

Alexandru Curici, “The ‘Party Soldier’: Obtuse and Then a Little Decrepit”; and 3) Milan Petrovici, “The Yugoslav Emigrant in Romania (by Chance).”

Obviously, in the case of the Serbs, too, the societal transformations initiated by the communist regime did not have an exclusively repressive political character. One of the predilect ways of transforming the community and, implicitly, the individual, regardless of nationality, was through culture, more specifically, through a compromise called *proletarian culture*, which concealed, in fact, the ideological agenda and aggressive propaganda of the party. Its manifestation in the Serbian community in Romania is exemplified by a case study of the newspaper *Îndrumătorul cultural*: this proved to be a means of repression, articulated in the national language, which was particularly aggressive against the Serbian identity. This state-sanctioned approach was seconded by the attack against the Serbian Orthodox Church: the collection of studies describes at large the manner in which the Security exercised control and supervision over this institution (“The Church under a Magnifying Glass”). The stage following the last “watershed moment,” the period of post-communism, concludes the volume, enumerating, by way of chronological sequences, the main institutions, personalities and events related to the Serbian community in Romania, starting from 20 December 1989 (“Veljko Unipan and the Romanian Democratic Front in Timișoara”) and ending on 28 April 2009 (“The 1990 Leader Confesses: ‘A Little Ceaușescu Lies Hidden in Everyone’”).

This historiographical undertaking, with an obvious restitutive character, as duly noted in the introduction, is part of a larger and, as yet, unfinished project carried out by the main contributors to the volume, which investigates the problem of the Serbian political prisoners in Romania. What deserves mention is that in this intermediate phase of the project, the collection of studies presented here makes known to the general public, through a series of tables and lists (pp. 221-258), the fact that there were nearly 1,000 Serb prisoners from an ethnic minority that barely exceeded 30,000. This and other aspects highlighted by the authors indicate an undeniable reality and a premise that still needs to be explored: according to this, the Serbs were among the groups that were most affected by the repressive side of Romanian communism and the twentieth century, except for the last decade, represented a “time of great trials and tribulations” for this community.

GRIGORE MOLDOVAN

GUZUN VADIM (EDITOR), *RUSIA ÎNFOMETATĂ. ACȚIUNEA UMANITARĂ EUROPEANĂ ÎN DOCUMENTELE DIN ARHIVELE ROMÂNEȘTI 1919-1923* [STARVING RUSSIA. EUROPEAN HUMANITARIAN ACTION IN THE ROMANIAN ARCHIVAL DOCUMENTS 1919-1923], TÂRGU-LĂPUȘ, GALAXIA GUTENBERG, 2012, ISBN 978-973-141-450-8, 663 p.

The twentieth century “cultivated” the largest number of “killing fields.” This highly controversial and often disputed term for a century of extremes (Eric Hobsbawm), popularised by Sydney Schanberg’s documentary book² describing Cambodia’s tragic experience under the Khmer Rouge regime, also captures the theme of the volume of documents edited by Vadim Guzun and his collaborators. Thus, in *Starving Russia*, the coordinator of the “Oriental Affairs”

² Sydney Schanberg, *Beyond the Killing Fields, War Writings*, Washington, Potomac books, 2010.

series is no longer interested in the “great Soviet famine”³ or in the “*piatiletka* and collective farms,”⁴ focusing, this time, on the humanitarian drama that occurred at the turn of the century, (also) known in historiography as the *Povolzhye/Povoljje*. This tragic moment that took the lives of about five million people, as part of the successive crises that afflicted Russian society beginning with the World War, the (Bolshevik) Revolution, and continuing with the civil and the Russo-Polish wars, was a time that was successfully yet cynically exploited, from a political, economic and social perspective, by the Bolshevik minority, in the context of its interest in consolidating the revolution. To capture this characteristic of the period coeval with the “matrix of Sovietism,” Martin Malia, one of the most competent analysts of this phenomenon, resorted to an older concept in Russia’s own history, namely “*smuta*”: specific to the end of the Kievan period in the Muscovite Tsarate, prior to the establishment of the Romanov dynasty, this concept described a “spell of adversity.” At that time, Russia experienced a period of famine that killed one-third of its population; the monarchy (the Rurik dynasty) collapsed and the country’s traditional social structure (consisting of boyars, the gentry and the peasantry) was replaced by an anarchic and allogeneic population. A similar political and social implosion but with different results occurred in the case of the “*smuta*” from 1918-1921, which was no longer followed by a restoration of the pre-existing order, but by the triumph of an entirely new type of order, namely an ideocratic partocracy.⁵ The conditions under which this regime was “born” and the Bolsheviks’ role in this process represent the main subject of the collection edited by Vadim Guzun, the thematic approach resting on an impressive set of 284 documents (preceded by an extensive introductory study), which have been selected by the editor and his collaborators from the Archive of Romania’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Expressing primarily the local (Romanian) perspective on this period and the above-mentioned tragedy, this undertaking represents - as stated in the introductory study - the first attempt to introduce important sources into the scientific circuit, without which the picture of the Bolshevik regime and its effects in the Romanian space would be deprived of essential elements (p. 61). Having an implicitly “recuperating character” (p. 61) and being published for “practical reasons” (p. 1), *Starving Russia* intends to outline, based on the subjective selection of archival data, an overview of previously unknown aspects of this phenomenon, by highlighting the circumstances surrounding the famine and simultaneously foregrounding the efforts made by the European states (and the relevant humanitarian organisations) to help the suffering population. All these are pursued in tandem with attention to the socio-economic crisis of the new Soviet state and to related topics, such as the Ukrainian and the Romanian matters, or the Romanian-Soviet relations.

Given their interest, the documents facilitate an understanding of this theme on at least three levels. The first is the *internal*, Soviet level, pertaining to the causes of the famine, more specifically, the subjective and objective factors triggering the first Russian famine of the twentieth century; another is the *external* level, encompassing the attitudes adopted by the international (European) community and entailing the publication of the diplomatic discussions and correspondences on record; and, last but not least, the documents provide a *regional* perspective on the situation, seen through the lenses of the Romanian state’s immediate interest. All these have the concern for this humanitarian drama as a focal point, in the background. Ultimately, we can say that together with the other documents published in the first two volumes

³ Vadim Guzun, *Marea foamete sovietică, 1926-1936*, Baia Mare, Editura Universității de Nord, 2011.

⁴ Vadim Guzun, *Foametea, piatiletka și ferma colectivă. Documente diplomatice românești, 1926-1936*, Baia Mare, Editura Universității de Nord, 2011.

⁵ See Martin Malia, “A Regime is Born,” in Sheila Fitzpatrick, (ed.), *Stalinism, New Directions*, London and New York, Routledge, 2000.

of the series, this undertaking represents an indispensable instrument for all those interested in arriving at a deeper level of understanding what *Sovietisation*, as a whole, meant. Regarding this concept as a process or a project, applied and tested for the first time in Russia, by a radical and revolutionary elite on its own population, and then extended to the Russian hinterland and, eventually, in the post-war period, to the Soviet Bloc countries, the documents published here capture the initial phase of the phenomenon, the experiments and the political opportunism of the Bolsheviks. As suggested by these documents, the mutual assignation of blame and the dichotomy between the victims, the population, on the one hand, and the executioners, the Bolshevik leaders, on the other, reveals the political overcharge of this tragedy, while also explaining the later characteristics of the regime. These are all arguments in favour of attentively exploring the documents included in this useful and necessary instrument for understanding the Soviet regime.

GRIGORE MOLDOVAN

SIGUNÐUR GYLFI MAGNÚSSON, ISTVÁN M. SZIJÁRTÓ, *WHAT IS MICROHISTORY? THEORY AND PRACTICE*. LONDON – NEW YORK, ROUTLEDGE, 2013. ISBN 9 780415 692090. 181 P.

This volume provides the first systematic and accessible overview of the origins, evolution and methodology of microhistory. The two sections of the book, which are, indeed, situated between theory and practice, suggest a different, yet complementary perspective on the subject under examination. The first section, which bears the signature of István M. Szijártó (Department of Social and Economic History, Eötvös Lóránd University, Hungary), has a pronounced historiographical character, while the second part, written by Sigunður Gylfi Magnússon (Centre for Microhistorical Research, Reykjavik Academy) is a personalised exploration of the actual practice of microhistory. Both authors have produced numerous studies, articles and books devoted to this subject, so this book incorporates the experience they have accumulated in the study and practice of microhistory.

The first chapter begins by presenting probably the most famous works of microhistory in Italy, written by Giovanni Levi and Carlo Ginzburg. Szijártó's analysis suggests that Italian microhistory has set out to provide an alternative to analyses based on quantitative methodology (promoted by the Annales School and currently facing an impasse), by inserting, in historical discourse, characters and experiences that are as real as possible (see the protagonists of the narratives *Inheriting Power* and *The Cheese and the Worms*) in order to create a personalised image of the past. Besides the aforementioned representatives, the chapter also outlines the research directions of S. Cerutti, C. Klapisch-Zuber and M. Gribaudi, lesser known authors who have extended microscopic analysis onto social groups, phenomena and situations. This chapter reveals that the goal of Italian microhistory is to provide answers to the great historical questions by engaging in a detailed analysis of particular individuals, phenomena or communities. At the same time, it brings to the fore the reluctance of the Italian School to embrace postmodernism and other historiographical trends that are prone to exaggerate the relativist approach to the historical past.

The second chapter acquaints us with the achievements of the French and the German historiographies. The first step is to introduce us to the famous work entitled *The Vanishing Children of Paris* by A. Farge and J. Revel; then, based on this presentation, the chapter outlines the main features of French microhistory. The historiographical scope is broadened by