Stalinist Terror: New Perspectives by J. Arch Getty; Roberta T. Manning

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place, just as they had on the other side of the Bug River. Nearly anyone who had survived the German occupation outside a concentration camp was now under suspicion as a collaborator, and many thousands were indeed arrested and deported—or worse. The final chapter describes the repatriation of various groups of Polish citizens (including Jews) from the USSR, and the expulsion of Ukrainians remaining west of the Bug to the Ukrainian SSR. This process was mainly completed by the late 1940s, but in some particulars continued into the 1950s. As Sword notes, most of the approximately 1.5 million “Poles” (they were not, of course, all ethnically Polish) were settled in the lands gained from Germany in the west of the new Polish state and most of the Polish Jews who survived the war on Soviet territory passed through Poland only briefly before taking up permanent residence in the United States, Israel or other countries.

Sword’s work is based on extensive research in Polish archives (both in Warsaw and London) as well as in periodical and monograph sources. It is regrettable that Sword was unable to complement his research with work in Russian archives which must, after all, contain a wealth of pertinent information. Indeed, the only major criticism this reviewer would have of the work is its sometimes obtrusive Polish/patriotic bias—to be sure, probably it goes with the territory, but still a weakness in a scholarly work. Furthermore, Sword often fails to deal adequately with the fact that most inhabitants of the territories incorporated into the Belorussian and Ukrainian SSRs were not Poles. To refer to this territory as “Poland,” as is sometimes done, while in a sense true (to September 1939, in any case), does not do justice to the complicated national mixture there. Still, the weaknesses do not invalidate the main points of the book. Historians, political scientists and students interested in the USSR and Poland in the Second World War, in the history of refugees, or in the beginnings of Polska Ludowa will all gain from reading this work.

Theodore R. Weeks, Southern Illinois University


Among this volume’s fourteen essays, four of which have been previously published, Boris Starkov’s is potentially the most pathbreaking. Starkov continues the promising practice fostered by J. Arch Getty of moving the analysis of the terror beyond Stalin to other highly placed individuals, in this case Nikolai Ezhov (1895–1940). Making partial use of formerly inaccessible archives (including those of the KGB, Procuracy, and Central Committee), Starkov reveals that to increase his authority, Ezhov staged his own attempted assassination by having mercury smeared on the upholstery in his office, and that to ingratiate himself further he initiated a plan to rename Moscow Stalinodar. Attacked in 1938 by a coterie of other high officials (for reasons that despite his archival access Starkov fails to make clear), Ezhov was shot in 1940. Much like Conquest, Starkov makes no attempt, beyond incriminating Stalin, to lay out the workings of a regime in which the top official in charge of carrying out the terror was easily dismissed and exterminated (for the second time in two years), along with countless other leading security and army officers. We need to explain not only what happened and who might have been responsible, but how it was possible. “Revelations” cannot substitute for analysis. Moreover, in at least one instance Starkov has since verbally withdrawn the supposedly archivally based insinuation in this essay that, in 1938, Stalin was overruled when he proposed G. Malenkov as Ezhov’s replacement but “a majority of the Politburo recommended L. P. Beria” (p. 38). This pseudo-revelation is cited with approval in the volume’s introduction.

In the volume’s second essay Getty has gathered several more juicy tidbits from the Russian-language press: that human blood was found splattered on Marshal Tukhachevskii’s confession; that Zinoviev denounced Kamenev; that Ezhov would not grant Piatakov’s insis-
tent request to perform the execution of his own wife, and so on. At the same time, summarizing recent research by Russians, Getty engages in a persuasive debunking of the folklore surrounding the Kirov murder and of Stalin's supposed methodical planning of the terror. Readers may note, and Getty would agree, that it is one thing to argue, using circumstantial evidence, that Stalin did not have a master plan, but quite another to come up with a more sophisticated notion than we currently have about how power operated throughout the regime. In the face of this challenge, Getty submits that he and the other contributors chose modesty (p. 17).

Scholars of Germany, aided by archival access, long ago moved away from what they call an “intentionalist view” of the Nazi regime whereby Hitler and his ideology are said to account for everything that happened. In its place arose a functionalist, or structural, approach that retains a key role for Hitler but emphasizes the overlapping jurisdictions and polycratic nature of administration, showing how various officials used their positions to increase their authority and sometimes pursue parallel agendas. Thus, the goal is to examine the atmosphere and parameters for decision making established not only by Hitler’s pronouncements or hints but also by the absence of explicit instructions, the competition among subordinates and unforeseen situations encountered by lower-echelon officials in localities. Something analogous seems to be the aim of this volume on the Soviet terror, only with considerably less self-consciousness. Needless to say, the problem is not simply one of documents, for many important processes and events were, by design, not recorded. The problem is also one of imagination and understanding.

Comprising the middle part of the book and addressing the society at large are essays by Lynne Viola and Roberta Manning on the countryside, Gábor Rittersporn on the mentality and practices of conspiracy, Manning on the background economic crisis, Robert Thurston on Stakhanovism, Roger Reese on the army, David Hoffmann on Moscow, and Hiroaki Kuromiya on the Donetsk basin. Highlighting the existence of social tensions and bureaucratic confusion, these varying efforts manage to catalogue the many contradictions and some of the unintended consequences of the terror. Glimpses emerge of the importance of language, categories of thought, accepted modes of political practice, interagency rivalries, individual ambition, and popular views toward the international context as well as the grand crusade. The intermittent speculations about Stalin’s motives and the supposed intentions behind the launching of the terror can be taken for what they are worth.

A concluding section is devoted to the volume’s mantra of the (relatively) limited scope of the terror, with essays by Getty and William Chase, Sheila Fitzpatrick, Alec Nove and Stephen Wheatcroft. Those who relish discussions of whether three to four, or four to five million people perished in the famine; whether there were two or three million people in the gulag and whether this number includes camps and colonies or just camps, but not exiles, etc.; and whether the bodies in recently uncovered mass graves at Kuropaty and elsewhere significantly alter the overall repression totals derived from arrest figures, will find much to keep them occupied.

In their introduction the editors suggest that no single approach emerges from this “generation of trained historians” (p. 3), several of whom have been “promiscuously and unfortunately labeled revisionist” (p. 13). Furthermore, the editors write, rather than attempting to supplant the totalitarian model, they have only been grappling with the anomalous matters not comfortably handled by the totalitarian view, which is now said to have been “in its time, capable both of satisfactorily interpreting reality and of encompassing counter examples” (p. 3). We are also informed that none of the contributors has ever tried to minimize the role of Stalin. Revisionism of one’s own revisionism, if you will.

As for the “new perspectives” advertised in the title, the editors point to a consensus that economic problems and a widespread belief in conspiracy fueled the terror—in other words, that input “from below” helped spread the repressions. Whether these indisputable propositions are incompatible with the manifestly inadequate yet still dominant totalitarian approach remains unclear. In the end, this volume underscores the enduring need for what it deliberately
avoids, namely, the articulation of what the editors call a new paradigm to inspire and interpret research.

Stephen Kotkin, Princeton University


Whatever its importance for other reasons, the collapse of the Soviet Union has yielded a bonanza for scholars. As Holloway remarks, "I was able to work in archives I thought I would never visit, and to interview people I thought I could never meet" (p. 6). Professor of Political Science at Stanford University and codirector of the university’s Center for International Security and Arms Control, as well as author of a previous book, *The Soviet Union and the Arms Race,* Holloway comes well prepared to take advantage of the opportunity. Testifying to his industry are seventy-two pages of source citations to Soviet materials of every kind—archives, interviews, memoirs, diaries, journal articles and official documents—all this bolstered by his interviews with informed Western scientists, research in American and British archives and study of a full range of secondary sources on science, technology, politics and international relations. The result is a truly impressive volume.

The thesis of *Stalin and the Bomb* is straightforward and, to my mind, unexceptionable: any attempt to understand the Soviet side of the postwar nuclear arms race must begin by recognizing Stalin’s central role in nuclear decision making and the persistent influence of the structure he created. Arguing that our knowledge of nuclear history in the Soviet Union, though much expanded, remains fragmentary, Holloway approaches his topic from three distinct angles that converge on Stalin and together may provide a fuller picture than could any one alone: (1) Stalin’s perceptions of, and reactions to, foreign and domestic factors in directing the Soviet development of nuclear weapons and delivery systems; (2) the relations between science and politics in a regime that regarded science and technology as progressive but often distrusted scientists and their values; and (3) the effects of nuclear weapons on Soviet foreign and military policy, largely as dictated by Stalin.

Holloway pursues these themes in a chronologically organized account of the origins and development of Soviet nuclear weapons policy and action within the framework of the Stalinist polity. The book opens with three chapters on the prewar Soviet physics community, its research on radioactivity, and its response to the discovery of fission, followed by two on the desultory wartime project. Despite superb espionage on the U.S. project, Stalin did not take the A-bomb seriously until Hiroshima, then promptly initiated a crash project (chaps. 6–7). As the wartime alliance collapsed, he refused to be intimidated by the U.S. nuclear monopoly; within four years the Soviet Union had built an industry to produce nuclear materials and tested its own version of the American A-bomb (chaps. 8–10). During the years before Stalin’s death, nuclear weapons became an increasingly important factor in Soviet military and foreign policy (chaps. 11–13). Stalin’s policies did not die with him. Nuclear weapons attained a new level of destructiveness with the development of H-bombs, but the Cold War did thaw somewhat and contacts between Soviet and Western scientists increased (chaps. 14–16).

*Stalin and the Bomb* does not pretend to be the final word on its subject: too much still remains classified or otherwise inaccessible. But it does offer a wealth of new information cautiously evaluated and contextualized in a carefully constructed, amply documented narrative presented in clear academic prose. Doubtless to be corrected and amplified as new material comes to light, Holloway’s book nonetheless promises to provide a coherent framework for a generation of scholars.

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