

Chapter 3 shows how the border was used in the framework of the Piedmont principle as a showcase window for projecting Soviet influence abroad in 1920s, and how it was transformed into a border of a besieged fortress in early 1930s, when hopes for world revolution gave way to fear of foreign influences.

The fourth chapter describes how in the second half of the 1930s the border zone was transformed into a “no man’s land” by deportations, resettlements, and the denunciation of treaties about trans-border relations concluded in 1920s. Deportations on ethnic bases in 1937–38 were supplemented by mass arrests and executions based on ethnic and social criteria, while the border zone became extended from 7.5 to 25 kilometers.

The final chapter describes the moving of Soviet borders westward in 1939–1940, as the result of annexations of parts of the territories of Finland, Poland, and Romania. These events combined as the Soviet drive for *revanche*, their new concept of control of the outer spaces as security measures and the implementation of ethnic principles.

The book offers rich illustrative material and often rare archival photographs. Sabine Dullin has written a conceptually rich, highly-informative, and well-narrated book, which should become an important addition to the syllabi of many courses on Soviet and east European interwar history.

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Les Enfants de Staline. La Guerre des partisans soviétiques (1941–1944). By Masha Cerovic. L’Univers Historique. Paris: Seuil, 2018. Appendix. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Illustrations. Photographs. Figures. Maps. €25.00.
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This book on Soviet resistant fighters (partisans) presents several remarkable assets. Not aiming to write a comprehensive history of the war waged by the Soviet partisans, it offers a global analysis of the extraordinary outbreak of violence generated by the collision between Russian society, Soviet culture, and Nazi occupation policies (20). The scale of violence was staggering: in the area affected by the war in the shadows, half a million combatants inflicted an equal number of deaths, although most victims of both sides were civilian. The book holds a steady line of comparing partisan behavior with, on the one hand, social and cultural practices of the prewar USSR and, on the other hand, norms and practices in the Red Army at the same time. Finally, it chooses a bottom-up approach, looking more at the original documents produced “in the forest” than at central orders written in Moscow and still kept there. Thus, the text abounds in quotations from diaries, reports from the field, and other rare and difficult sources. The paleographic challenges alone would have been monumental to exploit such compromised, difficult sources. Detailed examples punctuate the argument. The author does not neglect the global political and military framework, however: she exploited German wartime document holdings in Germany, Minsk, Moscow, and Kyiv, and the central *fondy* of the partisan movement in RGASPI (Moscow). But how Moscow understood and structured the partisan movement is not the point of the book; other historians studied this question and the author skillfully builds her own research question on their solid foundations. This choice enables the reader to dive into the universe of these peculiar fighters, both resilient to unspeakable living and fighting conditions and themselves brutal in the world they created far—but not completely cut off—from Moscow.

Nine chapters lead the journey through the partisans’ world. They are organized thematically. Chapter 1 underlines the importance of the 1941 military disaster, both

on the composition and painful start of partisan units and on a specific identity built on the premise of surviving this ordeal. The significant role of luck in the survival of the first partisans is outlined, as Moscow was mostly “hands off” while facing the first months of the German onslaught. Chapter 2 presents the main logic of partisan geography and structuring and draws a regional typology. Some elements here could have come earlier to strengthen the understanding of the author’s focus on a part of the partisan movement. The author makes a surprising choice of not mentioning here the creation of a partisan central headquarters in June 1942, yet that becomes clear as the book unfolds: “Soviet territories without soviets, they function as autonomous fiefdoms, bound through alliances, mutual recognition and conflicts, sometimes violent” (163). Chapter 3 precisely explores the relationship between the partisans and the State, the latter understood both as the institution and the individuals embodying it. A high level of analysis is reached here in the study of these evolving relationships—in time, but also according to precise circumstances and people. Several fascinating pages ponder over the way the partisans viewed and in their own way re-created the Communist Party. The chapter concludes on a claim for a sort of Soviet legitimacy, by the partisans, outside the Party. An excellent Chapter 4 immerses the reader in the duress of partisan life in the forest. Social, cultural, national, and gender relations inside the units are vividly analyzed, as are the hardships. Chapter 5 examines the functioning of partisan fiefdoms-republics: the ambiguity of a self-identification as Soviet versus a brutality reminiscent of pre-modern societies is explained by the extraordinary circumstances, suspending time and allowing for any excesses, but in the framework established by the *partisans* themselves. Chapter 6 goes deeper into the relationships between the resistant units and camps and the peasant world around them, studying the taxes imposed upon villagers (in goods and in blood) and the role of the feeling of duty (toward the family, the village, or the State) in accepting this cost. Chapter 7 deals with the nature of the fighting itself: tactics, operations, escalation of violence. Chapter 8 examines, through the analysis of the civil war’s opposing partisans and traitors, a new specific war culture born from the conjunction of prewar Soviet violence, revolutionary utopia, and occupation traumas. Chapter 9 looks into the shift from irregular to regular warfare in 1944 and the process of reintegration of the partisans in “regular” society. The final pages give insights into the conflicted memorial narrative on partisans in the USSR and after. This important book offers an innovative analysis of the Soviet partisans’ experience of war in a vivid yet critical way, by subtle yet clear demonstration of the author’s theses.

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“Na miru krasna”: Instrumentalizatsiia smerti v Sovetskoï Rossii. By Svetlana Malysheva. Moscow: Novyi khronograf, 2019. 459 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Glossary. Index. Illustrations. Photographs. Figures. P671, hard bound.

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Svetlana Malysheva has written another fine book on the public culture of early Soviet Russia. *Na miru krasna* is an analysis of the public expressions and political uses of death in theory and practice. Her main argument is that Bolshevik Russia developed a culture of death that excluded personal death rituals from public space and did not permit Russian people to process grief together as a national community. Russian culture today suffers from this Soviet legacy, which has prevented Russians from achieving a shared healing after a century of trauma, unlike Europeans who were