

to think-tanks and congressmen in order to turn a blind eye to Azerbaijan's failings or excused inaction, its low level compliance to democratic values and violations of human rights because Azerbaijan is "in a tough neighborhood" and a "young democracy" (78), even though these excuses rang hollow for many domestic and foreign critics.

The Aliyev regime continues to violently repress dissent by civil society, political parties, the media, and journalists, who are arrested, beaten, or thrown in jail. Nevertheless, western, particularly American diplomats continue to visit Baku and meet with Aliyev because the "United States policy in Azerbaijan is built on a tripod of energy, security, and democratization, but the worsening record in the third has become a source of worsening tension" as the author reiterates (4). It is crucial to emphasize that when "the United States, the United Kingdom, and other European states continued to do business with Aliyev in the face of arrests and dirty elections, Azerbaijanis became convinced that energy and finances trump democracy and human rights" (207–8).

Altstadt's book "is not about chance but about choice" (1). The topic is very well explored and the narrative is coherent. The author provides ample evidence to support her arguments. The book is a must read to US policy makers and to all those who are interested in geopolitics and the South Caucasus region. By adopting a historical and critical approach, Altstadt sends clear signals to both the Aliyev regime and US policy makers that if Azerbaijan does not initiate responsive public policy, tolerate opposition, address the gap between the regime and the state, distribute the national wealth, and diversify its economy, the inevitable change in the next decade may harm the partnership between the two countries and cause chaos in Azerbaijan.

OHANNES GEUKJIAN
American University of Beirut

Holocaust Education in Lithuania: Community, Conflict, and the Making of Civil

Society. By Christine Beresniová. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2017, xxvii, 189 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. \$90.00, hard bound.

doi: 10.1017/slr.2018.149

During the Second World War, almost the entire Jewish community in Lithuania was killed. Yet, throughout the whole Soviet period, the Holocaust never really existed as a topic in the official discourse. Soviet historians could only write about "the murder of peaceful Soviet citizens." These prohibitions no longer remain in post-Soviet countries; however, this does not mean that the memory of the Holocaust has easily found its place in Lithuanian society or in other post-socialist countries. This book by Christine Beresniová is dedicated to one aspect of this phenomenon: Holocaust education in Lithuania. It is based on her dissertation in education policy, and applies ethnographic methods of participant observation and interviews in a critical ethnographic framework.

The book analyzes not only the motivation of teachers working with Holocaust programs, but also many other contexts which influence the success or failure of these programs: the historical narratives that dominate in Lithuanian society; the activities of the International Commission for the Evaluation of the Crimes of the Nazi and Soviet Occupation Regimes that was founded by the Lithuanian president; various organizations that engage in Holocaust education; the role of foreign actors involved in this field; and the strengthening of right-wing radicalism. The author relates the support of Lithuanian government institutions for Holocaust education programs to the fact that one of the requirements for joining the European Union and NATO

was that Lithuania, like other central and east European countries, make an effort to demonstrate that the topic of the Holocaust was being integrated into Lithuanian society (xv, 11–12, 31).

Beresniova pays most attention to teachers who worked with the Commission's programs. She shows that there are quite a few teachers in Lithuania who have shown great initiative in this field, despite the fact that government support for Holocaust education following Lithuania's accession to the European Union and NATO decreased (68). In many cases, teachers were motivated by various factors (the desire to change Lithuanian society in a positive way, Christian values, and family history) or other pragmatic motives (for example, the desire to "pay back a debt" on returning from seminars abroad, 81–87). In addition, Beresniová sees this group of teachers as a community with its own identity, a *community of practice*, which serves as a very important stimuli for many teachers not to abandon working with Holocaust programs despite the unfriendly atmosphere they frequently encounter (137–57).

Beresniova tries to make a critical assessment of the effectiveness of Holocaust education programs prepared in the west in post-socialist countries, even though she acknowledges that they are necessary. The main point of the book is that programs prepared in different cultural contexts need to take specific local circumstances into consideration. In Lithuania, as in many other central and east European countries, a nation-as-victim or nation-as-hero narrative became established after 1990, which incorporated a comparison of the Nazi and Soviet regimes. Incidentally, this is the dominant narrative among ethnic Lithuanians, whereas Lithuania's ethnic minorities (Poles and Russians) did not receive attention in this research. In the author's view, this kind of narrative can and must be criticized. However, the creators of educational programs cannot ignore the following context: ". . . as distasteful as they may be to the methods of rigorous scientific exploration of historical fact, simply condemning them has not resulted in their disappearance" (20). That is why the author believes that "excavating the roots of the significance of the Soviet Occupation should be explored for its possible pedagogical usefulness rather than taken as an obvious misunderstanding of civilized culture . . ." (163). Beresniová also states that the aims of Holocaust programs are often unclear: are they promoting human rights, transmitting empathy, or inspiring social action? Is providing this kind of education in countries where such events took place worthwhile in itself? Chapter 2 is specifically devoted to the US Embassy's activities in this field. Beresniová's research shows that the embassy's engagement in the field of Holocaust education was thanks more to the initiative of specific diplomats rather than the result of any consistent program. Another shortfall of such educational programs according to Beresniová is that they usually focus all their attention on the Holocaust, rather than trying to introduce the culture and history of the group in question, in this case, the Jews. Beresniová's research shows that unless Jews are incorporated into the master narrative, like other minorities, they will remain "the Other," making it more difficult to arouse feelings of empathy. Another problem that this research has revealed is that the authors and executors of educational programs prepared in the west are constructing a kind of hierarchy of historical narratives, based upon which they represent a "modern," "civilized" approach, whereas others are identified as "tribal, [or] primitive," which also interferes with the success of these kinds of educational programs.

Beresniova's book can serve the interests of other researchers who analyze similar problems in other countries. The book will be truly useful to everyone working in the field of education who is able to critically reflect on their activities.

DARIUS STALIUNAS

Lithuanian Institute of History