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Review of Sediton: Everyday Resistance in the Soviet Union Under Krushchev and Brezhnev, by Vladimir A. Kozlov, Sheila Fitzpatrick and Sergei V. Mironenko.

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Kozlov, Vladimir A., Sheila Fitzpatrick, and Sergei V. Mironenko. *Sedition: Everyday Resistance in the Soviet Union under Khrushchev and Brezhnev*. Annals of Communism Series. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011. x + 414 pp. \$65.00. ISBN 978-0-300-11169-9

This is the latest entry in Yale's Annals of Communism Series, which has produced more than twenty significant volumes by mining the riches of Soviet state and party archives. *Sedition* is no less compelling than its predecessors. It focuses on those "small acts" of opposition to the regime during the Khrushchev and Brezhnev eras, which took a variety of forms, including letters, poems, complaints, leaflets, and organizational efforts. These activities comprised grassroots resistance (in Russian, *kramola*)—generally originating among the lower class—that is entirely distinct from the better known intelligentsia-based dissidence of the same period. As American editor Sheila Fitzpatrick suggests in an informative introductory essay, this phenomenon makes the Soviet population look "a lot less cowed than might have been expected" (p. 1). The book is a translation of a documentary collection edited by Vladimir Kozlov and Sergei Mironenko and published in Russia in 2005. Kozlov's own introduction appears here in translation, along with explanations and notes that contextualize the primary sources. The documents themselves—often the seditious material in its original form but sometimes summaries prepared by state prosecutors—come from the archives of the Supreme Soviet and the Procuracy of the USSR. Kozlov and Mironenko created a database with a combined total of nearly thirty-five hundred individual and group cases. They excluded instances involving the military, religious groups, and nationalist underground movements.

Each of the book's eight chapters focuses on a specific type of seditious activity, starting with criticism of Stalin at the time of his death. A common cause of political repression was "anti-Soviet conversation," which dabbled in forbidden topics such as the superiority of life abroad and the hope of a Soviet defeat by America. Khrushchev was a frequent target, reviled as a clownish "corn peddler" who gave away Soviet income to foreign countries or squandered it on the high life for himself and his cronies. (By contrast, the members of the "Anti-Party Group"—Molotov, Malenkov, and Kaganovich—were portrayed as heroic victims.) Some protesters defiled the Soviet flag and other symbols of state; a few even hurled rocks at Lenin's sarcophagus. Elections became a locus of protest, too; voters scribbled criticism on their ballots or posters. Many individuals distributed anti-Soviet leaflets and anonymous letters, perhaps reflecting a peculiarly Russian belief in the power of the written word to pinpoint a problem and cast a spell on the source of its evil. Most threatening from the regime's perspective were the underground groups and organizations that first appeared in the 1950s and dramatically multiplied thereafter. Although a handful discussed terrorism, by and large they were just conversation circles—consisting of no more than three to five family members or friends—that criticized the party's abuses of power and proposed alternative forms of governance. Buoyed by an official revival of Leninism, they may have represented "the last outburst of revolutionary idealism in the USSR" (p. 288).

At the most basic level, *Sedition* enriches and deepens our view of post-Stalinist Soviet society, in part by defying expectations. People fearlessly flung criticism in the face of authority, but not necessarily out of progressive beliefs; just as often their opposition had egalitarian, nationalist, Stalinist, or millenarian roots. Meanwhile, the "liberal" Khrushchev oversaw a severe crackdown on this dissent, even as his "thaw" was underway. By contrast, it was under Brezhnev that the regime tended to deal with

its critics by means of “prophylactic measures” rather than prison sentences.

This volume is more likely to serve as a source of documentary material for instructors than an assigned reading in undergraduate Soviet history classes. The commentaries that kick off each chapter are useful but, perhaps due to varying authorship, do not mesh as seamlessly as one might have hoped. Finally, the decision to retain some of the original misspellings in order to convey the flavor of the documents is laudable, but it does not explain the missing letters and redundant words that appear in other parts of the book. These minor reservations, however, do not alter the fact that *Sedition* is as fascinating as it is worthwhile.

**James H. Krukones, John Carroll University**