

Serbia Under the Swastika: A World War II Occupation. By Alexander Prusin. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2017. viii, 211 pages. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Illustrations. Plates. Photographs. Figures. Tables. Maps. \$39.95, hard bound.
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The Axis occupation of Serbia during the Second World War has, excepting the year 1941, received considerably less scholarly attention than the partisan warfare and interethnic conflict that consumed the neighboring Independent State of Croatia during this period. Serbia was a strategically vital region to the Axis, control of which was a prerequisite to controlling the Balkans, and an immensely important source of labor and raw materials. Yet until now, the forms, workings and effects of occupation and collaboration in Serbia had yet to receive the kind of concise, analytical, and accessible survey treatment that Alexander Prusin admirably provides here.

Prusin begins by sketching the background of interwar Yugoslavia and its invasion and initial occupation in 1941. Serbia was reduced to a rump state by the post-invasion carve-up among the Axis, placed under a German military administration aided by a collaborationist puppet government and fascist Serb organizations. The Germans' conduct of occupation in Serbia was characterized, as elsewhere, by competing military and civilian agencies fueling a chaotic occupation policy replete with twists, turns, and contradictions. Ultimately, any hope of a genuinely constructive occupation policy was slapped down by Hitler's anti-Serb sentiments.

The first phase of occupation was particularly bloody, with a national uprising in 1941 crushed by the Germans, and the rival Chetniks and Communist Partisans forming a precarious, half-hearted alliance before violently and permanently falling out. The reprisals the Germans enacted to crush the uprising, a disproportionate amount of which was inflicted upon Serbian Jews, were particularly vicious. While the main center of fighting now shifted to Serbia's neighboring territories, Serbia remained far from pacified during the following two years. Partisan and Chetnik activity remained a destabilizing factor, if combined in the Chetniks' case with a desperate, ultimately ineffective double game of easing off from action against the occupation regime in the hope of relieving pressure from that front.

The central character is General Milan Nedić, head of the collaborationist administration. Nedić has often been depicted by historians as having been a fundamentally patriotic, apolitical individual who took on the job purely to do what he could to spare his people from Axis depredations. In contrast, Prusin convincingly argues that Nedić was enthusiastically ideological in his conduct of government and in his suppression of anti-Axis resistance. Yet, Nedić's efforts to secure from the Germans a more meaningful role for his government largely came to nothing. This, however, did not stop other organizations in Serbia from being even more zealously pro-Axis, particularly the radical fascist Zbor movement. The Germans widely deployed personnel from this movement in security operations. This was in preference to the Serbian police, whom they considered unreliable because of the pro-Chetnik sympathy that supposedly proliferated among the gendarmes. The conduct of the Serbian fascist secret police, meanwhile, was so appalling that inmates at its prison requested to be handed over to the Gestapo for better treatment.

Yet, Prusin provides shades of light as well as darkness. For example, he details the spectrum of behaviors that ordinary Serbs displayed in relation to the persecution of Jews. Jews were more assimilated and less reviled among the wider population in Serbia than they were in parts of the German-occupied Soviet Union. There was

extensive cooperation by the Serb authorities in the Holocaust—a damning indictment of Nedić—and the Zbor movement was fervently anti-Semitic. Yet numerous Serbs, often prompted by connections of family or friendship, endeavored to hide and assist Jews. Prusin also sheds light on the cultural and creative side of occupation. Life was extremely harsh, with Axis economic exploitation causing immense suffering. But such hardships also precipitated a flowering of self-expression in the arts, sport, and creative media, albeit one that needed to watch its back for fear of censorship and oppression. Prusin concludes with an account of the collapse of Axis rule in 1944, and of the ruthless settling of scores with political opponents that the newly victorious Partisans then embarked upon.

Prusin's work employs an impressively wide archival base, encompassing material from the US National Archive, the US Holocaust Memorial Museum, and the Historical Archive of Belgrade. It is crisply and engagingly written, condensed into 161 pages of text. It provides an ideal introduction to this important region of Axis occupation, and valuable insight into the range of behaviors displayed by occupied civilians at the micro level. Prusin has made an important and very welcome contribution to the literature on wartime Yugoslavia, one that comes highly recommended to students, specialists, and interested laypeople alike.

As an additional note, since writing this review, I have received the sad news that Professor Prusin has passed away, and am very sorry for his family's loss. *Serbia Under the Swastika* is a final and fitting testimony to Professor Prusin's skills as a historian.

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Stalinism Reloaded: Everyday Life in Stalin-City, Hungary. By Sándor Horváth. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2017. x. 298 pp. Bibliography. Index. Illustrations. Photographs. Figures. Maps. \$80.00, paper.
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Sztálinváros (Stalin-City), or Dunaújváros as it is known today, was a utopian city project. It was the prototype for a new socialist life in post-war Hungary. Today it is an industrial city not so much spinning among the clouds as shrouded in urban fog. Sándor Horváth makes this city the focus of his latest book, *Stalinism Reloaded*. He offers a kaleidoscopic vision of the city's early development and the various forces that shaped life here.

The urban world and urban design is of particular interest for scholars at present. Projects such as the Second World Urbanity network, run by Steven E. Harris and Daria Bocharnikova, have encouraged us to “shatter a common image of the socialist cityscape as necessarily dull and grey, and offer a revised understanding of its limitations and achievements” (for this quote and the one following, see the project website at <http://www.secondworldurbanity.org/about-2/>). It now appears reductive to separate out the study of utopian visions from construction, the study of blueprints from lived experience, or the study of plans from praxis. This approach extends on Stephen Kotkin's *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as Civilization* (Berkeley, 1995), which was the first work to examine through the study of a new socialist city how ordinary people engaged with ideological visions. Keen to shed as much light on the parameters of such projects as on their power, Harris and Bocharnikova argue that we must strive to explore the “conceiving, building, importing, and inhabiting of socialist cities.” The same argument can be found at the heart of *Stalinism Reloaded*.