

Revolutionary Aftereffects: Material, Social and Cultural Legacies of 1917 in Russia Today. Ed. Megan Swift. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2022. 260 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Illustrations. Photographs. Figures. Tables. Maps. \$75.00, hard bound.
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As Megan Swift writes in her introduction, the celebration or commemoration of anniversaries usually play a pivotal cultural role for states and this was certainly true of the Soviet state. Yet the 2017 anniversary of the Russian Revolution was met inside the modern Russian Federation by ambiguity and uncertainty. Those outside Russia could choose to focus on its international and transnational impacts and legacies in 2017 and leave alone the largely painful question of its impact inside Russia. This collection of creative, stimulating, and engaging essays seeks out the residues and traces and examines the legacies of 1917 in Russia today and for Russian society. This focus on Russia makes it a uniquely valuable contribution to the scholarly literature. Going beyond asking how the Revolution had been memorialized, the individual contributions focus on continuity across the twentieth and twenty-first century divide and look at how Soviet cultural norms and practices still inform post-socialist Russian culture.

The collection is divided into three sections: material and mnemonic aftereffects, social and environmental aftereffects, and artistic and conceptual aftereffects. In addition to its focus on the meaning of the revolution for Russians, one of the other strengths of the book is its interdisciplinary nature, drawing on the fields of anthropology, art history, cultural history, gender studies, geography, heritage studies, film studies, literary studies, and sociology.

The specific chapters include the editor's contribution on the hesitant attempts of the state to approach 1917 in a way that would also mask Soviet state complicity in the Great Terror by choosing to focus on memorials to 1937 that year. She argues that states wants to celebrate "monumental history" but the tragedies of the revolution preclude that. Maria Silina's chapter agrees that a problem for the Russian state is that the victorious revolution cannot be easily celebrated as it left traumatic memories. She examines how post-communist modernization of the Moscow Agricultural Exhibition Ensemble (VDNKh) offered an opportunity to create a memorial to the peasant experiences of violent collectivization, but instead was turned into a "place of socialist nostalgia and post-Soviet prosperity" (51). Moving on from the specific commemorations of 1917, the other chapters look at the constant reevaluations of avant-garde architecture in the post-Soviet period whose "rejection and obsession" (75) mirror attitudes to the place of the Revolution in Russian history; the ongoing "gender crisis" of women's double burden as workers and single mothers created by early Soviet gender politics; the reappearance and resilience of the Soviet concept of *etnos*, and change and continuity in attitudes to environmental protection, particularly of Russia's forests. Finally, the sections on art and literature include reflections on the destruction of the "heroic" narrative of revolution in the works of the famous writer Boris Akunin and in Soviet films from the 1960s.

The collection does not only trace the ambiguity towards the revolutionary legacy in Russia today and the continuities from the Soviet period in Russian social and cultural life. It also attempts to analyze the meaning of this for Russian society; is it actually healthy to have diffuse and differing versions of the Revolution? Is this complexity in collective memory actually maturity rather than confusion? The conclusions are perhaps left open ended; perhaps the Revolution is too "monumental" rather than not monumental enough for easy commemoration. However, the

reflections themselves enrich this extremely enjoyable and thought provoking collection. Essential reading for academics interested in Russia's past and present, some of the chapters (particularly on commemoration and gender) could also be used in the classroom for undergraduates.

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“Hier ruhen friedliche Sowjetbürger”: *Die NS-Judenermordung in der sowjetischen Erinnerungskultur zum Zweiten Weltkrieg.* By Alexandra Tcherkasski. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz-Verlag, 2022. 312 p. Bibliography. Index. Illustrations. €39.00, hard cover.
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It has long been a truism that the Holocaust, the extermination of European Jewry, was marginalized or even excluded from public memory in the Soviet Union, and that this was largely due to a one-sided emphasis on a commemoration of World War II that foregrounded the heroic, unified, and victorious struggle of the population against the Nazi regime, led by Iosif Stalin and the Soviet army. Recent studies such as Arkadii Zeltser's *Unwelcome Memory* have offered more nuanced analyses, showing that there were in fact quite a few memorials to the destruction of Jewish communities. Alexandra Tcherkasski adds to this correction by analyzing the entwined politics of history, cultural politics, and memorial culture. Complemented by a micro-study of several memorials and memorial sites, Tcherkasski's critical review of the relationships, networks, and discursive interactions between these various strands of politics and larger trends in cultural representation shows that a careful examination of what she calls the “relational politics” (*relationale Politik*) of Soviet war memory calls on us to reevaluate long-standing assumptions about the lack of Holocaust memory in the USSR.

The book is based on Tcherkasski's dissertation, defended at the University of Hamburg in 2019. German universities still require that doctoral dissertations are published as is for the doctoral degree to be conferred, and this somewhat outdated practice has its limitations. Dissertations are rarely written as books, and many of them would benefit from substantial revisions for readability and a more engaging narrative—“*Hier ruhen. . .*” is no exception. The upside of such unadorned publications is a wealth of detail and references, offering specialists in the field the opportunity to meticulously trace the author's work.

The volume begins with an Introduction that discusses methodological approaches and analytical categories in detail. Chapter 2 reviews the “Soviet approach to World War II,” which here means the respective Soviet historiography and major tendencies of memorial culture. The following third chapter offers a fresh take on Soviet nationality policy, demonstrating in particular its impact on the historiography of WWII. The title of Chapter 4 is a misnomer; instead of broaching the “Soviet government's position on the ‘Jewish question’ and the Murder of the Jews,” major parts of the chapters are devoted to strategies of Jews to commemorate the dead, followed by an innovative study of Soviet cooperation with foreign institutions such as the Centre de documentation juive contemporaine or the Mémorial du Martyr Juif Inconnu in France that illuminates the contradictory nature of Soviet memory politics. The final chapter consists of micro-studies of the history of select memorials including Babi Yar, Salaspils, Rumbula, and Jungfernhof (Jumpravmuiža).