With the fall of the Soviet Union and the accessibility of former Soviet archives, rewriting the history of the Soviet Union continues to be of scholarly interest. Of the different political institutions facilitating Soviet expansionism, as well as enlarging its domain of political influence in the international arena (Comintern) was undoubtedly the most influential. Originally set up as a ‘universal world revolutionary party’ in 1919, both its strategy and its tactics were guided by the principle of ‘world socialist revolution’. However, not long following its formation the Comintern metamorphosed into an institution defending the Stalinist policy of socialism in one country, only protecting the interests of the Soviet Union.

By Touraj Atabaki

This perspective offers interesting new insights in different gender relations, such as between: father and daughter, husband and wife, young wife and male in-laws, and the relations between women themselves: mother and daughter, wife and mother-in-law, and female friends. Banani does this by analysing various social roles played by the heroines in the novels of three great Bengali writers whose careers span more than half a century: Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay, Rabindranath Tagore, and Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay. Among the earliest novels analysed in this study are Bankim’s ‘Indra and Bishabhaktirahula’, both from 1873; the latest ones are Rabindranath’s ‘Logjagni’ (1929) and Sarat Chandra’s ‘Shrikanta’ (1917–1919). This broad time-span enables Banani to consider the political implications for Soviet internal and external affairs.

The Comintern Eastern Policy and Iran (1929–1933) is a well-written and thoroughly researched work. It is based on original materials obtained from archives in Russia, Georgia, and Azerbaijan. Moreover, the author’s acquaintance with a variety of languages enables her to utilize the pertinent sources in Persian, Turkish, and Russian as well as those in some Western European languages. This book can be highly recommended for students of Soviet history and political scientists seeking a broader understanding of the complexities that burdened the Bolsheviks in sustaining the first socialist state in history.

Solmaz Rustamova-Tohidi is a historian specializing in Iranian modern history at the Institute of Oriental Studies at the Azerbaijan Academy of Sciences. Her interests include the comparative analysis of-twentieth century political and social movements in Turkey and Iran as well as the former Soviet republics of Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan.

By Victor A. van Bijlert

The world of Indian women witnessed significant changes in the course of the nineteenth century. Patriarchal notions about lifelong protection and seclusion of women came under fire then and abolition of suttee, the pleas for widow remarriage, and the demands for female education were major issues that engaged public opinion. The position of Indian women also prominently figured in the novels of the period. In her study, Banani Mukhia explores the construction of female characters in fiction written by males.

By Bhaswati Bhattacharya

This book, the second by Chaudhury, to explore the Plassey conspiracy, presents more evidence in support of his thesis that it was engineered and encouraged by the British, who were able to persuade the discontented courtiers of the Bengal nawab to stick to their ‘project’ of revolution (p.9). As a result of the, the Communal and stable regimes in the region, Bengali in the early eighteenth century was a land of plenty. While Bengal became the dominant partner in the European companies’ Asiatic and European trade, there was also a major share in the export from the region and the import of bullion still belonged to Asian merchants (p.23–25). The author dismisses the claim that it was Siraj’s antagonism towards the English and his intention to drive them out of Bengal that were responsible for the commencement of hostilities between the nawab and the English. It was the attitude of the English, especially the rigidly and haughtily placed English governor of Calcutta, which caused of the outbreak of war against Siraj. Chaudhury asserts that there had not been an internal crisis – neither in the form of schism in the society nor in terms of economic decline – which would have caused and arguably legitimized British intervention.

‘Given the rivalry between the Asian merchants and their European counterparts, and the privileged position enjoyed by the former, there could be no question of collaboration between the two.’ The English wanted to replace Siraj in the interest of their private trade. There was a long but calculated transition period between late 1755 and 1675. When, for the first time, the necessity of a shift from peaceful trade to armed trade in India was first suggested, and the 1750s, when the servants of the English East India Company became set on conquering territories in India. Indeed, the Plassey Revolution was not a mere coincidence (chapter 5).

By Prof. Victor A. van Bijlert

The book is interesting not only because it offers discourses such as women’s studies, history of private life, sociology, pedagogy, and psychology. It may also serve as a model for similar ventures in the novels of the same period written in other Indian languages. The book has an appendix with summaries of all the novels discussed in the main text, an extensive bibliography, and an index.

“Given the rivalry between the Asian merchants and their European counterparts, and the privileged position enjoyed by the former, there could be no question of collaboration between the two.” The English wanted to replace Siraj in the interest of their private trade.