

of place in a Pelevin novel. Here, we meet, for example, the “disoriented engineers” of the early 1990s, who “turned to selling gum and beer in the kiosks that lined the streets in Russian cities” (156); “the ‘red directors’ of the mid-1990s, who paid their workers meagre wages while requesting subsidies from the regional government or Moscow to produce goods which no one needed” (160); and “the young ministers” that oversaw the 1998 financial crash, “protégés of the half-dead president, who were completely useless in a crisis but were always in good standing with any government” (164). These miniature portraits bring Fyodorov’s accompanying statistics to life and enabled this reader to comprehend more profoundly the effects of Soviet collapse on Russians’ everyday lives.

Although the book’s conclusions are at points repetitive and at others contradictory (hardly surprising given the diversity of authors, methodologies and disciplines), the chapters present strong evidence for why the vast majority of Russians support Vladimir Putin. In the words of Popov and Dutkiewicz, “it must be acknowledged that Russia’s socioeconomic situation today (2014) is not just satisfactory; it is rather successful” (55). After the tumult and tragedy of the 1990s, a comparatively stable and prosperous society has emerged in a country that is ethnically, religiously, socially, and regionally diverse. The central challenge for the contemporary Russian leadership, therefore, is to manage this diversity and minimize the inequalities that run alongside it in order to ensure that stability may continue.

CATHERINE OWEN

Shaanxi Normal University, Xi’an, China

The Biopolitics of Stalinism: Ideology and Life in Soviet Socialism. By Sergei Prozorov. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016. xiv, 337 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. £24.99, paper.
doi: 10.1017/slr.2017.229

“Did you know, Stalin was a hipster?” is printed on a T-shirt, together with a picture of young Iosif Dzhugashvili, and sold at a tourist shop in Moscow. It is very puzzling to see the communist leader responsible for the death of millions glorified in a contemporary Russia that is characterized by non-ideological political nihilism accompanied by “mindless consumerism and superstitious religiosity” (259), as described by Sergey Prozorov. His book is extremely useful for those trying to understand the nature of Stalin’s terror and the whole Soviet-socialist enterprise, as well as the roots of rationality behind today’s ideology-poor, imperialist-minded Russia. Typically, the Stalin era has been approached with concepts like totalitarianism, with many scholars finding little difference between Nazism and communism. Or, it has been looked from ideological and governance angles, stating that Stalin’s terror is proof that socialism always leads to atrocities or rather that its implementation was just flawed, and thus the ideology should not be blamed. According to Prozorov, this has distorted the whole analysis of Russian political history.

Prozorov, an expert on Russian politics and history, proposes a different and, in my view, a very solid methodological tool to reveal the essence of the Soviet-socialist enterprise and Stalin’s rule. By operationalizing the concept of biopolitics and leaning on the works of Michel Foucault, Giorgio Agamben, and Roberto Esposito, Prozorov manages to unfold the specificities of Stalin’s power. The main argument concerning the interpretation of Stalin’s rule is that it was qualitatively very different from what we have come to think of as biopolitics. In the mainstream understanding of biopolitics, by which both liberal democracies and totalitarian Nazism have been analyzed,

the core value of the rule has been to protect life: even the genocide of Jews by the Nazis was carried out to *protect* the alleged Aryan blood and form of life attached to it. Therefore, in other western examples of biopolitics, the societal danger has been linked to an *excess* protection of life. Stalin's biopolitics turned into thanatopolitics (politics of death), that is, into a total eradication of previous forms of life—a war on nature, human and physical.

Through theoretical elaborations on the interplay of ideology and form of life, as well as the empirical analysis of the Soviet and post-Soviet eras, Prozorov shows that Stalin's rule and its rehabilitation in contemporary Russia can be understood with the help of biopolitical analysis. Prozorov leans on secondary research material, thus the book does not contain any new archival data and may not interest hard-core historians. It is exactly because of this, however, that the book is brilliant: it is the author's approach, his specific methodology that is able to unveil how in Russia the relationship between the rulers and the people, and especially rulers' views about preferred and permitted forms of living, has evolved over the course of history. Moreover, all the efforts to de-Stalinize Russian society, both during the Soviet and post-Soviet eras, have failed precisely because the focus has been on ideology and implementation, rather than the place that political power has had vis-à-vis the people and their forms of life. Thus, the book demonstrates the logical path why in the 2010s many Russians continue to see Stalin as a patriotic and positive figure, and how Putin can be represented as Stalin's heir and as an "effective manager." The valorization of Stalinism is not risk free for Putin's reign, however, as Putinism is not about transformation, as in Stalinism, but about preservation.

The book is not just about unveiling harmful practices, as many Foucauldian studies have been accused of, but about proposing new approaches to empower people. Prozorov proposes to battle the ideology-poor Russian society, since "(a) pure biopolitics 'without ideas' is in fact a particularly powerful ideological construct" (256), with a tool he calls affirmative biopolitics. Hence, the idea (equity, sustainability) should not be imposed on people, as in Stalinism, but it should be diffused, as was the case with socialism in early 1920s Soviet Russia, with the help of affirmative biopolitics. Moreover, the biopolitical-emancipatory perspective can reveal, for example, how fragile the truth claims of neo-Stalinism under Putin's rule are. Thus, one should not be discouraged by the fact that in today's Russia it is exceptionally hard to influence politics and policies via rational arguments, as naked power prevails over rationality. The dangers of genuine re-Stalinization, however, might be the key to a positive transformation along the lines of affirmative biopolitics.

VELI-PEKKA TYNKKYNEN
Aleksanteri Institute
University of Helsinki

Beyond the Euromaidan: Comparative Perspectives on Advancing Reform in Ukraine. Ed. Henry E. Hale and Robert W. Ortung. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016. xiv, 322 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Figures. Tables. \$70.00, hard bound.

doi: 10.1017/slr.2017.230

Henry Hale and Robert Ortung have compiled a book on a crucial issue: What is the likely future for Ukraine after the Maidan revolution? In doing so, they have gathered an impressive group of scholars to address this question. While one can quibble with the focus suggested in the subtitle—the potential for “advancing reform”—the