

Bellezza, Simone Attilio. *The Shore of Expectations: A Cultural Study of the 'Shistdesiatnyky'*. CIUS Press, Edmonton, AL and Toronto, ON, 2019. xxiii + 357 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. \$34.95; £26.99 (paperback).

WHAT we know about the post-Stalinist 'Thaw' remains heavily weighted towards Russia and its metropolitan centres. Increasingly, though, scholars have turned towards other parts of the Soviet Union, comparing and contrasting the dynamics of Russian cultural liberalization and crackdown with those in Central Asia, the Baltics and other republics. Simone Attilio Bellezza's study of the *shistdesiatnyky* — a key post-Stalinist Ukrainian cultural and political movement — is a valuable addition to the scholarship on the Thaw and

dissidence, as well as Ukrainian cultural history. Methodical and thorough in its collation and critique of a rich array of sources, from memoirs to party and state security archives, the book presents a linear, chronological account of the rise and fall of the movement. It recounts in detail every major incident in its history from the death of Stalin to the movement's collapse in the early 1970s, with thorough biographies of its key protagonists along the way, including Lina Kostenko, Ivan Dziuba, Valentyn Moroz and many others. As such, it is the most comprehensive and up-to-date account of the movement in English-language scholarship, though the vast array of protagonists and publications might prove somewhat disorientating to non-Ukrainianists.

The book's three lengthy chapters are each devoted to a sub-period between 1953 and the mid-1970s. They trace the emergence of the movement out of the post-Stalinist literary renaissance, through to more overtly political samizdat (*samvydav* in Ukrainian) and public demonstrations, harshly punished by the authorities until the movement collapsed; subsequent Ukrainian dissident groups, surveyed in the epilogue, were of a quite different character. The account of *shistdesiatnytstvo* is largely descriptive, and at times too detailed, with a tendency to quote sources at excessive length and a structure driven by successive events rather than a consistently clear line of argument. However, it does also persuasively challenge previous views of the movement as nationalist in origin. As demonstrated through nuanced analysis of biography and memoir material, the majority of key participants held sincere Marxist-Leninist views, shaped by Soviet education and Komsomol experience. Most only gradually adopted a pro-Ukrainian stance via critique of Ukraine's Russification and the increasingly imperial character of Soviet rule. Particularly interesting are the linkages traced here between literary manifestoes of individualism and the movement's burgeoning belief in the need for Ukrainian self-expression at the national level. At the same time, it was this distinctive stance on Marxist-Leninist ideology and on Ukrainian nationalism that hampered the movement's reach and success. The lingering hope for revitalization of Leninist ideals, rather than revolutionary overthrow, left the majority of *shistdesiatnyky* reluctant to organize overt opposition to the regime. Meanwhile, their nuanced positions on nationalism mired the movement in controversies and disputes, and limited its appeal beyond the intelligentsia friendship groups where its activities had been most productive (and where coordination of support to victims of regime crackdowns continued to be based).

Bellezza argues that this Ukrainian cultural renaissance and increasingly political activity unfolded in relative isolation from developments elsewhere in the Soviet Union, though the patterns of liberalization and crackdown closely resemble the familiar trajectory of the Thaw and early Brezhnev era. After the Prague invasion and the growth of the Soviet dissident movement, more contacts and networks sprang up between Ukrainian and Russian dissent, but

for most of *shistdesiatnytstvo*'s history there were significant linguistic and cultural barriers to communication and collaboration. Outside the Eastern bloc, on the other hand, the Ukrainian diaspora played an important and distinctive role in disseminating information about the movement and its brutal suppression. Although the movement was thus *sui generis* and largely limited to the domestic and international Ukrainian community, it is still striking and rather regrettable how rarely the book draws it into comparison with currents of the Thaw, samizdat and dissidence elsewhere, even where those comparisons are potentially productive. To take one striking example, the *shestidesiatnik* personality type, often used to describe the Thaw's key protagonists, is not compared with the Ukrainian 'sixtiers'; neither is the key Thaw trope of 'sincerity', which has obvious relevance to the ideas emerging in Ukrainian literary culture of the 1950s and 1960s. Overall, the account only engages to a limited degree with the recent wave of scholarship on the Thaw and dissent, and it privileges historical detail over a more incisive conceptualization of Soviet and dissident subjectivity, despite a wealth of material about *shistdesiatnyky* ideas of the soul and individuality. Nonetheless, this thorough account of intelligentsia post-Stalinist life in Ukraine should long remain a key reference work for Ukrainian and Soviet historians.