Continued.

Keeping an eye on a neighbor

ANDERS BJÖRNSSON

Sturessen, a German from the then Danish city of Altona, had, in his capacity as the head of government, tried to make the country modern in the spirit of the Enlightenment freedom for one and a half years in the early 1770s, but was tortured and killed by the forces of Reaction, his body publicly displayed. Sturessen is Henningsen’s man – a strong and energetic European who takes time by the forelock.

And in the same way, Denmark, in Henningsen’s interpretative framework, is the isles of missed opportunities. A man is, in a Peer Gyntesque sense, “sufficient unto oneself”, and that will do fine. It goes quite a long way. That Denmark, perhaps Europe’s most demilitarized country, has provided the military alliance NATO’s recent Secretary General – das lässt tief blicken. This book helps us keep our eyes open.

1 According to data from the OECD, Denmark has fallen on the list of prosperous countries and has been surpassed in recent years by Sweden, Australia, Austria, Ireland, and the Netherlands. The country is now in eleventh place. The main reason for the decline is low labor productivity in the economy. (Dagens Nyheter, December 24, 2005.)

2 Far from all commentators are as averse to the Danish EU-profile as Henningsen. Anglo-Saxon praise was received by the Danes in connection with the 2009 spring elections to the European Parliament. The Economist praised the Danish model for strengthening the influence of the national parliament in the decision-making of the EU, namely, summoning to the Folketing (the Danish Parliament) “government ministers every Friday to give them mandate for the following week’s meetings of national governments in the EU’s Council of Ministers. If Danish ministers wish to depart from this mandate in the course of negotiations in Brussels, they have to consult the Folketing’s European committee by telephone.” (June 6, 2009)
Reflections on the historiography of a reactionary era

on a large scale, and the former historiography was revised field after field. In contrast to the predictions some analysts in the West, the historians post-Soviet Russia demonstrated commitment and enthusiasm they came terms with the mythologization of country’s past. This pertained initially to reassessments of, and new input regarding, the history of Stalinism.

By tradition, most Russian historians are dedicated professional specialists in a single problem area during the bulk of their active research careers. The topic that they defend in their doctoral dissertation (doktorskaia dissertatsia) serves as the basis for further research in the same area. Strictly specialized Russian researchers have gradually begun writing generalizing and synthesizing works as well. Published archive documents in source volumes have expanded the opportunities for basic research. The so-called archive revolution and opening up to the outside world have been significant in helping them acquire new knowledge about the history of tsarist Russia and the Soviet Union. It has been customary for the last fifteen years to invite foreign historians to publish in the leading Russian professional journals. Most of the leading historians from Western Europe, Japan and the United States who specialize in Russian history have seen their work translated and included in the Russian historical debate. In the early 1990s, the fundamental works by Edward H. Carr, Robert Conquest and Richard Pipes, to mention only a few eminent scholars, appeared in mass print runs. In recent years, the popular histories on Stalinism, Gulag, and the World War II by Simon Montefiore, Anne Applebaum, and Anthony Beevor have likewise been translated, albeit without making the same impression in Russia as in Western Europe and the US. In the leading Russian publishing companies for historical works, e.g. Rosspen and AIRO-XXI, the renowned scholars Nicolas Werth, Jörg...
Continued. Reflections on the historiography of a reactionary era

Last year Russian economic historians have, under the editorship of Leonid Abalkin, come together to update the state of research after fifteen years of freedom from the dogmatic Marxist interpretations of the history of Russia’s economy and economic thinking. The result is a substantial and comprehensive encyclopedia that runs to nearly 3,000 pages and tends to offer longer articles on Russia’s economic history from the earliest times up until 1917. In their foreword, the editors indicate that it is still too soon to write a corresponding reference work about the Soviet period, 1917–1991.

Authors, actors, and journalists have also striven to offer the views on Russian history in ways that are more or less scientifically established, albeit sometimes more in the nature of straightforward popular history. Shining examples of such writers who have become known outside of Russia as well include Edward Radzinsky and Aleksandr Bushkov, who have compiled countless biographies of various tsars and prominent historical figures, from Ivan the Terrible to The Mad Monk, Rasputin.6 The 1970 Nobel Prize winner in literature, Alexander Solzhenitsyn, considered the task of depicting the historical roots and course of events of the Russian Revolution to be one of his life objectives. Solzhenitsyn continued to collect material on Russia’s past all the way from 1937 when, as a devout Marxist, he wrote the draft of “R-17”, to the 1980s, when he applied the finishing touches to The Red Wheel, while in the 1990s he even went so far as to tackle the sensitive issue of the history of the Jews in Russia from the late 1700s to the late 1970s.7 He viewed the mighty Gulag Archipelago as a preliminary study for other, equally important works.5 At some point in the early 2000s the author gained support for his idea of producing a history textbook about Russia that would clearly tie in to his view of the 1917 revolution as the great watershed in Russian history.

II.

A SCHOLASTIC TEXTBOOK must take into account that only 50 class hours are allotted to modern Russian history in the 11th grade (the final year of general education). This imposes heavy pedagogical demands in terms of presentation and choice of subjects and relevant facts, as well as assignments in which the pupils are to conduct individual or group discussions. All textbooks are vetted by the Ministry of Education before being either “approved” or “recommended” (the latter often with reference to pedagogical merits). Within academia there is also a tradition of other evaluative grounds for syntheses, general works about an era, a country, a war or a social change, the authors of which do not build on basic research, but are still assumed to be conversant with current research results.

Solzhenitsyn presented his concept for a new textbook about Russian history to Andrei Zubov, Professor of Religious History at the Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO). Zubov brought numerous like-minded people into the project. Zubov is known for his strong commitment to Russia’s “coming to terms with the past”. When Nikolai II and the royal family were formally acquitted in 2006 of the charges brought against them by the Bolsheviks in July 1918, Zubov demanded that Lenin be posthumously charged as the one ultimately responsible for the murder of the royal family. He had the support of the vice-director of the Academy of Sciences’ Institute of Russian History, Vladimir Lavrov, who explained in a letter to the Russian government that not only should Lenin’s mausoleum be torn down and his embalmed corpse removed, but the entire necropolis in Moscow’s Red Square had to be eliminated as an unsuitable relic of a totalitarian regime that had oppressed the people for many decades.8

What neither Zubov nor Lavrov took into account were the sensitive issues concerning descendents’ burial rights to the remains not only of Party leaders but also of the cosmonauts, field marshals and scientists who have been given state burials and laid to rest near the Kremlin Wall. Nor does Zubov’s emotional article indicate what he thinks about descendents’ burial rights to the mass graves in Red Square for the hundreds of members of the Red Guard who fell in the Battle of Moscow during the Bolshevik seizure of power in 1917.9 Their pronouncements provide some idea of how Istoriia Rossi sl XX vek has been presented as a strong anticomunist reaction to the former predomi-nant ideology. The authors who can be identified as professional historians include Aleksei Kaba–Marza and Sergei Volkov. The chapter on the atomic weapon project was written by a specialist in nuclear weapons technology, while the chapter on the space program was written by a doctor of technology from Saratov. The art history section of the book was written by the director of...
the Andrei Rublyov Museum, Gennady Popov. The other coauthors are, however, neither historians nor experts, as is reflected in both form and content. The authors of the book share the belief that “communism was catastrophic for Russia and the entire world”, but they view the causes of communism and its consequences for Russia in different ways, and sometimes portray the Soviet society in terms that indicate that it cannot even be considered to have been socialist in the usual sense of the word. In that regard, *Istoria Rossii XX veka* is less sensational for a Western reader, since practically all American textbooks and most other syntheses and instructional materials have been written from roughly the same perspective. In France, a more independent tradition of Slavistics and a Russophile spirit after the Second World War fostered a tradition which, in the context of post-1945 textbooks, adopted a paradigm that, even if not communist, was pro-Soviet.11

Solzhenitsyn proofread various chapters of the book. Each coauthor was clearly given free rein to write as much or as little as he or she wished, and the number of pages on some subjects piled up far beyond the number to be expected in a textbook. Some eras are given more space than others, with no actual justification being provided by the authors. Solzhenitsyn was displeased, distanced himself from the book and forbade Zubov from using his name. On May 17, 2008, Solzhenitsyn wrote that he had agreed to support the project of creating a new school textbook about Russia in the 20th century. But when, under your editorship, this project assumed concrete forms that corrupted the original intent, I saw that I could no longer identify with it. Specifically, I do not agree with its unchecked expanded scope, or its structure and form, or with many of the ideas and assessments it contains. I therefore ask that my name not be associated with your work.12

**however, at the moscow presentation of Istoria Rossii XX veka on November 18, 2009, Zubov took care to point out Solzhenitsyn's input, stating that the "concept" for the book had been formulated “in close cooperation with Solzhenitsyn”. Although Solzhenitsyn's and Zubov's original aim had been to write a new course text for use in schools or universities, the final result became something else entirely. The book has failed as a textbook for the general Russian 11-year school, and so far has only been approved in history courses at the St. Petersburg Spiritual Academy (Dukhovnaia Akademiia).

The size (1,800 pages) and the scope of the content make it impossible for one person to review *Istoriia Rossii XX vek* in the customary way.13 The 50-page introduction, “How Russia came to the 20th century”, that begins in Rus in the 800s and offers a sweeping overview up to the late 1800s, has a peculiarly retrospective character. Given such a compressed format, a plethora of simplifications is unavoidable. The structure and characterization of the rest of the book differ from the traditional approach in certain respects. It is divided in sections (chasti), chapters (glavy) and hundreds of sub-chapters. The first section, “The last tsarism”, is divided in three chapters with 69 sub-chapters, leading the narrative up to the February 1917 Revolution (pp. 62–369). The second section, “Russia in revolution 1917–1922”, devotes one chapter to “The provisional government, March–October 1917” (pp. 393–468). The seizure of power by the Bolsheviks in November that same year and the ensuing civil war are covered in a 300-page section entitled “The War for Russia” (I, pp. 469–765) in forty-seven sub-chapters. This is followed by the first book’s third section on “Russia and the establishment of the Communist regime, 1923–1939” with thirty-five sub-chapters. Unfortunately, many specialists will find a lot in every section of the book that seems disputable and relates only one of many historical schools of thought or individual historians.

*Volume II* is divided into three large blocks. The fourth section is entitled “Russia during the Second World War and the preparatio ns for the Third World War (1939–1953)”. Chapter one discusses the period from September 1939 to June 1941 (II, pp. 3–37), that is, from the negotiations in Moscow between the Soviet Union and Germany up to the annexation of the Baltic states and what is traditionally known as “The Great Patriotic War, 1941–1945”, but which Zubov instead calls “The Soviet-Nazi War 1941–1945 and Russia”, thereby emphasizing that it was supposedly not a war for Russia’s genuine cause but merely that of the communist state, and second, to accommodate the Vaslov Army and others who fought for their Russia while at the same time fighting the Soviet regime (II, pp. 37–187). The post-war reconstruction period is discussed in chapter three under the thought-provoking heading: “Russia and Stalin’s preparations for the Third World War that never came” (II, pp. 188–291). The post-Stalinist society, its ideology, administrative system and crisis economy, as well as the dissolution of and resistance to the regime, are analyzed in the fifth section, “Russia in the degeneration of Communist totalitarianism 1953–1991” (II, pp. 291–510). After a brief description of Gorbachev’s reform attempts, the sixth and final section of the two volumes, entitled “From the Soviet Union to Russia’s rebirth, 1992–2007” (II, pp. 579–810), offers a comprehensive chronicle of the most recent events in Russian history.
reveal whether the society tends to realize “the good” or “the bad”. This would seem an overly vague goal for anyone wishing to write a “History of 20th-Century Russia”.

Zubov generally underestimates the pioneering work that has been done by Russian and other historians over the last 20 years. One looks in vain for any of the path-breaking works of the 1990s concerning the victims and agents of repression during the Red Terror from 1918 to 1921 and more recent contributions on Stalinist repressions in the 1930s. Zubov believes that the news value of the book lies in the fact that it is not interested mainly in the major actors, but also addresses lesser-known individuals who shaped history. The two-volume work is truly wonderful, mixing with biographies, excerpts from memoirs, diaries, and other private testimonies. However, as strange as it may seem, Zubov ignores in its entirety the social history research conducted with an emphasis on the history of everyday life (*istoriia povsednevnoi zhizni*), which was consolidated after 1992, and in which Andrei Sokolov’s Center at the Institute of Russian History occupies a prime position.16

Zubov’s own assessments deviate from what the coauthors in question have written. For instance, the author of the section about the autumn of 1939 and the first months of the Second World War presents Stalin’s considerations in terms of *realpolitik*. But Zubov, as the person responsible for the final version of the book, claims in an insertion (II, p. 14) that if one views the Communist regime as having been illegitimate right from the start, then it is no longer possible to speak of any legitimate claims on the part of the Soviets in 1939 vis-à-vis western Ukraine or western Belarus, both of which were incorporated into the Soviet Union after the crushing of Poland.

For Zubov, “Russia” refers not only to the geographical/administrative element within the Soviet Union, but also to the entire cultural sphere, including the Russian diaspora. Perhaps one of the best features of the book is that it includes accounts of how the Russian groups in exile not only adapted to life in China, Serbia, Germany, France or elsewhere, but also passed on the Russian cultural heritage and the traditions of the Russian Orthodox Church. The philosophers, historians and journalists who found themselves on the losing side after the 1917 Revolution and the Russian Civil War and then went into exile were able to get published or even noticed in the Soviet Union only in exceptional cases. But in recent years, much of what was written in exile by Russian thinkers, authors and others has entered the social debate through new editions issued by publishing houses in Russia. The first large emigrant colonies in Berlin and Paris in the 1920s have been the focus of special studies, as have the later waves of Russian exiles that occurred after 1945 and in the 1970s. Correspondence between tsarist Russian diplomats in exile and generals from the White Army has been published in heavily annotated source versions. In Zubov’s work these Russians are placed in their chronological context, and their assessments of the development of the Soviet Union are presented. Of particular interest are the ways in which the various emigrant groups aligned themselves at the outbreak of the Second World War, and in 1941, when Nazi Germany attacked the Soviet Union.

IV.

THE QUESTION IS WHETHER

Andrei Zubov and all his coauthors can explain why, in 1917, it was Russia in particular that became the first country in which the originally 19th-century socialist ideas were tested.

Zubov’s simplified reconstruction is presented in the section on the World War I. Here we “learn” that Vladimir I. Lenin paid two secret visits to Berlin in June and July of 1914, and reached an agreement with highly placed military officials to undermine the Russian home front during the coming war. The leader of the Bolsheviks allegedly received 70 million German marks in return. The imminent events thus came under the control of Kaiser Wilhelm and the German General Staff. The military in Berlin had prepared a plan to “carry out the Russian Revolution” as far back as 1916! But events forced them to postpone their initiative for one year, until Lenin had returned to Russia. Zubov explains that the spontaneous workers’ revolt in Petrograd in July 1917 was instigated by Lenin on the directives of the German General Staff in order to stem the Russian Army’s summer offensive. Germany had nearly lost patience with Lenin’s party by October 1917, having gotten nothing in return for the millions of marks invested. According to Zubov, this was why Lenin began demanding that the Bolsheviks make a new attempt to seize power in October (Vol. I, pp. 137, 332, 350, 365–366, 404–412, 459–460).

For Zubov, it is completely logical that the regime in the Soviet Union ever since 1917 be characterized as illegitimate (*nezakonnyi*). The support that Russian socialist revolutionaries, anarchists and Bolsheviks received from Austria and Germany has been the subject of various studies. But no one has distorted the aspirations of the revolutionary movement of the 1910s as Zubov has.17 *Istoriia Rossii XX veka* explains that Lenin had, by 1914, become a traitor to his country, in the pay of the enemy and working as an agent of German influence. Up until Gorbachev’s “new thinking”, the Communists were driven by their aspiration of subjugating the Russian people and spreading their regime throughout the world.

Among the more peculiar elements in Zubov’s work is the Catholic legend of some children in the Portuguese village Fatima who during 1916 and 1917 received revelations from the Mother of God on a number of occasions. Lucia, who was ten years old at the time, would then recount how the Mother of God had spoken to the children on the 13th of each month in 1917 from March to October and, oddly enough, warned them of what disaster was to befall Russia. Neither the ten-year-old Lucia nor her younger siblings at first understood what the word “Russia” referred to. When they told of their experiences, the press began writing about this unusual occurrence in Fatima. Huge numbers of people gathered to attend what might be the next revelation. Those present even claimed to have observed strange phenomena, such as the sun starting to move back and forth across the heavens. On October 13 the Madonna was said to have explained to the children that the people in Russia had not improved or prayed for the forgiveness of their sins. As a result, the country was now to suffer a major calamity (I, pp. 455–458). The Catholic Church granted the Miracle of Fatima official status in 1967. The reader will no doubt wonder what Zubov and his coauthors intend to explain with regard to Russian history in the 20th century by bringing up the well-known legend of the Madonna at Fatima. Does this open the way to the idea that higher powers somehow “intervened” in the events in Russia? On the other hand, Zubov’s accounts of the Orthodox Church’s relationship with the Tsar and of the Communist regime’s fight against Christianity and other religions during the interwar period are objective and mostly matter-of-fact.

After these different takes on what is traditionally known as the Russian Revolution of 1917, the reader will not be surprised to find that Zubov devotes a 300-page section of the book — “The War for Russia” (*Voyna za Rossiiu*) — to the Russian Civil War and the efforts of foreign interventionist troops to destroy the Bolshevik regime between 1918 and 1921. This section reflects,
a greater extent than most of the others, how the authors have in fact incorpo-
rated both the classic accounts written by the White generals in exile and the
numerous documents and archival publications in recent years that have shed
light on the White Armies and on conditions in the areas that were periodically
controlled by the White side.

The execution of the Tsar’s family on 17 July 1918 is described in detail,
but approached in an unusual way with respect to German considera-
tions. Because the executed Tsar had not approved the Brest-Litovsk Peace
Treaty of 1918, but rather had clung to his belief that the White forces would
retake those areas and continue the war against Germany, Kaiser Wilhelm sup-
pessedly gave his consent to allow Lenin to execute Nikolai II and the members
of his family. This curious twist of other, usually anti-Semitic, myths surrounding
the execution of the Tsar’s family will certainly give rise to doubts on Zubov’s
general worldviews.

The authors’ accounts of the vari-
ous armies on the White side, and their
attempts to offer the unwillingness of
the Russian people to fight for their
country, their lack of any real sense of
nationality and their tendency to think
mainly of their own best interests as a
comprehensive explanation for why the
Red Army was victorious on all fronts
will, along with many similar “generaliza-
tions” and moralizations, undoubt-
edly put Zubov’s Istoriia Rossii XX vek in
a category all by itself.

Zubov’s lack of elementary source-
critical thinking is clearly evident in that
he could not bring himself to include
even the serious discussions being con-
ducted regarding the Red and White
Terror. Zubov has failed to include re-
cent research, e.g. by A. Litvin, I. Ratko-
vskii and M. Shilovskii, on the campaign
to rid the country of the Bolshevik
regime’s worst enemies. Zubov instead
ridiculously provides, without reservation,
ol old myths and widely inaccurate figures
on the extent of repression against
pious, teachers, doctors, the military,
the police, peasants and workers. The
figures were obtained from the November
7, 1923, (sic!) edition of the Edin-
burgh newspaper The Scotsman, which
however “failed to provide any source”
(i, pp. 552–553). It is said that “history is
written by the winners”, and that histo-
riography is consistently one-sided and
tendentious. But what is presented in
this work to describe how “the more noble, more hon-
est and more patriotic part” of the Russian population
lost the battle for Russia during the Civil War falls into
the realm of preconceived notions.

The widespread famine of 1921–1922 is referred to
as “the planned famine” or “killing by famine” (golodomor in Russian). Zubov adopts a controversial
interpretation which was originally introduced by
nationalist Ukrainian historians in Canada in the 1980s
and again in Ukraine after 1991 to paint the famine in
Ukraine 1932–1933 (holodomor in Ukrainian) as an act
of genocide that was intentionally controlled by the
Kremlin in order to exterminate the Ukrainian peas-
antry. Historians outside of Russia are very divided
on this interpretation, although no serious scholar
denies the famine of 1932–1933. The documentation at
hand hardly lends itself to this genocide thesis. First,
the catastrophic famine of 1921–1922 was attributable
not only to Stalin’s requisition policies, but also to the
reduction in the amount of land under cultivation and
a severely dry summer in 1932, which destroyed large
parts of the grain crop in Ukraine and southern Rus-
sia. In addition, there is no evidence that the famine
was especially severe solely in Ukraine. Zubov thus
applies the term golodomor to the catastrophic famine
of 1921–1922 as well, thereby parting ways with the
majority of historians and economic historians, who
certainly do accept that the bad conditions in the rural
villages were attributable to many years of requisition
policies. However, none of them has denied that it was
the exceptionally dry summer in 1931 that made the
famine a reality, or that the Bolshevik regime did what
it could to try and relieve the distress, and accepted
foreign aid for those affected. On these grounds,
Zubov’s use of the term golodomor would appear to be
incorrect.

Zubov’s work is, in certain respects, in line with a
neo-patriotic interpretation prevalent among Russian
journalists and political scientists, who describe the
period immediately following the seizure of power by
the Bolsheviks as being significantly bloodier than has
been customary in Soviet works. Lenin’s reign from
1917 up to the early 1920s is considered, not only by
means of the Red Terror and acts of war, to have im-
posed a significantly higher cost in terms of human life
than did Stalin’s “top-down revolution” of the early
1930s. Zubov’s work is consistent with that of historian
Natalia Narotchnitskaïa, who repudiates Lenin and his
era in especially strong terms, and is prepared to put
forth the most hyperbolic data about the persecutions
during the early 1920s.69

The description of the NEP period is comparatively
succinct, and addresses only the most important eco-

omy debates and the conflicts within the Orthodox
Church during the 1920s and up until Stalin’s “top-
down revolution” of 1929–1932.

Zubov resurrects the legend, abandoned by schol-
ars, that a group of “clear thinking” communists at
the 17th Party Congress in 1934 approached Leningrad
Party Secretary Kirov in an attempt to remove Stalin
as the Party’s general secretary. This legend was circu-
lated in the Khroushchev era, and may be seen as a fab-

Continued. Reflections on the historiography of a reactionary era

present in the 1922 statistics but not 10 years later is attributable to repression by the GPU, or security police, and to the great famine of 1932–1933. Zubov attempts to tie the problem to the notorious law passed in April 1935 that lowered the age of criminal liability to 12 and also extended the death penalty to minors. Zubov claims that the purpose of the law was to give the secret police free rein to execute street urchins (I, pp. 927–928). This is, of course, not the case, but rather has been extracted from the most reactionary legends that have circulated about Stalinist terror ever since the Nazis escalated their “Judeo-Bolshevism” propaganda in the 1930s. No historical works are even tied to this section, although there are references to defected agent Walter Krivinsky and his 1939 “memoirs”, co-written with the journalist Isaac don Levine. The reader will no doubt wonder why Zubov indicates that there were hundreds of thousands of such executions, or even more. The well-known Latvian documentary The Soviet Story by Edvins Snore likewise absurdly asserts that the “street urchin problem” of the 1930s was solved through mass executions. Other sources must be consulted to see how trade schools and daycare centers gave “society’s unfortunate children” a second chance in life. The theories of Anton Makarenko and others on child-rearing helped tens of thousands of street urchins return to society during the interwar years.

Western and Russian experts have analyzed the actual extent of the criminality of under-age groups in the 1930s. Russian historian Oleg Khlebnikov has provided a weighty and thoughtful background to the change in the law, its origins, and its application. Of the roughly 110,000 street urchins arrested, approximately two-thirds were restored to their parents or relatives, some 30,000 were placed in orphanages, and around 10,000 were actually sentenced to lengthy terms in the camps. On the other hand, very few minors were sentenced to death. The new law elicted strong protests in the West at the time, and Stalin tried to persuade French author Romain Rolland that it had been adopted mainly as a scare tactic. Stalin’s repression of the cadres in the Party and the Army and the mass operations of 1937–1938 are among the most thoroughly analyzed topics of research in recent decades. One might expect this to be evident in a synthesis such as Zubov’s book. The Great Terror of 1937 can be traced to two initiatives on the part of the top political leadership. First, a series of national operations in which supposedly untrustworthy individuals of the same ethnic origins as were present in the countries neighboring Russia (Poland, Latvia, Finland, Korea, etc.) were subjected to repression, banishment and punishment (Gulag or execution). Second, a mass operation that was somewhat misleadingly named the “anti-kulak operation”. Collectively these NKVD operations accounted for the bulk of the nearly 700,000 executions that were carried out in 1937–1938. But Zubov introduces, with regard to the Great Terror, a historical background that is unknown to the research community. The 1937 census revealed that the majority of the Russian people still characterized themselves as believing Christians. Zubov claims, alone among Russian historians, that the Great Terror was focused primarily on the various groups of believers in the Soviet Union.
colonels outshone the most prominent series of battles that demanded the sacrifice of soldiers, Zubov repeats the description and dried character. Like many others, Zubov’s account of his book. Similar to the versions of some other writers, Zubov’s account of the attack on June 22, 1941, is reflected in reports from its own agents from smart officers, the failure of the Soviet leadership to disentangle intelligence reports from its own agents from smart German disinformation, and eventually Stalin’s guilt in failing to heighten the alert in the final weeks before the Nazi attack on June 22, 1941, is reflected in Zubov’s book. Similar to the versions of some other writers, Zubov’s account of the course of the war from 1941 up until the Battle of Berlin in 1945 has a cut-and-dried character. Like many others who limit their perspective to “history from below”, i.e. that of the individual soldiers, Zubov repeats the description of putatively meaningful tactical battles that demanded the sacrifice of thousands of men. The fact that, in a series of strategic operations (Stalingrad and Kursk in 1943, Belorussia in 1944), the Red Army marshals, generals and colonels outshone the most prominent field commanders in the Wehrmacht should be made clear in any synthesis, and here Zubov could have made significantly better use of the research done by Western and Russian military historians in recent years.

Zubov presents the period after 1953 in a more conventional manner, and his account can be read as a standardized depiction of the Cold War era. Middle-aged and older Russian readers will find isolated deficiencies in Zubov’s multifaceted account of living standards, altered housing conditions and new or elusive career opportunities under Khrushchev and Brezhnev. What is valuable in Zubov’s work are his accounts of how the Russian exile groups (in the US and Western Europe) were able to begin establishing serious contacts with freethinkers and “dissidents” in the Soviet Union, starting in the late 1960s. Both international conflicts and internal Soviet complications, particularly the dissident movement, are described in vibrant and dynamic fashion. On the other hand, a reader will look in vain for connections to the debates that have raged between Russian and Western historians, particularly intense since glasnost in the 1980s and following the opening of the Russian archives in the 1990s.

\section*{Jennart Samuelson}

1. Nikolai Alekseevich Ivnitskii, Klassovaia borba v derevne i likvidatsiia kulachestva kak klassa (1929—1932 gg.) [The class struggle in the countryside and the liquidation of the kulaks as a class, 1929—1932], Moscow 1972; Kollektivizatsiia i raskulachivanie (nachalo 30-kh godov) [Collectivization and dekulakization, 1929—1932], Moscow 1996; Represiia’naia politika sovetskoi vlasti v derevne (1928—1933 gg.) [The repressive policy in the countryside by the Soviet Power, 1928—1933], Moscow 2000; Sudba raskulachennykh v SSR, Moscow 2004; Golod 1932—1933 godov v SSR (Ukraine, Severnyi Kavkaz, Poroishhe, Centralnaiia Chornomornaia obslast, Zapadnyi Sibiri, Ural) [The fate of the dekulakized peasants in the USSR]; Golod ... Ural [The 1932—1933 Famine in the USSR (Ukraine, Northern Caucasus, the Volga Region, the Central Black-Earth Region, Western Siberia, the Urals)], Moscow 2009.

2. For an overview of the more recent Russian historiography on part of the Soviet period, refer to John Keep’s and Alex L’vov’s excellent overviews of the history of Stalinism: Stalinism: Russian and Western Views at the Turn of the Century, London & New York 2005; idem, Epokha Stalin v Rossii. Sovremennoi istoriografii, Moscow 2009.

3. See here the radical re-interpretation of the Soviet period by Efim Gimpelson, Rossia na perelome epoch: Omsvylenie XX stoletiia rossiiskoi istorii [Russia at the turns of epochs: Reflections on the Russia’s 20th century history], Moscow 2006. Among Gimpelson’s earlier publications on the Soviet system of management can be mentioned Veliki Oktiabr i stanovlenie sovetskoi systemy upravleniia narodnym khoziaistvom (oktiabr 1917—1920) [The Great October Revolution and the formation of the Soviet system of management of the people’s economy (October 1917—1920)], Moscow 1977.

4. Andrei N. Sakharov (red.), IstoriiaRossii s drevenishikh vremen do kontsa XVII veka, [A history of Russia from eldest time to the end of the 17th century], Moscow 2003; idem, Istoriia Rossii s nachala XVIII veka do nachala XX veka [A history of Russia from the early 18th century to the early 20th century], Moscow 2001 and later editions. See also P. V. Leonov (ed.), IstoriiaRossii s drevenishikh vremen do kontsa XX veka [A history of Russia from eldest times to the end of the 20th century], Moscow 2002, for its discussion of decisive historical turning points.

5. Ekonomicheskaiia istoriia Rossii s drevenishikh vremeni do 1917. Entsiklopediia [Russia’s economic history from eldest times to 1917: An encyclopedia], edited by Leonid Borodkin and others, Moscow 2009.


7. Alexander I. Solzhenitsyn, Dvesti let vmoste (1755—1955) [Two hundred years together, 1755—1955], Moscow 2001; idem, Dvesti let vmoste [Two hundred years together], Moscow 2002.


10. Regarding the sensitive issue of burial rights, which is hardly ever discussed in connection with demands from Russian politicians to tear down the Lenin Mausoleum, see Aleksii Abramov, Pravda i vmyeso o kremlevskom nekropole i manzole [The truth and lies on the Kremlin Necropolis and Mausoleum], Moscow 2005.


13. The Harvard history professor Richard Pipes was among the first to loud Zubov’s book as something radically new in Russian historiography, compare radio RFE/RL http://www.rferl.org/content/A_New_Russian_History_That’s_Sensational_For_The_Right_Reactions/1895990.html (accessed on 2010-05-25), and as quoted by Sophia Kishskaya, “A history of 20th century Russia, Warts and All”, New York Times, December 3, 2009. However, the present reviewer seriously doubts that Professor Pipes, on closer inspection of Zubov’s two-volume History, would approve of its presentation of the 1917 Revolution or endorse the explanations on the Stalinist “revolution from above in the 1930s”. Furthermore, Pipes’s sweeping generalizations of an alleged lack of attention by Russia’s professional historians to their Western colleagues bear little resemblance to their interrelation with foreign scholars in the recent two to three decades.

14. One of MGIMO’s vice rectors has even taken exception to the book as being directly unsuitable for students, based on the excessive number of dubious interpretations and pure factual errors encumbering it.

15. Cf. Lewis Siegelbaum & Andrei Sokolov, Sta-
Research on Russia from a Finnish horizon.
Avoiding collapse by framing institutions

Russia Lost or Found?
Patterns and Trajectories
Edited by Hiski Haukka and Sinikukka Saari

Helsinki: Ministry of Foreign Affairs & Edita 2009
217 pages

In the summer of 2009, the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs arranged a conference to mark Finland’s annexation to the Russian Empire 200 years earlier. The volume Russia Lost or Found? is based on papers from the conference, written by six Finnish and three foreign scholars. They analyze present-day Russia and its domestic and foreign policies from economic, political, and historical perspectives in an effort to better understand what is currently happening in Russia.

The geographical proximity of Finland to Russia posed a problem for Finland and set limits on Finnish politics throughout the last century. This proximity also influenced Finnish research on Russia, which, up to the early 1970s, avoided any serious study of Soviet society. The ever-intensifying economic ties at that time created a need for knowledge and stimulated research. But in his overview of Finnish Russian studies, Raimo Väyrynen notes that such research did not actively commence until the 1990s. As a member of the EU, Finland made a commitment to conduct research on Russia; the Aleksanteri Institute was founded in 1996 as the hub of a research network, and the Finnish Academy provided generous funding. A number of research centers with a focus on Russia developed. Finland’s proximity to Russia now became an asset.

Analyses of Russia tend to share a common weakness. Researchers and journalists often base their work on declarations by the Russian government rather than actual policies and the results of these policies. This book also contains contributions where the conclusions are based mainly on declared policy. It is, in my view, difficult to describe Russian foreign policy as successful in the first decades of the 21st century if you follow what has occurred. The rhetoric of Russian leaders may have become more militant, but Russia has in reality become politically isolated, unable to develop an economic policy that is attractive to states on former Soviet territory, and has experienced several foreign policy setbacks.

The authors have mostly avoided the trap of declarative policies, or historical determinism, generalizations or schematic trend extrapolations. They exhibit methodological awareness. The book focuses on the structures, institutions (in the sense of ground rules), processes, and actors that could contribute to a change of the system.

The main message of the book is that Russia is in need of profound structural reforms. A number of contributors make it clear that the Russian political and economic system has run aground. They emphasize the severity of the situation by noting that the systems lacks incentives for change. Those in Russia who could have an impact have no personal interest in change, while those who want to change the system have no influence. The relative prosperity that resulted from the high world-market prices for energy products in the early 21st century made the small group of people who controlled natural resources extremely wealthy, while a portion of the surplus trickled down to the population and contributed only to a certain increase in the standard of living.

Whenever a single natural resource so totally dominates the income of a country like energy in the case of Russia, it always becomes a curse. In Russia it is even worse, says Alexander Etkind, who characterizes the situation as a “dual curse of raw materials”. According to Etkind, the Russian regime is dominated by old-fashioned geopolitical thinking, and winks at the soft sectors in the society. The demographic trends are frightening, with extremely high mortality rates, a bad healthcare system, an under-financed educational system, and a totally inadequate social safety net. Living conditions are unnecessarily harsh for many Russians, which explains the extremely high levels of alcohol consumption. Etkind asserts that a commitment to soft sectors has played an important role for positive economic development in many countries.

The “curse” inherent in the dominance of one natural resource derives from the fact that energy extraction employs only a small part of the population (1.6 percent of the workforce), and occurs in isolation. It is controlled by only a few oligarchs, state officials, and politicians, who also control the welfare revenues and their distribution. This elite has no personal interest in improving the quality of the workforce and its standard of living, or in investing in other industries. For them, it is enough to make the necessary investment in the energy sector. The rest is used for consumption or to buy property in the West. Nor does the elite have any interest in coming to grips with corruption, since that is part of the system. It permits no opposition to its policies, and expands the security apparatus. Moreover, says Etkind, the population as a whole also prioritizes private consumption, maintains a passive attitude, and does not seek change.

So is the picture completely bleak? Soili Nysten-Haarala hopes that the actors in the market economy, the companies, will be agents of change. When formal institutions are weak, and laws and regulations are not enforced, informal institutions (practices, attitudes, unregulated processes) tend to take over. Such informal institutions have a long tradition in Russia, and they have en-