

Jewegeni Petrow, visitors crisscrossed the spaces of the United States and studied its civilizational manifestations and technological modernities. They frequently contributed to the inventory of global imaginations of the United States and translated social spaces for audiences abroad. Schlögel masterfully excavates such connections by tracing appropriations and a web of correlations between skyscraper architecture, river dam projects, and mobility infrastructure in the United States and the USSR.

Despite the fact that empire is interwoven and embedded in all three dimensions of the American matrix, its analytical utility is neither foregrounded nor exhaustively utilized in the book. While Schlögel dedicates individual chapters to settler colonial violence and racial segregation, his exploration of their significance to spatial histories and contours of the United States remains ambivalent. Many imperial spatial formats such as colonies, extraterritorial zones, special districts, military bases, and commercial production zones do not filter into the analysis, with reservations, detention centers, internment camps, and penal colonies being mentioned but frequently overshadowed by somewhat exceptionalist benign readings of empire's persistent ubiquity.

While the spatial production of empire is neither front nor center of the analysis, Schlögel acknowledges the violence of the matrix and its spaces of colonial genocide in the United States. But he is also interested in the transformative power of the matrix and thus gives ample room to spatial settings of anticolonial resilience and resistance from Alcatraz to the National Museum of the American Indian and from Selma to the National Museum of African-American Culture and History.

The rise of populism; the radicalization and polarization of the political specter; the shrill mobilization of xenophobic, racist, and misogynistic sentiment; the neo-imperialism; and the constant noise of its president have made conversations about the United States difficult. It is Schlögel's forward-looking confidence in the generative power of the *American matrix* that makes this deeply learned and refreshing book essential reading—especially at a time when the United States no longer inspires but repels and repulses many contemporary observers at home and abroad.

Thomas Kunze, Andreas Hilger, and John Zimmermann, eds., *Bis in den Krieg: Die Außenpolitik der UdSSR 1938/1939. Dokumente aus russischen Archiven* (Brill-Schöningh, 2023), 750 pp.

Reviewed by
Kees Boterbloem, Tampa

This book consists of a selection of documents mainly found in Russian archives, and mostly translated out of the original Russian into German, that chart the lead-up to the outbreak of the Second World War. Following a chronological order, the first document presented is the infamous Hossbach Memorandum of November 1937, while the last document published in this collection contains excerpts from a speech by Hitler to the senior Wehrmacht commanders in the Reich chancellery in November 1939. Original pages of some

of these documents are rendered in the book as photographs. In this way, these 272 documents map the road to war from the moment that Hitler, according to many historians, decided that war had become inevitable (as he stated in November 1937, the “solution to the German question could only come by way of violence,” even when he then still mainly thought of a limited war [p. 7]). Of course, some argue that Hitler saw war as inevitable all along, given the *Weltanschauung* he had outlined in *Mein Kampf* in 1925.

The documents in *Bis in den Krieg* are a selection based on another, earlier selection of more than 1,000 documents made by Russian scholars and archivists from their repositories. This Russian selection was published online by *Rosarkhiv* (the Russian Federal Archive Agency) and the *Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Voennyi Arkhiv* (the State Military Archive) (p. xvii). As reflected in the shorter German printed version offered here, it includes documents from numerous central archives beside the military archive, such as from the foreign ministry, the presidential archives, other branches of the Soviet state, and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Unfortunately, the access links provided in *Bis in den Krieg* to those Russian documents no longer work (see p. xvii, note 7; the authors last accessed them in March 2021). As the book’s editors (one of whom, Andreas Hilger, sadly passed away after the book went into production, as did another collaborator on the project) note in their introduction, some of the documents presented in *Bis in den Krieg* had in the meantime been made public earlier. Indeed, several were long known outside of the Soviet Union through the publication

of the documentary evidence used at the Nuremberg Trials and so on.

Apparently, in the introductions of their two online publications, the Russian editors who selected their 1,000-plus documents pushed back against the conventional wisdom prevailing in the “West” that the point of no return was reached by the signing of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact in August 1939. Instead, they adopted a Soviet-era justification of this pact: accordingly, the September 1938 Munich Agreement, in which Czechoslovakia was sacrificed by the French and British prime ministers, became the root cause of the war, as “Munich” showed the Western leaders’ duplicity. This Western double-dealing, then, was subsequently confirmed by Britain and France’s refusal to force Poland to make concessions to the Soviets and strike a meaningful military alliance with the Soviet Union in the spring and summer of 1939 (pp. xvii–xviii). It is unclear in how far the Russian archivists selected (or left out) specific documents they placed online to support their case for “Munich” as the true cause of the war.

This Russian viewpoint is distinctly that of a minority within the scholarly world, as Kunze and his colleagues point out. This is true, although they might have at least mentioned the iconoclastic arguments of Oxford historian A. J. P. Taylor, who in 1961 suggested in his *Origins of the Second World War* that Hitler did not want war in 1939 and that the Western powers had forced his hand, which somewhat aligns with the Russian (Soviet) viewpoint that the United Kingdom and France bear much responsibility for the events of August–September 1939.[1]

In the early post-Soviet years, Russian-language publications were less driven by a political agenda emanating from the current regime in the Russian Federation that implicitly sees the “West” as a sort of eternal enemy of Russia (which it ever more conflates with its incarnation as the Soviet Union). A fine example are the 655 documents reproduced in the two-volume publication *1941 god* of 1998.[2] In these two books, a far more consistently scholarly effort was made by Russian scholars to provide a comprehensive documentary account of the lead-up to the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union during the last months before 22 June 1941. Political pressure was hardly applied when *1941 god* was readied in Russia during the 1990s, different from what prevailed two decades later.

Meanwhile, presenting these documents in translation to a German (or English) readership might have appealed to a broader audience than the documents found in *Bis in den Krieg*, for they greatly overlap with the documents brought together in the series *Deutschland und die Sowjetunion, 1933–1941* (ed. by Carola Tischler and Sergei Sluch) that began to be published more than ten years ago.[3]

It is somewhat odd that the editors barely refer to this much more ambitious project of document publication in German (which is issued in Russian as well in a parallel publication) that equally aims at a deeper understanding of the lead-up to the Second World War (it is mentioned once on p. xix, note 11). Since 2014, six installments of *Deutschland und die Sowjetunion, 1933–1941* have been published, which cover to date the period from 1933 to 1939 (of a likely total of eight that will be reached when the series is completed).

Given the publication of this series, what exactly does *Bis in den Krieg* add to it? It is shorter than the multivolume publication, although 750 pages is not exactly short. Its 272 documents are almost all located in Russian archives and are translated from the original Russian (of a few, the German original is presented, while there are some documents retrieved by the Soviet armed forces or secret police in 1945 that were originally written in Polish, English, or French). Conversely, the Tischler and Sluch volumes offer a balance between German and Russian archival collections. *Deutschland und die Sowjetunion*'s more fulsome selection of documents has not served any overt or covert political agendas. In addition, the meticulous presentation (cross references, identification of handwriting, literature) of each document in *Deutschland und die Sowjetunion* is superior to that of the work under review here.

That *Bis in den Krieg* is not as comprehensive as it should may be illustrated by one example. In the chain of events to which the book's documents attest, a glaring omission caught this reviewer's eye: the lack of any reference to Politburo member, Supreme Soviet delegate, and Leningrad Party leader Andrei A. Zhdanov's article in *Pravda* from late June 1939 that condemned the French and British dillydallying regarding the conclusion of a treaty with the Soviet Union as deliberate, arguing that it reflected the Western powers' lack of any true interest in such an alliance.[4] Despite its claim that it represented Zhdanov's personal opinion, the *Pravda* article was really a product of the consensus of all of the Soviet leaders (among whom Stalin and Molotov were first and foremost). It signaled Soviet exasperation with the Western powers as well

as a desire to come to an agreement with Nazi Germany, a first public hint at the willingness to entertain the pact that was to be signed in August. Despite their effort at meticulously charting developments, the German editors, perhaps following the Russian editors in this, make no reference to this moment in *Bis in den Krieg*.

Finally, the scholarly value of *Bis in den Krieg* is somewhat diminished as well because of the absence of a bibliography and very limited references to the enormous historiography about the outbreak of the Second World War in Europe. A few footnote references to this literature in the introduction of the book was evidently deemed sufficient.

In sum, although any collection of primary sources about the bloodiest of all wars is welcome in our efforts to understand how this violent conflict broke out and unfolded, this is a publication that does not add very much to what is already available (although it should be noted that the third and fourth volumes of *Deutschland und die Sowjetunion* were not yet issued in 2023; volume three—which continues the story until August 1939—has since been released), despite the considerable effort by the editors and their collaborators that went into producing it. For its size, its price is moderate, though, so it may attract a readership. Still, *Deutschland und die Sowjetunion* is (becoming) open access. It is hard to compete with that.

Notes

- [1] Alan John Percival Taylor, *The Origins of the Second World War* (Hamish Hamilton, 1961).
 [2] Vladimir Pavlovich Naumov, ed., *1941 god*, 2 vols. (Demokratiia, 1998). There are excerpts from further relevant documents of previous years in the addenda of its second volume. In addition, another source that is revealing for the

Soviet mindset in the late summer of 1939 are the diaries of Georgi Dimitrov, the Comintern chief: Georgi Dimitrov, *Tagebücher 1933–1943*, eds. Bernhard H. Bayerlein and Wladislaw Hedeler, 2 vols. (Aufbau Verlag, 2000). Meeting with Stalin, Molotov, and Zhdanov in the Kremlin on September 7, 1939, Dimitrov heard how Stalin was pleased with the European capitalist states slugging it out; see Dimitrov, *Tagebücher*, vol. 1, 273–274.

- [3] Carola Tischler and Sergej Slutsch, eds., *Deutschland und die Sowjetunion, 1933–1941: Dokumente aus russischen und deutschen Archiven*, 6 vols. (De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2014–2024). Two more books (vol. 4) are to appear at least.
 [4] Kees Boterbloem, *The Life and Times of Andrei Zhdanov, 1896–1948* (McGill-Queen's University Press, 2004), 193–197, 431 n82. Puzzlingly, Zhdanov, even when it is true that he (unlike Stalin and Molotov) only intermittently dealt with foreign affairs, is almost entirely absent from *Bis in den Krieg*.

Esra Özyürek, *Subcontractors of Guilt: Holocaust Memory and Muslim Belonging in Postwar Germany* (Stanford University Press, 2023), 254 pp.

Reviewed by
 Mathias Berek, Berlin

Has antisemitism been imported to Europe by Muslim migrants? Are European political actors instrumentalizing the critique of antisemitism for other goals? These two questions recur in academic as well as general debates about antisemitism, racism, and Holocaust memory.[1] Esra Özyürek's book engages in these debates and proposes a new approach. The text asserts that Germans have begun to employ young German Muslims as “subcontractors of guilt”