

“the expression of an objective historical need.” Stalin did indeed win a victory of which the Soviet people were entitled to remain proud. But that is no excuse, says Khlevniuk, for trying to maintain that the bloody methods he used, in war as in peace, were “regrettable but necessary and effective.” He does not speculate about alternative history. But he leaves little doubt that he thinks there was a far better way.

Written with fluent sobriety, and humor (“It is rarely helpful when politicians involve themselves in the interpretation of past events”), the book is a constant pleasure to read. No book of history is ever definitive: new facts trickle out, new writers bring new perspectives to bear. That is the charm of the genre. But some history books can become classics for later generations. Khlevniuk’s *Stalin* is likely to be one of them.

Khlevniuk has been very fortunate in his translator Nora Seligman Favorov. She has rendered his book into delightfully flexible, clear, and fluent English. Her contribution was fully recognized when the judges of this year’s Pushkin House Book prize gave Khlevniuk’s book a special award as Best Russian Book in Translation.

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Zuzanna Bogumił, Joanna Wawrzyniak, Tim Buchen, Christian Ganzer, and Maria Senina, *The Enemy on Display: The Second World War in Eastern European Museums*, New York: Berghahn Books, 2015. 190 pp.

The Enemy on Display is a collection of essays by an international team of scholars that analyzes how museums in Eastern Europe narrate World War II, and, specifically, how they present the image of the enemy. The case studies are focused on three museums—the Dresden City Museum, the Historical Museum of Warsaw, and the State Museum of the History of St. Petersburg—but they also touch upon other recently opened museums devoted to the period of 1939–45.

The authors' point of departure is the idea that museums play an instrumental role in social transformation and cultural/historical identity-making. With an understanding that history is socially constructed and that its transmission can take various memory forms, the authors attempt to find the common and divergent elements in museums' interpretations of World War II and to analyze the findings in the broader context of socio-cultural transformations in Eastern Europe after the fall of the Iron Curtain.

In their fascinating research the authors argue that historical exhibitions about World War II are particularly good examples of museums' vulnerability to political contexts, as well as their curators' professional choice—either to follow the path of conservative interpretations, or to take revolutionary steps to break away from past narratives. Under communism the ruling elites often used museums as instruments of propaganda and “transmitters” of the officially endorsed historical narratives. Museums were often forced to apply manipulative techniques and either silence, simplify, or exaggerate the past. The abolition of museum censorship after 1989 allowed more autonomy for museums, thus creating space for innovation, interpretation, and democratization of museum narratives. Yet, as *The Enemy on Display* convincingly demonstrates, East European museums have benefited from their re-gained autonomous status to varying degrees.

The collection builds upon the recently adopted academic argument that stresses the importance of history museums in the promotion of democratic discourses in post-totalitarian societies (see especially the work of Sharon Macdonald [2013], and recent collections edited by Sharon Macdonald [1998; 2011], and Susan A. Crane [2000]). As “builders” of “imagined communities,” promoters of national agendas, and makers of historical meanings and morally shaped ideological landscapes, museums can either promote multi-faceted dialogue about societies' painful pasts, or offer a static vision of history. In other words, they can either serve as “forums,” where societal debates and critical thinking is promoted, or as “temples,” where there is only room for a one-sided approach to the past.

The application of this famous categorization of museums, developed by Duncan Cameron in an influential article in the

journal *Curator* back in 1971, has allowed the authors here to assess the depth of cultural, political, and societal transformations in post-communist societies since 1989. They demonstrate that museums have not fully succeeded in abandoning their previous roles as legitimizers of political regimes or instruments of the official propaganda and have not yet developed the full capacity to speak with an independent voice, representing the interests of societies, not politicians.

Although the museums of Eastern Europe have attempted to change old canons and democratize themselves by acknowledging the diversity of ethnic, gender, and individual experiences of the war, the problem of static and ideologically-grounded museum narratives remains. As the case of the State Museum of the History of St. Petersburg demonstrates, the imposition of one-sided interpretations is still a problem for many Russian museums. The authors of this book found that historical exhibitions in St. Petersburg continue the old cultural patterns of glorifying the victorious national heroes and denigrating the common enemy—the German soldiers, presenting them as militaristic and morally dehumanized. There is either no or very little room for museum visitors to critically assess the past and question the morality of decisions taken by Soviet rulers, despite the declassified archival materials about the secret Molotov-Ribbentrop protocol of 1939, the deportations, repressions, and forced labor camps.

The Polish case is very similar, although it also carries the romantic discourse about the national state that lost its independence. The authors thus describe Polish historical museums as temples of “romantic martyrdom.” According to their assessment, even new museums like the Warsaw Rising Museum and Oskar Schindler’s Enamel Factory in Kraków demonstrate the tendency to tell a one-sided story of “heroes and victims.” Despite attempts to critically analyze and deconstruct the many historical myths developed under communism, they still leave no place for visitors to interpret the history for themselves or select an interpretation from a set of possible alternatives (95).

The German museums examined here, however, meet the criteria of the interpretative museum most fully. They have shifted

from displaying grand histories of nation states to experiences and memories of ordinary individuals. The Dresden City Museum allows visitors to construct their own understanding of the events, and, more importantly, critically analyze their ancestors' responsibility for what happened during the Nazi period. The moral tone of the Dresden museum differs from the one observed in St. Petersburg and Warsaw in its concern with the actions of ordinary people, not "heroes" or "victims."

The Enemy on Display is a very timely account of the important role played by cultural institutions in making their societies more democratic, plural, multicultural, and tolerant. It demonstrates that some cultural clichés and traditions of exhibiting, interpreting, and educating about "the enemy" prove to be longlasting and difficult to eradicate. The present analysis should no doubt be continued by the students of museology in post-Soviet republics, where great symbolic battles between various ideologies and the perceptions of the communist period are still underway.

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Boris Minaev, *Boris Yeltsin: The Decade that Shook the World*. London: Glagoslav, 2015. 569 pp.

Yeltsin Center, *A Man of Change: A Study of the Political Life of Boris Yeltsin*. London: Glagoslav, 2015. 544 pp.

The two volumes under review are published with the support of the President B. Yeltsin Center Foundation. *A Man of Change: A Study of the Political Life of Boris Yeltsin* is a collective effort by four historians. Minaev's *Boris Yeltsin: The Decade that Shook the World* is a translation of his 2010 biography (published by Molodaia Gvardiia, but available as a free download on the Yeltsin Center's website). It has been edited and the text reorganized to some extent. Most notably the foreword to the Russian original has been taken out. It's probably good commercial sense not to have a foreword by Putin in an English language book at the present time, particularly if the most notable thing about that foreword is Putin's recollection