The investigation of popular responses to these narratives draws on a remarkably broad range of sources: postwar and post-Soviet interviews, citizens' diaries and letters, police surveillance and local propa-gandists' reports and memoirs. While offering one of the fullest pictures of popular attitudes in this under-researched period, the collation of these sources often overlooks the significant differences between them as sources, especially for the Stalinist mentality that this book also seeks to reconstruct.

During this period, while official media often contained a bewildering shortage of information and coherence, its audience tried to dispel confusion through empirical observation, insights from other media or speculation and rumour. As Johnston persuasively argues, these practices extended beyond Stalinism, forming a consistent response to Soviet 'information hunger'. However, his conclusion, that 'unofficial' culture inexorably overwhelmed 'official' culture after Stalin's death and led to the Soviet collapse, underestimates attempts to inject greater 'truthfulness' and debate into post-Stalinist public culture, particularly under Khrushchev and Gorbachev.

The book's kaleidoscope of popular narratives amply confirms that Stalinist citizens could be 'creative' and far from 'passive'; however they were not necessarily more coherent or logical than the 'confused' media. The notions of bricolage and 'fusing' imply that 'unofficial' narratives were always more comprehensive and insightful than 'official' ones. Viewing any combinations of 'official' and 'unofficial' culture also conflates actions that were 'tactical' to different degrees. Was the life and death business of information-gathering about the war really comparable to consorting with foreigners, as described in the book's most captivating chapter, with Soviet sailors in the Arctic circle enjoying Hollywood films and jazz? These all show that Soviet citizens could be flexible and pragmatic, but were they all equally important 'tactics' for the Stalinist 'habitat'? At times, the vivid picture of Stalinist life, so assiduously unearthed by the author, spills out beyond his tight theoretical framework, suggesting that there may be more ways to understand the different behaviours of this eventful period.

Polly Jones

Myth, Memory, Trauma
Rethinking the Stalinist Past in the Soviet Union, 1953–70
Polly Jones
Yale University Press 362pp £45

FOR STUDENTS of Russian history and observers of Putin's Russia, the rehabilitation of the Stalinist past and Josef Stalin's resurgent personal popularity is a disturbing development. Ever since Stalin's death in March 1953, his ghost has continued to haunt contemporary Russia. Polly Jones' brilliantly researched study of de-Stalinisation in the Khrushchev and Brezhnev eras provides a timely reminder of previous efforts to come to terms with Stalinism. From the mid-1950s until the late 1960s the Soviet Union attempted to confront the trauma, shame and guilt of political terror and the suffering of a brutal war. Jones argues that de-Stalinisation, although frequently imperfect, witnessed genuine attempts to work through the moral and historical complexities of Stalinism. Although a missed opportunity, it nevertheless revealed obstacles to Stalin 'memory work', and binary positions to the Stalinist inheritance that are still with us today. Myth, Memory, Trauma forces the reader to rethink established truths about de-Stalinisation. It follows the complex twists and turns in the dynamics of memory, from Khrushchev's 'Secret Speech' in February 1956, his famous denunciation of the Stalin cult of personality, through to the commemoration of the 90th anniversary of Stalin's birth in December 1969. In the process we explore the increase in ideological vigilance and cautious praise for Stalin in the freeze of the late 1950s, followed in 1961 by the revival of traumatic narratives and attacks on cult symbols after the 22nd Party Conference. There was no single, clear or fixed interpretation of the Stalinist past under Khrushchev. Away from the key

Polly Jones provides one of the most sophisticated and nuanced analyses of complexities of de-Stalinisation currently available

Robert Dale

Poor But Sexy
Culture Clashes in Europe
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Agata Pyzik
Zoo Books 310pp £15.99

A QUARTER of a century ago, when the Berlin Wall fell, there was an expectation that the Evil Empire's colonies, no longer subjugated by the yoke of statis...
De-Stalinisation was the process of political and cultural reform undertaken after Stalin's death in 1953. It included the removal of key institutions that helped Stalin hold power: his cult of personality, the Stalinist political system and the Gulag labour camps. Eventually it led to measures that encouraged "forgetting" about him, such as the overnight removal of his body from Lenin's mausoleum on Red Square in 1961 and the renaming of cities bearing his name. At every step, Jones presents a nuanced, complex and detailed examination of the attempt to come to terms with S-... According to Soviet Socialist Republics--USSR. Germany. Stalin, Joseph Vissarionovich (1879-1953). Related books and articles. Books. Journals. Find many great new & used options and get the best deals for Myth, Memory, Trauma: Rethinking the Stalinist Past in the Soviet Union, 1953-70 by Polly Jones (Paperback, 2016) at the best online prices at eBay! Drawing on newly available materials from the Soviet archives, Polly Jones offers an invative, comprehensive account of de-Stalinization in the Soviet Union during the Khrushchev and early Brezhnev eras. Jones traces the authorities' initiation and management of the de-Stalinization process and explores a wide range of popular reactions to the new narratives of Stalinism in party statements and in Soviet literature and historiography.