

historical memory in the life of the older generations of Poles the book adds an indispensable piece to the mosaic of the Polish social policy.

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***Stalinism in Kazakhstan: History, Memory, and Representation.*** Ed. Zhulduzbek Abylkhozhin, Mikhail Akulov, and Alexandra Tsay. Trans. Simon Pawley and Anton Platonov. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2021. x, 202 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Illustrations. Photographs. Figures. Tables. \$105.00, hard bound.

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This multidisciplinary collection is the English translation of a volume that appeared in Almaty in Russian and Kazakh in 2019. The editors, historians Zhulduzbek Abylkhozhin and Mikhail Akulov, and the founder of the “Open Mind” project, Alexandra Tsay, curated the book project in the framework of a lecture series, bringing together historians, writers, artists, activists, and museum professionals. The book is divided into three sections, “History,” “Memory,” and “Representation,” and features an introduction by Catriona Kelly, who gave one of the “Living Memory” lectures.

In Kazakhstan, discussions of Stalinism and its legacies are complicated, sometimes muted or overwhelmed by the presence of many potentially competing narratives. Kazakh authorities have carefully avoided ascribing motives to Stalinist repression that could be provocative in the present. Meanwhile, topics like the Kazakh famine are becoming subject to disinformation campaigns from Russia, so a new volume like this is most welcome.

Section I opens with a discussion by Mikhail Akulov of how the utopias promised by the Third Reich and Soviet Union, despite obvious differences, carried deep within themselves the nightmarish universes of the camps. Deadly exclusionary policies were intrinsic to both systems, not some category of mistake or an errant dark side. This essay is a kind of rarity, because Putin’s ban on public Nazi-Soviet comparisons has dampened discussions in Kazakhstan, too. Akulov’s thought piece merely hints at official Russia’s rehabilitation of Stalinism, but his work and co-editor Zhulduzbek Abylkhozhin’s chapter on collectivization in the 2019 Russian edition of this book have been attacked as “famine mongering” and “Russophobic.”

Abylkhozhin argues that the collectivization campaigns were a “planned social and class genocide” (46), driven by choices that seemed natural to Bolshevik leaders and intrinsic to achieving the utopia’s goals. His chapter brings up numerous cruel details about the workings of the repressive apparatus that “laid waste to the Kazakh village like a devastating tornado” (43). The absurd gathering of vast livestock herds in concentration pens led to the deaths of millions of animals. Liquidation policies targeting the human population were essential parts of this process: meticulously planned, they involved firing squads, concentration camps, and being worked to death as part of a subjugated class. One “special settler” couple whose baby died in a pit in which they were forced to subsist, witnessed “200 deaths a day” at one of the Karaganda area mines, and saw stacks of bodies “kept in piles the size of a house, 500–700 people each, like logs” (50), waiting for the ground to thaw for burial. Kazakhstan became a terrifying “bleak terra incognita,” based on a “well-prepared and detailed plan” (46).

Zauresh Saktaganova explores repressive campaigns in Kazakhstan’s Academy of Sciences that were aided by opportunists among the colleagues of the affected scholars. They wrote up accusations that were later repeated verbatim by special

commissions and in trials. Official Kazakhstani historiography has focused more on how the policy was set in Moscow, while Saktaganova discusses the patterns found in the “deluge of denunciations in Kazakhstan” (61). Some of the scholar-informants went through minutiae of the accused’s bibliographies and built cases that their scholarship idealized “anti-Russian” historical figures. Without these collaborations, Saktaganova argues, the lives of dozens or even hundreds of victims could have “played out differently and less tragically” (61).

Section II opens with a short story by Yuri Serebriansky about displaced Polish villagers in Kazakhstan from the point of view of a young girl who wonders why they arrive without suitcases and in a strange settlement that has no buildings and stretches in all directions. This piece is accompanied by two brief oral histories and by a 1936 government resolution about the purported organization of the deportation of 15,000 families from Ukraine. The decree is more fictional than the story: a long and misleading list of tractors, lumber, horses, tools, and supplies that never materialized in the places of deportation.

Ekaterina Kuznetsova takes the reader to Dolinka, the former administrative center of the Karaganda labor camp complex, and introduces the descendants of former victims, many of them once orphaned. Her conversations reveal a glacial, tense process of recovery from the region’s profound “intellectual and moral-ethical losses” (91), alongside the presence of film directors, foreign visitors, historians and occasionally, returnees.

Co-editor Alexandra Tsay’s essay about the deportations of Koreans to Kazakhstan rounds out the middle section of the book as she reflects on Kazakhstan as a shared memory space in which everyone’s story is reclaimed from silences, and on Korean diaspora narratives and their relationship to nostalgia.

In Section III, Marinika Babanazarova, the long-time former director of the Savitsky museum of Karakalpakstan, introduces a small cluster of Russian avant-garde artists who were active in Uzbekistan in the 1920s. Their devoted follower, the archeologist Igor Savitskii, discovered and saved their paintings, along with thousands of others from the Soviet underground. The museum he founded in 1966 also collected Uzbek art and textiles. The avant-garde treasures that he saved became the core collection of one of independent Uzbekistan’s most fascinating museums, even if he did not live to see it.

Guldana Safarova takes us back to Karaganda and evokes the special energy that was brought to Kazakhstan by prisoner intellectuals. While most artists left after their release from the Gulag, some became beloved local teachers who worked without supplies or books but ended up having hundreds of students and carved out ways to hold exhibitions, a unique sphere of regional cultural activity.

The final chapter of the book brings examples of the post-memory art practice of Asel Kadyrkhanova. In her installation *Machine*, arrest warrants displayed on a wall are connected by red thread to a typewriter, exposing traces of repression. An animated sequence explores images of famine victims and party boss Filipp Goloshchekin, embedded in a discussion of what it means to create art that deals with trauma, especially when it is a prior generations’ pain, in “the endless time after” (179) the Gulag.

Compared to the international resonance of the *Holodomor*, the Kazakh *Asharshilik* is less known, and so are other violent and utopian policies of Stalinism in Central Asia. This compelling and accessible book brings Kazakh and Uzbek scholars and artists into broader discourses about Stalinism and post-Soviet culture and the collection will be of interest to many teachers and students of Soviet history and society.

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