

Faculti Summary

<https://faculti.net/crucibles-of-power-smolensk-under-stalinist-and-nazi-rule/>

This video discusses the significance of the Mki region, now part of Russia, in historical studies of the Soviet Union, particularly regarding the archives related to Communist Party documents seized after World War II. It highlights the uniqueness of these archives as the only authentic collection available in the West during the Cold War, which laid foundational work for Soviet studies, notably by Merle Faden.

The author, who is preparing a book titled "Crucibles of Power," emphasizes their focus on the 99% of documents that remained in the Soviet Union after the war, contrasting their work with prior studies that mainly utilized the Mki Archive. They aim to analyze the lived experiences of ordinary people under both Stalinist and Nazi regimes during the German occupation of Mki, examining themes of totalitarianism, collaboration, and agency.

This video also explores how the Holocaust happened on Mki soil and acknowledges how the regime changes brought about a power vacuum that affected people's options during this tumultuous period. The author introduces the concept of "biographical logics" to illustrate how individual choices reflect larger historical forces and how people navigated the complex political realities of their time.

This video concludes by presenting three case studies of individuals from the region who represent various paths during the war—showing how personal backgrounds and choices intersected with broader socio-political dynamics. The author advocates for a nuanced understanding of power, emphasizing ideological, social, and local contexts alongside traditional narratives of coercion and repression, aiming to capture the intricacies of human behavior and decision-making during this significant historical period.