Book Reviews


The goal of *Ruling Russia* is to assess the effects of political, economic, and social change on the development of the postcommunist legal system in Russia. Edited by a specialist in Russian criminal justice at Indiana University, the volume contains contributions from almost two dozen scholars, and is organized into three sections: law, crime, and justice. Although the book breaks little new ground (many of the chapters draw heavily from earlier works by the contributors), it serves as an important source of information and analyses on vital, yet understudied, aspects of Russian law and society.

Three early chapters seek to link legal reform to Russia’s peculiar institutional and cultural context. Where Richard Sakwa and Linda Cook examine, respectively, the role of the presidency and the Duma in shaping the Russian legal order, Janine Wedel challenges traditional approaches to the study of Russian legal affairs. In a chapter titled “Flex Organizing and the Clan State,” Wedel argues that because fluid networks of elites regularly operate across the public-private divide, analyses focusing on institutions fail to capture the informal relations of power and influence that shape Russian political and legal development. Likewise, because of their focus on individual action, economics-driven perspectives on law and politics miss out on behavior embedded in informal collectives, which she terms “flex organizations.” Wedel does not explore fully the implications of her alternative methodology for the study of Russian law, but raises important questions about the relationship between informal and formal rules. For answers to these questions, one will need to turn to the works of Alena Ledeneva and others.

The long-awaited Code of Criminal Procedure, adopted in 2001, is the subject of an exceptionally informative and nuanced chapter by Peter Solomon. Solomon details the code’s tortuous path to adoption, its formal provisions, and its initial impact on the criminal justice system. Designed to eliminate many of the elements of accusatorial bias inherited from the Soviet era, the code represents a compromise between the ideas of traditionalists working in law enforcement and those of westerners in the scholarly community and the presidential administration. Solomon notes that although the provisions of the code improve the position of the defense at each stage of the criminal process, numerous legacies from the old order remain. For example, investigators at the pretrial stage often refuse to interview defense witnesses, and, at trial, judges regularly turn down defense requests to call experts. As a result, Solomon writes, “the principle of adversarialism proclaimed in the theoretical parts of the CPC [Criminal Procedure Code] was seriously compromised in practice” (89). This gap between law and legal practice is a recurring theme in *Ruling Russia*, as it has been in virtually all earlier works on Soviet and post-Soviet law.
The core of the volume is a series of studies on criminology, which has only recently attracted the serious attention of the Western scholarly community. One reason for its neglect in the Soviet period was the unreliability or incompleteness of the data, but as the contributions here illustrate, one must still approach statistics relating to the perpetrators and victims of crimes with caution.

Not only is there a large gap between homicide rates reported by the police and other government agencies (discussed in the chapter by Natalia Gavrilova et al.), but some official data are at odds with information obtained from non-governmental sources. In her chapter, “Violence against Women in Russia,” Janet Johnson notes that the almost 50 percent drop in rapes and attempted rapes reported by the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD) from 1991 to 2001 contradicts the evidence available from women’s crisis centers and other sources. Where Johnson’s chapter presents a bleak picture of the scale of male on female violence (Russian women are three times more likely to be the victims of homicide than their American counterparts), the contribution by Rodeheaver and Williams on juvenile justice gives a portrait of youth crime that is less disturbing than one may have imagined. Unfortunately, the volume does not consider the growing problem of crimes against ethnic minorities or the role of skinheads or other marginalized youth in street crime. There are well-informed studies on subjects that merit broader discussion, such as William Butler’s work on the legal impediments to combatting the spread of AIDS in Russia, Louise Shelley and Robert Orttung’s study of human trafficking, Letizia Paoli’s analysis of the illegal drug market, and Roy King and Laura Piacentini’s assessment of Russian prisons.

Amid the grim statistics, the book provides optimists with reason to hope. Although Russia’s energy wealth may indeed be a curse, it has made numerous enhancements to the criminal justice system possible, whether in enhanced pay to judges, the formation of new judicial support organizations, such as the bailiff’s corps and judicial assistants, and rapidly rising spending on Russian prisons. The careful reader of this text will see that the financial and normative infrastructure of Russian law has improved in the Putin era. However, further improvements will not only require Russia to provide adequate funding for legal institutions and personnel, but also to overcome the still powerful cultural and institutional legacies of the Soviet era and to prevent the reconcentration of political power from developing into a new form of absolutism.

Given the uncertainties of Russia’s future course, we would probably do well to follow the lead of William Pridemore, the editor of this volume, who concludes that Russia is in a state of turmoil and not transition. Russia’s condition is not unlike that of Russian prisons, which, he notes, are “being pulled in multiple directions, lacking a clear sense of mission, and without a template for the type of organization that will emerge” (283).

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Public Policy and Law in Russia makes a compelling case: legislating in Putin’s Russia is a difficult bargaining process that is fraught with clashes among various interests that struggle and compromise. Written by law professors, political scientists, and criminologists from North America, Western Europe, and Russia, this volume examines how the law worked and failed to work during Putin’s first term in office. By focusing on both high-profile cases and the everyday workings of the legal system, this collection of essays provides a balanced assessment of key legal dynamics in Putin’s Russia. Like in many edited volumes, the chapters in this book are discrete, both empirically and methodologically. Editors could have done a better job in linking the chapters, particularly the several chapters dealing with federalist reforms and changes in the criminal procedure. It is difficult to critique all fourteen chapters in a review, so I will focus on the three important themes running through this collection.

The first contribution of Public Policy and Law in Russia focuses on both the domestic and international aspects of restoring legal order in Russia. National-level comparative studies of legal reforms must account for the influence of international pressure and opportunities resulting in a certain institutional arrangement. All postcommunist countries routinely send their draft legislation for approval to international organizations, such as the Council of Europe (CoE). Thus, studying the politics of law at the national level clearly demonstrates the power struggles of central elites and the demands imposed by international bodies. The chapters by Ferdinand Feldbrugge, John Quigley, and Louise Shelley explore this interplay between domestic and international factors in postcommunist constitution making, Russia’s war on terror, and the struggle against human trafficking.

What is more valuable is that the authors analyze both the supply of legal institutions at the top (constitutional systems of separation of powers, federalist reforms, new codes of criminal procedure, land reforms, and bills on religious rights and human trafficking) and the demand for law from the bottom (administrative justice, business litigation, reform of the bar at the local level, and local self-governance). Thus, it enables the readers to trace the patterns of the indigenous, “grassroots” demand for law, and the use of law in general. More important, it provides a nuanced picture of the power of law and the limits of law to achieve or block social change in a semidemocratic society. Although some believe that Russian politics is particularly messy, several chapters in this book clearly demonstrate that political actors and individual litigants engage in strategic behavior to enhance their power. This includes federal and regional leaders (chapters by Ger van der Berg, Robert Sharlet, and Gordon Smith), business people (chapter by Kathryn Hendley), lawyers (chapter by Eugene Huskey), law-enforcement officials (chapter by Stanislaw Pomorski), or ordinary Russians when they choose to sue the state (chapter by
Peter Solomon) or to govern themselves at the local level (chapter by Nikolai Petro). Taken together, the authors agree that law in Russia does make a difference, both in the upper echelons of power and in the everyday lives of ordinary citizens.

Finally, by focusing on Putin’s efforts to rebuild the foundations of Russian statehood, this book speaks to the crucial questions of national unity and effective governance as necessary prerequisites for democratization. To put it simply, democratization is impossible without a broad consensus on the borders of that state and on the nature of the political community within that state. Dankwart Rustow made this observation thirty years ago. Yet we still know very little about how to build strong and legitimate states that deliver democratic results. While war was once the most popular way of building new states in Europe, this military option is no longer available in the post–cold war era. Another way to entrench statehood is by making laws through democratically elected bodies and enforcing these laws in an impartial manner on the whole territory of the new state. For the Russian Federation, with its vast landmass and eighty-nine regions, enforcing laws throughout its territory was problematic in the 1990s. Under Yeltsin, the state lost its capacity to enforce federal laws and accomplish reforms, as the federal authority was sabotaged by “segmented regionalism,” “shadow separatism,” and “creeping authoritarianism” in the regions. As this book persuasively demonstrates, President Putin began to restore the authority of the federal center through law by working closer with the Parliament and resorting to the courts.

Why would an authoritarian leader with a KGB background, under whose presidency Russia has been downgraded to “not free” status by Freedom House, resort to legal means to rule Russia? This is a paradox. Indeed, we usually think that only democracy advocates want the rule of law to address social ills: it enhances the quality of democracy, strengthens good governance, reduces corruption, boosts economic growth, and improves the investment climate. Some even claim that judicial independence goes hand in hand with smaller government. On the contrary, authoritarian rulers do not need the law to govern—they do it through force and intimidation. Vladimir Putin’s high public approval ratings, a point of envy for many Western politicians, would have allowed him to pursue legal and illegal policies, yet he chose to act through law. Putin could have followed his predecessor and governed by issuing his own decrees, yet he chose to work with the legislature, which was not very loyal to him during his first term in the Kremlin. As a professional spy, Putin could have taken any action as long as it achieved the desired results, yet he chose to work with the legislature to pass necessary laws, despite having to deal with a painstaking and indeterminate law-making process, as chapters by van der Berg, Smith, Huskey, Sharlet, and Shelley clearly show. Like many other post-Soviet presidents, Putin could have forcefully amended the constitution and shored-up greater rule-making powers, as Feldbrugge demonstrates in his chapter; yet he chose not to. On the contrary, Putin did not take the power to fire judges, which increasingly ruled against the government, as Solomon’s chapter convincingly argues. Finally, Russia’s long history as a “law-
less land” does not provide a framework for laws to take root and to get things done. So, why did Putin, against all odds, choose law rather than force?

*Public Policy and Law in Russia* provides a partial answer. Several authors in this volume argue that Putin’s legal education played a certain role in his choice to govern through law in his first term. Lawmaking during Putin’s first term was not a sham to cover up his authoritarian tactics, according to the chapters by van der Berg, Huskey, Sharlet, Shelley, and Smith. It was a sincere attempt to restore the authority of the federal center. Thus, Putin chose law as one of the instruments to bring order to the Russian society. Just as the rule of law is essential to democracy, it is also helpful in nondemocracies because the rule of law establishes the hierarchy of rules. This legal hierarchy makes it easier to govern because those on the top have lawful means to overrule actions of the subordinates. To be sure, rulers at the top have to obey higher constitutional rules and have to face scrutiny from independent courts. However, supreme and constitutional courts in the West and the East ruled against the interests of governing coalitions. So, if top courts share key preferences of the ruling majority, the rule of law makes it easier to govern in democracies and nondemocracies alike. In Russia, with its tradition of the instrumental use of law, reforming governance through law was a justified choice that would boost Putin’s legitimacy at home and abroad. Like any other ruler, Vladimir Putin needs more legitimacy. His promise to Russia and to the rest of the world was: Enough revolutions! Yet his reforms were nothing far from revolutionary. They radically transformed many elements of Russian governance through law rather than force. To be sure, some of these reforms moved Russia in a nondemocratic direction. Yet we do not know much about how legal reforms can result in non-democratic developments even though Russia is under heavy international pressure to democratize. This is the subject of another study.

Overall, this book is a welcome addition to the growing body of research about Putin’s Russia. It should be read by all interested in legal reforms of postauthoritarian societies.

**NOTES**


In addition to granting the Ukrainians a chance to start consolidation of their fragile democracy, Ukraine’s Orange Revolution in the aftermath of the fraudulent 2004 elections has provided the international scholarly community with valuable material for research. Revolution in Orange: The Origins of Ukraine’s Democratic Breakthrough represents a pioneering effort to analyze the event and its broader implications.

Anders Åslund and Michael McFaul, both established scholars with proven expertise on the region, have guided the work of a group of authors in this volume. These contributors have diverse backgrounds and include academics, experts, and actors in the revolution. Revolution in Orange aims at grasping the event in all its complexity, and comes close to achieving this goal.

An obvious challenge in writing a book on the Orange Revolution is that it was an event that could have easily not taken place. Indeed, as some contributors point out, astrologists may be better able to explain the revolution than social scientists. All contributors to the volume reject the idea of the spontaneity of the protests, but acknowledge the uncertainty of the outcome until it actually happened. Many things could have gone “right” or “wrong” as the revolution was unfolding. The multiplicity of factors determining the eventual outcome of the protests and their influences on each other does not allow for constructing strict and meaningful causal chains. Everything was a dependent and independent variable simultaneously. To their credit, the contributors to Revolution in Orange still attempted to identify the relations between these variables and sketch them for the reader.

Another major difficulty in writing on the Orange Revolution is that the revolutionary process did not stop in December 2004; it continues even now. The Ukrainian events of 2004 must still earn the right to be called revolutionary. In the foreword, Jessica Mathews, president of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, notes that the true meaning of an event as major as the Orange Revolution can only be determined with the passage of time. However, the Orange Revolution will undoubtedly have a historic significance, not only for Ukraine but also for the broader region.

The Orange Revolution offers inspiration and experience for oppositions in other countries that wish to repeat Ukraine’s path. Unfortunately and unavoidably, the world’s authoritarian rulers are also likely to be diligent students of the Ukrainian lesson of regime collapse. Ukraine teaches them how to act to preserve their power. Belarus and Kazakhstan have already avoided colored revolutions during their last elections, if only for now.

The book’s contents can be grouped into three broad categories. The chapters by Anders Åslund and Adrian Karatnycky offer a perceptive analysis of the role of elites in the Orange Revolution. Åslund’s goal in his piece is to explain the revolution through a detailed study of the relationship between the old regime of
Leonid Kuchma and Ukraine’s powerful economic actors, usually referred to as the oligarchs. The concept of state capture employed by Åslund proves particularly useful for understanding this relationship: most of the Ukrainian oligarchs made their fortunes because of preferential treatment from the president and access to the state decision-making process. The post-2000 transformation that decreased the dependence of the Ukrainian oligarchs on the state, and turned rent-seekers into producers, is a fundamental development that eventually led part of the business elite to defect to the opposition. Åslund offers an insightful and revealing analysis of this process.

Karatnycky complements the analysis of elites in the Orange Revolution through discussion of the rise of the Ukrainian opposition. His focus is on political defectors because the major opposition figures have come from the regime itself. Whereas Ukraine’s “early” national-democratic opposition was too weak to move the country in the desired direction, the new opposition was equipped with impressive financial resources and thus was better fit to counteract the regime. In addition, the opposition had successfully internalized the painful lessons of its defeat during the so-called Kuchmagate scandal in 2001, which paved the way for its triumph in 2004.

The crucial role of civil society in bringing down the regime is the focus of the next few chapters of Revolution in Orange. As an opening, Taras Kuzio traces the evolution of public attitude toward the regime. For Kuzio, Kuchmagate is a central event in Ukraine’s political history because it revealed the low public trust in state institutions, low popularity of President Kuchma, and a growing gulf between the ruling elite and society (45). As Kuzio notes, it was the detachment of the elite from the population that led the former to underestimate the mobilization potential of the public, which eventually played into the hands of the opposition.

The transformation of Ukraine’s civil society is a difficult subject to wrestle with, but Nadia Diuk does it in a skillful and thorough manner. Diuk argues that the degree of civil society’s organization was a factor that shaped the mode of regime change and the outcome of transition. Diuk’s analysis of the understanding of civil society by the Ukrainians and the nature of Ukrainian civic groups is rich and perceptive. She makes an excellent point by arguing that the relatively developed civil society in Ukraine gradually became well informed about the regime’s transgressions, but was unable to “establish a final link to the government to provide the interaction that would help resolve citizens’ problems” (75). Thus, taking to the streets became a natural next step. The growing relationship between civil society organizations and the political opposition helped ensure the success of the protests.

The particular significance of the civic youth organization Pora in bringing down the regime is acknowledged in the essay by Pavol Demes and Joerg Forbig. The authors demonstrate how Pora contributed to the crystallization of some of the social and political factors that allowed the protests to succeed. Under the conditions of restricted media, civil society representatives took the role of providing alternative sources of information to citizens across the country on themselves. The stages Demes and Forbig identify in Pora’s organizational develop-
ment provide a good understanding of why it succeeded later. Demes and Forbig emphasize cooperation and coordination of efforts, a strong focus on students and youth, employment of modern communication techniques, the securing of resources to finance the campaign, a close partnership with democratic political actors, and a strict adherence to nonviolence as Pora’s recipe for success.

Olena Prytula is well qualified to elaborate on the role of mass media during the Orange Revolution, as she knows the situation inside out. Prytula has been the editor in chief of Ukrayins’ka Pravda, a respected Internet newspaper that has been on the frontlines of fighting Kuchma’s regime. Prytula introduces her reader to the topic by tracing the state of the mass media in Ukraine from the early 1990s. Her article is a story of the regime’s well-planned and consistent oppression of the mass media. It is also a story of a few daring persons creatively and persistently fighting back and finding ways to provide alternative viewpoints for the public, and those few who preserved the right to be called journalists among the mass of de facto propagandists. Prytula points out that corporate and public control over the media are necessary to ensure that the censorship of the Kuchma epoch does not return and the Ukrainian media successfully transform themselves into an objective and professional watchdog.

The role of international actors in Ukraine’s Orange Revolution is discussed in the next two chapters. Oleksandr Sushko and Olena Prystayko analyze the involvement of the West. The question of Western influence on Ukraine’s domestic developments was controversial and subject to dual treatment during the revolution. What the West and Ukraine’s opposition regarded as support for democracy, the regime often presented as interference into domestic affairs. While acknowledging the importance of international actors in determining the outcome of the struggle between the two camps in Ukraine, Sushko and Prystayko are extremely cautious not to overemphasize this involvement. In their view, international efforts became an effective instrument of changing the situation only when combined with political and judicial procedures and domestic civil activity. Sushko and Prystayko provide a good account of the major Western actors involved in the Ukrainian revolution, along with the methods, mechanisms, and objectives of this involvement and the dilemmas Western actors faced in Ukraine.

Nikolai Petrov and Andrei Ryabov of the Carnegie Moscow Center analyze Russia’s role in the Orange Revolution. They suggest that Russia’s involvement was the “Kremlin’s greatest foreign relations blunder since 1991” (145) and support this statement with rich and persuading argumentation. Out of a desire to keep Ukraine in Russia’s sphere of influence, the highest Russian officials provided blunt support to Kuchma’s appointed successor Viktor Yanukovych, who actively played “the Russian card” during the campaign, promising to conduct pro-Russian policies in Ukraine. For Petrov and Ryabov, the one-sided approach Russia took ultimately limited its space for maneuvering during the elections and made it a “hostage of the interests of President Kuchma and his associates” (147). In the Ukrainian elections, the Kremlin ended up playing Kuchma’s game and became an object of this game itself.
In the concluding chapter, Michael McFaul has done an excellent job of placing the Orange Revolution in a comparative perspective. Ukraine’s revolution was preceded and followed by similar prodemocracy breakthroughs in Serbia, Georgia, and Kyrgyzstan. This set of events with similar outcomes allows for drawing broader conclusions about their origins and meaning for the theories of democratization. Although he acknowledges that each regime change was caused by a unique constellation of factors, McFaul identifies several conditions that were present in each of the cases discussed. These were: the semiautocratic nature of the old regime; its unpopular leader; strong and well-organized opposition; an ability to persuade the public that the election results had been falsified; the existence of independent media to inform citizens about the falsified vote; a political opposition that was able to mobilize the population to protest against fraud; and a division between the intelligence forces, the military, and the police. Generalizing about revolutions is difficult, as their outcomes are determined by a multitude of factors that interact with each other in various ways. No list of factors is ever sufficient or necessary for the revolution to take place. The task is compounded by the fact that both the presence and extent of the identified factors matter for the outcome. McFaul himself admits that “[t]he stars must really be aligned to produce such dramatic events” (188). While the factors McFaul identified were important, a consideration of a failed case of prodemocratic or antiauthoritarian movements might have strengthened the argument.

One of the book’s major strengths is that it takes the Orange Revolution apart and reassembles it to give the reader a better understanding of the phenomenon. Another important feature of the book is that all of its contributors surpass the original goal of analyzing the proximate causes of the revolution and, according to the editors, discuss the deeper, structural processes at work (7). The authors demonstrate the development of the Orange Revolution as a long-term process. The cheerful crowds of protesters on the streets of Kyiv so pronounced in the media were only the culmination of a number of processes that had been taking place long before. Arguably, there is no other way to study Ukraine’s revolution. Most authors also regard Ukraine’s revolution as being far from over. They are both optimistic and realistic about Ukraine’s future. The transformation process that may consolidate Ukraine’s fragile democracy will take decades to complete and will be full of challenges. It will experience setbacks and reversals. Ukraine’s democratization is still an open-ended process, and the authors of Revolution in Orange recognize this fact.

Different chapters of the book touch on the same events and processes. The editors acknowledge the presence of repetition in the volume that, according to them, is to provide a diversity of perspectives on the subject. In practice, there is little variation in approaches the authors take in studying the revolution. Although the volume does not have an explicit overarching argument, the authors agree on the major issues discussed. In the opinion of this reviewer, the repetition in Revolution in Orange serves to underscore the importance of certain events and factors. The contributors reinforce and reemphasize each other’s points.
The book’s authors set a specific cut-off date of January 23, 2005, the day Viktor Yushchenko was inaugurated as Ukraine’s new president, for their analysis. The open-endedness of the process justifies the need to stop at some point and confine analysis to the events that have already taken place. Although the time constraint limits the scope of the analysis, it narrows the book’s focus to the Orange Revolution as a crucial event in Ukraine’s democratization, rather than the process of democratization per se. Readers of Revolution in Orange in 2006 and in the future will have more knowledge of postrevolutionary developments and will bring this knowledge into their evaluation of the book. But this should not diminish the value of the analysis Revolution in Orange presents. An important asset of the book is that most (but not all) authors try to avoid abruptly stopping their stories and elaborate on the implications of the Orange Revolution for Ukraine’s democratization in a broader perspective.

A major shortcoming of the book is that sometimes its arguments lack clarity and coherence and need further development. Some contributors could have made their stories more dynamic. The book does not connect sufficiently to theories of democratization. It would be helpful if the authors analyzed how the Orange Revolution confirms or invalidates these theories.

Revolution in Orange is a valuable case study for a student of democratization who wants to become familiar with Ukraine’s political development in the past decade, but offers little new information for the reader who was watching the dramatic events in Ukraine unfold. Still, Revolution in Orange will join other books by Andrew Wilson and Askold Krushnelnycky in providing a comprehensive introduction to the subject.

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David Hoffmann, in his recent book on Stalinist values, poses the perennial question: Was the modernization of the Soviet Union sui generis, or did it fall somewhere within the spectrum of other European countries modernizing in the aftermath of World War I? Within this question, he poses others: Was Stalinism a retreat from socialism and a return to prerevolutionary norms and traditions, as argued by Leon Trotsky and Nicholas Timasheff? Was it a unique brand of Soviet socialism, or were its features comparable to those of other European countries?

The book is organized into five chapters, each of which delves into the cultural and moral values of Stalinism. The first chapter outlines measures taken by the Soviet state to educate citizens about health, cleanliness, and order. In particular, Hoffmann examines the “wife-activist” movement, initiated by Sergo Ordzhonikidze, in which women took the lead in inspecting public facilities for
cleanliness and lecturing about proper hygiene. The state also promoted health-
ful leisure activities, physical conditioning, and literacy—with the goal of creat-
ing a new “Soviet person,” whose values and personal habits would reflect those
of the unerring state. One amusing quotation included is from the psychologist
Aron Zalkind, who wrote in 1924 that “children are an extraordinary plastic mate-
rial” that could be molded into the “new person” prototype of the state much more
easily than adults.

Chapter 2 discusses the Communist code of behavior. With the rapid and plen-
tiful influx of workers into the Communist Party in the 1930s, party leaders decid-
ed that behavioral rules were needed. Brochures and other forms of propaganda
describing this code of conduct aimed at the party elite were disseminated. If
members strayed from the code and committed offenses such as drunkenness,
careerism, or corruption, they could be removed from the party in one of its peri-
odic purges.

Family values are the topic of chapter 3. Here, Hoffmann discusses the mea-
ures taken to renew respect for the family as a social unit and rebuild Soviet man-
power after the devastating losses in the war, collectivization, and the famine in
Ukraine in the 1930s. Maternity was “in” and divorce and abortion were “out.”
Not only could the family produce children, but they could also raise and educate
them in Socialist values.

The most interesting chapter, in my view, is chapter 4, “Mass Consumption in
Socialist Society.” The state’s emphasis on “socialist abundance” was something
I had never encountered in my study of Stalinist culture. Stalinist pronouncements
in 1935 to permit collective farmers to prosper by retaining three cows was cer-
tainly a retreat from “early Stalinism,” when farmers were accused of being
kulaks for hoarding their own cattle. Hoffmann’s statement that more state
resources were allotted to consumer goods and housing in 1935 (127) is intrigu-
ing and, to my mind, counterintuitive, given the heightened emphasis on the Red
Army’s defense spending that accompanied the Japanese invasion of Manchuria
in 1931, and the threat of a two-front war in the future. Nonetheless, Hoffmann’s
findings are fascinating and provide new insights into the ever-contradictory Stal-
inist culture. Making Soviet life “joyous” through massive celebrations and pos-
itive images probably had some impact on the citizens’ psyches, even if the
images failed to match reality.

In the final chapter, Hoffmann examines the methods Stalin used to unify the
people, who were ethnically and geographically diverse and somewhat divided
by social status or class. The inclusive themes of the 1936 Stalin Constitution and
the Stalinist cult as portrayed in film, literature, art, and other media helped to
unify the people around the Soviet “project.” Iconoclasm was “out” and collec-
tivism was “in.” Socialist realism became the genre of the day. Harmony with all
ethnic groups was emphasized and Russian chauvinism was denounced—quite a
reversal for Stalin, who was one of the ultimate Russian chauvinists.

This book is a readable and laudable compilation of many Stalinist themes by
path-breaking authors in the field: Arch Getty on the purges; Sheila Fitzpatrick
on Stalinist culture and particularly its benefits in educating and promoting the
masses and introducing wage differentials; Wendy Goldman and Barbara Clements on women and gender themes under Stalinism; and many others.

However, there is little that is new or original in this volume. The idea that there was substantial controversy over Stalin’s purported “retreat from socialism” is hard to buy. Leon Trotsky was known to make audacious claims for the sake of debate and controversy. And with all due respect, how well-known is Nicholas Timasheff’s book on the great retreat? Few scholars question Stalin’s commitment to socialism; his methods and measures of achieving it, however, were something else altogether.

Hoffmann’s conviction that the modernization of the Soviet state under Stalin was comparable to that of other European countries is troubling. Although he finds similarities, such as the practical need to increase the birthrate after the losses of World War I, there is no evidence that Soviet leaders, policymakers, and reformers ever read or understood what was happening in other countries. Had the author provided references to Soviet reformers citing western European authors, Hoffmann’s conclusions would have been more convincing. Certainly, in the area of military policy, almost all of the key reformers were reading and translating the works of French, German, and Italian warfare theorists throughout the 1920s and 1930s—and evidence of that abounds.

A fascinating book yet to be written would feature “the other side” of Lenin and Stalin’s henchmen, such as Felix Dzerzhinsky’s policies and activities in improving the lives of homeless children, Lazar Kaganovich’s concern with the moral upbringing of Soviet children, and Sergo Ordzhonikidze’s role in establishing roles for women activists. That would render a more nuanced and balanced insight to our understanding of the Stalinist era and its values.

SALLY W. STOECKER

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