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Diplomatic Intelligence on the Holy Roman Empire and Denmark during the Reigns of Elizabeth I and James VI

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art community' might 'shift away from state-sponsored channels to more independent ones such as community-based organizations, student groups and independent workshops' (343). It may prove to be more likely that they move abroad.

As these books illustrate in their different ways, the visual and graphic legacy of the revolution and the communist period more generally retains its power to inspire and fascinate. This may be one reason why various right-wing governments in Eastern Europe have recently been so keen to impose a blanket ban on any public use of communist symbolism.

David Scott Gehring, ed., *Diplomatic Intelligence on the Holy Roman Empire and Denmark during the Reigns of Elizabeth I and James VI: Three Treatises*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2016; 272 pp.; 9781107147980, £46.99 (hbk)

Reviewed by: Dannielle Shaw, *University of East Anglia, Norwich, UK/University of Groningen, the Netherlands*

David Scott Gehring's book provides a detailed study of diplomatic intelligence and relations between Queen Elizabeth I, James VI and the Protestant princes of Denmark and the Holy Roman Empire. As Gehring correctly notes, 'much of the intelligence and many of the observations contained in these materials also remain obscure to modern scholarship' (1). Gehring's edition invites us to evaluate the usefulness of such information, whilst making sure to assess the importance of tracking the occupational trajectory of the authors of the intelligence themselves. This alone is noteworthy, but Gehring's study offers an impressive range and depth of historical examples that address trends in diplomatic history and question the very nature and intention of travel writing. This study provides texture to the three treatises, coherently highlighting the importance of intelligence reporting and travel writing. Gehring addresses the significance of understanding these little-known reports, so that we can see how diplomatic history and travel writing was instrumental in forming and executing government policy.

Gehring's thesis provides us with a useful analysis as to why Anglo-German diplomacy was, despite commonalities and agreements on religious practices and general consensus of principles, so tremendously complicated. As Gehring studiously notes, 'put lightly, establishing and fostering productive diplomatic relations with the Protestant princes of Germany (and to a lesser extent Denmark) was an uphill battle' (2).

By using a range of examples, Gehring's book introduces us to both familiar and lesser-known intriguing sixteenth-century intelligencers such as Henry Killigrew, Christopher Mundt, Philip Sidney, Lord Willoughby, Edwin Sandys and Edmund Tilney, and situates them chronologically and geographically, exploring their position in a chain of diplomatic networks and correspondence. What is demonstrated so articulately in this book is an understanding of the importance of travel writing and documents of social and cultural history in relation to new perspectives on diplomatic intelligence. By exploring the attention paid to 'new diplomatic history',

Gehring provides a useful examination of how exactly early modern cultural and social history might be incorporated in studies of diplomatic and international relations. Gehring describes how changing perceptions of inter- and transnational developments might manifest influence on pre-existing scholarship. Gehring suggests that by focusing on preoccupations with nationalistic values, we have overlooked key cultural and historical descriptions of English foreign policy during the sixteenth century. Gehring's thesis duly equips us with a framework for delineating insights into the evolving nature of European diplomacy, as well as detailed explorations into the biographical and autobiographical notations of privately motivated foreign travellers.

What Gehring details so well, is the shifting forms, design, configuration and reportage of intelligence between the years 1558 and 1598. This erudite study documents the beginnings of a new tradition in the form of travel writing and the Grand Tour, and is a perfect accompaniment to the pre-existing scholarship on the Jacobean origins of the Grand Tour by Edward Chaney and Timothy Wilks. In this regard, Gehring presents us with some salient examples of Elizabethan travel and travel literature. We find the likes of Sir John Peyton (1579–1635), who embarked upon his own Elizabethan Grand Tour for 'culture, education and intelligence' (27) and travelled widely in central and eastern Europe during the latter half of the 1590s. Peyton documented his many travels in Bohemia, Poland-Lithuania and Germany, and, like his contemporaries Henry Wotton and Stephen Powle, found in Robert Cecil a willing and generous patron. The aforementioned is a sample of the wonderful examples Gehring peppers his work with, which helps the reader to situate and contextualize his argument. These illustrations also allow for lighter moments, as with the narrative detailing the staggering quantities of alcohol supplied to Thomas Bodley at the Danish court of Frederik II (which this reviewer will not spoil for the reader).

Gehring leaves the reader very satisfied: this is an accomplished book that relies heavily on manuscript sources and delves into early modern archival collections across the United States, central and eastern Europe, as well as the United Kingdom. This study is painstakingly thorough and leaves the reader with an understanding and respectful appreciation for the archive-heavy work involved in collating these materials, which is no small task when these sources range from letters, travelogues and instructions, as well as historiographies and memoranda.

Gehring's writing style is crisp and meticulous, and though he acknowledges existing scholarship in the field of diplomatic intelligence, he does not let this cloud his own analysis of the texts. This book is technically sound, and the author provides a fine historical study that poses and answers much-needed questions in the field of diplomatic intelligence studies. The very nature of diplomacy is fickle and unknowing, and Gehring acknowledges the difficulty of this mutability, achieving a perceptive, accomplished analysis of the material he edits. Gehring presents a fluid argument that signifies the importance of travel documents as key sources of government intelligence, as well as acknowledging their relevance to the study of

diplomacy and the history of travel. In all, this is a critically astute study that is dense and methodical in its research, and clear in its argument.

Ilya Gerasimov, *Plebeian Modernity: Social Practices, Illegality and the Urban Poor in Russia, 1906–1916*, University of Rochester Press: Rochester, NY, 2018; 288 pp., 5 b/w illus.; 9781580469050, £55.00 (hbk); 9781787441767, £30.00 (ebook)

Reviewed by: Sarah Badcock, *University of Nottingham, UK*

This provocative and engaging book addresses a question that lies at the very heart of social history – how are historians to understand and interpret the daily lives, experiences and actions of those people who left little trace of their own lives and voices in written records? Medieval scholars talked about the ‘silent majority’ and Foucault referred to the ‘infamous men’, while postcolonial scholarship developed a distinctive branch, subaltern studies, to tackle this problem. In this work, Ilya Gerasimov presents a distinctive theoretical framework for the study of Russia’s lower-class urban dwellers, a group he refers to as plebeians. He argues that historians should look beyond the textual traces left by lower class urban dwellers, and that they should instead strive to read the ‘language’ of people’s bodies, actions and practices. He illustrates his theories through the narration of case studies selected from four cities across the Empire – Odessa, Kazan, Nizhnii Novgorod and Vilna (Vilnius). He draws on a diverse array of literature, but his highly individual approach ignores some of the recent rich historiography of this topic.

His work is structured into five chapters, each tackling a specific space or theme. Chapter 1 opens with a very engaging summary of how ordinary people lived, sketching out the common man’s day as he got up, drank tea and went about his daily business. He goes on to explore a series of anonymous letters, and proposes that these offer a rich collective vision of the lower-class self. He concludes the chapter by speculating that Russia’s civil society remained very small because many people on the peripheries of the middle classes were actually associated more closely with the plebeian elements, and these plebeian elements did not fit into the discourses shaped by civil society. Chapter 2 focuses on crime reports in Nizhnii Novgorod and Kazan as a vector into lower class life. The author presents crime reports as offering an unmediated window into lower-class life, which is compelling but not entirely satisfactory – many people lived without recourse to practices that the state identified as illegal. The exploration of motivations and actions in terms of pogroms and violent incidents seeks to illuminate the complexity of relationships between different groups, in this case Russians, Tatars and Jews, and makes the apt point that friendships rather than violent incidents are often better way-markers of popular feeling. He concludes the chapter by stating that there was a disjoint between elite ideas and plebeian everyday experience in shaping ethnic interactions, which were densely played out in urban, lower-class space. Chapter 3 weaves in and out of sex work in Vilna, street signs, pimping, and other aspects of life on the street. This is the only chapter where gender is prominent as a category of