

Perović, Jeronim. *From Conquest to Deportation: The North Caucasus under Russian Rule*. Hurst & Company, London, 2018. xxiv + 466 pp. Maps. Illustrations. Notes. Bibliography. Index. £65.00.

THE North Caucasus remains one of the most complex and challenging landscapes for historians to explore. In addition to its physical extremes, its linguistic and ethnic diversity has long proven a challenge to simplify and summarize. Until recently, the historiography of the region in general has also been dominated by the conflicts that have occurred there. These range from the Russian war against Shamil in the nineteenth century, to the first and second Chechen wars at the end of the twentieth century and the 'frozen' conflicts in the Transcaucasus. Russian annexation of the Crimea, the bloody and violent civil war in Syria, and NATO plans to grant Georgia full membership have all in recent years added further military tension to the region, rendering the Black Sea in general one of the main nexuses of conflict in the modern world. Jeronim Perović in this volume does a masterful job of summarizing the historical background to Russian engagement in the North Caucasus in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, a critical element in understanding the wider security dynamic of the region even today. Although, as his title suggests, conflict is also rarely absent from this account, he manages both to synthesize much of the more recent writing on the region, which have added complexity and depth to our understanding of the sources of conflict there, and also to avoid repeating the Russophobic narratives which assign all problems in the region straightforwardly to Moscovite aggression.

As the title suggests, Perović's account seeks to provide an overview of the most formative events that have shaped the North Caucasus in the modern period, beginning from the war against Shamil in the nineteenth century to Stalin's deportation of whole nationalities at the end of the Second World War. Although his final chapter and conclusion deal with the longer term consequences of the return of exiled peoples in the 1950s, the Soviet collapse in 1991, the Chechen wars, and the contested memorialization of all this recent history that continues even today, Perović's detailed historical narrative account largely ends with the death of Khasan Israilov, a Chechen insurgent leader and German collaborator, at the hands of fellow Chechens in December 1944.

Perović provides an impressive synthesis of much of the most recent Russian and Western writing on the subject in recent years. He builds upon and synthesizes Thomas Barrett's work on the ethnic makeup of the Terek Cossacks, as well as Michael Khodarkovsky's 2011 account of cultural misunderstandings between mountaineers and the Russian state over the obligations signified by oaths of fealty, to draw a picture of conflict drivers in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries that is both complex and multi-faceted. He

effectively also overturns traditional narratives of unified resistance to Russian rule in the region to draw a more nuanced picture of societies that were, at one and the same time, both militarized and highly fragmented. In addition, he argues persuasively, in line with much of the more recent historiography, that Naqshbandiya Sufi sects were not the key driver behind resistance to Russian rule in the region. He likewise builds upon, and effectively synthesizes, the work of Alex Marshall on the establishment of Soviet rule in the region in the 1920s and 1930s, in particular with regard to the Ali Mitaev experiment in Chechnia, and the disarmament and collectivization campaigns of that era. He further adds to this rich synthesis however some invaluable additional material of his own—notably a detailed account of collectivization in the late 1920s and early 1930s, as well as an account of the insurgency in the region during the Second World War that incorporates Khasan Israilov's own diary.

By drawing attention to the report of V. Pomerantsev, a Soviet journalist who visited Chechnya-Ingushetiia in 1939 as a reporter for the atheist journal *Bezbozhnik*, Perović here provides critical additional insight on the growing suspicion of the Soviet central authorities towards their regional governments in the North Caucasus. Pomerantsev's report at the time sparked a violent political debate within the party over the progress of Soviet modernization in the North Caucasus that has until now escaped the attention of most researchers. One indirect individual product of this same modernization process however was Khasan Israilov, the poet, journalist, legal prosecutor and ex-Communist party member who led elements of an anti-Soviet insurgency in Chechnia-Ingushetiia from 1940 onwards. Perović unpicks Israilov's own diary, captured in August 1943 by NKVD operatives, and whose authenticity has been contested and debated ever since, in a ground-breaking manner. Israilov's diaries, if treated as an accurate account, reveal a man leading a double life, both culturally and intellectually, right the way from his early twenties until his death. What emerges from Perović's careful dissection of the diaries is that Israilov's grievances against the existing order were as much a product of clan conflicts and blood feuds with other local Chechens as they were a reflection of resistance to Soviet collectivization policies and military repression. Israilov's own career prior to his becoming an insurgent leader was also apparently marked by brawls, drunken binges, covert assassination of perceived enemies, feuds, and at least one attempted rape. Perović's conclusions about Israilov in this connection are both damning and persuasive; Israilov emerges as a fantasist, whose grievances stemmed from never being in reality as important in local political life as he would have liked to be. He 'apparently suffered not only from the repression of a dictatorial regime but also agonized over himself, over inherited traditions and over the manifold tensions intrinsic to Chechen society' (p. 311).

Perović's history is an invaluable addition to the growing modern historiography of the North Caucasus which should be used by all future students and scholars of the region.

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Babović, Jovana. *Metropolitan Belgrade: Culture and Class in Interwar Yugoslavia*. Pitt Series in Russian and East European Studies. University of Pittsburgh Press, Pittsburgh, PA, 2018. ix + 259 pp. Illustrations. Notes. Works cited. Index. \$27.95 (paperback).

METROPOLITAN BELGRADE is an ambitious attempt at a sociocultural history of entertainment in interwar Belgrade. Babović presents to the English language reader the scholarship of Belgrade historians Dubravka Stojanović, Radina Vučetić, Ljubodrag Dimić and Predrag Marković, among others, and brings additional archival and press coverage. She places entertainment in the wider context of popular culture in Yugoslavia as well as globally, as it was during this period that the capital of the newly unified country immersed itself in transnational genres such as jazz, film and cabaret. The most important contribution she makes is to link this existing scholarship to that about entertainment in other European capitals, to which Belgrade aspired to be compared. Yet this approach is not without risk, as its ambition to accommodate and project Western discourses on class, bourgeois morals and spatial analysis often turns out to be unsubstantiated.

In Babović's analysis the Belgrade middle-class, or otherwise interchangeably defined bourgeois urbanites, chose to be consumers of foreign popular culture as a demonstration of their participation in European metropolitan modernity, as opposed to their alleged civic duty of promoting the emerging Yugoslav high culture or nurturing that of the Serbian nation within the Yugoslav state. Further archival research and an examination of the readily available views of outsiders — the numerous foreign journalists, travellers and residents in Belgrade (only Rebecca West's disillusionment is mentioned) would have resulted in a more nuanced picture. More significantly, Babović fails to consider the enormous influence, as both creators and consumers of entertainment, of the massive influx during this period of Russian émigrés, who thrilled Belgrade audiences, such as the singer Olga Jančevecka or prima ballerina Nina Kirsanova. Jewish immigrants are mentioned, but only in a discussion about entry permits, and there is no mention of the thousands who streamed into Yugoslavia from Eastern Europe, and especially Germany