

### Forum: On Collaboration in Poland and the Soviet Union during World War II

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MARTIN DEAN, AND TANJA PENTER

Astonishingly, we still do not have a history of collaboration in Poland during World War II. Klaus-Peter Friedrich shows that the building blocks for such a history already exist, however. They are scattered throughout the contemporary Polish press and studies on the Nazi occupation regime. Examples include institutionalized cooperation (*Baudienst*, Polish Police), ethnically defined segments of the population (*Völkische*), informal support of Nazi projects on ideological common ground (anti-Semitism and anticommunism), and the stance of the Polish peasantry as well as the Roman Catholic Church. Friedrich concludes that collaboration eludes study because of a mental image according to which ethnic Poles were the foremost victims of the occupiers and heroically resisted them. Questionable views of national self-interest keep Polish society from coming to terms with the past. Nevertheless, debates on “Polish collaboration” continue to recur—as they have since 1939.

Based on archival and other materials from Rostov-on-Don, a major industrial center in southern Russia, Jeffrey W. Jones examines the different representations of “collaboration” apparent in Soviet society during and after the war. Jones analyzes several different levels of discourse: inner party deliberations and reports on the subject, depictions of collaborators and their actions in the local party press, questions and comments of workers and others at public meetings as recorded by party officials, and Cold War and post-Cold War era memoirs and interviews. These sources overlap to a significant degree but deal with the complex issue of collaboration in nuanced ways, stressing different themes and asking different questions. The evidence reveals a subtle divide in the perception and representation of this issue between party leaders and the population at large while also showing that the party’s public assurances of cossack loyalty contrasted with a widely shared assumption of cossack *disloyalty*.

Three historians comment on the articles. John Connelly considers the moral and historiographical meanings of “collaboration” and “collaborationism” and suggests that even those cases that Friedrich documents do not make Poland into a collaborationist country. In fact, the Nazis were disappointed that Poles refused to collaborate. Connelly emphasizes the complicated choices and intentions among the Polish population and calls for bringing together both the heroic (and true) tale of Polish resistance with the disturbing (and true) tale of Polish accommodation to the slaughter of the Jews. Tanja Penter adds to the discussion the results of her own research in the records of military tribunals for trials of Soviet citizens accused of collaborating with the Germans. These data confirm the Soviet regime’s extremely broad understanding of collaboration and provide in-

sight into the collective biography of collaborators. They also suggest which crimes the regime believed most harmful to its integrity. While it is difficult to determine motives and even intentions from these trials, these data, like Jones's, indicate the immense loyalty problem that the Soviet government faced in its occupied territories. Martin Dean calls attention to the difficulties of weeding out collaborators in the postwar Soviet Union and agrees with Jones on the limits of representing the "reality" of collaboration. He notes the reluctance, raised by both Friedrich and Jones, of postwar communist governments and nationalists to deal publicly with the phenomenon. Contrasted to the desire in postwar Europe to deal quickly with war criminals, collaborators, and traitors so that people could move on with their lives, Dean emphasizes the necessity and possibility for historians to write a full history of wartime collaboration, one that recognizes multiple human motives and the responses of hundreds of thousands of individuals who had to take far-reaching decisions under swiftly changing circumstances.

**Kirov and Death in *The Great Citizen*:  
The Fatal Consequences of Linguistic Mediation**

JULIE A. CASSIDAY

A fictional account of the life and death of Sergei Kirov, Fridrikh Ermler's two-part film *The Great Citizen* (1937 and 1939) appears unusual due to its lack of action and its fetishization of the spoken word. As an instance of what Ermler called "conversational cinema," the film defines the outer limit of verbosity and immobility in socialist realist film. The movie's hero Shakhov mediates between Stalin and the Soviet masses; as a result, the conflict between Shakhov and the Trotskyist opposition represents a struggle between authentic and corrupt linguistic mediation in the film. By appropriating the myth of the Russian writer's martyrdom, *The Great Citizen* depicts Shakhov's demise, not merely as the result of a Trotskyist conspiracy, but more importantly as the necessary guarantor of the truth of Shakhov's words. Ermler's film reconfigures the writer's role in Russian society by inverting the hierarchy of the written and the spoken word, thus subjugating the myth of the martyred writer to the aesthetic and ideological goals of socialist realism. *The Great Citizen* demonstrates the importance of Kirov's martyrdom within Stalinist mythology and figures as a paradigmatic work of socialist realist film.

**"In a Manner Befitting Soviet Citizens":  
An Uprising in the Post-Stalin Gulag**

STEVEN A. BARNES

In May–June 1954, prisoners in the Kengir division of the Steplag special camp staged one of the longest and largest uprisings in gulag history. Steven A. Barnes considers the role played by the west Ukrainian and Baltic nationalists and Red Army veterans who comprised the Kengir pris-

oner population in an uprising strangely marked by moderate, even pro-Soviet, demands. Through a careful study of the propaganda war between prisoners and authorities and a consideration of the uprising's nominal leader, Red Army veteran Kapiton Kuznetsov, Barnes explores the possibilities and limits of resistance under Soviet rule and examines the gulag in its twilight as seen by both leadership and inmates.

**Russian Colonialism and the Asiatic Mode of Production:  
(Post-)Soviet Ethnography Goes to Alaska**

SONJA LUEHRMANN

This article discusses the concept of *politarizm* (politarism), developed by the Soviet ethnographer Iu. I. Semenov as an elaboration on Marx's Asiatic mode of production. Presenting both its origin in the revisionist debates of the Khrushchev and Brezhnev eras and its recent application in an innovative analysis of Russian colonialism in Alaska by the ethnohistorian A. V. Grinev, Sonja Luehrmann attempts to grasp the intellectual complexity of Semenov's work. While the Soviet debate on the Asiatic mode of production has been read as Aesopian criticism of the USSR, it may more fruitfully be seen as an argument against a strict five-stage scheme of historical evolution that opened up new possibilities of concrete empirical analysis and a new theoretical role for ethnography as the science of noncapitalist societies. Grinev's use of *politarizm* in the 1990s shows the lasting explanatory value of the concept as well as the need to understand the origins of Soviet intellectual traditions in order to critically engage with them.