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David L. Hoffmann. *Cultivating the Masses: Modern State Practices and Soviet Socialism, 1914-1939.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011. 328 S. $45.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-8014-4629-0.

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James Scott described high-modernism as a steadfast belief in scientific and technical progress and a political credo of rational planning and human supervision in the name of an anticipated brighter future. James C. Scott, Seeing Like a State. How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed, New Haven 1998, pp. 87-102. See also the remarks concerning the gardening state in Zygmunt Bauman, Modernity and Ambivalence, Cambridge 1991, pp. 18-52 and his Modernity and the Holocaust, Ithaca 1989. A similar paradigm serves as the foundation of David Hoffmann's understanding of modern, interventionist state practices of the early twentieth century: a concept by which “state officials and non-government professionals sought to reshape their societies in accordance with scientific and aesthetic norms” (p. 2). Theories of social engineering intoxicated the political figures of most European states, particularly the intelligentsia of the late tsarist and early Soviet eras. The policies and political practices resulting from these notions form the basis of Hoffmann's analysis. Although the dialectic of the Enlightenment is of almost proverbial character, his book empirically demonstrates the political decisions to modernize and compares the Russian/Soviet state with similar governmental policies worldwide. A meticulous examination of the teleological spirit of modern states guides the reader through Hoffmann's five chapter study.

The first two chapters center on social welfare and the promotion of public health during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Relating social welfare to the professionalization of the social sciences, Hoffmann argues that societies were “increasingly conceived as entities that could be mapped statistically, reordered and cultivated, and administered scientifically by experts [...]” (p. 23). In the wake of this development, societies became an experimental field for state-run welfare and control ambitions. Even though Hoffmann does not neglect country-specific differences, he describes an increasing international linkage between social welfare aspirations and military considerations (p. 34). These efforts were further stimulated by the First World War, in the course of which government interest in a physically healthy society increased, leading to the development of public health programs throughout

Europe: in March 1917 the British War Cabinet underlined the urgent need of a Ministry of Health which was finally realized in 1919; one year later France and Turkey adopted similar measures (p. 78). Soviet Russia founded the Commissariat of Health in July 1918, after the professionalization and centralization of sanitary welfare had already been administered in the early nineteenth century, particularly in the course of the "zemstvo" movement (pp. 72-86).

In the following three chapters, Hoffmann further outlines state interventionism and its potentially deadly repercussions. Initially focusing on biological interventionism, Hoffmann once more accentuates the mass mobilization of the First World War as a watershed that resulted in a politically virulent questioning of defense capabilities (pp. 125-35). In 1924 Skrobanskii, a Soviet medical professor, declared that the Russian Empire's prewar population of 172 million had fallen to staggering 90 million due to wars, famine, and territorial losses, thus reaching a threatening dimension for state security with regard to foreign threats from European countries and Germany in particular (p. 130). The decline of the Russian population in fact reflected the declining birthrate in all of Europe that had begun in the mid-nineteenth century. Europe-wide increasing abortion rates and enhanced contraceptive methods fueled not only a pan-European phobia of demographic demise but fit into the framework of real and imagined competition on the international political stage. The intensified international rivalry over political power thus added to the urgent call for the best possible development of human resources, soon a worldwide mantra. "Three generations of imbeciles are enough", stated the American Chief Justice Wendell Holmes in 1927 while sanctioning the sterilization of "those who already sap the strength of the State" (pp. 159-60). Holmes spoke out what many scholars in, for instance, Denmark, Sweden, Germany, Great Britain and in the Soviet Union advocated. While eugenic ideas "were imported to Russia from Western Europe prior to the Revolution", Soviet authorities ultimately rejected eugenics, because it "contradicted Soviet nurturist and universalist thought" and "they associated it with fascism" (p. 163, p. 166).

The last two chapters on surveillance and state violence are akin to an informative textbook, relying heavily on the research of historians such as Jonathan Daly, George Leggett or Peter Holquist. Although this section fits into the larger study, Hoffmann's conclusions are rather conventional. Thus he describes control and surveillance mechanisms of the emerging Soviet state from the First World War to the eve of the Second World War. The Cheka, for example, had swollen into a gigantic institution by summer 1921 when "the total number of security police employees was about 60,000, and in addition to employees, the security police enlisted an extensive network of informants" (pp. 199-200). Lastly, Hoffmann follows the Soviet system's path into mass violence. He describes the genocidal tendencies during the First World War, the civil war excesses, the passportization campaign of 1932 and the mass and national operations of the late 1930s. Particularly with respect to the mass and national operations, Hoffmann offers an interpretation similar to that of Oleg Khlevniuk or Hiroaki Kuromiya as a set of preemptive measures against potential fifth-columnists (p. 241, pp. 288-89). See the recent article by Hiroaki Kuromiya, Stalin's Great Terror and International Espionage, in: The Journal of Slavic Military Studies 24 (2011), pp. 238-252. Therefore, Hoffmann considers a pure ideological explanation for the Soviet mass violence as insufficient, since Bolshevik ideology was just "one of a range of transformational ideologies and agendas" (p. 3). Instead, Hoffmann underscores the modernist vision of political order and points to the institutionalization of total war practices "as permanent features of Soviet governance" in view of the experiences of the world and civil war (p. 239, p. 305).

David Hoffmann repeatedly emphasizes the impact of modernist ideas and the First World War for liberal-democracies, fascist states and the emerging Soviet state alike. While constitutional democracies generally subordinated interventionist practices to the preexisting order once the war was over, the Soviet state, by contrast, retained the path of total mobilization “without any traditional or legal constraints” (p. 4, pp. 253-69). In stressing the link between wartime experience and interventionist politics for many European countries and the Soviet Union alike, Hoffmann integrates his study into an established branch of research. For example Peter Holquist, Making War, Forging Revolution. Russia's Continuum of Crisis, 1914-1921, Cambridge 2002; Donald J. Raleigh, Experiencing Russia's Civil War. Politics, Society, and Revolutionary Culture in Saratov, 1917-22, Princeton 2002, and Joshua A. Sanborn, Drafting the Russian Nation. Military Conscription, Total War, and Mass Politics, 1905-1925, DeKalb 2003. However, the ambitious comparative angle of the study sometimes suffers from imprecision, since the reader frequently encounters vague terms like modern state, enlightened policies or officials, without getting to know what that exactly means in the different contexts and who actually is acting. A closer description of the interventionist actors and their historical circumstances would have helped to understand Russia’s specific path, even though many policies at the first glance seem comparable with other European countries. Nevertheless, Hoffmann's book contributes to our understanding of modernist theory and helps illustrate the interrelationships between Soviet and European policies in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It is a good read for scholars interested in a general account of modern interventionist policies, locating the Soviet Union in a pan-European framework and thoroughly historicizing modernist theories.

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