

**CZECHOSLOVAK
STUDIES
ASSOCIATION**

**Newsletter of the Czechoslovak Studies
Association**

Volume 48 ▪ No. 1 ▪ SPRING 2025



See Inside:

**Prize Announcements
Conferences, CFPs, and More
Recent Book Reviews & Interviews
Articles
News of the Membership**



Church of the Czech Brethren in Olomouc, beside the Morava,
photo Jiří Komárek, via Wikipedia

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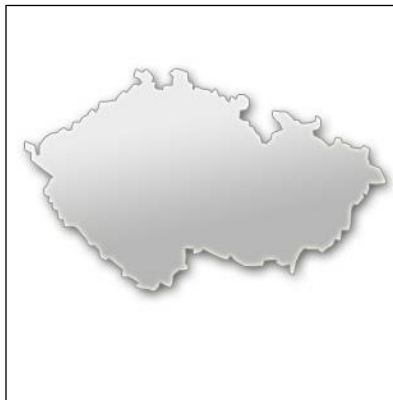
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**“The Newsletter of the Czechoslovak Studies
Association exists to express interests in the history of
Czechoslovakia, its predecessor and successor states,
and all its peoples within and without its historic
boundaries.”**

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Welcome to Our New Secretary-Treasurer

Zachary Doleshal has kindly agreed to take on the Secretary-Treasurer position, which is not an elected position, but one that is appointed by the president and approved by the executive committee. The first duty is to participate in Executive Committee discussions and present the CSA budget at our annual CSA meeting over Zoom. In addition to managing the CSA budget, duties include

the annual tax filing and overseeing the spring membership drive. The Secretary-Treasurer is also the person to contact if you have any questions about your membership status!

The CSA board is delighted to have Zachary following in the admirable footsteps of departing Secretary-Treasurer Thomas Ort.



Call for Nominations and Self-Nominations

Beginning August 25, the Czechoslovak Studies Association will hold elections for president, vice president, and four officer-at-large positions. These positions are for three-year terms, beginning at our annual meeting in November.

The CSA president and vice-president, along with Secretary-Treasurer Zachary Doleshal and Newsletter editor Karla Huebner, form the executive committee, which handles most of the day-to-day business of our organization. At-large board members primarily serve in an advisory role.

Nominations and self-nominations will be accepted through Monday June 30, 2025. Please send a paragraph-long biographical description and your CV to the nominating committee, Cynthia Paces (paces@tcnj.edu) and Julia Secklehner (secklehnerjm@hotmail.co.uk) by the deadline. Questions can be directed to the nominating committee or current CSA president Chad Bryant (bryantc@email.unc.edu).



Czernin Palace, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Prague, via Wikipedia

2025 Annual Social and General Meeting

The Czechoslovak Studies Association (CSA) will be again host an ASEES conference reception in Washington, DC, probably with the Slovak Studies Association (SSA) and/or another group as co-host; planning for the event will be done later this summer. The event is only possible thanks to your dues and generous donations. Past support has been provided by the SSA, the Center for Slavic, Eurasian, and East European Studies and the Center for European Studies at UNC-Chapel Hill as well as the Center for Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies at the University of Texas at Austin. Please let Chad Bryant know if you have suggestions for a good venue for the reception, ideally one near or easily accessed from the Washington Hilton, which is located on Connecticut not far from the Dupont Circle Metro.

The **annual membership meeting** of the Czechoslovak Studies Association will take place via Zoom on, tentatively, December 5

(we will confirm the exact date and time in the fall).

Members are automatically enrolled in the Google Group listserve, which will be our primary means of quick communication within the CSA. People may opt out of the listserve, but the hope is that it will prove useful for communication among members rather than being a top-down method of making announcements. While members are added automatically, non-members can email CSA to be added to the group.

The CSA's twitter handle is:

@CzechoslovakSA

The CSA has two Facebook pages:

Our institutional information page:

<https://www.facebook.com/czechoslovakstudies>

Our community group, for news/discussion:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/561860507278186>



CSA Prizes

Stanley Z. Pech Prize

The next competition for the Stanley Z. Pech Prize will be in 2026. The biennial prize honors a peer-reviewed article or book chapter dealing with the history of Czechoslovakia, its predecessor and successor states or provinces, or any of its peoples within and without its historic boundaries. To be eligible for consideration in this cycle, the publication must have appeared in English in print or online in calendar years 2024 and 2025.

The Pech Prize Committee accepts submissions from all academic disciplines, if they contain a substantial historical component. Authors should be members of the Czechoslovak Studies Association when they submit their publications. The current award is \$300.



CSA Book Prize

The next, biennial, Czechoslovak Studies Association Prize for the Best Book in the Field of Czechoslovak Historical Studies will be given in 2025. This prize recognizes an outstanding book published in 2023 or 2024 that is primarily concerned with the history of Czechoslovakia, its predecessor and successor states, or any of its peoples within and beyond its historical boundaries.

To be eligible for consideration, books must be primarily concerned with the history of Czechoslovakia, its predecessor and successor states, or any of its peoples within and without its historical boundaries. The field of historical studies will be broadly construed, with books in all fields considered for the prize if they are substantially historical in nature. The prize committee will decide whether a book matches these criteria. Books under consideration must be new works by a single author written originally in the English language. Books published in 2023 and 2024 are eligible for the 2025 competition.

To be eligible, you must be a member of the CSA. If you are uncertain about your membership status, please contact CSA Treasurer Zachary Doleshal at zad007@SHSU.EDU. Authors are responsible for providing the committee with the book they wish to enter the competition. Books for consideration should be submitted to committee chair no later than June 30, 2025. If you would like to send hard copies, please send a copy to each of the committee members listed below. You can also send an electronic copy to chair of the committee Marta Filipová at 16411@muni.cz.

The current award is \$400.

Many thanks to the Center for Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies at the University of Texas, Austin, which has sponsored this prize.

Current Committee Members

Dr Marta Filipová (chair)
Department of Art History
Faculty of Arts, Masaryk University
Arna Nováka 1
Brno 602 00
Czech Republic

Dr Felix Jeschke
Historisches Seminar der LMU München
Geschwister-Scholl-Platz 1
80539 München
Germany

Jesse Siegel
Department of History, Rutgers University
16 Seminary Place
New Brunswick, NJ, 08901
USA

Emerging Scholar Prize

The Czechoslovak Studies Association is pleased to announce the Emerging Scholars Essay Prize. This prize will be awarded to the author of a distinguished article, essay, or chapter on a topic related to the history and culture of Czechoslovakia, its predecessor and successor states, and its peoples. Papers that place these topics in a comparative or transnational context are welcome. Submissions should be an essay, journal article, book chapter, or chapter of a recently completed dissertation or master's thesis from 2022, 2023, or 2024 (they may not also be submitted for the Pech Prize).

They must be no more than 10,000 words in length inclusive of references/footnotes, and

written originally in English. Dissertation or thesis chapters can be edited to meet the maximum word count. Applicants must be current Ph.D. students or have earned a Ph.D. or master's degree in or after 2021. The competition will be open to members and non-members of the CSA, and the prize committee will not be provided information about an applicant's membership status. We encourage non-members, however, to see this as an opportunity to join the CSA. Please use [this page](#) to apply for membership. If you are uncertain about your membership status, please contact CSA Treasurer Zachary Doleshal at zad007@SHSU.EDU. Email submissions by June 20, 2025 to prize committee chair, Tatjana Lichtenstein, at lichtens@austin.utexas.edu. Prize value: \$200

Current Committee Members

Tatjana Lichtenstein (chair), University of

Texas at Austin

Philip Howe, Adrian College

Julia Mead, University of Chicago

Many thanks to the Center for Slavic, East European, and Slavic Studies and the Center for European Studies at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, which have sponsored this prize.

This prize is awarded to the author of a distinguished article, essay, or chapter on a topic related to the history and culture of Czechoslovakia, its predecessor and successor states, and its peoples. Papers that place these topics in a comparative or transnational context are welcome. Submissions should be an essay, journal article, book chapter, or chapter of a recently completed dissertation or master's thesis (they may not also be submitted for the Pech Prize).

Other Prizes of Interest

Slovak Studies Association Lifetime Achievement Award

Beginning in 2024, the Slovak Studies Association annually presents a deceased or living SSA member with the Slovak Studies Association Lifetime Achievement Award. Any member may nominate an individual for the award and present a brief rationale explaining the nominee's eligibility at least one month before the annual SSA meeting. The SSA Executive Committee (the president, vice president, secretary, treasurer, and newsletter editor) evaluate the nomination. Approval requires a majority of all members attending the annual meeting. The SSA shall present those receiving an SSA Lifetime Achievement Award with a plaque and shall update the SSA website with the names of

the winners. Send nominations or inquiries to slovakstudies@gmail.com.

The 2024 honorees were Owen V. Johnson (In Memoriam) and M. Mark Stolarik. See <https://slovakstudies.org/prizes/lifetime-achievement/>

Center for Austrian Studies Biennial Book Prize

The Center for Austrian Studies holds a biennial book prize competition. Books published between January 1st, 2023 and December 31st, 2024 are eligible for submission. Eligible works may be from any discipline in the humanities, social sciences, or fine arts.

The subject matter may deal with the past, present, and/or future of Central Europe, including topics pertaining to Austria and any regions historically part of the former Habsburg Empire.

The language of the publication must be English. Multi-authored studies or multi-author collections of essays are not eligible for this competition. This award is not restricted to U.S. citizens or permanent residents, but is meant to promote scholarly works published in North America. Please contact the Center with eligibility questions.

Deadline for submissions: Friday, May 2nd, 2025. The winners will be announced by October 2025. For additional questions, please contact Dr. Meyer Weinshel at casahy@umn.edu.

The CAS Book Prize has been made possible thanks to a generous donation from David and Rosemary Good.

BASEES Book Proposal Prize

A Prize for Best First Book Proposal in Minority History, launched by the BASEES Study Group for Minority History (SGMH), recognizes scholarly excellence among early career academics seeking to publish their original research with a major English-language academic press.

The biennial prize is offered by the SGMH for a book proposal of high quality dealing with any aspect of minority history (broadly defined) relating to Central, Eastern and Southeastern Europe.

The deadline for the next cycle is anticipated to be in January 2027. For more information about the prize, see:

<https://studygroupforminorityhistory.com/sgmh-first-book-proposal-prize/>

Please send any queries to:
sgmh.basees@gmail.com

The BASEES Study Group for Minority History (SGMH) is a forum devoted to the study of minority groups in the national and regional histories of Central, Eastern and Southeastern European from the Napoleonic Wars to the contemporary past.



Push-pull unit with 951.006 driving coach of ZSSK, between Bratislava-Vinohrady and Bratislava hlavná stanica, Slovakia, photo Petr Štefek, via Wikipedia

Twenty-fourth Annual Czech & Slovak Studies Workshop University of North Carolina

The Twenty-fourth Annual Czech and Slovak Studies Workshop was held at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill on April 25-26, 2025. The Workshop welcomes papers on Czech and Slovak topics, broadly defined, in all disciplines. In the past our interdisciplinary conference has drawn participants from colleges and universities in the United States and abroad. Areas of interest have been anthropology, architecture, art, economics, education, film, geography, history, Jewish studies, literature, music, phi-

losophy, politics, religion, society, sociology, and theater. Work in progress is appropriate for our workshop format. Junior faculty and advanced graduate students are particularly encouraged to apply. Hotel accommodation will be provided for participants who are presenting at the workshop.

This year's program included an invited lecture by Professor Melissa Feinberg, former Czechoslovak Studies Association President and author, most recently, of *Curtain of Lies: The Battle over Truth in Stalinist Eastern Europe* (Oxford University Press, 2017) and *Communism in Eastern Europe* (Routledge, 2022).

Sponsored by the Center for European Studies; the Center for Slavic, Eurasian, and East-European Studies; the German and Slavic Languages and Literatures Department; and the History Department at Chapel Hill as well as the Czechoslovak Studies Association; the Slovak Studies Association

Summer Meetup in Prague

Our summer Prague social meeting took place on Letna in June. We hope to do this again next year.



Birthday Appreciations of Jindřich Toman

Early this year our dear colleague Jindřich Toman turned eighty. Jindra's name has appeared on the spine of more than a dozen books, in Czech and English, since his arrival at the University of Michigan in 1987. His doctoral thesis from the University of Cologne (1981) focused on German and Slavic Philology, an interest that led to the publication of *Wortsyntax: Eine Diskussion ausgewählter Probleme deutscher Wortbildung*, 1983, republished in 1987) and *The Magic of a Common Language: Mathesius, Jakobson, Trubetzkoy and the Prague Linguistic Circle*, 1995). Jindra's interests then travelled to the history of the Czech avant-garde, which included a translation of Vítězslav Nezval's *Alphabet*, he completed with one of contributors below, Nicholas Sawicki. He has also curated several exhibitions, including *Jindřich Heisler: Surrealism Under Pressure* (Art Institute of Chicago, 2012). Recently, his intellectual journey has brought

him to the history of Bohemia's Jews (*Bohemia's Jews and their Nineteenth Century: Texts, Contexts, Reassessments*, 2023 in English, 2024 in Czech.)

I first met Professor Jindřich Toman in 2001, in Ann Arbor, Michigan at the Czech Studies Workshop, which, thanks to Professor Toman, became an annual event at the University of Michigan before taking to the road as the annual Czech and Slovak Workshop, setting up its tent at a different university or museum each year. The culture, ethos, and goals that Professor Toman created remain embedded into its DNA to this day, as does his goal of forming a sense of community. The Czech and Slovak Studies Workshop represents one of Jindra's most enduring legacies, along with his commitment to our field, and its rising scholars, more broadly. A longtime CSA board member and informal advisor, Jindra continues to make us all better. It is a pleasure to present

these three tributes to him as a belated birthday present.

Chad Bryant
President, CSA

An Appreciation by Cynthia Paces

In June, I was fortunate to meet up with Jindra and other members (and friends) of the Czechoslovak Studies Association. Michaela Appletová, Chad Bryant, Veronika Tuckeroová, and Avi Tucker joined Jindra at the Letná Beer Garden on a beautiful night just after the solstice. The sun did not set until late into the evening, and Jindra was his usual self—full of funny stories and new discoveries in Prague's library and archives. He told us that his Prague friends had recently conspired to throw him a party for his eightieth birthday. He said he would have been completely surprised except his friend called several times to make sure Jindra would not change his mind about attending.

We sipped beers and listened to Jindra tell us about the Jewish, anti-Zionist, pro-Soviet journal from the 1930s that he had photographed at the library that day. The conversation turned to recent and forthcoming publications among the group, including Veronika's book on Kafka and mine on the history of Prague. I pulled up the website for my book and asked Jindra if he recognized the painting on the cover. Of course he did. Not only did he reply that Oskar Kokoschka painted it, but he also commented on the other paintings in the artist's series of riverscapes. And he added where in Prague Kokoschka had lived.

Jindra has an encyclopedic knowledge of Czech, Bohemian, and Moravian culture.

Whenever he attends a Czech and Slovak Studies Workshop or ASEEES panel, we can always be sure to learn about a range of topics including poetry, architecture, photography, history, ethnography, *a tak dalé!* Not only is Jindra's knowledge broad, it is also precise. Off the top of his head, he can recommend books in various languages. He can explain the nuance of an argument, the meaning of a symbol, or a fragment of literature.

Although Jindra has dedicated countless hours researching his various interests, he has not spent his career sitting alone in an archive. He has created communities wherever he has gone. Of course, his most lasting contribution to our field is the Czech and Slovak Studies workshop, which he founded in 2000. For several years, young scholars from various academic disciplines met at the University of Michigan, where Jindra hosted us and introduced us to one another. He created a warm, welcoming, and generous atmosphere where senior scholars gave constructive advice to junior researchers. Thanks to Jindra, I got to know scholars in literature, music, film, and art history. A group of us who met through Jindra attended an interdisciplinary conference on modernism in Madison, Wisconsin. As a historian, I probably would not have ventured there on my own. Several of us who were at the inaugural workshop attend the current ones and try to offer the type of advice that helped us get where we are today. The workshop's reach has expanded—its location rotates and young scholars from Europe can attend with funding.

On the happy occasion of Jindra's eightieth birthday, I want to thank him for broadening my approach to scholarship and inviting me

into a supportive academic community. With his red spectacles, salt-and-pepper beard, and mischievous smile, Jindra might have stepped out of a book illustrated by Josef Čapek. His sense of humor and enjoyment of everyday life may embody the Czechs' *malý člověk*. But truly, he is a great man.

At' žije Jindra!

Cynthia J. Paces is professor of History at The College of New Jersey and completed her doctorate at Columbia University.

An Appreciation by Nicholas Sawicki

In the early 2000s, shortly after returning to the United States from working on my doctoral research in Prague, I was introduced to Jindřich Toman and became aware of his work. We met at what I believe was either the first or second Czech studies workshop, an annual intellectual gathering that at the time was still in its beginning stages, and which of course Jindra himself launched and organized. The workshop was in many ways his greatest gift to young scholars like myself, then just starting out in their careers in North America. And it was emblematic of the incredible dedication Jindra has always invested in searching out and bringing together what would otherwise be a mostly dispersed community of scholars and students, introducing them to one another, and encouraging them to share their thinking together—and to do so across all possible fields of inquiry where the study of the Czech lands and Czechoslovakia resides.

There was a great personal generosity to this gesture, as well as an intellectual one. At the time, to be a student or scholar in the United

States or Canada working on Czech topics felt to many of us something like living on a distant island. There was limited opportunity for intellectual exchange, and in most cases, the disciplines we trained in had few advanced scholars with deep knowledge of the subjects we were individually working on. Jindra's talent for building, almost from scratch, a connected community of colleagues and thinkers, changed this entirely. Over a period of years, at annual convenings of the Czech studies workshop and during the early summers, when Jindra was almost always in Prague and maintained an open invitation to all of us to gather with him for a meal or a drink, he established the conditions for the community of Czech studies scholars we have today.

For myself, as a graduate student at the time studying the history of artistic modernism, Jindra's own incredibly broad intellectual purview was a constant spur to expanding and refining my own thinking, for in every discussion one has with Jindra, there is always something more to learn. His interest in modern Czech and Czechoslovak visual culture is astounding and his knowledge about it is extraordinarily deep, although his own earliest scholarly training and research were naturally centered on linguistics. I learned from our many conversations, walks together through museum and gallery exhibitions, and the example of Jindra's own expanding body of scholarship on the visual arts, that one can productively work and think across disciplines. I also learned that to treat any aspect of Czech cultural production of the early 20th century in disciplinary isolation was missing the story, since the artistic, literary, musical, and critical develop-

ments of that period were all closely intertwined and in dialogue with one another.

“Embed yourself deeply, but make sure not to go native,” was another piece of advice he sometimes shared. To conduct research in the Czech Republic in the 1990s and early 2000s required cultivating strong relationships with scholars and institutions locally, but Jindra challenged our generation of emerging scholars to maintain a healthy criticality towards the more canonical narratives forming in the 1990s in some Czech-language scholarship, which naturally had a significant role to play in Czech life after the revolution of 1989, but often traded historical complexity for simpler explanations. This conviction over time also spread among young scholars in the Czech Republic, many of whom Jindra would invite to travel to the Czech studies workshops, and through this, all of us found closer personal and intellectual integration. For Jindra, there was a prevailing belief that in every area of inquiry there is always another layer that can be peeled back, and a new and intellectually exciting discovery in the waiting.

Nicholas Sawicki is professor of Art History at Lehigh University, and completed his doctorate at the University of Pennsylvania.



An Appreciation by Veronika Tuckerová

I first met Jindra during a Czech Workshop, held at Columbia University. Jindra founded the workshop at the University of Michigan a quarter-century ago: a unique, yearly opportunity for the US students of Czech studies to discuss their research. As a doctoral student in German, I did not take part in the workshop regularly; it changed when I started teaching at Slavic departments. The breadth and depth of Jindra’s scholarship however defies such compartmentalization: liberal humanist, he is equally at home in linguistics, German and Slavic studies, Jewish history, art history, and design. His questions to academic speakers are deceptively simple, and more often than not serve as corrective lens: pointing out connections missed, important omissions, phrased in a disarming way, “Tak co máš?” or “What is xyz?” I had many opportunities to meet Jindra also in Prague where he frequents archives and libraries; these venues appear to be his home, as much as *antikvariáty* and art galleries such as Ztichlá klika. Friendly, tolerant, and collegial, he is an engaging conversationalist, his wry humor making every encounter a pure joy. Many good wishes, Jindro!

Veronika Tuckerová is senior preceptor in Slavic Languages and Literatures (Czech Language Program) at Harvard and completed her doctorate at Columbia.

Opportunities

Visiting Professorship at the Institute of History, University of Hradec Kralove (Spring Semester 2026)

The Institute of History, University of Hradec Kralove, is again offering a visiting professorship position in History for the Spring Semester of 2026. As part of this successful program running from 2015, we offer a wide range of scholars a unique teaching, research, and study opportunity at our institute in the heart of Central Europe.

As we always strive to internationalize our academic community even further with the goal offer the taste of the same to our students, we are pleased to invite outstanding scholars from abroad to apply.

The expected length of the professorship is five months (February 2026 to June 2026), with full or part-time residence in the area. It involves teaching two courses (one graduate level, ninety minutes per week, and one undergraduate level, forty-five minutes per week) on topics of your choice and based on your field of expertise, plus offering individual consultations over the course of the semester to our students, allowing them

to reap the benefits of a unique one-time opportunity. Besides teaching, publishing at least one scholarly article is required, either in an academic journal indexed in Web of Science or SCOPUS databases, or as a chapter in a collection of essays published with a renowned international publisher. The publication is to be affiliated to our institute and dedicated to the Visiting Professorship program.

Under its terms, one-time travel costs to and from are covered, in addition to a monthly pay of 45,000 CZK (roughly 1,900 EUR, before taxes). We also offer help with finding appropriate accommodation in Hradec Kralove for the duration of the program; however, its cost is expected to be covered by visiting scholars themselves.

DISCLAIMER: In case the situation in the Czech Republic (pandemic or any other large-scale crisis) does not allow in-person contact with the students, the teaching will be done online (via MS Teams, Zoom, or other channels). If it is impossible to travel or the international situation is difficult in any other way, this may be done from your home location (in that case, the approximate price of accommodation is deduced from the monthly pay, to 1,150 EUR before taxes).

Questions? Contact Dr. Jiří Hutečka
(jiri.hutecka@uhk.cz).

If interested, please fill out an application form, add a brief motivation letter, and send these documents the same e-mail address by 31 May 2025.

The Michael Kopanic PhD Fund Scholarship

Beginning in the 2025-2026 academic year, students currently studying Slovak courses in the University of Pittsburgh's Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures are invited to apply for the Michael Kopanic PhD Fund Scholarship. Recipients must be in good academic standing, currently enrolled

in a Slovak course, and have committed to taking Slovak course(s) within the next academic year.

The donor, Michael J. Kopanic, Jr., is currently Adjunct Professor of History at the University of Maryland Global Campus (UMGC). Passionately interested in Slovak history and culture, he chose to pursue his PhD in history at the University of Pittsburgh after discovering that only the University of Pittsburgh consistently offered courses in Slovak.

Professor Kopanic has devoted his entire life to learning more about Slovaks and their culture, and is very active in Slovak studies. In consultation with Pittsburgh's Slovak Studies Program and Slavic Department, he

learned that there was a strong need for funding for students wishing to learn Slovak. Thus he decided to fund an endowed scholarship for students studying advanced Slovak, and it is his hope that the Slovak Studies Program will flourish and thrive for centuries to come.

For more information, see:

<https://www.slavic.pitt.edu/michael-kopanic-phd-fund-scholarship>

Christine Metil summarizes the history of the Slovak Program at the University of Pittsburgh at

<https://www.slavic.pitt.edu/about/community-support>



Calls for Papers

Central Europe Yearbook, an open-access journal for undergraduates working on Central European topics, provides an opportunity for them to publish their scholarship and work in tandem with professors, independent scholars, graduate students, and other undergraduates. The Yearbook's online platform provides an outlet for a wide array of scholarly projects. Please encourage students to submit projects and proposals. Submissions can include academic articles, GIS maps, interactive resources, games, VLOGs, or any other compelling union of technology and research.

More information about the journal can be found on the journal's website:
<https://pubs.lib.umn.edu/index.php/cey/>.

If you have any questions, please contact the editors at ceuy@umn.edu.

Canadian Slavonic Papers welcomes submissions from anyone in the world and from any disciplinary perspective on the Slavic area. Editor James Krapfl is particularly keen to revitalize the book review section, so anyone (including graduate students) who might like to write a review should get in touch with him.

James Krapfl, Editor, *Canadian Slavonic Papers / Revue canadienne des slavistes*
Dept. of History | McGill University | 855, rue Sherbrooke O. | Montréal (Québec) H3A 2T7 | Canada | tel. +1 514 769 8548 (home)

Exhibition

On September 27-28, the Kysuce Museum in Čadca, Slovakia, opened an exhibit entitled “Stolárikovci”, featuring the Stolárik family of Ottawa. It focused on the work of the late Imrich Stolárik and his son Mark in the Canadian Slovak League and the work of the Chair in Slovak History & Culture at the University of Ottawa. The exhibit was organized by Dr. Marián Lisčák, of the Museum, who made two trips to Ottawa to research and gather materials for the exhibit. In January of 2025 “Stolárikovci” was installed at a branch of the Kysucké museum in Stará Bystrica. In September it will travel to another branch in Turzovka and to the Slovak Embassy in Ottawa in 2026. Mark and Anne Stolarik flew to Slovakia at the end of September to attend the opening.

Mark also lectured to two groups of local High School students about Slovak immigration from the Kysuce region and he also said a few words about the exhibit at its official opening. A large number of residents of Čadca attended the opening, as did members of the Slovak press, who wrote articles about it in local newspapers.



Recent Book Reviews from H-Net

Book reviews pertinent to our geographic interests can appear on a perhaps surprising variety of H-Net networks. It's easy to miss some of them, so thanks to H-Net's Creative Commons licensing, we are reprinting reviews relating to Czechoslovak studies.



Ghodsee, Kristen; Orenstein, Mitchell A.. *Taking Stock of Shock: Social Consequences of the 1989 Revolutions*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2021. Illustrations, tables. xvii + 280 pp. \$32.99 (paper), ISBN [9780197549247](#). \$125.00 (cloth), ISBN [9780197549230](#). Reviewed by Krzysztof Jasiewicz (Washington and Lee University). Published on H-Poland (November, 2024). Commissioned by Agnieszka Mrozik (Insti-

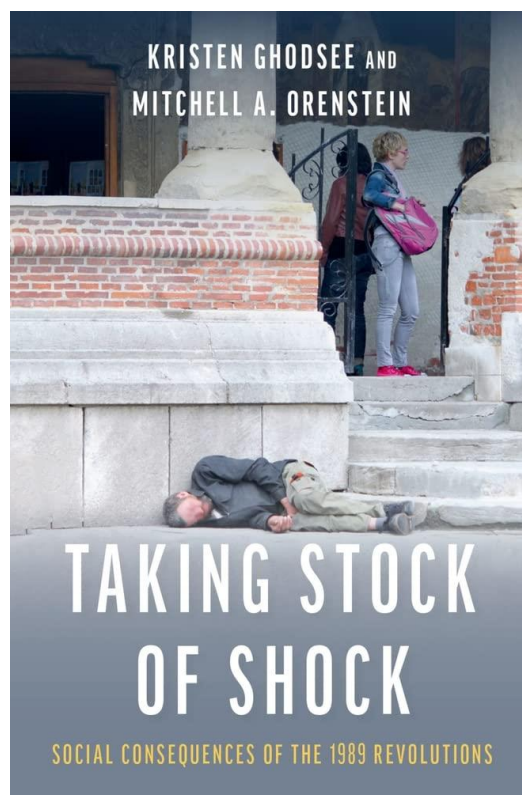
tute of Literary Research of the Polish Academy of Sciences).

During the days of real socialism (when communist regimes ruled the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe), those who cared to read through party leaders' speeches or other official pronouncements skimmed through the first paragraphs and pages, which were full of self-congratulatory praise of the regime's accomplishments, in search of the word “however” (однако in Russian). Only after seeing this adverb did they find some information on the real problems facing the nation. There is a “however” section in this review, but readers should not skim through what precedes it. The praise offered here is well deserved.

This extraordinary book is a thorough assessment of the post-communist transitions in twenty-nine nations of the region, written by two scholars, Kristen Ghodsee and Mitchell A. Orenstein, representing the antipodes of the methodological spectrum. Ghodsee is a cultural anthropologist whose qualitative ethnographic approach highlights the idiosyncratic nuances of the communities under investigation. Orenstein is a political scientist specializing in quantitative research in political economy on a societal and cross-national level. Each became a renowned authority in their respective fields long before they coupled their scholarly efforts at the University of Pennsylvania. Congratulations to Penn for poaching them from other fine institutions!

The authors' analyses are based on multiple sources, including hard economic and demographic statistics (World Bank, United Nations, US Department of Agriculture's Economic Research Service, Maddison Project, Eurostat, etc.); opinion survey data (Eurobarometer, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development's Life in Transition, Pew Charitable Trust, World Values Survey, Levada Center, etc.); and soft ethnographic studies presenting snapshots of daily life in communities coping with challenges of transition, in Central Asia, Russia, the Balkans, and Central Europe. At their disposal, they also had an abundance of varied scholarly projects. In their selection of sources, they were guided not just by their quality but also by the completeness of data (preferably covering all twenty-nine nations) and the potential of chosen cases to best illustrate particular arguments. In effect, the product is both rich in detail and concise (some two hundred pages of text, plus an-

other eighty pages of notes and bibliography), a true treat for students of the subject.



The book is composed of four parts, which present evidence—economic, demographic, public opinion, and ethnographic—to answer the question posed in the introduction: was the transition from communism a qualified success or an utter catastrophe? Throughout the book, the authors confront two dominant perspectives, scholarly and otherwise, of the transition. The first, labeled here as the “J-curve perspective,” focuses on economic performance, which, after a short period of decline in the gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (the actual shock), was supposed to lead to steady growth for years to come, to everyone’s benefit. The other, the “disaster capitalism perspective,” emphasizes the fate of ordinary citizens who were suddenly (here is the

shock) thrown from the admittedly uncomfortable but predictable conditions of late socialism into a land of a painful present and uncertain future, the promised land for a few (cutthroat capitalists) and the condemned land for exploited masses.

Not surprisingly, Ghodsee and Orenstein find at least partial confirmation for both perspectives. The population of the post-communist region bifurcated into winners and losers of the transition in two distinct ways, cross-national and intra-national. Certain national economies indeed followed the J-curve trajectory: after an initial drop in the GDP, although longer and deeper than expected when “shock therapy” was first applied, they recovered and have kept growing at a relatively high annual rate. This growth was briefly interrupted by only two global events, unrelated to the conditions of post-communism: the Great Recession of 2008-9 and the COVID-19 pandemic a decade later. But other national economies “never [that is, not before 2019 when the data for the book were analyzed] recovered the GDP per capita of the late socialist period” (p. 33). There are winners and losers within each nation as well. Wealthy, young, urban, educated men are more likely to be found among the former; the poor, the elderly, the less-well educated, and women tend to be overrepresented among the latter. In short, those who once expected to be and now really are competitive in the market (economic, political, cultural) are satisfied; those who lack attributes giving them competitiveness in this new environment are not.

Neither of these two findings is a revelation. The bifurcation within and across nations has been studied since the 1990s. Cross-national comparative studies have demon-

strated a vast gap in standards of living between, say, Central Europeans and the peoples of Central Asia. Ghodsee and Orenstein gather the best available evidence in one place to expose important patterns observed by scholars in extant literature and, on this basis, to offer a summary assessment of the post-communist transitions. This summary, presented in the concluding chapter, is by no means positive. In what they call “a sobering thought,” they state, “soon, a number of countries will have spent more time in transition than they did living under communism” (p. 193).

The interdisciplinary approach is arguably the book’s major strength. The authors not only cite plentiful data on economic inequalities but also confront them with relevant results of public opinion surveys. They apply procedures developed by such sociologists as Max Weber (his *Verstehen* method) and William Thomas and Florian Znaniecki (the approach known in Poland as “Znaniecki’s humanistic coefficient” and in the United States as the “Thomas theorem,” which can be summed up this way: “if people perceive situations as real, they are real in their social consequences”). If people perceive existing inequalities, no matter of their real size and character, as too big and unfair, they are likely to act to reduce them, for instance, by voting for parties that promise to tax the rich, curb corruption, and expand social services offered by the state. Hard statistical data, regardless how accurate, do not matter; what matters is how they are perceived and interpreted by citizens. Understanding this helps us to understand the “red nostalgia” of the 1990s and the surge of right-wing populism in the twenty-first century.

Ghodsee and Orenstein point out that the rise of populism in its exclusivist, nationalist version has been facilitated by an ideological vacuum, as communism not only collapsed as a system of governance or political regime but also faded away as a coherent ideology. In relation to Russia, the authors cite subtle analyses of the anthropologist Sergui Oushakine and his concept of “patriotism of despair,” which refers to a new collective identity based on the common experience of loss and trauma and, they add, which accounts for the popular support for the resurgence of Russian imperialism (p. 180). They find a similar sense of national victimhood elsewhere in the region. They mention specifically Poland, Hungary, and Bulgaria, whose citizens willingly put nationalist populists in power, but they see nativist policies as an important factor across the post-communist space. These are all important observations, solidly rooted in the authors’ original research and their analyses of a wide variety of scholarship.

However... Enter Poland. I give special attention to the Polish case not as justification for the submission of this review to H-Poland but because of certain methodological considerations. We can learn a lot from scholarly syntheses, such as the book reviewed here, but we can also enrich our understanding of the studied phenomena by looking at outliers or extreme cases. Such an outlier may be treated as a crucial case, one that best illustrates a concept or theory. If the outlier does not support the theory or the conclusions, or contradicts them outright, then the case has to be explained, its idiosyncratic features pointed out. It should be demonstrated if and how the exception confirms the rule.

Poland is a perfect candidate for such a test. Chronologically, it was the first nation to apply shock therapy. The liberalization of prices, meant to restore balance between demand and supply, happened virtually overnight on January 1, 1990. This move was a part of a packet of legislation designed to introduce a market economy in place of a communist command economy. Privatization of trade and industries followed, albeit at a slower pace, while arable land had already been owned by individual farmers, unlike in other countries of the region. Furthermore, Poland was the leader in political reforms, the first nation of the Soviet bloc to conduct a competitive (if not yet quite fully free) election in June 1989 and install a non-communist government in September that year. Arguably, developments in Poland accelerated the process of reforms in Hungary, emboldened citizens of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) to vote for freedom with their feet, empowered the opposition in Czechoslovakia, and encouraged dissidents and reformers across the bloc.

While the rise of prices and the depth of the recession were greater than expected, the Polish economy was the first to record positive growth in 1992 and the first to reach pre-transition levels in GDP per capita in 1996. It has been growing steadily ever since. Poland, the only nation in Europe to do so, avoided the recession in 2009, recording negative growth only in the pandemic year 2020.

On face value, then, the Polish case seems to confirm the J-curve perspective on transition. Ghodsee and Orenstein admit this; they go as far as to say that “Poland had done spectacularly well” (p. 184). They place Poland, along with Hungary, Czechia, Esto-

nia, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia, as well as Albania, Bosnia, and Belarus, in the group of relative winners of the economic transition. In the opposite group, those whose “average levels of GDP per capita remain[ed] below 1989 in 2019—thirty years later”—are “Ukraine, Moldova, Serbia, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan, but also EU member Latvia and star reformer Georgia” (p. 33). The presence of Latvia, maybe not a poster child of transition but still in conventional wisdom a winner, is striking here. Data on the GDP per capita published by the World Bank, Eurostat, and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) confirm this conventional wisdom.[1] Moreover, data posted by the authors on their book companion website contradict their own finding: in 2011, Latvia’s GDP per capita is listed there as USD\$13,343 in 1989 and USD\$22,092 in 2016. It recorded a significant, 17 percent, drop in the GDP during the Great Recession but recovered quickly by 2013. The authors must have had good reason to place Latvia in the group of losers, which makes it a deviant case, an outlier among EU member states. But as a result, this case deserves a thorough explanation of both the methods used in data analysis and the conclusions drawn.

Throughout the book, the authors use data for the year 1990 as the benchmark. Communist regimes in Central and Southeastern Europe fell in late 1989 and in 1990; the Soviet Union collapsed at the end of 1991. Economic reforms began at least a year (and more often a few years) later, so the statistics for 1990 represent the state of the communist economy, as reported at its twilight by its officials, not the beginning of reforms.

The authors declare a careful approach to the data’s reliability but mostly in relation to post-communist economies (accounting for the presence of the informal sector). However, competent students of communist economies at the time, economic historians since, and even any casual observer who had lived there (like me) have expressed serious doubts about the veracity of numbers issued by communist statistical offices. Alain Besançon, in his *Anatomie d’un Spectre: L’économie politique du socialisme réel* (1981), observed, for example, that the numbers for steel production in the USSR typically included production of real steel, steel of mediocre quality, steel with defects, steel-like garbage, pseudo-steel, and pseudo-production of steel (the last category meaning the steel that existed only on paper).

Likewise, the authors base their assessment that “poverty shot up in post-communist countries after 1989” on the commonly accepted measure of absolute poverty set at USD\$5.50 a day (p. 13). This measure cannot be projected back to the period of the command economy because currencies of communist countries were not transferable on money markets. Citizens of these states were (sometimes) allowed to purchase a limited amount of foreign currency from a state bank at an official exchange rate or to sell their dollars or deutschmarks (when possession of such currency was legal or at least tolerated by the regime) but at a less favorable rate. Alternatively, they could make a much better deal exchanging their cash on the black market, with obvious risks involved. This grossly complicates the calculation of purchasing power parity (which the \$5.50 seems to represent). Regardless of the rate, though, the equivalent of \$5.50 in

local currency would let them survive not a day but a week or longer. Comparison of levels of poverty should be based on patterns of consumption (what one can afford) rather than on income. The authors cite data on availability of basic necessities (table 2.2) but for the year 1995 only, without comparison to data from before 1989. To be sure, poverty in transition states has been a real, often acute, problem, but many people lived in poverty before the revolutions that launched the transition. Would the revolutions have happened otherwise?

Most importantly, statistics on income inequality and its growth over time, the key element of the authors' arguments in favor of a negative assessment of the transition, are not free of shortcomings either. The Gini coefficient, one of the most commonly used in the literature and applied here, is suitable for market economies. As for the GDP, the benchmark used by the authors is the year 1990, which illustrates the inequities before the introduction of markets (shock therapy), implemented, gradually, in the early 1990s. Between 1995 and 2015 (last year cited in the book), the value of the Gini coefficient either before (table 2.3) or after (table 2.5) taxes and transfers, regardless of some fluctuations not exceeding seven points on a one-hundred-point scale, has not changed much in any region or even any nation, so we do not see a rise of inequalities with the progress of transition. Furthermore, these do not deviate significantly from the numbers for other, non-transitioning European economies. In 2015, while Lithuania, Romania, and Bulgaria had the highest Gini numbers among EU members, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Czechia had the lowest. The status of an economy in the post-communist transition

does not explain anything here. Nor does the status of a leader in economic growth: Poland places in the middle, with Gini slightly below the EU average.

The 1995-2015 Gini numbers are consistently higher, however, than those for 1990. Obviously, the problem is that none of the national economies in the region was a true market economy that year; access to goods and services was mostly regulated by bureaucratic means. True, people were receiving their salaries, wages, or pensions, the basis for calculation of the income-based Gini coefficient, but equal income did not mean equal access to goods and services. A party apparatchik and a college professor could have had exactly the same salary, but the former would jump the line in a housing cooperative to receive a flat exceeding in size the prescribed norms; would receive coupons allowing him to buy, at nominal price, a refrigerator, or a washing machine, or a car; and would buy his groceries in a shop accessible only to party office employees. The latter, in contrast, would wait more than a dozen years to move into an under-sized flat (in the meantime living with his parents or overpaying to rent on the black market); would pay four times the nominal price for a second-hand car on a semilegal free market; would need to bribe a shop manager to get a refrigerator or a washing machine; and would spend hours queuing for groceries in front of a neighborhood shop, without any guarantee that the desired staples would still be on shelves when he gets inside. The Gini coefficient for those two equaled zero; their standards of living were poles apart. Such inequalities extended also to access to universal social benefits, distributed allegedly to everyone free of

charge or heavily subsidized, such as health care, childcare, and university education. “Free” means regulated not by the market but by the bureaucracy. If the resources are scarce, who gets them is decided by connections or bribery.

These inequalities were real, and they were perceived as unjust and unfair. They were among the major factors in undermining the legitimacy of the communist system, particularly in Poland and Romania, where shortages were more severe than elsewhere. The data on Poland included in table 12.3 confirm this: the perception of society as highly unequal was expressed by 58.5 percent of those interviewed by the International Social Survey Programme in 1991 (two years after the fall of communist regime), and the percentage decreased with the progress of transition to 49.1 percent in 1999 and 37.1 percent in 2009.

But even in the context of a market economy, the Gini coefficient, if calculated on the basis of representative samples, has another shortcoming. Even the best sampling formulas cannot catch the top earners, particularly if this group is small in size, which artificially lowers the value of the coefficient. To offset this problem, the authors introduce another statistic, percent of the national income flowing to the top 1 percent of earners (table 2.4). In most of the listed transition economies, this category of highest earners is in the upper single digits or lower teens of percent of national income. Poland, with 13.98 percent in 2015 is near the higher end, but the real outlier is Russia, with 20.24 percent. However, the data for Central Asian and Caucasus economies, as well as for Ukraine and Belarus, are conspicuously missing. And no wonder: the income and

even more so the wealth of the richest people in countries abundant in oil, gas, and other natural resources like Azerbaijan or Kazakhstan may be hard to measure or even to estimate. It is safe to assume, though, that the Aliyevs and the Nazarbayevs of this world have taken good care of their families and cronies.

In short, inequalities are lower in economies that have grown following the J-curve. Most of them have something else in common: they are pluralist democracies. Surely, they are not perfect, as evidenced by democratic backsliding in Hungary and Poland, but the backsliding phenomenon is not specific to post-communist nations. Besides, Poland, since 2023, seems to be in the process of reversing it. In contrast, Russia, Belarus, Azerbaijan, and Central Asian republics are autocratic regimes. As Robert Conquest once remarked, “Even with political liberty there may be economic injustice; without it, it is inevitable.”[2]

The demographic evidence presented in the next section of the book is indeed striking. The very titles of the chapters speak for themselves: “Where Have All the People Gone?,” “The Mortality Crisis,” “Collapse in Fertility,” and “The Out-Migration Crisis.” Data cited by the authors provide solid support for such diagnoses. Ghodsee and Orenstein give special attention to Russia. They offer an extensive discussion of alcoholism as the likely chief cause of excess mortality of men of productive age. They note that the high mortality among men dates back to communist times and reached dramatic levels during the first decade of transition. They critically assess the thesis set forth by David Stuckler, Lawrence King, and Martin McKee that shock therapy

(which included mass privatization leading to mass unemployment) caused widespread psychosocial stress that explains the increase in mortality.[3] The Polish case supports the authors' skepticism of this reasoning: while unemployment levels rose steadily during transition, exceeding 20 percent on the eve of accession to the EU (2004) and reversing only then (eventually to the lowest levels in the EU), mortality among adult males, excessively high throughout the 1970s and 1980s at above 200 per 1,000, from its peak in 1991 (276 per 1,000), kept declining at a fast pace to reach a low of 154 per 1,000 in 2019.[4] Apparently, shock therapy offered Polish males (some, like Russians, no strangers to binge drinking) certain incentives to get their acts together and stay alive.

Going back to statistics from the decades of communist rule is helpful also in understanding developments in Russia. In figure 6.1, Ghodsee and Orenstein compare general (male and female) life expectancy in Russia, Germany, France, and Visegrad countries (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia) from 1915 to 2015. Russia reached a peak in the late 1960s (at about seventy, only slightly lower than the reference cases), declined in the 1970s, rebounded briefly in the late 1980s (during glasnost and perestroika), then dropped rapidly, and rose again around 2010 (the times of oil and gas exports-induced prosperity). The reference cases, including the Visegrad Four, recorded steady increases since 1960. Apparently, something more or else than just the vicissitudes of transition accounts for Russia's exceptionalism here.

Data on fertility in post-communist societies, alarming as they are, seem to correspond to data from non-transition countries.

Everywhere in Europe fertility rates have dropped below the simple reproduction level; they are relatively high in Africa and in Muslim countries in Asia, including the post-communist nations of Central Asia and Caucasus. Obviously, cultural factors, not the effects of transition, are in play here.

There is, however, a direct link between the transition and emigration. Ghodsee and Orenstein show appreciation for the sense of liberation that the abolishment of tight controls of international borders gave to the millions of people in the region. The freedom to travel was, in due course, followed by the freedom to seek employment in more affluent Western economies. This was true for the nations that joined the EU, but not exclusively. From Central and Southeastern Europe, job seekers moved west, north, and south, while their economies absorbed the flow of guest workers from the East. Again, Poland is an outlier here. According to Eurostat, "Poland topped the list of employment-related first residence permits, with 625,000 permits issued in 2019 (of which 551,000 were issued to Ukrainians), making up 52% of all first permits for employment reasons issued in the EU." [5] Besides Ukrainians, among permit recipients there were also citizens of Belarus, Georgia, the Central Asian republics, and Vietnam. As the authors note, it may be too soon to fully assess the effects of such massive migrations, partly temporary, partly permanent. What seems to be certain is that they have affected particular nations and subregions to various degrees, with the Caucasus and Baltic nations recording highest losses.

Evidence coming from public opinion polls and surveys is critical, for reasons discussed above: people's behavior is guided by their

perceptions of reality, not the reality itself. Across the region, the cited data on assessment of the transition (taken from the most reliable surveys) show a similar pattern: first, hope-generated enthusiasm in early years; then disappointment with outcomes in the late 1990s and first years of this millennium, often deepened by the experience of the Great Recession; and finally renewed appreciation in a few cases and a more critical view elsewhere. Poland—our crucial case—stands here again on the extreme. In 2019, according to the Pew Research Center, Poles were more than anyone else satisfied with the transition to a multi-party political system (85 percent) and to a market economy (85 percent), and, by far, more often believed that the transition benefited ordinary people (64 percent) (pp. 127-29).

Poles are also, in the company of East Germans and Czechs, at the top in terms of satisfaction with their lives. They record here, along with East Germans, the greatest rise between 1991 and 2019, a jump from 12 percent to 56 percent of fully satisfied (table 11.1). The rise, if not that profound, was recorded also in other investigated nations, including Russia. Ghodsee and Orenstein note here an interesting phenomenon: across the region, thirty or so years after the breakthrough, people tend to assess the improvement in their personal situation better than in the general economic, political, and social situation of their country. Let's add here that attitudes are shaped in reaction to changing circumstances with certain delay; the reality changes first, the perceptions of it follow in due course. It is not surprising that people first feel the improvement in their households and only later appreciate the general factors that have contributed to it.

The final section, on ethnographic evidence, offers a number of telling and often touching personal stories. They demonstrate how the systemic change altered human lives. They portray a longing for the past, with its sense of personal safety and security, and note the difficulties in coping with new challenges. One can add that they offer evidence of what psychologists refer to as “learned helplessness,” here expressing itself in the inability to assume responsibility for one's own fate induced by the socialization into the conditions of an omnipotent and omnipresent state. Unfortunately, in this section there are no stories told by people of success (like the story of Bogdan, a psychologist turned into a business consultant, told in the introduction). There are no stories of such people as the young mathematician drafted to work for a bank, who learned operations on the real estate market to the point of amassing a personal fortune big enough to become one of the greatest contributors to charities in his country; the young sociologist, active in the radical left-wing opposition to the communist regime in his country, who became a mayor of a big city, elected and reelected to the office five times in free and fair elections; the young economist, who from scratch built a recycling company that became a major player in her country and earned her the businesswoman of the year title; the married couple of farmers who, recognizing that their small farm was not going to feed them, built on their land a warehouse that became the center of gravity in the fruit and vegetable trade in the district; or the retired mechanic, happy that he does not have to spend hours hunting for food items across the town anymore, because now he can find in a shop next door all he needs to cook dinner for his wife and

himself. In addition to “portraits of desperation,” in real life there are also stories of dreams fulfilled (p. 155).

Poland, treated as a crucial case for the effectiveness of post-communist transition, shows us that shock not only could but also would lead to therapy, if it met certain conditions. These conditions can be identified by comparing Poland and other similar cases of eventual success with cases of failure. As noted above, Ghodsee and Orenstein provide a compelling explanation for the bifurcation between winners and losers within a society. We still need an explanation, not clearly articulated in the book, of the split among the winners and the losers of the transition on a cross-national level.

There are certain idiosyncrasies in the Polish case. The economic crisis in the 1980s was deeper in Poland than elsewhere in the communist world, with the exception of Romania. This explains why austerity measures were generally accepted as a necessary condition for any improvement. In addition, the powerful Solidarity movement, which brought in the political regime change, offered the reforms a protective umbrella. Shock was delivered virtually overnight, in one jolt. Recovery, if longer than expected, was shorter than in ultimately successful economies that delayed and stretched reforms, and hence the suffering, over time (Slovakia, Romania). But most important was the political context. Poland became a pluralist democracy, with its government accountable to citizens. And, indeed, the Tadeusz Mazowiecki government that delivered the shock survived only one year. Its successors, however, were neither able nor willing to reverse the reforms.

As observed when looking at socioeconomic inequalities, Poland shares democratic features, imperfect as they are, with other successful post-communist nations, including Czechia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Romania, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, and, though now backsliding, Hungary. In contrast, the losers are either those who entered the path to democracy late (Ukraine, Moldova, Serbia) or have never done so (Azerbaijan and the Central Asian republics). Russia could be placed in the latter company, with its reversal from democracy and its short-lived economic prosperity due to international terms of trade, not reforms. The causal chain seems to run this way: no democratic reforms; no accountability; incentives for corruption, nepotism, and cronyism; economic inequality/kleptocracy; no incentives for economic reforms.

This leads us to another question: why did some post-communist nations choose democracy while others did not? Many different responses have been suggested in the extant literature, as indeed many different factors have been in play: the robustness of civil society (Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia), the presence of democratic traditions (Czechoslovakia in the twentieth century, Hungary and Poland-Lithuania in the early modern times), the duration of communist rule, geopolitics (proximity to the EU or to Russia), etc. Let us add here the presence of alternative elites, opposition leaders savvy enough to accept responsibility for governance. This certainly was the case in Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary. Seasoned leaders of the opposition—Lech Wałęsa, Tadeusz Mazowiecki, Bronisław Geremek, Václav Havel, Jiří Dienstbier, Árpád Göncz, József Antall, and scores of others—

overcame the challenges of transition from their anti-politics (the title of György Konrad's 1984 book) in the context of a mono-party system to politics as usual in a competitive, pluralist environment, and became globally respected leaders.

Furthermore, in the 1970s and 1980s, opposition intellectuals not only were engaged in protests but also worked on actual plans for reforms. In Polish, the synonym for "shock therapy" is "Plan Balcerowicza," named after Leszek Balcerowicz, the minister of finance in the Mazowiecki government and a couple of other administrations that followed it (incidentally, Balcerowicz's name is never mentioned in the book). Already in late 1970, Balcerowicz was sketching plans for transition to a market economy contingent on the limitations (political and otherwise) present at the starting point. When conditions became ripe, the plans were taken from the drawer. In effect, the package of ten legislative acts implementing shock therapy was ready in less than four months. Likewise, the reform of local self-government, implemented in May 1990, arguably the most successful of all reforms in the region, was prepared by a team led by Jerzy Regulski a decade earlier. Elsewhere, where there was no opposition, the drawers were empty.

In contrast, post-communist elites in nations that are losers of the transition are composed of former communist apparatchiks. With the exception of Kyrgyzstan, in Central Asian republics the last first secretary of the Communist Party became the first president of the newly sovereign state. In Azerbaijan, former communist leaders fought against each other for power, with Heydar Aliyev, once a close aid to Leonid Brezhnev, emerg-

ing victorious, to be succeeded by his son. In Georgia, the leader of the opposition, Zviad Gamsakhurdia, lasted as president for one year only, to be replaced by Eduard Shevardnadze, once number two to Mikhail Gorbachev. In Romania, where Nicolae Ceaușescu's regime effectively suppressed any opposition, the post-revolution leadership was composed of second-rate apparatchiks, which slowed down the introduction of reforms. Russia is today ruled by a former KGB lieutenant colonel aided by his former brothers-in-arms.

As much as in the nations that recorded positive results of the transition with their domestic elites deserving some credit for the success, the elites of laggards deserve the blame for failures to a greater extent than the foreign advisers and international financial institutions that "failed to account for the local East European context" (p. 190). They were familiar with the local context and used it to their, not their people's, advantage.

Nonetheless, Ghodsee and Orenstein express a well-justified criticism of how reforms were implemented (where they were implemented). Reformers underestimated the depth and duration of the decline in the national product. They did not direct sufficient attention to communities particularly hard hit by the economic change, like agricultural workers on state farms (PGR) in Poland or, across the region, inhabitants of towns dominated by a single industrial enterprise that went out of business or was forced to lay off thousands of workers (a bitter aftermath of investment patterns in a socialist planned economy). Such communities were begging for well-tuned, targeted assistance. Curiously, the authors generally opt in favor of uni-

versal rather than targeted benefits. Universal distribution is certainly more convenient for bureaucracies and less prone to corruption. Indeed, the distribution of targeted benefits often led to corruption or benefits were missing the target due to bureaucratic inefficiency. But universal benefits have been perceived as often unfair, awarding undeserving (better-off) recipients and reducing the means available to those in real need. And, as we already know, the sense of fairness matters for the people of the region.

Certainly, the transition could have been implemented better, in a fairer and less harmful way, across the region, including in Poland and other “winner” countries, offering less shock and more therapy. But was there a strategic alternative to shock therapy? The authors claim that such an alternative was applied by the Communist Parties of China and Vietnam. Without relenting their firm political control over the population, the communists there “proved able to reform socialism and create capitalism in a period of unbroken growth” (p. 190). But the authors are quick to admit that this option was unavailable across Eastern Europe and Soviet Eurasia. The attempted reforms, be it Gorbachev’s perestroika or the New Economic Mechanism (NEM) of the 1970s in Hungary, were too little and too late. To maintain political control over their populations, authoritarian regimes cannot rely on coercion alone; they need some forms of legitimacy. The Chinese regime in the Deng Xiaoping days enjoyed solid legitimacy, as do his successors now. In Eastern Europe in 1989, no regime could safely make such a claim about itself. Reforms from above either were shut off (Hungary 1956, Czechoslovakia 1968) or failed. The solution came

in the form of grassroots movements that abolished the regimes.

There are other reasons for which the Chinese example seems unconvincing. As the often-told anecdote goes, in the early 1970s, when Henry Kissinger asked Zhou Enlai (the Chinese prime minister) about his assessment of the French Revolution, Zhou responded, “too early to say,” supposedly to express the Chinese perspective based on the millenia (as opposed to mere centuries) of the nation’s history. While Kissinger meant the Revolution of 1789, Zhou in his response referred to the Paris riots of 1968. China (as well as Vietnam) has indeed recorded a remarkable rate of economic growth over the past four decades. But its starting point was very low, so the growth could be achieved through simple mobilization of available resources. This was also the case of communist Eastern Europe right after World War II, when the average growth rate matched or exceeded the rate for Western democracies, only to stall in the late 1960s and 1970s. (To be fair, this phenomenon also accounts in part for the early success of the transition in post-1989 Poland.) In the mobilization of human resources, autocratic regimes, regardless of their ideology, enjoy an advantage over democratic ones because of their propensity for coercion and ability to apply it at will. Francisco Franco in Spain and Augusto Pinochet in Chile facilitated impressive economic growth, at the expense of thousands of dead, imprisoned, or exiled.

China’s economic growth was fueled by commissions on merchandise from the capitalist West taking advantage of Chinese cheap labor. But with the creation of the Chinese middle class, rising expectations with regard to wages and salaries, and a

shrinking labor force, as well as changing policies of Western states, China's exports have started to decline, and this source of capital is drying up. China is already facing a demographic crisis of proportions exceeding those in Eastern (and Western) Europe. According to the Pew Research Center, the current fertility rate is 1.18.[6] The population is aging rapidly: the dependency ratio, currently at two persons of productive age to one of unproductive age, is expected to worsen significantly in the coming decades; its effects will be exacerbated by a retirement age even lower than in France. Also, the balance of in- and out-migrations is negative, if not yet on the scale of depopulating countries of Eastern Europe.

In Spain and Chile, after many years and many dead, democracy was restored. This seems to confirm Joseph Schumpeter's opinion (*Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy* [1942]) that, in the long run, democracy needs markets and markets need democracy. It is "too early to say" if Chinese communism with a capitalist face is a story of success. The jury is still out.

Autocratic regimes are sometimes able to achieve economic success critical to their survival. Joseph Stalin's rapid industrialization in the early 1930s, with its emphasis on heavy industry and steel production, was certainly instrumental (albeit by far not the only factor, as Stalin's apologists claim) in the Soviet Union's victory over Nazi Germany, since it facilitated production of tanks and other weaponry. Technologies necessary for this development were imported from the West and paid for by exports of agricultural products, mostly grain. To secure state control over grain production and trade, Stalin launched collectivization of agriculture,

which was resisted by farmers and led to a decline in grain and livestock production. Massive confiscation of grain by the Soviet coercion apparatus followed, resulting in the Ukrainian Holodomor, as well as starvation in other regions of the USSR. But while production was decreasing, grain exports were increasing. Even potential criticism of this policy was suppressed by massive purges, with thousands executed and millions imprisoned in gulags. But the Soviet Union emerged victorious from World War II.

As far as we know, state terror in China today does not reach the scale of the Soviet Union in the 1930s. But what we know is appalling enough: oppression of Uighurs, Tibetans, Mongolians, and other ethnic minorities; abolishment of democratic institutions in Hong Kong; suppression of free expression; persecution of protest movements and any forms of dissent; and the brutally executed massive lockdown during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. And social inequality, according to anecdotal evidence since we do not have reliable data, exceeds what we see in Russia. Given such social costs of economic growth, to ask Eastern Europeans to follow the Chinese way is not sound advice. The authors cite the Life in Transition survey executed among citizens of twenty-eight states in the region in 2006. Only a mere 4 percent of respondents favored "'authoritarianism and a market economy' (the Chinese model)" (p. 109). Clearly, they know better than that.

Throughout the book, Ghodsee and Orenstein narrate a story of pain and suffering present everywhere with only a few exceptions and caused by the transition from communism. The subtitle of their book, "Social Consequences of the 1989 Revolu-

tions,” goes even further: the people who rebelled against the regime brought misery upon themselves. But the authors also offer ample evidence in support of another narrative. Over and over again, they discuss the harm done to the economies and societies of the region by years of communist mismanagement. They sum it up in no uncertain terms in the first paragraph of a section titled “The Collapse of Empire” (p. 186). They offer examples of this mismanagement: for instance, the East German government investing heavily in the production of polyester fabrics (a technology purchased from the West) and, with the change in patterns of demand, unable to switch the production to other, natural fabrics. Indeed, this is a perfect illustration of the shortcomings a bureaucratic planned/command economy displays in comparison with a self-regulating market economy.

The collapse of entire industries was due not to misconceptions of the reformers but to the conditions in which post-communist managers inherited them. In the GDR, in 1989, the car affectionally known as “Trabi” (short for Trabant) and its bigger cousin Wartburg were the only two car models produced in the world that ran on a two-stroke engine. Their further production was unsustainable not just because of their inferiority in performance to Volkswagens or Opels but also because of the levels of pollution they generated.

The authors point to the harm done beyond the economy, to people’s minds. They demonstrate that years of anti-capitalist propaganda induced in people a naive perception of the market economy as synonymous with affluence, creating overblown expectations, and simultaneously of capital-

ism as a system of brutal, catch-as-catch-can competition, which therefore should be avoided. They cite data on people’s commitment to “socialist” values, that is, expectation of the government securing not only jobs and minimal standards of living but also “fairness” in distribution of income (that is, a maximal income allowed). Disappointment with a system that promised to provide free of charge or heavily subsidized virtually everything (jobs, housing, education, health care) led to the rejection of the system but not to the revision of such expectations.

Hence, on the basis of evidence presented in this book, one could construct another narrative, a telling of the long-lasting damage done to the region and its people by communist regimes. The root cause of the suffering, ubiquitous in the first years of transition, and still persisting in many places, was not “the revolutions of 1989” but what led to these revolutions: the grand failure of the communist utopia in power.

Ghodsee and Orenstein gathered an abundance of data and information, gave it a thorough assessment, and presented it in an elegant form. Their audience, seasoned scholars, undergraduate students, and the general public, will, without a doubt, appreciate it. Above all, we should appreciate how thought provoking this book is.

Notes

[1]. For example, see, “GDP Per Capita PPP (Current International \$)—Latvia,” World Bank Group, accessed September 30, 2024, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.PP.CD?locations=LV>.

[2]. Robert Conquest, *Tyrants and Typewriters: Communiques from the Struggle for Truth* (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1989), 176.

[3]. David Stuckler, Lawrence King, and Martin McKee, "Mass Privatization and Post-communist Mortality Crisis: A Cross National Analysis," *Lancet* 373, no. 9961 (2009): 300-407.

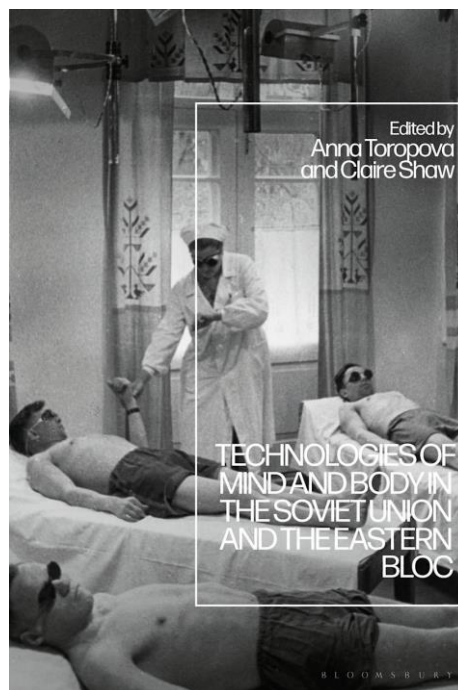
[4]. "Mortality Rate, Adult, Male (per 1,000 Male Adults)—Poland," World Bank Group, accessed September 30, 2024, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.DY.N.AMRT.MA?locations=PL>.

[5]. "3 Million First Residence Permits Issued in the EU in 2019," Eurostat, November 27, 2020, <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/en/web/products-s-eurostat-news/-/ddn-20201127-2>.

[6]. Laura Silver and Christine Huang, "Key Facts about China's Declining Population," Pew Research Center, December 5, 2022, <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2022/12/05/key-facts-about-chinas-declining-population/>.

Citation: Krzysztof Jasiewicz. Review of Ghodsee, Kristen; Orenstein, Mitchell A.. *Taking Stock of Shock: Social Consequences of the 1989 Revolutions*. H-Poland, H-Net Reviews. November, 2024. URL: <https://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=58885>

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Toropova, Anna, and Claire Shaw. *Technologies of Mind and Body in the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2024. Illustrations. x + 252 pp. \$39.95 (paper), ISBN 9781350271302. \$103.50 (e-book), ISBN 9781350271289. Reviewed by Garret McDonald (Kenyon College). Published on H-Sci-Med-Tech (November, 2024). Commissioned by Penelope K. Hardy (University of Wisconsin-La Crosse)

From the earliest inception of the Soviet experiment, revolutionaries, state officials, scientists, engineers, artists, and ordinary citizens all spoke of radical transformations of human bodies and minds in an effort to both prepare people for and enable a utopian socialist future. Historians Anna Toropova and Claire Shaw's edited volume examines the goal of altering human physiology as a common, if somewhat varied, task shared across the Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc. The editors recognize that "the desire to reshape the human population was not

unique to socialism; in its engagement with wider discourses of science, technology and medicine, it reflects broader, modern practices of population management, social engineering and human remaking.” They emphasize, however, the complexities through and the intensity with which socialists “created new ways of thinking about the interactions between the body, mind and society” (p. 18). *Technologies of the Mind and Body in the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc* is centered on these distinctively Soviet and socialist approaches to the relationship between body, mind, and society, couched within an understanding of “technology” that satisfies both the Foucauldian uses of the term (as referential to broad relations of power as well as processes of self-transformation) and the three major approaches to the term used in science and technology studies (STS). Indeed, the “three key ‘layers of meaning’” of technology in STS operate as the volume’s organizing principle (p. 2). The eleven essays are spread across three sections: “Knowledges,” referring to expertise and technical “know-how”; “Practices,” emphasizing human activities, processes, and interactions; and “Artefacts,” investigating the physical objects of technology.

The “Knowledges” section investigates scientific expertise and conceptualizations of the relationship between mind, body, and society. In particular, it emphasizes the sciences of the mind in the Soviet Union (including Soviet Latvia), Czechoslovakia, and the German Democratic Republic. The contributions of Toropova and fellow historians Jakub Střelec, Siobhán Hearne, and Jan Arndt illustrate the lengths and limits of what the volume refers to as “power-knowledge.”

Whether one turns to sex education in Soviet Latvia or narratives of health and heroism, the essays demonstrate the expansion of the public dimensions of scientific and medical expertise in socialist Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. In each essay, there is, however, a tremendous gap between the technocratic ambitions of scientists, who levied their knowledge to extend their sociopolitical influence, and the implementation of their advice by political, legal, and public authorities. It is also clear that the articulation and exercise of power stemmed not only from state authorities and individual experts onto their willing and unwilling subjects but also from the Soviet Union into its sphere of influence. In his essay, Střelec dissects the construction of explanations of criminal behavior by Czech forensic psychiatrists in the postwar period. Within Střelec’s narrative, postwar Sovietization was not a simplistic process that amounted to little more than Soviet authorities and experts forcing their views on their Czech counterparts. Rather, Sovietization resulted in hybrid scientific views and practices formed through the combination of ideas and methods inherited from the former Austro-Hungarian Empire with the Pavlovian paradigms of the Soviet Union.

Considering therapeutic interventions and practices, the second section places at the forefront the overlap between experts’ determination to improve the health of the individual body and their revolutionary aspirations of altering the social body. Mental health scholar Aleksandra Brokman, for example, notes that some practices, such as psychotherapy in the Soviet Union, were meant to extend the purview of psychiatric and psychological experts as the “physician

becomes a teacher of life” for their patients (p. 124). The essays by Brokman, Julian Chehirian, and Tricia Starks all illuminate the on-the-ground interactions between physicians and their patients, whether through socialist psychotherapy, Bulgarian work therapy, or Soviet smoking cessation. As a result, there is some overlap with the first section. Readers can easily identify the limits of power-knowledge in these subsequent essays and observe, as Hearne does in her chapter on sexual education, the intersections between narratives of health and those of ideology and morality. Medical, scientific, and cultural practices operated, in other words, as vehicles of normalization.

The third section builds on this assumption and undermines the scientific/amateur binary while speaking to Donna J. Haraway’s famous meditation on the “cyborg” by examining the actual physical technologies of socialist self-transformation, such as bactericidal lamps, bionic arms, and appliances meant to augment the deaf and hard of hearing.[1] Prosthetics or, as Lilya Kaganovsky creatively illustrates with the practices and tools of filmmaking, even technologies that have little to do with the human body at first glance imitate and rely on the human form. In so doing, the technologies examined blur the distinction between the organic and the mechanical, the human and the machine.

Technologies of the Mind and Body is a profound, theory-laden, and conceptually dense volume that will undoubtedly be of interest to scholars and students engaged in history, cultural studies, and STS. For those specifically pursuing the histories of the socialist world, there is a great deal of material here that is itself transformative. The practical utility of the volume lies in its temporal and

geographic breadth, spanning the Soviet Union and its East European satellites from their earliest years to the collapse of communism in Europe. I am not convinced, however, that there is an adequate answer to be found in the pages of the volume to the question of whether or not the Soviet Union and Eastern bloc were “a common, if internally variegated, political, ideological and technological space” (p. 3). Each essay is uneasily caught between attempting to draw out the unique complexities of a given case (often confined to a single geographic region) and connecting that case to broader generalizations concerned with “socialist” or “Soviet” tendencies, developments, and characteristics. It is also somewhat distressing that the “Soviet sphere of influence,” as it is studied and presented in this volume and elsewhere, is bereft of Soviet Central Asia or the Soviet satellite of the Mongolian People’s Republic. Integrating these spaces is necessary for any inquiries into the continuous or discontinuous nature of Soviet influence and perhaps represents a fruitful path for future research.

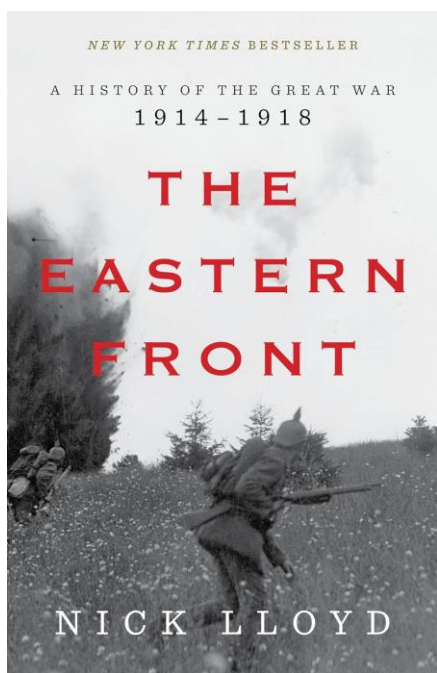
Note

[1]. Donna J. Haraway, “A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century,” in *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 149-81.

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<https://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=61204>

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Lloyd, Nick. *The Eastern Front: A History of the Great War, 1914-1918*. W. W. Norton, 2024. 672 pp. \$42.00 (cloth), ISBN 9781324092711. Reviewed by Carolyn S. Harris (University of Toronto School of Continuing Studies). Published on H-Russia (April, 2025). Commissioned by Oleksa Drachewych (Western University).

The Eastern Front: A History of the Great War, 1914-1918 is the second volume of a trilogy about the First World War that begins with *The Western Front: A History of the Great War, 1914-1918* (2021) and will conclude with *The Wider War* in 2027. The events that unfolded on the Eastern Front have received less attention in English-language histories of the First World War than the more famous battles of the Western Front, such as Passchendaele and the Somme. Only the Russian defeat at the Bat-

tle of Tannenberg in 1914 is especially famous in the West as it compelled Germany to fight a two-front war from the beginning of hostilities, preventing all German troops from being concentrated on the Western Front. For decades, the most significant book about the Eastern Front of the First World War was Norman Stone's 1975 work, *The Eastern Front, 1914-1917*, and an updated history of the Eastern Front was necessary in the twenty-first century to bring together new research and newly discovered sources for historians and general readers alike.

Nick Lloyd, professor of modern warfare at King's College, University of London and the author of four previous books about the First World War, including *Passchendaele: A New History* (2017) and *The Western Front*, has written an important new history of the Eastern Front, bringing together Austrian, German, Russian, Serbian, Italian, Romanian, Bulgarian, British, and French sources. The book provides a compelling portrait of a conflict that engulfed eastern and Central Europe, creating the conditions for the collapse of the German, Austrian, and Russian Empires and the emergence of newly independent nations that would shape the course of subsequent European history.

The differences between the Western and Eastern Fronts are clear from the beginning of the book. While the Western Front was characterized by trench warfare and extended stalemates in a comparatively small geographical area in France and Belgium, the Eastern Front, Lloyd reminds readers, was sometimes more than nine hundred miles long and was a place where "breakthroughs were always possible and there continued to be space for cavalry charges and grand bat-

tles of manoeuvre throughout the war.” Alongside these traditional battle tactics, the Eastern Front served as “a laboratory of war” where chemical attacks, aerial reconnaissance, and large-scale infiltration operations to undermine morale were strategically significant, foreshadowing the conditions of the Second World War and subsequent hostilities (p. xx). Throughout the book, Lloyd discusses old and new military strategies side by side as cavalry charges encountered machine gun fire. A distinctive new period in military history emerged as nineteenth-century tactics proved to be untenable amid twentieth-century weaponry.

Lloyd’s approach to writing about the Eastern Front and condensing more than four years of hostilities into around five hundred pages is to present the decisions of the politicians and generals to the reader through their own words as expressed in diary entries, letters, and reports as well as accounts of their conversations recorded in memoirs published after the war. This approach provides an immediacy to the text as the events unfold before the reader, avoiding the foreshadowing that often occurs in histories of the Russian Revolutions of 1917 or biographies of Tsar Nicholas II where the war on the Eastern Front serves as a prelude for the end of imperial Russia.

The individual personalities of key figures on the Eastern Front come to life through these writings, especially the decision-makers who challenged their colleagues, such as General Aleksei Brusilov, the Russian commander of the Southwest Front in 1916-17 who led the Brusilov offensive, which briefly broke through German lines in multiple locations, and Hungarian Prime Minister Count Istvan Tisza, who objected

to Austria-Hungary issuing an ultimatum to Serbia in the aftermath of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand’s assassination in 1914 because “we should appear before the world as the disturber of the peace and would kindle the fires of a great war in the most unfavourable conditions” (p. 4). While Lloyd states in the preface that he intends to “leave any judgement to the reader,” he is clearly more sympathetic to some decision-makers on the Eastern Front than others (p. xxi). General Mikhail Alekseev is described by Lloyd as “the man who had driven the knife into Nicholas II” because of his role in the tsar’s abdication and notes that “far from dousing the flames of revolution, the abdication had poured kerosene on them” (p. 328). In contrast, Lloyd provides a sympathetic account of the young Emperor Karl of Austria’s efforts to achieve peace for his crumbling empire after inheriting Austria-Hungary and the war on the Eastern Front from his great-uncle Emperor Franz Joseph in 1916.

While the Eastern Front may appear to be synonymous with the advances and retreats of the Russian army, Lloyd provides a comprehensive analysis that includes events from the Baltic to the Balkans, including battlefronts that have received comparatively little attention in English-language popular histories of the First World War, such as the fall of Serbia and Montenegro and Italy’s entry into the war. At the heart of the book is the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, which would reshape the map of Europe. The narrative begins with the assassination of the heir to the Habsburg monarchy, Archduke Franz Ferdinand, and his wife, Sophie, on June 28, 1914, and ends with the emergence of the four new nations

of Austria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia that would be significant for the rest of the twentieth century. The Austro-Hungarian army is shown to have struggled to maintain cohesion and momentum from almost the beginning of the war and at real risk of being defeated decisively by the Russian Empire in the autumn of 1914. While Russia suffered a catastrophic defeat fighting Germany at the Second Battle of Tannenberg in late August 1914, the sheer number of Russian forces allowed the Russian Empire to keep fighting on the Eastern Front until the collapse of supply lines, morale, and leadership in 1917.

The Eastern Front will be of great interest to scholars of the Russian Revolutions of 1917 because Lloyd places the political upheaval and collapse of the Russian war effort in a wider European context. While chapter 15, "Born for Misfortune," analyzes the abdication of Nicholas II, chapter 18, "Time Is Running Out," begins with the inter-Allied council held in May 1917 where the British and French agreed to depose Nicholas's cousin, King Constantine I of Greece. As a result, "Tsar Nicholas II was not the only monarch to lose his throne in 1917" (p. 372). The Greek and Russian abdications are compared with one another and placed in the context of wartime conditions. Lloyd juxtaposes the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia with the Italian defeat at the Battle of Caporetto, which threatened to remove Italy from the war effort, observing that "on November 7, the day [General Luigi] Cadorna was replaced, Vladimir Lenin's Bolsheviks stormed the Winter Palace in Petrograd and deposed the Provisional Government" (p. 403). Outside Italy, the Bolshevik Revolution is much more well known than the Bat-

tle of Caporetto, but both events changed the shape of the Eastern Front as Italy needed time to rebuild its army at the same time as the Bolsheviks were negotiating the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk.

Lloyd observes that once Nicholas II appointed himself commander in chief of the Russian army in 1915 and resided for long periods at Russian military headquarters in Mogliev (now part of eastern Belarus), he became increasingly alienated from the home front in his capital, Petrograd (Saint Petersburg). The strong focus on military strategy in *The Eastern Front* means that the home front often fades into the background of the narrative for all the nations involved in the conflict. There is discussion of large-scale mistreatment of civilian populations where the fighting took place and persistent issues supplying the troops, but there is little mention of the care of wounded soldiers and civilian responses to news from the front, including accounts of the millions of casualties. More discussion of the home front in *The Eastern Front* would have provided additional context for military decisions at the heart of the book.

The discussion of events in Petrograd while Nicholas II was residing at military headquarters in Mogliev is crucial to understanding the eventual collapse of the imperial Russian war effort and would have benefited from a more critical reading of the memoir literature published by Russian émigrés in Europe after the Russian Revolutions of 1917. For example, when Lloyd describes Grigori Rasputin's murder, he includes some of the sensationalized details that originated in Prince Felix Yusupov's memoirs, such as the cream cakes "laced with enough cyanide, so it was said, to kill several men,"

which are not corroborated by the autopsy report discussed in Douglas Smith's 2016 biography, *Rasputin: Faith, Power and the Twilight of the Romanovs*, a book that is cited elsewhere in *The Eastern Front* (pp. 308-9). The murder of Tsar Nicholas II, Tsarina Alexandra, and their children took place in the early hours of July 17, not July 18, as stated in Lloyd's text, which was the date of the murder of Alexandra's sister, Grand Duchess Elizabeth, and other members of the extended Romanov family

For general readers interested in the relationship between military history and current events, Lloyd's history of the Eastern Front provides valuable historical context for the current Russian invasion of Ukraine. Amid the hostilities between the Great Powers on the Eastern Front were smaller nations fighting for independence from Russia or Austria-Hungary. In January 1918, the Ukrainian National Assembly announced Ukraine's separation from Russia, declaring independence amid the political and military turmoil on the Eastern Front following the Bolshevik Revolution. Lloyd describes "Ukraine ravaged by war, hunger and despair" following the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk as Germany and Austria-Hungary attempted to extract resources from the land, including

130,000 tons of grain, in the last desperate months of the First World War before the Central powers finally surrendered on November 11, 1918, and the treaty was nullified (p. 470). The consequences of events on the Eastern Front during the First World War continue to shape current events in the twenty-first century. *The Eastern Front*, a magisterial study of a conflict that changed the face of Europe, will be of interest to historians and general readers alike.

Citation: Carolyn S. Harris. Review of Lloyd, Nick. *The Eastern Front: A History of the Great War, 1914-1918*. H-Russia, H-Net Reviews. April, 2025. URL

<https://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=61365>

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Keeping Czech Populism in Check

A Discussion with Petra Guasti

Hosted by International Horizons, Oct 18, 2021

International Horizons is a podcast of the Ralph Bunche Institute for International Studies that brings scholarly expertise to bear on our understanding of international issues. John Torpey, the host of the podcast and director of the Ralph Bunche Institute, holds conversations with prominent scholars and figures in state-of-the-art international issues in our weekly episodes.

Summary

In the recent Czech elections, a broad coalition edged out the populist ANO (YES) party and changed the political landscape. Meanwhile, the ailing Czech President must appoint the government from the intensive care unit in order to avoid a constitutional crisis. How relevant is the Czech election in the context of the current international wave of populist politicians? What lessons can be drawn about populism in Eastern Europe and beyond? Petra Guasti, Associate Professor of democratic theory at the Faculty of Social Sciences at Charles University in Prague, talks to RBI Director John Torpey about the recent Czech elections, and what they may tell us about the fate of populism in Central and Eastern Europe and beyond.

Listen to the full interview at:

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Paul R. Magocsi and Yohanan Petrovskii-Shtern, *Jews and Ukrainians: A Millennium of Co-existence*

Hosted by Ari Barbalat, May 10, 2025

Ari Barbalat holds a PhD in International Relations from the University of California

in Los Angeles. He lives in Toronto with his family.

Summary

There is much that ordinary Ukrainians do not know about Jews and that ordinary Jews do not know about Ukrainians. As a result, those Jews and Ukrainians who may care about their respective ancestral heritages usually view each other through distorted stereotypes, misperceptions, and biases. This book sheds new light on highly controversial moments of Ukrainian-Jewish relations and argues that the historical experience in Ukraine not only divided ethnic Ukrainians and Jews but also brought them together.

The story of Jews and Ukrainians is presented in an impartial manner through twelve thematic chapters. Among the themes discussed are geography, history, economic life, traditional culture, religion, language and publications, literature and theater, architecture and art, music, the diaspora, and contemporary Ukraine. The book's easy-to-read narrative is enhanced by 335 full-color illustrations, 29 maps, and several text inserts that explain specific phenomena or address controversial issues. *Jews and Ukrainians: A Millennium of Co-existence* (U Toronto Press, 2018) provides a wealth of information for anyone interested in learning more about the fascinating land of Ukraine and two of its most historically significant peoples.

Listen to the full interview at:

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Astrid von Schlachta, *Anabaptists: From the Reformation to the 21st Century*

Hosted by Caleb Zakarin, May 6, 2025

Caleb Zakarin is the Editor of the New Books Network.

Summary

The Anabaptists, alongside the Lutheran and Reformed churches, were the third major current in the sixteenth century Reformation movements. From their beginnings, the Anabaptists were highly diverse and yet they shared some central beliefs and practices for which they were quickly persecuted – for example, defenselessness and nonresistance, the refusal to swear oaths, and the separation of church and state. Ideal for both teachers and students, this book provides a comprehensive and scholarly account of the history and development of the Anabaptists, alongside the Mennonite, Hutterite, and Amish traditions that emerged from their movement.

Anabaptists: From the Reformation to the 21st Century (Pandora Press, 2024) shows the cultural diversity of the Anabaptists over five centuries as they moved between persecution and toleration, isolation and social integration, and traditionalization and renewal. Amidst these tensions, the Anabaptist story is told here anew based on the current state of the field on the eve of its 500-year anniversary. Written by an established scholar of Anabaptist history, and expertly translated into English by Victor Thiessen, this comprehensive study appears in the Anabaptist and Mennonite Studies series, edited by Maxwell Kennel, and published by Pandora Press.

Maxwell Kennel is Senior Research Fellow with the Canadian Institute for Far-Right Studies (CIFRS), Director of Pandora Press, and Pastor at the Hamilton Mennonite Church.

Listen to the full interview at:
<https://newbooksnetwork.com/anabaptists>



Matthäus Merian (1593–1650), The Second Defenestration of Prague, via Wikipedia

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Meghan Forbes

Publications:

Technologies for the Revolution: The Czech Avant-Garde in Print, Karolinum Press, 2025 (comes out in December; available for preorder through <https://press.uchicago.edu/ucp/books/book/distributed/T/bo257336328.html>)

Jiří Hutečka

Publications:

“‘Žižka, Not Švejk!’ War Memory and Masculinity among Czech Veterans of the Austro-Hungarian Army in Interwar Czechoslovakia,” in *Erinnerungsbilder und Gedächtniskonstruktionen. Fallstudien zum Erbe des Ersten Weltkriegs in Zentraleuropa (1918-1919)*, ed. by Christa Hämmerle, Gerald Lamprecht, Oswald Überegger, Campus Verlag, 2024, 85-106.

(2023), “A Missed Opportunity? Czech Historiography of Modern War in the 21st Century,” *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 36:3, 271-293.

(2020 hardcover; 2023 paperback), *Men under Fire. Motivation, Morale and Masculinity among Czech Soldiers in the Great War, 1914-1918*, Berghahn Books.

Michael Kopanic, Jr.

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Historical presentations on “Slovak and Czech Notes,” an online radio program that airs every two weeks at: Slovak and Czech Notes <https://slovakandczechnotes.com/listen-now>

Daniel Miller

Publications:

Philip J. Howe, Thomas A. Lorman, and Daniel E. Miller. “Continuity and Discontinuity in Legislative Representation: From Austria-Hungary to the Austrian and Czechoslovak First Republics.” In *Das Erbe der Habsburgermonarchie in den Nachfolgestaaten: Brüche und Kontinuitäten*. Ed. Ulrike Harmat, 295-332. Sonderband of *Die Habsburgermonarchie 1848-1918*. Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2025.



Marty M. Mullins

Presentations:

“Rebranding from Above and Below: Eastern Slovakia’s Hungarian and Greek Catholic Minorities,” at the (Re-) Branding Regions in East Central Europe conference, University of Vienna, February 2025.

James Peterson

Presentations:

“Resilience, Public Management, and the Visegrad 4: COVID-19 and the Russian Invasion of Ukraine,” Midwest Political Science Convention, April 6, 2025.

M. Mark Stolarik

Publications:

“Ako Slováci v zahraničí pomáhali katolíckej cirkvi na Slovensku prežiť komunizmus v rokoch 1945-1989,” *Slavica Slovaca* 58, No. 3 (2023), 522-29.

“Die Beziehungen zwischen der slowakischen Emigration in Nordamerika und der Katolischen Kirche in der Slowakei,” in Martin Zükert and Anna Bischoff, eds., *Handbuch der Religions- und Kirchengeschichte der Slowakei im 20. Jahrhundert*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2024, 711-28.

Veronika Tuckerova

Publications:

Bedekr Kafka, Prague: Revolver Revue (2024).

Reading Kafka in Prague: On Translation, Samizdat, Censorship, Export, and Dissent, New York: Bloomsbury Academic (2025).



New Members

Meghan Forbes

Meghan Forbes received her PhD in 2016 from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. She was Czech lecturer at the University of Texas at Austin from 2016–2017 and

has since held postdoctoral fellowships at The Museum of Modern Art and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. Her monograph *Technologies for the Revolution: The Czech Avant-Garde in Print* will be published by Artefactum/Karolinum in

2025. Recently, she was co-curator of *Lucia Moholy: Exposures* on view at the Kunsthalle Praha from May–October 2024. She is the editor of the volume *International Perspectives on Publishing Platforms: Image, Object, Text* (Routledge, 2019).

Emily Hackett

Emily Hackett will begin her PhD in History at the University of Chicago in the fall of 2025. She received her MA in Regional Studies: Russia, Eastern Europe, Central Asia from Harvard University and her BA in Slavic Studies and International Relations from Connecticut College. Her master's thesis, *The Pen As Their Sword: Ukrainian Emigre Students in Czechoslovakia, 1920-1925*, explored the intellectual, cultural and diplomatic impacts of Ukrainian students in interwar Czechoslovakia. In her PhD studies, Emily's research will revolve around interwar cultural diplomacy in East Central Europe, with a specific focus on cross-border exchange between national student organizations.

Ines Koeltzsch

Ines Koeltzsch is a historian working at the Vienna Wiesenthal Institute for Holocaust Studies. Since 2023 she teaches as a Visiting Professor at the Jewish Studies Program at CEU Vienna. She previously worked as a research assistant at the Institute for East European Studies at the Freie Universität Berlin, at the Bohemicum at the Universities of Regensburg and Passau and a postdoctoral researcher at the Masaryk Institute and Archive of the Czech Academy of Sciences in Prague. Her research and teaching activities focus on the history of Jewish/non-Jewish relations in Central and Eastern Europe in the modern age, especially on the

history of cultural and literary translation, flight and migration, and everyday history. Her publications include the books *Geteilte Kulturen. Eine Geschichte der tschechisch-jüdisch-deutschen Beziehungen in Prag 1918-1938* (Munich: Oldenbourg 2012) and *Vor dem Weltruhm. Nachrufe auf Franz Kafka und die Entstehung literarischer Unsterblichkeit* (Wien/Köln: 2024), as well as two book chapters together with Michal Frankl and Martina Niedhammer in *Prague and Beyond. Jews in the Bohemian Lands* (Penn Press: 2021, edited by Katařina Čapková and Hillel J. Kieval).

Martin Nedbal

Martin Nedbal is a Professor of Musicology and a faculty affiliate of the Center for Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies at the University of Kansas. His research primarily focuses on German and Czech music, with a particular emphasis on opera during eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In 2023, Cambridge University Press published his latest book, *Mozart's Operas and National Politics: Canon Formation in Prague from 1791 to the Present*. He is also the author of *Morality and Viennese Opera in the Age of Mozart and Beethoven* (Routledge, 2017) and translator and editor of *The Published Theoretical Works of Leoš Janáček* (Editio Janáček, 2020) and is one of the editors for the forthcoming book *A History of Music in the Czech Lands*, which will be published by Cambridge University Press.

Ondrej Lee Stolicka

Ondrej Lee Stolicka is a historian and research fellow at the Center for Slavic, Eurasian, and East European Studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. His research analyzes Czechoslovakia's public

image (in 1948, 1968, and 1989) in the United States. He earned his master's and undergraduate degrees at the University of South Bohemia, where he focused on the cultural life of the Bohemian nobility in the early modern period. He later graduated from the Autonomous University of Madrid, where he studied German-speaking diplomats' cultural and diplomatic presence at the Spanish royal court in the 17th century. This research led him to a postdoctoral position at the Institute of History at the Czech Academy of Sciences, where he conducted a research project on the Central European nobility and the Order of the Golden Fleece.

Jakub Střelec

Jakub Střelec is a postdoctoral fellow with the ERC project Taming the European Leviathan at the Institute for the History and

Ethics of Medicine, Charité – Universitätsmedizin Berlin. He holds an MA in Economic and Social History from the Faculty of Arts and a PhD in Modern History from the Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University. His forthcoming book, *Poválečná duše před soudem: Forenzní psychiatrie v Československu, západním Německu a Velké Británii, 1945–1970* (Karolinum Press, 2025), based on his doctoral research, explores the understanding of violent crime in forensic psychiatry across diverse post-war contexts. His research focuses on the history of the psy-disciplines, care and control, and risk under communist dictatorships. Currently, he is examining the role of quantification and risk reasoning in Czechoslovak state-socialist healthcare during the 1970s and 1980s.



View of Telč, photo Ben Skála, via Wikipedia

CZECHOSLOVAK STUDIES ASSOCIATION
Financial Statement
For the period 8 December, 2023, to December 6, 2024
BALANCES
6 December 2024

Cash balances in:		
Operating Fund (includes all funds excepting Pech)		\$19,863.64
Pech Fund		\$ 4,717.92

OPERATING FUND

Opening cash balance		\$ 19,430.57
Receipts for the period		<u>\$ 2,467.84</u>
		\$ 21,898.41
Disbursements for the period	-	<u>\$ 2,284.77</u>
Closing cash balance		\$ 19,613.64

RECEIPTS FOR THE PERIOD

Dues		\$ 1,845.00
Interest + misc. contributions		<u>\$ 622.84</u>
TOTAL		\$ 2,467.84

EXPENDITURES AND TRANSFERS FOR THE PERIOD

ASEEES reception		\$ 1,087.27
Czech Studies Workshop (UNC Chapel Hill)		\$ 500.00
Website hosting		\$ 347.55
Newsletter production		\$ 53.51
Emerging Scholar Prize (2024)		\$ 200.00
Paypal and bank fees		<u>\$ 96.44</u>
TOTAL		\$ 2,284.77

STANLEY Z. PECH PRIZE FUND

Opening cash balance		\$4,921.44
Contributions		\$ 96.00
Interest	+	<u>\$.48</u>
Subtotal		\$4,860.40
Pech prize (2024)	-	\$ 300.00
TOTAL	=	\$ 4,717.92