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Alexander Statiev, The Soviet Counterinsurgency in the Western Borderlands

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a hard-fought and brutal one, and the litany of atrocities perpetrated by both sides may not be surprising, but Braithwaite also highlights the unexpected signs of humanity which relieved them, as well as the many ways human beings coped with inhuman circumstances. On the other hand, the sobering accounts of coffins deposited in the living rooms of uncomprehending parents, of widows denied benefits until the precise fate of missing soldiers had been ascertained and the often cursory treatment given to veterans damaged in body and soul helps illustrate the yawning chasm which had opened between the Soviet ideal and its reality.

Ultimately, this was a war in which the Soviet army could win every battle but come nowhere near winning the war. The forces deployed would have had to have been doubled or trebled, the rules of engagement relaxed to permit strikes against rebel support bases in Pakistan, and Moscow would have had to have been willing to pay the consequent price in its relations with the rest of the world. Gorbachev, having embarked on his increasingly desperate bid for reform, one which required reduced defence spending and improved trade ties with the West, would not consider anything short of withdrawal. By the time the Soviet withdrawal was engineered by Gorbachev and his foreign minister Eduard Shevardnadze, one million Soviet troops had fought in Afghanistan: 15,000 lost their lives, many more would never be the same again. For what? Even this magisterial account, undoubtedly now the standard history of the war, cannot find much of a good reason.

New York University

MARK GALEOTTI © 2012

Alexander Statiev, *The Soviet Counterinsurgency in the Western Borderlands*. Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010, xvi + 368pp., £55.00 h/b.

THE BOOK IS DIVIDED INTO 11 CHAPTERS AND A CONCLUSION AND BEGINS with a background chapter on western Ukraine and western Belarus inside Poland and the three independent Baltic states of Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, and the first Soviet occupation in 1939–1941. The next two chapters analyse nationalist movements under Nazi and Soviet occupation and Nazi and Soviet counter-insurgency strategies. The last seven chapters cover thematic issues such as Soviet agrarian policies, amnesties, deportations, the Church, paramilitaries and security police tactics.

Statiev has produced an in-depth account of the Soviet integration of the western borderlands during and after World War II that analyses the many facets of this issue from many angles. Of the five main nationalities in these borderlands the fiercest nationalist struggle was in western Ukraine and Lithuania and the least was in western Belarus, with nationalist resistance in Latvia and Estonia lying in between. Statiev points to the Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) as the only nationalist movement possessing a ‘distinctive ideology and a widespread underground network’ (p. 44). As with most nationalist movements in Europe in the 1930s, Statiev argues, OUN’s ideology was close to fascism.

The inhabitants of the borderlands, with the exception of Belarusians, ‘were happy when the Soviets left, and many viewed the Germans as liberators’ (p. 54), at least initially. Western Belarusians met the Nazis ‘far more coolly’ (p. 60) and they had the lowest desertion rate from the Soviet army. Polish nationalist resistance, grouped mainly around the AK (Home Army), were anti-Nazi and cool towards the Soviet Union. The three Baltic peoples and Ukrainians hoped the Nazis would permit the creation of national armies that would fight the Soviet Union, a policy only introduced in 1943–1944 with the establishment of Waffen SS divisions.

The hasty Soviet withdrawal was accompanied by the mass execution of prisoners and deportations (in addition to earlier mass executions of Polish officers in Katyn in 1940). Statiev points out how these Soviet executions were matched by often larger *pogroms* or executions

committed by nationalist units who aligned with the Germans and had often been trained by them. Sometimes these descended into 'antisemitic pogroms' because 'Jews were overrepresented in the NKVD and the Communist party, and borderland ethnic majorities therefore associated Jews with Soviet repressions' (p. 57).

The relationship between Ukrainian nationalists and the occupying Nazis was far more complicated than Statiev gives credit for and here the book would have been improved by a comparative section on collaborationism in Europe. (For example, the Nazis never permitted Ukrainians to establish Slovak- or Croat-style puppet states.) After the OUN proclaimed an independent Ukraine in Lviv on 30 June 1941 its leaders were arrested and Stepan Bandera spent most of the war in a Nazi concentration camp. The Germans disbanded two OUN battalions and only permitted the creation of a single Galizien Waffen SS division in 1943, the first of which was destroyed in battle and its replacement division was brought from Italy to Britain in 1947, where it formed the nucleus of the future Ukrainian community. The highest number of volunteers for the Nazis in the borderlands were from Latvia, where, by 1944, 8% of the population served in various units. Two Latvian Waffen SS divisions fought to the last days of the war, including a unit that guarded Adolf Hitler's bunker.

Many of those who joined Nazi police units committed atrocities against Jews, and in western Ukraine against Poles, and some of these joined nationalist guerrilla units. Statiev points out that nationalists in Estonia, Latvia and Belarus placed too much hope on the Nazis without creating a political alternative whereas Lithuanian and Ukrainian nationalists 'distanced themselves from the Nazis and prepared an underground infrastructure for anti-Soviet resistance' (p. 78). By autumn 1943, nationalist anti-Nazi resistance in western Ukraine 'was stronger than any other resistance outside Soviet borders, with the exception of Yugoslavia' (p. 81). Of the nationalist movements in the borderlands, only the Ukrainians fought the Axis and this became a major problem for the Germans by 1943.

Statiev writes that Ukrainian nationalists 'killed about 50,000 Poles in Volhynia' (p. 88) which is at odds with university professor Paul R. Magocsi who estimated that civil war in this region led to the deaths of 60,000 Poles and 20,000 Ukrainians. Statiev ignores this discrepancy, except to say that AK units launched retaliatory raids against Ukrainian villages (pp. 92–93, 123). Polish nationalist groups and policemen also participated in the bloody civil war for control of Volhynia before the Soviets returned and Ukrainian nationalist killings drove many Poles into the arms of the Soviets.

After the Soviet army returned to the borderlands, nationalists had to take on the victorious Soviet state. The Ukrainian resistance was the largest with 25,000–40,000 guerrillas and upwards of 400,000 in total involved in the nationalist network. The OUNb (OUN loyal to Bandera) 'was a deeply rooted underground network enjoying popular support' (p. 106) and 'Ukrainian guerrillas fought with a resolution that no resistance in western Europe could have imagined' (p. 108).

Soviet reoccupation brought with it different forms of pacification and repression that Statiev's book excels in documenting. Statiev's analyses Soviet counter-insurgency policies that led to numerous 'gruesome atrocities' (p. 285) against civilians, captured guerrillas and their families. Only western Belarus was spared repression and mass deportations because of the weakness of nationalism; the main Soviet opponent in the region was the AK.

Baltic and Ukrainian nationalists received little foreign assistance Statiev claims, writing that the British and Americans were mainly interested in intelligence and discouraged guerrilla warfare. This ignores the sending of couriers by the CIA and British Secret Intelligence Service (SIS, usually referred to as MI6). The CIA parachuted 12 couriers while the SIS trained and parachuted about four dozen couriers, many of whom were trained as wireless operators, into western Ukraine and Poland. Most of the couriers were captured because of Soviet spies such as Kim Philby inside the SIS.

Between 1950 and 1952 most guerrilla actions and Western support for the nationalist movements ceased. Nevertheless, it is questionable whether Statiev is correct in saying that by the mid-1950s many in the borderlands 'became Soviet loyalists' (p. 137); acquiescence and passivity should not be confused with 'loyalty'—as seen in the late 1980s when the Baltic republics and western Ukraine led the drive for independence from the USSR. Statiev's well documented work is a major contribution to our understanding of nationalism in the borderlands and the Soviet response to them.

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Andres Kasekamp, *A History of the Baltic States*. Palgrave Essential Histories. Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, xii + 252pp., £16.99 p/b.

SCHOLARS OF ESTONIA, LATVIA AND LITHUANIA HAVE BEEN kept waiting eight years for a new history of the three countries; now, two of them have come along at once. To Andres Kasekamp's book one can also add Andrejs Plakans' *A Concise History of the Baltic States* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011). This is very welcome at a time when the implications of the 2004 EU and NATO enlargements to the Eastern Baltic have yet to become fully clear.

In this regard, Kasekamp's concluding chapter on the Baltic states' 'Return to the West (1991–2009)' will be of particular interest to *Europe-Asia Studies*' readers. It provides a concise and accessible overview of post-Soviet developments, up to and including the recent economic crisis. The latter hit the Baltic economies especially hard, undermining the narrative of the 'Baltic Tiger' that had taken hold during the preceding decade. All three countries have steadied the ship—in Latvia's case with the help of the IMF—since Kasekamp wrote his book. All the same, the experience has led many commentators to ask where the Baltic states go from here in terms of their economic and societal development, following the rigid adherence to neo-liberal economics during the two decades since 1991. Unemployment remains stubbornly high, while outmigration remains a highly salient issue in the case of Latvia and Lithuania. For those more interested in post-Soviet (and indeed EU) Politics, Kasekamp gives a very helpful summary of institutional frameworks, parties and elections. Attention is also given to nationality issues in Estonia and Latvia, to external relations with Russia and to relations with EU and NATO partners, both prior to and after accession.

Kasekamp's work ably meets the challenge of writing 'an integrated, comparative history rather than the parallel histories of three separate countries' (p. x). For the most part, it also delivers on a promise to chronicle the achievements not just of the 'titular nations', but of all the peoples who have lived in this territory. As is doubtless a standard requirement of this series, the book begins with a discussion of geography and prehistory before moving on to discuss the northern crusades, the expansion of Lithuania and medieval Livonia, the Polish Lithuanian Commonwealth and the long nineteenth century under Tsarist rule (1795–1917). Readers of *Europe-Asia Studies* may wish to fast forward to Chapter 5 ('The Short Era of Independence'), which covers the period from the February 1917 Revolution to the eve of the Second World War. In Chapter 6 ('Between Hammer and Anvil') Kasekamp then outlines how the 1939 Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact set the scene for 'three successive foreign occupation regimes: that of the Soviet Union in 1940–1, Nazi Germany during 1941–4 and the USSR again from 1944' (p. 124). With regard to the period 1953–1991 (Chapter 7), the book speaks not of Soviet occupation but of Soviet rule, portraying the death of Stalin as a watershed which ushered in a gradual process of accommodation to the regime and the entry of ever greater numbers of local