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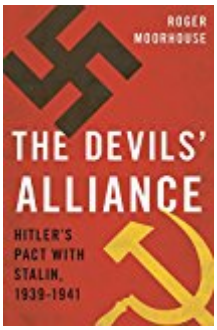

Roger Moorhouse. *The Devils' Alliance: Hitler's Pact With Stalin, 1939-41*. New York: Basic Books, 2014. 432 pp. $29.99, cloth, ISBN 978-0-465-03075-0.

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Commissioned by Margaret Sankey (Air University)

By June 1941, the European continent lay firmly under German dominion. The battlefield revolution created by the Germans' adroit exploitation of the potential offered by tanks and planes operating in tandem served as one cause of this. Just as important, however, was a diplomatic revolution that allowed the Germans to concentrate their forces on one front at a time. At a stroke, the signing of the Nazi-Soviet Pact on August 23, 1939, fundamentally altered European Great Power politics, and instead of the Soviet Union acting as check on German ambitions—as its predecessor had during the First World War—Moscow supported German policies, while simultaneously pursuing its own revisionist agenda.

Despite its significance in shaping not only the war itself, but indeed the postwar settlement as well, historian Roger Moorhouse argues that "the pact is simply not a part of our collective narrative of World War II" (p. xxiii). In his new book, *The Devils' Alliance: Hitler's Pact with Stalin, 1939-1941*, Moorhouse aims for the agreement and its results "to be rescued from the footnotes and restored to its rightful place in our collective narrative of World War II in Europe" (p. xxvi). In particular, he believes "it is frankly scandalous" that the Sovietization of those areas annexed by Moscow "does not find a place in the Western narrative of World War II" (p. xxvi). While Moorhouse's presentation does not offer a dramatic revision of how historians understand the events from 1939 to 1941, he does provide a readable overview that should appeal to broad audience not as well versed in the topic.

Moorhouse offers a conventional narrative approach that covers all of the major events during the pact's relatively brief existence: German foreign minister Joachim von Ribbentrop's visits to Moscow in August and September 1939, Sir Stafford Cripp's ill-fated May 1940 journey to the Soviet Union, Nazi deputy führer Rudolf Hess's spectacularly misjudged attempt to end the war between Germany and Great Britain by flying to the British Isles, Soviet foreign minister's Vyacheslav Molotov's stormy and ultimately unsuccessful meeting in Berlin in November 1940, and the

various foreign policy and military machinations of the two states in the area stretching from Finland down through the Balkans. His eye for detail and his artful descriptions of the leading protagonists and their beliefs keeps the relatively well-known narrative moving at a brisk pace.

Three major themes emerge in his treatment of the period. First, he is determined to shine a bright light on Soviet occupation policies in the annexed areas of the Baltic states, eastern Poland, Bessarabia, and Bukovina. Of course, this is not *terra incognito*. Jan Gross's *Revolution from Abroad* (1988), Alexander Prusin's *The Lands Between: Conflict in the East European Borderlands, 1870-1992* (2010), and Timothy Snyder's *Bloodlands: Europe between Hitler and Stalin* (2012) have all examined the events surrounding the pact and its results based on serious archival research, and Soviet behavior in these areas constitutes an important component in the work of one of Moorhouse's former collaborators, Norman Davies, in his *No Simple Victory: World War II in Europe, 1939-1945* (2007). Nonetheless, Moorhouse effectively mines memoirs and other secondary source material, including that published in the Baltic states, to vividly recreate the terror caused by the mass arrests, deportation, and murder unleashed by the Red Army and NKVD. In sixteen months, the Soviets organized four separate major deportations from their occupied section of Poland. Citing the Polish historian Zbigniew Siemaszko, Moorhouse suggests that the generally agreed upon number of one million deported might be a significant underestimation of the true number, as it fails to include those whose fate remained outside the written record. The well-known murderous events at Katyn were complemented by smaller scale shootings of officers; clearly, Poland suffered greatly under its 22-month Soviet occupation. The other areas incorporated into the Soviet Union as a result of the pact fared no better. Moorhouse states that over 17,000 Estonians, some 22,000 Latvians, more than 46,000 Lithuanians, and approximately 32,000 Bessarabians were deported in the year between annexation and German invasion. He also estimates that some 6,500 Lithuanian soldiers and 8,000 Bessarabians were executed by NKVD and that evidence exists proving that Latvian officers suffered a similar fate. The final eruption of Soviet violence occurred following the German invasion, when the Soviet secret police murdered numerous political prisoners in captivity before it evacuated the area, with more than 14,000 shot in eastern Poland and the Baltic states.

Moorhouse also addresses the German occupation of western Poland. He discusses the contributions of the various German institutions involved in the pacification and subsequent Germanization of western Poland, from the army and Einsatzgruppen to the civilian authorities in the General Government and Gauleiters of the annexed territories. While Moorhouse does not downplay German crimes in Poland, his emphasis is clearly on Sovietization policies in eastern Europe, and the relative space devoted to each occupation is telling of his approach. This reviewer does not read this as a nefarious attempt to minimize German crimes at the expense of the Soviet; rather, it seems an attempt to raise consciousness of what he believes to be the relatively unknown fate of eastern Poland, the Baltic states, and Bessarabia under Soviet control. His claim that "in fact, a remarkable symmetry emerged between the occupation policies adopted by the Nazis and the Soviets, with both sides using similar methods for dealing with their respective conquered populations" (p. 43) fits neatly into recent historiographical trends that sees numerous similarities between Nazi Germany and the Stalinist Soviet Union in how they constructed their respective empires.

The second major theme concerns what he terms the "contortions" of political parties in Europe and the United States caused by the pact (p. 112). The ideological antipathy that existed between the Nazi and Bolshevik states was simply

erased in Orwellian fashion by the two regimes. Both states completely reversed course in their domestic spheres, and films or other types of propaganda that slandered their new ally disappeared from public view. This shift in message by Moscow meant that Communist parties throughout Europe had to radically change their policies on the fly: instead of Fascists, now the "bourgeoisie"—defined as Social Democrats, Liberals, and Conservatives—were targeted as the main enemies of peace. This led to the absurd behavior of the French Communist Party attacking its own government even after the German invasion had begun. On the right, Fascist Italy was dumbfounded by the pact, and this led its oreign minister, Count Galeazzo Ciano, to advise Mussolini to "tear up the [Axis] Pact ... Europe will recognize you as the natural leader of the anti-German crusade" (p. 122). The ideological struggle that had dominated European politics and society during the 1930s was now upended, further confusing the diplomatic situation.

The economic relationship between the Third Reich and the Soviet Union constitutes Moorhouse's third primary theme. Despite a rather bumpy relationship, the two states had become each other's largest trading partners by 1941, with each deriving real benefits from the arrangement. Moorhouse believes that German machine tools proved of immense value to Soviet industry and claims that "it is surely no exaggeration to say that German engineering was one of the unacknowledged godfathers of the Red Army's later military prowess" (p. 180). He also contends that Soviet food was extremely important to Germany, arguing that by mid-summer 1941, the Reich had become dependent on grain from the east.

That this was a benefit to the Germans is certainly true from one perspective, but it was also an extremely worrying prospect from another. Dependence on the Soviet Union—the wellspring of the "Judeo-Bolshevism" that Hitler and his ruling circle believed mortally threatened European civilization—simply could not be accepted by Berlin. This line of thought leads to my only real criticism of the book. In his discussion of why Germany broke the pact and invaded the Soviet Union, Moorhouse argues that Hitler had "moved on" from economic thinking "to much more seductive motivators, such as ideology and geopolitics" (p. 241). Recent historiography has not only suggested that economics, ideology, and strategic considerations all reinforced one another, but also that if one motivation drove the others, it was indeed economic thinking. His discussion of the opening stages of the German *Vernichtungskrieg* —or war of annihilation—continues in this vein, by examining activities of the Einsatzgruppen during the opening stages of the Holocaust on the eastern front but neglecting Economic Staff East and the attempt to starve large swathes of northern and central Russia. Berlin had already demonstrated that it could rationalize ideological inconsistencies in the name of security; economic concerns, however, proved too tangible to be ignored.

In sum, Moorhouse has produced a solid book. ***The Devils' Alliance: Hitler's Pact with Stalin, 1939-1941*** is a sound overview of the Nazi-Soviet Pact and its legacy that could be effectively used in the undergraduate classroom and should appeal to a broader, popular audience.