

2011

H-Diplo

H-Diplo Roundtable Review

www.h-net.org/~diplo/roundtables

Volume XIII, No. 2 (2011)

8 September 2011

Roundtable Editors: Thomas Maddux and Diane Labrosse

Roundtable Web/Production Editor: George Fujii

Commissioned for H-Diplo by Thomas Maddux

Introduction by Gerhard Weinberg, University of North Carolina, Emeritus

Timothy Snyder. *Bloodlands: Europe between Hitler and Stalin*. New York: Basic Books. 2010. ISBN: 978-0465002399 (hardcover, \$29.95).

Stable URL: <http://www.h-net.org/~diplo/roundtables/PDF/Roundtable-XIII-2.pdf>

Contents

Introduction by Gerhard Weinberg, University of North Carolina	2
Review by Pertti Ahonen, University of Edinburgh	5
Review by Christopher R. Browning, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.....	9
Review by Hiroaki Kuromiya, Indiana University.....	13
Review by Igor Lukes, Boston University	16
Author's Response by Timothy Snyder, Yale University.....	23

Copyright © 2011 H-Net: Humanities and Social Sciences Online.

H-Net permits the redistribution and reprinting of this work for non-profit, educational purposes, with full and accurate attribution to the author(s), web location, date of publication, H-Diplo, and H-Net: Humanities & Social Sciences Online. For other uses, contact the H-Diplo editorial staff at h-diplo@h-net.msu.edu.

Introduction by Gerhard Weinberg, University of North Carolina

The book that is the subject of this roundtable places the comparison of Adolf Hitler and Joseph Stalin in a geographic context by its focus on the portion of Europe that is between Germany and the Russian core of the pre-1939 Soviet Union. Following a detailed review of the famines and purges arranged by Stalin in the Soviet Union, the account concentrates on the occupation of Poland by the two partitioning powers, the systematic killing of Jews that has come to be called the Holocaust, the massive population shifts in the last stage of World War II and its immediate aftermath, and the development of anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union under Stalin. The work is based on extensive work in the secondary literature in many languages as well as some work in archives. It is written to appeal to a broader audience as well as scholars in the field.

The review by Pertti Aharonen holds that the author has accomplished a fine work in spite of its ambitious scope and comments on the need it meets of including the enormous killing suffered by the people of Belarus. He is also impressed by the extent to which Snyder tries to provide a voice for the victims of the mass killing so that they do not disappear as statistics. Aharonen is critical of what he sees as a relative neglect of the Baltic States and of the impact of local inter-ethnic strife in the area covered.

In his review Christopher Browning emphasizes the uniqueness of Snyder's way of looking at the Holocaust and the sensible way he handles the many difficult questions in the area of statistics. Browning's main criticism is on the handling of local collaborators, especially in the absence of reference to prior ideological commitment to anti-Semitism by many contributors to the killing of Jews. Hiroaki Kuromiya holds the book to be successful in its broad sweep combined with sufficient detail to provide readers with a real sense of the ongoing horrors in the area studied.

The longer review by Igor Lukes offers a broadly favorable summary of the book and stresses its solid base in both the literature in many languages and some archives, its deft handling of statistics, and its forcing the reader to confront the reality of the horrors described by paying attention to the actual suffering of individual victims. He holds, and here this reviewer fully agrees, that Snyder has missed the point that it was the refusal of the Soviets to respond to British and American pleas to assist the Warsaw 1944 uprising that really started the Cold War. Lukes insists that the book does not cover adequately the role of Czechoslovakia in aiding Jews to flee after the war and in assisting the emerging state of Israel. Of the few books that the reviewer argues Snyder should have utilized but did not, the important report on Auschwitz by Witold Pilecki, hitherto available only in Polish, is about to appear in English translation.

In his compelling response to the reviews, Snyder devotes a considerable amount of attention to a question that will be of great interest to H-Diplo readers: "what subjects must the historiography of the Holocaust treat for it to become transnational?" One of Snyder's test issues, the "test of diplomatic history," discusses Hitler's desire between 1934 and 1939 for an alliance with Poland for war on the Soviet Union. The evidence for any serious

effort by Nazi Germany to recruit Poland for a joint attack on the Soviet Union, however, is very slim indeed, especially since the Poles were to disappear and be replaced by Germans.

It is this reader's view that the book has great merit and will be of interest to a broad range of scholars as well as those in the wider public with an interest in the great upheavals of twentieth century Europe. The author has many new ways of looking at subjects that others have previously covered. The statistical examples cited by the four reviewers will oblige some to rethink their reading of events. There are some minor errors in detail about German events, but two main points that deserve mention. The author has completely failed to consider the broader aims of German policy as carefully delineated in Jochen Thies, *Architekt der Weltherrschaft: Die "Endziele" Hitlers* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 1976), and as described by Hitler himself in his Second Book. The other point that would have been helpful would have been a description of what Hitler and Stalin in their own thinking and planning hoped to accomplish in the part of Europe that Snyder concentrates on. Revolutions halted in their tracks are a little easier to understand if one pays attention to where those in charge hoped to arrive. This is especially obvious in the case of Poland. Stalin hoped to achieve a Poland in borders of his choosing with a regime subservient to Moscow and a population so enthusiastically communist that it would not only work happily in state owned factories and collective farms but raise its children to recite passage from Lenin and Stalin instead of going to mass. Hitler expected that once the last sterilized Polish worker had died and thus there were no Poles at all in the country, the whole area would be inhabited exclusively by Germans and would consist of Gaue, provinces, essentially analogous to those of pre-1939 Germany. That on the road to these aims enormous numbers would have to die accounts for both similarities and differences in the way the Bloodlands were treated by Hitler and Stalin.

Participants:

Timothy Snyder is Professor of History at Yale University. He received his doctorate from the University of Oxford in 1997. He is the author of *Nationalism, Marxism, and Modern Central Europe; A Biography of Kazimierz Kelles-Krauz* (Harvard University Press, 1998); *The Reconstruction of Nations: Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, Belarus, 1569-1999* (Yale University Press, 2003); *Sketches from a Secret War: A Polish Artist's Mission to Liberate Soviet Ukraine* (Yale University Press, 2005); and *The Red Prince: The Secret Lives of a Hapsburg Archduke* (Rowman and Littlefield, 2008).

Gerhard L. Weinberg is retired from the department of history of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, having taught previously at the Universities of Chicago, Kentucky, and Michigan. Among other books, he is the author of *Germany and the Soviet Union 1939-1941; Hitler's Foreign Policy 1933-1939: The Road to World War II; A World at Arms: A Global History of World War II*; and found and edited the German and English language editions of *Hitler's Second Book: The Unpublished Sequel to Mein Kampf*.

Pertti Ahonen is Senior Lecturer in European History at the University of Edinburgh. He received his PhD in modern European History from Yale University in 1999. He is the author of *After the Expulsion: West Germany and Eastern Europe, 1945-1990* (OUP, 2003)

and *Death at the Berlin Wall* (OUP, 2010) and co-author of *People on the Move: Forced Population Movements in Europe in the Second World War and Its Aftermath* (Berg, 2008).

Christopher R. Browning is the Frank Porter Graham Professor of History at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He received his PhD from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and taught for 25 years at Pacific Lutheran University in Tacoma, WA, before moving to Chapel Hill. His most recent book is *Remembering Survival. Inside a Nazi Slave Labor Camp*. He is also the author of *Ordinary Men* and *The Origins of the Final Solution*.

Hiroaki Kuromiya teaches history at Indiana University. He is the author of several books, including *Stalin* (Profiles in Power) (2005), *The Voices of the Dead: Stalin's Great Terror in the 1930s* (2007), and (with Andrzej Pepłoński) *Między Warszawą a Tokio: Polsko-japońska współpraca wywiadowcza 1904–1944* (2009). His new book, *Conscience on Trial: The Fate of 14 Pacifists in Stalin's Ukraine, 1952--1953* will be published later this year.

Igor Lukes is University Professor and Professor of History and International Relations at Boston University. He holds a Ph.D. from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University, and a Ph.D. from Universita Karlova in Prague. His most recent publication is *Rudolf Slansky: His Trials and Trial*. Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 2006. His current project is called "The Perfect Storm in Postwar Eastern Europe: The Stalinist Purge that Shaped the Cold War."

Timothy Snyder pursues a very ambitious agenda in his latest book *Bloodlands: Europe between Hitler and Stalin*. As explained in the book's brief preface, he sets out to write "a history of political mass murder" (p. x) in the period between 1933 and 1945 in an area of east-central Europe that he calls the "Bloodlands": a swath of land that stretches from the Black Sea to the Baltic, encompassing Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, central Poland, western Russia, Ukraine and Belarus (see the map on p. ix). More specifically, Snyder focuses on the deliberate killing of at least fourteen million people in this region by Hitler's Germany and Stalin's Soviet Union, none of whom was on active military duty at the time of her or his death. In other words, the study excludes straightforward battlefield fatalities – which would have pushed the total considerably higher than fourteen million – but does include those of POWs or so-called guerrilla or partisan combatants. Snyder proposes to write a truly trans-national history, a narrative that transcends conventional national historiographies and connects several branches of scholarly literature that have often remained separate, including those on the Soviet Union's pre-WWII famines and purges; on the Third Reich's policies of mass murder, particularly the Holocaust; and on the large-scale ethnic cleansing that accompanied the war's final stages and its immediate aftermath. To quote Snyder's own formulation: "This study brings the Nazi and Soviet regimes together, and Jewish and European history together, and the national histories together." In addition, Snyder intends to pursue the story from multiple perspectives, giving a voice to both "the victims, and the perpetrators," as he explains in the preface (p. xix).

That is a tall order for one single-authored study, even one that runs to more than 500 pages. Snyder tackles his task through eleven thematic and roughly chronologically organized chapters that progress through what he labels three consecutive phases of mass killing in the Bloodlands. In the first, which stretches from 1933 to 1939, the Soviet Union was responsible for the vast majority of the deaths through actions such as the artificial famine in the Ukraine and the Great Terror. In the second, which covers the era of the Nazi-Soviet Alliance from September 1939 to June 1941, the policies of the two regimes caused roughly equal numbers of deaths, primarily in what had been inter-war Poland. The third and final period from the launch of Operation Barbarossa in June 1941 to the end of the war saw the balance of political violence shift dramatically, with Germany responsible for nearly all of the killing, in large part because of the systematic mass murder of European Jews. The book finishes with a further chapter that examines anti-Semitic campaigns in the Soviet Union and the rest of Eastern Europe after the end of the war, primarily in the last years of Stalin's life, and with a conclusion, entitled "Humanity," which offers wider reflections on the mass killings in the Borderlands and their subsequent commemoration and representation. There is also a brief "abstract" that presents a number of overarching arguments about the book as well as a six-page statement on "numbers and terms" that addresses definitional matters.

How well does Snyder deliver on his ambitious goals, then? In most respects, the results are impressive. Snyder does a remarkable job of synthesizing key research findings from

several very extensive scholarly literatures, using multiple languages: Polish, Russian, Ukrainian, German, and French. Although he relies primarily on secondary literature, as any author of as wide-ranging a synthesis as this inevitably must, he also puts archival and other primary materials to frequent and effective use. Most importantly, Snyder does manage to offer a fresh perspective on the history of this region – and of the Europe of the 1930s and 1940s in general – by emphasizing the interaction of the Stalinist and Nazi systems in the “Bloodlands”. Most of the specific content is not necessarily new to experts within the various specialized fields to which the book relates, but the presentation of events such as the Ukrainian famine of the early 1930s, the Holocaust, and Europe’s post-war ethnic cleansing within one narrative framework is.

The book’s target audience is also an important factor to bear in mind. *Bloodlands* is clearly not a traditional academic monograph but rather a “trade book”, aimed primarily at a broader educated audience and at a wider public impact. From that perspective, its key arguments take on added weight. Some of the points stressed by Snyder – such as the need to correct misconceptions about the Holocaust based on overly “Western” public memories in which the industrial mass killing of Auschwitz-Birkenau has dominated, sidelining attention to the more “primitive”, hands-on forms of killing that also claimed millions of lives, primarily further east – are not so much challenges to academic experts in their specialized fields, who are already aware of such facts, but to wider public perceptions in the Western world. Still, many a professional historian, too, will surely gain new insights from Snyder’s description of the Second World War’s absolutely devastating impact on current-day Belarus, for example – an area rather remote from the consciousness of most historians trained in the West, not least because of the limited availability of secondary materials in easily accessible languages. In addition, the many striking comparative statistics that Snyder keeps providing will also force just about any reader to pause and think. How many of us knew that “[a]s many Soviet prisoners of war died on a single given day in autumn 1941 as did British and American prisoners of war over the course of the entire Second World War,” for instance – or that “[o]n any given day in the second half of 1941, the Germans shot more Jews than had been killed by pogroms in the entire history of the Russian Empire.” (182, 227)

Another asset of the book is the attention that it pays to the victims of the mass killing in the Bloodlands. Snyder is careful to counter-balance his extensive figures and statistics about the killings with an attempt to recall the voices of some of the victims. The result is a series of often deeply moving brief testimonials left behind by those murdered in the region, such as the letter that Junita Vishniatskaia wrote to her father shortly before she was shot in Minsk in July 1942: “I am saying good-bye to you before I die. I am so afraid of this death because they throw small children into the mass graves alive. Farewell forever. I kiss you, I kiss you.” (236). To a considerable degree, Snyder succeeds in his effort to restore a sense of individuality to at least some of the victims.

In my opinion, Snyder is somewhat less successful in giving a voice to the perpetrators, particularly those responsible for the frontline slaughter. To be sure, he does address Nazi and Soviet plans for mass killing operations effectively, and his description of the implementation of such plans is also generally convincing. His account of the decision-

making and practical action behind the artificial Soviet famine of the early 1930s, for instance, is detailed and highly persuasive. But the book could do more to probe the mental words of frontline perpetrators; to explain why and how they could kill and keep killing on a massive scale. More detailed vignettes of particular individuals and their specific motivations – perhaps along the lines of those provided in Christopher Browning’s classic *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* -- would have been helpful in this regard.

The book is also somewhat uneven in its geographical coverage. Most of the time, the focus lies on Poland, Ukraine and Belarus, while the Baltic states receive much less attention. To be sure, such a weighting can be justified with the fact that many more people lost their lives in the central and southern parts of the ‘Bloodlands’ than in the areas further north. But this focus also perpetuates a tendency of most of the relevant English-language literature to say rather little about the Baltic states.

These points of criticism are relatively minor squabbles with the contents of what remains a fine and in many ways pioneering study. My one broader criticism relates primarily to what the book omits rather than what it contains. In some ways it is probably unfair to criticize a rather big book for not being even bigger, but with a slightly different focus a work of this kind could deliver even more of a challenge to established popular views of recent East European history. As Snyder explains in his brief appendix on “numbers and terms,” he chose to focus on the “deliberate and direct mass murder” by Stalin’s Soviet Union and Hitler’s Germany “as a distinct phenomenon worthy of separate treatment,” specifically excluding “acts of violence carried out by third parties that were clearly a result of German or Soviet occupation” (411). Although this decision is certainly justifiable analytically, not least as a way of delineating a manageable project, it leaves out various third party conflicts that claimed large numbers of lives in the ‘Bloodlands’. Snyder himself has published pioneering studies of the murderous Ukrainian-Polish ethnic cleansing campaigns of the war and early post-war periods, for example – campaigns that do get a brief mention here and there in the book, even though they are not analyzed extensively.¹ There are also several other bloody conflicts that took place in this region outside of the Nazi-Soviet confrontation as such, including those between Poles and Lithuanians or between citizens of the Baltic States and the Soviet authorities. Analysis of these issues would further complicate the picture of the ‘Bloodlands’, highlighting some of the ways in which the Second World War unleashed complicated inter-ethnic conflicts and civil war-like confrontations in the region, many of which carried on into the early post-war years at least.² That, too, would challenge well-established Western popular perceptions of the Second World War in eastern Europe in significant ways – and help to carry the story

¹ Timothy Snyder, “The Causes of Ukrainian-Polish Ethnic Cleansing 1943,” *Past and Present* 2003 (179): 197-234 and “To Resolve the Ukrainian Problem Once and for All’: The Ethnic Cleansing of Ukrainians in Poland, 1943-1947,” *Journal of Cold War Studies*, (1999): 86-120.

² An insightful recent study of the same region that analyzes these conflicts at some length is Alexander V. Prusin, *The Lands Between. Conflict in the East European Borderlands, 1870-1992* (Oxford, 2010).

forward into the early post-war years in a way that arguably fits the overall story better than the Stalinist anti-Semitism that Snyder emphasizes in his final chapter. Additional attention to these conflicts would also help to challenge the often all too iconic standing of the year 1945 as a sharp turning point between war and peace, highlighting instead the continuity of problems rooted in the war into the postwar period, as various recent key studies have done.³ Perhaps Snyder could write yet another book with such a focus; he would certainly be one of the world's best-qualified authorities to undertake such an endeavour.

³ See, for example, Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945* (New York, 2005); Frank Biess and Robert G. Moeller, eds., *Histories of the Aftermath: The Legacies of the Second World War in Europe* (New York/Oxford, 2010); Richard Bessel and Dirk Schumann, eds., *Life after Death: Approaches to the Social and Cultural History of Europe during the 1940s and 1950s* (Cambridge, 2003); Klaus Naumann, ed., *Nachkrieg in Deutschland* (Hamburg, 2001).

One of the major trends in Holocaust research over the past several decades has been to place the Holocaust in one of several wider contexts. One such contextualization has been to view the Holocaust as emerging from a wider program of Nazi ethnic cleansing, mass killing, and attempted demographic revolution.¹ Another has been the approach of comparative genocide: either with other Nazi victims such as “Gypsies” and the handicapped,² or with other genocidal regimes and genocidal dynamics.³ (such as Robert Melson, *Revolution and Genocide*, or Eric Weitz, *A Century of Genocide: Utopias of Race and Nation*). Even those arguing emphatically for the uniqueness of the Holocaust have conceded the need for comparison.⁴ The originality of Tim Snyder’s *Bloodlands* is that he contextualizes the Holocaust geographically, concentrating on the borderlands of Eastern Europe between Germany and the Soviet Union, where the vast bulk of Holocaust victims lived and perished, and where other populations also suffered terrible loss of life at the hands of Hitler and/or Stalin. He inevitably makes comparisons between the relative impact of Josef Stalin and Adolf Hitler’s occupations of the “bloodlands,” but in doing so argues the need for more facts and less theory (for more light and less obfuscating heat).

Snyder uses the geographical context of the “bloodlands” to unite three histories which he says have been kept separate: the Holocaust, Hitler’s other victims, and the mass killings of Stalin. While I don’t think the Holocaust and other Nazi mass killings have been kept as separate as Snyder implies, he clearly ties in Stalin’s mass killings—and the intensifying interaction between the two killer dictators—better than has been done before. With extraordinary linguistic capacities, Snyder is one of the few scholars in the world today who can conduct primary research and read the most recent local secondary sources for virtually every ethnic group in this borderland region. As an historian whose previous publications give him authority as an historian of Eastern Europe, Snyder takes several very important positions. First, he does not accept inflated figures for the Ukrainian famine and puts forward very low-end figures for the Gulag. As a result, in contrast, to the special pleading and high-end estimations that are so often forthcoming, Snyder concludes that Stalin’s total victim count was roughly half that of Hitler’s (6 million vs. 11 million). He likewise takes a very low-end estimate for losses resulting from the expulsion of ethnic Germans from Eastern Europe. In short, there is no attempt to numerically equate the

¹ Götz Aly, *‘Final Solution’: Nazi Population Policy and the Murder of the European Jews* (London: Arnold, 1999). Christopher R. Browning, *The Origins of the Final Solution: The Evolution of Nazi Jewish Policy, September 1939-March 1942* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004).

² Henry Friedlander, *The Origins of Nazi Genocide: From Euthanasia to the Final Solution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995).

³ Robert Melson, *Revolution and Genocide: The Origins of the Armenian Genocide and the Holocaust* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); Eric Weitz, *A Century of Genocide: Utopias of Race and Nation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003).

⁴ Steven T. Katz, *The Holocaust in Historical Context* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

“victims of communism” with the “victims of Nazism.” On the contrary, he clearly establishes Hitler and the Nazis as the more lethal killers in the region. And with his firm grasp of Soviet and Polish post-war history, he is able to demonstrate how and why the memory and magnitude of the Holocaust was obscured in these regions (in no small part because “hundreds of thousands” of Soviet citizens had been complicit in the killing of Jews, whose fate was not to be allowed to trump Soviet wartime suffering).

Second, while Snyder takes a relatively sympathetic view of Poland’s wartime situation, is more charitable toward the Home Army than many historians, and argues that Polish suffering has been underappreciated, he is also emphatic that Jews in Poland were fifteen times more likely to have been killed than non-Jewish Poles. Once again, he performs a valuable service as a creditable historian of Poland in dispensing with past attempts at equation. In a particularly memorable chapter Belarus, the impoverished and vastly underrepresented country in terms of past historical spokesmen (especially in comparison to Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania and Latvia), is given its due as the neglected epicenter of the “bloodlands.” Here one quarter of the population perished and another quarter was displaced. Snyder provides a very useful refocusing of our perspective in this regard.

There are many topics in this stimulating book that deserve more attention—such as Snyder’s de-centering of Auschwitz and the Gulag in favor of the “killing fields” stalked by both famine (such as the Ukraine under Stalinist collectivization and in German POW camps) and the executioners’ bullets (such as at Katyn and Babi Yar)—but among these I would like to concentrate on the volatile topic of collaboration. As the subtitle “between Hitler and Stalin” implies, Snyder focuses above all on the overlapping impacts of the two killer dictators in the geographical region tragically placed between the two. In such a framing, the peoples of this region—Jews and non-Jews—are basically positioned as victims. One of the most sensitive and delicate challenges in writing a book conceived in this manner is how to treat the collaboration of the local populations with one or both of the killer dictators. Even victims have agency, and as we now know all too well, people who are victims in some regards can simultaneously be perpetrators and/or bystanders in others. These terms do not designate exclusive essential qualities but rather complex functional relations.

Snyder notes that the territories at the very core of the “bloodlands” were those which experienced a “double occupation”—Soviet in 1939/40 and Nazi in 1941—and that non-Jews who experienced the horrors of the first initially welcomed the second as liberation. “In Eastern Europe it is hard to find political collaboration with the Germans that is not related to the previous experience of Soviet rule,” he observes. (190, 397) Soviet victims of the first occupation thus became Nazi collaborators of the second, and “with the help of tens of thousands of local collaborators, the Germans had the necessary manpower” to implement the Final Solution through mass shooting east of the Molotov-Ribbentrop line. (220) In short, there is no denial of the extent and significance of local collaboration in the mass murder of the Jews, particularly in Lithuania, Latvia, and Ukraine.

As for the illusive issue of motive, Snyder argues that much of this collaboration was caused not by ideological conviction or political calculation (“Almost none of these people

collaborated for ideological reasons, and only a small minority had political motives of any discernable sort,” (397), but rather by the “negative opportunism” (398) of the most vulnerable, who simply sought to escape starvation or deportation to forced labor in Germany for themselves and their families. Others joined in the killing of Jews to cover the tracks of their previous complicity in the Soviet occupation (and here is probably a rare case where Snyder and Jan Gross have made the same argument). Increased food rations and exemption from forced labor roundups were clearly two incentives the Germans offered to native police recruits in 1942, but such institutionalized incentives do not explain the early offers of collaboration and eager participation in the initial murderous pogroms in June/July 1941. Snyder argues that the notion that “suffering under the Soviets was the fault of the Jews” was a “Nazi line” that “found some resonance” among the local population, especially because of the last minute NKVD prison massacres. Here I think Snyder underestimates the degree of pre-existing ideological overlap. If local populations were receptive to Nazi propaganda about “Judeo-Bolshevism,” it was in no small part because they had already processed their recent experiences through this ideological lens. Jews were deported from these regions in the same if not greater proportions than others, but this was elided entirely from popular perception and memory. Individual Poles, Ukrainians, Lithuanians, and Latvians served the Soviet occupation, without anyone concluding that all Poles, Ukrainians, Lithuanians, or Latvians were communists. That obvious empirical evidence was either totally ignored or absurdly generalized would indicate that much of the population was already committed to the myth of Judeo-Bolshevism before the Nazis arrived.

Snyder himself in his earlier work has documented the tortuous path of Ukrainian policemen who, after serving the Germans to obtain guns and rid their country of Jews, fled to the forest with their arms in 1943 to pursue the ethnic cleansing of despised Poles, and then pursued a doomed resistance against returning Soviet forces. Given the ghastliness of each step undertaken and the hopeless odds against withstanding the Soviet re-occupation, this was hardly the trajectory of “negative opportunism” devoid of politics and ideology. It is a strength of Snyder’s book that he has integrated the multiple programs of mass killing to which the populations of the “bloodlands” were subjected by the regimes of both Stalin and Hitler, but I do think he has perhaps underplayed the degree to which some of the victims of the “bloodlands” were pursuing their own agendas and exercising their own agency. The mass killing was driven by Stalin and Hitler, but tragically too many of the victim/perpetrators of the “bloodlands” contributed to the body count for their own reasons.

In summary, Timothy Snyder has written an original and important book, with an expansive command of the relevant sources and literature that are linguistically beyond the reach of almost anyone else. Those who suggest that this book equates Nazi and Communist crimes of mass killing or diminishes the particularities and salience of the Holocaust have simply not read it carefully. On the contrary, with the most impeccable of credentials as an historian of Eastern Europe sympathetic to the plight of those living in the “bloodlands,” he firmly establishes that Hitler and the Nazis were more lethal than Stalin and the Communists and that of all the peoples who suffered terribly in this horrific time and place, Jewish victimization was singular. But he has also shown how difficult,

precarious, and tragic life was for all inhabitants of the “bloodlands” and how numerous the different policies of mass killing. In doing so, he has made a major contribution.

Few people are capable of and even fewer ever attempt historical works that synthesize on a grand scale. Timothy Snyder's superb *Bloodlands* is just such a rare work of synthesis.

It is not that works comparing Hitler and Stalin or works focused on the lands between Germany and Russia/the Soviet Union have not been written. Many have. Rather, Snyder transcends comparison to analyze systematically the bloody history of Europe in the 1930s and 1940s. Snyder places the history of Central and Eastern Europe within the context of the interaction between Stalin and Hitler. In so doing he consciously removes what has been an artificial break in historical studies of Western and Eastern Europe, so common in the literature of European history, and integrates the Bloodlands into "Europe." Similarly, he integrates Jewish history and the Holocaust into the history of "Europe." The result is a unique and enlightening perspective on the history of Europe and historical analysis of the region.

Throughout the book, Snyder corrects conventional wisdom. Concerning the Holocaust, he reminds us that the "German prisoner-of-war camps in the East were far deadlier than the German concentration camps" (183), that the "vast majority of Jews killed in the Holocaust never saw a concentration camp" (383), and that "[m]ore Poles were killed during the Warsaw Uprising alone than Japanese died in the atom bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki" (406). There is a reason why "people [in the West] remember Belsen [a concentration camp] and forget Belzec [a death factory]" (381): at the end of World War Two Allied forces liberated Belsen and other concentration camps, while they "reached *none* of the bloodlands and saw *none* of the major killing sites" (xiv, emphasis in the original).

Snyder's main concern is how and why mass murders took place precisely in these lands of Central and Eastern Europe in the 1930s and 1940s. While not downplaying the singularity of the Holocaust, Snyder contends that the Holocaust can only be understood within the larger context of mass murder as committed by Hitler and Stalin. He estimates that as many as fourteen million civilians were murdered in these lands of Central and Eastern Europe at the time as a result of deliberate policies by both Hitler and Stalin.

Snyder is correct in asserting that "Europe's epoch of mass killings is overtheorized and misunderstood" (383). While ideology and racism mattered, ideology and racism alone cannot explain the history of the mass killings in the Bloodlands. Real life is full of constraints – geopolitical, human, material, emotional and so on. Without taking these factors into consideration, one cannot fully account for history. Snyder is careful here not to accept any reductionist arguments. He rejects the claims that the question of food supply ("or any other economic consideration") played a decisive role in the Final Solution. He correctly states that the Final Solution was "an ideological expression and political resolution of pressing problems arising from a failed colonial war. It was also a choice" (487–488).

Examining the reasons and the mechanisms of the mass murder in meticulous detail, Snyder challenges (or at least corrects) the theory of modernity that posits the Holocaust and mass murders as the culmination of modernity. According to Snyder, “Hitler and Stalin both accepted a late-nineteenth-century Darwinistic modification [of the Enlightenment]: progress was possible, but only as a result of violent struggle between races or classes” (156). Even then, Snyder suggests, the actual mass killings of the time cannot be understood within this framework alone: they were not so much due to “a progressive alienation within one modern society [as Hannah Arendt suggested],” as “a consequence of the belligerent encounter of two [modern societies]” (381).

Indeed, Snyder’s main focus is on the interaction of Hitler’s and Stalin’s policies. Stalin’s Great Terror of 1937–1938, which affected the Soviet part of the Bloodlands disproportionately, cannot be understood without considering the threat of Nazi Germany to the Soviet Union. Likewise, Hitler’s mass killings cannot be understood without considering Hitler’s plans to colonize Eastern and Central Europe. In all of this, geopolitics played a central role. Stalin made concessions to what he saw as a fact of life, a world dominated by the British Empire, and, hoping to “endure the imperial age of history,” concentrated his efforts on building “socialism in one country.” Hitler chose a different path. “Unable to rival the British on the oceans,” he aimed at creating an empire of the lands east of Germany, namely Poland, the Baltic States, Ukraine, Belarus, and large, western segments of Russia. It was these lands where Hitler actually implemented (although he could not carry out in full) his grandiose Hunger Plan, whereby tens of millions of Slavs were to be exterminated through hunger in order to open up the lands for German colonizers. It was here that the majority of European Jews were transported and then murdered by the Nazis: Hitler’s “Final Solution” was implemented in these Central and East European lands.

Snyder’s narrative goes well beyond Europe. This was a century of global imperialism. There are reasons why the war started by Germany (in league with the Soviet Union) in 1939 developed soon into the global war that came to be called World War Two. In this regard, one of the strengths of the present book is that Snyder does not neglect Asia. Japan in particular played a central role in all of this (its long-standing collaboration with Poland against the Soviet Union, its eventual alliance with Germany, its war against China, Britain, and the United States, and so on). He skillfully integrates seemingly external factors into his narrative of European affairs. This should be of particular interest to the readers of H-Diplo.

Grand narratives generally neglect nameless individuals by focusing on the famous and powerful. Yet Snyder makes an effort to do just the opposite. Indeed he brings to life a few, utterly unknown individuals whose lives were violently ended. Fourteen million people may have died anonymous deaths, but leaving them anonymous is to “sacrifice individuality.” Snyder thus emphasizes: “We must be able not only to reckon the number of deaths but to reckon with each victim as an individual” (407).

Perhaps it is inevitable that a book of this scope is controversial. Specialists of the many and various subjects analyzed in the book may take issue with Snyder's interpretations. The present reviewer, for instance, is not entirely convinced by Snyder's discussion of the 1932–1933 famine in Ukraine with which the book begins, claiming that it was premeditated mass murder. In the conclusion, however, Snyder adds: "I am counting the deaths in Ukraine as intended and those in Kazakhstan [in Soviet Central Asia where people also starved to death en masse 1931–1933] as foreseeable. Future research might change the estimation of intentionality." It is unclear whether the last sentence refers to Ukraine or Kazakhstan or both. Specialists of the Pacific War may disagree with the statement that the "southern course of Japanese imperialism had been set by 1937" (210). These and similar matters are minor details in this expanded vision of Europe and the War.

All in all, this is a book of enormous interest to a very wide circle of readers. The book is free of jargon and written in prose accessible to the "general reader." However controversial it may turn out to be, this is a book of lucid and elegant synthesis based on formidable scholarship and humanist sensibility. It should be read widely.

This urgently needed and courageous book maps out the symbiotic relationship between Nazism and Bolshevism, the two totalitarian systems that left a tragic stamp on the twentieth century. It illustrates how Adolf Hitler and Joseph Stalin enabled and inspired each other as they drove their contending but also complementing killing machines, which murdered, according to Snyder's conservative calculations, c. fourteen million people in the course of twelve years (406).

The book opens in the interwar period with a study of the Ukrainian famine (*holodomor*) and the vicious decisions of Stalin's that caused it. It then analyzes the Bolshevik and Nazi forms of terror, and studies life in "Molotov-Ribbentrop Europe." This is followed by a creative chapter on "The Economics of Apocalypse" that identifies parallels between the terroristic food policies of Stalin and Lazar Kaganovich in Ukraine in 1932 and of Hitler and Hermann Göring in 1941. Next come crisply written chapters on the Holocaust and wartime resistance. The penultimate chapter presents a variety of topics, including the crimes committed against German women and German POWs by the Red Army, and against German civilians driven out of Poland and Czechoslovakia. It also deals with the postwar deportations of Ukrainians and the punitive measures directed by Stalin against the Baltic Republics and the Caucasus. The final chapter is focused on "Stalinist Anti-Semitism" and its impact on the postwar era.

The parallel lives of Stalin and Hitler have been studied by many, but mostly with a focus on their coexistence and ultimate collision in western Europe. By contrast, Snyder examines the consequences of Nazism and Stalinism primarily in Poland, parts of Prussia, the Sudetenland, the Baltic states, Belarus, Ukraine, and western Russia, that is, in places where Hitler, Stalin, or their lieutenants and creatures, committed their biggest crimes. Much of the text will be eye-opening to readers who must be forgiven for thinking that World War II was won on the beaches of Normandy, that the French *Résistance* was the biggest underground organization in occupied Europe, and that the Holocaust is reducible to Auschwitz.

A word about sources. Snyder introduces his Bibliography with an impressive list of seventeen archival collections located in six countries. Yet a closer look at the text and endnotes reveals that evidence drawn from archives represents but a small fraction of this book's evidentiary apparatus. This is a project built on secondary sources. The point is that many of Snyder's secondary sources are of the kind that even many specialists are unlikely to have seen, which is hardly surprising because Snyder can do research in ten languages, some pretty exotic. *Bloodlands* takes nuggets from each source, then assembles them into an original mosaic. Almost every paragraph of the book's eleven chapters is supported by one or several previously underutilized secondary sources.

On rare occasions, an endnote is lacking. For instance, it would be nice to know the source for the claim, on page 335, that Jewish Red Army soldiers were more likely to be decorated for valor than Russians wearing the same uniform. On the basis of Isaak Kobylanskiy,

From Stalingrad to Pilau and similar sources I am inclined to think it is true, but who and for what reason would have compiled such statistics?¹

The book is original and without a rival in the field. It is certain to overturn some established assumptions. For instance, Snyder notes that the bombing of Warsaw by the Luftwaffe in the opening weeks of World War II killed almost as many citizens as the much-debated bombing of Dresden in February 1945 by the British and Americans. He also observes that the number of Poles killed in action or executed during the Warsaw Uprising in August-October 1944 (Operation Tempest) is bigger than the number of Japanese victims at Hiroshima and Nagasaki (406).

Furthermore, Snyder calculated that the 165,000 German Jews whom the Nazis murdered represented less than three percent of the victims of the Holocaust (ix). The other ninety-seven percent perished in the bloodlands. Some died in such places of horror as Belzec, Sobibor, or Treblinka. Many others were shot – mostly by the *Einsatzgruppen* – on the edges of open pits in Poland, the Baltic States, Belarus, Ukraine, or Russia.

Snyder also discovered that a “*non-Jewish Pole* in Warsaw alive in 1933 had about the same chances of living until 1945 as a Jew in Germany alive in 1933. Nearly as many *non-Jewish Poles* were murdered during the war as European Jews were gassed at Auschwitz. For that matter, more *non-Jewish Poles* died at Auschwitz than did Jews of any European country, with only two exceptions: Hungary and Poland itself.” Clearly, the fate of Poles under the Nazi occupation was horrific. It then gives one pause to consider that a “Jew in Poland was about fifteen times more likely to be deliberately killed during the war than a non-Jewish Pole” (406).

Finally, many readers are unlikely to know much about the fate of German and Soviet prisoners of war (POWs). Snyder estimates that some 600,000 German POWs and forced laborers taken at the end of the war died in captivity. About 185,000 German civilians and 363,000 POWs died in the Soviet camps alone, an 11.8 percent fatality rate. This is very bad. But consider that 57.5 percent of Red Army POWs died in German captivity, a consequence of Hitler’s order to his subordinates to use food as a weapon of war, much like Stalin had done a decade before to his own citizens (318).

Some of this information is bound to surprise even professional historians, let alone others who grew up on the heroism of D-Day and *Stalag Luft III*, the movies *A Bridge Too Far* and *The Great Escape*, or those who took a standard course on the Holocaust that placed Auschwitz at the top of the mountain of horror, although it was, in Snyder’s phrase, only “the coda to the death fugue” (383).

Although different, Hitler and Stalin shared the teleological view that there existed a future good and that in order to get there it was justified, even ennobling, for them to cause massive harm to millions along the way. Their experiments caused so much previously

¹ Isaak Kobylanskiy, *From Stalingrad to Pilau* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2008).

unimaginable evil that many writers took the view that the actual consequences of Nazism and Stalinism were outside the realm of polite conversation. Those who wrote about the two systems often stuck with the institutions and tools of killing—the famine, the purge, concentration camps, guards, attack dogs, electric fences, gas chambers—or they took the argument to a level of technical detail that was inaccessible to the uninitiated. Even the classical books by Adam Ulam, Robert Conquest, and Robert Tucker have their victims dying in large groups and anonymously.

Snyder does not believe that the murderous policies of Stalinism and Nazism are beyond words and imagination, and that the victims were one nameless human mass. That is good, but his journey into the abyss is hard. We start in Ukraine, where in the early thirties the Stalinists launched a “political famine” that killed more than three million people (379). Many have written about *holodomor* but they often got sidetracked in arguments about political minutiae or about the role played by the weather in creating it.

This book’s approach is different. Choosing a language that is free of jargon, Snyder takes us inside peasant cottages inhabited by real people; whenever possible he mentions their names and family circumstances. In one hut we find a father sharpening his knife to slaughter his daughter, while in another place there are parents who offered themselves as food to their children. In one unforgettable scene Snyder tells of teachers who noticed that the children—their stomachs bulging and their bodies covered in scabs—fell suddenly silent. They turned and saw that they were “eating the smallest child, little Petrus. They were tearing strips from him and eating them. And Petrus was doing the same, he was tearing strips from himself and eating them, he ate as much as he could. The other children put their lips to his wounds and drank his blood” (51).

While this was going on, the Kremlin bosses enjoyed their sumptuous dinner parties. But they found time to denounce the starving as saboteurs and wreckers of the socialist transformation. Stalin explicitly charged the dying with seeking to discredit the Soviet Union. Young communists in large Ukrainian cities were ordered to believe that the millions dropping around them like flies were political oppositionists and enemies who brought starvation upon themselves to “spoil our optimism” (41). It was at about this time that the United States granted *de jure* diplomatic recognition to the Stalin régime.

To survive in the countryside after all the food had been seized by armed officials required moral decisions. “The good people,” Snyder writes, “died first. Those who refused to steal or to prostitute themselves died. Those who gave food to others died. Those who refused to eat corpses died. Those who refused to kill their fellow man died. Parents who resisted cannibalism died before their children did.” There were many orphans in Ukraine in 1933. No one could help them. In some places, the “boys and girls lay about on sheets and blankets, eating their own excrement, waiting for death” (50).

It has been a long time since anyone has denied that there was famine in Ukraine. But I do recall that in the mid-eighties mainstream historians rejected Victor Kravchenko’s testimony regarding the *holodomor* as a Cold War rant by an unstable émigré seeking favor with the F.B.I. In reality, Kravchenko’s memoir *I Chose Freedom* does not come close to

capturing the full extent of what was happening among the starving millions.² Snyder's *Bloodlands* will set the record straight once and for all.

Partly numb and partly inoculated by so much horror, readers are likely to find inspiration, not plain sadness, when Snyder takes them to occupied Poland. One learns to admire the three Polish sisters who refused to help the Nazis locate their brothers active in the underground. One of them, Janina Glinska, calmly told her interrogator that Nazi rule over her country was "laughable and temporary." She would never betray "her brother or another Pole" (148). These were her final words.

Or consider the Dowbor sisters, whose fate so powerfully reveals the symbiotic relationship between Stalinism and Nazism. Janina Dowbor-Lewandowska had established a European record in parachuting and earned a Polish Army reserve commission as a pilot. She was shot down in combat in 1939 and taken a prisoner of war by the Germans who handed her over to the Red Army. After imprisonment in Ostashkov and Kozielsk, where she assisted in the secret life of the underground church, she was executed by the NKVD with her fellow officers at Katyn in April 1940 as the only woman in that noble group. Her younger sister, Agnieszka, remained in the part of Poland under the Nazis and she had joined the *Armia krajowa*. She was arrested by the Gestapo in April 1940 and executed a few months later in the Palmiry Forest, together with many thousands of other Poles during the *AB-Aktion*. The group included former prime ministers, university professors, great artists, public intellectuals, and the runner Janusz Kusocinski, a 1932 Olympic gold medalist from Los Angeles. Snyder notes that both Janina and Agnieszka were murdered by the same method (pistol shot in the head), at about the same time in 1940, buried in similar mass graves, and after equally meaningless legal processes. Only the uniforms of the executioners from the NKVD and the *Einsatzgruppen* were different (149).

Snyder found that the Nazi killers in Poland were sometimes less methodical and proficient than the NKVD. For instance, in Operation Tannenberg the *Einsatzgruppen* were ordered to execute sixty-one thousand prominent Polish personalities, whose sole crime was that they had achieved something significant in their lives. In the end only fifty thousand were killed because some at the top of the list had escaped. Such slacking on the job would not have been tolerated in the NKVD, an organization that always fulfilled, or over fulfilled, its quota. As Snyder notes, from September 1939 to June 1941 the Soviet security apparatus "made more arrests in occupied Poland than in the entire Soviet Union." Whereas their Nazi partners occasionally improvised and kept poor or no records, the NKVD was meticulous, efficient, and lethal (126-127). Sadly, most of its impeccable records remain inaccessible.

Even the political branch of the Soviet occupation forces proved itself to be more swift than the stereotypical image of Russian bureaucracy would allow us to believe. Snyder notes that only a month after the Red Army's arrival in eastern Poland, an "election" was organized on the territory under Soviet control. Three weeks later, on 15 November 1939,

² Victor Kravchenko, *I Chose Freedom: The Personal and Political Life of a Soviet Official* (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1946).

eastern Poland formally became part of the Soviet Union. Then, in February 1940, the NKVD rounded up 139,794 Poles and put them onto cattle cars – it was forty degrees below zero; the trains' destination was Kazakhstan or Siberia. Snyder introduces Wieslaw Adamczyk, 11, who asked his mother whether the NKVD “were taking them to hell.” About five thousand Poles died on the road east. When the NKVD drove the surviving Poles from the trains, the Kazakhs, a third of whom has been starved to death by Stalin a decade before, were generally unwilling to help their new neighbors. Consequently, eleven thousand Poles died by the following summer (129).

Snyder richly illustrates the heroism and horror of the Warsaw Uprising of 1944 and, as always, he brings up unusual tidbits, such as that “more Jews fought in the Warsaw Uprising of August 1944 than in the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising of April 1943” and that about “half of the people who fought in Warsaw in German uniforms did not speak German” (302-303).

The chief instruments employed by the Nazis against the uprising—an SS Brigade commanded by Bronislaw Kaminskii, a former Soviet citizen, and *SS-Sonder-Kommando* led by Oskar Dirlenwanger, a convicted rapist and child molester—more than lived up to their horrific reputations; Kaminskii was executed by the SS for looting. But the Uprising is not reducible to the horror and massacres. It had a real military dimension that is somewhat lost in Snyder's account, in part, perhaps, because *Bloodlands* never introduces General Leopold Okulicki and other key Polish military figures, such as General Emil Fieldorf-Nil. Snyder speculates that *Obergruppenführer* von dem Bach-Zelewski agreed to negotiate with the *Armia krajowa* command and grant all the citizens of Warsaw the status of lawful combatants because he may have planned to recruit some Poles “in a final struggle against the Soviets” (308). This is a serious charge and it should have been supported by evidence. I used to think it was a sign of soldierly recognition of the Poles' valor.

Snyder concludes that the Warsaw Uprising had failed to defeat the Germans and “was a little more than a passing annoyance to the Soviets” (305). He is right about the first point but I would challenge the second. Stalin's outrageous response to the British and American requests for access to Soviet airfields in order to provide assistance to Warsaw marked, in my view, the beginning of the Cold War. After all, Snyder himself quotes Kennan's perceptive comment that Stalin's refusal was a “gauntlet thrown down with malicious glee” to the Allies (307). Stalin was furious that the Warsaw Uprising forced him to drop his mask and made him reveal his ruthless methods and objectives. Churchill and Roosevelt had done their best not to see the truth about Stalin (remember Katyn) for three years but it became nearly impossible to remain in the denial by the late summer of 1944. Snyder fully understands the link between the Uprising and the eventual breakup of the anti-Nazi alliance: “The ashes of Warsaw were still warm,” he writes, “when the Cold War began” (312).

Bloodlands assembles detailed information on events that are discussed frequently but without the necessary depth. In one sentence and with the use of a few numbers Snyder reveals the causes of the tortured relationship between the Poles and the rest of the wartime anti-Nazi coalition. When Hitler attacked Stalin in June 1941, the Allies warmly

welcomed the Soviet Union as their new brother-in-arms. But the Poles saw little to celebrate because Stalin, the new friend of the Allies, had seized half their country, deported 315,000 fellow citizens, arrested 110,000, executed 30,000, and killed another 25,000 in custody (151).

According to Snyder, some 5.7 million Jews died in the Holocaust. He insists we should think of this shocking number as “5.7 million *times one*.” Then he demonstrates that when Auschwitz acquired its central place in the Holocaust, the majority of Soviet and Polish Jews were already dead. Of the one million Soviet Jews killed, less than one percent perished at Auschwitz and of the three million Polish Jews murdered about seven percent perished at Auschwitz. The others died elsewhere. Some 1.3 million were killed east of the Molotov-Ribbentrop line, mostly shot and thrown into mass graves. Still others died at Treblinka, Belzec, Sobibor, Chelmno, and Majdanek. Many others perished in local massacres, such as the 33,761 Jewish victims at Babi Yar (275, 407-408).

There are three important sources on the Holocaust that are missing in this otherwise exquisitely documented book. I saw no references to *rotmistrz* Witold Pilecki, the Polish Army officer who voluntarily went to Auschwitz in September 1940, regularly smuggled out information about the camp, established a resistance organization, escaped in April 1943 to rejoin the *Armia krajowa*, and wrote the so-called *Raport Witolda* that made its way to wartime London. This incredibly courageous man and his reports from Auschwitz ought to be recognized. Also important is the testimony of Rudolf Vrba who, like Pilecki, escaped from Auschwitz and was a coauthor of the important Vrba-Wetzler report; he wrote *I Escaped from Auschwitz*.³ Finally, a breathtakingly honest and important source is Richard Glazar, *Treblinka, slovo jak z detske rikanky*.⁴

The chapters dealing with the postwar era are, like the rest of this book, innovative, honest, and scholarly. I was pleased to see that Snyder here acknowledges the January 1951 Kremlin conference where the east European bosses heard from Stalin that they needed to prepare for a war against NATO in Europe (362).

I was surprised to read that Polish Jews on their way to Israel in the early postwar years “first went to Germany to displaced persons camps” (352). Some might have. But as Martin Smok and other Czech researchers have shown, the vast majority of Polish and Soviet Jews went from Poland to Czechoslovakia—the crossing was organized in the city of Nachod—where they came under the protection of the American Joint Distribution Committee (aka Joint).⁵ The political backing for the exodus was provided by Foreign Minister Jan Masaryk and Communist Party General Secretary Rudolf Slansky. In

³ Rudolf Vrba, *I Escaped from Auschwitz* (Fort Lee, NJ: Barricade Books, 2002).

⁴ Richard Glazar, *Treblinka, slovo jak z detske rikanky* (Prague: G plus G, 2007).

⁵ Martin Smok and Petr Bok, *Between a Star and a Crescent*. This is a scholarly film trilogy consisting of “Bricha,” “The Trials,” and “Father of the Refugees.”

Czechoslovakia, the refugees obtained clothes, some training, and new documents before they continued either to the U.S. zone in Germany or directly south to Palestine.

I was also surprised by Snyder's claim that Jewish soldiers were trained in postwar Poland (346). I cannot exclude it, but I have seen countless American and Czech documents and have spoken with participants who told me that the training took place in Czechoslovakia. One of the men in charge of the large operation was General Antonin Sochor who won the Hero of the Soviet Union decoration for service with the Svoboda Legion during the war. Sochor even spent some time in Israel as advisor to the IDF. The Czechs were responsible for training several brigades of Hagana, Israeli parachutists, and pilots. The Zatec airfield located 75 km north-west of Prague was used heavily for traffic between Czechoslovakia and the emerging State of Israel.

The sections focused on ethnic cleansing and Stalinist anti-Semitism seem to lack the personal dimensions that make reading the earlier parts such a rich experience. They are still outstanding. The postwar fate of *Armia krajowa* could have been described in greater detail, and readers should know about *Wolnosc i Niezawislosc* (WiN) and other false-flag communist security operations that further weakened the already decimated democratic enclaves in the bloodlands.

Author's Response by Timothy Snyder, Yale University

I am grateful for all four of these thoughtful essays. To experience my book as filtered through the minds of scholars I much admire and from whom I have learned is a true pleasure, and I would like to thank Thomas Maddux for his efforts in arranging this collection of essays. Because each of them excellently summarizes the subject and arguments of *Bloodlands*, and all are so gratifyingly positive, I find myself in an awkward position. The criticisms from Hiroaki Kuromiya and Igor Lukes are generally of a specialized character, and I believe it is right to say that most subjects described as neglected in this book of mine were treated in other books of mine.

I will try to review my assessment of collaboration, an issue raised by Christopher Browning, as presented in this book and the previous ones. It can be summarized thus: it was worse than we think, and we must build outward from our notion of political and ideological collaboration to a fuller sociology of collaboration if we wish to understand its sources and its importance to the Holocaust.

I quite agree with Browning that Judeobolshevism (Żydokomuna) was an important political trope in prewar eastern Europe (it was also present in western Europe and in the United States, where it was used as an argument against taking Jewish refugees in the 1930s). Yet even if we imagine that this form of anti-Semitism was singly responsible for all of the anti-Jewish violence of interwar eastern Europe, that composite total falls far short of the 24,000 pogrom deaths in the summer of 1941 in the lands successively occupied by the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany. Something crucial happened when the Germans invaded lands previously occupied by the Soviets.

Judeobolshevism was the proclaimed ideology of the German invaders, who presented themselves as liberators from the repressive Soviet power installed months earlier. Local people in the zone of double occupation could express their own humiliation at the prior loss of statehood and prestige (the work of the Soviets) by scapegoating Jews (the proposal of the Germans). This German policy created for non-Jewish local collaborators with the Soviets an obvious escape from their recent associations. By enacting Judeobolshevism in pogroms, Soviet collaborators cleansed themselves of their own past, and made themselves available to arriving German power. These mechanisms still need to be clarified; no doubt there are others; I make an effort at summary in *Bloodlands*. But we must remember that these pogroms taken together amount to less than one half of one percent of the deaths that would follow in that Holocaust.

I also quite agree with Browning about the importance of ideological and political collaboration. In *Bloodlands* the political collaboration of summer and fall 1941 takes on a causal significance for the Holocaust as a whole. I argue that it was the unexpected success of shooting operations that allowed Heinrich Himmler to make the case to Adolf Hitler that the Final Solution could be carried out as mass murder at the sites where Jews lived, rather than as deportation to some easterly destination. Crucial to the making of such a case was the massive and effective participation of German institutions beyond the Einsatzgruppen,

especially the Order Police (as Browning has so well documented in a later Polish setting) and the Wehrmacht. But even with the combined efforts of the various German police and military forces involved, local assistance was needed for a massive Holocaust by bullets.

So it is not that I minimize political and ideological collaboration. It is that I emphasize that there was *far more* collaboration of other kinds *as well*. When I say that relatively little collaboration was ideological or political, what I mean is that *in addition* to the collaboration we most frequently discuss, there was massive collaboration which eludes the categories we find discursively convenient. Ideological and political collaborators tend to draw our attention because they appear abundantly in German-language sources, and because historians of present generations are drawn to ideational rather than material explanations of human action. Ideological and political collaboration also figure prominently in current discussions of national guilt and innocence (metaphysical questions that can make discussions of historical causality harder). Yet (as I argue in the book), though important cases of collaboration involve ideational and political commitments, we need other sorts of explanations to cover the sociology of collaboration as a whole.

My earlier work on political collaboration, which Browning and Pertti Ahonen kindly mention, led me to some of my current positions. I began as a historian of nationalism, seeking to explain national violence, pogroms, ethnic cleansing, and collaboration in the Holocaust by way of regional politics and national sentiment and organization. What I found in a decade of work using local languages and sources is that these explanations take on salience precisely when nationalist aspirations and undertakings encounter German and Soviet power, and indeed in the most dramatic cases, both. This does not reduce the significance of political collaboration; it simply raises the additional analytical possibility, which the research on collaboration abundantly confirms, that the presence of alien power might suffice for collaboration even when there is no discernible prior political or ideological overlap between occupiers and occupied.

One obvious way to make this point is to recall that many people collaborated with *both* the Soviets after the Soviet occupations of 1939 and then with the Germans after Operation Barbarossa. The dramatic way to make this point is to note that the most infamous of the collaborators, the first cadre of guards recruited to guard the death facilities at Bełżec, Treblinka, and Sobibór, were Soviet citizens who would otherwise almost certainly have starved to death in German prisoner-of-war camps. Perhaps the most telling way to make the point is to note that the Germans had as much collaboration in the Holocaust as they needed in the *prewar* Soviet Union. Indeed, in central and eastern Soviet Ukraine, where Ukrainian nationalism was of marginal significance, murder rates of Jews seem to have been as high *or indeed higher* than in western Ukraine, where nationalism was much more widespread. Collaboration in the Holocaust in the territories of the prewar Soviet Union is not a phenomenon that prewar Polish politics or organized nationalism can explain, since both are absent.

We tend not to be drawn to the banal arguments. Who drew a salary as a policeman in 1941? Very likely someone who drew a salary as a policeman in 1940, or indeed in 1935. Why did Ukrainian policemen kill so many *Ukrainians* under German orders, and Polish

policemen *Poles*, and so on? Surely arguments from authority matter here. It seems coherent to argue that obedience to authority, the importance of which emerges so clearly from Browning's work, might be just as important to non-Germans as it was to Germans, since the consequences for disobedience were so much greater, and the position of local collaborators in every way more vulnerable than that of Germans.

We must be wary of agency inflation, the tendency to reduce events of a transnational character to incidents of interethnic strife. An international history of mass killing has to include the national political aspects, without exaggerating or understating their importance, while resisting the magnetism of national polemics and questioning explanations that only function within national conventions.

When we concentrate too much on political collaboration at the expense of opportunist collaboration we risk seeing the nations of eastern Europe precisely as the east European nationalists themselves would like us to see them: as embodying the most radical of nationalist movements and implementing their most radical plans. In the most important case, that of the Ukrainians, the Holocaust literature tends too often to implicitly confirm the image that its nationalists offered explicitly.

I believe that it is fair to say that one could read every book ever written on the Holocaust without learning the following four basic facts: (1) far more Ukrainians killed Ukrainians in the famine of 1933 than killed Jews in 1941-1945; (2) far more Ukrainians fought against Nazi Germany than served Nazi Germany; (3) more Ukrainians fell on the battlefield fighting the Wehrmacht than Americans, British, Poles, and Frenchmen combined; and (4) the army that liberated Auschwitz and all the sites of all of the German death facilities was disproportionately ethnic Ukrainian. Ignorance of the last three facts unbalances the picture of the war as a whole; ignorance of the first unbalances, in my view, our presumptions about the motivations for collaboration. We cannot fully understand the collaboration of negative opportunism, the desire to avoid something worse, when we cannot picture agrarian societies recently struck by mass starvation.

Because I have just written an essay for the *Journal of Genocide Research* on just this subject of collaboration for another discussion of the book, I will confine myself to these brief remarks. What I would like to do instead is to take a cue from both the method of critique (that my book might have treated other subjects as well) and follow a general form of praise (that the book succeeds as transnational history), to conduct a sort of thought experiment. Let us ask a question that I hope will be of interest to readers of H-Diplo: what subjects must the historiography of the Holocaust treat for it to become transnational? As a way of enquiring after what might be missing, I would propose the following tests, which for the sake of convenience I will organize by year, beginning in 1933, when Hitler came to power, and ending in 1942, when the Holocaust was fully underway.

The test of 1933, or the test of *transnational political history*. It is natural, understandable, and indispensable to describe Hitler's rise to power as the onset of a new kind of political anti-Semitism that will have unthinkably horrible consequences. It is nonetheless impossible to narrate the rise of Hitler to power without an account of the Great

Depression (usually present) and Stalin's first Five-Year Plan (usually neglected). The introduction of collective farming in the Soviet Union brought massive starvation. Stalin had little choice but to present its failures as the responsibility of others besides himself. These were, in national terms, the Ukrainians, and in economic terms, the kulaks. Because Stalin presented collectivization as a class war, other communist parties had to follow a line of "class against class." This meant that between 1928 and 1933 communists were to treat all parties to their right, including socialists, as class enemies.

In the German setting this is familiar as the inability of the communists and socialists to cooperate against Hitler in the electoral campaigns of 1932 and 1933. But in histories of the Holocaust, communism is not commonly viewed as precisely a transnational movement, and the actions of German communists, and thus the flowering of Hitler's political chances, as an indirect result of a disastrous Soviet policy.

The test of 1934, or the test of *diplomatic history*. The history of the Holocaust must be international, since 97% of its victims lived beyond Germany, most of them in Poland. It is impossible to understand Hitler's international plans without early and frequent reference to Poland as an independent state and independent diplomatic actor. As diplomatic historians once chronicled, Hitler sought between 1934 and 1939 some sort of alliance with Poland. Beginning with the German-Polish non-aggression declaration of January 1934, Ribbentrop and German diplomats sought for five years to convince Poland to take part in a common war of aggression against the USSR. The notion was that Germany would take territories from Poland, and that Poland would be compensated by territories from Soviet Ukraine. How, then, did Hitler imagine that he would "resolve" the "Jewish problem" before 1939? If Poland was to be a sovereign German ally or a German satellite, then presumably Polish institutions would have been used to deport Poland's three million Jews. Given that the idea of a deportation to Madagascar was commonly discussed in Poland, German leaders could be forgiven for believing that some such common enterprise could be undertaken.

Unsurprisingly, Polish diplomats had no interest in inviting the Wehrmacht to invade the USSR through Poland, and pursued consistently a policy of equal distance between Berlin and Moscow. Since Poland refused an alliance, Hitler had no choice (from his perspective) but to invade Poland before invading the Soviet Union. Thus Germany destroyed the Polish state (with Soviet help) and was left to its own resources in its policy towards Poland's three million Jews. We cannot say what would have happened had a German-Polish alliance come about, but we can say that the question of statehood or state destruction was a fundamental one for Jews (on which more below).

We cannot say what sort of war would have proceeded had Germany and Poland together invaded the USSR, but we can wonder just how and indeed if the British and French would have gotten involved, and thus whether a world war would even have followed. The difference between invading the Soviet Union with Polish help and invading Poland with Soviet help is quite profound, but without a dose of diplomatic history will not be noticed.

The test of 1935, or the test of *comparative institutional history*. It is difficult to understand the nature of concentration camps without some reference, in 1935 let us say at the latest, to the Gulag. By this point a reader of histories of the Holocaust will have learned of the first two (and at this point only two) German concentration camps, at Dachau and Lindenberg. By this point about a million Soviet citizens were in the Gulag, and during this year the NKVD demonstrated its power capacity to deport tens of thousands of Soviet citizens at once to its camps and special settlements.

Without this bit of comparison, readers of Holocaust history will have a problem with two basic issues. First, it becomes harder to see that the history of concentration camps is not the same thing as the history of mass murder. In both the Soviet and the German cases, the overwhelming majority of people who would be deliberately killed, Jewish or non-Jewish, never saw a concentration camp. The Soviet example reveals this distinction, which (although of course known to specialists) is in my experience totally lost upon readers of the history of the Holocaust. The comparison also allows the reader to see just how limited was the German capacity for repression before the Second World War (on which more later).

The test of 1936, or the test of *global history*. This is the last plausible moment for a credible history of the Holocaust to bring to bear the competition between the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany for the lands between as a special expression of the rivalry between two systems and ideologies with global aspirations and sensitivities. Both Nazis and Stalinists had visions of global transformation, which by 1936 can be seen to be constrained to the lands between Berlin and Moscow. Soviet modernization was a retreat from the hope for a European revolution, a kind of self-colonization. Before Germany could proceed to anything like global domination or a "war of the continents" it had to secure, as Hitler saw matters, a colonial empire in the western Soviet Union. In both cases a grand ideological vision of dramatic change was corralled within the territorial possibilities, which for both Hitler and Stalin were constrained by the unavoidable reality of British sea power.

Thus Hermann Goering's Four-Year-Plan Authority, established in 1936, was among other things chartered to reverse the consequences of Stalin's Five-Year-Plan of 1928-1933. Soviet modernization was to give way to Nazi de-modernization on territories the Germans would conquer from the Soviets. Soviet self-colonization was to give way to Nazi racial colonization. All of those German and Soviet plans, fearful and territorially overlapping, concerned above all Ukraine, a major Jewish homeland and, by no coincidence whatsoever, the place where more people died between 1933 and 1945 than anywhere else.

The test of 1937, or the test of *comparative modernity*. We are instructed by an influential school of thought to understand the Holocaust as an endpoint of modernity. But a comparative glance reveals that, as late as 1937, the Nazis had nothing that remotely compared to the one truly modern system of repression in the world, that of the Soviet Union. In summer 1937 the NKVD began a series of operations that killed something like 682,691 people in about seventeen months. (Just to emphasize the point: this included more *Germans* than German power would kill in the 1930s. And more Jews, for that matter.) The killing operations, known as the Great Terror, were marked by extravagant

state capacity and precise bureaucratic control. The deportation of about twice that number of people in those months was an even more profoundly impressive display. The Great Terror was a high point, in the twentieth century, of the organized murder and deportation of people, understood as a precise task of separation, targeting, and repression.

The Germans would later kill far more people than the Soviets, but only after their institutions of repression had repeatedly failed to match Soviet precision in deportation. The improvisatory escalatory brutality of the Holocaust, especially at the beginning, becomes much clearer in this light. The Soviet example also helps us to remember that modernity (or better, projects of modernization) was plural, and had no single goal or endpoint.

The test of 1938, or the test of *international Jewish history*. This is the last moment for the historian to provide the reader with a sense of the lives and the pasts of the Jews who will be touched by the Second World War: in their tremendous majority Polish Jews, Soviet Jews, Hungarian Jews, Baltic Jews, and other east European Jews, at this time still an intact community with a history of more than half a millennium in the region. In general, histories of the Holocaust discuss the lives of German Jews in the 1930s, and this is then meant to stand for the experiences of Jews as such. This approach is inadequate. German Jews were a small (3%) victim group in the Holocaust, and an atypical victim group in that most of them survived. Because Jews beyond Germany are usually ignored before they are killed, the reader's sense of loss can be minimized.

Just as importantly, the reader loses a sense of perspective about Jewish fates in Europe. In the 1930s, for example, the Nazi regime killed *hundreds* of Jews, and the Soviet regime *tens of thousands*. I'll be happy to be corrected, but to my knowledge no history of the Holocaust has ever alluded to this contrast. It is important, of course, that the Soviet regime was not killing (at this point) from anti-Semitic motives. That distinguishes it from Nazi Germany. But it also shows that large numbers of people can be murdered in the service of projects that are not anti-Semitic. Because Hitler was a racial thinker, he could not help but see the Soviet Union as a racial state for the Jews. It was impossible for him to see the truth: that an international ideology could powerfully motivate people, just as a racist one could.

The test of 1939, or the test of *military history*. Is it clear under what martial circumstances the Holocaust became thinkable? German Jews were not very numerous, and Nazi Germany did not kill *en masse* in peacetime. In order to perpetrate a Holocaust, German power had to extend to lands where Jews lived in large numbers, and operate under cover of a war. In August 1939, Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union became military allies, and the following month jointly invaded Poland. This began the Second World War. The invasion of Poland allowed German institutions (especially Einsatzgruppen) to kill, for the first time, on a large scale. It also brought, for the first time, millions of Jews under German power. There were as many Jews in Warsaw alone as in all of Germany. Once two million Polish Jews fell under German power, Nazi thinking about the Final Solution began to crystallize.

It is possible to imagine other scenarios under which the war might have begun and in which Germany would take control of millions of Jews: but a military alliance with the Soviet Union was in fact how it happened. This crucial event generally receives little attention in histories of the Holocaust.

The test of 1940, or the test of the international *history of the state*. The state is of course the basic unit in studies of international relations, and its existence or non-existence the crucial question of Western (and Jewish) political thought. It is striking, then, how little attention the historical literature on the Holocaust pays to the destruction of states. After all, their existence or non-existence seems to be of fundamental importance for the Jews. When states exist in the German sphere of influence during the war (including the Nazi state and its allies), resident Jews had, on average, a slightly better than one in two chance of surviving. When states are replaced by German puppets (Slovakia, Croatia, Hungary in 1944) or worst of all by German administrative units (the General Government and the Reichskommissariats instead of Poland and the USSR), Jews' chances of survival are worse than one in ten. This is a profound difference.

And for all the attention paid to the issue of political collaboration, just what the politics are -- of state destruction and creation -- is often left in shadow. The history of significant Lithuanian, Latvian, and Estonian political collaboration with Germany commences with the destruction of the Baltic States by the Soviet Union in 1940. The Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists, an insignificant force in prewar Poland, takes on significance only after Germany and the Soviet Union destroy the Polish state in 1940. The destruction of the Polish state and the displacement of the Soviet state activated hopes among Ukrainian nationalists that a Ukrainian state might be created.

The Holocaust in its entirety took place in a zone where prewar states had been destroyed or displaced.

The test of 1941, or the test of *battlefield history*. As of June 1941, the Germans had four basic plans regarding the Soviet Union: a military victory in 9-12 weeks, a starvation campaign to kill tens of millions that winter, a Final Solution of driving Jews across the Ural Mountains, and a Generalplan Ost for long-term German colonization. Historians of Germany now debate how these plans yielded to a prioritization of the Jewish "problem" and the mass killing policy we call the Holocaust. This is the subject of chapters five and six of *Bloodlands*. What is slightly odd about these discussions is that they tend to rely on German sources and thus German perceptions alone. There was in fact a battlefield reality on the eastern front, one which is anterior to German experience. Hitler's improvisations in 1941 in other words were a reaction to something that cannot fully be disclosed just by attention to Hitler, his associates, or Germans generally. The seeming opposition between "intentionalist" and "functionalist" positions in German debates disguises a common refuge in the psychology of German leaders. The brute fact that the Wehrmacht was losing the war from the beginning according to the Germans' own planning can only be brought home by presenting the Red Army as a distinct historical actor. The problems with the implementation of the Hunger Plan can only be understood when Soviet citizens become distinct historical actors. And so on.

The test of 1942, or the test of *colonial history*. German colonial plans concerned chiefly Slavs and Jews, and the alteration of these plans between 1941 and 1942 is crucial to the fate of both. In 1941, the largest group of noncombatant mortal victims of German power were Soviet prisoners of war, which was fully consistent with the Hunger Plan. In 1942 and thereafter, the largest group of noncombatant mortal victims of German power were Jews. Without a serious discussion of the scale of German killing of Soviet POWs and of this shift, the Holocaust is difficult if not impossible to understand. A longer war meant a greater need for labor, labor taken from POW camps meant feeding Soviet citizens who were not Jewish and accelerated killing of those who were, and some of the labor was used precisely to kill Jews. German propaganda shifted from 1941 to 1942 from an emphasis on the Slavic Untermenschen and their Jewish masters to an overweening demonization of the Jews themselves. Since with the use of Slavic labor Germany would quickly become the world's second-most populous Slavic state (after the USSR), such a shift was inevitable.

In general, synthetic histories of the Holocaust avoid the second-largest German crime, the murder of three million Soviet POWs, presumably because it seems to break the clear genealogical storyline of the Holocaust: from a history of anti-Semitism within Germany to a history of killing Jews beyond Germany. But not only do three million deaths deserve attention on their own, their history is one of an alteration of German colonial priorities that is an essential part of the history of the Holocaust.

Among my goals in writing *Bloodlands* was to provide a robust and defensible history of the Holocaust that would intersect not only with other historical literatures of mass killing but with the global history of economics, politics, and war in the 1930s and 1940s. The above tests suggest some minimal conditions for a coherent, complete, and causal history of the Holocaust. I set them out as a concrete formulation of my view that transnational and international history permit us to see factors that are overlooked or underestimated in the history of the Holocaust, and to cast light upon the peculiarities and unprecedented character of the German policy to physically annihilate Jews.

Copyright © 2011 H-Net: Humanities and Social Sciences Online. H-Net permits the redistribution and reprinting of this work for nonprofit, educational purposes, with full and accurate attribution to the author, web location, date of publication, H-Diplo, and H-Net: Humanities & Social Sciences Online. For any other proposed use, contact the H-Diplo Editors at h-diplo@h-net.msu.edu.
