

ANNOUNCEMENT

WINNER OF THE POLLY CORRIGAN BOOK PRIZE

The Polly Corrigan Book Prize committee is delighted to announce that the winner of the Prize for 2022 is:

Molly Pucci, *Security Empire: The Secret Police in Communist Eastern Europe* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2020)

Security Empire is an impressive achievement. In it, Molly Pucci constructs a history of the establishment, evolution, and practices of communist secret police forces in Poland, Czechoslovakia, and eastern Germany/the German Democratic Republic during the period from 1945 to 1954.

For a number of years now, intelligence scholars have highlighted the need to develop comparative analysis of national approaches to intelligence in order to test assumptions about how intelligence is organised and practiced, and how and why it evolved over time. This is precisely what *Security Empire* does and, in doing so, adds significantly to our understanding of how secret police forces developed across post-war Eastern Europe, and why they developed in the form they did.

Based on multi-archival research in the Czech Republic, Poland, Germany, and the United States, Molly Pucci demonstrates that assumptions about the application of a standard Soviet model in the creation of secret police forces in the aftermath of the Second World War need to be revised to take account of considerable diversity in motivation, understanding, and practice across the Eastern Bloc. In terms of ideas of structure and agency, this book emphasises the importance of individual agency; that individuals from a range of different backgrounds, political systems and policing cultures engaged in processes of what Molly Pucci terms “imperfect translation” of the Soviet template to their national contexts rather than “reproduction or transplantation”, resulting in greater variation than has hitherto been held to have existed.

In doing this, Pucci also highlights the different histories of relations between each of these states and Russia and how this impacted on the development of the secret police in terms of “the room each country was given to make its own decisions” and also “local perceptions of what the Soviet model was, and the question of which aspects of Soviet policy should be replicated (or not) in Europe.”

Based on extensive research in multiple languages, rich in detail, and presenting the thoughts and words of secret police officers themselves, this book transforms our understanding of the early history of communist secret police forces in Eastern Europe.

Jury members

Jane Feinmann, Journalist and Polly’s mom

Michael S. Goodman, Head of the Department of War Studies, King’s College London

Claudia Hillebrand, Senior Lecturer, Cardiff University

Mark Phythian, Professor of Politics, University of Leicester

Daniela Richterova, Senior Lecturer, King’s College London