

that these trials appeared to be, “in Soviet circumstances . . . completely normal judicial proceedings,” unlike the work of troikas (98). In Ch. 4, Vadym Zolotar’ov examines the role of personal connections among the NKVD officers of Kharkiv and Odesa in the unfolding of the terror. Lynne Viola looks at the rural Skvirskii district in Ch. 5, examining the role of orders from above and the place of witnesses. (In a rural region, it was especially important for prosecutors to take advantage of the local knowledge of witnesses—many of whom were wary of the Jewish NKVD chief as a non-local.) Serhii Kokin looks at the purges in Zhitomir in Ch. 6, finding that the harshest sentences for NKVD officials often went to the mid-level officials who were most directly responsible. Ch. 7, by Jeffrey J. Rossman, concludes the book by looking at the theme of NKVD motivations in a close analysis of the Northern Donetsk Railroad NKVD. Although Rossman finds that ideology played a part in shaping NKVD officers’ purge-era actions, he argues that situational factors (like the fear of punishment) were primary motivations.

These chapters are models of archival research—judicious, thorough, and well-documented—and they paint a compelling portrait of the NKVD during and after the purges. There were a handful of minor ways in which the book could have been improved, however. *Laboratories of Terror* ends somewhat abruptly after Jeffrey Rossman’s chapter and would have benefited from a conclusion; compelling as the book’s analysis was, it could have been still stronger if the editors included a final section stepping away from the details of purge trials to emphasize broader points of analysis. (How is our understanding of Khrushchev-era discussions of socialist legality affected by analyzing the purge of the purgers, for example? Several chapters make implicit comparisons between Nazi perpetrators and NKVD officers—another theme that could be expanded upon in a conclusion.) The book is more effective in explaining how the purge of the purgers worked than in elucidating why it happened—largely, of course, because fully understanding the reasons for the purge would require more knowledge of Stalin’s and Beria’s motivations and attitudes, which cannot be divined from local archives. The book’s chapters were occasionally a little repetitive (which is a danger for any highly focused collection of essays); the chapters are based on similar source bases and feature similar arguments and similar descriptions of the career trajectories of NKVD officials, for instance.

Overall, however, *Laboratories of Terror* is a model of archival research and an important contribution to our understanding of Stalinist perpetrators, Soviet secret policing, and the end of the Great Terror.

Evgenii Akel’ev. *Russkii misopogon. Petr I, bradobritie i desiat’ millionov “Moskovitov.”*

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Every now and again, and these days perhaps with increasing frequency, we are brought to realize that circumstances and events in Russian history that we thought we

understood perfectly were in fact more problematic or complicated or multifaceted than we once realized. Such now seems to be the case with Tsar Peter I's policy to force most Russian men to shave their beards and for those who served the state and those who lived in towns to abandon traditional Russian garb for clothing patterned on western European styles. Peter's personal wielding of the razor on boyars in Preobrazhenskoe on the first full day following his return to Moscow from the Grand Embassy in August 1698 is a matter of legend. But after that, no *ukaz* has been found forbidding the wearing of beards until that of January 1705 requiring almost all men other than clergy and peasants to shave off their facial hair or pay a hefty annual tax (*poshlina*) varying in value depending on one's *soslovie*, for the right to retain a beard. How to account for the more than six year gap between the first deed and the law? What exactly motivated each step Peter took regarding these policies, not just in 1698 and 1705, but in between and thereafter throughout his reign?

Evgenii Akelev has written the first comprehensive history of the circumstances and motivations surrounding the "Russian beard hater," drawing the title from Emperor Julian the Apostate's 363 CE satirical essay against beards. Drawing on sources such as *kormchie knigi*, the archives of various *prikazy* (in particular the *Preobrazhenskii prikaz*), circular letters, and other published and unpublished writings of prominent churchmen (including the last two patriarchs and Bishop Dmitrii Rostovskii), and the papers and correspondence of Peter I himself, Akelev brings to light a far more nuanced story than traditional historiography has generally traced.

As Akelev demonstrates, opposition to the shaving of beards was by no means universal among the top levels of Muscovite society in the last two decades of the seventeenth century. Grand Princess Sophia's court boasted several clean-shaven men, including her favorite Prince Vasilii Golitsyn. One of the churchmen whose views supported Peter's was Dmitrii Rostovskii. But by far the prevalent view was that man, created in the image and likeness of God, must retain his beard in order to help ensure his salvation. Akelev points out that an *ukaz* was prepared in October 1698, but not published, to force beard shaving for most non-peasant men in Russia. Peter apparently feared vehement opposition to such a law at that time. His suspicions were well-founded given the public appearance shortly thereafter of Grishka Talitskii, the largely self-educated bookbinder who used his reading of Biblical prophets and prophecies to conclude that Peter was the Antichrist. Talitskii was not alone in this belief, but was the most celebrated victim of state retribution, sentenced to be roasted to death on Red Square. The memory of the danger to Peter's retaining power represented by Talitskii apparently haunted the tsar for the rest of his life.

When the *ukaz* to shave beards or pay a costly *poshlina* finally appeared, it led directly to the Astrakhan uprising of 1705, confirming Peter's misgivings. By that time, Akelev argues that for Peter the strongest motivator was not religious belief but fiscal necessity. Russia found itself deep in war with Sweden and up against the wall financially. Peter apparently hoped to bring in to the treasury perhaps a million and a half rubles per year from beard taxes. This was not to be, as noncompliance was widespread. As early as September 1706 Peter began backtracking on his policy, initially on the imposition in some areas of one kopeck from every bearded peasant who passed through the gates of a town.

The major question regarding Akelev's treatment of the topic is why the Old Belief and Old Believers are not featured more prominently. After all, they were the elements in the population who most vociferously opposed beard shaving. They were prominent in the Astrakhan uprising. From 1724, cases relating to beard-wearing were handled by the newly created *Raskol'nicheskaiia kontora*. The inclusion of eighteen appendices providing the full texts from archival sources of various projects, *ukazy*, remonstrations, and amendments to *ukazy* provide a distinct flavor to the book.