

## Continued. Keeping an eye on a neighbor



ANDERS BJÖRNSSON

Editor-in-chief of *Baltic Worlds*. Has contributed to Nils Erik Forsgård, *Maktbalans och stormaktskrig 1722–1814: Kriget om Östersjön V* [Balance of power and Great Power wars 1722–1814: The wars for the Baltic Sea V] (2008), edited the anthology *Skandinaviska vägval: Det framtida norsk-svenska samarbetet* [Scandinavian routes: The future of Norwegian-Swedish cooperation] (2008) together with Bjørn Magnus Berge, and published the book *Palatset som Finland räddade* [The Palace that Finland rescued] (2009).

ness or indifference; but it is indeed difficult to impress a Dane!

NOW, BERND HENNINGSEN has not lampooned the Danes here.<sup>2</sup> On the contrary, Henningsen's method is both empathetic and sympathetic. Thus he can simultaneously be honest and unreserved. He recognizes the many features of the Danish society that must arouse admiration and perhaps also are worthy of imitation. The Danish welfare system is flexible and decentralized. If "The Law of Jante" – according to the Danish-Norwegian novelist Aksel Sandemose's dictate, that "you should not believe that you are anything" – has become something of the "goals" clause of the Kingdom of Denmark, and rules out feats in the present, it has also given rise to a healthy pragmatism and a consensual atmosphere in society as a whole. Despite the kingdom's having been amputated in war after war, there is very little that has broken in the actual core of the country. There is an institutional inertia or continuity that the Danes have been able to fall back on even in adversity – they have allowed themselves to be thoughtful instead of getting carried away. Mediocrity is the philosophy of the middle class, and Denmark the showpiece society of the bourgeois middle-class.

IN SOME SENSE, Denmark is still Scandinavia's bridge to Europe, though perhaps less so than when there was no fixed link between Skåne and Zealand (Danish: *Sjælland*). Traveling from Malmö to Copenhagen can be a circuitous route for those trying to reach the Continent; on the other hand, that large parts of the Skåne landscape have been integrated into the Danish labor market has become obvious and can be seen as a return to a previous state of normalcy. In his little book, Henningsen makes it clear to the reader the kind of richness Danish culture – in particular during the 1800s, the period of state bankruptcy and humiliating retreats – has constantly been able to offer: the two golden ages, with Søren Kierkegaard and Georg Brandes as fixed stars, belong without question to the common European cultural heritage. And yet: Kierkegaard published his important works under pseudonyms, and Brandes, as a Jew, went into a multiyear exile in Berlin. Were they too great for the ordinary Dane? Johann Friedrich

Struensee, 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. Struensee 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 tiefblicken*. This book helps us keep our eyes open.

anders björnsson

- 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, 2009.)
- 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)



ILLUSTRATION: RAGNI SVENSSON

## A new textbook.

THE 1990S WERE a golden age for professional historians in Russia. Various "veterans" of the 1960s "thaw" (*ottepel'*) resurfaced with publications on subjects about which they could not have published anything during the paralyzing "stagnation" (*zastoi*) ushered in by Brezhnev's inept re-Stalinization efforts in 1965. Following the primarily journalistic efforts of the *glasnost* era, archive-based research began to be published



**Andrei Zubov**  
 (ed. and author)  
**Istoriia Rossii**  
**XX vek. 1894–1939**  
**Istoriia Rossii**  
**XX vek. 1939–2007**

[The history of Russia:  
 The 20<sup>th</sup> century. 1894–  
 1939; The history of  
 Russia: The 20<sup>th</sup> century.  
 1939–2007]  
 Moscow: Astrel 2009  
 1,023+829 pages

## Reflections on the historiography of a reactionary era

on a large scale, and the former historiography was revised in field after field. In contrast to the predictions of some analysts in the West, the historians in post-Soviet Russia demonstrated commitment and enthusiasm as they came to terms with the mythologization of the 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 disser-

tation (*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

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**LENNART SAMUELSON**

Associate professor of economic history at the Stockholm Institute of Transitional Economics (SITE), Stockholm School of Economics. His recent research projects concern the history of the Soviet military-industrial complex from the 1920s to the Cold War era, including a case-study monograph, *Tankograd*, which is based on archival research on the defense industries in the Cheliabinsk region (published in Swedish by SNS in 2007, in Russian by Rosspen in 2009 and in English by Palgrave Macmillan in 2011). In the academic year 2010–2011, he is Waern visiting professor at the Department of History of the University of Gothenburg.

Baberowski, Marc Junge and Andrea Graziosi have regularly published translations of their books. The economic historians Robert W. Davies, Mark Harrison and Paul Gregory have, together with Russians scholars and PhD students, carried out several research projects on the Stalinist command economy and the Gulag camp system.

Agrarian historian Nikolai Ivnitskii (born 1922) offers an illustrative example of what first became possible only under post-Soviet conditions. Only in the wake of *glasnost* could Ivnitskii resume his research on forced collectivization in the 1930s, a subject he had begun to research back in the 1960s, before being stopped. In his first monograph in 1972 on “class warfare in rural villages and the liquidation of the kulaks as a class”, he succeeded in conveying a more accurate picture of the violent transformation of the rural villages thanks only to his use of Aesopian language. However, the subject was subsequently declared taboo. After the breakup of the Soviet Union, Ivnitskii resurfaced with no fewer than five works that provide a comprehensive picture of collectivization and dekulakization, of the role of the secret police in the persecution of the “kulaks”, of the “kulak families” who were banished by the thousands to “special towns” in Northern Russia and Siberia and, finally, of the catastrophic famine that struck both Ukraine and large parts of Russia and Kazakhstan in 1932–1933.<sup>1</sup>

Corresponding renascent basic research was conducted by historians both younger and older into practically every aspect of modern Russian history: political and social life in late-tsarist Russia, the events of 1917, the Civil War from 1918 to 1921, the peasant revolt against the Bolshevik regime, through the entire Soviet period and up to the history of everyday life in the 1960s and the dissent movement that was emerging at that time.<sup>2</sup> Conditions, which include opened archives and extensive research using primary sources, are thus favorable for new syntheses of Russian history. At the turn of the millennium, many “veterans” evinced radical new ways of thinking about the entire preceding century, after having seemingly been fettered by the “Communist Party line” up until 1991.<sup>3</sup> Every university of note in Russia, including the Russian Academy of Sciences’ Institute of Russian History, has presented editions of

new, general handbooks that present the country’s history from the earliest times to the 2000s in customary scientific fashion. Particularly noteworthy is academy member Andrei Nikolaevich Sakharov’s two-volume history, which has been published in several editions in recent years.<sup>4</sup>

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 lengthier articles about Russia’s economic history from the earliest times up until 1917.<sup>5</sup> 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 their 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.<sup>6</sup>

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.<sup>7</sup> He viewed the mighty *Gulag Archipelago* as a preliminary study for other, equally important works.<sup>8</sup> 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.



**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 eval-

uative 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.<sup>9</sup>

What neither Zubov nor Lavrov took into account were the sensitive issues concerning descendants’ 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 descendants’ 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.<sup>10</sup>

Their pronouncements provide some idea of how *Istoriia Rossii XX vek* has been presented as a strong anticommunist reaction to the former predominant ideology. The authors who can be identified as professional historians include Aleksei Kara–Murza 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, *Istoriia 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 Russophilic 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.<sup>11</sup>

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 20<sup>th</sup> 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.<sup>12</sup>**

**HOWEVER, AT THE MOSCOW** presentation of *Istoriia Rossii XX vek* 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.<sup>13</sup> The 50-page introduction, “How Russia came to the 20<sup>th</sup> 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 chapterization of the rest of the book differ from the traditional approach in certain respects. It is divided in sections (*chasti*), chapters (*glavy*) and numbered sub-chapters. The first section, “The last tsardom”, 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 preparations 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 Vlasov 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

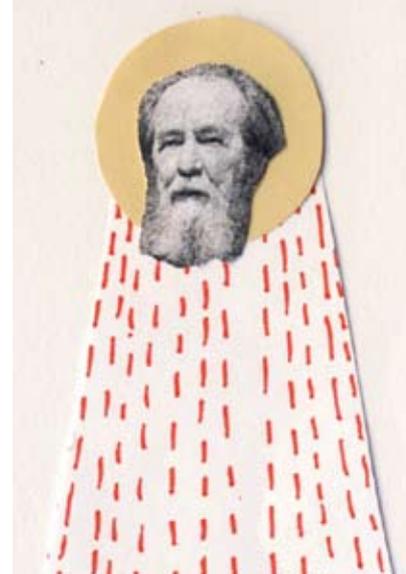
“From the Soviet Union to Russia’s rebirth, 1992–2007” (II, pp. 579–810), offers a comprehensive chronicle of the most recent events in Russian history.



**THE BOOK IS WRITTEN** in popular-science style, with only a few references to entire works provided at the end of many, but far from all, of the chapters. Nor are there any indications as to who among the roughly forty collaborators wrote what. The texts are interleaved with “A historian’s perspective” (often quotations from known historians) or “The Editor-in-chief’s view”, in which Zubov addresses the subject just presented in freer terms, often with conclusions that go far beyond those that the author of the section in question was willing to draw. The book also contains a large number of document excerpts, so that readers can form their own opinions of what the historical actors said. Examples include Solzhenitsyn’s famous letter “Live Not By Lies”, which was published in the West the day after his arrest in February 1974 and simultaneously spread via *samizdat* in the Soviet Union (II, pp. 422–424).

Zubov claims ultimate responsibility for how the texts were written, and for selecting which excerpts from the works of historians and philosophers have been included. Zubov is the target of the criticisms that have been raised (even if he did not write the sections) concerning the factual errors, tendentious presentations of numerical material and downright falsified documents that account for the failure of *Istoriia Rossii XX veka* to live up to the aspirations entertained by its authors.<sup>14</sup>

Zubov has shunned “the Soviet spirit” that is said to have permeated earlier attempts at writing textbooks, even after the breakup of the Soviet Union. According to Zubov and his colleagues, a political regime must be judged on the basis of how it makes it possible for individuals to grow spiritually and materially, and whether it enhances the worth of the individual or, conversely, leads to degeneration. All in all, individual growth and development



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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 20<sup>th</sup> 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 overflowing 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.<sup>15</sup>

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 19<sup>th</sup> 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. 127, 332, 350, 365–366, 404–412, 459–463).

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.<sup>16</sup> *Istoriia Rossii XX vek* 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 13<sup>th</sup> 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 20<sup>th</sup> 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” (*Voina 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, to

a greater extent than most of the others, how the authors have in fact incorporated 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 considerations. 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 supposedly 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 various 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 nationhood 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 "generalizations" and moralizations, undoubtedly 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 conducted regarding the Red and White Terror. Zubov has failed to include recent research, e.g. by A. Litvin, I. Ratkovskii and M. Shilovskii, on the campaign of terror engaged in by the Bolshevik regime against resisters. Zubov instead giddily provides, without reservation, old myths and widely inaccurate figures on the extent of repression against priests, teachers, doctors, the military, the police, peasants and workers. The figures were obtained from the November 7, 1923, (sic!) edition of the Edinburgh 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 historiography is consistently one-sided and tendentious. But what is presented in

this work to describe how "the more noble, more honest 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" (*pervyi 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 peasantry. 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 1932–1933 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 Russia. 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 1921 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 imposed 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 Narotchnitskaia, 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.<sup>17</sup>

The description of the NEP period is comparatively succinct, and addresses only the most important economic 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 scholars, that a group of "clear thinking" communists at the 17<sup>th</sup> Party Congress in 1934 approached Leningrad Party Secretary Kirov in an attempt to remove Stalin as the Party's general secretary. This legend was circulated in the Khrushchev era, and may be seen as a fab-



rication made to legitimize the Communist Party's struggle to reconnect to the original ideals of the Lenin era, which had implicitly been trampled by Stalin after 1929. Given Zubov's expressed aim of writing an anti-communist and supposedly truer history, it is remarkable that such tales are found in the book.

Pure historical falsifications often diminish the value of Zubov's committed anti-communism and, in the long term, run the risk of undermining confidence in his purpose, even when his positions are reasonable. Allow me to offer a flagrant example. The millions of street urchins present in the 1920s and early 1930s were a scourge on the society. They had become homeless or lost their parents during the World War, the subsequent Civil War, or the famine of 1921–1922. Various People's Commissariats took active steps to care for these *besprizornye* in special orphanages, where they were able to participate in normal schooling and even receive some occupational training. Childrearing methods, radical for the time, were employed at some of these orphanages, drawing interest from far beyond Soviet Russia. The authorities solved the worst aspects of poverty in the postwar years when the rapid industrialization process and collectivization of farming in 1928–1932 recreated a social scourge of more or less criminalized street urchins.<sup>18</sup> Under the heading "The liquidated street urchin problem" (*likvidirovannaia besprizornost*), Zubov conversely and absurdly posits that the disappearance of some five million street urchins who were

## 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 Krivitsky 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.<sup>19</sup> 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 Khlevniuk 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 elicited 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.<sup>20</sup>

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.<sup>21</sup> 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.

In the chapter on the years leading up to the Second World War, Zubov buys into the view, commonly held in Eastern Europe, that Stalin sought to provoke a war between Germany and Great Britain. This could have been one of Stalin’s conceivable scenarios in 1939. But Zubov makes the mistake of citing in support of his thesis a speech supposedly given by Stalin to the Politburo on August 19, 1939. No such session was held that day, and the archival document cited is, in fact, a speech in French (!) that was found in the so-called Trophy Archive (now part of the Russian State Military Archives, RGVA) among other documents that the Red Army discovered in corresponding Nazi trophy archives in Berlin. To be sure, the author refers significantly enough to the Russian translation of the text published by historian Tatiana Bushueva in the literature magazine *Novyi mir* in 1994, without devoting a single word to the provenance of the document. The source-critical review that Sergei Sluch presented in the early 2000s establishes beyond a doubt that the document was drafted by French journalists or intelligence agents purely for propaganda purposes in the autumn of 1939. Also relevant is a similar “speech by Stalin” that enjoyed widespread dissemination in the Western European press back

in December of 1939 and which no serious historian viewed as an authentic record of Stalin’s explanation as to why he was prepared to enter into a non-aggression pact with Nazi Germany.<sup>22</sup>



**ZUBOV BELIEVES THAT** reason becomes superfluous when it comes to the behavior of the Soviet Union in an international context. As a result of this attitude, *Istoriia Rossii XX veka* provides no assessments of the *realpolitik* or even geopolitical factors that the Kremlin may have considered at one time or another. The reader is inundated with postulated truths about the regime’s expansionist aspirations rather than references to research on the foreign policy of the Soviet government during the interwar period and the various phases of the Cold War. Zubov’s description of the annexation of Polish, Romanian, and Baltic territories in the first phase of the Second World War 1939–1940 is straightforward and the narrative underlines the crash *realpolitik* of that epoch. The extent of repression in the sovietized territories is emphasized, as is the fact that several Western powers never recognized the Soviet annexations. According to Zubov some 700,000 inhabitants of the former Baltic states were victims of repression by the NKVD or secret police, by means of elimination of the political elite and mass deportations of whole families to distant settlements in Siberia (II, p. 16–20).

As noted, the authors do not use the term “Great Patriotic War, 1941–1945”, which is the common term, even in modern Russia, but which, for obvious reasons, is called into question by Ukrainian and other nationalists. Zubov also attempts to distinguish Russia from the regime that was established. Because he considers the post-1917 regime to be illegitimate, having established an oppressive state over the Russian people, it could not have fought for the Fatherland in the true sense. Here he differs from Natalia Narotchitskaia, who conversely believes that, when the existence of the Russian nation was threatened by the Nazis in 1941, Stalin’s regime became the sole guarantor of the survival of the Russian people.<sup>23</sup>

Zubov aligns himself with a group of military historians in Russia who vigorously defend defected GRU agent Vladimir Rezun’s hypothesis that, in May 1941, Stalin and the General Staff of the Red Army prepared for an attack on the Nazi and other troops concentrated along the borders of the Soviet Union. To date it has not been possible to substantiate this hypothesis, which Rezun (under the pseudonym Viktor Suvorov) has asserted since 1985, with archival documents.<sup>24</sup> On the contrary, most of the Red Army’s plans for 1941 indicate that it was prepared only for a defensive war in the event that Nazi Germany should attack. Even on logistical grounds, that is, troop transport capacity by rail, it was clear to the Soviet General Staff that, in 1941, the Red Army could not undertake any

major operations for anticipatory or pre-emptive purposes. On the other hand, many hundreds of thousands of men were mobilized during the spring and early summer of 1941, all in hopes of being able to stave off the impending attack from Nazi Germany for a few more years. As is known, Stalin ultimately reasoned that Germany would not repeat previous historical mistakes and start a two-front war, against Great Britain in the west and Russia in the east. Unfortunately, little of the extensive Russian debates since the late 1980s concerning the legacy of the 1937–1938 repressions of thousands of 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 descriptions of putatively meaningless *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.

### Iennart Samuelson

- 1 Nikolai Alekseiievich Ivnskii, *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; *Repressivnaia politika sovetsskoi vlasti v derevne (1928–1933 gg.)* [The repressive policy in the countryside by the Soviet Power, 1928–1933], Moscow 2000; *Sudba raskulachennykh v SSSR*, Moscow 2004; *Golod 1932–1933 godov v SSSR (Ukraina, Severnyi Kavkaz, Povolzhe, Centralnaia Chernozemnaia oblast, Zapadnyi Sibir, 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 epoch, refer to John Keep's and Alter Litvin'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 Stalina v Rossii: Sovremennaia istoriografiia*, Moscow 2009.
- 3 See here the radical re-interpretation of the Soviet period by Efim Gimpelson, *Rossia na perelome epokh: Osmyslenie XX stoletii rossii skoi istorii* [Russia at the turns of epochs: Reflections on the Russia's 20<sup>th</sup> century history], Moscow 2006. Among Gimpelson's earlier publications on the Soviet system of management can be mentioned *Velikii Oktiabr i stanovlenie sovetsskoi sistemy 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.), *Istoriia Rossii s drevneishikh vremën do kontsa XVII veka*, [A history of Russia from eldest time to the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century], Moscow 2003; idem, *Istoriia Rossii s nachala XVIII veka do nachala XXI veka* [A history of Russia from the early 18<sup>th</sup> century to the early 21<sup>st</sup> century], Moscow 2003 and later editions. See also P. V. Leonov (ed.), *Istoriia Rossii s drevneishikh vremën do kontsa XX veka* [A history of Russia from eldest times to the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century], Moscow 2002, for its discussion of decisive historical turning points.
- 5 *Ekonomicheskaia istoriia Rossii s drevneishikh vremën do 1917: Entsiklopediia* [Russia's economic history from eldest times to 1917: An encyclopedia], edited by Leonid Borodkin and others, Moscow 2009.
- 6 See for example Edvard Radzinskii, *Stalin*, Moscow 1997; Alexandr Bushkov, *Stalin: Ledi-anoi tron* [Stalin: The ice throne] St. Petersburg 2004.
- 7 Alexander I. Solzhenitsyn, *Dvesti let vmeste (1795–1995)* [Two hundred years together, 1795–1995], Moscow 2001; idem, *Dvesti let vmeste* [Two hundred years together], Moscow 2002.
- 8 See for instance Edward E. Ericson Jr. & Alexis Klimoff, *The Soul and the Barbed Wire: An Introduction to Solzhenitsyn*, Wilmington 2008, pp. 150–161.
- 9 Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty [http://www.rferl.org/content/Tsar\\_Murder\\_Probe\\_Raises\\_Divisive\\_Questions\\_About\\_Bolshevik\\_Crimes/1961860.html](http://www.rferl.org/content/Tsar_Murder_Probe_Raises_Divisive_Questions_About_Bolshevik_Crimes/1961860.html) accessed on 2010-04-18.
- 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 Aleksei Abramov, *Pravda i vymysel o kremlevskom nekropole i mavzolee* [The truth and lies on the Kremlin Necropolis and Mausoleum], Moscow 2005.
- 11 Regarding the French textbooks' tendencies and connections to the Soviet-Marxist paradigm, see Laurent Jalabert, *Le Grand Débat: Les Universitaires français – historiens et géographes – et les pays communistes de 1945 à 1991*, Toulouse 2001.
- 12 Solzhenitsyn, facsimile of letter, [http://pics.livejournal.com/russia\\_xx/pic/00005893/](http://pics.livejournal.com/russia_xx/pic/00005893/) accessed on 2010-02-25.
- 13 The Harvard history professor Richard Pipes was among the first to laud Zubov's book as something radically new in Russian historiography, compare radio RFE/ RL [http://www.rferl.org/content/A\\_New-Russian-History\\_Thats\\_Sensational\\_For\\_The\\_Right\\_Reasons/1895990.html](http://www.rferl.org/content/A_New-Russian-History_Thats_Sensational_For_The_Right_Reasons/1895990.html) (accessed on 2010-05-25), and as quoted by Sophia Kishovsky, "A history of 20<sup>th</sup>-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

*linism as a Way of Life: A Narrative in Documents*, New Haven & London 2004.

- 16 Cf. Stefan T. Possony, *Lenin: The Compulsive Revolutionary*, Chicago 1964, pp. 151–184, on Lenin's and the Bolsheviks' contacts with Russian reform-minded millionaires, with the Austrian and German authorities on matters of financial support for the Party's newspapers and organization; for a modern account of Lenin that rejects the foreign, and purportedly German, control of the Bolsheviks, see Helène Carrère d'Encausse, *Lénine*, Paris 1998.
- 17 Natalia Narotshnitskaïa, *Que reste-t-il de notre victoire? Russie-Occident: Le Malentendu*, Paris 2008, pp. 43–60.
- 18 See Alan M. Ball, *And Now My Soul Is Hardened: Abandoned Children in Soviet Russia, 1918–1930*, Berkeley, Los Angeles & London 1994.
- 19 Edvins Snore, “The Soviet Story”, DVD, 2008.
- 20 Oleg Khlevniuk, *Khoziain: Stalin i utverzhdanie stalinskoï diktatury* [The boss: Stalin and the consolidation of the Stalinist dictatorship], Moscow 2009, pp. 237–239.
- 21 Vladimir Khaustov & Lennart Samuelson, *Stalin, NKVD i repressii, 1936–1938 gg.* [Stalin, NKVD, and the repressions, 1936–1938], Moscow 2008.
- 22 Sergei Sluch, “Rech Stalina, kotoroi ne bylo” [Stalin's speech that never was held], *Otechestvennaïa istoriia*, 2004:1, pp. 113–139.
- 23 Narotchnitskaïa, *Que reste-t-il*, pp. 129–131.
- 24 Viktor Suvorov, *The Ice-Breaker: Who Started the Second World War?* London 1985. The Russian debate in defense of Rezun-Suvorov's theses may be found in, for example *Pravda Viktora Suvorova: Perepisyvaia istoriu Vtoroi Mirovoi*, [Viktor Suvorov's truth: to rewrite the history of World War II], Moscow 2006. Arguments against Rezun-Suvorov have been put forward by, among others, Alexander Pomogaïbo, *Psevdoistorik Suvorov i zagadki Vtoroi Mirovoi Voïny* [The pseudo-historian Suvorov and the enigmas of World War II], Moscow 2002, and Aleksei Isaev, *Anti-Suvorov: Desiat mifov Vtoroi Mirovoi* [Anti-Suvorov: Ten myths about World War II], Moscow 2005.

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

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of Foreign Affairs  
& Edita 2009  
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**I**N 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 actually 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 21<sup>st</sup> 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 declaratory 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 21<sup>st</sup> 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.<sup>1</sup> 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-