

ABSTRACTS

Is Ukraine a Multiethnic Country?

VOLODYMYR KULYK

This paper critically examines the widespread perception of Ukraine as a multiethnic country with clear boundaries between ethnic groups. It demonstrates that despite the Soviet legacy of rather strong institutionalization and discursive presentation of nationality, the post-Soviet state discontinued or downplayed most of the institutional mechanisms for the reproduction of ethnic distinctiveness and virtually abandoned the use of ethnic categories in official discourse. While several smaller minorities retained some institutional backing and discursive presence, the once very large group of ethnic Russians ceased to be publicly presented and popularly perceived as clearly distinct from the bulk of Ukrainians. At the same time, Ukrainian citizens differ greatly in their ethnocultural practices and ethnolinguistic identifications, hence Ukraine certainly remains ethnoculturally diverse, and this seems to be a more appropriate designation than “multiethnic.”

Was Tolstoi a Colonial Landlord? The Dilemmas of Private Property and Settler Colonialism on the Bashkir Steppe

EDYTA M. BOJANOWSKA

Using new archival research, this article establishes key facts about the most understudied aspect of Lev Tolstoi’s biography—his Samara estate—assessing its role in the Tolstoi family economy and property structure. Integrating imperial history with the theoretical perspective of settler colonial studies, the article argues that the estate functioned within the context of Russia’s settler colonialism in Bashkiria. While this experience contributed to Tolstoi’s rejection of private property, it never erased his enthusiasm for Russia’s manifest destiny as a settler civilization. Sympathizing with the plight of Russian settlers, Tolstoi remained perplexingly indifferent to the suffering of the semi-nomadic Bashkirs they displaced. These findings complicate Tolstoi’s status as Russia’s premier anti-colonial writer, urging a more capacious framing of the problem of empire in Tolstoi’s art and thought, one that balances his critiques of the military conquest of the Caucasus against his embrace of settler colonialism.

Words on Trial: Morality and Legality in Frida Vigdorova’s Journalism

REBECCA REICH

During the Khrushchev period, the journalist Frida Vigdorova charged Soviet society with a moral indifference that expressed itself through evasive language. Such language, she argued, claimed to exercise moral judgment, while in fact enabling both individuals and institutions to sidestep their

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responsibilities. As the state enacted reforms aimed at raising society's moral consciousness, Vigdorova applied this critique of language to the Soviet justice system. This study traces the evolution of that critique across her published and unpublished writings about legal and paralegal rituals of justice from 1955 to 1963. For Vigdorova, these rituals offered object lessons in society's failure to combat indifference: evidence that linguistic evasion plagued those very institutions charged with adjudicating morality. By cultivating a transcriptive style, Vigdorova situated herself and her readers as witnesses to that language: a community of listeners gathered in space and time. In doing so, she presented journalism as a higher court that could call society to account.

“The Master Rarely Casts His Eye Here”: Water and Urban Infrastructure in Postwar Vladivostok

RUSTAM KHAN

The keyword socialist modernity has often served as the yardstick for scholarship on socialist urban histories. Many have stressed the so-called fundamental and micropolitical characteristics of ideology to understand the material and social lives of their cities. I argue that such a historiographical stance not only sidelines the variegated and conflicting experiences of urbanization, but also marginalizes how nature and space actively conditioned urban life and its social fabrics. By looking at water and its infrastructure in post-WWII Vladivostok, I argue how groups ranging from technical experts to everyday residents built the city around the cruciality of water supplies. This spawned debates about the limits of urban planning, the corruption of the municipal authorities, and the fight against epidemic diseases. Reframing socialist urbanization as that of “assemblages” opens new avenues that fuse the work of environmental and urban histories of socialism.

Keywords: infrastructure, water, space, urbanization, Soviet Union/USSR

Histories of Color: Blackness and Africanness in the Soviet Union

HILARY LYND AND THOM LOYD

What were the meanings of blackness in the Soviet Union? Marxist ideology offered no clear guidance for conceptualizing blackness, and the Russian Empire provided few historical references. But discrimination against people racialized as black was a major problem of the twentieth century that the Soviet Union was unable to ignore. As Soviet institutions and black people from different parts of the African continent and diaspora cultivated political and cultural connections, those connections entailed collisions among multiple ways of conceptualizing difference. Blackness could not easily be translated into Soviet taxonomies, but, propelled by a series of conjunctures in global politics, people never stopped looking for linkages and analogies. Two primary challenges, recurring in different forms over several eras, were: How was the Soviet Union to conceptualize the relationship between the African continent and the diaspora? And how should it relate racial dynamics

elsewhere to domestic conditions within its own borders? Drawing on two scholars' original fieldwork and recent scholarship in an emerging field, this article proposes a novel, interactive approach to the historical construction of blackness and Africanness in the USSR.

“Are There Racists in Yugoslavia?” Debating Racism and Anti-blackness in Socialist Yugoslavia

PETER WRIGHT

This article examines debates, scholarly studies, and literary representations of the phenomenon of racism in socialist Yugoslavia and Yugoslavs' relationship to whiteness in the 1960s and 70s. I argue that the persistent activism of black African students helped provoke official, scholarly, and public discussions about the thorny question of racism in Yugoslav society during this time. The salience of black students' accusations eventually made something that was taboo in the 1950s and early 1960s—namely, entertaining the prospect that anti-black racial prejudice existed in non-aligned, socialist, and anti-racist Yugoslavia—into an active subject of debate by the end of the decade. Importantly, the relative candidness with which academic studies and popular literature addressed racism indicates a reflexivity about “racial” questions on the part of socialist Yugoslav society, something that scholarship has largely neglected in favor of focusing on the suppression or elision of race and the inadequacy of state socialist responses to the problem of domestic expressions of prejudice.

The Islamic Framing of the Economic Activities of Salafi-oriented Muslims in Dagestan, North Caucasus: An Anthropological Approach

IWONA KALISZEWSKA, JAGODA SCHMIDT AND MAREK KALETA

In this paper, we explore the entanglement of spiritual and economic life through the example of Dagestani, Salafi-oriented entrepreneurs who try to live out their religious ideals in moral economic practices. We ask how living a religious life shapes economic behavior and its moral dimensions, and how the gradual acquisition of the norms of an Islamic economy influences the everyday economic practices of Salafi-oriented Muslims in Dagestan. Drawing on Stephen Gudeman's market-community framework, and offering our research as a corrective, we show how an Islamic framing of everyday economic activities and the gradual acquisition of the norms of the Islamic economy allows Salafi-oriented Muslims to escape traditional obligations, and to some extent, “the state,” while at the same time bestowing meaning on “cold” market relations. As a result, instead of escaping the market-society script (that they criticize), they reinforce it. Our analysis is based on the results of ethnographic fieldwork conducted in Dagestan between 2014 and 2018.

Keywords: Islam in Russia, anthropology, Salafism, corruption, informal economy, Islamic economy