

“political communication” that took decades to install, thrown by nervous elites and peasants alike. Did inheriting the Habsburg system offer its beneficiaries a distinct contemporary “gift” compared to areas relying on the modified Ottoman system? Müller questions this—“a functioning land register is dependent on reliable cadastral work, which never materialized” (131). For him, the culprits were clear, “Romania’s political class, consistent with its general neglect, even contempt, of rural areas and their inhabitants, simply ignored the legal insecurity that was rampant in the countryside” (131–32).

In this light, it is unsurprising that landownership created and existential insecurity, or as Pavel Klint puts it, “a certain sense of temporariness concerning one’s property” (212). The absence of a universal pension system or opportunities for urban work compounded the centrality of land as security. Even today, despite the huge changes in society and the economy, land still remains an asset that many believe should not be sold outside the family. Politicians may claim that “no matter what Brussels says,” foreigners will never be able to buy land. Yet, in practice, pocket contracts, sleeping partners, and other devices mean that thousands of hectares are already owned by foreigners. There are telling vignettes of domestic dramas concerning land. In Poland, the state offered additional pension payments in exchange for unwanted land. As Klint points out, for would-be heirs, land is a problem which they do not know how to solve; renunciation in favor of the state is “not possible,” yet they have no intention to work it themselves. For Jacek Nowak, the case of the Lemkos in Ukraine demonstrates how both struggles around dispossession and repossession can deprive land of its meaning and lead to a “people [that] might also forget its land” (194).

The volume effectively marries comparative legal analysis, economic history and ground level ethnography. Backed up with impressive scholarship and a huge bibliography, it should be a source of inspiration and reference for a long time to come.

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The Rise and Fall of Belarusian Nationalism, 1906–1931. By Per Anders Rudling. Pitt Series in Russian and East European Studies. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2015. xii, 436 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Illustrations. Photographs. Tables. Maps. \$29.95, paper.

In his influential 1993 book *The Revenge of the Past: Nationalism, Revolution and the Collapse of the Soviet Union*, Ronald G. Suny argues that Soviet efforts to domesticate nationalism after 1917 eventually led to the consolidation of more than a dozen nations and the collapse of the USSR. This elegant thesis has been tested and refined in the past quarter century by an array of studies focusing on the former Soviet republics: Terry Martin’s *Affirmative Action Empire* (2001); Shoshanna Keller’s *Toward Moscow, Not Mecca* (2001); Timothy Snyder’s *The Reconstruction of Nations* (2003); Adrienne Edgar’s *Tribal Nation* (2004); Douglas Northrop’s *Veiled Empire* (2005); Serhy Yekelchuk’s *Stalin’s Empire of Memory* (2004); Kate Brown’s, *A Biography of No Place* (2004), Adeeb Khalid’s *Making Uzbekistan* (2015), and others. Here, Per Anders Rudling contributes further to this growing literature with his insightful book *The Rise and Fall of Belarusian Nationalism, 1906–1931*.

Rudling traces the origins of what he calls Belarusian nationalism to the late nineteenth century and then follows its activists forward through their interaction with major regional players—state authorities from the Russian and German empires;

local nationalist and socialist movements; and an expanding array of grassroots constituencies. Throughout this discussion, Rudling is careful to stress not only the intellectual strength of the Belarusian movement, but its institutional weaknesses as well, stemming both from the divisiveness of its core thinkers and the difficulties that it faced in disseminating its ideas within Belarusian-speaking society on a mass level.

Although Belarusian independence was proclaimed no less than six times between 1918 and 1921, this nascent national community was partitioned in the Treaty of Riga by two new regional powers—reconstituted Poland and newly emergent Soviet Russia (known after 1922 as the Soviet Union). Here, Rudling continues his story by tracing how these new states attempted to contend with the challenges posed by this small but articulate group of Belarusian activists, who stubbornly stuck to their long-term goal of advancing a national awakening within the new postwar circumstances. Again, Rudling is perceptive in his approach to the issue, using a comparison between the Belarusian nationalist experience in Poland and the USSR in order to highlight not only key features of the movement itself, but the importance of context on either side of the Curzon line.

Particularly interesting is the contrast between the Polish and Soviet relationships to Belarusian activism during the early-to-mid 1920s. During Poland's parliamentary Second Republic, national authorities tacitly allowed for the development of Belarusian nationalism by failing to follow through with effective assimilationist policies. Early Soviet engagement with Belarusian activists was more constructive, but also more cynical: as Moscow attempted to build communist support in the republic, it implemented an array of indigenization programs designed to tie the realization of national aspirations to the construction of socialism. Here, Belarusian activists willing to work within the confines of the party's "national in form, socialist in content" doctrine found some opportunity for continued work at the grassroots level.

Toward the end of the 1920s, Polish and Soviet officialdom turned against the Belarusian national movement almost simultaneously. In the Polish case, Józef Piłsudski's 1926 military coup d'état precipitated an array of new restrictions against minority self-expression—restrictions that stifled the Belarusian activists. In the Soviet case, rising political tensions brought on by the Piłsudski coup and the 1927 war scare (and presumably the ongoing stand-off with the peasantry and the left and right oppositions) led the central party apparatus to fear that even its loyal allies in the republics—particularly in Ukraine and Belarus—had become dangerously independent. And if the backlash that followed against these national communists did not end indigenization programs entirely, it did lead to a reconfiguration of Soviet nationality policy that brought formerly autonomous national development in the republics under central control.

Rudling's treatment of this final phase of the Belarusian activist experience is perceptive for two key reasons. First, Rudling demonstrates that the fate of the Belarusian national movement was decided almost simultaneously in Warsaw and Moscow—a fascinating coincidence that places the Belarusian experience within the larger interwar eastern European context rather than within the narrower domestic histories of either Poland or the USSR. Second, Rudling is careful to describe the Soviet destruction of the Belarusian movement without positing some sort of nefarious Russian nationalist demiurge on the part of Iosif Stalin and his comrades-in-arms. Although there was a limited revival of Russocentrism in the USSR under Stalin, this instrumental policy dates to the mid-to-late 1930s and thus could not have contributed to the campaign against national communism.

An impressive study, Rudling's book was awarded the 2015 Kulczycki Book Prize in Polish Studies by the Association for Slavic, East European and Eurasian Studies.

It deserves to be read by anyone interested in the modern trials and tribulations of nation building in eastern Europe and the former republics of the USSR.

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Army Film and the Avant Garde: Cinema and Experiment in the Czechoslovak Military. By Alice Lovejoy. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015. xiii, 305 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Chronology. Index. Illustrations. Plates. Companion DVD. \$35.00, paper.

Many of the most prominent male directors and cinematographers of the celebrated Czech New Wave (1962–69) worked for Czechoslovak Army Film in the 1950s and 1960s. Through a meticulous gathering and analysis of materials from many archives (including those of Czech National Film, the Military History Institute, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs), press sources, interviews, and a wealth of interrelated scholarship on media, culture and politics, Alice Lovejoy reveals the factors which led to this unit's significant role in promoting the stylistic experimentation and sociopolitical critique which characterized the Czech New Wave. She explores the institutional structures and political arrangements which made this possible and the dynamic personalities who drove developments, beginning with Jiří Jeníček, put in charge of Army Film in 1929. Jeníček was a career soldier, but also a well-known amateur photographer and a prolific advocate of documentary film and the importance of technique. Lovejoy details how he promoted an expansive delineation of Army Film's role, going beyond military training and reportage of activities to include the political education not only of soldiers but of the population as a whole. He was committed to training young filmmakers as military recruits as well as to reflecting Czechoslovakia's democratic and multinational character. As Lovejoy convincingly argues, his fictionalized documentaries about border guards and military preparedness were part of the Edvard Beneš regime's propaganda efforts in the face of threats from Nazi Germany.

After World War II, when the Czechoslovak government and its army were reconstituted under Beneš, Jeníček returned to his position. Army Film remained an independent unit, while the rest of the Czechoslovak film industry was nationalized. Although Jeníček was removed after the Communist coup in 1948, the ambitious new Defense Minister, Alexej Čepička, a confirmed Stalinist, invested heavily in Army Film, determined to make it a rival to Czechoslovak State Film (the main producer of theatrical narrative films) in terms of prestige and cultural influence. Although the ideological and political functions of these two entities were similar, in that both were now expected to adhere to the principles of Soviet socialist realism, Lovejoy details how they became institutional rivals in a battle for resources. Čepička continued Jeníček's policy of recruiting young talent, particularly recent graduates of the State's Film School (FAMU), and expanded the distribution of its films. Ladislav Helge, Zbyněk Brynych, František Vlácil, Vojtěch Jasný, and Karel Kachyna all worked in Army Film in the 1950s and became major narrative filmmakers after they left for State Film's Barrandov studio, launching the thematic emphases and stylistic strategies that became the Czech New Wave. Čepička's dream of turning Army Film into a major force in feature-length film ended when he was removed from his position in 1956, but the studio's pioneering experiments in non-fictional short documentary genres continued.