David L. Hoffmann. *Cultivating the Masses: Modern State Practices and Soviet Socialism, 1914–1939*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011. xiv, 327 pp. $45.00 (cloth). ISBN-13: 978-0-80144-629-0.

Ask nearly any college student to characterize the Soviet system and you are likely to hear in reply a list of features, including murderous repression, ideological fanaticism, and dictatorial, single-party rule. This combination makes the Soviet system, especially during the Stalin era, look remarkably like that other infamous totalitarian state of the mid-twentieth century, Hitler's Germany. Not surprisingly, the presence of "socialist" in the name of Hitler's political party has led many such students, especially in the United States, to assume that there is something unique to socialism that leads inexorably to hyper-statism, police rule, and mass murder. While comparative studies of the USSR with the Nazi state have been fairly numerous, few have ventured beyond their apparent kinship to explain how the grand experiment of Soviet socialism went so tragically awry.

David L. Hoffmann offers a powerful counterweight to such simple (and self-exonerating) explanations in the first major comparative assessment of Soviet socialism in its turbulent foundational decades. Without downplaying the most infamous elements of the system, Hoffman rounds out the picture by pointing to Soviet efforts to manage the health and well-being of the population as equally characteristic (and, indeed, perhaps more fundamental) features. Traditional explanations for the intrusiveness and violence of the Soviet state have pointed to ideology – the outcome of Marxist collectivist utopianism ruthlessly applied to a backward agrarian country. Having broadly surveyed historical examples from Western Europe, Turkey, Japan, the United States, and elsewhere, however, Hoffmann concludes that, far from exceptional, the Soviet case represents trends common to the transition to modernity around the world, including in liberal democratic states. He focuses on the rise to prominence of cameralist thought – typified in the growing importance of scholarly and technocratic information-gathering in fields such as sociology, psychology, criminology, statistics, medicine, and public hygiene – in the nineteenth century as tools of modern statecraft. Moreover, Hoffmann traces the roots of "excisionary violence," that is, the selective removal of entire categories of people from society by incarcerating them in camps or penal settlements, to the European administration of their colonies in Africa and Australia as well as to imperial Russia's own policies in the Caucasus. World War I intensified the application of such tools for preparing the population – by mobilizing the masses and isolating potential internal enemies – to meet the demands of total warfare.

Indeed, the Great War represents the essential turning point in the emergence of the mobilizing state, as governments across Europe harnessed the technologies of information gathering (the "alpha and omega of our work," as Peter Holquist, Hoffmannn's original partner in this project, described it), propaganda, surveillance, reproduction, and public health to ensure the sur-

vival of their nations. The Soviet government was still in its infancy when the war came to an end, and its efforts to reshape society generated opposition that required the maintenance and even expansion of mobilizational techniques, including perlustration of letters, monitoring of popular moods, and use of informants. These were all made necessary, he argues, by the shift from monarchy, in which subjects were expected to obey without question, to a democratic state whose success depended on mass recognition of a commonality of purpose. Thus, propaganda sought to instill common values, and surveillance ensured its effective implementation. But whereas Western states generally dismantled large-scale surveillance among the population after the war, the Bolsheviks maintained and even elaborated on it in the interest of securing the future of the socialist state among hostile neighbors and creating the "new" Soviet person.

Hoffmann does not stop at noting similarities between Soviet techniques of social engineering and their cameralist predecessors abroad. He clearly demonstrates the influence of the latter on social scientists in the USSR, who regularly participated in international academic forums and sought ways to apply or amend the latest thinking to the construction of socialism. In the effort to fashion an ideal society of physically and mentally fit citizens, however, Soviet thinkers rejected the eugenic solutions that found favor in the West (most infamously in Germany), adhering instead to a Lamarckian environmentalism that implied greater malleability – and potential for redemption – of the individual. This emphasis fit naturally with Soviet faith in the transformative strength of the socialist nurturing state and is visible in the educational and public health campaigns that Hoffmann skillfully illustrates.

But if the apparently distinctive elements of the Soviet system share roots with trends in the West European transitions to modernity, what then was the role of ideology in this process in Russia? Hoffmann has long been associated with an interpretation that emphasizes the Enlightenment roots of Soviet institutions and practices, yet here he does not shy away from pointing out the ways that the Marxist-Leninist world view fit with and gave a particular shape to Russian applications of cameralist techniques. With regard to the relentless information gathering, for example, he argues, "What occurred was not the genesis of surveillance from Bolshevik ideology but rather the ideologizing of preexisting surveillance practices. Surveillance was attached to the Bolsheviks' ideological agenda and institutionalized within the new Soviet state" (p. 211).

Nevertheless, how do we account for the system's extraordinary brutality if not through ideology? The bulk of his book draws attention to the methods of state intervention and violence that the Soviets shared with other countries, but Hoffmann asserts that the "disciplinary knowledge" with which the leadership sought to "categorize" and "sculpt" society "fused with another necessary though insufficient condition of Soviet state violence – the millenarian thinking of Soviet leaders" (p. 304). In the context of perceived international hostility and the opposition that attempts to reshape Soviet society generated,

that millenarianism acquired a special virulence focused on revealing and eliminating all perceived threats by applying the available "technologies of social excision."

Hoffmann has presented an ambitious survey of Soviet state practices that deserves an audience in all fields of modern world history. Even if some might dispute his largely structuralist interpretation of the system's most infamous abuses, they will be hard pressed to ignore the abundance of evidence he presents of influences common to the transition to modernity. His prose is lucid, and the comparative approach and chronological scope of this monograph make it an attractive choice for the classroom, especially as a balance to the weighty set of assumptions with which many students come to the study of Russia. Archival references buttress the narrative where Hoffmann has ventured into uncharted territory, but he also seems to have synthesized an entire generation of scholarship in European history and made even the most arcane topics fit comfortably into his story.

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