

the search for support and consolation outside the secular realm. My own research on apparitions in Soviet Lithuania revealed that they are in response to trauma, both personal and political, beginning with personal trouble and extending later into general political discontent.

This volume sends a very clear message that is fundamental for social sciences: the facts are perceived only through our own net of attitudes, premises and beliefs. Truth is always subject to interpretations, and our notion of reality is a social construct. The most important contribution of this book to the social sciences and humanities is that it brings supernatural visions and miracles into the modern European political landscape. As it has been said earlier, traditional western scholarship attributed magic, visions, and miracles to pre-political societies or the so-called Third World, while distinguishing the west as modern, rational, and secular. This volume illuminates the role of religious visions, miracles, and prophecies in the middle of the twentieth century in western countries, thus destabilizing the boundaries between the modern and pre-modern.

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The Russian Cold: Histories of Ice, Frost, and Snow. Ed. Julia Herzberg, Andreas Renner, and Ingrid Schierle. New York: Berghahn Books, 2021. vii, 261 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Figures. Tables. Maps. \$145.00, hard bound.
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Cold forms one of Russia's most distinctive natural features. More than two thirds of its soil is permanently frozen. Here are the coldest inhabited places in the world, and its continental position brings long winters, frost and snow, which shapes the environment within Russia. And yet, to date few scholars have explored how the cold climate has been experienced, studied by scientists, or represented by artists or writers. In the last few years, scholars have increasingly explored the history of climate and its science in Russia and the Soviet Union. This collection represents a fascinating addition to this growing body of scholarship as it tries to historicize cold in Russia by understanding how people have experienced climate and culturally engaged with the cold. In so doing, the editors argue for including climate as an influential, even central factor for historical causalities by simultaneously assigning "human actors more scope for action" (6). The editors want to break with the tradition of a majority of other works within environmental studies of the Russian empire and the Soviet Union that consider nature only as "a target of human activity" (6) and that concentrate on political and economic factors. Instead, this volume seeks to emphasize the mutual interrelationship between society and nature through the phenomena of cold. Following theories from disaster studies, climate is seen here as a trigger or as a catalyst but not as a factor determining Russian history.

The book follows a thematic structure, in which the cold is approached through science, aesthetics, and sports. While the themes are of course very diverse, they are still connected by the common idea showing how knowledge about or experience with the cold has changed over time, as have the social and political realities. Cold is not only a question of degrees, but also a cultural construct. In most of the case studies cold is associated with some sort of heroism, strength, and invincibility; it is often used by historical actors to drive their own histories. Using different approaches, sources and covering different periods, this essay collection succeeds

in demonstrating the ubiquity of climate in the lives of Russians from the eighteenth century to the end of the USSR.

Studies on scientific experiences with the cold in Russia form a fundamental part of the collection. Exploring how climate and the human-nature relationship was understood by meteorologists and historians since the mid eighteenth century, Julia Herzberg shows how the emergence of Russia as a major power with Peter I “contributed to a reevaluation of cold and a rehabilitation of the North” (21). Harsh climate was no longer seen as a devastating force, but as a productive one. Following the move of the capital north, the experience of extreme cold awakened scholarly interest in studying the weather and climate. Their research made clear that the world’s climate cannot be understood without considering Russia’s cold. In his chapter on a book by Russian geographer A. A. Grigor’ev’s *Subarktika* (The Subarctic, 1946), Denis J. B. Shaw similarly makes the point that Russian research on the tundra advanced global scientific understanding of the environment. Unfortunately, he does not even mention the political context. Only Herzberg in her introductory chapter points to fact that Stalinism forced scientists to adapt their meteorological theories and to disregard climate as determining factors for the development of plants and societies. For scientists under Iosif Stalin, the cold climate was only attractive when it served to claim the apparent Russian discovery of Antarctica in 1821, as Erki Tammikasaar argues in his essay.

The section on narratives and images of the Russian harsh climate explores the changing journalistic and cinematographic engagement with the cold. Natalia Rodigina, who analyzed the image of Siberia through news articles between the 1860s up to the first Russian revolution, argues that depending on the political stance of the periodical, Siberia was either described as the “El Dorado” for settlers and as a region that should be integrated into the communicative space of the empire or it was characterized as a place of punishment of an inhumane regime. In Russian and Soviet films, ice and snow similarly changed their meaning and function of the political era, as Oksana Bulgakowa shows. In the 1930s, Soviet films used winter landscapes as decorative parts of Russian exoticism without conveying the sensation of cold as temperature. With the war, she argues, screen temperatures dropped and winter became a harsh, dangerous, inhuman feature. Thaw and post-thaw films continued making cold films and created the image of a “ferocious winter,” which “attested to a change in self-assessments of the national character” (149): the cold was now represented as cold.

Snow and ice served as useful tools to create images and identities of masculine strength and courage as the last section shows. Here, Aleksei Popov traces the ways representations of Soviet winter ski tourism changed over time and how this reflects changes in Soviet society as a whole. While in the 1930s extreme climatic conditions during the winter holiday season were considered as advantageous to the physical development of military fighters, winter tourism in the post-Stalin period was used to advocate Soviet technological progress and urbanization. Snow was now perceived as “gentle”; enjoyment in the snow became the recurring motif.

This edited volume is, as the editors rightly conclude, “a first attempt to unravel the stereotyped conflation of coldness and Russianness” (249) as it provides a variety of new aspects on the cold. It is a very coherent essay collection that helps to understand how climatic conditions and experiences with climate are embedded in Russia’s social and political history. Studies on how the cold influenced everyday lives and shaped the environment as well as studies on the cultural history of permafrost or on tsarist and Soviet glacier expeditions would have enriched the collection. Space is always limited, however, and this volume is a very valuable

contribution to studying the cultural history of Russia's climate. It is meant for students and scholars of environmental history as well as of Russian and Soviet cultural history.

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Stalinism at War: The Soviet Union in World War II. By Mark Edele. London: Bloomsbury Academic Press, 2021. xii, 257 pp. Appendix. Notes. Index. Photographs. Figures. Tables. Maps. \$35.00, hard bound.
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Mark Edele's *Stalinism at War* is clearly the culmination of many years of research and thought. In producing this concise and accessible work, Edele has done a significant service to the many students and others who I hope will read it.

This new book is perhaps best categorized as looking at the Soviet Union in wartime from a primarily "war and society" perspective, something highlighted by the nature of the author's brief discussion of the historiography early on in the book. His discussion of the literature on operational and strategic military matters is far less developed than that on the "war and society" side of things, and he not unreasonably suggests that "deep explorations of Stalin's diplomacy or detailed recounting of military operations" (5) is something best sought elsewhere. In terms of themes considered in this book, Edele nonetheless casts his net widely and has been fairly comprehensive in touching upon, no matter how briefly, most topics that a reviewer might reasonably expect to see in a book with this title. From social, military, and economic preparations for war, to Iosif Stalin's wartime leadership and the significance of Allied Lend-Lease aid for the Soviet war effort, despite his brevity Edele is able to provide a degree of nuance backed up with further reading in the endnotes. As one might expect given his work on the immediate post-Great Patriotic War period, Edele spends significant time on the aftermath of the Great Patriotic War.

A trend in the historiography of war in recent decades has been to focus more on the experience of "rank-and-file" historical actors as opposed to simply elites. Although there are very reasonable attempts to inject bottom-up experiences throughout this book—what Edele describes as "individual stories" (4)—these do not, however, change the fact that this book is primarily about the impact of policy "from above" on those "below," rather than the experiences of the latter per se. By necessarily keeping a lid on such material, Edele has kept his book relatively short and pithy; no mean achievement.

Although aimed primarily at a "non-specialist" (5) audience, this does not mean that the book does not contribute to wider scholarly debate. For instance, I certainly agree with Edele's recasting of the Soviet Second World War as something starting in 1937. That Edele chooses to also extend the Soviet "war" to 1949 in part on account of "pacification and consolidation" (4) relating to the establishment of Soviet rule on newly occupied territories is, however, perhaps taking chronological revisionism a little too far from the perspective of a reviewer orientated towards the military-diplomatic. Soviet forces had destroyed much of the strength of nationalist guerrillas in the west by the end of 1946, even if resistance would continue on a smaller scale for many more years. While Soviet demobilization was indeed a protracted process compared to that of the western allies, much of it had nonetheless also taken place by the end of 1946.