

“gardening state,” which the author adapts from Zygmunt Bauman. Stalin, and later the Communist Party, was the head gardener in this effort to build a victory garden that would turn dirt into soil, wasteland into horns of plenty, and flawed humans into happy Soviet, socialist subjects.

The sixth and final chapter is conceived quite literally as a climax: a discussion of the virgin lands campaign launched under Nikita Khrushchev. The book unpacks the gendered understandings of the campaign as the male Slavic conquest and impregnation of the feminized Kazakh steppe. This campaign, as the author so perceptively notes, was coincident with—and explicitly connected to—the Soviet conquest and idea of colonizing extraterrestrial space.

Based primarily on published sources, this is a rich and impressive piece of research and writing that will be of interest to a variety of audiences: literary scholars, science and technology studies specialists, environmental historians, and modern Russian historians. Of course, in a book as ambitious as this one, there will invariably be some areas that could have used further development. The author makes a bold claim that literature shapes the worldview and decisions people make, and as a result it “has the power to determine social and material realities” (117). Supporting that claim, however, would require more than the expert analysis of literature, film and art in this book, but also some sense of how everyday Russians and Soviets read and consumed these notions of soil and acted upon them. One also wonders if those toiling masses had their own ways of understanding soil.

ANDREW JENKS  
*California State University*

***Russia's Hero Cities: From Postwar Ruins to Soviet Heroarchy.*** By Ivo Mijnsen. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2021. xxii, 307 pp. Appendix. Bibliography. Index. Illustrations. Photos. Tables. Maps. \$42.00, paper. doi: 10.1017/slr.2022.273

Mijnsen's monograph examines the ways in which the memorialization of the Great Patriotic War mediated the postwar urban development and local identities of Novorossiysk and Tula. As the author demonstrates, their induction into the pantheon of “Hero Cities” (in 1973 and 1976, respectively) crowned the official efforts to transform wartime trauma into an enduring source of political legitimacy and didactic values. The book's source-base is a mixture of published media, materials from central, regional, and city archives, and a score of interviews with members of the postwar generation.

*Russia's Hero Cities* presents a rich variety of commemorative discourses and practices in two regional (and heretofore overlooked) contexts. The book reveals the contested and polysemic nature of local war memory in the late Soviet period, which often frustrated the best efforts of the authorities to sculpt it into a “useable past.” Thus, while official narratives foregrounded the cities' wartime unity and stalwart resistance, family memories told of inglorious defeats, needless suffering, desertion, and collaborationism. Solemn monumental ensembles attempted to imbue commemoration with a sacred tenor, but the public also appropriated these spaces for private activities, like wedding photoshoots. Excursions to local battlefields aimed to awe and inspire, but were as likely to founder in the face of public disinterest and logistical challenges. To be sure, war memory had strong emotional resonance, but, as elsewhere in the Soviet Union, it often escaped official molds.

Against this backdrop, Mijnsen finds a surprising level of public identification and local pride in Novorossiysk and Tula's “Hero City” status. Convincingly, he

demonstrates that this appellation was far from an empty symbolic gesture. Rather, the recognition of collective “worthiness” (implicit in the conferral of “Hero City” status) mediated the late Soviet “socialist contract” in important ways. Specifically, individuals (and regional elites) felt entitled to—and went on to demand—a level of material provisioning “worthy” of their cities’ newfound status. The central authorities, for their part, hoped that recognizing wartime heroism would inspire city-dwellers (and especially younger generations) to heroic labor “worthy” of their forebears. In some sense, then, the implicit acceptance and strategic negotiation of the “heroarchy” of Soviet cities contributed to the (however precarious) hegemony of official war memory.

Mijnssen’s argument is largely convincing, and should encourage historians to reexamine the significance of symbolic incentives, typically dismissed as the irrelevant, empty rituals of late Soviet discourse. However, further work is needed to test and refine Mijnssen’s model. As the author admits, Tula was ultimately unsuccessful in leveraging its “Hero City” status for superior material provisioning. “Its connections to the elite were good but not excellent,” unlike those of Novorossiysk, which secured massive housing and infrastructure investments (231). This disparity goes to the heart of the matter: Novorossiysk and Tula became “Hero Cities” (and received attendant benefits) primarily due to the efforts of their respective patrons. The Party’s Central Committee and the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet did not proactively extend this honor to either. Rather than a truly two-way “socialist contract,” then, “Hero City” status could have been more a rhetorical instrument in clientelist struggles for resources and prestige. Perhaps the central authorities never did seriously expect to improve labor discipline by recognizing wartime heroism, but were “discursively entrapped” to act as though they did.

However that may be, *Russia’s Hero Cities* charts promising directions for further inquiry. Furthermore, for those less familiar, the book will serve as an effective introduction to the contours of war commemoration in the late Soviet period. Tragically, the study has an acute contemporary relevance: as Mijnssen points out, between 2007 and 2015, the Russian government recognized forty-five new “Cities of Military Glory.” While the significance and meaning of such designations has partially shifted, understanding their genealogy is crucial; the Russian regime is using war memory to fuel its new war.

ANTHONY KALASHNIKOV  
University of Alberta

***Survival on the Margins: Polish Jewish Refugees in the Wartime Soviet Union.*** By Eliyana R. Adler. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2020. xviii, 433 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Illustrations. Photographs. Tables. Maps. \$49.95, hard bound.

doi: 10.1017/slr.2022.274

This book examines the history of the 150,000–300,000 Polish Jews who managed to survive the Holocaust after fleeing Poland for the Soviet Union and were then evacuated to the Soviet interior. By integrating the experiences of those Jews who spent the war years in the Soviet Union into the realm of Holocaust studies, Eliyana Adler fills an important historiographical lacuna. As the author notes, “Despite the fact that the majority of Polish Jews fortunate enough to see the end of the war did so in the Soviet interior, little is known about their experiences” (279). This double shift—both geographic and paradigmatic—is Adler’s most important intervention in the study of