

Zitierhinweis

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using interviews conducted in August 2011. His analysis shows that their choice of Baku as the location of their business activities derives from cultural and political affinities as much as from economic incentives. However, the chapter as a whole largely focuses on corruption. Seen as a 'political system rather than an issue reduced to bribery', Bedirhanoglu demonstrates how business people navigate cultural and economic imperatives to conduct business in post-independence Azerbaijan.

Sofie Bedford focuses on Azerbaijan's adoption of 'Turkish Islam' after decades of state atheism under Soviet rule. She provides a pertinent analysis of how the issue of religion became politicized, given that Turkish Islam was possibly seen as non-political but at the same time deeply Turkish. Despite the success of movements such as the, essentially Sunni, Gülen movement in Shiite Azerbaijan, the leaders of such movements were persecuted as the parameters of Azerbaijan and Turkey's bilateral relationship shifted. As Bedford demonstrates, the possible explanations are endless: The persecution of Gülenists could be seen as showing support for Erdogan's oppression of them at home or, conversely, as a subtle retaliation against Turkey for moving closer to Armenia. Either way, Bedford's chapter is important for contextualizing the religious developments in Azerbaijan, often analyzed as an internal affair.

Overall, the book addresses an impressive, if not always coherently presented, set of themes. Norman A. Graham's conclusion is instrumental in tying all the threads together. This is an important volume that illuminates the ideological as well as the pragmatic aspects of two nations that have been declared to be 'one', characterized by complex historical and

contemporary entanglements. The book's main strength is its emphasis on each country's interests in the post-Cold War context. And here it not only draws on the official ideologies. The use of interviews in the chapters dealing with the economy has engendered some very interesting insights on ideology from the perspective of people who are not in charge of politics, bilateral relations, or, indeed, ideology.

Orel Beilinson (Herzliya)

Kristen Ghodsee, *Red Hangover. Legacies of Twentieth-Century Communism*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2017. 256 pp., ISBN 978-0-8223-6949-3 (Paperback), \$ 26.95

Kristen Ghodsee's *Red Hangover. Legacies of Twentieth Century Communism* is a collection of essays and four fiction stories mainly directed at students and young people born after 1989. Ghodsee, an experienced ethnographer and Professor of Russian and East European Studies at the University of Pennsylvania, writes in the Prelude that the book is 'for non-experts curious about how the legacies of the Cold War impact European politics today' (xx). Similar to her 2011 volume *Lost in Transition. Ethnographies of Everyday Life After Communism*, *Red Hangover* is a 'literary ethnography' which combines anthropological research with fiction to produce an easily readable scholarly text.

The book in fact abounds with personal anecdotes, photographs, accounts of the hardships faced by the 'losers' of postsocialist transition and fiction stories. Mostly drawing on examples from eastern Germany and Bulgaria, Ghodsee sets out her main argument in the Prelude and elaborates it in the four subsequent parts of

the book. She maintains that critical analysis of the socialist past will remain impossible as long as the socialist experience in Europe continues to be interpreted exclusively through the lens of Stalinist crimes. On the other hand, the staunch defenders of democracy tend to disassociate it from the injustices and other social problems created by neoliberalism: 'Those desperate to rescue the democratic ideal today insist that democracy must be separated from the disenfranchisement and gross inequities of neoliberal, free-market capitalism. [...] But in the same breath, they often insist that all experiments with twentieth-century state socialism in Eastern Europe must be forever linked to the worst crimes of Stalinism' (xix). In this view, the distortions of democracy are justifiable, but those of communism are not (the terms communism and socialism are used interchangeably in the volume, which is why I am following the same pattern). According to Ghodsee, it is this hypocrisy that hinders a critical analysis of the socialist past, while simultaneously causing voters in both eastern and western Europe to turn to the far right for responses to the challenges of neoliberal capitalism. 'The last twenty-five years of world history—the triumph of unfettered free market capitalism, the American obsession with democracy promotion and regime change, as well as the steady growth of worldwide economic inequality—resulted from the greedy and self-aggrandizing stance of Western political and economic elites after the collapse of communism' (50), argues Ghodsee.

Probably the two most interesting essays in the book are 'Venerating Nazis to Vilify Commies' and 'Democracy for the Penguins'. In the former the author examines the equation of nazism and communism in Eastern Europe, which she explains with the desire to claim the status

of victim while at the same time legitimizing resurgent nationalism. The twin narrative of totalitarianisms and the consequent rewriting of history is tacitly supported by European institutions, which was made official with the Prague Declaration in 2008, intentionally or not, in the midst of the global financial crisis. The author writes that the intellectual precursor of the Declaration was Nolte's revisionist position in the *Historikerstreit* in the mid-1980s, which, for example, functions as a reference frame for the Ukrainian decommunization laws of 2015. Finally, in 'Democracy for the Penguins', Ghodsee concludes that in order to prevent the rise of the far right 'we need to get past our red hangover and recognize the pros and cons of both liberal democracy and state socialism in an effort to promote a system that gives us the best of both' (199).

The style of writing makes this book an interesting read. It should not pass unnoticed, especially considering the imminent thirtieth anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall. The volume advances several important, at times provocative theses and as such makes a non-negligible contribution to the literature on postsocialism. Nevertheless, neither the catchy title nor the blurb reveal the full extent to which this book actually comprises personal anecdotes and fiction, sometimes at the expense of analytical depth. The author justifies her choice, however, by dedicating the book to non-experts and students. Although these readers might need slightly more background information and contextualization and other, more informed readers might lack theorization in the book, *Red Hangover* is an instructive introductory reading for everyone trying to understand the global postsocialist condition.

(Dora Komnenović, Gießen)