This original, stimulating, and important book looks at the revolutionary era through the prism of "a broader 1914-1921 cataclysm, with 1917 serving as its fulcrum." (p. 2) This allows Holquist to pursue several themes. One is to set Russia's experience into a wider European story and then explore common European antecedents (World War I mobilization policies, especially) for some Russian events and practices that usually are thought of as having purely Russian revolutionary or civil war origins. Another is to trace certain commonalities and continuities -- and differences -- across political regimes, whether tsarist, the Provisional Government, the Bolsheviks, or their civil war opponents. Yet another major theme examines the changes that took place inside Russia during the war years and how the war shaped the new revolutionary regimes.

Throughout, Holquist traces the way Russia's political classes harnessed the task of wartime mobilization to create the building blocks of a new revolutionary order rather than, as was the case for other European belligerents, treating their wartime measures as practices that could be either abandoned or incorporated into an existing order once the war ended. The war dramatically expanded the possibilities for Russian educated society to play a public role, via the numerous semi-state, semi-public "parastatal" structures. The February Revolution then brought to power the class that had been staffing these organizations, and they now took the tools of wartime mobilization as the tools for achieving their (prewar) revolutionary visions for a restructured society. The Russian revolution, Holquist argues, was a social revolution not just "because various social groups made it, or the social order was changed, but because all political actors sought to employ politics as a tool to transform society." (p. 5)

Holquist focuses on three state practices in particular: 1) management of food supply; 2) employment of official violence for political ends; 3) state surveillance of the population for purposes of coercion and enlightenment. To study these issues he uses the Don Region because of its importance as a food source and the political and military importance of its inhabitants, because the civil war extensively was fought here, and because good records exist for Bolsheviks, Cossacks, and Whites.

As Holquist develops his story -- partly chronologically, partly topically -- some interesting insights emerge. His study of the food supply question, which is central to the book and its theses, shows intriguing trends. One is the extent to which a new breed of bureaucrats of the tsarist Ministry of Agriculture and agricultural specialists in local agencies and cooperatives, and even "society" generally, shared an antipathy to private trade ("speculation") and moved to bring the grain trade under government and cooperative control and to destroy the traditional grain market system. (Other European government also took a greater governmental role, but built on traditional trading systems.) The specialists wanted to implement their visions in league with the state, even while critical of the autocracy (i.e., they saw a state role, but not for this government). Many Mensheviks and Kadets worked together in these wartime activi-
ties and commissions, especially in such things as food supply, in what may well have been a precursor to the "coalition" mentality of 1917. Indeed, one of the things that Holquist accomplishes is to demonstrate the extent to which old party affiliations and structures became partially obsolete even before the revolution, which in turn accelerated the process, as political actors realigned themselves along new axes as they confronted the issues of war and revolution.

In power after February 1917, the intelligentsia, centrally and in local agencies such as the new Don Territorial Food Committee, still seeing the problem not in the anti-market measures but in their execution, now had to confront the result of their own destruction of the grain market. Indeed, Holquist argues, wartime food-supply issues fostered "a shared anti-market, pro-planning, etatist consensus across the political spectrum" (p. 44) and a continuity in grain levy and grain monopoly policies from the wartime tsarist regime through the Kadet and SR ministers of the Provisional Government in 1917 to both Reds and Whites of 1918-21. What evolved was the extent of these policies and the use of violence. Provisional Government officials contemplated state violence to secure grain, but were constrained by lack of means and their worldview. The Bolsheviks, with their view that total national war be inverted into total and open-ended class war as a means of restructuring society, were not so constrained.

Holquist also explores the development of surveillance and state violence. He notes that both the Red Army and the AFSh (Denikin) had political departments that paid attention to the political outlook of the soldiers and populations they controlled. This is not surprising, because both armies grew out of the revolutionary reorganization of the army in 1917. For example, AFSh also established a surveillance arm, OSVAG, to inform Denikin's government of popular attitudes and to inform the populace of government measures and shape opinion. It also had military-political offices and a Propaganda Department. Holquist is especially insightful about the development of violence in political life growing out of the war and revolution: Red violence and White violence "were twin strands, inextricably intertwined, emerging out of the 1914-1921 maelstrom of war, revolution, and civil wars" (p. 203), with both the Bolsheviks and their opponents (Whites, Greens, nationalists) using similar tactics of punitive detachments, labor conscription, burning "hostile" villages, and so on, all aimed toward shaping society according to their respective world views as well as winning their war.

Having stressed similarities and continuities, I should hasten to note that while Holquist finds many of them in the state actions of the various regimes, he also makes important distinctions, such as that the Provisional Government and Whites punished peasants for failing to turn over surpluses they actually had, but the Bolshevik government punished for failing to meet targets regardless of whether or not they actually had surpluses and grain. He cautions that "Red violence and White violence were not homologous." (p. 204) For the Bolsheviks, he argues, revolutionary violence was not merely a tool for application during a circumscribed period of civil conflict, but a permanent part of its governing and social reconstruction project. His is a nuanced study, not a simple argument for continuity or similarity.