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Dovid Katz

Efraim Zuroff's review of Timothy Snyder's 'Bloodlands' now posted at:

<http://holocaustinthebaltics.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/Zuroff-review-of-Snyders-Bloodlands-May-2011.pdf>



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Timothy Snyder

Hi Dovid. Since your mission is to defend history, I trust you'll be defending my book against Efraim's groundless claim that I equate the Nazi and Stalinist regimes. As you know, Bloodlands is the only book that both documents what was qualitatively different about the Holocaust, and shows that in quantitative terms the Holocaust was worse as well. As for Bloodlands being the bible of east European nationalists: well, fun Efraim's moyl in G-ts oyern, may they learn from the translations, when they appear. The east European debut of Bloodlands is in Warsaw on 17 May, where it will be introduced by Professor Jerzy Jedlicki, founding director of the Polish Association Against Anti-Semitism. All welcome. Cheers. Tim

May 8 at 11:28am





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Rasa Rimickaite Dear Timothy, your books are so excellent and they defend themselves:)

May 8 at 6:30pm



Submit

Rasa Rimickaite And I'm waiting for your book in polish especially with the introduction written by Prof. Jedlicki - my great Master

May 8 at 6:33pm



Submit

Timothy Snyder Rasa, Yes, one of the great historians -- and anti-nationalists. Professor Jedlicki will be introducing the discussion of my book (Biblioteka Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 18:00, 17 May). Here is his review of Bloodlands: <http://archiwum.polityka.pl/art/pola-smierci,387804.html>

May 8 at 11:40pm





Submit

Mark SPLINTER sometimes you fight so many enemies you start to see everyone as an enemy.

May 8 at 11:46pm



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Chris Hale What evidence is there that Bloodlands is being used as a 'Bible' by 'Holocaust distorters'? It doesn't deserve that fate to be sure...

May 9 at 2:32am



Submit

Julius Rayetzkas Every historian has his swerve, I'm sure Timothy is no exception. Why was it so important in the west 65 years after WWII to write a history of Soviet crimes juxtaposed to the Holocaust? Was it some sort of news? It could have gone as a separate research. Or was it dictated by certain moves which needed to be legitimized all of a sudden? Leaves one to wonder.

May 9 at 5:05pm





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Račelė Kraučaitė Hi Timothy, I've not yet read the book but before I start (I do have a copy!) have you any direct knowledge/experience of soft- or hardcore nationalists attempting to subvert your aims? Also, how many languages from the Bloodlands, as it were, will it be translated into? Don't worry if I don't make sense, I'm just thinking out loud. Cheers, RK.

May 9 at 5:15pm



Submit

Mark SPLINTER

Julius, conversely, plenty of people "wonder" if the Jewish attitude to the memory of the Holocaust is useful in diminishing the amount of attention paid to Israeli crimes. I am not totally on that side but sometimes I do "wonder". It's bizarre to suggest that a historian shouldn't put Nazi and soviet crimes in the same book. I haven't read it, but the way i read Efraim's criticism, it seems that he's overstating the "equivalence" angle instead of allowing "comparison". That is also what Timothy has said here. Dovid mentions both soviet and Nazi crimes on his website, and rightly so. It's impossible to contextualise the Holocaust without context.

May 9 at 5:20pm





Submit

Julius Rayetzkas

How do you know exactly, Mark, how it settles in the mind of the reader, "equivalence" versus "comparison"? Are you a psychologist of human nature? Can you say for sure that intentionless intention of an historian has an objective setting-up in the readers' minds? I can't.

Besides, the number of the "wonderers" never proves a thing ["plenty of people "wonder" if Jewish attitude..."]. Historians don't run after the numbers; if they would, they were not historians but populists.

May 9 at 5:29pm



Submit

Mark SPLINTER

i am not commenting specifically on what the book does or doesn't say, because i haven't read it.

I also do not advance the number of wonderers as proof of anything, and similarly i am sure you do not advance your doubt as to Timothy's intentions as proof of his intention.

As to the ability of people to twist an author's work for their own uses, I would not blame the author very much, certainly no more than I would blame the writers of the Bible for Catholic human rights abuses in the middle ages.

If you are implying Timothy is deliberately stirring the controversy to lend weight to the spurious claims of equivalentists, i would doubt that, based on what i have read from Efraim and the author. However, I might change my mind on that if I read the book, I don't know.

If you are saying that it is unreasonable to wonder whether Israeli or Zionist motivations are partly behind the "rebuttal of equivalence" then I

would disagree. I think it is a reasonable conclusion to say that those who are biased towards Israel's interests will use the Holocaust as justification for their bias. It might be a justifiable motivation anyway in some cases.

I hope that explains my point of view clearer.

May 9 at 5:49pm



Submit

Julius Rayetzkas " I think it is a reasonable conclusion to say that those who are biased towards Israel's interests will use the Holocaust as justification for their bias."

With this I will agree in full. Only the bias is a two-way road.

May 9 at 5:57pm



Submit

Mark SPLINTER

Sure, so I would hope that both sides are discussed by Timothy in his book. And, I would add that the existence of bias on the other side doesn't justify your own bias, if you are claiming to argue for justice. Theoretically you should be as blind as possible to the political advantages gained by any argument on any side. Under these conditions, the Holocaust is quite clearly the most disgusting thing a state has ever done to people. I would also agree that compared to other disgusting state-perpetrated crimes, it's in a league

of its own. However, I only know that for sure because I have compared these crimes and acknowledged the horror of Stalinism. Timothy's book sounds like it would enlighten that debate and strengthen the anti-equivalence argument, or maybe it's a piece of trash paid for by the KGB. I wish I had time at the moment to read it and find out what I think.

May 9 at 6:05pm ·



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Per Rudling

The strength of *Bloodlands* is that it contextualizes the violent 30s and 40s in Eastern Europe. I think Snyder is at his best when he writes books based upon his own research. *Sketches from a Secret War* and *The Reconstruction of Nations* made enormous contributions to our field. *Bloodlands* does not add much new information, but contextualizes and popularizes information which is not common knowledge outside circles of professionals. Myself I missed a discussion on collaboration in the Holocaust. Had Snyder expanded his section on the OUN and the LAF, for instance, it would have made nationalist groups less interested in trying to appropriate the book for their causes. Snyder mentions Kazys Škirpa, and touches briefly upon the OUN, but the contextualization of nationalist involvement in anti-Jewish actions and the Holocaust itself is missing. Expanding this section would also have confronted the nationalists with the issues they deny, relativize, or try hard to forget. In this regard, I think *Reconstruction* and *Sketches* are both superior to *Bloodlands*.

That said, I do not think the book relativizes the Holocaust. *Bloodlands* clearly shows that the scope and nature of the Holocaust was very different than other crimes. I also think Snyder is very careful in his use of the term genocide in order to avoid inflation of this term. There is no doubt that various eastern European nationalists are trying to use this book as a vehicle for their political projects. But my sense is that they

will only be successful to a certain degree.

Regarding Ukrainian nationalists, which I am more familiar with, many are uneasy with Snyder, who has authored some of the best English-language accounts of the OUN-UPA mass murder of Poles in Volhynia. Whereas he educates a broader audience on the 1932-33 famine - a long-standing aim of the nationalists - he also clearly rejects nationalist attempts to inflate the number of famine deaths to 7 to 10 million people. So at least in the Ukrainian case, the nationalists are ambiguous. They cannot really dismiss the book, but they also have problems appropriating it. There are many references to Bloodlands in comments sections, and by pro-nationalist polemicists. But I sometimes get a feeling these haven't read the book.

May 9 at 6:37pm



Submit

Julius Rayetzkas

Here is what Lithuanian American historian Suziedelis writes: "But it's not all hopeless. [S. refers to the Western misunderstanding of what took place in Lithuania during and after the WWII.] In this regard Timothy Snyder has written an important book called Bloodlands. It is popular now, the aforementioned figures have come out against it." It is popular, the historian himself admits.

Perhaps, times have changed, people become more and more literate so it is becoming a trend to read historian works, not just historian novels, like it was (one-sided, as some might say) with Leon Uris and other writers' novels. Perhaps, I am not convinced.

I certainly don't intend to read every historian's book to form my opinion about world events first of all because I am not an historian. It is enough to read the gamut of reviews of the specialists in the field. Also, I don't think that an historian work qualifies to be either good or a piece

of trash: There are countless other evaluations in-between, each of them as praising as critical.

May 9 at 7:15pm



Submit

Mark SPLINTER

like i said, twisted people twist stuff. i don't find that surprising. e.g. Dovid's words have been twisted and used against him every time he speaks.

What annoyed me most in that Sužiedėlis interview was this:

"In the West, where most people's understanding of WWII is based on Steven Spielberg films"

Fuck off, mate. I could say "in Lithuania, where most people's understanding of WWII is based on biased pseudohistory taught by government infiltrated universities and schools backed up by the racist media and endorsed by the kind of people who think Lithuanian citizens with Polish blood should speak Lithuanian or be sent 'back to Poland', even if they are living in the village of their birth, which was, at the time, Polish".

I repeat, I learnt the word gulag in school, in "the West". I also learnt that the Soviets halted the Nazi advance eastward, and I am glad they did. I also remember the picture of the red flag on the Reichstag. I manage to keep all these thoughts side by side in my "Western" head. it's not very intellectually difficult to do that. I don't like having my intelligence insulted by racist Lithuanians.

May 9 at 7:30pm



Submit

Mark SPLINTER

it's a dangerous world. hopefully, the book is right, and the people who rely on a twisted version of it will eventually find their case relies on an imaginary version of the book that doesn't exist. when it is pointed out that the book doesn't support equivalence, and especially if the author points that out himself, it makes people using the book to support equivalence look stupid. I think that's what intellectual debate, bookwriting and facebook is for.

May 9 at 7:45pm



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Mark SPLINTER Racinkas: "They write in a special kind of media, the left-wing Guardian"

... this one made me laugh. I would love to know how he characterises Respublika and Delfi. "normal kind of media" perhaps?

May 9 at 8:09pm



Submit

Mark SPLINTER One more point before I go... even if it's arguable that "ordinary" people in "the west" don't know anything about Lithuania in WWII and therefore have invalid opinions.... what about the ambassadors (including Estonian) who write open letters of complaint to the Lithuanian authorities? Are they all Spielberg fans?

May 9 at 8:12pm





Submit

Julius Rayetzkas Quite plausible... But, if seriously, I think there are too many Lithuanians (also Latvians, Estonians, Ukrainians, etc.) who know NOTHING or close to it. Certainly, an average westerner couldn't be so misinformed : This is yet another myth created in order to proffer some ideas. In this, Timothy's book could be helpful — but should not!

May 9 at 8:43pm



Submit

Phil Katz

The Europe you describe - sandwiched between two competing giants - is a fiction built in hindsight. If you were a peasant in Poland in the 20s or 30s, or a French democrat or a Spanish republican you would have been more concerned about the growth of domestic fascism right into the late 30s. Each country you describe as a 'victim' had active governments of the right pressing to hitch up to the Hitler wagon as it rolled East. On wheels oiled by Chamberlain. The role of the Russians cannot be separated from the fact that she was fighting Japan in the East. For the USSR the Pact of Non Aggression had as much to do with to do with Asia as Europe.

May 12 at 4:17am

