

Book Reviews

Ben Macintyre. *The Spy and the Traitor: The Greatest Espionage Story of the Cold War*. New York: Crown Publishing, 2018. 330 pp. plus illustrations, notes, bibliography, and index. Hardback \$28.00.

Ben Macintyre's newest book, *The Spy and the Traitor: The Greatest Espionage Story of the Cold War*, is indeed a page-turning account of one man's journey from KGB agent to British spy, and all of the cloak and dagger accoutrement that went with this significant and dangerous conversion. Oleg Gordievsky came from a family of KGB agents – both his father and brother worked for the KGB – but from early in his career, he recognized that he was doubtful about the mission of his employer and the Soviet Union in general. He joined the infamous Soviet secret police agency in 1962, and within a few short years, he received a coveted post in Copenhagen at the Soviet Embassy, tasked with managing a network of undercover agents in Denmark. His heart was never truly in his work, however, and the construction of the Berlin Wall and the military crushing of Prague Spring only further disillusioned him. When he returned to Russia after three years, it appeared to him more depressing, paranoid, and oppressive than when he had left. He soon was reposted to Denmark and it was during this second stay that he was recruited by the British spy organization, MI6, to be a double agent. In 1982, after several years spying for the Brits, he obtained a position in the Soviet Embassy in London.

Gordievsky's story is interesting enough on its own, but it is enriched by Macintyre's dive into the craft of espionage and spying, as well as the motivation of those decide to betray their own countries. While money, ego, and romance drive many individuals to become spies, Macintyre believes that Gordievsky was moved by political and ideological causes, a rejection of the Soviet system and all it stood for. Another well-known spy, the American CIA agent Aldrich Ames, chose to spy for the Soviets for monetary gain, and would ultimately blow Gordievsky's cover and endanger his life. Macintyre explores this incredibly secret and dangerous world of dead drops, secret meetings, and exfiltration plans with a deft hand and a tone of suspense. He concludes his book with the tale of Gordievsky's risky and breathtaking escape from the Soviet Union into

Finland with the help of British diplomats and the high price he paid leaving his family behind the Iron Curtain. Though many in the West will not be familiar with Gordievsky's name, he was enormously important, offering an insider's view of the Soviet mindset as he advised Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan on how to best approach the new Soviet leader, Mikhail Gorbachev.

The Spy and the Traitor is engaging and well-written, and anyone who enjoys the history of espionage (and who doesn't?) will want to read this book. Macintyre interviewed Gordievsky and other relevant persons in the KGB, CIA, and MI6 for hours, and his reliance on this type of source material is reflected in the tone and flow of the book. But Macintyre is also simply a good writer with a great story to tell, and deserves praise for bring the story of Oleg Gordievsky to a broad audience.

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Victoria Phillips, *Martha Graham's Cold War: The Dance of American Diplomacy*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2020. 458 pp.

In this massive, exhaustively researched book, Victoria Phillips, an adjunct lecturer at Columbia University, details how the innovative dancer and choreographer Martha Graham took her dance company to more than twenty-five countries between 1955 and 1987. During those Cold War decades, Phillips shows, United States government officials supported and promoted the Graham company tours in the hope that they would enhance the appeal of American culture to foreign nations. According to Phillips, "government representatives understood that dance – particularly modern dance – was second only to music in its effectiveness and impact in foreign markets" (p. 16). *Martha Graham's Cold War* thus complements earlier studies of the cultural dimension of the Cold War such as Penny Von Eschen's book, *Satchmo Blows Up the World: Jazz Ambassadors Play the Cold War* (2004). Yet where Von Eschen and others have highlighted how America's cultural representatives abroad advanced their own agendas and at times departed from U.S. officials' intentions, Phillips emphasizes how Graham and her company served U.S. government objectives. The multiracial troupe served as an implicit counter to communist propaganda about American racism and the celebration of individualism in Graham's dance technique harmonized with U.S. global messaging about freedom. Even more interesting is the way Graham adapted her work *Frontier* to what Phillips calls the "cowboy nationalism" of the Ronald Reagan administration in the 1980s (p. 268).

How effective was the Martha Graham company as an instrument of U.S. propaganda? In a more slender book, *Dance for Export: Cultural Diplomacy and the Cold War* (1998), Naima Prevots gave a simple answer: "Martha Graham went abroad and conquered," winning widespread applause and challenging negative

stereotypes about fat, materialistic Americans (pp. 46-51). Phillips offers a more complex and sophisticated analysis of foreign audiences' responses. On one hand, she highlights the successes of Graham and her company, especially in the first tour in 1955. Thus, in Japan in 1955 Graham's work triumphed over a Soviet ballet tour and "seduced the intelligentsia and political leaders into an imagined international community of modernist thinkers" (pp. 6, 9). Yet Phillips also argues that "the paradox of an individualistic American artistic construction promoted as a universally applicable approach consistently plagued Graham with critical international audiences" (p. 36). Moreover, responses to the troupe varied by country and over time. While the company won huge ovations in the Philippines in 1955, it received poor reviews in Berlin in 1957 and in Poland in 1962 the reviews were "decimating" (pp. 84, 32, 33). By the 1970s Graham's dance sometimes seemed "dated and ineffective as pro-democratic propaganda," yet even then "it often worked" (p. 24). Although the featured stories of the American frontier were intended to convey messages about the tearing down of walls and the bringing together of nations, a visit to East Berlin in 1987 did not seem to shake the Wall or offer any sense of hope for change. In assessing responses to that final tour Phillips skillfully contrasts glowing official notices to the memories of the dancers, who did not recall an effusive reception (pp. 280-1).

There are a few flaws in this exceedingly ambitious book. Phillips is not always sure-footed in her handling of U.S. foreign policy. For example, at one point she appears to confuse the National Security Agency and the National Security Council, while at another point she writes about how President William McKinley (who was assassinated in 1901) justified the U.S. annexation of the Philippines in 1903 (pp. 31, 79). A more rigorous copyediting might have eliminated some unnecessary repetition and revised some tangled sentences that are hard to unravel. For example, on page 36 the reader is confronted with the following sentence: "Remaining ever-contemporary, withering Graham-style diplomacy has been made relevant again – even just as a study – as Mr. Trump seemingly twists Cold War elements to make America 'great again' who tweeted nuclear threats, while improbably sidling up to a John le Carre leader of Russia and his cohort."

Despite such missteps, *Martha Graham's Cold War* is a major achievement. Phillips presents the fascinating story of a dynamic, creative figure who was both ostensibly apolitical and very political; an independent, successful woman who distanced herself from feminism; and a pioneering artist who degenerated into alcoholic unreliability yet retained her ability to cultivate connections to First Ladies and launch new initiatives almost to the very end of her long life.

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Francine Hirsch, *Soviet Judgment at Nuremberg: A New History of the International Military Tribunal after World War II*. Oxford University Press, 2020. Xvii, 536pp. Index. \$34.95. Hardcover.

Francine Hirsch's *Soviet Judgment at Nuremberg* is a captivating account of the Soviet Union's contribution to and experience of the Nuremberg Trials. This 500-page volume combines several projects in one. It is part legal history, part courtroom spectacle, and part human drama starring the eccentric characters of the USSR's legal team. These narrative threads are woven together to illustrate how the trial's outcome stemmed from contingencies and personalities as much as from political powerplay and ideology. Hirsch unfolds her story without a sense of inevitability. Her account shifts between a ground-level view of closed-door negotiations—which are mostly riveting but sometimes overly detailed—and a high-level analysis of the trial's significance for the Cold War and the history of human rights.

Hirsch's main objective is to showcase Soviet contributions to proceedings, which the western Allies deliberately obscured. In the process, she makes three major arguments. First, the Soviets were key to the establishment of the International Military Tribunal, pushing for it as early as 1942 when some British and US officials proposed executing high-ranking Nazis without due process (17, 38). Second, Hirsch argues that Soviet legal experts—especially Aron Trainin—provided “the legal framework for the entire trial” by conceptualizing the notion of “crimes against peace” (8, 35). This criminalized aggressive, unprovoked wars of conquest to protect people from repressive states. The Soviets also helped develop the concept of “crimes against humanity” both conceptually and practically, through their presentation of evidence at the trial. These two “Nuremberg principles,” crimes against peace and against humanity, constituted a veritable “revolution in international law,” and Soviet lawyers deserve much of the credit for formulating them. The fact that they have not been credited leads Hirsch to her third argument: the western Allies—especially the US—downplayed Soviet contributions to Nuremberg and cast the trial as a triumph of liberal values and justice, whereby the defendants' individual rights, including the right to a fair trial, were paramount (6, 144). Hirsch dubs this the “Nuremberg myth,” and argues that, in fact, the illiberal USSR significantly shaped international understandings of justice and human rights after WWII (8).

Soviet Judgment at Nuremberg is somewhat ambivalent in its challenge to the “Nuremberg myth.” At times, Hirsch flatly refutes it, showcasing—for instance—the US government's ulterior, political motives at Nuremberg. At other times, she claims she is restoring a missing piece of the story, not rewriting it entirely. In the conclusion, Hirsch writes: “the myth of the Nuremberg moment celebrated the power of American leadership and Western liberal ideals. [...] But it only told part of the Nuremberg story.” She then asks: “What do we get by putting the Soviet Union back into the history of the Nuremberg Trials?” (415). In truth, *Soviet Judgment at Nuremberg* does much more than restore a missing piece. Insofar as the west's “Nuremberg myth” rests on a negation of Soviet

contributions, Hirsch undercuts it on nearly every page. And she does not replace it with a pro-Soviet counter-myth. Indeed, Hirsch goes to great lengths to uncover the Soviets' falsification of evidence about the Katyn massacre, their intentions to make Nuremberg a show trial, and their blunders with everything from translation (82-83) to cross-examination. "The Soviet Union had won the war; at Nuremberg it lost the victory," (14) she observes. Still, without idealizing the Soviet side, Hirsch depicts the Soviet legal team with sensitivity, noting how the tribunal was an opportunity for bearing witness to unthinkable suffering, not just for vengeance or political grandstanding. Moreover, Hirsch argues, the USSR's lawyers "played a leading role in the organization of the I[n]ternational M[ilitary] T[ribunal] and developing its legal framework" (397). They helped to refute the "defense of superior orders" and eventually learned how to litigate in a system of adversarial justice, which was totally unfamiliar to them (391). Their presentation of the supposedly dead Field Marshal Friedrich Paulus, as well as Hirsch's description of it, were spellbinding. Ultimately, Hirsch tears down both eastern and western myths of Nuremberg, exposing "all of Nuremberg's contradictions" including the hazy line between victors and victims, liberators and perpetrators (415).

Soviet Judgment at Nuremberg is a massive achievement, grounded in original research from seventeen archives in three countries. The book is a bit long to assign to undergraduates, but it is an engaging read. Hirsch displays her skills as a storyteller, recounting late night drinks between American and Soviet journalists and absurd moments, such as when Soviet lawyers claimed their chief prosecutor had malaria to excuse his delayed replies. Hirsch also is a masterful analyst, tying these small moments to Nuremberg's geopolitical legacy. Most of all, she acts as able interpreter of the cultural differences that confounded the Allies. Without passing judgment, she explains how they defined democracy differently and how their understandings of a fair trial diverged. In short, *Soviet Judgment at Nuremberg* takes us behind the myth-making and reveals the concepts, chaos, and compromises that ultimately defined the Nuremberg moment.

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Erika Haber, *Oz Behind the Iron Curtain: Aleksandr Volkov and His Magic Land Series*, Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2017, xvii. 259pp. Bibliography. Index. \$30.00, Paper.

In the past two decades we have gained a greater understanding of the diverse experiences of children in the U.S.S.R., the evolution of Soviet children's literature, and the propagandistic representations of Soviet children in comparison to their U.S. Cold War counterparts. Erika Haber's study adds to this literature on the world of Soviet children by exploring Aleksandr Melent'evich Volkov's creation of the *Magic Land Series* of stories with which many young readers in the U.S.S.R. fell in love. Since Volkov's original 1939 children's book *Wizard of the*

Emerald City (*Volshebnik Izumrudnogo goroda*) – that inspired the popular series – was a reworking of American writer, L. Frank Baum’s 1900 *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, Haber also provides readers with an alternative perspective on Soviet-American cultural relations. She emphasizes the significance in that children on both sides of the Iron Curtain shared a common captivation with the fantastical tales of Baum and Volkov. While a wide range of contemporary cultural expressions continue to pay homage to the Oz and Magic Land series (including merchandise, films, plays, and cartoons), Haber emphasizes that neither Baum nor Volkov command immediate name recognition that their Oz and Magic Land fairy tales do. The widespread popularity of these stories, Haber contends, at least partly explains scholars’ relative neglect of the two series and their creators.

Haber draws on Syracuse University’s extensive archival collections pertaining to Baum and Volkov’s papers at the Tomsk State Pedagogical University which also houses “A.M. Volkov’s Magic Land Museum” (216) to reveal how the authors’ personal backgrounds and the socio-cultural contexts in which they lived influenced the stories they created. The call of the 1934 Soviet Writers Congress for amateur writers to take on the important task of creating stories for young readers encouraged Volkov, who was a mathematician by training, to pursue writing children’s literature. Volkov aspired to use his personal experiences as a teacher and father to author works that would appeal to children while also meeting the shifting demands of Soviet censors. In addition to writing an original historical novel, Volkov observed how established writers like Kornei Chukovsky and Alexei Tolstoy successfully adapted foreign fairy tales for Soviet audiences. As Haber makes clear, the adaption “of foreign literature for domestic consumption” was not a Soviet innovation but had a long and well-respected history in Russia with the writers “often claiming authorship of the revised work” (144). Volkov, who acquired a copy of Baum’s *Wizard of Oz* from a colleague in 1934-1935 with the purpose of honing his English-language skills, claimed that his sons loved the tale when he shared it with them. After translating and reworking this definitive American fairy tale by adding a few chapters, changing characters’ names, and revising “the story in terms of logic, emotion, and motivation” (148), Volkov spent three years trying to get the Stalinist censors to support its publication. As Haber argues, by enhancing “the themes of collective spirit and bonds of friendship, Volkov could emphasize the book’s pedagogical qualities over Baum’s original focus on pure entertainment, and in this way, make it palatable for the Soviet censors” (137). When the Children’s State Publishing House finally approved its publication, Volkov was named as the author and only a brief statement on the first edition of the copyright page identified that the story was based on the U.S. author L. Frank Baum’s *Wizard of Oz*.

Nearly two decades later, in 1959, amidst Soviet leaders’ efforts to open the country to foreigners Volkov released a more thoroughly revised version of the *Wizard of Emerald City* tale with new color illustrations. A new generation of Soviet youth immediately became enchanted with the *Wizard of Emerald City*. In response to a multitude of letters from children and parents around the country urging him to write more about the Magic Land adventures, Volkov ultimately

wrote and published five sequels. Haber rejects Cold War interpretations of Volkov's rendering of Baum's Oz. She insists that with the exception of an overtly politicized statement inserted in the 1959 epilogue about capitalism's exploitation of the masses to benefit the rich, Volkov's revisions of Baum's tale (which she details at length) were not motivated by an ideological objective but "a pedagogical one, meant to create a better educational experience for children" (148). When Baum's original *Wizard of Oz* finally became widely available to Russian children's literature experts and readers by the early 1990s, it fostered a renewed appreciation for Volkov's stories. In the end, Haber stresses that the fantastical, whimsical aspects of Baum's original story – "the unique charm of the quirky characters and offbeat plot elements" (211) – inspired Volkov's fairy tales and explain its enduring transnational cultural appeal into the twenty-first century.

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Andrei Wal'terovich Grinev, *Russian Colonization of Alaska: Preconditions, Discovery, and Initial Development, 1741-1799*, trans. Richard L. Bland. (Lincoln & London: University of Nebraska Press, 2018). 328 pp., including an appendix of major Russian hunting expeditions, a short glossary of terms, extensive source notes, and an exhaustive bibliography.

Establishing a strong foundation for more recent in-depth examinations were the late Academician Nikolai Bolkhovitinov, who edited a three volume work, *Istoriia russkoi Ameriki* (1997-99), and the emphasis on that subject in his several books on the history of Russian-American relations; and the ethnographer-historian, Svetlana Fedorova, ground-breaking research on the native populations of Alaska and California, cited in its original Russian edition of 1971 in Grinev's bibliography, though failed to include the important English translation of the Fedorova book by Richard Pierce in his Limestone Press edition of 1973.

This book of Andrei Grinev's, who teaches at the Peter the Great Technical University of St Petersburg, follows his impressive study of the Tlingit native Americans who live along the southern coastal area around the future Russian capital of Sitka: *The Tlingit Indians in Russian America, 1741-1867* (2005), also translated by Bland, who is a research associate at a museum at the University of Oregon, and is published by the same university press. Both books were preceded by Russian editions published in 1991 and 2015, respectively. They join Alexander Petrov's comparable works on the early 19th century founding of the Russian-America Company.

Grinev's painstaking examination follows the course of Russian exploration and exploitation of the fur animal and human resources of the territory from its discovery by the Chirikov-Bering expedition of 1741 until the chartering of the Russian America Company in 1799 by the imperial government as a means of controlling its new-found empire. The details, derived from little known archival

sources throughout Russia in geographic and population is immense, but the author leaves the reader with little guidance in the way of maps. One can trust Grinev's claim that both the natives and their Russian intruders for many years persisted in the belief that a more hospitable land area existed somewhere south of Kodiak Island. It was at last found at some distance—the Hawaiian Islands.

Relations between Russian hunter artels (companies of *promyshlenniki*) and among the various natives, especially the Kodiak and Aleuts, who resented Russian intrusion, were never very good, mostly because of growing impoverishment and exploitation that was often reduced to mass killing and enslavement. Grinev is adept at describing the atrocities that occurred in the process of Russian extraction of fur-bearing riches from the area, especially the sea otter that found profitable markets in China and elsewhere. He records a number of specific expeditions and the impressive number of monetary rewards regardless of shipwrecks and regular loss of life involved with the competition finally settled down to a struggle between the “Lebedev men” and the “Shelikov men” in the quest to gain the favor of the far away St. Petersburg government's support for permanent Russian settlements in the territory.

To me, two terms stand out that Grinev uses in the text to help explain the economic, cultural, and social relationships among the native populations and between them and the *promyshlenniki*, which by the end of the century included other foreigners besides Russians, such as the Englishman James Shields. The first is the *baidarki*, which were oared vessels or longboats used especially by Aleuts for transport of people and cargoes between islands and along coasts and, of course, for hunting; the frames were covered with sealskins on the sides and even over the top for durability through the stormy seas often prevalent in the area, and were soon adopted by the Russians as more practical for the same purposes, as fragile sailing ships were used more often for exploration. The other term that even Grinev finds difficult to fully explain: *amanaty*, which is somehow of Arab origin. It is the taking of hostages or prisoners permanently, or for negotiated periods of time, to insure peace, exact bribes, or gain favors. This was also employed by the *promyshlenniki*, for example, to secure payments of tribute to the Russian crown.

In summary, Grinev provides new insights about a fascinating chapter in Russian-American Indian relations with Richard Bland's accurate, if stodgy translation in its support. Can we expect more to come? Let us hope so.

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