

grave error they had made in severing relations with Israel in 1967, as in the case of Yugoslavia (p. 250).

The Albanians were faithful to their lost cause to the bitter end and for years they rejected all Israeli demarches (in the 1950s and 1960s). Diplomatic relations were only established in 1991, by which time Albanian diplomats and politicians had begun to stress the historical Albanian–Jewish relationship, especially during the Holocaust—something ignored by Enver Hoxha’s dogmatic and xenophobic brand of Marxism.

The chapter on the talks and contacts with the terminally ill German Democratic Republic is especially interesting, as the reformers in Pankow also discovered the value of the miniscule Jewish community in their midst. In March 1990, Hans Modrow, the post-Honecker leader, wrote to Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir that “the GDR recognizes the responsibility of the entire German people for the past. This responsibility results from the deep guilt of Hitlerite fascism...” (p. 134). The GDR also declared its readiness to discuss property claims by Israeli citizens (p. 135), although not restitution to be paid to the Israeli government. Presumably, it assumed that the claims would ultimately be settled and paid by West Germany, which in any case would have to manage the dismantling and rehabilitation of East Germany.

With this latest book, and the previous one on relations with Romania, Yosef Govrin has presented us with the first serious study of East European relations with Israel. He has succeeded in combining, however modestly, his personal insights as an active participant in the processes with those of a historian. In so doing, he gives his readers the background to these dramatic events and a detailed picture of their evolution. This volume is a most valuable addendum to the history of Israel’s foreign relations, as well as to the foreign policy aspects of the collapse of the Communist bloc—and the first steps of post-Communist diplomacy.

Bloodlands—Europe Between Hitler and Stalin
by Timothy Snyder

(New York: Basic Books, 2010) 524 pages

Reviewed by Alexander J. Groth
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Timothy Snyder is a history professor at Yale University and the author of four other books dealing with European subject matter. The last of these, the enigmatic story of Wilhelm von Habsburg, was *The Red Prince: The Secret History of a Habsburg Archduke* (2008). *Bloodlands*, his latest, is a book with a very broad, multidisciplinary approach to a whole gamut of issues played out on the great belt of territory between Moscow and Berlin. These include politics and ideology, and comparisons of the theory and practice of Communism and Nazism and Stalin and Hitler. Snyder begins his study in the period following World War I and carries on his discussion until the end of World War II, and in fact right up into the present day. Snyder focuses on Stalin’s collectivization and purges, Hitler’s domestic policies, the evolution of national conflicts in Eastern Europe, and especially the Holocaust in its various aspects and phases.

Snyder’s work is generally very well written and researched, and contains a number of interesting insights. Among these is an essentially honest assessment of Allied indifference to the fate of the European Jews (pp. 290–291 and 343), and some thought-provoking attempts to define Nazi-Soviet “system” differences, e.g., “Whereas the Germans excluded the majority of the inhabitants of their empire from equal membership in the state, the Soviets included almost everyone in their version of equality” (pp. 390–391). Snyder says, “In practice, the Germans generally killed people who were not Germans, whereas the Soviets usually killed people who were Soviet citizens... The Nazis ... killed no more than a few thousand people before the war began. During the war of conquest, Germany killed millions of people faster than any state in history (to that point)” (p. 391). The importance of this fact can hardly be underestimated.

To be sure, Stalin’s policies, with their massive bloody extermination campaigns, are well known from other works, e.g., Robert Conquest’s *The Great Terror*, and are well documented. Many of the facts concerning Hitler’s persecutions and killings, especially the destruction of European Jewry, are likewise well known from a wide array of sources, first and foremost thanks to the scholarship of the late Raul Hilberg. Of course, that is not to suggest that Snyder does not contribute new information to the discussion.

That being said, however, Snyder's examination of mass murder is repeatedly marred by a somewhat quixotic and even annoying attempt at precision where common sense would suggest that exactitude is beyond reach. Thus, we find the author saying, "In 1937 and 1938 NKVD shot 70,868 inhabitants ... in the Kulak operation." Even if this were someone's official figure, is it possible that the source miscounted? Was it perhaps only 70,864, or, maybe it was actually, 70,987?

It is Snyder's discussion of the Holocaust, one of the main elements of the book, that is especially, and even profoundly, flawed—and that warrants particular scrutiny. In general, Snyder seems to have been influenced by claims minimizing the strength of local antisemitism and its role in the Holocaust. He also attributes "causality" in the behavior of Poles (and other East Europeans) toward Jews to their perceived role as Communists and Soviet collaborators. The crux of the issue is in Snyder's assertion that "in Eastern Europe, it is hard to find political collaboration with the Germans that is not related to previous experience of Soviet rule." (See p. 397 and also his discussion of this on p. 196.) Arguably, this approach subsumes some social and private motivations of local antisemites (i.e., the acquisition and retention of Jewish property and the replacement of the Jews in the socioeconomic fabric of the country) in favor of their public rationalizations. These motivations were very ably examined in the recent and highly publicized works of Jan Tomasz Gross, Jan Grabowski, and others,¹ at least with respect to Poland. Characteristically, Snyder mentions Gross several times in his bibliography but not even once in the index of *Bloodlands*. Also missing from the index is any mention of the slaughter at Jedwabne (1941) or the pogrom in Kielce (1946). Jedwabne is mentioned briefly in the text; the postwar pogrom in Kielce is not.

Snyder does mention Roman Dmowski on page 6 of his book: "Piłsudski's great political rival, the nationalist Roman Dmowski, made Poland's case to the victorious powers in Paris." But he does not seem to know much about Dmowski. If he did, he presumably would have acknowledged that Dmowski, the most influential Polish ideologue in the interwar period, advocated almost Hitler-like views of Jews long before the world knew who Lenin, Stalin, and Trotsky really were—long before the Polish-Soviet war of 1919–21, and, of course, well before World War II. Dmowski's works such as *Mysli Nowocześniejszego Polaka* [Thoughts of a Modern Pole] (1903) and *Upadek Mysli Konserwatywnej* [The Fall of Conservative Thought] (1913) are imbued with anti-Jewish vitriol. In the latter, he wrote that "if all society were to succumb to [Jewish] influence, we would actually lose our capacity for societal life."² In 1934, five years before the Soviet occupation of eastern Poland, Dmowski wrote in a book titled *Przewrót* [Overthrow] on p. 309 that "even if Jews were morally angels, mentally geniuses, even if they were people of a higher kind than we are, the very fact of their existence among us and

their participation in our life is for our society lethal [*zabójczy*] and they have to be gotten rid of [*Trzeba sie ich pozbyć*]."

None of Dmowski's works are even mentioned or cited by Snyder. This is a monumental omission. In Poland, popular antisemitism actually predated something called the Soviet Union by many years, and the degree of its influence could be reasonably inferred from the record of all the Polish national elections in the interwar period, i.e., 1919–20, 1922, 1928, 1930, and the so-called non-partisan elections consequent to the 1935 authoritarian constitution. Popular support of antisemitic parties and movements in Poland was actually much greater than it was in Germany in all the years of the Weimar Republic, right up to and including Hitler's victory in March 1933.

In Poland's relatively freest interwar national elections, held in 1922, parties with overtly antisemitic programs won pluralities in forty-two electoral districts for the lower house (Sejm) out of fifty-five in which any Polish party (rather than ethnic minorities) won. That figure constituted 76 percent of all Polish-dominated districts. Fifty-eight percent were won by Dmowski's own National Democrats. About 80 percent of the aggregate nationwide vote for the lower house in 1922 was cast for Polish parties as opposed to ethnic minorities. And over 70 percent of the Polish vote went to parties with antisemitic programs.³ That the virulence of antisemitism in Poland greatly intensified in the late 1930s—without the presence of a single Soviet soldier on Polish soil—is common knowledge. Generally speaking, things went "from bad to worse."⁴

When Snyder says, and without any apparent substantiation, that "antisemites in the Home Army were a minority" (p. 286), he is simply not credible. To be sure, Jan Karski, Władysław Bartoszewski, and Irena Sendler were not antisemites. In the aggregate, obviously many people were not, but "majority" is still another matter. Snyder is on shaky ground when he talks about a "substantial proportion" of the Home Army's "modest arms cache" being shared with the Jewish resistance in the Warsaw Ghetto in 1943. That was not the opinion of Mordecai Anielewicz. Historians such as Israel Gutman, Shmuel Krakowski, and others have demonstrated this. There is no reason to assume here that any later source would necessarily be more accurate about any such issue than an earlier source. At the very least, this should have been addressed by Snyder as a matter of important historic dispute.⁵

When Snyder asserts that in December 1941, Hans Frank told his subordinates that they must get rid of the Jews but "he had no idea even then how this could be achieved" (p. 261), he again strains credulity. Wasn't a 184-calorie-per-day official food ration in the Warsaw Ghetto (not to mention the issues of space, exposure,

epidemics, etc., which had a dramatic effect on mortality in the ghetto) a pretty good means to that particular end? Snyder maintains that “whereas the Germans preserved prewar Polish-Jewish elites, choosing from among them a Judenrat to implement German policies in the ghetto, they tended to regard non-Jewish Polish elites as a political threat” (p. 146). If this suggests that, even in 1939–40, a category of Jews was actually better treated by the Nazis than an equivalent category of Poles, the suggestion is simply false.

The idea that “the establishment of the ghetto in 1940 did not necessarily convey to Polish Jews that their fate was worse than that of non-Jewish Poles, who were at the time being shot and sent to concentration camps in large numbers” (p. 281), borders on the delusional. The reasons are numerous but one could begin with the food ration—184 calories for Jews versus 634 for Poles, and the comparison between prison-like confinement of Jews (robbed of all property that they literally could not carry) in far less space than was available to people outside the Ghetto, combined with severe deprivation of all sorts of amenities such as medication, fuel, public transportation, opportunities for gainful employment, contact with the outside world, and simply access to land with all its natural bounty, parks and playgrounds included. Snyder’s suggestion that the Nazis did not resort to killing Jews in the Ghetto and using them for forced labor—but rather just “let them be”—while they were confined is simply wrong. Snyder should have reread his own account on pp. 145–146 where he notes that in the Warsaw Ghetto, population density was “about two hundred thousand people per square mile.” How did that compare with Polish-inhabited Warsaw outside the ghetto? How did that compare, even roughly, with any urban areas inhabited by Poles during the Nazi occupation of Poland? It is known that some 92 percent of Ghetto apartments surveyed in the winter of 1941–42 had no adequate heating. Was that comparable with Polish urban space? Did all Polish inhabitants of Warsaw—all of them—lose their apartments, houses, factories, shops, stores, and farms (if they happened to own any), and even their furniture and household utensils, as did all Jews moving into the Ghetto in 1940?

Poles indeed suffered greatly and tragically under Nazi rule in World War II. Millions lost their lives, but they were not targeted for biological elimination. In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler classified Jews alone as destroyers of culture. This fact did have practical consequences, which no credible account of the period can possibly finesse.

Among various subjects, one of the weakest parts of *Bloodlands*, not unexpectedly, is its conclusion. It is not at all clear what the author makes, or indeed can make, of all the disparate materials he has surveyed.

The most troubling aspect of this book is the instrumental way in which it will inevitably be put to use by those, especially in East Europe, who would have the public believe that there is no real difference between the suffering brought on by Stalin and that by Hitler—and that all victims should be relegated to the same memorial “basket.” These are the same people who have pushed so forcefully for a common “Day of European Remembrance for Victims of Stalinism and Nazism” to be observed on August 23, the anniversary of the signing of the Ribbentrop-Molotov Agreement. In fact, in April 2009, the European Parliament passed a resolution adopting that proposal. As Yehuda Bauer pointed out, “This is an equation that not only trivializes and relativizes the genocide of the Jews perpetrated by the Nazi regime, but is also a mendacious revision of recent world history... There can be no doubt as to the crimes of violent and often murderous oppression of the Soviet regime in the countries of Eastern Europe... One certainly should remember the victims of the Soviet regime, and there is every justification for designating special memorials and events to do so. But to put the two regimes on the same level and commemorating the different crimes on the same occasion is totally unacceptable.”⁶ Sadly, this idea seems to have been lost on Snyder, and whether by design or accident, he has given a powerful tool to those who would like nothing more than to trivialize and relativize the Shoah.

¹ See Jan T. Gross, *Złote Żniwa* (Kraków, 2011) and Jan Grabowski, *JUDENJAGD. Polowanie na Żydów 1942–1945. Studium dziejów pewnego powiatu* (Warsaw, 2011).

² See *Pisma*, Vol IV (Częstochowa, 1938), pp. 118–119.

³ Among various sources, see Alicja Bęcikowska, *Stronictwa i związki polityczne w Polsce* (Warsaw, 1975); Alexander J. Groth, “Proportional Representation in Prewar Poland,” *Slavic Review*, XXIII:1 (1964), 103–116; “Polish Elections, 1919–1928,” *Slavic Review*, XXIV:4 (1965), 653–665; “Dmowski, Piłsudski and Ethnic Conflict in Pre-1939 Poland,” *Canadian Slavic Studies*, III:1 (1969), 69–91.

⁴ See Antony Polonsky, *Politics in Independent Poland 1921–1959, The Crisis of Constitutional Government* (London, 1972), pp. 467–469; William W. Hagen, “No Way Out: The Politics of Polish Jewry, 1935–1939,” in *Central European History*, XXXIII:1 (2000), 154–158. See also Raymond L. Buell, *Poland: Key to Europe* (New York, 1939), p. 307: On December 21, 1938, “General Skwarczyński, head of the [politically dominant] Camp of National Unity... reiterated previous declarations that the Jews were an obstacle to the development of the Polish nation and asked the government to take energetic measures to reduce the number of Jews in the country ... Colonel [Zygmunt] Wenda, Chief of Staff of the Camp of National Unity, declared that the departure of the Polish Jews was

a necessity on account of national defense. The economic structure of the country should be placed in the hands of patriotic elements which in case of crisis would support the national cause.”

⁵ The Anielewicz letter of March 13, 1943 about Polish help—or lack of it—is reproduced in Israel Gutman, *Żydzi Warszawscy 1939–1943* (Warsaw, 1993), pp. 475–6. See also Israel Gutman, *Resistance: the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising* (New York, 1994). Only the last of these sources is mentioned in Snyder’s bibliography. In his 1951 memoirs, the leader of Poland’s Home Army, General Tadeusz Bór-Komorowski, devoted a total of eleven pages out of 370 to the fate of Polish Jews. He conceded that the assistance given to Jews in the Warsaw Ghetto was not very substantial but justified the paucity of aid by pointing to the Home Army’s lack of resources. He mentions over 25,000 attacks on the German railroad system and over 5,000 assassinations of German officials but none apparently connected with the liquidation of the Jews. See *Armia Podziemna* (London, 1951), pp. 95–106, 146–147. Snyder does not cite the general’s work.

⁶ http://www.gedenkdienst.at/fileadmin/user_upload/yehuda_bauer_-_23_august.pdf.

1989: The Struggle to Create Post-Cold War Europe

by Mary Elisse Sarotte

(Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 344 pages

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If an alien were to visit our world and review history books concerning the twentieth century, it might make the mistake of assuming that it was the shortest century known to humankind. This can be attributed to the fact that two watershed events reduced the century chronologically to a mere seventy-two years. The first, of course, came in 1917 with the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, known as the October Revolution. The end of the century was marked by the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, metaphorically signifying the downfall of the Soviet bloc in Eastern Europe and the eventual collapse of the USSR.

This period is also usually divided into two main parts, in accordance with the outcome and consequences of World War II. The first section is named “Intermediary,” and the second “the Cold War”—a concept reflecting the ideological and political struggle between the West and the Eastern Communist Bloc. This confrontation seemed quite natural in those days, but is now reevaluated and reconsidered in a historical perspective. It is in that context that one must look at the book by Mary Elisse Sarotte, *1989—The Struggle to Create Post-Cold War Europe*.

The central idea that Sarotte, Professor of International Relations at the University of Southern California, wishes to present appears to be merely an issue of semantics. Contrary to popular research, Sarotte maintains that 1989 should not be seen as the year ending the Cold War, but rather that which initiated the age of building post-Cold War Europe. Her decision to name the period beginning after the fall of the Berlin Wall “post-Cold War Europe” lends the impression that she herself is bound by the old view in which the Cold War is perceived as the main occurrence, and subsequent events as by-products.

Winding one’s way through Sarotte’s book, however, it quickly becomes evident that this is not the case. Sarotte succeeds in building an interesting and comprehensive thesis explaining the world after the Cold War, not by establishing a theory based on retrospective wisdom, but rather by presenting facts that reflect a reality characterized by opportunism and mere chance. If we borrow the phrase uttered by the economist Adam Smith, it was “the invisible hand of history” that stirred the setting.

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