

consolidated while various objects of criticism were relegated to still occurring shortcomings or bourgeois survivals.

The analysis in the book is primarily textual and arguments emerge in the context of interpretation of various texts. Although authors infer claims about humor reception among people, the book presents little data to understand what people actually laughed at beyond a text. Moreover, the popularity of discussed Stalinist comedies or literature does not necessarily mean that Soviet citizens accepted various state ideological agendas.

While it is beyond the scope of this book, I think it is important to keep in mind that state laughter coexisted in the context of censorship, which is rarely mentioned in the book. Moreover, while this state laughter was a means of Soviet imperial governance, it must have had different circulation and reception in Soviet peripheries. Thus, officially sanctioned laughter in the Stalinist era does not necessarily mean that people and the state in real life laughed at the same things or that all Soviet people were united by state laughter.

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Russian Contributions to International Humanitarian Law: A Contrastive Analysis of Russia's Historical Role and its Current Practice. By Michael Riepl.

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Persons who are not steeped in the lore of international humanitarian law (IHL) may not think of Russia as a central player in the development of legal standards to ameliorate the hazards of warfare. Michael Riepl's book provides an antidote. Based on a meticulously researched dissertation, it details, in its first half, Russia's involvement in the formulation of IHL in the tsarist and Soviet periods.

The second half, as the sub-title foretells, focuses on conflict situations at the turn of the twenty-first century (Chechnia, Georgia, Crimea, Syria, Donbas). Violations of IHL by Russia are recounted. Beyond IHL violations, Riepl focuses on the appropriate legal characterization of these twenty-first century situations. He explains the status of Russia's military personnel in these conflicts, arguing that Russia has often played a more central role than it has acknowledged. He explains the emergence of the Wagner group.

What may surprise readers the most in this book is Riepl's lucid explanation in the first half of the book of Russia's role in generating IHL, a body of law that dates from the second half of the nineteenth century. The suffering of troops in the 1853–56 Crimean War was dramatized to the world by field medical work on both sides, spurring the later institutionalization of humanitarian work in warfare. In 1868, as Riepl recounts, Tsar Alexander II called European leaders together in St. Petersburg to draft a treaty on types of weaponry that caused unnecessary harm. They produced the first treaty to outlaw any particular means of killing. The 1868 St. Petersburg Declaration prohibited the use of bullets that explode upon contact with their target. In 1874, Alexander II invited European leaders to Brussels, where Russia proposed a broad treaty on IHL. In 1899, Tsar Nicholas II convened the leaders again, this time at The Hague, where they built on the work of the Brussels conference to conclude a comprehensive IHL treaty, one whose rules apply, with some revision, to the present day.

Even more surprising to a reader may be the efforts made by the Soviet government in the further development of IHL. Nazi atrocities committed in the Soviet Union during World War II gave the Soviet government that orientation. Riepl explains how, when the Geneva conventions were re-drafted in 1949, the Soviet government promoted strong protections for civilians and secured the expansion of IHL to include domestic (non-international) hostilities.

The Soviet government's role in generating ideas that produced the post-war Nuremberg trial of major Nazi figures is also noted by Riepl. In 1942, Foreign Commissar Viacheslav Molotov was the first to propose a special tribunal to prosecute Nazi leaders. During the war, the Soviet government collected evidence of Nazi atrocities with a view to prosecution. Riepl relates that Aron Naumovich Trainin, a leading Soviet academic in criminal law, authored a monograph in 1944 with a view to post-war prosecutions under the title *Ugolovnaia otvetstvennost' gitlerovtsev*. The impact of Trainin's monograph does not come through, however. As seen in N. S. Lebedeva's 1975 *Podgotovka Niurnbergskogo protsessa*, and George Ginsburgs' 1996 *Moscow's Road to Nuremberg: The Soviet Background to the Trial*, two works that Riepl does not cite, the Soviet government initiated key ideas, even beyond Molotov's statement

Trainin's monograph was quickly taken in the United States as a guide for dealing with the Nazi leadership. Translated quickly as *The Crimes of the Hitlerites*, it was circulated within the US War and State Departments. It oriented the United States, as Britain as well, towards the idea of prosecuting not only government personnel, but industrialists who employed slave labor or manufactured weaponry. Most importantly, Trainin's monograph led to the inclusion in the Nuremberg charter of aggression as a crime. Trainin coined the term "crimes against peace."

Riepl's text is highly readable. It reflects exhaustive knowledge of sources, many quoted from the Russian originals, plus copious notes that give assurance that what Riepl writes is well grounded. The book unfortunately has no subject index. In a book of such length, an index would have been helpful. Published early in 2022, the book does not cover Russia's February 2022 invasion of Ukraine. That situation, of course, gives the book great topical interest. Anyone who has followed the initiation and prosecution of the war in Ukraine will find this book illuminating.

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