

sive comparative framework across the republic's diverse regions. Another limitation is the relatively underdeveloped engagement with linguistic and cultural practices. B. could have further explored how language functioned both as a tool of repression and a site of resistance—especially in court proceedings and identity formation. Finally, while the author touches on continuities into the wartime and communist periods, a fuller exploration of how interwar logics fed into the Protectorate's concentration camp system and post-war Roma policies would be a fruitful direction for future research.

Despite these minor caveats, *“Metla našeho venkova!”* stands as a landmark study—not only for the field of Romani studies but also for broader debates on democracy, racialization, and state power in Central Europe. By drawing attention to how liberal democratic institutions could harbour deeply exclusionary practices, B. invites readers to reconsider comfortable narratives about Czechoslovakia's interwar period. This is a methodologically rigorous, theoretically informed, and ethically engaged work. Despite the fact that the book originates from B.'s doctoral dissertation (and, as such, employs a highly academic language that at times renders it challenging to read) it deserves a wide readership not only among historians, but also scholars of critical race studies, sociology, anthropology, and legal studies. Most of all, B.'s book serves as a necessary corrective to national histories that continue to marginalize Roma voices and experiences.

Frankfurt am Main

Denisa Nešťáková

Peter Whitewood: The Soviet-Polish War and Its Legacy. Lenin's Defeat and the Rise of Stalinism. Bloomsbury Academic. London et al. 2023. IX, 233 S. ISBN 978-1-3502-3894-7. (£ 28,99.)

Researchers studying the early period of Soviet history have often reflected on the origins of Stalin's brutally enforced “revolution from above” and the subsequent horrors of the Great Terror. Early scholarship viewed the reasons for the establishment of a dictatorial regime and the elimination of all forms of opposition in the USSR as inherent characteristics of the Bolshevik ideology and system of government outlined by Lenin. Over time, however, historians belonging to the so-called revisionist school have questioned this interpretation. They attribute the course taken by the Bolshevik leadership in the late 1920s to the traumatic experience of civil war, namely the mortal threat that Soviet Russia faced at that time and the terror carried out on all sides in the extremely fierce conflict.

While conceding that the revisionists are right to a certain extent, Peter Whitewood, Associate Professor of History at York St John University, points to significant gaps in their reasoning. He aptly notes: “It is not clear exactly how or through what processes the formative civil war experience contributed to the later Stalinist dictatorship. What connected the early and late 1920s is not always obvious, aside from the fact that Soviet wartime measures of the civil war era resembled, if sometimes closely, Stalin's radical and often destructive campaigns of industrialization and collectivization ten years later” (p. 3). In this book, W. attempts to delineate these processes by tracing the influence of one particular episode from the civil war: the conflict between Soviet Russia and Poland, or, more precisely, the catastrophic defeat of the Red Army at the Battle of Warsaw in August 1920.

The Polish victory halted the rapidly advancing Soviet offensive and dashed the Bolshevik leaders' dreams of quickly revolutionizing Central Europe. The Bolsheviks attributed their failure to the significant support given to Poland by the Entente powers who allegedly directed Warsaw's actions and were responsible for its aggressive policy toward the Soviets. W. convincingly argues that fears of a “capitalist encirclement” and the threat posed by Poland, which had the potential to lead a broader anti-Soviet coalition in the future, had a decisive impact in the years following. These concerns not only shaped the direction of official Soviet propaganda but also the thinking of Bolshevik leaders, as reflected in their private correspondence and intimate discussions. The author points out that these fears were largely unfounded: both Poland and the major Western powers sought to

stabilize international relations in the 1920s and were not in the least interested in a repeat of anti-Soviet intervention in Russia. W. notes, however, that this stance was not recognized in Moscow, and the specter of such intervention served to justify actions to strengthen the unity of the party and the Soviet state. In practice, this translated into a fight against any views that deviated even slightly from the “general line” adopted by Stalin and his supporters. W. rightly asserts that oppositionists such as Trotsky, Zinoviev, and Kamenev were defenseless against such actions, especially since they themselves shared the increasingly paranoid belief that the USSR was facing a growing external threat.

The author, who has drawn on a wealth of previously unknown or underutilized material from post-Soviet archives, writes very interestingly about the successive stages of development in Polish-Soviet relations in the 1920s and early 1930s. Within this context, he traces the evolution of the Bolshevik leaders’ views on the relations between Soviet Russia, and later the Soviet Union, and the wider capitalist world. The sections of the book on the Ruhr crisis of 1923 and the war scare in 1927 are especially informative. Importantly, W. does not approach the subject selectively in that he does not try to omit facts and threads that do not fully fit into his interpretative framework. He therefore exposes, for example, the differences in the perception of the “Polish threat” that emerged among Soviet leaders, in particular between diplomatic representatives like Chicherin and Litvinov, who usually (though not always and with exceptions) assessed Poland’s role more soberly, and members of the Politburo, first and foremost Stalin and earlier Lenin himself.

As noted above, the book draws on a solid source base, but, of course, some additions could still have been beneficial. For example, there is no mention of the latest multi-volume source edition that appeared in 2020 and 2021, *Dokumenty do historii stosunków polsko-sowieckich, 1918–1945* [Documents on the History of Polish-Soviet Relations, 1918–1945], which, although dominated by Polish documents, also contains valuable, lesser-known materials of Soviet origin. It would also have been useful for W. to consider Mariusz Wołos’s comprehensive monograph.¹ An attentive reader might also point out minor flaws in the book, including some simplifications or certain factual errors. That said, however, these all relate to details of little significance. Overall, I believe that W.’s book is one of the most important monographs on the pre-1941 history of the USSR to have been published in recent years. Its fresh perspective has paved the way for new and intriguing avenues of research.

Kraków

Jan Jacek Bruski

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- 1 MARIUSZ WOŁOS: O Piłsudskim, Dmowskim i zamachu majowym: Dyplomacja sowiecka wobec Polski w okresie kryzysu politycznego 1925–1926 [On Piłsudski, Dmowski, and the May Coup: Soviet Diplomacy towards Poland during the Political Crisis of 1925–1926], Kraków 2013.

„**Bilder der Heimat**“. Fotografie und Kunst in Heimatzeitschriften. Hrsg. von Bernadette Gebhardt. (Schriftenreihe des Instituts für Volkskunde der Deutschen des östlichen Europa, Bd. 25.) Waxmann 2022. 255 S., ISBN 978-3-8309-4569-7. (€ 34,90.)

Dieser von Bernadette Gebhardt hrsg. Sammelband vereint in sich Beiträge zu Abbildungen in sudetendeutschen Heimatperiodika, zur böhmischen Fotografieggeschichte und auch zur Darstellung der Tschechoslowakei durch eine westdeutsche Linse. Erschienen anlässlich der Erweiterung des *Online-Handbuchs Heimatpresse*,¹ rundet ein Bericht über dieses Datenbank- und Rechercheangebot den Band ab.

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- 1 https://www.ivdebw.de/bibliothek_und_archive/handbuch_heimatpresse (2026-03-06). Infolge der Umbenennung des Instituts für Kulturanalyse [bislang: Volkskunde] der Deutschen des östlichen Europa (IKDE) ist das *Online-Handbuch Heimatpresse* vorübergehend offline. Es soll unter einer neuen URL wiederveröffentlicht werden.