

## Reviews

Vadim J. Birstein, *The Perversion of Knowledge: the True Story of Soviet Science*. Oxford: Westview Press, 2001, xx + 492 pp., £23.99 h/b.

Slava Gerovitch, *From Newspeak to Cyberspeak: a History of Soviet Cybernetics*. Cambridge, MA and London: The MIT Press, 2002, xiv + 369 pp., £25.95 h/b.

THE STORY OF SOVIET SCIENCE remains one of the great paradoxes of twentieth century history and economic history. Against a backdrop of social and economic backwardness, and in the face of extreme political constraints (as extensively documented in both volumes under review), Soviet science managed to flourish to the extent of winning a degree of international recognition, and making a crucial contribution to the attempts of the Soviet government to achieve strategic parity with the United States. It failed, however, to make a significant contribution to Soviet economic development, and indeed the history of the decline of the Soviet economy into stagnation in the Brezhnev years is also the history of the decline of Soviet science, or rather of Soviet innovation.

Birstein and Gerovitch's monographs help us to make sense of this paradox. In biology, the traditional science with the greatest potential in terms of practical innovation in the latter part of the twentieth century, Soviet scientists were subjected to a regime which, in its repressiveness and obscurantism, went far beyond the system of political and ideological constraints and controls which affected all science under the Soviet system. The dominance of the anti-scientific Lysenkoist school of biology was so crushing that opponents of Lysenko simply lost their jobs, and in some cases even their freedom or their lives.

Standard scientific methods were not followed in any of Lysenko's 'experiments', and he considered the statistical analysis of data to be 'harmful' for biology. No doubt Lysenko's refusal to use standard scientific methods had a more practical purpose—it made the disproving of his results impossible since he never clearly explained his methods (Birstein, p. 47).

In an environment like that, the wonder is that any true biology survived in the Soviet Union at all. In cybernetics the story is a little different, but the results were just the same in the end. 'Optimal planning', as an application of cybernetics which effectively introduces standard rules of resource allocation into economic planning, could have made a significant (not necessarily critical) contribution to the process of economic reform in the Soviet Union. In practice

Soviet bureaucrats, in a way, learned the lessons of cybernetics better than did some overenthusiastic cybernetic reformers ... Instead of facilitating the decentralisation of power through computer simulation of market mechanisms, computer technology now served to strengthen centralised control within each ministry. The growing power of ministries quickly reduced the autonomy of individual enterprises to a minimum, and economic reforms were effectively buried ... Instead of upsetting the existing power structures, cybernetics was enrolled to reinforce them (Gerovitch, p. 284).

These are both rich and many-faceted volumes, and I will look in detail at only some of the fascinating subjects they discuss. Gerovitch's discussion of the semiotics of Soviet Marxism–Leninism, in terms of 'tetrads' of 'ideologemes', and his application of semiotics to the specific case of cybernetics ('cyberspeak as a carnival language'; 'cyberspeak as an instrument of freedom') is a valuable addition to the literature on language and communism. Birstein's highly detailed discussion of the NKVD 'laboratory of death', where, in the late 1930s and early 1940s, poisons were systematically tested on prisoners, in many cases resulting in agonising deaths, makes salutary, if uncomfortable, reading. And Birstein rightly reminds us that the Soviet Union is not the only country where such appalling abuses of human rights have taken place. Nazi Germany and militarist Japan apart, both US and British governments have been guilty of experimenting on humans with dangerous substances with a military application.

As Birstein in particular stresses, the story of 'Soviet' science does not end with the end of the Soviet Union. Through the 1990s and early 2000s the Russian scientific scene has been as streaked with paradox as the old Soviet scientific scene ever was. While state funding for science has been reduced to nugatory proportions, the formal structures of Soviet science—the Academy of Sciences, its institutes etc.—have largely survived. And the interpenetration of science and state, and even of science and state security, remains a dominant feature, while the contribution of science to economic development remains marginal. Is this institutional recidivism just one more feature of Russia's 'half-reform', which will eventually disappear as the process of transition is finally completed? Or will it remain as a defining feature of a unique Russian polity into the long-term future? In more concrete terms, will Russian science learn how to help Russian economic transformation? Gerovitch's and Birstein's works counsel us against excessive optimism on either count.

These books are not without their minor imperfections. There is a good deal of repetition in both. Birstein documents nearly everything he says with great meticulousness. Just occasionally, he fails to provide a reference for a key statement. Thus, for example, on p. 11 he states that, in the early 1950s, 'Taking into account Hitler's successful extermination of European Jews, Stalin considered sending the Soviet Jews into exile and to special labour camps'. This is a key statement, but no supporting evidence is offered. Birstein also occasionally makes factual mistakes. On p. 36, for instance, he says that Stalin replaced Lenin as General Secretary of the Bolshevik Party in 1922. In fact, Lenin was never General Secretary. But these are small points, and they do not detract from the achievements of the authors. Slava Gerovitch and Vadim Birstein have added enormously to our knowledge of the bizarre, sometimes grim story of Soviet science, and in so doing have managed to throw a good deal of light on some of the more peculiar features of contemporary Russia.

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DAVID A. DYKER

Philip Hanson, *The Rise and Fall of the Soviet Economy: An Economic History of the USSR from 1945*. London and New York: Pearson Education Limited, 2003, xii + 279 pp., £16.99 p/b.

PUBLISHED AS NO. 15 IN THE SERIES *The Postwar World* and intended for a wide interdisciplinary audience, this book by a leading authority on Soviet studies offers a broad overview of the ups and downs of the Soviet economy, from victory in and reconstruction after World War II to the largely unexpected collapse in 1989–91. The author offers a chronological presentation of events, with complex economic interrelationships explained in plain and accessible language. And he does so without losing any intellectual rigour. Hanson relies largely on Western recalculations of contemporary Soviet statistics, but keeps out of the still ongoing intense

controversy over the reliability of competing estimates (that put, for example, the size of Soviet GNP between 14 and 70% of 1989 USA figures). One of the main conclusions of the book is that outcomes in the 'planned economy' were mostly not a result of conscious policy decisions but of the interchange among policies, formal and informal institutions as well as interest groups.

Chapter One describes the Stalinist economy as a paradox: it was extremely successful in military terms but remained notoriously underdeveloped and failed in the agricultural sector, which still accounted for over 25% of Soviet GNP at the time of Stalin's death (p. 47). Chapter Two addresses the first half of Khrushchev's rule, 1953–60, as one of 'moral and material progress', with the abolition of the Gulag and changes in priorities in favour of consumption, as well as the housing programme (p. 64). The deterioration in 1961–64 of these 'benign but not well designed' policies is explained in Chapter Three. Khrushchev managed to alienate basically all segments of the elite, and his micromanaging issues and ill-conceived plans led to the food riots of 1962. While Khrushchev presided over the first manned spaceship, in 1960 no less than 42.1% of the workforce was still employed in agriculture (p. 79). Thus the failure of his rural initiatives lay at the heart of the overall dissatisfaction.

Chapter Four describes the new start under Brezhnev. The author cautions against too much reliance on our memories, with Gorbachev having called this time an era of stagnation. This holds for the 1973–82 period only, when recalculated real GNP grew by a mere 0.9% per annum (p. 98), not however for the 1960s. During the early Brezhnev years there was a slowdown in defence expenditure, and import-substituting investment in agriculture grew continuously—but so did imports, especially in bad harvest years. Chapter Five describes the 1973–82 period in terms of petrodollar windfalls and muscle flexing. Hanson doubts, on the basis of his own statistical calculations, whether the oil windfall did a lot to ameliorate or, conversely, exacerbate problems (pp. 132–140). The continued focus on agriculture implied that its low productivity developed into a major problem for the entire macroeconomy, as did the overall softening of the atmosphere (lack of plan discipline), where neither sticks nor carrots were available to improve performance. In this chapter the author, it seems, plays down the importance of classical imperialist features of Soviet rule that led to the exhaustion of resources and vitality, and similarly, his precise account of ever-growing cynicism is not fed back to the economic analysis (of the reasons for the stagnation and later collapse).

Chapter Six describes the transition to Gorbachev via the funerals and the gradual change of the old guard. Vivid and substantial economic debate, notes Hanson, erupted years before Gorbachev came to power in 1985 (pp. 165–169). Gorbachev and his rule are described as being ruinous for Soviet power. Gorbachev had been popular in the West, but rightly very unpopular at home, since he seems to have understood the nature of the Soviet system the least. In his case the dominance of unintended side-effects of his policies was not only pronounced but disastrous, and led to the disintegration of the country and of the socio-economic system alike. While in 1985–86 miraculous improvement of total factor productivity was hoped for (pp. 178–181) in the phase of 'acceleration', the collapse of this strategy led to a period of trial and error reforms in 1987–89 (pp. 192–209). These lacked a master plan and coherence, and were dominated by reactive measures. By 1989–91, with the eruption of shortages, national revivals and democratic movements, events were quickly running out of control. This is the subject of Chapter Eight, titled 'The end-game'. Hanson explains that by this period a systemic vacuum had emerged which co-existed with a political vacuum (p. 230). While fiscal control was lost, production plummeted (by 2.4% in 1990 and 15.1% in 1991), so the radical liberalising reforms of Gaidar in January 1992 came at a time of complete collapse, with no other alternatives left open by the chaos left by the operetta putsch against Gorbachev.

A concluding Chapter Nine wraps up the story. The Soviet economy did grow in the 1940–90 period in all but 5 years. There was no question about closing the developmental gap;

however, failure until the late 1980s was only comparative (p. 247). The slowdown was systemic—i.e. inability to overcome the depletion of resources had to do with salient features of the command economy. However, under a better prepared leadership, who would have been less keen to liberalise, the party-state could well have been saved, as in China (p. 254). Needless to say, I disagree with this latter point and sustain the idea, advocated (with various degrees of openness) in my contemporary and later writings, that the Soviet collapse was inevitable. However, this selective and by necessity simplifying account of the book may convince the reader of its value. Rich in details and personal insights, factually invaluable and accessible, this is a welcome addition to the literature and a useful guide for students in any social sciences discipline and for the educated public.

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LÁSZLÓ CSABA

Tomáš Kostecký, *Political Parties After Communism: Developments in East-Central Europe*. Baltimore and London: The Woodrow Wilson Center Press and the Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002, xx + 213 pp., £19.00 h/b.

POLITICAL PARTIES ARE INTEGRAL to modern representative democracies. Over the past decade and a half East-Central Europe (ECE) has witnessed the end of one-party rule and the emergence of a plethora of parties all vying for the attention of the electorate. Gazing back along the road on which the region has travelled, Tomáš Kostecký asks in his new book what lessons we can draw about the general trends in party formation and support since the collapse of the communist regimes at the end of the 1980s.

After an initial overview of party development in both the pre-communist and communist periods, *Political Parties After Communism* explores developments in the party systems of Poland, Hungary and the successor states of Czechoslovakia. The great merit of Kostecký's book is the author's ability to bring together both the established classics such as Lipset and Rokkan, and much of the burgeoning literature on party systems in post-communist Europe (particularly the works written in the languages of the region) under one roof. In one of the most interesting sections of the monograph Kostecký applies Lipset and Rokkan's ideas on cleavage formation to ECE. The centre-periphery, state-church, agriculture-industry and class cleavages are shown to have a degree of explanatory power, but Kostecký also shows generational and gender-based cleavages may also play a role in shaping electoral behaviour.

Drawing on the work of other scholars such as Tworzecki, Tóka and Krivý and his own work on electoral geography, Kostecký also argues that we can see clear evidence of regional continuity both in terms of turnout and voting patterns. The current strongholds of the contemporary Czech Communist Party, for instance, copy the pre-war ones, 'including not only the traditional mining regions but also the traditional "areas of red peasants" in Western Bohemia' (p. 83).

A number of criticisms, however, deserve to be leveled at the book. First, Kostecký needed a better editor to weed out the embarrassing mistakes which are sprinkled generously throughout the text. Some are forgivable typos, but others start to undermine the reader's confidence in the plethora of other facts in the book. Mečiar's first spell as Slovak Prime Minister, for example, we are told erroneously ended in '1997' (p. 50), although in reality the self-styled father of the nation's initial stint as premier ended 6 years earlier. Moreover, Kostecký is guilty of a howler on p. 59 when he declares Miloš Zeman became Czech prime minister in 1993. The former leader of the Social Democrats with a penchant for hugging trees, however, did not sit in the Czech premier's seat until after the 1998 elections.

Although Kostecký is to be applauded for using the ideas of Lipset and Rokkan, it was a

shame the author did not engage explicitly with the arguments put forward by Kitschelt and his colleagues in their benchmark text *Post-Communist Party Systems*. Kostelecký clearly had enough statistical ammunition to launch an assault on Kitschelt's fortress. Moreover, any account of party systems is based on unsure foundations without a detailed analysis of parties themselves. The reader of *Political Parties After Communism* is given a flavour of the parties in the second chapter, but more could have been made of the organisational structures and machinery of parties in contemporary ECE. In this regard, the work of Aleks Szczerbiak would have provided a useful starting point for Kostelecký.

The most disappointing section of the book covers the role played by electoral laws. Although Kostelecký stresses the impact of different electoral systems, contrasting Hungary's fiendishly complicated mixed electoral system with the prevailing norm of PR elsewhere in the region, he does not explain the importance of different counting mechanisms such as Hagenbach-Bischoff, Imperiali and d'Hondt. Although often seen as of relevance only to nerdy academics, the relative merits of each system were debated at great length in Czech political circles when a new electoral system was planned—and with good cause. As Lebeda and Korecký showed, the formula used to transfer votes into seats can have more than a marginal impact.

Nonetheless, there is much to applaud in *Political Parties After Communism*. The book is unlikely to become a classic on the subject, but it does raise some interesting questions. Kostelecký may not have offered the reader any earth-shattering insights, but he provides a wealth of data and will make many readers think again about party development in post-communist Europe.

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TIM HAUGHTON

Ben Fowkes, *Ethnicity and Ethnic Conflict in the Post-Communist World*. Basingstoke, Hampshire and New York: Palgrave, 2002, xii + 228 pp., £45.00 h/b.

DURING THE LAST DECADE the countries in Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union have been on the path of political and economic transition. Ethnic conflict has been an obstacle on that path and has continuously attracted scholarly attention. In *Ethnicity and Ethnic Conflict in the Post-Communist World* Ben Fowkes provides a historical examination of ethnic conflicts that have emerged in Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union after the fall of communism. He provides at least a brief analysis of close to 20 cases of ethnic conflicts and disputes.

The author's general argument in this book is that in Europe 'nations are not inventions of the twentieth century' (p. vii). On the contrary, they 'are founded on pre-existing ethnic group solidarity' (p. vii), which is supported by concrete historical evidence. The author sets out to show that 'ethnic conflict is not the inevitable result of the rise of ethnic awareness' (p. viii). Rather, it is created by conditions which emerged from rivalry for material resources, in which members of the same ethnic group support each other's interests.

The first chapter lays the ground work for the study by reviewing existing theories of ethnicity and nationalism, contrasting the primordialist and constructivist viewpoints. The author himself supports a moderate constructivist position. He argues that the elements of an ethnic make-up are never randomly chosen, and this ethnic make-up presents itself in situations of 'either pronounced ethnic mixture, or earlier in history' (p. 2). The author also highlights various factors that determine ethnicity: a common name of a group, a common myth of descent, as well as common culture, language and religion, identifying a common language as the most important factor for the region under discussion.

Chapters two to six provide a detailed, country-by-country historical examination from the formation of ethnic groups to post-communism. Each chapter looks at all ethnic groups during a given historical period, while Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia are discussed separately in the post-communist era. In chapters two and three, the author examines the formation of ethnic groups and nations in the territory of the post-communist countries. He focuses on the presence of the factors determining ethnicity, introduced in chapter one, to explain why there has been a serious ethnic conflict in recent times in a given place in the region.

The position of ethnic minorities during the communist era is discussed in chapter four. The communist regimes contributed directly and indirectly to the emerging of ethnic consciousness in the region's population. The direct influence varied by country and period. It was manifested by either the encouragement of expression of ethnic identity or the repression of ethnic minorities. Both approaches strengthened the ethnic self-consciousness in the region. The constant economic shortages of the command economy drove people to form informal economies along ethnic lines and to support the economic interest of their own ethnic group first. Fowkes argues that economic difficulties, collapse of political structures and the decline of common ideology triggered ethnic conflict after the fall of communism in areas where there was a potential for one.

In chapters five and six the author tries to explain why ethnic conflicts broke out in the post-communist world. For Central and Eastern Europe, these explanations are constitutional structures unfavourable to minorities, the ambitions of individual leaders, secession attempts and minorities' efforts to expand their rights. Central Asia has not experienced much ethnic conflict because of the lack of genuine democracy, passivity of the Russian minority and absence of territorial disputes.

In the final chapter, Fowkes tries to determine the reasons for ethnic conflict and also give predictions for its future. The author divides ethnic conflict in the post-communist world into five categories: material, intellectual, political, cultural and psychological. Material conflict can be caused by 'distributive nationalism', 'economic separateness' and 'sustained economic growth and resource depletion' (pp. 167–169). Intellectual conflict is based on religious antagonisms or ancient primordial hatreds used by states and political parties to spark conflict for their own purposes. Political manipulation of forces within a country, abuse of power of the mass media and policies of individual political leaders escalate ethnic conflict, while external influence contributes little to that process. The author notes that in a broad sense there are considerable cultural differences among the peoples of the post-communist world. In its narrow sense, however, through music and the mass media, culture has amplified ethnic conflict. Finally, psychological conflict makes its impact through mutual fear, national solidarity and a stronger sense of belonging to one's ethnic group.

As a conclusion to his study, the author offers a prognosis for ethnic conflict. Although the short-term prospects for the resolution of ethnic conflict are positive, they are negative in the medium term since hatred and disagreements would lie latent. Fowkes holds an optimistic view of the long term, where ethnic conflict will decline, influenced 'by the rise of international associations, by economic globalisation, and by the global diffusion of scientific knowledge' (p. 186).

An important contribution of this work is its wide coverage of ethnic conflicts post-1990 in Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Most works on this subject are usually either single-country studies or compare a small number of countries. Fowkes' study tries to cover all cases of ethnic conflict in the post-communist world. The book provides a convincing argument, supported by historical facts, that ethnic conflict has deep historical roots and did not simply appear with the fall of communism. The author's classification of ethnic conflict undoubtedly contributes towards an answer to the question why ethnic conflicts

emerge. Although the study would have been improved by bringing in the very interesting findings of the concluding chapter earlier in the text, it is well organised and the argument is easy to follow. Because of its comprehensive nature, this work would be a fine introductory text on ethnic conflict in post-communist countries.

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MARIA TZINTZAROVA

Lynne Viola (ed.), *Contending with Stalinism: Soviet Power and Popular Resistance in the 1930s*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002, ix + 234 pp., \$42.50 h/b, \$18.95 p/b.

THIS IS A COLLECTION OF ARTICLES on popular reactions to Soviet government and policy from the 1920s to the 1950s. Most of the focus is on the 1930s. As a collective work, it has the usual problems of this genre: a lack of cohesiveness and strained efforts to make the work seem cohesive. The title is somewhat misleading, for there is much less resistance than there is contending with Soviet governments economic and social policies. And Stalinism, per se, does not figure largely in this book unless one means that everything Soviet is Stalinist.

While the collection has only a strained unifying theme, most of the chapters are interesting and well researched in Soviet archives. The authors are new scholars with two exceptions: Lynne Viola and Elena A. Osokina. Chapters cover a variety of subjects: a strike movement in an industrial town in European Russia (Jeffrey Rossman), a peasant uprising of sorts in Ryazan province (Tracy McDonald), Soviet Uzbek family law (Douglas Northrop), homosexuality in the Soviet Union (Dan Healey), economic disobedience during the five-year plans (Osokina) and a local study of problems in the execution of the plans in the Urals (James Harris). Viola attempts to find common themes in an introductory chapter.

The chapters on popular dissidence by Rossman and McDonald are well researched and interesting. Yet there is little surprising in them. Although it is nothing new to observe that workers were unhappy with inadequate wages and insufficient victuals, the story of a workers' strike is worth telling. Likewise, it is nothing new to observe that peasants were angry about collectivisation and slaughtered their livestock to deny them to the state. Peasants always get the short end of the stick when societies modernise, and they resist in traditional ways. What is noteworthy is that local Soviet authorities aided or abetted dissident peasants, and that, according to McDonald, this complicity of local authorities 'may well have saved the Soviet regime by softening the collectivisation onslaught' (p. 108). Here is one of a number of paradoxes which readers will encounter in this book.

The chapter on the difficulties of implementing new social laws in Uzbekistan is more about the usual problems of an external power attempting to impose its values on a traditional society. In this case it was 'European-style women's liberation' (p. 110) against Uzbek polygyny, forced marriage (including young girls) and bride price. The Soviet government passed laws against these practices that had only limited success in male-dominated Uzbek society. Soviet officials did not like homosexuality either and enacted laws against it, again with varying degrees of success. Of course, the early gay movement in the Soviet Union would have occurred whether Russia was red or white; it was part of a wider change in values, as the author Healey concedes (p. 168).

In the most interesting chapter Osokina focuses on the various ways in which average Soviet citizens and officials tried to get around the self-defeating aspects of the five-year plans. It reminds me of Homo Sovieticus, who was, as historian Aileen Kelly put it, passive in the face of inflexible authority, focused only on immediate needs, infinitely pliable and 'superbly equipped with basic survival skills' (*New York Review of Books*, 29 November 2001). In an ultimate paradox Homo Sovieticus, the bane of Stalin's existence, was really Stalin's creation.

The rigidity of the five-year plans led to every imaginable ruse to create, buy and sell goods in a goods-scarce society. It was the New Economic Policy again, but this time without government sanction. NEP redux, a widespread black market in town and country, was dressed in 'socialist forms of production and trade' to avoid detection (p. 184). In yet another paradox NEP redux alleviated the supply crisis by the mid-1930s. 'Life has become better ... more cheerful', noted Stalin, because of the infinite pliability and resourcefulness of Homo Sovieticus.

Because of the unrealistic goals of the five-year plans Soviet officials were forced into endless subterfuges to avoid blame for failures to fulfil plan objectives. Scapegoating became a main survival strategy, as Harris points out. Accordingly, 'wreckers' and 'saboteurs' were responsible for plan failures, not unreasonable production quotas or the failures of regional plan executors. Homo Sovieticus was also at work in the higher levels of regional government but with more destructive results because the 'wreckers' and 'saboteurs' were usually innocent victims in the purges.

All these articles are tied together by Viola's introduction, which is the weakest part of the book. She struggles to find common themes, and, in her struggles, increases her difficulties by using clotted, incomprehensible language. Binaries, tropes, hybridities, 'spatial and synchronic proximit[ies]' (p. 29) and 'interstices of the generally rather one-sided state-society dialogue' (p. 32) make all too frequent appearances in her text. Topics of interest and some passion are thus reduced to a plodding, boring 'discourse' focused, *inter alia*, on forms of resistance and the valorisation of the resisters. Only Northrop, among the other contributors, falls occasionally into the use of this pseudo-scientific language. All the other pieces are well written and impressively researched. The book would have worked better with a more effective introduction, but it is nonetheless worth reading.

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MICHAEL JABARA CARLEY

Israel Getzler, *Nikolai Sukhanov: Chronicler of the Russian Revolution*. London: Palgrave in association with St Antony's College Oxford, 2001, xix + 226 pp., £47.50 h/b.

IN HIS SUMMING-UP SPEECH at the 'Menshevik' trial of March 1931 the Soviet prosecutor Nikolai Krylenko struggled to characterise one of its chief defendants, N. N. Sukhanov (Gimmer): 'Sukhanov is a "wild one", not quite an SR, not quite a Menshevik, not quite a Martovite, not quite a Menshevik of the type that now stands before us', Getzler tells us (p. 170) that Stalin's crony mused, before he handed down a 10-year sentence for sabotage. This was the first in a series of false charges to be inflicted, during the subsequent decade of terror, upon the well-connected socialist, eminent publicist and author of one of the most famous and well-regarded works on the events of 1917, the seven-volume *Zapiski o revolyutsii* (Petrograd, 1919-22), before his ultimate execution, on the trumped-up charge of spying for Germany, on 29 June 1940. Krylenko was not alone: pre-war associates such as Ekaterina Kuskova liked to introduce Sukhanov as 'Mr Betwixt and Between'; and, in the volume here under review, even Getzler, whilst largely championing Sukhanov and all his works, has to accept his subject's 'gadfly reputation' (p.114). Students of the revolutionary period will already be familiar with the problem of pigeonholing Sukhanov. Prior to World War I he had been an SR. In 1917 he moved closer to the Social Democrats and was the architect of 'dual power', but then fell out with the Soviet leadership (especially on the issue of the war and coalition with the Kadets) once the Siberian Zimmerwaldist *bloc* led by Tseretelli came into the ascendant, and joined Martov's Menshevik-Internationalist faction in arguing for a more vigorous peace policy and

a 'government of the democracy' by July. He evinced no little admiration for Lenin, but became an arch and open critic of the very premise of the October Revolution (not least in his *Zapiski* and in the active part he played from 1917 to 1918 in *VTsIK*, which he joined in contravention of party policy, having failed to persuade other Mensheviks not to walk out of the Second All-Russian Congress of Soviets). He likewise deplored the civil-war extremes of the Soviet regime, but then championed the NEP and worked as an expert in various state organs in the 1920s (even applying, unsuccessfully, to join the Communist Party in January 1924), with the consequence that his erstwhile Menshevik colleagues disdained to review his *Zapiski* in *Sotsialisticheskii vestnik* and would not even list him in their bibliographies of Menshevik writings. Finally, at his trial in 1931, he abjectly accepted the absurd charges made against him, whilst incriminating others of the accused and espousing his complete conversion to the Stalinist cause, including the tenets of forced collectivisation which he had spent his entire adult life rebutting.

A fully-fledged biography of this enigmatic figure might have enabled us to get closer to an understanding of his singular character and career, but a project comparable to his earlier study of Yulii Martov (the admirable *Martov: A Political Biography of a Russian Social Democrat*, Melbourne and Cambridge, 1967) was denied Getzler as a consequence of the fact that few materials on his subject were to be found in the West, while the opening of the Soviet archives revealed only that all Sukhanov's private papers had, tragically, disappeared. Self-confessedly, therefore, the author offers us 'a more limited political and intellectual portrait' (p. xiv). This focuses on 1917, with Sukhanov presented in its two central chapters, on the basis of extensive quotations from or references to his *Zapiski* and his contemporary journalism, as the 'Ideologist of the February Revolution' (pp. 27–66) and the 'Chronicler of Russia's Democratic Revolution' (pp. 67–104). These contain some interesting nuggets—not least the reminder (p. 31) that Sukhanov intended the agreement of 1 March between the Executive Committee of the Petrograd Soviet and the Duma Committee to be no more than 'the arrangement of the conditions of the duel' (rather than the basis of a lasting partnership), thereby reminding this reviewer that generations of what he had hitherto presumed to be the more linguistically challenged of his students had, in fact, been spot on in their ruminations upon the nature of 'duel power'! However, Getzler's claims for his subject remain largely that—claims. Little or no attempt is made to compare Sukhanov as the 'chronicler' of the revolution with his competitors in that field (Milyukov, Trotsky, Chernov, Tseretelli *et al.*) and only very infrequently does Getzler proffer any critical analysis of Sukhanov's actions in or account of the events of 1917. That Sukhanov's calls during the summer of 1917 for the Russian democracy to break with the Allies (and the Provisional Government) before waging a 'separate [i.e. non-imperialist] war' against Germany—which might, at best, be described as optimistic—should be passed over in silence by Getzler is puzzling enough (p. 62). But the epitome of this approach is reached with his coverage of the July Days, where the text (p. 58) merely refers the reader to Appendix II (pp. 191–194). Therein one finds reproduced Sukhanov's claim that on 8 July 1917 Lunacharsky had told him that the Bolsheviks *had* intended to seize power during the demonstrations in Petrograd (together with the subsequent correspondence this inspired between Sukhanov and Trotsky, Lenin and Lunacharsky), but no commentary at all from Getzler upon this, possibly the most notorious section of the *Zapiski*—and this despite Sukhanov's explicit plea in the passage reproduced that 'to establish a historical fact precisely is the job of the historian ... Let industrious historians sort it all out'!

Subsequent chapters, dealing with Sukhanov's life and fate in the years of NEP and the 'Menshevik' trial, actually contain more of interest than those on 1917 which are at the heart of the book, with Getzler's critical and interpretive voice intervening more frequently and to greater effect. The inclusion of 16 contemporary pen and ink drawings of key figures (by Yu. K. Artsybushev) also enhances the volume's worth. However, *pace* Robert Service's lauding

of it, on its jacket, as ‘almost a work of scholarly benediction’, one leaves it with a feeling somewhat closer to perplexity than Epiphany.

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JONATHAN D. SMELE

David J. Smith, Artis Pabriks, Aldis Purs & Thomas Lane, *The Baltic States: Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania*. London and New York: Routledge (Postcommunist states and nations), 2002, xxviii + 246 pp., £24.99 p/b.

THE BOOK UNDER REVIEW IS, in fact, three books, a compilation of texts on the individual Baltic countries. Each offers an engaging historical and contemporary portrait of its respective country: Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. The writing style throughout the volume is varied, though almost invariably accessible and reader-friendly. Much of the story rendered in the chapters is not an untold one—quite a few books have come out in the past decade chronicling these events—but it is a well-told one.

All three parts offer brief but quite comprehensive historical backgrounds that will enlighten readers new to Baltic history and inform those with area knowledge as well. Smith’s ‘Estonia: independence and European integration’, the strongest contribution of the three, shines in its brief but informative section on the genesis of the first Estonian state, which intersperses large-scale historical facts with more micro-level anecdotes that give the history body and character. His section on ‘War and Revolution’ begins with the words:

It is difficult to say how quickly Estonian aspirations for national self-determination would have been realised without the catalyst of war and revolution. According to a later author, only a ‘prophet or mental patient’ could have predicted independence in 1910, when the poet Juhan Liiv declared that ‘one day there will be an Estonian state’. Liiv—a schizophrenic—was both (p. 11).

The section goes on to describe the historical path to statehood within the larger context of world war, Russian empire and Estonian local politics. Indeed, this path has the twists and turns of fate, politics, conflict and nationalism that highlight the improbability of Estonian statehood, which was achieved after World War I.

Pabriks & Purs’ work, ‘Latvia: the challenge of change’, offers, among other things, a nice sketch of Riga’s social, political and cultural history at the turn of the century. The authors bring in some thoughtful observations on the class dimensions of the historical moment:

Riga’s rapid industrialisation and modernisation ... left a substantial part of the population behind in its rush to prosperity. These people, unskilled workers, migrant farm labourers and peripheral religious or ethnic communities, contrasted sharply with the wealth of the upper and middle classes. Riga and much of Latvia approached Western European standards of cultural achievement, literacy, economic productivity and social welfare, yet its political institutions lagged desperately behind (p. 8).

While more could be said on the topic of class stratification (and the authors note, though critically, Ronald Suny’s analysis of the convergence of class and ethnic identities in the revolutions of 1905 and 1917) in the pre-independence and First Republic periods, the authors rightly attend to this interesting phenomenon, which has received, arguably, too little treatment in most historical accounts. Pabriks & Purs also provide the most thorough coverage of social problems in the post-communist period.

Finally, Lane’s contribution on Lithuania offers a very interesting section called ‘The economic inheritance of independent Lithuania’. He notes that ‘at the time of the first census

in 1923 Lithuania was a small and impoverished state' (p. 8), and goes on to talk about the evolution of the economy: though it remained agrarian from the end of the tsarist period, when so much of the population was impoverished, it made strides forward through the independence period. Despite this, notes Lane, economic achievements were modest and prosperity incompletely realised. Those who, in the modern Baltics, look longingly to the 'radiant past' have often turned a blind eye to the class, economic and political problems (including periods of dictatorship, aptly chronicled in each history) of the interwar period. Appropriately, Smith, Pabriks & Purs and Lane do not shy away from a critical treatment of the period.

There is, perhaps inevitably in a volume such as this, repetition in the historical accounts in each chapter—all three parts reiterate the common stories of the Baltic countries. These include the national 'awakenings' experienced in the nineteenth century, the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact of 1939 and the bloody aftermath of occupation, the process of sovietisation and the brutal suppression of dissent. The stories of each country's social movements and activism against occupation also overlap in some respects: Gorbachev figures prominently in every story of the Baltics' move towards freedom and each section of the book covers events like the Baltics' activities in the Congress of People's Deputies, El'tsin's nascent oppositional role and the conservative backlashes of January and August 1991. Later, each state shares the challenges of economic and political change, corruption and integration of ethnic minorities (particularly in Estonia and Latvia). Clearly, there is much that sets the states' experiences apart, but there is a shared context for the particular manifestations.

As noted earlier, the volume's strength is in its engaging and thoughtful coverage of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania's early twentieth-century histories. Coverage of the Soviet period is very good as well, though offers little that is new for those familiar with Soviet history. Modern history is a weaker point in much of the volume, despite the book's publication in the Postcommunist States and Nations series. The coverage appears to be broad and accurate, but it offers few theoretical guideposts for understanding the early transition or post-communist periods: it is a chronology more than an analysis (of course, this may have been the intention). For the reader interested primarily in modern history, there are more attractive choices, including Anatol Lieven's *The Baltic Revolutions* (1993). The reader seeking a book about the Baltics as a unit might also look elsewhere: this volume is not, in a sense, about the Baltics. Rather, it is a book about Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania as separate national entities. Their ties, commonalities and differences are left for the reader to discern and discover: the book would have benefited greatly from a general introduction that made clear the justification for studying these countries together, iterated briefly how their historical paths both converged and diverged, and offered a core premise, theoretical or otherwise, for the book. The chapters are under one cover, but they are never explicitly tied together.

Overall, while the volume suffers from some weaknesses, it is a fine investment of time (or money) for those seeking a solid, accurate and interesting reference work on the twentieth century histories of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. The authors' efforts have resulted in carefully researched and reader-friendly chronicles of the triumphs, tragedies and travails of the Baltic States.

