

practices and rituals inside the party and especially in leading party circles is convincingly dense, but the everyday *samokritika* practices of common Soviet citizens are dealt with much more superficially.

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Censura, istituzioni e politica letteraria in URSS (1964–1985). By Maria Zalambani. Biblioteca di Studi Slavistici, vol. 10. Florence: Firenze University Press, 2009. 284 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. €29.90, paper.

Maria Zalambani analyzes censorship in Leonid Brezhnev's times by focusing on two episodes—Fazil Iskander's *Sandro of Chegem* (1983) and the *Metropol'* affair (1982). Around these two original chapters she has woven a story built upon the archival materials published after 1991 by Russian scholars, A. V. Blium and T. M. Gorjaeva in particular. Zalambani also uses more recent Russian literature, but she relies less on western scholarship.

The book's structure reflects its genesis: an introductory chapter, "The Epoch of *zastoi*," introduces an analysis of censorship under Brezhnev; it is followed by a brief review of "taboo topics," by the two best chapters, and by a short concluding note, "The Fall of the Empire." The book's intellectual structure reflects instead the author's education: a literary scholar, Zalambani organized her material following theorists—Roland Barthes, Pierre Bourdieu, Michel de Certeau, Michel Foucault—rather than by sticking to a straightforward chronology of events. Sudden jumps back in time thus abound, and while such an approach allows Zalambani to present a coherent argument, the dichotomic reasoning favored in particular by Bourdieu may at times be misleading. For instance, the interpretation of *zastoi* as a "transition" between Stalinism and perestroika downplays the relevance of the Khrushchev era and the dynamics of the Brezhnev one. The same applies to the juxtaposition between official culture and underground movements in the 1970s. These movements were certainly there, but to speak of a resistance that undermined the system and represented the "most important factor in the breaking of the Soviet monolith" (37) is perhaps excessive.

Heroes did exist, however, and Zalambani tells their story well. The documents she quotes are often moving, and their authors' courage and dignity are impressive. This applies to famous texts like Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's 1967 letter to the Writers' Union as well as to less well known documents, such as the letters fellow writers sent in support of Vladimir Voinovich when he made his statement in 1974 before that same Union. Equally heroic was the behavior of people like the typist of the *Gulag Archipelago*, who committed suicide after her arrest and protracted interrogations in 1973.

Zalambani convincingly reconstructs the complexity of censorship. Editors of both journals and publishing houses played an often ambiguous role—"cleaning" manuscripts in order to get them published—thus simultaneously collaborating with and subverting the aims of *Glavlit*, which was subjected to the Central Committee's propaganda department and found more reliable and stern collaborators in the KGB and the Writers' Union. This complex activity assured the working of a censorship that—as the author remarks—by the Brezhnev period had become a tool for maintaining the state, after having been a tool for building it up in the 1920s and 1930s.

Translation from foreign languages involved a special case of censorship. Besides forbidden authors, there were those whom the regime decided it was expedient to publish, but whose works needed "polishing." Translators thus ended up by playing a role similar to that of editors, often sanitizing their authors in order to get them published, as in the case of Jean-Paul Sartre's *Nekrassov* (1955), which Zalambani analyzes in detail.

These multiple levels of cleansing helped produce the Soviet *dubovyi iazyk*, stifling and normalizing the language. Authors, however, as well as editors and translators, protected the inner life of their work, and literature remained a comparatively freer space than politics or the press. As Zalambani rightly remarks, the USSR thus became a "literature-centric" (105) society, as the tsarist one had been until the end of the nineteenth century:

at least from a cultural point of view (but the parallel could be meaningfully extended), the Soviet Union was a peculiar ancien régime, in which, in spite of and perhaps also thanks to, persecutions, literature, and literati played an extraordinary role, one they lost after 1991.

The chapter on Iskander, whom Zalambani interviewed, analyzes the working of the editors' "censorship," often done in at least partial accord with the writer. That on *Metropol'* is instead devoted to the role played by the Writers' Union, which grimly defended its place in the bureaucratic hierarchy. Its leaders often pursued extremely narrow-minded policies, distinguishing themselves in the persecution of *inakomytsiashchie* toward whom they at times adopted a line less liberal than the KGB's.

Given the importance of the Writers' Union, additional information on its membership or the privileges it administered, would have been useful. Data on the number of writers expelled by the union or exiled from the USSR in Brezhnev's times would also have been valuable, and the same applies to the quantitative dimensions of samizdat. An analysis of Soviet censorship should perhaps also have at least raised the problem of Soviet television, whose importance Kristin Roth-Ey rightly underlined. And the pages on "taboos" would have profited from the findings of works on the evolution of "secret" in Soviet history, like Vladlen Izmozik's or Matt Lenoe's.

A few slips—for example, Andrei Zhdanov was not the Zhdanovshchina's real inspirer, but rather a sick pawn of Iosif Stalin; Ann Arbor, the seat of Ardis, is in Michigan, not Massachusetts—do not mar a book that provides the reader with a better sense of Brezhnev's times.

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Armageddon in Stalingrad, September–November 1942, vol. 2, *The Stalingrad Trilogy*. By David M. Glantz with Jonathan M. House. Modern War Series. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2009. xxiv, 896 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Illustrations. Tables. Maps. \$39.95, hard bound.

This is the middle book and the central work of an epic trilogy. The Stalingrad campaign of 1942–43 remains the defining event of the Russo-German War. Like the conflict as a whole, it has essentially been presented and explained from German perspectives and in German contexts. In good part that reflected the limitations of Soviet writing on the subject and the linguistic, political, and cultural inaccessibility of the best of the scholarship and all of the archives. Even before the USSR's collapse, David M. Glantz was working to change that. He has developed an unrivalled access to and mastery of written and human Russian sources on the Great Patriotic War. He combines that with a no less sophisticated command of the German side of the front. And in Jonathan House he has a collaborator expert in the functioning of modern military systems.

This is a formidable tome: almost nine hundred pages to cover only two and a half months. Nor is the elaborate reference apparatus for the intellectually faint-hearted. But it requites reader engagement. Glantz and House have produced seminal studies of major events: the Battle of Kursk and the campaign on the Eastern Front. In terms of research, insight, and revision, *Armageddon* is their best yet.

The work's principal conceptual strength is its perspective. German accounts, reflecting their provenance, tend to be operationally and tactically focused, generating a corresponding tunnel vision. *Armageddon* contextualizes Stalingrad in a comprehensive Soviet strategy of slowing the German attack, forcing it to overextend, then mounting a massive counteroffensive that would decide the war. That strategy failed repeatedly in the summer of 1942 because the Germans were able to sustain momentum in the face of Soviet ripostes. But when Adolf Hitler determined to take Stalingrad by assault and committed the Sixth Army to a set piece battle of attrition, initiative passed to the Russians.

The vicious fighting in the city compelled the Germans to feed more and more resources into the cauldron at the expense of key defenses on the flanks. The Sixth Army