

and government in support of the hard issues of Poland's foreign and defense policies: for example, secure US and Polish support for more radio and television broadcasts into Ukraine and Belarus; promote expanded close cooperation of Poland with the US Intelligence Community; lobby for the stationing of some US armed forces in Poland, particularly an Air Force fighter squadron, homeporting a US Naval warship in Gdańsk, and the conduct of combined exercises in Poland of US special forces with Polish special forces; press for a redefinition of Article V of the North Atlantic Treaty; campaign for a conservative Pole to be chosen as Secretary General of NATO; lobby in the US, at NATO, and in Ukraine for Ukraine's membership in NATO; support regime replacement in Belarus; obtain the Central Intelligence Agency's support for a Polish covert action program in Ukraine; and mobilize a diplomatic campaign to expel Russia from Kaliningrad. Polonia consists of many voters; why should they not be mobilized in support of the hard issues of Polish security?

Poland, preferably with the support of the United States, ought to take the initiative to confront the difficult strategic challenges of its security and not merely accept the efforts of others, however friendly and well-intentioned, to set the fundamental conditions of its security. I contend that Poland has no other choice. ▲

The above article is based on the Address to the Polish American Congress delivered at the Annual Thanksgiving Dinner in Washington, DC, in November 2011.

Bloodlands

Europe Between Hitler and Stalin

By **Timothy Snyder**. New York: Basic Books, 2010. 524 pages, Maps of the Bloodlands from 1918 to 2010, ISBN 978-0-465-00239-9. Hardcover, \$29.95.

James E. Reid

A whole world that had been lovingly and carefully assembled now lay in ruins.

"The Blind Mirror," Joseph Roth on Galicia

The betrayals, history, and terror of the war-torn lands of Europe that lay between Hitler's Germany and Stalin's Soviet Union have concerned Timothy Snyder for some time. In the May 2003 issue of *Past & Present*, he published a focused examination of "The Causes of Ukrainian-Polish Ethnic Cleansing 1943." There he described the shifting allegiances and paths to genocide in a theater of the Second World War that

is not as well known as it should be, and whose places, such as Galicia, Volhynia, and Lwów/Lviv lay in the heart of the heart of these killing fields. His article made clear the need for a more complete history of the people who were executed, starved, and murdered across the area where the greatest number of noncombatants died before and during the war. *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin* is that history.

Bloodlands is grounded in deep scholarship, and its broad scope, impact, and the resultant shifts in and coordination of historical perspective and knowledge all recall the significance of the three volumes of Solzhenitsyn's *Gulag Archipelago*, whose gulags the Snyder book references. *Bloodlands* is not a history of the military casualties of war, but of the lesser-known state policies of deliberate murder and starvation of civilians, and the summary execution of prisoners of war.

Snyder's Introduction to *Bloodlands* lays the groundwork for how this devastation occurred. He begins with the tremendous changes in state power relations that occurred following World War One before moving forward to the vile responses of Hitler and Stalin during and after the Great Depression: Hitler's national socialism and Stalin's genocidal socialism. He also presents Hitler and Stalin's common interest in the rich resources in the breadbasket of Ukraine, in the heart of the Bloodlands. Recognizing the complexity of the shifting borders in the Bloodlands for his readers, he provides six maps of this area in the preface and introduction. Numerous detailed maps, unfortunately not indexed, appear throughout the rest of the book. They present countries and cities whose former names have disappeared.

Bloodlands opens with "The Soviet Famines." As Stalin's collectivization of Ukraine brings famine and death by starvation, this deeply deluded ruler blames the catastrophes on the peasants themselves instead of apprehending that his *diktats* are directly responsible for the deaths. By 1932 in Ukraine a peasant's "possession of food was presumptive evidence of a crime," usually punishable by death. As mass starvation increased cannibalism occurred. "Roving bands of cannibals" hunt for unprotected children. Some families even cannibalized their own children and weaker members of their families. Snyder draws on a number of sources in Polish for this difficult chapter and throughout his book, one of which is *Głód i represje wobec ludności polskiej na Ukrainie* (*Starvation and Repression of the Polish Population in Ukraine*) by the prolific Polish writer (and Roman Catholic priest) Roman Dzwonkowski. Summarizing what is now

known with more certainty, Snyder estimates that 3.3 million people died from starvation and hunger-related diseases in Soviet Ukraine in 1932–1933. He concludes this chapter by quoting Western intellectuals and leaders such as Arthur Koestler, *New York Times* reporter Walter Duranty, and former French prime minister Edouard Herriot, whom the Soviets fooled into believing that the starving Ukraine was one big happy Potemkin village.

“Class Terror” covers the parallel rise of Hitler’s SS (Schutzstaffel), and Stalin’s OGPU (*Ob’edinennoe Gosudarstvennoe Politicheskoe Upravlenie*) which delivered state terror in the Soviet Union, most famously in the show trials of the 1930s. Snyder describes Professor Paweł Wiczorkiewicz’s work on the military show trials as “a fundamental work on the military purges.” Here again, Snyder reminds us of the Western intellectuals and leftists who were drinking Stalin’s Kool-Aid about a vast global conspiracy threatening Soviet promise. In both of these chapters he singles out George Orwell for providing an alternate and more accurate version of history. An introduction to the betrayals in these military purges is presented in Nikita Mikhalkov’s film *Burnt by the Sun*.

Bloodlands then proceeds to more familiar ground as it lays out the rapid shifts by Hitler as he began persecuting and killing German Jews, and Stalin’s similar attacks on Ukrainian Poles and Soviet Jews. These genocidal similarities preceded the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and the subsequent attacks that Poland fought alone. The progress of *Bloodlands* is clear from a number of its succeeding chapters: “Final Solution,” “Holocaust and Revenge,” and “Resistance and Incineration.”

Bloodlands does not contain stories of individuals of Polish, German, and Russian background who were faced with the impossible choice of possibly saving themselves by betraying Jews, Ukrainians, Russian kulaks, and Poles into the hands of murderers. It does, however, make perfectly clear how grave the result of each of these individual choices was. Some of these many stories have been told in diaries (Victor Klemperer, David Sierakowiak), memoirs (Primo Levi), and in Hans Fallada’s recently translated novel, *Every Man Dies Alone*. Snyder’s focus, however, is on the overview of how the machinery and bureaucracy of unimaginable suffering and death became the everyday experience of millions.

Bloodlands echoes the prescient warning in 1919 by John Maynard Keynes in *The Economic Consequences of the Peace*. There Keynes predicted that if the terms of the peace after World War One punished the nations

who lost, “nothing can then delay for very long that final civil war between the forces of Reaction and the despairing convulsions of Revolution, before which the horrors of the late German war will fade into nothing, and which will destroy, whoever is the victor, the civilization and the progress of our generation.”

In often similar magisterial language, Timothy Snyder has exhaustively chronicled the horrific systems of mass murder in Germany and the Soviet Union that preceded and coincided with the war that Keynes feared. Snyder’s book is a full and meticulous recovery of the history of how the entire peoples and their culture in the bloodlands were systematically obliterated. By his estimates, there were 14 million noncombatant deaths here. The Nazis killed 10 million prisoners of war and civilians, 6 million of whom were Jews murdered in the Holocaust. Those who cooperated with Stalin killed 4 million prisoners of war and civilians. Confronted by the appalling numbers of the dead, Snyder’s writing is committed to clarity and restraint, with both the right distance from and a clear focus on the horrors he presents. Without these qualities, the histories in *Bloodlands* might otherwise prove to be a challenging read. With them, *Bloodlands* is a necessary book. Absolutely necessary. He concludes with a chapter devoted to “Humanity,” and his hope, in the final lines of this book, “for us as humanists to turn the numbers back into people.” May his hope be fulfilled.▲

Personal Reflections on *Bloodlands*

Europe between Hitler and Stalin

Raymond Gawronski, SJ

“Spigau” she used to say in her Polish pronunciation of a German word, but I could never find it anywhere, and along with it, the number by which she was called at “Appell” in the camp. Two decades after the war, my mother destroyed the documents I remember seeing, the “Arbeitsbuch fuer Auslaender” with the eagle and swastika on it, the “P” for Pole: the memories of those days were too painful, the nightmares. Most of the tales of my childhood—her tales, the tales of other family and friends—were of such places, camps and invading armies, Stalin killing my godmother’s Latvian father, my grandfather being labeled a “kulak” and condemned (along with his “kulak” family) for deportation “east,” the horizon of the stories outlining the silhouette of the blonde Czech girl hung by the Germans for espionage. Dresden and