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Michael Parrish. *The Lesser Terror: Soviet State Security, 1939-1953.* Westport, Conn: Praeger, 1996. xxii + 424 pp. $69.50 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-275-95113-9.

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According to Michael Parrish, there occurred in the Soviet Union a "lesser terror" that followed the much-studied Great Terror of the 1930s. Parrish labels the period 1939 to 1953 one of "lesser" terror, since, although the terror was as prevalent as it had been in recent years, "it was less publicized, claimed fewer victims among those in the top leadership, and had a larger percentage of victims who were either foreigners or minority nationalities of the USSR" (p. xviii). He further offers this study as a biography of V.S. Abakumov, head of the Ministry of State Security (MGB) from October 1946. Wisely, Parrish notes in his preface that his study is not meant to be "the definitive history of Soviet state security during the later part of Stalin's rule but should provide a framework for further research. It is mainly a history of massive crimes committed by the Soviet state during 1939-1953, usually initiated by Stalin and always carried out with his approval and consent" (p. xvii). In this the author is entirely correct: his book often serves more as a catalogue of those consumed by the Stalin terror machine than a work of historical analysis.

Parrish acknowledges Robert Conquest's support and suggests that his book follows (and slightly overlaps) Conquest's *Inside Stalin's Secret Police: NKVD Politics 1936-1939* (Stanford: 1985). Parrish's book is structurally similar to Conquest's, especially in the inclusion of lists and appendices of the names, ranks, and circumstances of those who were victimized by the terror. *The Lesser Terror* contains many long lists of names; in the chapter entitled "The Orel Massacres," Parrish devotes a full eleven pages to a recitation of the names and circumstances of Soviet generals who were arrested during the Second World War (pp. 84-94). One of the most frustrating aspects of the book is its seemingly endless stream of quantitative information that is transmitted to the reader as a series of facts largely unencumbered by an analytical framework. This is not to deny, however, the utility or scope of Parrish's research. His chapters and lists are comprehensive and highly informative. The book is of great use for specialists and non-specialists who wish to track the careers of upper-level military men, party functionaries, Vlasovites, the Polish officers who were massacred in Katyn Forest, as well as those persons who were tainted by the "Doctors' Plot" and other anti-Semitic campaigns, the "Mingrelian Affair," the Leningrad Affair, and other such intrigues.

Indeed, Parrish clearly possesses a vast knowledge of the Soviet state security apparatus, its functionaries, the Soviet military, and the fate of its officers before, during, and after the Second World War. He has consulted what he loosely calls the "Glasnost archives" and demonstrates an impressive and thorough familiarity with both Soviet and Western sources. He is particulary good at tracing the similarities and the differences of the career trajectories of N.I. Ezhov, L.P.Beria, and Abakumov, to name only the most visible of Stalin's apparatchiks. Parrish offers much new information about Abakumov's rise to power, especially his appointment as the head of SMERSH in 1943, the Byzantine intrigues that accompanied his arrest in 1951, and his imprisonment, torture, and eventual execution in 1954. Most notably, while Ezhov and Beriia each savagely purged the followers of their predecessors when appointed head of Soviet State Security, Abakumov, given the constraints on his power, could not. Also, while Iagoda, Ezhov, and Beriia maintained a high public profile, Abakumov did not, nor did he receive much attention in political and military memoirs (pp. 16-17).

In contrast to those who claim that Abakumov's downfall was caused either by Stalin's displeasure at his reluctance to move against Beria or Beria's fear that Abakumov was acting too independently, Parrish suggests that Abakumov, like others, fell when he ceased to be indispensable to Stalin (p. 250). Particularly riveting is Parrish's description of the fate of many Soviet officers during and after the war, as is his discussion of Abakumov's role in the perilous postwar intrigues against Marshal G. Zhukov, who, from June 1945 to March 1946 served as Commander in Chief of Soviet Forces in Germany and Head of the Soviet Military Administration

(pp. 180-186).

Still, Parrish's obvious expertise in these matters is often overshadowed by the book's flaws. Along with the absence of a larger historical argument, the book lacks a conceptual scheme. In his introduction, Parrish offers his disdain for what he calls the "scholar-squirrel" variety of academic writings (p. xxi), but attention to this aspect of scholarly methodology would have greatly enhanced his presentation. While Parrish often discusses specific matters of interpretation in detail (quibbling, for instance, with Amy Knight's and others' portrayals of Abakumov), he does not include a discussion of the historiography of the terror–especially the rancorous exchanges between R. Conquest and J. Arch Getty. Parrish clearly and decisively proves that Stalin was in full control, playing minor rivals against each other, supporting one clique or faction and then another, and even "micromanaging" the terror at large.

Although his work serves as a vindication of the traditionalist (and totalitarian) school of Soviet historiography, Parrish fails to set his argument in the larger scholarly context. Similarly, while Parrish offers a denunciation of Sovietologists for their failure to predict or anticipate the fall of the Soviet Union (opining that Sovietology "proved to be, like other 'social sciences,' an exercise in academic delusion good only for getting grants and tenure" [p. 281]), his presentation is empty of a scholarly discussion of the historiography of this topic. At the very least, he could have included a discussion of the attempts by historians to account for this failure.[1] Instead, he offers what amounts to no more than a diatribe (pp. 280-81)

Parrish makes claims that the victims of the "lesser" terror were often members of various nationalities, but he does not develop this argument fully. He reveals that the "Mingrelian Affair" was aimed at Beriia's supporters in Georgia and briefly mentions that there was political fallout from this affair in Ukraine (pp. 236-259). Parrish also extensively examines Stalin's various anti-Semitic campaigns. He should have included, though, a section on the partisan warfare in western Ukraine and the Baltics after 1945. This involved a vast number of people and resulted in a terror campaign by the State Security Forces that was costly in casualties for both sides.[2] Since Parrish notes that the "anti-parasite campaign" that was conducted by the MVD in Ukraine almost certainly involved Abakumov and the MGB, he could have expanded this aspect of his research. Parrish hints at this subject, revealing, for instance, that over one hundred nationalities were represented in the Gulag population in January 1953 (p. 108). He offers a brief discussion of the 15,000 Greeks who ended up in the Gulag by 1953, provides breakdowns of the nationalities involved in the deportations and terror campaigns during and after the war years, and includes a six-page chapter on the terror and counterintelligence campaigns in Eastern Europe (pp. 98-107; 223-228). Again, though, this subject could have been greatly expanded.

Also troublesome are Parrish's frequent asides and interjections. Often, instead of discussing the relevance of his arguments to the secondary literature, he offers personal opinions that are seemingly unrelated to the topic at hand. One can agree wholeheartedly with many of Parrish's opinions and still find his many eruptions distracting and ultimately tedious. At various points, we are treated to comments about Oscar Wilde, Kingsley Amis, Eric Hoffer, Ben Hecht, Anthony Daniels, H. L. Mencken, and John Le Carre, to name but a few. While this in itself is not overly objectionable, it adds to the reader's yearning for a more focused examination of the accumulated information. On a minor note, Parrish often includes direct quotations without providing the necessary citations (see, for example, p. 326), and the text contains a small number of typographical errors.

In summary, Parrish's book contains a wealth of new information on the comparatively unexamined aspects of the later years of the Stalinist terror. It is comprehensive, contains a massive amount of material, and clearly indicates exhaustive primary and secondary research. It should, however, be read in tandem with works that provide students in particular with the necessary historiographical and historical context.

Notes

[1]. For example, Alexander Dallin's "Causes of the Collapse of the USSR," *Post-Soviet Studies* 8 (1992), Martin Malia's "From Under the Rubble, What?" *Problems of Communism* (January-April 1992), or the Spring 1993 issue of *The National Interest* that was devoted to this very question.

[2]. See Jeffrey Burds' "AGENTURA: Soviet Informants' Networks & the Ukrainian Underground in Galicia, 1944-1948," *East European Politics and Societies* 11, no. 1 (Winter, 1997), 89-130.

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