

appointed by heads of state nuclear programs or governments. Obviously, the role of the IAEA is to promote nuclear power.

The author points out that after Alexander Lukashenko came to power in 1994, all areas of Chernobyl research were subordinated to the State Committee on Chernobyl, and the majority of research institutes relocated to the south-eastern city of Gomel', close to the affected area, but peripheral to central authority. Moreover, the government has opted to re-cultivate contaminated farmlands and has a vested interest in minimizing the health consequences of Chernobyl with a decision to build a Belarusian power plant in 2011.

Moreover, the leading investigators in Belarus among the scientific community have now passed away and the government has forced the closure of a number of NGOs working on Chernobyl effects, including the "Children of Chernobyl," which organized regular conferences (though not annual as the author states, 162) and published the delivered papers.

The book emphasizes how radiation risks in Belarus became less visible to the public and concludes (164) that it is essential to focus on the "social mechanisms of knowledge production" and their relationship to power relations. Simply put, the victim is the local population, which lacks access to knowledge and accurate information.

The *Politics of Invisibility* is timely and much needed. It is well written and carefully argued, and an important antidote to the official reports of UN agencies, particularly those of the IAEA, whose attitudes have often been condescending and ritualistic but who have maintained a near monopoly over western media reporting on Chernobyl's impact on the health of the affected populations.

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The Conflict in Ukraine: What Everyone Needs to Know. By Serhy Yekelchyk. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015. xix, 186 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Chronology. Index. Maps. \$16.95, paperback.
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Popular synthesis is a special art in academic writing, especially when it has to deal with recent events in their unfinished political condition. Serhy Yekelchyk, the author of *Ukraine: Birth of a Modern Nation* (2007), is a master of the genre. His new book aims at explaining the conflict in Ukraine, its domestic and international dimensions, as well the complicated history of one of the largest countries in Europe. The book consists of four chapters covering the entirety of Ukrainian history with an emphasis on current events. The author strives to answer commonly asked questions, including the stereotypical ones: "What is the Maidan?," "Was Ukraine always a part of Russia?," and "Who are the Crimean Tatars?" In doing so, he summarizes the results of international scholarship and presents them for the broader public. Some summaries could be described as exemplary, for instance, Yekelchyk's four-page-long introduction into the notion of ethnic and civic nationality and the modern conception of the Ukrainian nation (14–18).

Post-Soviet Ukraine "did not experience the Soviet collapse as a social revolution complete with the removal of the old elites" (85). It faced a mass movement on the Maidan twice, first in 2004 (the "Orange Revolution") and again in 2013–14 ("Euro-Maidan"). For Yekelchyk, both events could be seen as "a clash between civil society and a paternalistic state, as well as between western-style democracy and Soviet-style

authoritarianism” (86). He convincingly criticizes the oversimplified notion of “two Ukraines”: a “pro-Russian” one and a “pro-western” one, stressing that “radical nationalists constituted only a small minority among EuroMaidan revolutionaries” (54). He claims that some popular support for the separatist movements in the Crimea and Donbas could be found “in the fusion of Soviet nostalgia with Russian cultural identity” (20). Yekelchyk several times reminds his readers that, according to the polls, only about a third of Donbas residents favored separating from Ukraine. One should not forget that political conflicts in post-Soviet Ukraine were until recently resolved peacefully, despite constant attempts by politicians to manipulate identity and/or memory issues. Yekelchyk correctly describes these attempts but pays less attention to such phenomena as national indifference or situational nationalism. He points out that the war in the Donbas “combines features of a covert foreign invasion with those of a civil conflict” (5), and reflects on the question of why other parts of “eastern Ukraine” avoided war. It seems that a comprehensive answer here should not reduce the outbreak of war in the Donbas to ideological reasons or to the region’s specifics, but rather look closely at the purely situational factors: first of all, the attitudes and behavior of the local elites and of the Kyiv government. In the cases of two other big eastern Ukrainian cities, Dnipropetrovsk and Kharkiv, both the decisive pro-Ukrainian actions of local elites and the reduced activity of pro-Russian forces were key factors for keeping these regions in Ukraine. The fact that Donetsk elites in the initial phase of the conflict, in March-April 2014, preferred to remain neutral intensified the disorientation of the local population and shifted the situation in a military direction. The specific “Donbas identity” seems to be rather the result (but not the reason) for the outbreak of war in 2014.

The Kremlin’s undeclared involvement in the conflict, according to Yekelchyk, reflects “Russia’s difficulty in coming to terms with its own post-imperial complex” (6), as well as its view of Ukraine “as a crucial battleground in Russia’s historical struggle with the west” (9). Yekelchyk rejects the propaganda stereotype of the Maidan as “Western conspiracy,” showing instead the dynamics in U.S. attitudes towards Ukraine, and claiming that such a conflict “can only be resolved in a wider international framework” and that “peace in Ukraine is not an internal issue, but an international one” (165–66).

Serhy Yekelchyk’s attempt “to make sense of the war suddenly exploding in the heart of Eastern Europe decades after the collapse of communism” (xiii) is a valuable contribution to the public and academic debate on Ukraine and Europe. His popular book presents a complex view of the Ukrainian past with a focus on the country’s post-Soviet experience and recent tragic events, which could be seen as an important starting point for further research that should proceed towards various goals from a comprehensive interdisciplinary analysis of the local events to global politics and international law.

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Orphans of the East: Postwar Eastern European Cinema and the Revolutionary

Subject. By Constantin Parvulescu. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015.

198 pp. Appendix. Notes. Bibliography. Photos. Figures. \$75.00, hard bound.

\$28.00, paper. \$27.99, ebook.

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Whereas pre-WWII cinema approached the orphan figure from the sentimental, non-political point of view, the post-war representation of orphans was immediately politi-