

Part 3, “Questions et Débats,” consists of 142 pages devoted to various controversial topics such as “Léninisme, stalinisme et terreur,” the role of ideology, agriculture, nationality issues, foreign policy, and “Les causes de l’effondrement.” Closely tied to part 1, this section often reads like an enormous annotated bibliography. (The book’s cross-referencing system is a bit clumsy. Graziosi mentions hundreds of authors in part 3, but if you want any information about their works, you have to turn to the index and find a page reference in roman numerals to the bibliography in part 1. Users of the book should also be aware that these roman numeral references are consistently two pages ahead of what they should be. Note also that cross-references in the text refer to chapters as “sections.”)

If an overall interpretation emerges from the welter of detail, it seems to go something like this: On the one hand, the Soviet system was doomed from the start by an ideological “original sin” (410) that ensured that genuine reform was never more than a mirage. This original sin was already identified in 1920 by Ludwig von Mises, the Austrian economist who is mentioned more often than you might expect in a book on Soviet history. Von Mises argued that a nonmarket system cannot generate rational prices and therefore cannot allocate resources in even a minimally efficient fashion. On the other hand, contrary to von Mises’s 1920 prediction, the Soviet Union did not collapse immediately but hung on for 74 years, and this unexpected survival needs to be explained. In fact, “the USSR never ceased to astonish” (xi) and the historian should be ready for surprises, for example, the long-term switch from murderous excitement to dead calm. While not particularly sympathetic to this framework, I found it to be flexible enough to allow Graziosi to escape our usual ideological pigeonholes. In particular, he brings out the role of an ideologically inspired “Soviet humanism” in motivating genuine if doomed efforts at reform.

There is no mistaking Graziosi’s immense erudition and openness to all points of view. The passionate fascination with everything connected with Soviet history that wafts from these pages is quite engaging. Nevertheless, the narrative history left me somewhat cold. It consists almost entirely either of assertions that I am familiar with and agree with, assertions that I am familiar with and do not agree with, and (most frustratingly) assertions that are new to me but are necessarily left undeveloped here. I also came away with the impression that any actual “rethinking” has been more intensive in some subject areas than in others. For example, the political history of the pre-Stalin period seems to me still dominated here by arguments and stereotypes that have been around for a long time. The main value of Graziosi’s narrative is perhaps the substantial one of documenting the Standard Story of Soviet history, circa 2010.

For those of us who enjoy reading annotated bibliographies (I am one), the final fourth of the book that is devoted to “questions et débats” can often be engrossing. In an opening section, Graziosi gives a whirlwind account of the entire course of the historiography of the Soviet Union. The format of the remaining chapters does not allow any real discussion of specific issues, but they do point the reader toward the basic works on a topic and put these works in useful relation to each other. No doubt these chapters will be more often consulted on particular topics than read straight through. All in all, *Histoire de l’URSS* is an ambitious work of synthesis by an extremely knowledgeable historian.

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***The Socialist Alternative to Bolshevik Russia: The Socialist Revolutionary Party, 1921–1939.*** By Elizabeth White. BASEES/Routledge Series on Russian and East European Studies, no. 68. London: Routledge, 2011. ix, 180 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Illustrations. \$150.00, hard bound.

Elizabeth White’s book explores the political and intellectual history of the small colony of exiled Socialist Revolutionaries (SRs) in Prague after 1919. Among the SR members of the Russian community in Prague were Viktor Chernov, the principal theoretician of the SR party (PSR), and most of the members of the party’s foreign delegation, including Marc

Slonim, Evsei Stalinskii, and Vasilii Sukhomlin. They joined the SRs Vladimir Lebedev and Sergei Postnikov in editing *Volia Rossii*, the principal rival to the Paris SRs' *Sovremennye zapiski* as the most distinguished thick journal of the emigration.

White argues persuasively that the SRs' vocabulary and analytical categories are useful tools with which to make sense of the Russian revolutionary experience and early Soviet history. SRs' long-standing interest in a noncapitalist transformation of the Russian countryside positioned them well to evaluate Soviet development in the 1920s. SRs were of course unsurprised by the resurgence of the peasant commune, but Chernov and Stalinskii were particularly interested in rural cooperatives and the possibilities they afforded for an evolution toward socialism. White suggests plausibly that Nikolai Bukharin's interest in cooperatives and an evolutionary road to socialism owed something to the populist tradition and the PSR, though no doubt Bukharin's ideas did not derive from anything in the pages of *Volia Rossii* or *Revoliutsionnaia Rossiia*, the SR organ abroad that Chernov edited.

White also argues that while the SRs were conceptually astute, they were "bad tacticians" (57): they pinned their hopes for overcoming the Bolshevik dictatorship on cooperatives and other rural institutions that would allow the "laboring democracy" (73) in the village to defeat the Soviet state in a confrontation the SRs anticipated throughout the 1920s. She does not point out that SRs had made much the same argument during the civil war and had thus failed to draw significant conclusions from the Bolsheviks' victory and the end of large-scale peasant resistance after 1921. This in turn suggests that SRs' misunderstanding of Soviet politics was more profound than the author acknowledges. She concedes that the Prague SRs never truly grasped "the nature of the Soviet state" (57). They were recurrently attracted to the notion that a Soviet bourgeoisie was the real force in the country, and they frequently argued that the Bolshevik dictatorship posed an insurmountable obstacle to political stabilization and economic development. Surely these various propositions, and the political failures that flowed from them, amount to more than bad tactics and should give us pause before crediting the SRs with great insights into Soviet history. To be sure, there is no shame in the SRs' difficulty in making sense of so much about Russia after 1917: the stabilization of the dictatorship and its subsequent development confounded almost everyone's expectations and posed enormous challenges to the intelligentsia's conceptual categories and historical schemes.

White concludes that the SRs are better understood as pragmatic modernizers than as romantic utopians. The historiographical force of her argument would have been stronger, however, had she referred not only to western work on the PSR but also to the growing body of archivally based Russian work, notably the several books of the Moscow historian K. N. Morozov. Moreover, its title notwithstanding, this book is not a history of the PSR after 1921. It does not seriously explore the demise of the party in Russia, and it devotes only passing attention to SRs elsewhere in the emigration. The author makes clear in the introduction that she plans to concentrate on Prague, but the book's title leads one to expect more. Greater attention to the Paris SRs would have fit well with the author's interest in the SR emigration and enriched the book analytically, because the history of the PSR is the history of both its left and right wings, and of their difficult coexistence and struggles with each other, which were reproduced by the tensions between the Prague and Paris SRs in the 1920s.

White also expresses the hope that her work "will challenge the common idea that Russian émigré politics are of no interest to historians" (1). That is a rather sweeping claim and leads to an unnecessarily polemical effort to distinguish her book from those by Marc Raeff, Catherine Andreyev, and Ivan Savický, who have largely concentrated on other émigrés and other issues. That said, White's book offers a sympathetic portrait of a neglected group of émigrés and a valuable account of one line of the expiring SR tradition.

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