

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

able to deal publicly with the mass suffering left in the wake of the world wars. “The indifference of state, society, and people to graves and burial places,” she writes, “long ago became realities of the Soviet and Russian culture of death” (19).

Malysheva uses an anthropological method that leans on Freud’s insight that death rituals are part of a process of “working through grief” (6). Her focus is on the public appearance of death, that is, how death is presented in rituals, philosophical contemplation, and print discourse, as well as funerary architecture and practices. Through the process of mourning, individuals “exclude death” from life and thus continue to live with less fear of death. Death rituals, in other words, are not for remembering the dead but for consoling the living. In the Soviet Union, however, public expressions of death and mourning were instrumentalized by the Bolsheviks for their own narrow political and ideological uses. This monopolization prevented the vast majority of traumatized people from working through grief with others outside the personal milieu. I find this line of argument convincing, not least because my research has led me, independently, to come to somewhat similar conclusions (albeit with a different subject and methodology).

An inflexion point occurred during the Revolution and is laid out in Part I. Malysheva points out that the mass public instrumentalization of death first took place in World War I as millions of soldiers died far away from their native place and traditional death rituals were no longer practicable. Urban society developed public death rituals to memorialize the sacrifice of patriotic hero-soldiers, while soldiers developed their own culture of death on the front. The Bolsheviks in the 1920s attempted to marginalize traditional and religious death rituals by replacing them with so-called Red funerals, which had little resonance among ordinary people. The Stalinists in the 1930s then lost interest in Red funeral rites. They ignored ordinary folk to focus on public mourning for party elites and erased death with a culture of joy and happiness.

The book contains much information and interesting insights on these matters and others. It is organized thematically into three sections: thanatology (intellectual and cultural understandings of death), ritual (burials and funerals), and terrain (cemeteries and crematoria). Evidence and arguments are not evenly distributed across the twentieth century but come thickest for earlier periods, and some conclusions are drawn between the early and later periods that lack direct evidentiary elucidation. The introduction has a thorough historiography and theoretical discussion, but readers should know that this book is not a focused study on scientific and medical thanatology. Malysheva’s prose is straightforward and free of jargon, and the text is amply illustrated with interesting photographs and well-known works of art, although these are not discussed or used as evidence. Nonetheless, the book is a highly original analysis of a critical topic in Russian history and an impressive example of modern Russian history writing.

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Dissident Histories in the Soviet Union: From De-Stalinization to Perestroika.

By Barbara Martin. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019. xv, 293 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Chronology. Index. Photographs. Figures. \$114.00, hard bound.

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Barbara Martin’s *Dissident Histories* is a fascinating exploration of the lives and works of four writers who struggled against official historiography in the Soviet Union after Stalin’s death: Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, Anton Antonov-Ovseenko, Aleksandr