore, what would have happened if Poland had decided to accept the German demands for Danzig and an extraterritorial passage to East Prussia? Some historians believe, moreover, that Great Britain was Hitler's main prize, and knocking out the USSR, Hitler hoped, would force the British to come to terms.⁴ Contemplating Hitler's goals in the war sheds light on the ultimate aims of Nazi policies. Yet the British option is not discussed at all, and Snyder makes no attempt to offer an explanation as to why Hitler attacked Britain. In fact there is evidence to suggest that the Germans

3 For the strength of microhistory in explaining the complex web of motivations in both participation in and resistance to persecution, see Omer Bartov, "Communal Genocide: Personal Accounts of the Destruction of Buczacz, Eastern Galicia, 1941–1944," in *Shatterzone of Empires – Coexistence and Violence in the German, Habsburg, Russian and Ottoman Borderlands*, ed. Omer Bartov and Eric Weitz (Bloomington, In.: Indiana University Press, 2013), 399–422. Alexander Prusin, "A 'Zone of Violence': The Anti-Jewish Pogroms in Eastern Galicia in 1914–1915 and 1941," *ibid.* 362–77.

4 Mazower, *Hitler's Empire*, 137. See also John Lukacs, *The Duel: 10 May – 31 July 1940: the Eighty-Day Struggle between Churchill and Hitler* (New Haven, Ct.: Yale University Press, 2001). We know that Hitler and the German military leadership were still interested in a landing in Britain shortly before they launched the attack on the Soviet Union. See Andreas Hillgruber, *Hitlers Strategie. Politik und Kriegführung 1940–1941* (Frankfurt: Bernard & Graefe, 1965).

may have been amenable to the idea of prolonging the truce with Stalin. Molotov went to Berlin in November 1940 to negotiate a *modus vivendi* in Europe. It was only after the talks failed due to Molotov's refusal to cede Bulgaria to Germany that Hitler gave the final order for Operation Barbarossa. Yet Snyder does not mention the Berlin talks. More recently a debate emerged on the notion of preemptive attack, more precisely the contention was made that Hitler invaded the Soviet Union because he learned that Stalin was preparing for war against Germany. This position is incompatible with Snyder's position. Perhaps one does not want to buy into this assumption, but the pros and cons of this argument brought new facts to light and gave rise to new interpretations regarding Hitler's and Stalin's motives.⁵ As Snyder's arguments revolve around the two dictators' concepts of security, it would have been useful to have presented the main ideas of this debate.⁶ I would tend to agree that given Hitler's worldview, the destruction of Bolshevism may have been his main war aim, but I feel that the reader should be made aware of the dilemmas and controversies, as well as the lacunae in our knowledge.

Snyder's explanation of the war against the Soviet Union is also problematic. He argues that "Hitler's economic vision could be realized only after actual military conflict" (p.159). According to Snyder, "the Soviet Union was the only realistic source of calories for Germany and its Western European Empire" (p.161). Colonization was motivated by access to agricultural space, which in turn was allegedly needed to grow enough food to supply a growing number of Germans. Potentially there was ample food available for Hitler's Germans without the resort to war as a result of exploitative bilateral clearing agreements. Through this ingenious arrangement, Germany received essential items, including foodstuffs, from the Soviet Union, Romania, Hungary, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia. In fact the latter three sold much of their surplus to Germany, the market of which helped them emerge from recession. Eventually Germany was not paying for the shipments it received (the mechanism of the clearing agreements made this possible with impunity). The fact that exports from Southeast Europe declined after 1939 can be partly attributed to the war.⁷ Mark

5 Several authors have argued that the doctrine of "interimperialistic contradictions" shaped Stalin's policy. This again proves the ideological nature of Soviet thinking.

6 For good overviews see e.g. Chris Bellamy, *Absolute War – Soviet Russia in the Second World War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007); Gerhard Wettig, *Stalin and the Cold War in Europe: The Emergence and Development of East–West Conflict, 1939–1953* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008).

7 György Ránki, *The Economics of the Second World War* (Vienna: Böhlau, 1993).

Mazower's conclusion that Nazi racial goals were the *raison d'être* of the war in the East seems more convincing.⁸

Snyder's explanation of the evolution of the Final Solution flows from his presentation of the war against the Soviet Union as having been ineluctable. Originally, or so Snyder argues, Hitler sought a peaceful solution, the emigration of European Jews to distant lands. Only when this turned out to be impossible did killing come to the forefront. Again this idea is presented without any attempt at a dialogue with other positions on this complicated issue. Snyder claims that deportation to Madagascar was the original "plan." Snyder claims that, "In late 1940 and early 1941, the Royal Navy prevented Hitler's Oceanic version of the Final Solution," as the British still controlled the sea lanes (p.160). Madagascar definitely floated around as a "solution" to the "Jewish Question." For instance, the Hungarian Nazis openly talked about it in the early 1940s and even after extermination became official policy in Germany. Was this a *plan* in a technical sense? On page 159 Snyder asserts that the Germans lacked the ships necessary to invade Britain. If the Germans lacked the capacity to carry a few hundred thousand troops across the channel, how would the deportation of millions of people to an island in the Indian Ocean have been possible? Ground transportation was also a problem: German planners understood that the deportation of 160,000 Jews from the Lodz ghetto to the Generalgouvernement would require 200 days.⁹ As Saul Friedländer put it, Hitler may have used "the Madagascar idea as a metaphor for the expulsion of the Jews from the continent."¹⁰ Hitler was aware of the logistical problem. When Martin Bormann asked how they were to be shipped there, he answered ironically, "A Strength through Joy Fleet?"¹¹

Bloodlands runs into a similar difficulty with the claim that the Nazis hoped to use the Soviet Union as a dumping ground for Jews. Snyder notes that "[t]he allied Soviet Union had rejected Germany's proposal to import two million European Jews" (pp.160–61). How serious this proposal was we do not actually learn, but Snyder contends that "if Germany conquered the Soviet Union, it could use Soviet territories as it pleased" (p.161). Later in the book he argues that, "Russia is vast:

8 Mazower, *Hitler's Empire*, 104.

9 See on this and more details on the "Madagascar Plan" Götz Aly, *'Final Solution' Nazi Population Policy and the Murder of the European Jews* (London: Arnold, 1990).

10 Saul Friedländer, *The Years of Extermination – Nazi Germany and the Jews* (New York: HarperCollins, 2007), 81.

11 Mazower, *Hitler's Empire*, 120.

the Germans never even aimed to colonize more than its western fifth” (p.336). It is hard to see how they could have dumped millions of unwanted people there if the full stretch of the country was not to be a German colony.

In Snyder’s view Hitler and his leaders did not originally intend to kill all the Jews. The Final Solution, rather, was the result of a lack of other options and the German failure in the war against the Soviet Union. “Six months after Operation Barbarossa was launched, Hitler had reformulated the war aims such that the physical extermination of the Jews became the priority” (p.187). “When the war was lost, Hitler called the mass murder of the Jews his victory” (p.388). The question is whether Hitler knew in early December that he had lost the war. And could he ever openly call the killing of the Jews his victory and hence substitute it for victory in the war to the German people? We know that everything about the killings was kept secret as far as possible. Snyder contends that the physical liquidation of European Jews was not a foregone conclusion. Rather, according to him it was a resolution that evolved during the first phase of the war.

Snyder’s argument may be problematic on several important points. In the fall of 1941 Hitler did not know that the invasion of the Soviet Union would fail, and neither did anyone else, including people with a far more astute perception of the situation than Hitler. Snyder himself claims on page 211 that “Even *after* the failures of Operations Barbarossa and Typhoon, Hitler... seemed to believe that he could conquer the USSR in early 1942.” It is more reasonable to assume that even in 1942, “victory was assumed to lie only a few months away” (p.379). It is therefore difficult to believe that the Holocaust was a substitute for a victory that Hitler thought he could still obtain. However, Snyder’s argument *rests on this claim* if we are to believe that Hitler adopted the Final Solution in response to a dramatic constellation of events. One factor was the alleged realization that Germany could not win the war; the other was the formation of the grand alliance: “Jews as such would be killed as retribution for the U.S.–U.K.–USSR alliance” (p.217). Hitler announced on December 12 that “the world war is here. The annihilation of Jewry must be the necessary consequence.” As Snyder asserts, Hitler became convinced that a worldwide Jewish conspiracy had brought Germany into war with all three powers. This would make sense only if the United States had declared war on Germany, which was not the case. Snyder admits that the United States reciprocated the German declaration of war. Even Hitler’s warped mind could not have missed that point. Thus the question should be why Hitler actually brought about the Grand Alliance by declaring war on the United States.

In addition, Snyder's own chronology throws into question the argument that Hitler made up his mind to kill the Jews only in December. Himmler, as Snyder asserts, "endorsed the killing of women and children in July 1941" (p.197) and "the total extermination of Jewish communities in August 1941" (p.206). The "death factory" of Belżec was established in "late October 1941" (pp.255–56), and the Chelmno facility was gassing Jews "as of December 1941" (p.258). This was hardly a result of a new policy initiative after the coalition came into existence *later* that month. Goebbels stated on November 16 that the fate of the Jews would be annihilation. Finally, one would need to demonstrate that there was a change of paradigm in Jewish policy before and after December 1941. In fact, mass killings to exterminate Jews were already taking place in 1941. Even though it was the preferred option, exterminating the Jews may not have become automatic, even after 1941. The policy of exterminating Hungarian Jews was an evolutionary policy in 1944, and immediate, total liquidation was the desired outcome, although it conflicted with a pressing need for forced labor in the *Jägerstab* program.¹² Snyder constructed a timeline of events that would support his argument that the extermination of the Jews became the only Nazi option when Hitler no longer believed in victory. In doing so, he may have underestimated the murderous propensity of Hitlerism. Victory was not yet beyond reach for the Germans in 1941 or even 1942, although it was delayed. My intention is not so much to address the question of whether German extermination policies were predetermined or escalated (radicalized), but rather to observe that by introducing the formation of the Grand Alliance as the trigger for the implementation of the policy to kill *all* Jews, in my reading Snyder has rationalized a policy the real foundation of which, in my assessment, was irrational hate.

Snyder argues that Hitler could still have reversed his policies in December 1941, much as Antonescu did. This statement obscures the difference between the two leaders. Antonescu may have been a murderous anti-Semite who presided over the annihilation of 300,000 people in territories attached to Romania after the Soviets were pushed back by the Wehrmacht. Yet he was a Romanian nationalist first and acted in (his perception of) Romania's national

12 Gábor Kádár, Zoltán Vági, *A végső döntés: Berlin, Budapest, Birkenau 1944* [The Final Decision: Berlin, Budapest, Birkenau 1944] (Budapest: Jaffa Kiadó, 2013). For a similar argument see also Tim Cole, *Holocaust City – The Making of a Jewish Ghetto* (New York–London: Routledge, 2003). For a view that the Germans had a "master plan" when they invaded Hungary, see Randolph Braham, *The Politics of Genocide – The Holocaust in Hungary*, vol. 1 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).

interest. The Jews in Romania proper were his Jews, not the Germans' Jews, and their fate would be decided according to the perceived national interests of Romania. Unlike Hitler, Antonescu did not construct an ideology around mortal struggle for the survival of his race.¹³ Ferenc Szálasi, the leader of the Hungarian National Socialists, understood that Hitler's mission was to "struggle against international Jewry." Szálasi was a self-professed Jew hater. He called the Jews "executioners of the peoples," and he sought to expel all Jews from Hungary and the continent, but he did not share other aspects of Hitler's racist ideology. He too was first and foremost a nationalist. This explains why Szálasi refused to hand over Hungary's remaining several hundred thousand Jews to the Germans after they installed him in power in October 1944. Eichmann had to content himself with 60,000 forced laborers who were "lent" to him by the Hungarian Nazi leader, but whom Szálasi expected to get back after the war.¹⁴

Robert Jervis has remarked that in order to kill Jews the Germans sacrificed security.¹⁵ This would be true if German politics had been anything close to rational. In fact, for Hitler and many of his followers killing Jews was a prerequisite of security, indeed of the very survival of the German race. Snyder actually cites sources to support this claim, but he fails to go as far as his sources potentially could have taken him. He understates the essence of Nazism and presents the drive to kill all members of a group of people as a product of rational politics. An Austrian policeman wrote to his wife of his emotions while killing Jews: "I aimed calmly and shot surely at the men, women and infants. I kept in mind that I have two infants at home, whom these hordes would treat the same, if not ten times worse." General Gustav von Becholsteim advocated the mass murder of Jews as a preventive measure, arguing that had the Soviets invaded Europe, the Jews, who were "no longer humans," would have exterminated Germans (pp.205–6). As Goebbels put it, Jews were "suffering a gradual process of annihilation" that they had "intended for us." In a recent book Wendy Lower has reconstructed the genocidal mindset of the many thousands of German women who went on a torture and killing spree against the Jews in the East.

13 For an outstanding biography of Antonescu see Dennis Deletant, *Hitler's Forgotten Ally: Ion Antonescu and his Regime, Romania 1940–1944* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006).

14 Rudolf Paksa, *Szálasi Ferenc és a hungarizmus* [Ferenc Szálasi and the Hungarist Movement] (Budapest: Jaffa Kiadó-MTA Bölcsészettudományi Kutatóközpont, 2013), on his views regarding Jews and Hitler's struggle: 66–67. See also László Karsai, *Reflektor a sötétbe. Szálasi Ferenc naplója 1943. szeptember 15–1944. július 18.* 1–2. [Reflector in the Dark. The Diary of Ferenc Szálasi] *Beszélő* 13, no. 3. (2008) 54–76; *Beszélő* 13, no. 4. (2008), 60–79.

15 Robert Jervis, *American Foreign Policy in a New Era* (New York–London: Routledge, 2005).

Lower cites a wartime letter penned by a woman who “took dictation” from Hitler: “Our people immigrating here [to the Ukraine] do not have an easy task, but there are many possibilities to achieve great things [...] One comes to the conclusion that the foreign people are not suitable for various reasons [...] an admixture of blood between the controlling strata, the German element and the foreign people would occur. That would be a cardinal breach [...] of the need to preserve our Nordic racial inheritance and our future would then take a similar course to that of... the Roman Empire.” Killing may not have been “a substitute for triumph” (p.215).¹⁶ In Snyder’s portrayal, economics (the “foundation” in Marxist thought) underlay Stalin’s and Hitler’s killing sprees. But Hitler did not need to kill in order to get all the food he needed and more from the East. The bilateral clearing agreements that Hitler had signed with his clients (Yugoslavia, Romania, Hungary and the Soviet Union) worked well, and Germany was receiving goods even when it was no longer paying for them. Even when one considers the food needs of a “thousand-year” Reich, more traditional colonial practices would have sufficed, assuming that food shortage was a primary factor in Nazi politics at all.

The thesis that the killings of 1932–1945 were an interaction between the two tyrannical powers is persuasive for many of the areas under discussion. It breaks down for Hungary and even Yugoslavia and Slovakia, where the Holocaust had nothing to do with Stalin or the Soviet Union. The statement that Hungarian Jews (or most but not all of them I should say) were murdered in the “Bloodlands” does not help explain why this last chapter (one of the most rapid and devastating episodes) of the Final Solution took place. For a clearer understanding of the motivations of the many participants in the politics of genocide it would have been interesting to compare the motivations of leaders like Antonescu, Szálasi, Tiso and Ante Pavelić, as well as to contrast the peculiarities of the Romanian Holocaust, which created its own “bloodlands,” with the Holocaust in Hungary, which used its own territory as a killing ground to a much smaller extent. In one sentence, for a more universal explanation of Nazi genocide, the geographical scope ought to have been slightly extended.¹⁷ After all, the title of the book does claim to discuss “Europe.” This is not to say that I fault the author for not providing a more systematic, country-by-country

16 Wendy Lower, *Hitler’s Furies: German Women in the Nazi Killing Fields* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, Harcourt, 2013), 215.

17 For a geographically broader approach to violence in twentieth-century Europe see Keith Lowe, *Savage Continent – Europe in the Aftermath of World War II* (New York: Saint Martin’s Press, 2012).

account of Nazi or Communist rule in Europe. Yet the vast number of victims of the Holocaust in the Yugoslav territories and in territories under Romanian and Hungarian jurisdiction would have justified a comparison with “bloodlands,” all the more so since a comparison of the methods that were used would have provided further insights into the mindsets and motives of the perpetrators.

In Snyder’s account, as in many recent accounts of the genocides that occurred in twentieth-century Europe, the comfortable notion of a leader-centric world (Stalin and Hitler and their close knit group) is shattered. No longer can we comfort ourselves with the thought that the tyrants’ maniacal visions were shared by only a few. Mass murder was not just part of Hitler’s and Stalin’s agendas, but rather was part of an agenda shared by many of their compatriots of every rank and file. Mass murder, dehumanization, and the persecution of tens of millions on racial and social grounds was a product of a quest for state/racial security that is not security understood in the normal sense. The Stalinist and National Socialist security dilemma arose through the lens of two ideologies of hatred and prescribed the annihilation or at least the incarceration of millions as a *sine qua non* of state/national survival. Snyder underestimates the scope of communist genocide perpetrated against foreign nationals after the war. On page 318 he asserts that the Soviets took 287,000 people as laborers from East European countries, but he makes no mention of the tremendous death toll. From Hungary alone almost 230,000 civilians were taken in so-called cleansing actions, and together with POWs some 600,000 Hungarians languished in labor camps, where roughly a third of them may have perished.¹⁸ And this is just the Hungarian figure. Snyder is also mistaken that Noel Field was not tried in the Rajk trial (p. 318). He was, and he was held in prison until his release after Stalin’s death. Moreover, Rajk’s main crime was not that he was allegedly an agent of Field, although this may have been the first script of the trial. Rather, he was convicted primarily for his purported service to Tito’s Yugoslavia, revealing a new, ominous turn in Stalin’s lethal paranoia.

These qualifications notwithstanding, *Bloodlands* is a brilliant analysis and a deeply emphatic and humanistic approach to suffering and its causes in an all but forgotten part of Europe. It is likely to be read and debated for a long time to come.

László Borhi

18 Stark Tamás, *Magyar foglyok a Szovjetunióban* [Hungarian Prisoners in the Soviet Union] (Budapest: Lucidus, 2006).

Régi könyvek, új csillagok [Old Books, New Stars]. By Gábor Farkas.
(Humanizmus és Reformáció, 32. kötet.) Budapest: Balassi Kiadó, 2011.
282 pp.

Few people would think that a supernova in the Early Modern Era would be of much interest to anyone apart from a few small circles of historians of the science of astronomy. Yet the “new star” that appeared in the skies in 1572, the glow of which was visible for a time even in daylight, has become a central character in numerous works of scholarly literature, including studies written on the history of philosophy and accounts of the emergence of the modern concept of the world. How can an exploding star have attracted interest from such an array of fields of inquiry? The answer to this question lies in the role it played in a paradigm shift, for interpretations of its appearance in the sky prompted a shift in visions of the world. In the Middle Ages it represented a sudden and unexpected assault on (or at least challenge to) the ruling Aristotelian-Ptolemaic conception of the universe. According to this conception of the world, change, creation, and destruction could only take place in the sphere beneath the moon, in other words on the planet earth, which was at the center of the universe. The celestial bodies beyond the moon were in a realm of perfection in which only the most perfect form of motion, the circle, was possible, and stars were neither created nor destroyed. It was not possible for a celestial body to move in an ellipse in the sphere of perfection, and naturally comets could not orbit among them, since they were regarded as atmospheric phenomena, similar to falling stars, rain, clouds, fog, wind, and lightening. This conception of the universe, which gradually began to lose its plausibility over the course of the seventeenth century and today is regarded as elegant but utterly inadequate and inaccurate, was accepted for over a millennium. It constituted an entirely satisfactory framework for interpretation of celestial phenomena. Its unraveling was a long and gradual process one of the most important milestones of which was the publication of Copernicus’ *De revolutionibus orbium coelestium*, or *On the Revolutions of the Celestial Spheres*, in 1543. From the perspective of the impact it had on thinking at the time, however, the new star that flared up in 1572 in the sphere of the fixed stars (in other words in the part of the universe where such things were not supposed to happen) but then vanished some 18 months later (in fact it was a supernova in the constellation Cassiopeia) was even more momentous

than Copernicus' work, which only later acquired the revolutionary significance we attribute to it today.

Drawing on a rich array of sources, Gábor Farkas' new book documents the effects of this momentous occurrence. He examines the impact of the event on cultural circles in Hungary and the broader European context in the Early Modern Era. Since the celestial phenomenon represented something of a shock to the scholars at the time and could hardly be accommodated to their understanding of the universe, observations and reflections on the significance of the supernova appeared in great numbers and numerous debates were held on its meaning (in all likelihood the star mentioned by Barnardo in act 1, scene 1 of *Hamlet* is a reference to this). Farkas demonstrates clearly that the responses to the event cannot be divided simply into an acceptance or a rejection of the Ptolemaic understanding of the cosmos. Many other possibilities were raised. For instance, some people understood it as a unique divine miracle, a celestial sign that did not contradict the medieval vision of the universe. Others insisted that it was an atmospheric phenomenon, merely a comet that somehow had lost its tail. It was also understood simply as the light released by the celestial bodies, concentrated in a given point in the skies.

The methodology on which the book rests is a close reading of the many responses given to the event and a thorough examination of the dissemination of the ideas on the basis of the history of books and readings (this is hardly surprising, since the author is a student and colleague of István Monok, a distinguished and prolific scholar of the field, as one reads in the acknowledgements). Farkas uses materials in libraries currently in use and data regarding the collections of libraries that once existed to examine which books were owned by whom in the Carpathian Basin, whether or not we can presume that the owners of these books actually read them, and what marginal notes they contain. This philological inquiry develops into a kind of history of mentalities. Farkas' comparison of the various sources, the reactions to the real and imagined celestial events, and the astronomical, theological, and astrological interpretations casts light on the scientific theories, superstitions, and religious and political ideas that preoccupied scholars of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The study of responses to the supernova offers insights into the mentality of the intelligentsia of the era, which was influenced by the celestial event, but also (and perhaps more fundamentally) by its classical education.

The appearance of comets and the celestial phenomena that accompany comets have traditionally been associated with natural disasters, plagues, and

the commencement of severe cold fronts. One of the interesting aspects of the book is the contrasts it brings to light between the observations we would have expected people to make and the observations they actually made. People of the time often made no mention whatsoever of celestial phenomenon that took place in their lifetimes and that we consider significant today, while other occurrences that according to contemporaries were in some way related to natural disasters or important political events are given considerable attention in the sources, including occurrences that today we think may well not actually have taken place. For instance, as noted in the micro-historical discussion of the 1595 military campaign of Zsigmond Báthory in Wallachia, the allegedly inauspicious appearance of an eagle was linked to the appearance of a new star, but the existence of this new star is not confirmed by other sources. Thorough and methodical study of the textual sources and the depictions that have survived in old prints reveals how the prince's court and the Jesuits used a topos familiar from the works of classical authors, tying a political shift to a celestial event in order to legitimize the acts of the prince. At times this was the foundation for an observation concerning the movements of celestial bodies.

One of the most interesting chapters of the book concerns the reception of the ideas of Copernicus, Tycho Brahe, and Johannes Kepler (in other words the reception of the new understanding of the heavens) in Hungary. Farkas first discusses the extent to which these works were disseminated across Western Europe (surprisingly Copernicus' *De revolutionibus* was read in far wider circles than traditionally thought or than Arthur Koestler contends in his famous book, *The Sleepwalkers: A History of Man's Changing Vision of the Universe*). He then examines which editions of these works can be found in Hungary today (or were ever in Hungary) and how the ideas they contained were received. As Farkas notes in his summary, this reception did not go beyond a very narrow layer of the intelligentsia, and some of these intellectuals purchased the books of the three "world-shattering" astronomers second-hand. Boldizsár Battyhány, András Dudith, Ferenc Krasznai and János Zsámboky were perhaps the only people in Hungary to purchase the books soon after their publication. As this inquiry into this aspect of the history of reading in Hungary demonstrates, while the reception of works of modern physics in Hungary was not entirely negligible, until the end of the seventeenth century Aristotle continued to be regarded as the primary authority in the natural sciences.

The book is a pleasure to read, its rich, lengthy list of sources notwithstanding, and its publication constitutes an important contribution to the study of the

history of science in Hungary. If I were to venture one critical remark, I would have been curious to have read a bit more about the extent to which the author, given his knowledge of the sources, regards physics and astronomy in Hungary as peripheral or able to catch up. While he does give a brief answer to this question at the end of the book, Farkas could have devoted a bit more attention to the impressions he gathered in the course of his study of the sources. The book concludes with a detailed appendix in which the reader finds data concerning editions of the works of the three great astronomers in Hungary, a list of observations of comets in the sixteenth century, and a considerably longer list of observations of alleged celestial phenomena that scholars have been otherwise unable to confirm.

Translated by Thomas Cooper

Benedek Láng

Köleséri Sámuel tudományos levelezése 1709–1732 [The Scientific Correspondence of Sámuel Köleséri]. By Zsigmond Jakó. (Kölesérianá 1.) Edited by Zsuzsa Font. Latin text edited and summaries written by László András Magyar. Cluj: Erdélyi Múzeum Egyesület, 2012. 256 pp.

In 1969, Zsigmond Jakó, one of the most prominent medievalists in international scholarship, wrote a captivating article in German on the early period of Enlightenment thought in East Central Europe and, within this, one of the most important figures of the Enlightenment in Transylvania in the early eighteenth century, Sámuel Köleséri. Although the article was published also in Romanian and Hungarian, to this day only the members of a small circle have a grasp of the importance of the array of sources on which it rests. In the 1950s and 1960s, Jakó pursued research in libraries and archives in the cities of Sibiu, Braşov, and Cluj, where he compiled an indispensable collection of documents from Köleséri's correspondence with other scientists and scholars. However, he did not publish the documents he had assembled, but rather, in the interests of facilitating further research, passed them on to Bálint Keserű, with whom he had been continuously exchanging ideas on the unsolved questions of Transylvanian cultural history, and the Department of Hungarian Literature at the University of Szeged. Thanks to Keserű's efforts, a team was organized under the leadership of Zsuzsa Font, and the 112 letters that had been collected by Jakó were published, along with 14 additional letters collected by the group in Szeged.

This book is particularly significant in part simply because of the remarkable personality of Köleséri, who was born in 1663 and died in 1732. As we learn about the various twists and turns in his life, we get an impression of the exceptional breadth and span of his career. He was the child of a Hungarian Calvinist family. His parents had intended for him to adhere to family tradition and become a pastor, but he decided not to complete a doctorate in theology, but rather to pursue studies in the medical sciences and mine-engineering and then to immerse himself in the world of the natural sciences, which was beginning to gain increasing importance. This decision was soon followed by a political event that was to have a shaping effect on his life, namely the incorporation of Transylvania into the Habsburg Empire. As his family was Calvinist, one would assume that he would not have welcomed this change and would have showed signs of at least passive resistance, along with many other Transylvanian protestants. Köleséri did not do this, but he also did not simply bide time and

wait to see what would come. Rather he sought out fields in which he could make useful contributions while also satisfying his curiosities and interests as a scientist. Various signs suggest that he attempted to do this in part by regarding his homeland as part of a larger Southeast European region and working to promote cultural growth and development in the interests of cultivating a “civilized” society. (His recommendations concerning methods of containing plague epidemics, which were repeatedly breaking out, and his suggestions regarding hygienic measures and important tasks in the economic sphere offer concrete examples of his commitment to his vision, which derived from his profound sense of mission as a doctor.)

Naturally not every aspect of the career of a scientist, even a scientist who is acting out of motives such as these, is so clearly oriented towards the practical. Keeping pace with the scientific tendencies of Europe in the early eighteenth century, he authored works that deal with the geology and history of the region (of these, one of the most important is *Auraria Romano-Dacica*, which was published in 1717), as well as notions regarding the history of Earth as a whole, notions that made the fossils found in the cliffs both in the Alps and in the Carpathian mountains exciting findings for him. This is an additional reason why he deserves a place of distinction in the history of science, for he was one of the first people to accept the “diluvial doctrine” (in other words the belief that world history was drastically affected by a great flood or floods) in the study of rock deposits, and alongside Johann Jacob Scheuchzer he played an important role in enriching the source materials on which this doctrine was based. Miklós Kázmér, a Hungarian natural scientist, recently identified eight findings sent by Köleséri in the Cambridge Woodwardian Collection (which is named after John Woodward, the inventor of the doctrine). While neither Scheuchzer nor Köleséri was timid, they were clearly accepted as members of the Royal Society because of the importance of their findings (Scheuchzer’s son was also made a member of the Society).

I have already mentioned one of the principal topics of the correspondence, but as is perhaps not surprising given that we are speaking of the exchange of ideas between two natural polymaths in the eighteenth century, the correspondence addresses an array of other subjects pertaining to the sciences. Köleséri was intensely interested in the questions of linguistic relationships, and in his writings he touches for instance on the practical problems of compiling a Finno-Ugric glossary and also on the possible relationship between Romanian and Welsh. Influenced by one of the prominent traditions of Central European humanism, he was preoccupied with the antiquities, understood in the broadest sense, of the

Roman province of Dacia. He also deals with questions that were being raised at the time in philosophical inquiries, though to a smaller extent. As his exchange of letters with Michael Gottlieb Hansch reveals, he was remarkably versed in these question as well, and Christin Wolff, whose privations in Germany he seems to have looked on with great compassion, had a significant influence on his thinking. Some of the references indicate that for a time at least he exchanged letters with Wolff himself, although these letters have not survived. His other letters not only give a clear impression of his insatiable thirst for knowledge, but also reveal the difficulties with which he had to contend in order to maintain his erudition and his knowledge of many fields of inquiry, both of which were virtually unparalleled in East Central Europe.

What Köleséri wrote on the religion of the pagan Dacians is interesting in part simply because, perhaps surprisingly, neither theological nor denominational questions figure among the topics. But it is also interesting because it is the only document in which it becomes clear that Köleséri's letter to András Huszti begins to gesture in the same direction. Like many of his contemporaries, Köleséri showed an interest in a kind of ancient *religio naturalis*. The strength of his interest in the creation of a religion that would be above denominational differences is illustrated clearly by many of his other statements and gestures, first and foremost his republication of the texts of two significant theologians and philosophers (Pierre Poiret and Jacobus Gardenius) with his own commentaries on them. (The publication, as part of a continuation of the series that has begun with this volume, of these and similar introductory commentaries will constitute a major step forward in the research on the religious Enlightenment in Transylvania.) If one applies to Transylvania the approach developed by Johannes van den Berg and David Sorkin (among others), the century that preceded mature Enlightenment thought, sometimes treated as something of a stepchild of Hungarian cultural history, appears in an entirely different light, and the works of many interesting authors, predominantly Protestants, emerge from obscurity as writings worthy of our attention. This volume is indispensable, however, not simply because of the importance of Köleséri and the topics with which he was preoccupied, but also because of the exemplary thoroughness with which the team following in Zsigmond Jakó's footsteps prepared the material for publication. The preface and the afterward provide a concise and objective description of the situation with respect to the sources. For instance, we learn which letters belong to which period of Köleséri's life, and which letters came from which collection. There is also a separate summary of where these documents can be found today. As

collections that serve as sources for the inquiry have been moved many times in recent decades, the task of locating them cannot have been simple, even if the editors were able to count on the assistance of young Transylvanian scholars. Naturally at the beginning of the book there is a precise list of the letters that are included, and of course there is also an index of names and places and a summary in German and Romanian.

The admirably detailed index of subjects, which betokens discriminating philological precision, will make the book remarkably easy to use. The thoroughness of this breakdown was made possible by the erudition of András László Magyar, a scholar of the history of medicine and the history of the sciences who worked together with the editor in the preparation of the source materials for publication. Thanks to the work of this precise scholar, who compared the Latin texts with the originals, there are, alongside Jakó's succinct but sometimes sparing summations (which indicate the subjects of the letters), comprehensive summaries that touch on the relevant details at the beginning of each letter. Given the wide array of topics, the composition of these summaries must have required meticulousness and unusual breadth of knowledge, since in the majority of cases we are speaking of an exchange of ideas between people who made casual and frequent use of the technical terms and jargon of their fields of inquiry.

The notes, which have been done with the proper degree of attentiveness to the sources, make the historical background (including the history of science) comprehensible and the material engaging and useful to a wide readership. Zsigmond Jakó's precision and legendary erudition as a historian combine with Zsuzsa Font's knowledge of the institutional, philosophical, and scientific history of the Early Modern Era. The secondary literature on the individual figures offers the reader an image of the network of relationships among scientists and scholars within which Sámuel Köleséri, a man who by no means sought isolation, but who nonetheless was in many respects a lonely figure, pursued his work.

This book, which is indispensable to anyone who is interested in the cultural history of Central Eastern Europe, is the product of a rare, harmonious encounter between generations of scholars, ateliers, and individuals capable of cooperating in the interests of furthering the sciences. The Transylvanian Museum Society was responsible for the last stages of publication. Hopefully and presumably it will become a part of the collections in the most important libraries and research institutions where scholarship is pursued on the Early Modern Era.

Translated by Thomas Cooper

Mihály Balázs

Unfinished Utopia. Nowa Huta, Stalinism, and Polish Society, 1949–56.
By Katherine Lebow. Ithaca–London: Cornell University Press, 2013.
xiv + 233 pp.

Unfinished Utopia is more than what it claims to be in its title. It draws a narrative framework that encompasses the entire socialist period, and this narrative also seeks links between elements of the experiences of the Stalinist years and longer structures of modern Polish history. Choosing a well-defined locality as the focal point also allows Lebow to challenge aspects of the chronology of the Socialist era. Both Stalinism and the thaw of the years of Gomulka after 1956 appear more heterogeneous than the periodization itself suggests.

The six chapters address two major themes. Chapters 1, 2 and 4 are about features of Modernity and modernization as embodied by postwar reconstruction and industrialization in Poland. Chapters 3, 5 and 6 address the problem of resistance against the regime. Lebow argues that the paradox of Nowa Huta serving as one of the major centers of Solidarity in 1970 and in 1980 can be explained by the continuity of the tradition of collective action that was kept alive in the city by local identity and class-conscious worker solidarity. Lebow makes these themes a good read by maintaining a focus in each chapter on individual experiences.

Postwar reconstruction lends itself as a topic for global history. Local elites published plans from 1943 onwards in such distant parts of the globe as India and Italy. Reconstruction as a term was applied to a number of situations throughout the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries. Europe had to be reconstructed after 1814, the USA after the Civil War, and the world after 1920 and again after the economic crisis. In 1943 the Fabian Society published a booklet that contained essays on various aspects of postwar reconstruction, such as medicine, diet, agriculture and international migration. John Marrock, one of the authors, advised that since planning would be based on science, it must start before the end of the war: “When the fighting ends they will be hungry and exhausted, in no mood for experiments.”¹ Postwar reconstruction was not about reinstating the pre-war world. The Fabian Society, the ministries of India led by the Indian National Congress, and the communist parties of Italy or Belgium and the newly formed Eastern Bloc wished to create a different world. Lebow takes issue with

1 John Marrock, “Food for Starving Europe,” in *When Hostilities Cease. Papers on Relief and Reconstruction Prepared for the Fabian Society*, ed. Julian Huxley, H.J. Laski et al. (London: Fabian Society, 1943), 79.

the assumption that the craving for normalcy in the postwar world created an atmosphere in which things went back to an earlier stage: “[...] wartime exposure to a wider world had often been compulsory and far from pleasant, this did not necessarily make it easier to settle down again at home with the return to ‘normalcy’” (p.44). She demonstrates that Poland was uprooted, with migrants all over the country, so restoration was not an option.

In this context, the construction of a large steel plant in the vicinity of Krakow in the early 1950s had multiple meanings. It was not only about countering and controlling a stubbornly “bourgeois” city. The plan for such a venture itself carried the long-term dream of Polish Enlightenment about modernization and industry, the strategic need to relocate industrial centers away from the border areas of Silesia, and the zeal of postwar reconstruction. The plans for Nowa Huta were drawn up in the Stalinist period, but this does not automatically mean that they were shaped entirely by monolithic ideas without links or roots. Lebow also asserts that there was no linearity between plan and practice in the course of the construction of Nowa Huta as the first socialist city of Poland. Many planned features remained only on paper and were postponed to later decades, while many unplanned edifices were built. The plan followed the octagonal shape of many Soviet cities, but it integrated the garden city ideal that was an Anglo-Saxon concept and was ideologically ambivalent in the eyes of the communists. In fact, prefab houses erected in the 1970s and 1980s diverge from the initial design, for which Socialist Realism meant neo-renaissance buildings for administrative centers, theatres, central squares and greenness.

Taking Nowa Huta as an archetypal example, postwar architectural reconstruction in the Soviet Bloc differed from the Western experience in that the former took housing as a secondary goal after industrialization. A recent volume shows that governments in Western Europe had ambitious plans to improve the living conditions of the working classes, but they implemented public projects on a smaller scale than planned and supplemented them with compensation and cheap loans that facilitated private initiatives. In the case of Belgian cities, the choice of architects reflected ideological preferences and professional recognition, but the houses that were built were often unremarkable parts of the postwar cityscape.² Moreover, housing schemes were not necessarily integrated with industrial projects.

2 Fredie Flore, “Housing for War Victims, 1946–1948. A Problematic Building Project by the Belgian Government,” in *Living with History. Rebuilding Europe after the First and Second World Wars and the Role of Heritage Preservation 1914–1964*, ed. Nicholas Bullock, and Luc Verpoest (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2011), 263–80.

Lebow stresses that Nowa Huta's housing problems were serious throughout the Stalinist period, but the construction project entirely altered the landscape. The gap between insufficient housing and increasing industrial output was extreme in the Soviet Union in the period between 1946 and 1948. David Filtzer has demonstrated that the space available for workers, which was already scarce during the war due to the extensive damage done to industrial cities, actually decreased during postwar reconstruction on average.

Chapters 2 and 4 address two aspects that have dominated much of the social sciences for a decade, but hardly surface in discussions of Eastern Bloc Modernity: migration and emancipation. In his examination of the experience of moving to Nowa Huta, Lebow focuses on non-official documents, primarily the published memoir of a worker, Edmund Chmielinski. A close look at important junctures in the life of this youth leads Lebow to develop a model of identity formation and change between village and urban life (pp.45–50). However harsh housing conditions may have been at the site, the decision to become a member of a youth brigade could signify an immediate rise in standards of living for many simply because they were given new clothes and a clear goal in life. The visibility of the new sense of belonging brought about conflicts with family members who had been left behind and also with local farmers, in other words, with the world that had once been familiar (pp.59–60). Coexistence with local villages could potentially be symbiotic as long as the urban site did not threaten the existence of lifestyles: workers needed meat and liquor that was produced by locals. However, the city more frequently appeared as the disgraceful “other” in the imaginations of inhabitants of nearby villages. Yet it remained attractive as a destination to large sections of Polish society who had lost their standing in their own localities due to clashes with state, imprisonment and large-scale displacements. It was relatively easy to begin a new life at a muddy, chaotic and enormous construction site like Nowa Huta in the early 1950s.

For Lebow, emancipation is yet another theme from the perspective of which the political history of Stalinist years and their relationship to what followed were more ambiguous than textbooks usually suggest. The recent historiography of Stalinist Hungary emphasizes that images of female roles hardly changed in the postwar years and women essentially continued to be associated with domesticity. Mark Pittaway argues that this feature is a key to understanding the emergence of the double economy in the 1950s: income generated in the villages from agricultural produce was at least as important for the household budget as salaries earned at industrial centers. Women hardly entered heavy industry, and they were

almost always poorly paid however vital their contributions may have been to this second economy.³ This picture also holds also for Poland. The rhetorical model, in which “the new woman extended her traditionally nurturing role beyond the sphere of the nuclear family to embrace not only the nation, but also the wider family of international progress and peace,” effectively meant that the workplace did not destabilize traditional roles (p.100). Lebow also shows that Nowa Huta women played an important role in Stalinist society, since “no other Polish women have ever penetrated so deeply into the sanctum sanctorum of national industry” (p.97). Journalists’ descriptions emphasized that women did not wear makeup, but they wore the distinctive rubber boots, just as male workers did, and thus could easily be distinguished from the bourgeois of Krakow on Sundays in the city. The female metal caster brigade was the only such brigade in the country, and it performed well. Plastering brigades also produced Stakhanovite women. Yet while Nowa Huta female workers had a high standing in the official propaganda, their prospects were limited. Although 11.5 percent of the physical labor force was female, they had little chance of entering vocational schools unless they were well connected. Clerical jobs that required minimal qualifications and fit traditional roles were the most easily available throughout the 1950s (pp.102–5). Lebow points out that late Stalinist and post-Stalinist years bore witness to a setback from this perspective. The casting brigade was dispersed on the grounds that the work that they did was a threat to a woman’s health. While families were under heavy pressure due to lack of housing, inadequate childcare and imbalanced division of labor, after 1956 public opinion blamed Stalinism for these problems instead of addressing them through policies. In this period moral panic regarding sexual life and sexual freedom in the city was on the rise. Lebow shows that changes in policies regarding the “Gypsy problem” were influenced by this sense of moral panic. In Nowa Huta official voices believed in integration through work and guardianship, especially as far as hygiene was concerned, and the official stance acknowledged differences among Roma groups. In the 1960s the new policy focused on policing, force and surveillance. Lebow does not construct an image of Stalinist golden years of social mobility. She emphasizes that many of the instances in which the presence of a Roma population in Nowa Huta was a factor before 1956 involved prejudice and conflict, and she also highlights the ambiguity regarding gender that was

3 Mark Pittaway, “Retreat from collective Protest: Household, Gender, Work and Popular Opposition in Stalinist Hungary,” in *Rebellious Families. Household Strategies and Collective Action in the 19th & 20th Centuries*, ed. Jan Kok (New York–Oxford: Berghahn Books), 198–228.

present throughout the socialist era. Yet she manages to convince the reader that a simple juxtaposition of ‘bad Stalinist years and policies’ and ‘better post-1956 times’ is misleading for the analysis of gender roles.

Lebow’s vision of resistance against the regime and its successes focuses on continuity rather than miracles (pp.152–77). She shows that Nowa Huta played a vital role in building up the tradition of resistance, even if this may seem paradoxical at first glance. Despite the long dominance of the totalitarian paradigm, the historiography of the Soviet Union reveals a great deal about the problem of resisting the regime. While there is an array of available sources, historians studying Soviet Society have often found themselves compelled to confront the problems of silence and the comprehensibility of speech. One of the outstanding undertakings of recent years is *The Whisperers* by Orlando Figes. The volume, which is based on written memoirs, personal documents and the oral histories of hundreds of families, attempts to decipher the logic of the disintegration of society and the reach of Stalinist oppression. Figes focuses on the contrast between the public reality and the reality that existed as a whisper and hardly found expression, even at the family level. From this perspective, actors remain passive throughout, except during the years of the Second World War, when alienated central rule could not silence individuals to the same extent as it had before.⁴

Sarah Davies, Sheila Fitzpatrick and Lynne Viola have argued that there are a number of voices still to be uncovered. Davies believes that it is possible to some extent to allow these voices to speak for themselves by rearranging police reports. Researchers who believe in the existence of popular protest against the regime accept the content of police reports on the continued presence of a will to uproot it. In this context, the regime fought a successful war for rule over voices, but fear did not triumph over resistance.⁵ However, one of the strongest arguments against the resistance thesis is that well-documented dissenters revolted against exclusion, but not against the foundations of the regime.⁶ Figes argues that whispers are cries for help from pioneers who broke down during the period of terror, and these whispers do not constitute a fight for freedom.

Labor history of the Soviet Union often addresses the question of resistance, but does not arrive at definitive answers. In 1994 the landmark volume *Making*

4 Orlando Figes, *The Whisperers. Private Life in Stalin's Russia* (London: Allen Lane, 2007).

5 Sarah Davies, *Popular Opinion in Stalin's Russia. Terror, Propaganda and Dissent, 1934–1941* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

6 Jochen Hellbeck, *Revolution on My Mind: Writing a Diary Under Stalin* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006).

Workers Soviet, edited by Lewis H. Siegelbaum, was hesitant about theoretical frameworks.⁷ A decade later Jeffrey J. Rossmann openly challenged previous wisdom regarding the Soviet Union as a totalitarian society. On the basis of a close analysis of a textile factory, he describes collective action and resistance as mass phenomena during the 1930s.⁸ Looking at the postwar years, Donald Filtzer found a diffuse form of resistance in evasion and flight. Importantly, he points at vocational training as one of the major sites of such protest.⁹ Lebow argues that the potential for resistance stemmed from the faith of part of the population in ideas about a workers' state throughout the 1950s and 1960s that in turn facilitated collective action and also maintained the memory of such action. On the other hand, the protest regarding the cross clearly demonstrates that the idea of rights, and thus the moral economy of Nowa Huta workers, did not match the ideal type of Homo Sovieticus, who should have thought of religion as 'opium.' Lebow also emphasizes the generational aspect of resistance. This feature links Stalinist Poland to global trends of youth culture in the 1950s and creates important cultural bridges among countries of the Eastern Bloc. Although the author pays attention to gestures during moments of conflict and offers a thick description of some of them, she does not list any occasions when youth culture and the moral economy of workers interacted, combined or clashed. She comes closest to this question in Chapter 5 when looking at the "Poem for Adults." In August 1955 Adam Wazyk, a party hardliner, published a piece that wounded Stalinist sensitivities almost as much as Khrushchev's speech did some months later. The poem asserts that Nowa Huta was a political failure where young males were bored and did nothing apart from desperately seek opportunities to copulate with girls waiting for them in their corrupted 'convents,' i.e. hostels (pp.146–7). The critique of Nowa Huta from a dissenting figure rebuked youth culture on the same grounds as the official voices: sexual promiscuity and the number of unwanted children.

Her appreciation of the significance of individual life stories and situations enables Lebow to locate freedom, dreams and struggle in Nowa Huta under Stalinism. She convincingly links many of these to *longue durée*

7 Lewis H. Siegelbaum and Ronald Grigor Suny, eds., *Making Workers Soviet. Power, Class and Identity* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1994).

8 Jeffrey J. Rossmann, *Workers Resistance under Stalin. Class and Revolution on the Shop Floor* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005).

9 Donald Filtzer, *Soviet Workers and Late Stalinism. Labour and the Restoration of the Stalinist System after World War II* (Cambridge, N.Y.: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

trends of modern Polish history. She uses a variety of archives, though with more innovative readings she could have overcome two problems that arise in the course of her examination. First, she does not render the dynamics of communities within the city perceptible. She makes mention of groups, such as the voluntary brigades, the theater groups, and informal youth circles, but these groups seem to function only as frameworks without internal lives and forces. By showing individuals, she highlights the importance of individual agency and choices in creating new spaces, but she unintentionally confirms the totalitarian model according to which society is atomized. This is in contradiction to her larger narrative about collective action. One way to overcome this paradox would have been to use photographs as archival sources instead of illustrations of arguments. Second, while the change of landscape was the essence of the story of creating a new city, there is no discussion regarding how the rural landscape was transformed into an urban one. At one point we see peasants in conflict with brigades, and in the second chapter she stresses the role of changes in the hinterland of would-be workers, but no picture emerges of the role that was played by environmental change or how an old landscape changed, merged with, or remained part of the city, nor is there any characterization of the new human ecology that replaced the old one. Lebow often quotes descriptions that stress mud. Contemporaries were so preoccupied with getting stuck in the mud that the author seems to have forgotten to consider how it might have looked from a bird's-eye view.

The book is a well presented case study that provides the reader with a firm foundation on which to develop ideas regarding some of the most salient historiographical issues of Stalinism, such as Modernity, the role of the Second World War, repression and resistance. Lebow talks about her actors with empathy and skill. She is good at describing events and personal dramas. She does this with warmth, sensitivity and understanding, but without pathos. And she has chosen themes, including housing issues, moral panic, sexuality, youth culture, and women's emancipation, that make her work useful for those interested in global histories. The book also demonstrates how much an analysis of this period can reveal about the social history of Central Europe. These features make the volume relevant for a large number of students and researchers working on the postwar history of the region.

Róbert Balogh

Hungary and Romania Beyond National Narratives: Comparisons and Entanglements. By Anders E.B. Blomqvist, Constantin Iordachi, and Balázs Trencsényi (eds). Bern: Peter Lang, 2013. 855 pp.

This is an ambitious volume whose goal is no less than to rewrite the history of East Central Europe from an integrated transnational perspective, using the entangled histories of Romania and Hungary as a point of departure (p.8). By adopting this approach, the editors hope to overcome the ethno-national based perspectives that have so dominated the historiography on the two countries and the region, opting for a multi-layered framework for transnational research and analysis that can open new lines of inquiry for historians and others (p.34). Chronologically the contributions cover roughly the last 160 years, beginning with the Hungarian and Romanian nation-building projects that grew out of the Revolutions of 1848 and ending with the postmillennial bid to reach a political and historiographical *modus vivendi*. Many of the volume's articles emerged out of the "Shared/Entangled Histories" international conference held in Cluj in 2008, which brought together an array of historians from around the world, including some of the leading experts in their respective fields. The volume itself marries a number of these well-established scholars with an invigorated new generation of historians.

In the auspicious introduction, which should be required reading for any student working on the transnational history of East Central Europe, the editors have drawn on the history of transfers and especially *histoire croisée*,¹ citing Franco–German historical reconciliation as a model for writing a common history of Hungary and Romania.² Using these frameworks, they hope to refocus the attention of scholars on the two countries' shared patterns of experience. As the introduction also makes clear—and as anyone who has lived in Hungarian–Romanian borderlands knows well—there is indeed a long if also overlooked tradition of fertile intercourse between Hungarians and Romanians, intellectually, culturally, and otherwise.

1 Cf. Michael Werner and Bénédicte Zimmermann, "Beyond Comparison: Histoire Croisée and the Challenge of Reflexivity," *History and Theory* 45 (February 2006): 30–50.

2 Notable examples of "entangled history" include Bénédicte Zimmerman, Claude Didry, and Michael Werner, eds., *Le Travail et la Nation: Histoire croisée de la France et de l'Allemagne* (Paris: Maison des sciences de l'homme, 1999); Michael David-Fox, Peter Holquist, and Alexander M. Martin, eds., *Fascination and Enmity: Russia and Germany as Entangled Histories, 1914–1945* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2012); Roumen Daskalov, Tchavdar Marinov, and Diana Mishkova, eds., *Entangled Histories of the Balkans*, vols 1–2 (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2013).

With over 20 chapters spanning 855 pages (and weighing in at 1.2 kg), there is certainly much to like in this volume and, doubtless for some readers, enough to dislike. With such a *mélange* of topics, the volume could benefit from segmentation into different parts, though perhaps that would defy the logic of “entanglement.” The sheer size and scope of the volume make reviewing it all the more difficult, especially as some contributions tally 50, 60, and even 70 pages. Consequently, the chapters highlighted in this review reflect some of the reviewer’s own interests.

One of the major themes tackled in this volume is the representation and perception of the “Other,” in other words, Hungarian views of Romanians and *vice versa*. In the opening chapter Sorin Mitu takes a theoretical stab at the heart of the “story of Romanian–Hungarian hostility” that has seemingly existed for a millennium. Whether the negative images of one another are “imagined realities” or “real images” is beside the point, argues Mitu, as these images often have tangible effects on the relations between the two communities and on the everyday lives of individuals (pp.37–38). Mitu locates the genesis of Hungarian–Romanian negative imagology and stereotypes in the overlapping Hungarian and Romanian national projects, which began in the first half of the nineteenth century and converged in Transylvania. Mitu describes how the modern Hungarian self-image was constructed against a Byzantine Romanian one so as to circumscribe Catholic/Protestant Hungary within the enlightened Western Europe. Turn about was fair play, as the Romanian self-image as Latinate inheritors of the Roman legacy was constructed against an image of the equestrian Finno-Ugric from the steppe, which depicted the Hungarians as cultural and geographical interlopers in Europe’s hapless eastern periphery. The postcolonialist paradigm of Orientalism and its various adaptations have become axiomatic in explanations of self-imagining and Othering in the European East.³ However, it does not always explain the countervailing trends in both countries that led to positive conceptions of identity using explicitly Eastern-oriented, mystical, and indigenous notions of spatiality, temporality, and being.⁴ In some

3 See Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994); Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans* (New York–Oxford: OUP, 1997); Milica Bakić-Hayden and Robert M. Hayden, “Orientalist Variations on the Theme ‘Balkans’: Symbolic Geography in Recent Yugoslav Cultural Politics,” *Slavic Review* 51 no. 1, (Spring, 1992): 1–15; Milica Bakić-Hayden, “Nesting Orientalisms: The Case of Former Yugoslavia,” *Slavic Review* 54 no 4, (Winter, 1995): 917–31; and Alexander Kiossev, “Notes on Self-Colonizing Cultures,” in *Rethinking the Transition*, ed. Ivaýlo Znepolski et al. (Sofia: St. Kliment Ohridsky University Press, 2002), 361–69.

4 In recent years scholars working on the region have begun to challenge or at any rate counterbalance

respects these self-imaginings had greater identity-building ramifications than the nesting discourses from the West.

Judit Pál offers a fascinating look at the use of flags as symbols of cohesion and mass mobilization in Transylvania during the Revolution of 1848. Pál shows how “the struggle of colors” symbolized the political disunity that plagued the Hungarians, Romanians, and Saxons in Transylvania. Flags expressed newly formed national and ethnic identities and corresponded to specific political discourses about national belonging (p.122).

Keith Hitchins provides a typically masterful account of the aspirations and apprehensions of majority and minority elites in dualist Hungary and interwar Romania. Examining periods of intransigence, reconciliation, and separation between the competing nationalities, Hitchins argues that their point of divergence was ultimately not political but rather fundamentally cultural and spiritual, giving rise to a *Kulturkampf* of sorts that, for generations, impacted the status and treatment of minorities in Transylvania (p.126). The idea of ethnically based nation-states as the only legitimate form of social organization prevailed over attempts at accommodation.

Several chapters in this volume deal with the entanglements of economic nationalizing in the contested ethnic borderlands. In his case study of Szatmár/Satu Mare County between 1867 and 1940, Anders Blomqvist depicts the struggle for supremacy on the “internal front,” where local minority and majority elites “cut their political teeth” while Budapest and Bucharest experimented with nationalizing policies (p.170). Blomqvist makes a convincing argument that excluding minorities from the economic life of a town or region can have devastating consequences for majorities alike. He also shows the uncanny ability of some minority elites to adapt amphibious-like to the realities (and sometimes perks) of majority rule, only to co-opt the selfsame strategies of nationalizing whenever their turn to rule. Barna Ábrahám’s chapter compares the modernization and *embourgeoisement* processes of the Slovaks and Transylvanian Romanians in dualist Hungary, specifically their respective efforts to achieve social and economic progress and ultimately to construct ethnically based national economies independent of “the encompassing context of Hungary”

post-colonialist discourses that depict “Eastern” Europe as a space of passive receptivity and reproduction of “Western” European models of easternness. See especially Wendy Bracewell and Alex Drace-Francis, eds., *Under Eastern Eyes: A Comparative Introduction to East European Travel Writing on Europe* (Budapest and New York: Central European University Press, 2008); Ezequiel Adamovsky, *Euro-Orientalism: Liberal Ideology and the Image of Russia in France (c. 1740–1880)* (Oxford–New York: Peter Lang, 2006).

(pp.203–4). Gábor Egry likewise examines through the lens of regionalism the parallel processes of Romanian and Hungarian national building. Egry looks at regionalist programs, organizations, ideologies, and discourses that took place in apposition and frequently in opposition to the nationalizing and statist agendas from Budapest and Bucharest. He challenges taken-for-granted assumptions about what unites people beyond the creed of nationhood.

The history of science and medicine in East Central Europe is a neglected field, which, as Marius Turda shows, has the potential to fulfill the kind of research agenda envisioned by the volume's editors. Within a broader overview of the history of anthropology in Hungary and Romania, Turda discusses the “entangled epistemologies of race” that anthropologists in both countries worked to disentangle in the first half of the twentieth century (p.306). Turda shows how this research was impressed into national service and used as a weapon in the political war over disputed territories and peoples.

One of the strengths of this volume is the collection of chapters dealing with the politicization of history writing and education, from the rewriting of school textbooks to the reorganization of universities. Zoltán Pálffy gives a prosopographical account of elite formation and the nationalization of higher education in Transylvania before and after 1918, while Lucian Nastașă provides a timely study on the development and vicissitudes of the Hungarian University in Kolozsvár/Cluj since 1875. Nastașă shows how the politics of higher education in this most important Transylvanian town reflected the national and international politics of Hungary and Romania. Eric Beckett Weaver looks at the League of Nations' initiative to review and improve foreign texts. Hungarian politicians and historians enthusiastically supported the initiative, frustrated as they were by the “false” histories portraying Hungary as oppressive and “inhumane,” and thus deserving of its fate as a defeated and diminished country (pp.422–23). To revisionists in Hungary, such discourses not only enabled the disaster of Trianon but also prevented its revision and justified de-nationalization policies targeting Hungarian minorities in neighboring states. In detailing this historiographical counteroffensive for “re-narrating” Hungarian history abroad, Weaver shows that, even with the best intentions, the efforts to arrive at a common understanding of the past can often lead to greater mutual misunderstanding.

Holly Case paints a reflective portrait of a young historian's pursuit of a promising line of research, in this instance her own discovery of a personal letter written by a dispirited woman in Northern Transylvania to a friend across the border in Romania. How did such an innocuous letter, which lamented the

difficult local conditions under Hungarian rule, spark an international dispute between Hungary and Romania that eventually drew in Axis allies Germany and Italy? Contemplating this question, Case traces her own journey from writing a “micro-social history” as a graduate student to writing a “different sort of big history,” one that was transnational and accounted for the multiplicity of contexts in which individuals, communities, and states interacted with one another (pp.467–68). Case’s contribution is all the more satisfying, as it answers the editors’ call for historians to consider their own involvement in the process of knowledge production (p.7).

In his chapter on “national essentialism” in post-World War II Romania and Hungary, Balázs Trencsényi provides a welcome coda to his book on “national character” in interwar East Central Europe, showing how communist regimes in both countries appropriated the essentialist national discourses of the interwar past to serve the aims of the communist present. Hungarian and Romanian communist regimes incorporated the national(ist) canon into the framework of “socialist patriotism” by selectively appropriating the national bona fides of the populist (*népi*) tradition in Hungary and the “young generation” in Romania, respectively (pp.516, 520). In the context of de-Stalinization, especially after the 1956 Revolution, and increasingly inadequate class narratives, the “national turn” served as a mediator between the regime and the pre-communist cultural traditions. It helped, moreover, to indigenize a new generation of communist elites eager to distance themselves from the old cadre of “foreigners” and internationalists. In Romania the *topoi* of national essentialism lent succor to autochthonist and protochronist discourses and the re-emergence of a national metaphysics, while in Hungary it facilitated an emerging “neo-populism,” enabling a diverse group of intellectuals and political actors to speak in familiar terms about the nation and the plight of the Hungarian minority across the border (pp.527–28). Trencsényi also assesses the legacy of the interwar ideological tradition of national essentialism since 1989, suggesting that in both Hungary and Romania ethnic revivalism has lent itself to many of the “therapeutic” projects in an effort to break out of the transition process (p.563).

Martin Mevius takes a fresh look at the controversial 1986 publication of the three-volume history of Transylvania, *Erdély története*.⁵ The volumes were assembled and published in large measure as a response to Romanian propaganda and historical writing under Ceaușescu. In this respect, *Erdély*

5 Béla Köpeczi, ed., *Erdély története*, vols 1–3 (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1986).

története was “not only a work of scholarship but also a political weapon,” exemplifying the recurrent theme of history as an open battlefield for international disputes over the symbolic territorial spaces and the treatment of minorities (pp.571–72). Mevius shows how historians and politicians of both regimes instrumentalized history for reasons of national legitimacy, promoting increasingly national(ist) perspectives on history in lieu of increasingly inadequate Marxist ones. One of the assets of this contribution, and of the volume as a whole, is the great range of sources used. Mevius draws on many forms of research available in the historian’s toolkit, including personal interviews with the “hard-line (*vonalas*) party hack” Béla Köpeczi, the volume’s lead editor and author (p.537).

Several chapters deal with the seemingly intractable issue of rapprochement and reconciliation after 1989, giving a kind of history-of-the present critique of reconciliation processes in Hungary and Romania. In a comparative analysis of history textbooks in Hungary and Romania, Csaba Zahorán revisits the issue of rival national narratives that continue to obsess over ethnogenesis, state foundation, and demographic unity. Zahorán notes, however, that a more accommodating space is beginning to open up, which can allow for multiple perspectives and the de-mythologizing of traditional national heroes and events. Michael Shafir sets out to explore cross-border attitude grouping of Hungarians and Romanians, but for the most part offers a discourse analysis of Cristian Tudor Popescu’s and Horia-Roman Patapievici’s writings on such topics as the Roma (“Gypsies”), anti-Semitism, race, and political correctness. While certainly provocative, the upbraiding of two high-profile Romanian public intellectuals makes an awkward fit for a pioneering volume aiming to forge a common history of Hungary and Romania.

Shafir’s dismal portrait of Hungarian–Romanian reconciliation stands in stark contrast to Constantin Iordachi’s assertion that the ever-closer integration of the two countries through participation in European and global institutions has positively redefined the nature of their interstate relations. Iordachi’s chapter is another fine example of the potential of *histoire croisée* to yield fruitful results on under-researched topics. His sweeping overview and analysis of the development and evolution of nation-state citizenship in Hungary and Romania show how the citizenship issue has moved from one of “disentanglement” to “interdependence,” having finally overcome the pre-World War II demographic-territorial mixing (p.712). The citizenship issue is an important category of analysis, argues Iordachi, as it has a number of heuristic advantages, one of

which is to bridge the institutional (state) and the subjective (nation) dimensions of modern identity construction (p.717).

Despite the editors' clarion call to break new paths in the historiography on Romania and Hungary, many of the contributions deal with well-trodden issues of national and ethnic identity, the minority question, and elites and their institutions (invariably in Transylvania). This is not so much a criticism as it is an endorsement of the editors' conviction that a common history of the two countries should go "beyond national narratives." As the editors readily acknowledge, "[w]riting the history of Romania and Hungary from a unitary perspective is a difficult if not a self-defeating exercise, a genuine test for the uses and abuses of history" (p.4). This makes the contributions on flag colors, textbooks, regionalism, and citizenship all the more outstanding. The book's great achievement is not so much that it fills a historiographical gap but that it exposes this gap and offers new ways to fill it. One can envision a new generation of scholars working on the entangled traditions of Hungarian and Romanian art, architecture, music, food, and even sex (miscegenation, anyone?). Also, there is certainly more room for the life stories of individuals, small communities, and local cultures, all of which can be made relevant as a sort of connective tissue supporting or uniting larger themes. Employing innovative and transnational frameworks such as the ones proposed in this volume will be necessary if the historian's craft is to have wider appeal and application across disciplines. For these reasons, the book represents a seminal contribution to the recent historiography not just on Hungary and Romania but also on the wider region.

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