microhistories but, as the author sees it, an arena repeatedly "reinvented" by "exchange and encounter" as an internally linked entity (1). This is a history of trade, cultural interaction, regional politics and continuous geographical reconceptualizations. The author makes clear at the outset that the historic behaviors of the peoples around the Baltic Sea were not "determined"—in the Braudelian sense—by their proximity to it; that proximity, rather, set the framework for commercial innovation and repeated expansionist efforts.

The story begins in the tenth century and concludes in the present. In chronological order, the first six chapters deal with the migrations of the Vikings, Slavs, and the Baltic peoples; the Christianization of the area, brought about mainly (but not only) by German-speakers; the development of the Hanseatic League and its rivalry with the concurrent rise of ambitious monarchies; the religious turmoil and cultural flowering in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; the ambitions of the leading seventeenth and eighteenth century regional hegemons—Sweden and Russia. The seventh chapter, entitled "Nordic Romanticism," takes up the nineteenth century and describes not only cultural developments, but agricultural history, industrialization, and the rise of organized movements promoting separate national identities. The last three chapters deal with the twentieth century and describe the revolutionary events before and during WWI and the resulting new states; then the Sovietization of the eastern and southern littoral, and the diffusion of the welfare state idea in the Scandinavian countries and Finland; and finally the post-Soviet changes and the incorporation of the region's former communist states into the European Union. The author starts each chapter with a capsule description of a city, town, or institution, the history of which, in the period being described, can be seen as iconic. In historic order, the reader encounters Wolin in northern Germany, Eldena Abbey in the same location, Lübeck, Danzig, Stockholm, St. Petersburg, Helsinki, Riga, Tallinn, and, finally, the Øresund Bridge linking Sweden and Denmark.

The book strikes a nice balance between the diversity and the interlocking features of the Baltic Sea region. It also provides, more than other surveys of this type, information on parts of the longer story that usually get short shrift: the economic and cultural influence of Dutch activity (129–32; 135–44); the pre-WWII origins of the idea of the Swedish welfare state (232–33); the nature of the pre-industrial manorial economy (104–10); the symbiosis (rather than culture clash) of Christian and pagan customs during the medieval centuries (50 ff.); the homogenization of taste (1797ff.); and what the author terms "the media revolution of the 18th century," the proliferation of periodical publications (171–77). There is little doubt that *The Baltic: A History* will become one of the standard surveys in English of the Baltic Sea region, to be used in the future alongside such older works as David G. Kirby's 1990–1995 two-volume opus on the "Baltic world."

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"Our Glorious Past": Lukashenka's Belarus and the Great Patriotic War. By David Marples. Soviet and Post-Soviet Politics and Society, vol. 124. Stuttgart: Ibidem-Verlag, 2014. xvii, 403 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Photographs. €59, hard bound; €39.90, paper.

David Marples' theme is not so much history, as the uses of history: less the role of Belarus during the Second World War, than the use that has been made of its participation by the Lukashenka leadership. That leadership's aim, he believes, has been to

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generate a "Belarusian-manufactured version that serves to consolidate the official image of the state as a key player in events over which it seemingly had little control" (vii). Marples makes extensive use of school textbooks as a mirror of this official narrative, but he has also read exhaustively in the pro-government and oppositional national press, and in the regional press (*Vechernyi Brest*), which was often more willing to advance 'oblique and overt criticisms' of the government's approved interpretations. He has visited the sites and monuments, and talked to local activists.

The chronological focus of this study is 2008–10, a short period but one that included the 65th anniversaries of the liberation of Belarus from German occupation and the freeing of Minsk on 3 July 1944, as well as the 65th anniversary of the German surrender on 9 May 2010, which was perhaps the "last time the that the Lukashenka regime could celebrate the Victory with a parade of the original participants" (p. xi). This is a detailed, densely footnoted account, but also a readable one. There is room for individual stories: for instance, how the outbreak of the war affected the Barushkas, a teacher's family who had just moved to Brest (40–42). And there is also room for a deconstruction of the recent film *Brestskaia krepost'* (302–07).

But the core of the book is a series of chapters on more substantive themes. Chapter 3 deals with the partisans and vexed issues of 'collaboration', and Chapter 4 concentrates on the creation of Veteran Heroes (446 Belarusians became Heroes of Soviet Union, a "formidably high proportion" (139); it also includes a separate discussion of the role of women in the war. Chapter 5 considers the liberation of Belarus in the spring of 1944, and Chapter 6 shifts the focus to commemorative objects: historical sites, monuments and memorials, including Chatyń (or Khatyn), the Brest Hero Fortress and the Stalin Line, opened in 2005 to commemorate the defenders of Minsk, designated a Hero City in 1974.

In such a full and engrossing account it may seem ungenerous to ask for more. All the same, at least for this reviewer, there was a startlingly brief conclusion (just six and a half pages after more than three hundred and fifty pages of text). And there is almost no "bottom line:" has the attempt to use the real or invented facts about World War II, in fact, had any measurable effects, intended or otherwise? It is hardly a revelation that Belarusians may not have been "completely convinced" by official mythmaking (364). If not "completely," then to what extent, and among which groups more than others? Marples uses some survey data here, but very little and very reluctantly. Other strategies of investigation were surely available: for instance, focus groups (of school pupils or university students). Or elite interviews: for instance, with textbook authors, or the heads of publishing houses, or former partisans.

Some readers may also be impatient for a wider perspective—in particular, they may want to know if the Belarusian experience of government mythmaking about the war is in any way distinctive, and how it compares with that of other countries in which the war was no less a national trauma. For instance, in France, where the discussion has focused around *lieux de mémoire* (Pierre Nora is cited, but just a single article), or indeed in Russia (as it happens, I'd just finished reading this book when I came across an excellent discussion of very similar issues in *Sotsiologicheskie issledovaniia* from May 2015).

In the end, David Marples has given us a richly illuminating case study; he will surely hope to have contributed, not just to Belarusian studies, but to a larger and continuing discussion on the use of myth and memory across the entire post-Soviet world and indeed more generally.

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