

Recent Books

The Victims Return: Survivors of the Gulag After Stalin. BY STEPHEN F. COHEN.

Publishing Works, 2010, 224 pp. \$22.95. Most nonfiction books are written from a sense of intellectual challenge; this one is written as much from a sense of duty. Over more than 35 years, since he first met Nikolai Bukharin's widow, Anna Larina, Cohen has developed a deep relationship with the widows and offspring of many of the gulag's celebrated and uncelebrated victims. By interviewing them, reading their memoirs, and digging through secret police archives, he collected material for a book he first planned to write in 1983. It tells the story of how survivors experienced liberation, what happened when they reentered society, and how, with varying degrees of success, they came to terms with what they had suffered. Misery was common, but, as Cohen stresses, its meaning and effects varied widely from individual to individual. This is not the thick, detailed book he originally intended to write, and it is all the better for that. It is also all the better for the graceful, pellucid writing.

Building States and Markets After Communism: The Perils of Polarized Democracy. BY TIMOTHY FRYE. Cambridge University Press, 2010, 312 pp. \$27.99.

Frye brings a particularly rigorous approach to explaining the speed and constancy of postsocialist economic reform and the creation of state institutions conducive to it. Count him among those who see the state—at least a state capable of efficient regulation—as crucial to the development of a proper market. Particularly in democratic and semidemocratic settings, he finds that the degree of partisan discord between the executive and legislative branches of government to be the decisive factor.

Democratic states blessed with little partisanship make reforms more rapidly and consistently; as partisanship increases, reform suffers. Frye reaches this simple but original proposition through exceedingly painstaking argumentation—first by establishing a statistical correlation between political polarization and its seeming effects, next by using a survey of business attitudes in 23 countries to establish causal links, and then by rounding out the analysis with a finely textured comparison of outcomes in Bulgaria, Poland, Russia, and Uzbekistan.

Twilight of Impunity: The War Crimes Trial of Slobodan Milosevic. BY JUDITH ARMATTA. Duke University Press, 2010, 576 pp. \$39.95.

Armatta, a lawyer, journalist, human rights activist, and expert on the Balkans, sat through three years of excruciating testimony in The Hague for the first trial of a head of state since Admiral Karl Dönitz at Nuremberg—the trial of Slobodan Milosevic for 66 counts of war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide. By her own confession, she was scarcely an impartial observer, having witnessed much of what served as the basis for the charges, but she provides more than a fair analysis of the proceedings' fumbblings and ill-advised decisions. Hers is the front-row view of a first-rate court reporter, giving the reader a TiVo-like version, culled of dead space and repetition, that is still exhausting in its arduous pace and detail. Diligently, she watched and recorded as the court probed all three charges from Kosovo, back through the Croatian and Bosnian wars, tediously piling up the evidence as Milosevic bobbed and weaved. One comes away half heartened by the

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effort to answer unspeakable cruelty and suffering with justice but, in a way, more saddened by Milosevic's slippery success in persuading his partisans and many of his countrymen that they, not he, were on trial, the victims of great power bullies. And then there is the whimper with which it was all ended, by a heart attack that left him prosecuted but unjudged.

Lonely Power. BY LILIA SHEVTSOVA.

Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2010, 394 pp. \$49.95 (paper, \$19.95). Long one of Russia's premier political analysts, Shevtsova has grown sharper and more charged as Russia has edged deeper into the Putin era. The country's self-seeking power elite has "used the West in order to save an anti-Western system," and many in Russia and the West who should know better have either wittingly or unwittingly played along. She calls Russia's system "bureaucratic capitalism" spliced to "imitation democracy," created by "personalized power" in the Yeltsin era and taken to its warped extreme in Vladimir Putin's. She applies her sensitive fingertip feel less to the country's deadened political pulse than to the system's interior dynamic, which she fears is unpredictable and imperiled by a regime that generates self-serving ambitions while blocking essential answers. Most of all, however, the book is a poignant appeal to the policymakers and analysts who have, as the Russian expression goes, "looked through their fingers" as Russia has passed from one lost opportunity to another. She identifies with those experts who have been most critical of her country, but when it comes to action, she aligns herself with those who want to engage Russia and give it

constructive options, provided strict conditions are attached.

Realism, Tolerance, and Liberalism in the Czech National Awakening: Legacies of the Bohemian Reformation. BY ZDENEK V. DAVID. Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010, 504 pp. \$70.00.

This book is a meticulous history; the footnotes are two-thirds the length of the text. In locating the wellsprings of modern national consciousness in the Czech Republic, and by extension its liberal political culture, David credits the ideas of the Bohemian Reformation in the fifteenth century, which were resuscitated and embraced during the Austro-Bohemian Catholic Enlightenment in the eighteenth century. More precisely, he traces the intellectual impulses inspiring the "national awakening" in the late eighteenth to early nineteenth century to the liberal, tolerant, and "nonaristocratic" thought characteristic of the Bohemian Catholic Church set up by the followers of the theologian Jan Hus in the sixteenth century. In a long-standing historical debate, David lines up against those who focus less on the lineage of ideas and more on linguistic-ethnic particularities and the sociology of identity associated with German Romanticism and idealism. But he is not only uncovering the roots of Czech political culture; he is also following an important stage in the development of analytic philosophy. Hence, the reader needs to be prepared to follow the fundamental philosophical quarrel that the early-nineteenth-century Czech scholar Bernhard Bolzano had with Immanuel Kant, Johann Gottlieb Fichte, Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling, and, above all, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel.