

may be a lesson learned from Gulag history: starving people are easier to manage and terrorize. Large parts of the food from their relatives' care-packages is stolen by the guards; this too may be overdetermined. Yet if during the Stalinist terror, torture interrogators would introduce themselves to their victims by name, here the torturers are anonymous and wear balaclavas, as if unwilling to be eventually recognized in the streets. Other innovations are the electric-shock equipment, constant monitoring of the prisoners by cameras installed everywhere, as well as the bags—makeshift hoods—that the prisoners have to wear over their heads when anyone enters the cell or takes them out of it.

The confusion and fluidity can be read as signs of the temporary affiliation of the prison: there is a pretense that it is run by Russian separatists, but there are many such separatists (former militants) among the inmates. Indeed, in the fall of 2022, Russia annexed the Donetsk and Luhansk “People’s Republics”—Aseyev’s taking one of these appellations in inverted commas had been the pretext for his indictment. As a reader, I wonder whether the true boss of the institution was not the FSB, in advance of the annexation. Meanwhile, the front man was a prison supervisor nicknamed Palych, a psychopathic sadist of the kind that surface at breakdowns of legality. His condition is also fluid: after a drunken excess, he is himself arrested and placed in a basement, though later seemingly put to use again. The translator’s preface notes that eventually this man was arrested in Kyiv.

The prisoners include veteran criminal convicts. One might expect their presence to cause the dominance of the “criminal code” described in Gulag literature (it devolved into unlimited moral chaos, the *bespredel*, after the so-called “bitch war” among criminal inmates of the camps in 1945–53; see Varlam Shalamov’s “Sketches of the Criminal World”). Yet the abnormality and fluidity of the prison conditions cause departures from the remnants of the code, which also becomes fluid.

Written soon after release, the memoir bears traces of trauma. Aseyev knows this and is consciously trying to recover. What troubles him most is the awareness that similar torture houses still exist, and, while one is enjoying the amenities of regular life, other people are being tortured. In 2022 it was known that *Izoliatsiia* was still a functioning concentration camp.

Coherent Digital. *Cold War Eastern Europe, 1947–1982*. 2022.

Accessible via Coherent Digital’s History Commons. <https://history-commons.net/modules/cold-war-eastern-europe-1947–1982/>

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Coherent Digital’s new *Cold War Eastern Europe, 1947–1982* database has a time-capsule feel for several reasons: one, because its heavily-marked-up documents from the era of typewriters and carbon copies evoke an earlier, John LeCarré-esque era; two, because history as a discipline has moved firmly away from these types of Anglocentric diplomatic/intelligence sources over the past several decades; and three, because this material has also already been available online for many years as part of Taylor & Francis’ Digital Primary Source archive, although it was previously in a much less convenient format. Coherent Digital’s conversion of these documents into a relatively functional full-text-searchable database is a major improvement over its predecessor. International Relations researchers and others interested

in the development of British foreign policy and intelligence work will find ample primary source material here. Most historians, and those who are interested in eastern Europeans' own perspectives in their own voices, may wish to look elsewhere, although some material valuable for this type of research is also included.

Part of Coherent Digital's History Commons platform, this database includes digitized versions of nearly 17,000 documents from the UK National Archives dating from the immediate post-WWII decades, for a total of over 1.4 million pages of text. The documents comprise formerly-classified reports from embassies and consulates throughout communist eastern Europe that were prepared for various departments of the British Foreign Office. At least 80% of the content is in English, which will be useful for Anglophone researchers who are unfamiliar with east European languages, but also ensures that events, personalities and movements are largely refracted through a British foreign policy lens. The remaining non-English content raises the question of whether similar or more impactful non-English documents have become available directly from east European archives since the fall of communism in 1989.

Fairly typical basic and advanced search capabilities are provided. Words which are printed clearly in the original are searchable with a high degree of accuracy, but the vast majority of documents include hand-written notes and blurry or indistinct text, so the ability to search the complete full text of all the documents is less than perfect. This can be seen in the snippets of text provided with each search result, which often include the automated optical character recognition (OCR) program's erroneous and/or nonsensical attempts to interpret the text. Hand-written diacritical marks added to east European personal names (Gomułka, Dubček, Ceaușescu) also create problems for full-text searching. In certain browsers, moreover, even when the full-text searching capability works perfectly, it can be difficult to navigate directly to the specific page(s) in a document where the search term appears. All individual documents can be downloaded, however, so as a last resort "Ctrl+F" can be used to highlight the locations where search terms appear in a particular text.

The inclusion of lesson plans, a glossary, "fact files" on the Foreign Office and on east European countries, a timeline of many of the key events documented in the database, and several essays on various topics in east European history and politics are intended to increase the value of the database as an undergraduate teaching tool. "Cold War Eastern Europe" should not be confused with another Coherent Digital product, "Secret Files from World War to Cold War (1936–1953)," which contains over 12,000 more-recently-digitized documents. While the hefty price tag will still be prohibitive for many institutions, the database does offer significantly improved functionality at a near-50%-discount compared to its previous Taylor & Francis incarnation.

Koen Slotmaeckers. *Coming In: Sexual Politics and EU Accession in Serbia.*

Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2023. xiii, 234 pp. Bibliography. Index. Figures. £85.00, hard bound.

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Based on the latest data from the Rainbow Map, produced annually by ILGA Europe, Serbia exhibits a 35% level of respect for LGBT human rights in 2023. While modest, this figure