

Book Reviews

Völkermord in Deutsch-Südwestafrika: Der Kolonialkrieg (1904–1908) in Namibia und seine Folgen

Jürgen Zimmerer and Joachim Zeller, eds

Berlin: Ch. Links, 2003

276 pp, EUR 22.90 (pbk)

In January 1904, the Herero of South West Africa (present-day Namibia) rose up in revolt against German colonial domination, and were soon joined by some of the Nama people in the south and the Ovambo in the north. German encroachments on land and the arbitrary exercise of punishment against Africans were the flashpoints that touched off the revolt. The war began on January 11–12, 1904, although there had been some skirmishes the preceding autumn, with attacks on German farms and farmers in the Okahandja district, the heart of Herero territory, and the areas to the north. The Germans were first astonished at the very fact of the uprising, then enraged at their difficulties in suppressing it. The governor, Theodor Leutwein, attempted to reach a settlement, but the government in Berlin sharply rejected any negotiations with the rebels. The army General Staff in Berlin assumed control over the military campaign and soon convinced Kaiser Wilhelm II to remove Leutwein from office. He was replaced by Lt. General Lothar von Trotha, who arrived in South West Africa in June 1904. Trotha immediately declared martial law, and soon assumed both civilian and military power.

It is Trotha whose name is indelibly linked to genocide. Trotha decided on an encirclement campaign around the town of Waterberg, which culminated in a German attack in mid-August 1904. The battle, long feted in colonial memoirs and novels and the General Staff's own history of the war, actually failed. The German troops did not succeed in encircling the Herero, though the battle did mark their military defeat. The Herero, entire families with their cattle, fled eastward into the Omaheke desert, where they were pursued by German troops. It was not so easy: the Germans did not know the desert, as did the Herero, who knew the location of the watering holes. The Germans were unprepared for fighting in the harsh desert conditions, but they managed to deprive the Herero of food and water. In October 1904, Trotha issued his infamous "annihilation order," and although it was countermanded two months later, the German military continued a policy of relentless killing. No one knows exact figures, but probably 60–80% of the Herero population (out of about 60–80,000) died by direct shootings, by starvation and thirst in the Omaheke desert, and by the dire effects of internment in concentration camps: all intentional policies of extermination.

Two important studies of the Herero war were published in the late 1960s, one by the East German historian Horst Drechsler, who had access to the Colonial Office archive, and one by the West German historian Helmut Bley. That was about all that existed in terms of serious scholarship. But since 1990, the year of Namibian independence, there has been a growing tide of research on South West Africa under German colonial rule. The result has been a small number of superb scholarly studies. With very few exceptions, most of this work has been published in German. Notable works in English include Jan-Bart Gewald, *Herero Heroes* (1999), and the republication of the British Blue Book of 1918, an important primary source, which appeared as “*Words Cannot Be Found*”: *German Colonial Rule in Namibia: An Annotated Reprint of the 1918 Blue Book*, edited by Jeremy Silvester and Jan-Bart Gewald (2003).

Völkermord in Deutsch-Südwestafrika (Genocide in German South West Africa) is an excellent collection that offers the reader samples of recent scholarship on the subject. As such, it is a “state of the field” report on the history of South West Africa, one that goes beyond the genocide itself to explore its prehistory and also its consequences. Gesine Krüger starts off the volume with an essay on “The golden age of the cattle herders.” Krüger brings a finely-honed historical sensibility to her topic; she demonstrates the evolution of Herero society over the course of the nineteenth century, when this semi-nomadic people came to thrive through cattle herding. The Herero’s accomplishment in building up large stocks of animals made them targets of raids and wars by the Nama to the south, and then by German colonists. In the latter half of the nineteenth century, the Herero developed greater cohesion under Maharero, who won the support of other chiefs as well as German missionaries and traders. Maharero managed to put an end to warfare with the Nama, which also made possible a far-flung trading network that both benefited and began to undermine the status of the Herero. Krüger describes the critical influence of German missionaries, to whom the Herero elite sent their children for education.

But the Herero way of life was devastated twice—by an epidemic in the 1890s that killed a huge proportion of the herd, and then by the genocide committed by the German military. In two essays, Jürgen Zimmerer analyses the colonial war and its consequences. He describes the brutal policies of the German military, not only in the armed campaign but in the string of concentration camps in which mortality rates exceeded 50%. This topic is pursued with frightening detail in the contributions by Joachim Zeller and Casper W. Erichsen. Only through the intervention of missionaries did conditions somewhat improve. In the wake of the war, the government abandoned its earlier efforts to rule indirectly through tribal chieftains. Instead, the German government sought to build an apartheid-like state and society in South West Africa, one totally dominated by Germans and including strict residential segregation, a ban on marriages between whites and Africans, and the imposition of internal passports on Africans. Out of a largely pastoral population, Germans sought to create a class of dependent wage labourers. This was to be Germany’s “model colony.”

Other important contributions detail the involvement in the war of women, the Nama, and the Ovambo, while others follow the impact of colonization and war on

Germany, on Herero society, and on contested memories of the past. Long after the loss of the colony in 1915 to South African troops, and then formally with the Versailles Treaty in 1919, South West Africa retained its cachet in German popular culture. Novels, stories, memoirs, and ethnographies portrayed it as a frontier tamed through the fighting and labour of heroic German men. The brutalities of German policies, hotly contested at home in the decade before World War I, faded or were deliberately displaced from memory.

Yet the Herero survived to reestablish and reshape their society, as a number of insightful chapters by Jan-Bart Gewald and others demonstrate. Samuel Maharero, the leader of the uprising, died in 1923 in exile in Bechuanaland. After much reflection, the South African authorities, who now ruled South West Africa under a League of Nations mandate, allowed his body to be buried alongside his father's grave in Okahandja. From that day to the present, the Maharero gravesite has been the site of ceremonies that memorialize both the massacre and the survival of the Herero. In a fitting form of cultural adaptation, many Herero men adopted German uniforms and a military form of social organization, while Herero women can still be seen wearing the Victorian dresses that missionaries brought to them. As a number of authors caution, cultural adaptation can have multiple meanings, and the Herero lent their own content to the German forms they adopted. Present-day Namibia is the site of intense conflict over the symbols of the past. Monuments to German soldiers still stand prominently in many towns, including the capital, Windhoek, while the government renames streets from German to Namibian heroes and popular organizations demand restitution for the genocide from the German government and prominent companies.

In both their monographs and their contributions to this volume, a number of the authors make a strong argument for connecting the genocide of the Herero with the Holocaust. They draw upon Hannah Arendt's insight in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, in which she linked race thinking in Europe and its ultimate consequence, the Holocaust, to the spread of European imperialism abroad. For Jürgen Zimmerer, the war against the Herero marked Germany's first genocide; it signified the full unleashing of violent state power against a defined population group. It broke the taboos, and therefore made the Holocaust possible. This argument is appealing, not least because it situates the most extreme policies at home in Europe within a global history of population politics. But the empirical demonstration of this perspective still requires a great deal of research. *Völkermord in Deutsch-Südwestafrika* provides a most impressive display of the best recent scholarship on Namibia; it also points the way toward a history that is, at one and the same time, global and local.

Bibliography

- Gewald, Jan-Bart. (1999). *Herero Heroes* (Athens: Ohio University Press).
 Silvester, Jeremy and Jan-Bart Gewald, eds., (2003). *Words Cannot Be Found: German Colonial Rule in Namibia: An Annotated Reprint of the 1918 Blue Book* (Leiden: Brill).

Eric D. Weitz
 University of Minnesota

Harvest of Despair: Life and Death in Ukraine under Nazi Rule

Karel C. Berkhoff

Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004
463 pp, US\$29.95 (hbk)

**The Reconstruction of Nations: Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, Belarus,
1569–1999**

Timothy Snyder

New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003
367 pp, \$20 (hbk)

In recent years, German research on the Holocaust has played a critical role in shifting academic assumptions about the causation of the “Final Solution,” from what might loosely be called metropolitan directors to peripheral implementers. That is, from key players in the Nazi hierarchy who, it was assumed, gave the orders, to the SS functionaries, police bureaucrats, and *Wehrmacht* officers who carried them out. The work of, among others, Christian Gerlach, Thomas Sandkuhler, Christoph Diekmann, and Dieter Pohl suggests something much more complex: not just a “cumulative radicalization” in the scope, scale and dimensions of Jewish mass murder, but a more fluid interplay between core and periphery, in which the “men on the spot” were key initiators of that radicalization. The implication—that the key impetus of the “Final Solution” actually came from emergency decisions taken not in Berlin, but on the ground, in the ancient towns and open spaces of Galicia, Lithuania or Belarus—is little short of explosive. Yet there has been little development of this focus, to explore whether historical and geographical locales might be significant to a broader understanding of the origins of near-simultaneous genocides.

This reviewer proposes this as something of a lacuna, not least because of the more general incidence of exterminatory violence in the frontier regions between the old Russian, Austrian and German empires, encapsulated after 1918 in new national or (in the Soviet case) crypto-national polities. After all, one is not dealing here with the Holocaust alone, though its gigantic proportions at first sight overwhelm other contenders. The fate of the Roma and the mass liquidation of Soviet POWs, as part of this same approximate sequence, are now certainly more than blips on the radar screen. So too, increasingly, is a broader acknowledgement of the scale of NKVD mass deportations and massacres as the Soviets occupied eastern Poland in 1939–1940, only to depart in chaotic but murderous haste in June 1941. The possibility that there might be a dialectical relationship among these sets of atrocities continues to be largely avoided, for fear of relativization. Even this, though, is being eroded, as awareness of a significant demotic involvement in massacres at the outset of Operation Barbarossa—crystallized by the publication of Jan Gross’s *Neighbours* (2000)—points to the popular if misconceived assumptions of a Jewish–communist connection.

As noted, an appropriate method for interpreting the relationships among these wide-ranging mass murders remains in its infancy. But so does a simple adumbration

of the full gamut of genocidal violence in the rimlands. Should we include the mass killings that punctuated the emergence of the new contender states from 1918 to 1921? What of the Ukrainian killings of Poles, and vice versa, during the Nazi retreat, which arguably reached their culmination with the 1947 Polish-Soviet “Operation Vistula” against remaining “Ukrainians” on Polish soil? Not only are these events not well known in the West, beyond a small scholarly literature; but they also happen to be problematic for post-Soviet, increasingly Western-oriented polities—most obviously Ukraine—as they begin to face up to the ugliness not only of their communist past, but of what preceded it.

Here, then, are two excellent historical studies that engage, in different ways, with aspects of these conundrums. Timothy Snyder’s *The Reconstruction of Nations* is a subtle, restrained, but eloquent synthesis. At its core lies a recognition of the potential for human interaction that transcends religious and ethnic differences, founded upon deep layers of historical experience; and the way this potential has been so violently tugged out of joint and devastated by nationalist ideologies. Karel Berkhoff’s *Harvest of Despair* is a somewhat more pacy and narrative-driven account. It takes a specific time and space—1941–1944, in the Ukraine as delineated by the Nazis—and explores not only why German rule was so bad, but why the society’s grassroots response was so conspicuous for its lack of solidarity and mass resistance.

What are the noteworthy features of each book for genocide studies? As his title implies, Snyder’s interest lies not in violence per se, but in how the eastern and southeastern territories of the former multiethnic Polish Lithuanian Commonwealth came to be so bitterly contested, both spatially and in terms of historical memory, by no fewer than four national competitors (even leaving aside Russians and Austro-Germans). The investigation necessarily raises questions about the transmission belt by which these national movements achieved their political goals, or failed to do so. Thus, as Snyder provocatively asks early on (p 2): “Is ethnic cleansing caused by nationalism, or does ethnic cleansing nationalise populations?”

This question is particularly pertinent given that the heart of the study is a consideration of events in parts of Volhynia and Eastern Galicia, primarily in 1943 and early 1944. In attempting to create the nucleus of a nation-state in this technically German-occupied region, the self-styled Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) set out to cleanse the minority Polish population, killing an estimated 40–60,000 in the process (Snyder, p 170), and forcing at least 200,000 others to flee. The killing was rather purposeful, and the actual atrocities meted out are reminiscent of those in Rwanda described in Christopher Taylor’s *Sacrifice as Terror* (1999). Are the UPA massacres, then, unequivocally a case of genocide? Mitigating evidence might lie in the fact that the killings were not carried out by a “real” state, but a putative one, amidst a wider set of conflicts among German and Soviet regular forces, various partisan and counterinsurgency groups, the Polish Armia Krajowa, and the UPA itself. None of this, however, would seem to obviate the fact that these Ukrainian nationalists were attempting state formation, and that exterminating supposedly extraneous Polish inhabitants was one of their objectives.

The more disturbing line of questioning hinges not only on why this course of action was considered, but whether, in the circumstances, the UPA had any choice in the matter. A convenient way out might be to blame UPA behaviour on Nazi brutalization. It is certainly true that much of the frontline strike force in the Polish massacres came from recently deserted members of the Schuma, the German-organized auxiliary native police. As Snyder perspicaciously notes, these young men learned their exterminatory methods through the roundup and massacre of Jews and Gypsies—even while leaders of the movement were being strung up or shot by the Nazi SD and Security Police. But though the UPA was undoubtedly caught between a Nazi rock and a Soviet hard place, its fanatical, racist, but also romantic *Weltanschauung*, together with the way it behaved towards alleged enemies, has a definite Khmer Rouge tinge to it. The UPA, or rather the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) out of which it developed, was a terrorist, revolutionary movement that had no compunction about killing Ukrainians whom it considered traitors or who hid Poles or Jews, as well as its own dissenting cadres. Its nearest statist parallel from this period is the Croat ustashi, another self-willed group of genocidaires. What is more bewildering is that the UPA forest nucleus attracted tens of thousands of followers, the majority fleeing German counterinsurgency and labour-requisition campaigns. The fact that many thousands of people were inducted into the killings of Poles, though in part by terror and intimidation, suggests a willingness to engage in extreme violence that is confirmed by Berkhoff's reading of the insurgency.

Harvest of Despair—shades here of Robert Conquest's *Harvest of Sorrow* on the collectivization and famine of the early 1930s—blames much of what happened in the Ukraine under German occupation on the communist legacy. Berkhoff's key argument is that the Soviet system dissolved societal ties and communal bonds that might have provided a counterweight to Nazi terror; opportunities for solidarity, let alone a grassroots counterculture, were simply unavailable. But it was not just that the Soviet system had made Ukrainians "self-centred, distrustful and apathetic" (p 311). Arguably worse, the thirst for revenge among those who had suffered so much under the Soviets played straight into Nazi hands.

This thesis permits Berkhoff to chart some aspects of events in 1941–1944 with particular acuity. For instance, he persuasively suggests that the catastrophic near-collapse of the Red Army in summer 1941 did not result merely from Stalin's regime being caught on the hop, or from the inadequacies of the post-purge officer corps. The rank-and-file, especially those from the rimlands, simply did not want to fight. They went to enormous lengths to defy their commanders or even shoot them, in order to surrender to the Wehrmacht. On the apparently logical premise that nothing could be worse than the hell they inhabited, it made sense for civilians to welcome the invaders as liberators, and take their revenge on Stalin by looting collective farms and taking over the properties of *apparatchiks*—and Jews.

There is something alarming but intriguing about this thesis. Alexander Dallin, in his celebrated 1957 study *German Rule in Russia*, shows quite clearly that had the occupiers played their cards right—had they somehow been able to jettison their racialized, ideological straitjacket—they could have taken the majority of

Ukrainians and other peoples along with them in the assault on Stalinism. Soldiers and officers, Berkhoff suggests, were quite prepared to see their hated commissars liquidated by the Nazis. “Getting rid of the Jews”—which was assumed to mean sending them somewhere else—also appears to have been welcomed by significant parts of the population. All that was needed was a German decree returning the collective farms to the peasants.

As we know, this counterfactual version of events never arose, though it did have quite serious proponents within the Nazi occupation regime. Instead, when hundreds of thousands of POWs, alongside the commissars, were liquidated or left to starve, the Ukrainian native population was rudely awakened. Incidentally, Berkhoff here has no truck with recent studies arguing that this catastrophe was the result of German economic constraints, predicated on the need to feed its own army and provide food back home. On the contrary, he argues, 1941 provided a good harvest; there was food enough for all, and the peasants often risked their lives to feed the prisoners. Perhaps *contra* his own general thesis, was there thus some solidarity after all? Might it even have extended to the Jews? Hoping that they might “leave” was not the same as wishing to see them exterminated in a quarry or sandpit. Gentile Ukrainians appear to have been shocked and frightened by the Jewish destruction—but also numbed, as it became clear what German authorities had in store for them too. Berkhoff arguably breaks new ground in charting the German attempt to starve occupied Kiev out of existence in the winter of 1941–1942. Yet in spite of this, of the subsequent deportation of an estimated one million Ukrainians for forced labour, and of ongoing (especially urban) starvation and terror, the region’s heartlands did not become a hotbed of partisan resistance, as they did, for instance, in Belarus to the north.

Was this because what Ukrainians *really* wanted was not a return of the Soviets, but genuine independence? That certainly would have been the UPA’s claim. But there is a problem with this notion. The backbone of the UPA was primarily enlisted from among the Polish *kresy*: the lands that fell under Russian rule only after the 1939 Nazi–Soviet Pact. Under German rule, there were recruits from Soviet Ukraine proper; but this hardly proves the existence of a broader Ukrainian national consciousness. By contrast, Amir Weiner’s brilliant recent study, *Making Sense of War* (2001), claims that an opposite phenomenon occurred: a Ukrainian consciousness was borne in particular by Red Army veterans, whose sense of the patriotic had become heavily and genuinely Sovietized.

If Weiner’s argument helps to explain the cementing of post-war Soviet rule, both Berkhoff and Snyder confirm that, up to this juncture at least, both Soviet and Polish-Ukraine nationalism remained quite fuzzy notions for most of the peasantry. Thus, in a significant chapter on “Ethnic identity and political loyalties,” Berkhoff shows that the common terms *svoi* and *nashi*, denoting “us” as opposed to others, also embraced Russians—though not Ukrainian Jews. Meanwhile, incoming OUN emissaries from Galicia who preached the independence message were often greeted by peasants impressed that “these *Germans* could speak ‘Polish’ or badly, to be sure, *ponashomu*, ‘like us’” (Berkhoff, p 218). Even at the epicentre of the revolt, the vast majority of peasants had

for generations designated themselves either by a religious affiliation or as “locals”—if, as Snyder puts it, “they were watching out for themselves” (Snyder, p 50).

That, surely, is the critical point. This was not an area where people were historically at each other’s throats in an *ethnic* sense. Those who identified themselves as Jews, Catholics, Uniates, Orthodox, or whatever, experienced serious social tensions, not least those emanating from the acute discrepancies between haves and have-nots in an overpopulated sea of rural poverty. But nationalism was a town thing: something that came from above, as through the *fin-de-siecle* Russian and Austrian censuses that classified populations for the first time in ethnic terms (arguably thereby allowing rimland nationalist dreamers to construct mental maps inhabited by like-speaking and supposedly like-minded national “masses”).

Where does this leave us? Certainly with two valuable and vivid rimland studies, with mass atrocity at their Second World War cores. Yet these books are not just about the behaviour of obviously “totalitarian” hegemons. The struggle for the rimlands was waged by a multiplicity of national actors; in the western Ukraine and eastern Poland, it ended up as “a war of all against all.” None of the actors can be exonerated from what transpired. True, by the time the Poles managed to retaliate against the UPA in the final Vistula sweeps, their country had “turned communist.” The paradox is that the communist regime, for all the hostility it aroused, achieved homogenizing goals that had eluded Polish nationalists in the interwar years.

The double irony is that in creating a dream monoethnic state, the regime ultimately victimized not so much the UPA—which was already in the process of being liquidated across the new eastern border determined by Stalin—but rural highland communities known collectively as the Lemkos. An ethnographic delight of a people, the Lemkos’ great contribution to world civilization was their refusal to play at being Ukrainians, or anything else. All they wanted was to be left alone to eke out a relationship to the Carpathian habitat they knew, nurtured, and loved. For their antediluvian obduracy, they were deported *en masse*, with many ending up in requisitioned German concentration camps or dying of illness, psychic numbing, and direct execution in the process. Berkhoff sees the need for a genuine civil society as the bulwark against oppression, while Snyder sees hope in a realization of historic realities that transcend national borders. To my mind, these can only be aspects of a broader reality that transcends both the fixation with nation-states and ideas of unilinear historical progress. But that is another story.

Bibliography

- Gross, Jan (2000). *Neighbours* (Princeton: Princeton University Press).
 Taylor, Christopher (1999). *Sacrifice as Terror* (Oxford: Berg).
 Weiner, Amir (2001). *Making Sense of War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press).

Mark Levene
University of Southampton, UK

Stalin: A Biography

Robert Service

Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005
715 pp, US\$29.95 (hbk)**Stalinism: The Essential Readings**

David L. Hoffman, ed.

Oxford: Blackwell, 2003
317 pp, US\$32.95 (pbk)

For any student of the mass killings under Stalin, or indeed the Soviet regime *tout ensemble*, surely the most perplexing of conundrums is whether “genocide” is a term we want to be using at all. Everyone knows that the regime was responsible for the death of millions, and that in relative terms it was Stalin the *vozhd*, not Hitler the *Fuehrer*, who wins the prize in grotesquery for the most bloody European statistics of the twentieth century (not to mention that other *global* contender, Mao). But suppose, for the sake of argument, that Stalin had been posthumously arraigned for his crimes at some international tribunal. What would have been on the charge sheet? Crimes against peace, war crimes, crimes against humanity—most certainly. But genocide? Arguably, the jurists might have fought shy of that one.

Two key experts who would have counselled caution are Amir Weiner and Peter Holquist, both of whom figure prominently in David Hoffman’s edited volume of *Essential Readings*. Writes Holquist (p 156): “While sanctioning mass violence, the Soviet regime never set the extermination of people as an objective in itself.” Even more forthrightly, Weiner intones (p 273): “Excision, even when carried out to completion, did not emanate from a genocidal ideology and was not practised through exterminatory institutions.”

Stalin: mass murderer but not genocidaire. Is this, then, the end of the matter? Like so many subjects, the assumptions one starts with may determine one’s conclusions. So, does Robert Service’s new book throw additional light on the matter? Unfortunately, the answer is: not really. Service is a very fine and distinguished scholar, and his trawls through some of the recently opened Soviet archives bring to light a somewhat broader and more nuanced picture of the man than we have often had to date. Service’s aim, indeed, is to offer a genuinely human portrait: not so that we can let the man born Joseph Dzhughashvili off the hook, but so that the full horror of the Stalin years may be both contextualized and more fully comprehended. On this score, to a degree, Service succeeds—not least through taking much more seriously the years from Stalin’s birth in 1879 through to his elevation to party secretary in 1922. Service is surely right that Stalin’s “gross personality disorder” (p 10) does not in itself explain his regime or what it did, any more than do traditional readings that emphasize his role as the desk-bound apparatchik *par excellence*. In fact, as Service demonstrates, Stalin’s Marxist revolutionary background was not associated with bureaucratic management or any personal predisposition as such. Moreover, despite the

obvious cruelty of his domestic life and deep and abiding resentments against those he thought had slighted him, Stalin's psychic makeup does not appear so out of the ordinary. And while it may be a truism to say that "constraints on power existed even for Stalin" (Service, p 9), it is perhaps a necessary one if we wish to get closer to understanding how this "totalitarian" regime managed—in spite of the apocalyptic upheavals and struggles besetting it—to survive intact, with substantial popular support (not least for Stalin himself), until the dictator's probably natural death in 1953 and beyond.

Arguably, one problem for Service is that it is difficult to build into a personal biography the millions of other souls who, directly or indirectly, were that individual's victims. We seem to get a little closer when Service interrogates Stalin's relationships with his nearest and dearest, such as his destruction of the Svanidzes and Aliluevs, the families of his two deceased wives. The matter-of-factness of this account makes for chilling reading. By contrast, there is precisely one sentence on the deported peoples of 1943–1944, and hardly more on the fate of returning Soviet POWs "liberated" from Axis hands, only to end up in the Gulag. Service repeatedly speculates on Stalin's attitudes towards Jews, clearly foregrounded by the fact that so many of his key party rivals—not least Trotsky—were of Jewish origin. But this does not lead to closer analysis of the rising crescendo of post-war anti-Semitism. As for issues such as the Ukrainian (or for that matter Kazakh) famines of 1932–1933, and the degree to which they represented conscious, hence genocidal, assaults on particular peoples beyond their designation as "kulaks," here again we are little the wiser.

In one respect, this is somewhat surprising. One line of inquiry that Service appropriately *does* develop is Stalin's seminal role on the "national question." His rise in the Bolshevik party had at least something to do with his avowed expertise in this area, though many Georgian Marxists, like some of their Jewish counterparts, were notable in their sophisticated approach to the subject. Indeed, Service throws up a Stalin "credo," in 1904, in which he declared the need for an autonomous Georgian Marxist party. At the time, many of his fellow revolutionaries referred to him as the "Georgian Bundist." This appellation technically would have made him an opponent of Lenin's centralizing line; 30 years later, by his own dictates, it would have warranted an NKVD bullet in the head. (Not surprisingly, by then the "credo" had been mysteriously lost.) Yet in 1904, Stalin had sided with the Bolsheviks, not the federalizers; had gone on to produce a distinctly Leninist tract on "Marxism and the National Question" at his leader's behest; and, at the inception of the "people's dictatorship" (*sic*), was rewarded with the entirely novel government post of Commissar for Nationalities.

It is not, of course, part of Service's agenda to chart how Stalin moved from being the key player in "bringing on" the "backward" nationalities of the former tsarist empire, to being increasingly their tormentor and, in some cases, their destroyer. But the twisted road to that destination is surely an intriguing and important one. If Stalin had died, or fallen prey, say, to an assassin's bullet in 1930, his reputation might well rest on his association with the opportunities that the regime fostered for the national development of diverse ethnic

communities in what was now the USSR (an overt repudiation of historical Russian chauvinism), as well as his relatively benign role in the New Economic Policy, which finally enabled the vast mass of Russian and non-Russian peasantry to enjoy the fruits of their 1917 victory on the land.

As Service shows, this is only half the personal story. Stalin had been a merciless grain procurer on the southern front during the civil war; this was a logical prequel to the unilateral West Siberian grain seizures he initiated at the outset of collectivization nearly a decade later. In addition, as early as 1931, Stalin made a famous public speech in which he unashamedly extolled the historical mission of “Mother Russia,” suggesting in a few heady lines that the Soviets’ debt to Ivan Grozny was at least as important as that to Karl Marx.

What this poses is a question not so much about Stalin *per se*, but about the historical and immediate context in which he—and the violence we associate with him—developed and operated. The rather diverse essays in Hoffman’s *Stalinism* address these subjects. Stalin’s era of massive violence began with his accelerated move towards an autarkic “Socialism in One Country,” and the rapid collectivization and industrialization that accompanied it. This begs the question of whether Stalin’s behaviour is something peculiar to his regime, inherited from Lenin and the ideology of *his* party, or is actually more deeply ingrained, both in the peasant culture and authoritarian politics of tsarism and in the longer-term stagnation of Russia relative to the dynamism of the West.

With extracts from Moshe Lewin, Martin Malia, Ronald Suny, Sheila Fitzpatrick and others, one would not necessarily expect Hoffman’s work to arrive at a historiographical consensus on these matters. Perhaps more significant, in terms of the book’s overall shape, is whom it omits. In addition to most of the major Soviet-born experts, Robert Conquest is absent—thereby denying us not only the Western Cold War position on the subject, but Conquest’s detailed reading of dekulakization, the Great Terror, or the deportations of Crimean Tatars, Chechens, Volga Germans and other “punished” peoples. By the same token, there is nothing here from Arch Getty, Conquest’s main, latter-day revisionist critic, with his more measured, structuralist interpretation of the *Ezhovshchina* (the purges of 1937–1938).

That said, the 11 essays in Hoffman’s volume represent significant and varied takes on the subject. Three of them, by Holquist, Weiner, and Oleg Khlevnyuk, address squarely the mass exterminatory violence that characterized Stalin’s rule. Khlevnyuk, for instance, rather than seeking *sui generis* Stalinist causation for “The Objectives of the Great Terror,” takes quite seriously the threat of potential fifth columnists both within and outside the regime, as a way of explaining—though not pardoning—the fear that such enemies could exploit a war and potential invasion to help foment or abet a Soviet collapse. Interestingly, this reads as a mirror-image of Hitler’s worst nightmares, though in this instance with one of the key perpetrators, Molotov, still alive and unrepentant in the 1970s, justifying the killing with the nonchalant comment: “What if one or two extra heads were chopped off?” (Hoffman, p 103). This is a quite extraordinary statement, in light of our present knowledge that at least 682,000 people—according

to the official records—were executed outright in this 1937–1938 sequence. Unfortunately, Khlevnyuk’s case study, the death toll notwithstanding, fails to get us much nearer to the issue of whether this involved genocide, though it might have done if its focus had been more strongly on the communal or national aspects of the *Ezhovshchina* (that is, if it had considered NKVD operational orders against Polish, German and other alleged “national” counter-revolutionary elements, as Nicholas Werth does in Robert Gellately and Ben Kiernan’s recent edited volume, *The Specter of Genocide*).

Holquist’s landscape is larger, and altogether more provocative. There are distinct shades of Zygmunt Bauman in his growing, often brilliant corpus of work, as in his statement here that violence was not simply a tool for Soviet repression, but rather a technique “for fashioning an idealised image of a purer, better society” (Hoffman, p 134). Significantly, Holquist holds no truck with the idea that this was something peculiar to Stalin or Stalinism. His own seminal research on the attempted decossackization of the Don in the civil-war era, referred to in passing in this piece, points to a meticulous targeting and assiduous planning of violence from the very outset of the regime. Holquist, however, is no latter-day Cold War warrior. Indeed, what is particular noteworthy—if also essentially Baumanesque—about his reading is the importance of broader Western social science notions to the Bolshevik experiment, especially with regard to population politics and their military and civilian application. As such, the vast archival data base on Soviet citizens accumulated under NKVD aegis, and used promiscuously during the high-Stalinist purges and deportations, represents far less a communist aberration, and much more a station on the road to a “normative” modern society in which states hold every last detail of biological, social, and other information on their citizens, and can monitor and control them at will.

Weiner’s arguments, here culled from a benchmark *American Historical Review* essay entitled “Nature, nurture, and memory in a socialist utopia” (October 1999), parallel Holquist’s in key respects, though with a sharper focus on the lengths to which the Soviet system went to prove that its “excision” of malefactors was always on grounds of individual “incorrigibility,” and never a consequence of their ethnic or even “class” background. The problem, as Weiner demonstrates, is that by the time of Stalin’s mid-1930s proclamation that socialism had actually been achieved, the regime had landed itself in a double-bind on the subject. On one hand, if nurture had genuinely triumphed over nature, there was no basis upon which opposition to the regime could be deemed logical. On the other, this left hanging the considerable evidence that whole sections of the population remained covertly, if not overtly, hostile. As “the eschatological clock grew louder” (Hoffman, p 273)—itself a wonderfully Weinerian turn of phrase—the Soviet assertion that it was *not* applying “zoological” (i.e., Nazi-style racist) criteria in its violent coercion of Korean, Ukrainian, German, Polish and other counter-revolutionary “elements” began to sound more desperate, self-justifying, and shrill. It’s a pity that the richer picture that Weiner painted in the original essay with regard to two specific post-war campaigns of this nature—the liquidation of the Ukrainian insurgent movement, and the more overtly phobic anti-Jewish campaign of Stalin’s twi-

light years—is not reprinted in full here. The latter events, in particular, had the potential to finally destroy any vestige of rational social science as the basis upon which the Soviet regime preserved or denied life and liberty to the peoples under its sway.

Holquist and Weiner, then, while providing brilliant and illuminating analyses, do not entirely convince this reviewer that what transpired in particular cases of Soviet mass violence against communal groups did *not* amount to genocide. Weiner himself shows that ideology alone was insufficient to prevent Stalin's regime from lurching into an acute projective paranoia against communal aggregates; while, *contra* Holquist, the killings from the 1930s onwards were never just a case of conscious, calculated prophylaxis. On the contrary, they pointed to a state that, far from running in sound and smooth order, was actually operating against a backdrop of near-perpetual emergency. In such conditions, leaders are caught between calculus, policy objectives, and what usually amounts to a crisis-ridden clutching at straws. Something—including something psychological—is bound to give. Neither a transformative political-social agenda, *pace* Holquist, nor a genocidal ideology (whether or not a Nazi-style racism), is necessary for genocide to result. What *is* necessary is a yawning discrepancy between state aspirations and the unforeseen limitations that arise when that discrepancy becomes palpable. Unfortunately, this condition was literally built into the Soviet system as its founders had laid it out. As Service succinctly puts it in his conclusion (p 601), Lenin “invented a cul-de-sac for communism: Stalin drove the party down it.”

Neither of these books was intended as a treatise on Soviet genocide, and both remain valuable for other reasons. Hoffman provides a range of first-rate critiques of the regime from various angles, with those by Weiner and Holquist well to the fore. Service offers a measured post-Cold War approach to Stalin, one in which the monstrosities he committed make no sense without “the institutional, procedural and doctrinal scaffolding” (pp 603–604) bequeathed to him by the makers of the October Revolution, which Stalin was then able to exploit.

Bibliography

Gellately, Robert and Ben Kiernan (2003) *The Specter of Genocide* (New York: Cambridge University Press).

Mark Levene
University of Southampton, UK

With Intent to Destroy: Reflecting on Genocide

Colin Tatz

New York: Verso, 2003

222 pp, US\$26 (hbk)

With Intent to Destroy: Reflecting on Genocide, the Australian-based political scientist Colin Tatz has assembled his previously published writings on comparative genocide in a single volume. A voluntary exile from South Africa's apartheid regime, Tatz writes with informed outrage about institutionalized racism and its effects.

Tatz's Jewish background and lineage connection to the Holocaust spurred him to moral and scholarly activism. Working as a journalist in the 1950s, he confronted the possibility of complicity through passive acceptance of the South African racial state. The racism of Afrikaner nationalism and anti-Semitism reinforced his sense of alienation, and he left the country in 1961. His concerns with racial injustice migrated with him, finding a new template in his study of Aboriginal administration in northern Australia, which was undertaken as a doctoral thesis at the Australian National University in Canberra.

This biographical introduction is instructive, since it is indivisible from Tatz's writing. It appears at various points in the text, with comparisons of racial states in Europe, Australia and Africa—the book's principal case studies. It also leads Tatz to represent himself as an "authority," if not a scholarly trailblazer, in the field of genocide studies. While we undoubtedly owe Tatz a large debt in this respect, such an acknowledgment should not prevent a critical appraisal of his book.

Scholars seeking fresh insights may feel themselves short-changed, as only the prologue and epilogue were written specifically for the book. Other chapters explore conceptual approaches to genocide; case studies of Germany, Australia and South Africa; and, finally, somewhat disconnected reflections on denial, accountability, and reparations.

Tatz's personal resistance to racism is highlighted through the metaphor of a membrane. This is appropriated from the Jewish novelist Alexander Baron, who used it to describe how the Holocaust became gradually internalized in his own consciousness. Paralleling Baron's passage from denial to awareness, Tatz comments, "the membrane metaphor resonates with me: a tough, fibrous, protective tissue that both divides from, and serves to connect to, other structures." The ability to see anti-Semitism as one variety of racism allowed him to make correlations with his experiences of discrimination and racial classification in South African society. There, racial otherness was reinforced in "whiteness"—of Afrikaners, non-Jewish whites, and Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe. In the demographic majority were three kinds of "blacks": Cape Coloureds, Indians, and Africans. The survey of racial dystopia and its permeation through society, economy, and labour relations is perhaps the most interesting section of the book, at least for a scholar who is familiar with Tatz's other writings on comparative genocide.

Tatz's second chapter deploys the Jewish Holocaust as a "way into" genocide, studying how four main methodological approaches have come to shape the inquiry: historical, philosophical, religious and psychological. In many ways, this chapter is unsatisfying, reflecting the thoughts of someone who ceased reading the robust Holocaust literature at least a decade ago. Tatz grounds his investigation in references to outdated debates, such as the intentionalism and functionalism of the 1980s; scholars would be well advised to consult more recent scholarship in this area. Similarly, his discussion of the Holocaust's "comprehensibility" cites two voices that insist on the event's uniqueness. In itself, this is not problematic; but since Tatz sees the Holocaust as a "way into" genocide, it would have been helpful to offer some alternative interpretations, or a "way out." The suggestion of comparison is made, but not effectively utilized.

Tatz also follows Raul Hilberg's sequential rendering of the Nazi destruction of the Jews: moving from the formulation of an idea to its exposition, justification, adoption, legitimization, implementation, rationalization, and denial (p 25). But he pays little attention to the variety of perpetrators and multiplicity of victim groups. As scholars of German race hygiene have demonstrated, there were numerous varieties of Nazi racism, evident in the targeting of both Jewish and non-Jewish victims (the latter category subsuming aliens, the hereditarily ill, and asocials). It is a pity, then, that Tatz does not acknowledge the origins of Nazi scientific racism, save for brief invocations of Charles Darwin and Social Darwinism. This lack of elaboration is a serious limitation for a student of the Holocaust and genocide seeking actual examples of Nazi policy that fit Tatz's sequence. His final section, on psychology, is also limited by its neglect of recent comparative research on the social psychology of genocide.

In interpreting the genocidal impact of various racial states, Tatz invokes those he knows best: Germany, Australia, and South Africa. Before Hitler, Tatz argues, Germany was anti-Semitic. But this is hardly a revelation: so were France, Poland, and tsarist Russia. In the nineteenth century, meanwhile, the United States was implementing racial visions and eugenic solutions in response to immigration, fear of "miscegenation," and post-slavery pan-African nationalisms.

Tatz reserves his longest exposition for Australia's racist past, a subject that is obviously close to him academically and personally. Here, genocide becomes not a subject for debate, but a means of indictment. Australia is accused of inflicting at least three, and possibly four, genocidal actions in its treatment of Aborigines. The three core genocidal strategies were: private genocide, such as physical killing committed by settlers and rogue police officers while the state, as beneficiary, stood by; twentieth century attempts to bring about the biological disappearance of half-caste Aborigines through intermarriage and state policy (the so-called "stolen generations"); and actions supposedly undertaken to "protect" Aborigines, but which caused them serious bodily or mental harm (p 73). Finally, Tatz's selective appraisal of scholarship supports a claim of genocide beginning with the moment of European contact, through disease—whether "introduced" or "inevitable"—as an intentional weapon of extermination. His argument cites the work of Jan Kociumbas in Australia, and draws comparisons with disease and colonial genocide in the fifteenth and sixteenth century Caribbean, as studied by Noble David Cook, among others.¹ Tatz criticizes Henry Reynolds, the erstwhile scholar of European–Aboriginal contact, arguing that the attempted, rather than successful, commission of genocide—which he interprets Reynolds to advocate—is sufficient for an indictment under the Convention definition.

Tatz's final chapter, "Reflecting on genocide," attempts to provide a synthesis of genocidal aftermaths. It examines the highly topical currents of denialism towards the Holocaust and the Armenian genocide, as well as the "membrane" that is the position of the Australian Liberal government towards the history of contact and race relations in Australia. This chapter could have had more resonance had Tatz provided a prefatory discussion of the Armenian genocide for his

appraisal of Turkish denialism, since he places it alongside the Holocaust as the twentieth century's worst genocide.

Omissions such as this reinforce the book's missed opportunities. As an exercise in reflection, it collates much of Tatz's published material. But some of the offerings, even when the thoughts are "new," engage with relevant research in only a limited and subjective way. For scholars new to the field of comparative genocide, Tatz's reflections merit reading. But those interested in more recent scholarship, at least in the field of Australia and its racial past viewed in comparative context, are encouraged to consult Dirk Moses's edited volume, *Genocide and Settler Society*, also reviewed in this section.

Notes and References

- 1 See Jan Kociumbas, "Genocide and modernity in colonial Australia, 1788–1850," in A. Dirk Moses, ed., *Genocide and Settler Society: Frontier Violence and Stolen Indigenous Children in Australian History* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2004), pp 77–102. On the Caribbean, see Noble David Cook, *Born to Die: Disease and New World Conquest, 1492–1650* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

Simone Gigliotti
Victoria University of Wellington

Genocide and Settler Society: Frontier Violence and Stolen Indigenous Children in Australian History

A. Dirk Moses

New York: Berghahn Books, 2004

325 pp, US\$25 (softcover)

Genocide and Settler Society marks a significant step forward in applying the genocide framework to encounters between indigenous peoples and settlers in Australia, and to a lesser extent in North America and Europe. Initially conceived as a companion volume to the editor's university course on comparative genocide, the book assembles contributions from leading historians working on the colonial and modern histories of Germany and Australia. It focuses on two principal sites of possible genocidal activity—colonization and frontier violence, on one hand; forcible removals of indigenous children, on the other. Richly detailed, impressively researched, and persuasively argued, each chapter analyzes how the concept of genocide permits a reinterpretation of contested histories that were previously viewed as unjust, brutal, inhumane, or murderous. Taken together, these studies produce a distinct ambivalence about the impact of European colonization in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. They also illuminate the adaptability of eugenic thought in the state-sponsored racialization of ethnic minorities in Europe and Australia during the interwar period of the twentieth century.

The book is divided into three sections. The first includes a comprehensive introduction by editor Dirk Moses, surveying the history of racial encounters and its interpretation in (mainly Australian) historiography over the last five decades. It is an essential and provocative discussion. The same can be said for the chapter that

follows, “Colonialism and the Holocaust: toward an archaeology of genocide,” by German historian Juergen Zimmerer. While many scholars locate the origins of Nazi genocide in the post-World War I period, Zimmerer invites a paradigm shift by urging that we consider Hitler’s intentions and plans for Jews, Gypsies, and victims of resettlement or eugenics policies in light of the racial visions of socially engineered and colonial societies. Many scholars accustomed to seeing the Holocaust as a product of anti-Semitism, or an industry of mass murder enabled by bureaucracy and willing volunteers, will be challenged by Zimmerer’s core thesis that:

Colonial genocides did not constitute a fundamentally different category from the Nazi genocides. They were merely less-organized, centralized, and bureaucratized forms of genocide. Ultimately, the various colonial manifestations of genocide could also be found in the Nazis’ murderous policies, exemplified by genocidal massacres of partisans and the practice of eradication through deliberate neglect. The main difference between the two lay in the different roles played by the state. (pp 67–68)

Jan Kociumbas’s excellent chapter examines disease and its biological and ecological impacts in “New World” colonization history, focusing on New South Wales between 1788 and 1850. The subsequent two sections consider the controversial question of settler-driven frontier violence in Tasmania, Victoria, and Queensland, along with forcible removals of indigenous children during the pre-World War II and post-war periods.

The debate over removals sharpened with the 1997 publication of *Bringing Them Home*, a report based on testimonies of representatives of Aborigines’ “stolen generations,” in Peter Read’s phrase.¹ The report’s conclusions about the impact of the removal policy were misinformed; unhelpful as well were the scholars who claimed that different histories of forced removal could be conflated and presented as “genocide” under the UN Genocide Convention. *Genocide and Settler Society* provides a major corrective for the unqualified and overgeneralized interventions in this debate. While Pamela Lukin boldly asserts that genocide was committed against the Karuwali group of Queensland, Paul Bartrop provides a more complex assessment of the massacre of Aborigines at Warrigal Creek, Gippsland, in the late 1840s. This settler-initiated massacre was not isolated, but in Bartrop’s view, it did not constitute part of an overall plan of state-sponsored extermination—in contrast to the brutal treatment of Native American Indians at Sand Creek, Colorado, almost 20 years later.

The UN Genocide Convention is rigorously considered in the final chapters. These essays address the forcible removals of indigenous peoples in both Australia and Germany during the interwar period, as well as the welfare interventions of post-World War II Australia. The chapters by Robert Manne and Anna Haebich, on techniques of genocide and forcible removal at different points in twentieth century Australian history, discuss the theme of administrative intention. To flesh out this discussion, a distinction should be made between forcible removals and their absorptive intention in the pre-1939 period; and the post-war removals, which Russell McGregor describes in a later chapter as interventionist and reformatory, rather than eliminationist (see below).

The inclusion of Isabel Heinemann's comparison of the "Germanization" of abducted children provides good reason for sharpening the uninformed vocabulary often used to describe forced removals in Australia. In a chapter titled "'Until the last drop of good blood': the kidnapping of 'racially valuable' children and Nazi racial policy in occupied Eastern Europe," Heinemann examines the 50,000 non-Aryan children kidnapped by the Nazis for purposes of racial makeover. These kidnappings took place on eugenic grounds, according to the children's perceived "racial value"—irrespective of whether they were "orphans," "partisan children," or "soldiers' children" (p 257). Heinemann concludes, rightly in my view, that the practice of "Germanization" met two central requirements of the UN Genocide Convention: intentionality, and the attempted destruction of at least part of a national group by removing or killing its offspring.

The sophistication of this argument is matched by Russell McGregor's excellent study of Australian governance and assimilation in the post-war era. His is an important corrective to perceptions of forcible removal as genocide. McGregor strongly refutes the application of labels like "ethnocide" or "cultural genocide" to these removals. Rather, he treats methods of Aboriginal assimilation such as naming and education as normative practices that were aimed at the production of privatized identities. Acknowledging the unjustness of the treatment of Aborigines, McGregor suggests that "cultural suppression" occurred during the assimilation era. In particular, public displays of Aboriginality and ethnicity were subordinated to a specific idea of belonging and inclusion. But this forging of citizens was not dissimilar to the demands placed on immigrants in nineteenth century Europe; they, too, were induced to demonstrate loyalty, and in return received civic rewards of participation in the polity.

In sum, *Genocide and Settler Society* marks an important shift in the way colonization, dispossession and violence can be analyzed in relation to Australian and European history. Tim Rowse's epilogue provides a sober analysis of the survival and growth of Aboriginal populations, an intervention in the debate among Australian historians over frontier massacres, and a strong rebuttal to the fantastical "doomed race" theory. The book also leaves the reader with much to consider in relation to genocide's interpretive forbear, the Jewish Holocaust. In actively engaging with genocide in different eras, and across different landscapes and geographies, the authors do not all agree about what genocide is and is not. While this disagreement reflects the state of the field of comparative inquiry, it does not diminish the book's repudiation of denialist theses, and its overall contribution to the history of race and violence.

Notes and References

- 1 Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, *Bringing Them Home: Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families* (Sydney: Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 1997).

Simone Gigliotti
Victoria University of Wellington