

why, when communism collapsed in 1989, Poland's ostensible "return" to the global community seemed culturally somewhat less dramatic from the perspective of many Poles than from those watching in the west.

I was surprised to see that for all the nuanced recognition of fluid overlaps between "socialist" and "Western" modernities, the overarching distinction remained binary, and a discussion of Soviet, various east European, and Polish regional forces that shaped Polish youth's experiences of the "global sixties" seemed sparse. The book did not always draw on relevant literature, particularly of Soviet cultural and political developments, which, after all, shaped the Polish context during that time. Still, the book is an important and original contribution to the fields of Polish, east European, and global histories, and has lots to offer to experts and graduate students alike.

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***Communism's Public Sphere: Culture as Politics in Cold War Poland and East Germany.*** By Kyrill Kunakhovich. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2022. xiii, 337 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Photographs. \$46.95, hard bound.  
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In *Communism's Public Sphere*, Kyrill Kunakhovich explores the under-researched area of relations between politics and culture under communism in eastern Europe. Its focus is on two cities of differing character—both historical and geopolitical—with less attention to other members of the "bloc." These two cities Kraków and Leipzig joined ranks officially as "sister cities" from 1973, followed by exchange visits of dancers and other actors.

His book divides the forty-five years of communist rule into three contrasting stages. The initial stage is known retrospectively as Stalinism. Under this, all workers must be exposed to the right kind of art. This widened the project to one of cultural enlightenment, making artists prominent in public office and dispatching them on extended visits to mines and factories, while also restricting them to the parameters of a "state cultural matrix" determined from above. The notion of "cultural space" was thus focused on indoctrination and propaganda of the Party line. The theory of "socialist realism"—formulated by a Soviet committee in 1934, which contained no writers—became the obligatory, if often nebulous, requirement.

The stage that followed was "National Communism." Access to the long-forbidden west became a rebuilding block in Poland, but in East Germany was far more problematical. In the late 50s, Leipzig teenagers began to gather on street corners to blare Radio Luxembourg and Radio in the American Sector from transistors. A quota law from 1958 attempted to restrict "forbidden western songs" to 40% of a performance repertoire. More generally across the "bloc," "National Communism" was a controlled revolt, "letting people speak" without allowing their demands to spiral out of control. This overcame the circumscribed public sphere of Stalinism. But since any criticism of the socialist past inevitably cast doubt upon the present, reform was thus a slippery slope.

The third stage was "actually-existing Socialism," a phrase first coined by *Pravda* on the fiftieth anniversary of the 1917 Revolution. This deemed politics to trump any consideration of artistic values. Thus art, instead of being part of public discourse, became purely entertainment. In response, Czech dramatist Václav Benda called for a "parallel polis" to run alongside state media. Civic action would

ignore state institutions and instead build its own culture, outside official structures. An alternative cultural matrix did emerge in Kraków as part of a mass proliferation of unofficial networks in the 1980s, but was more problematical in Leipzig. Rather than attributable to racial stereotypes—rebellious Poles and obedient Germans—the real cause of difference was geo-politics. Leipzig did not need to forge an alternative cultural matrix since one already existed on the other side of the inner German border.

The author contrasts these three stages most admirably. Hopefully, he is now engaged in a much-needed sequel to show how post-communism brought in new restrictions while inherited culture was often sidelined to public regret.

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***Balancing Between National Unity and “Multiculturalism”: National Minorities in Lithuania and Finland 1918–1939.*** Ed. Karl Alenius and Saulius Kaubrys. On the Boundary of Two Worlds series, vol. 47. Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2022. xii, 264 pp. Appendix. Bibliography. Index. Tables. Maps. Hard bound.  
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The reconfiguration of eastern Europe after World War I left virtually all the area’s new national states with the difficult problem of “national minorities.” Not only had democratic constitutions created the national *majorities* that now dominated these states, but the League of Nations kept a watchful eye on the treatment of *minority* populations, seeking to ensure that their guaranteed “rights” were respected. Two of these states were Finland and Lithuania, and the book under review deals with their experience with minorities during the interwar years. The analysis is exhaustive and valuable, since both authors are skilled historians and furnish their audience with historical information rarely found in English anywhere else, especially about the regional and local society. The book does not seek to contribute to a theory of comparative analysis but rather positions the two accounts side-by-side within chapters dealing with such traditional themes as the imperial heritage (from the Russian empire for both, Chap. 1), demography (Chap. 2), politics (Chap. 3), education (Chap. 4), the economy (Chap. 5), and religion (Chap. 6). Both authors clearly faced considerable quantitative obstacles: Lithuania had only one interwar census (1923) while Finland had three (1920, 1930, 1940), but the Finnish enumerations recorded only preferred language and “no other ethnically related issues” (28). Consequently, both authors had to draw on many non-census sources: governmental reports, local and regional surveys, academic studies, newspapers, and individual assessments.

At the beginning of the interwar decades, the proportion of the titular population in both countries was overwhelming: Lithuania, with its 2.1 million people, included about 84% who self-identified as Lithuanians, while Finland with its 3.15 million in 1920 had about 86% “ethnic Finns,” a problematic category, to be sure. In both cases, the proportion of “national minorities” in the interwar period in both countries remained relatively stable, perhaps 14–16%, though there was considerable external and internal migration, producing mixed categories. In any event, most political leaders in both countries throughout the period came from the titular majority, whose continuing assignment became the reduction of ethnic frictions that might threaten national unity. Both countries had one numerically prominent “national minority”—Jews in the Lithuanian case and Swedish-speakers in Finland—as well