

**Norman Naimark, *Stalin's Genocides*,
Princeton: Princeton University
Press, 2010, 163 S.**

Reviewed by
Matthew Lenoe, Rochester

In *Stalin's Genocides* Norman Naimark sets out to demonstrate that Joseph Stalin was not just a mass murderer but also a "genocidaire" comparable to Adolf Hitler. To make his argument Naimark employs an expanded definition of genocide that may not be familiar to some readers. Rather than rely simply on the definition of the crime by the UN's 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide as "acts committed with the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such," Naimark follows earlier UN resolutions and drafts of the final convention that included mass murder based on political beliefs. He points out that Soviet delegates resisted this inclusion in the final Convention, in order to avoid discussion of their government's mass murder of supposed political enemies. Ultimately, however, Naimark contends that Stalin was culpable in genocidal attacks not just on these "enemies," but also on ethnic groups. He makes a powerful, but from this reviewer's perspective flawed, case that the Stalinist regime's starvation of millions of Ukrainian peasants by hunger in 1932–1933 constituted genocide.

In addition to using an expanded definition of "genocide," Naimark foregrounds the

UN Convention's inclusion in the term of intended destruction of a group "in part". At three points he cites the International Criminal Tribunal's 2004 decision that the mass execution of almost 8000 Bosnian Muslims by Serbian military units in 1995 qualified as genocide even though it was a direct attack on only a part of an ethnic group. Naimark concludes that "exterminating part of a group can be viewed as genocide when the attack places the existence of the entire group in jeopardy" (p. 26). Based on this consideration he makes a very strong case that the Soviet regime's 1940 Katyn massacre of Polish officers and the mass deportations of Koreans, Lithuanians, Latvians, Estonians, Crimean Tatars, Chechens, Ingush, and other ethnic groups can be considered genocides or attempted genocides.

Naimark makes the strongest case this reviewer has seen that the starvation of around five million Ukrainian peasants in 1932–1933 was also a case of genocide. In particular he notes that the regime blockaded famine stricken regions in Ukraine to prevent the starving from escaping, and that forced collectivization in Ukraine and "sedenterization" in Kazakhstan both aimed "to destroy particular ways of life that were closely associated with the distinctive national and ethnic cultures of the people involved." Having read very many of the published documents from the top levels of the Soviet leadership from the period in question, however, this reviewer has seen no evidence that Ukrainians were targeted as such. It "is" clear under the definitions that Naimark uses that the famine of 1932–1933 was a genocidal attack on Soviet peasants, if not on Ukrainian peasants.

It is worth noting that the United States government's historical attacks on particular Native American groups, the Australian state's past policies towards Aborigines, and the actions of many European colonial regimes all constitute genocide under the meaning Naimark employs. Discussion of the applicability of the term to specific historical events should prompt not just horror at the crimes perpetrated by Stalin and his regime, but also reflection about the crimes of democratic and Western states against peoples deemed inferior.

One of the strongest chapters in "Stalin's Genocides" explores "the making of a mass murderer." Naimark denies that the roots of Stalin's murderousness can be found in his childhood. Rather the dictator's decisions "to engage in mass murder" emerged from a "perfect storm" of mutually reinforcing influences. These included his violent experiences in childhood and the revolutionary movement, the intense political struggles of the 1920s, Communist ideology, and the Russian "backwardness" despised by the Bolsheviks.

In his conclusion, Naimark frames "Stalin's Genocides" as a contribution to the debate as to whether Stalin or Hitler was "worse," or to be more precise, as to whether Stalin's crimes were comparable to Hitler's. This debate derives largely from the polemics of right-wing commentators such as Robert Conquest who aimed to implicate the entire "Left" (as if there ever was a single "Left") in Stalin's crimes. While many European and some American leftists remained sympathetic towards and/or naive about Stalinism well into the 1950s, this is no longer the case. Outside Russia Stalin is almost universally acknowledged today to be a mass murderer. To his credit

Naimark does not charge those who disagree with him with Stalinist sympathies, and he acknowledges serious arguments against including some or all of Stalin's crimes against humanity in the category of "genocide." He does however express suspicion of what he sees as some historians' attempts to explain mass collectivization, the Terror, and mass deportations in terms of *realpolitik* considerations – the necessity of rapid industrialization, preparation for World War II. To my mind, this misses the point. What is most frightening to me about state-sponsored mass murder is that there are usually more or less plausible *realpolitik* rationalizations for them. Modern mass murder is the obverse side of cold-blooded, putatively rational *raison d'état*.

I am not sure that defining some of Stalin's mass murders and forced deportations as "genocides" makes these acts more horrific or amoral than they already are. Mass murder is mass murder, and we know that Stalin was a mass murderer on an extraordinary scale. Similarly, I am not certain that there is much point to the debate about whether Stalin or Hitler was worse, or whether their crimes were comparable. They were both extraordinary criminals guilty of extraordinary crimes against humanity.

In spite of my discomfort with some of Naimark's framing, I found "Stalin's Genocides" to be a well-argued, concise, and thoughtful discussion of the definition of "genocide" and its applicability to specific historical crimes. It is also a cogent and persuasive argument that Stalin was a genocidaire. It is well worth reading for specialists and the generally educated public alike. It also will make a fine read-

ing assignment for university and college courses on genocide.

Friedrich Balke: Figuren der Souveränität, München: Wilhelm Fink, 2009, 545 S.

Rezensiert von
Helmut Goerlich, Leipzig

Die philosophische Habilitationsschrift des Weimarer Professors für „Geschichte der Theorie künstlicher Welten“ befasst sich mit Souveränität nicht als mit einer notwendigen, staatsrechtlich-juristischen Figur – wie etwa in jüngerer Zeit hierzulande Dieter Grimm oder viele andere unter Aspekten der europäischen Integration, ohne diese dabei kategorial in Frage zu stellen. Sie geht vielmehr Phänomenen der Souveränität vom totalen Staat bis zum individuellen Gewissen nach und kommt dabei vielen Dingen in einer Weise auf die Spur, wie sie traditionelle Souveränitätsforschung überhaupt nicht erschließen kann. Dabei erweist sich die Arbeit als historisch-sozialwissenschaftliche Untersuchung, die auch die moderne Soziologie etwa Foucaults oder Derridas einbezieht, zugleich jedoch die großen Klassiker der Moderne wie Bodin, Spinoza und Hobbes nicht auslässt und sogar wagt, die griechische Antike aufzusuchen und zum Thema abzuklopfen; letztere wird über Shakespeares Julius Cäsar und die Rechtskonflikte der Antigone erreicht. Möglich ist die so breite Anlage der Schrift deshalb, weil der Autor die souveräne, umfassende

Befugnis zur Setzung rechtlicher Ordnung und der Verfügung von Ausnahmen von dieser nicht nur der Polis oder dem modernen Staat zuordnet, sondern einen souveränen Machtanspruch auch denen, die sich ausgegrenzt in einer deklassierenden Position ohnmächtiger Minderheit befinden, zuspricht. Dabei berufen diese nicht etwa Rechte im modernen Sinne, wie sie heute dem Individuum zugeordnet erscheinen, sondern nehmen eine ontisch geprägte Disposition ihrer Gattung in Anspruch, sei es des Gewissens, eines Für-Wahr-Haltens, der vom Bewusstsein geprägten Meinung, sei es eines alternativen, dem Menschen ontisch vorgegebenen anderen Rechts. Dadurch kann die Schrift zudem auch sozialpsychologische, geschlechterspezifische und sexuelle Orientierungen einbeziehen in ein gespanntes umfassendes Feld der Deutung aller sozialen und politischen Beziehungen, die die menschliche Existenz bestimmen können. Deswegen ist auch gar nicht erstaunlich, dass die Arbeit Titel und Autoren einbezieht, die der Jurist fern des Themas sieht und allenfalls als Gegenstände seiner Interessen jenseits des Staates und der politischen Ordnung zu verstehen geneigt ist. Die Weite des phänomenologischen Vorgehens der Untersuchung gewinnt indes ihre Legitimation durch ihre Ergebnisse. Es geht um ein Inventar der Erscheinungen, wie sie sich heute darstellen, nicht um ein historisches Kaleidoskop präziser Bilder von geschichtswissenschaftlich und philosophiegeschichtlich oder staats-theoretisch erschlossenen Gegenständen. Auch ist der sozusagen ungeschichtliche Umgang mit historischen Gegenständen gerechtfertigt, wenn man bedenkt, dass all die damit verfügbar gemachten Topoi nur idealtypisch zu verstehen sind, hier