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Reviews

Martin McCauley, *The Rise and Fall of the Soviet Union*. Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, 2007, xxix + 522 pp., £19.99 p/b.

MCCAULEY'S *RISE AND FALL OF THE SOVIET UNION* JOINS A MARKETPLACE already crowded with excellent works addressing the entire span of the Soviet period by the likes of Ronald Suny, Geoffrey Hosking and Robert Service to name just a few. Where the present volume differs, however, is in the fact that it is more overtly designed for newcomers to the subject, presumably at undergraduate level, though perhaps also at Masters level. Herein lies its greatest strength: its content is presented in an accessible fashion and the more challenging concepts and processes of Soviet history are deconstructed and explained at a level appropriate for the intended audience. As an introduction to the history of the Soviet Union, this work will certainly give a sound understanding of the principal events and debates of Soviet history to those who read it. However, this is not to say that it has nothing to offer to those beyond entry-level study as McCauley's personal experience of years of researching the USSR ensures that the present volume is well informed and detailed throughout.

The content of *The Rise and Fall of the Soviet Union* is laid out in a primarily thematic manner, though also with an eye to the proper chronological order of events. In this, McCauley manages well to minimise the degree of overlap and confusion that can be caused by employing these two approaches simultaneously. It is probably about as successful as one could hope to be in explaining complex political structures and such like in the form of diagrams, bullet points and anecdotes as well as in standard prose. However, as diagrams such as those explaining the 1936 constitution (p. 130) and the Soviet preparation for war (p. 236) demonstrate, the machinery of state was at times extremely complex and can only be simplified so far before suffering in regard to accuracy. For the most part, where there has been conflict between the two, McCauley has rightly opted for accuracy over simplicity.

At the end of each chapter the author provides a list of 10 questions intended to stimulate students' thought on the issues raised. For the most part these questions raise arguably the most important subjects that students should be thinking about on each theme. These appear to be a particularly useful addition and one that may eventually contribute towards making the present work a standard-issue volume for university courses on Soviet history. Another innovation, and one that probably demonstrates the author's own long experience of visiting and studying Russia, is the series of jokes and personal anecdotes that runs through the script. Usually, though not always immediately relevant to the subject, the use of Soviet *anekdoty* is a useful addition in making the study of Soviet history a little more of a human experience and demonstrating that life in the USSR was not simply 'terrifying' or 'grey' as popular opinion might have us believe.

In common with other works that cover the entire span of Soviet history, the author concentrates much attention on the Stalin era, though the Gorbachev period is also particularly well represented. The main problem that this presents however is one of balance: the Stalin period receives approximately 200 pages while the material directly related to Khrushchev amounts to just over 30 pages despite the author's own excellent work on the period. It is perhaps not without

significance that a review of the present work's predecessor, *The Soviet Union since 1917*, implied that there had been too much attention lavished on the Khrushchev era. The result is that important issues of that time, such as cultural liberalisation and foreign policy, are treated rather more lightly than they probably deserve to be in the overall scheme of things. However, for a volume that already weighs in at 522 pages, and considering the target audience, McCauley was undoubtedly right to resist adding a significant amount of extra material.

The problems with the present work by no means undermine its overall value. There are a small handful of factual inaccuracies. For example, Vladimir Nabokov did not win the Nobel Prize for Literature (p. 133), the XX Party Congress did not commence on 25 February 1956 (p. 403) and Andrei Sakharov was not present at the demonstration at Pushkin Square on 5 December 1965 (p. 355). The chapter drawing comparisons and distinctions between Stalin, Hitler and Mao would perhaps have benefited from being written in plain text rather than in bullet-point format while the chapter on the Brezhnev era places what seems to be excessive emphasis on corruption at the expense of other developments of the period.

These are, however, more than offset by the considerable strengths of the book. For example, McCauley provides insightful coverage of fields that have drawn less attention in other volumes addressing the whole Soviet period and previously remained confined to more specialised studies. Chapters on 'Bolshevik speak', 'Women and Revolution' and 'Muslims and Others and Revolution' add a valuable dimension to what students will gain as their core understanding of the Soviet Union. Integral subjects such as state terror, the Second World War and ultimate collapse of the regime are not only well covered but also adeptly explained.

In summary, *The Rise and Fall of the Soviet Union* is a very strong work and it seems entirely likely that this could go on to be one of the core texts for the teaching of Soviet history. It sits well in the company of those works mentioned at the beginning of the present review as one that will be used by students and scholars alike.

University of Birmingham

ROBERT HORNSBY © 2008

Claudio Morrison, *A Russian Factory Enters the Market Economy*. London: Routledge, 2008, viii + 234 pp., £75.00 h/b.

THE 'ORTHODOX' VIEW OF THE TRANSFORMATION OF CENTRALLY-PLANNED into market economies foresaw market pressures leading to hard budget constraints, forcing enterprises to improve efficiency and to modernise. Those Russian managements that seemed to cling to older practices were seen as behaving 'irrationally'. This book constructs a response to that line of argument. It is based on the author's experience first as a business consultant and then in undertaking research in a textile firm in Ivanovo. He embedded himself in the firm and the town and interviewed, in various ways, around 100 employees. Further research followed changes over time and included a comparison with a different kind of enterprise to check how far this one case could be seen as representative. The work was difficult, owing in part to the secretiveness of Russian enterprises which itself appears as an element of continuity from the Soviet past. The result is an interesting and important contribution on the nature of the transformation in Russian industry.

Continuity emerges as a prominent feature. Privatisation left the same management in control and many old practices continued under the subsequent ownership of a holding company. The author concentrates on management-owner relations and management-employee relations, arguing that these were the key to inertia. The period of 'hyperinflation' robbed the enterprise of working capital and it then had to seek survival strategies. The solution was to become tied in with a trading company which could provide inputs and sell outputs. The firm itself had no

direct contact with its final customers. It could afford only minimal modernisation while significant profits were taken by the trader, or later by the holding company when that took full ownership. There was also no serious state help to support the textile industry, for example in foreign trade policies. Business consultants recommended setting up marketing and sales departments, but these had little impact and met with prejudice from many other employees who saw such white-collar staff as parasites living off the work of others. The firm therefore remained almost exclusively a production unit, as it had been in the Soviet period.

The author links the problem back to Soviet personnel policies and the problems of imposing discipline, alongside the absence of technological and organisational change. In this he builds on works on the Soviet period by Ticktin, Filtzer and Arnot which point to a failure of managements to gain control over the labour process. Managers were lenient on discipline issues and did not introduce Western management methods that would have required a confrontation with established labour practices. In the post-Soviet period they seemed to have even less power over employees. They were constrained by the removal of the moral incentives from the Soviet period, by labour market conditions which made every skilled and qualified employee valuable, by their own financial constraints which led to delays in wage payments—and hence little scope for using pay as a controlling device—and by a sense of social responsibility in a town dominated by the enterprise. They had little power over absenteeism or drunkenness and had to accept that many employees would leave for seasonal work in agriculture. Much of this seemed to represent continuity from the Soviet period. There was continuity even in the low level of open conflict, with only one strike taking place, over non-payment of wages.

The analysis here gives a great deal of useful information on the Russian economic system. There is a convincing case for viewing managers' behaviour as 'rational', when set in the context in which they had to operate. However, the author's emphasis on owner–management and management–employee relationships as the key determinants of continuity may only be part of the story. Other elements of the environment also prevented the emergence of familiar features of a developed market economy. As he indicates, the survival strategies of outward-processing trade or foreign ownership were not available. Those were common in the different conditions of East-Central Europe where similar firms, if they were to succeed, used the finance provided by such strategies to set up their own sales outlets. In the Russian context the best remaining option was subordination to a trading firm followed by outside ownership under a holding company. That ruled out accumulation of adequate capital to undertake the modernisation necessary for an independent existence within a market economy. The continuing social responsibility of the enterprise was also fostered in the Russian environment by the low level of state support, either for social protection or for new enterprise development. Again, that was not the case in East-Central Europe where social provision was partly modelled on Western European experience and gave at least some protection. Finally, the absence of a functioning financial system and the exceptionally chaotic state of Russian banking further confirmed the limited scope for an enterprise to raise finance and hence to develop as an independent economic, rather than just production, entity.

Thus a number of features of the system created in Russia worked against the modernisation of existing enterprises and pointed to a process whereby capital accumulation favoured non-productive enterprises. A large part of this came from the policies in the 1990s, including the mistaken belief that firms should be faced with mercilessly hard budget constraints. That is not what happens in a developed market economy where successful companies can develop on the basis of outside finance. This detailed study of a Russian factory helps to show how far Russian conditions have diverged from those in developed market economies and how far that explains the survival of many practices from a previous period.

Thomas Lane & Marian S. Wolanski (eds), *Poland and European Unity: Ideas and Reality*. Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 2007, 272 pp., zł 30.00 p/b.

THIS IS A NEAT AND CONCISE VOLUME EDITED BY THOMAS LANE and Marian Wolanski dealing with twentieth century Polish *émigré* and exile community thought on the subject of federalism and European Unity. It is part of a series of publications arising from Lane and Wolanski's research project on 'Federalist Thought in Polish Exile Communities 1945–1991 and its Influence on the Foreign Policy of the Third Polish Republic'. The majority of the chapters consist of papers that were originally presented at a conference held at the Institute of International Studies at the University of Wrocław in December 2004. There are 10 chapters by various contributors covering considerable ground in terms of extensive research on Polish exile communities in various foreign states, their influence on the international awareness of the 'Polish Question' in post-World War II Europe and their efforts to propagate the ideas of federalism and European unity while seeking refuge from their communist-ruled homeland. The volume concentrates on Polish exile communities in Britain, Belgium, Spain and the United States and the biographies of the notable and influential personalities in each of these communities that have contributed to the movement for European unity. As stated by Lane 'one of the aims of this book is to examine the many contributions that Poles and other East Central Europeans in exile made to the development and attempted implementation of the ideal of a united Europe' (p. 9). In respect of this the volume succeeds in its aims. It does not examine the influence of exile communities on thinking about Europe's future in their respective homelands, something which is apparently reserved for a subsequent future volume, instead it concentrates on the influence that the individuals had on the host societies and exile communities as a whole. Another running subtheme of the book, a somewhat obvious one, is the attempt to uncover more about Polish exiles in Western Europe. This is an area which has already been explored but far from exhaustively.

The individual contributions exhume and examine historical detail. Idesbald Goddeeris considers the biographies of eminent Polish exiles in Belgium and whether their effectiveness could have been increased by working within their own communities or through engagement with their host societies. Marian Wolanski's chapter examines the Union of Polish Federalists and shows the changing focus of exile organisations. The complex life of the influential but somewhat shadowy Jozef Retinger is illuminated by Thierry Grosbois' chapter which focuses on Retinger's role in supporting federalist thought and the 'European Idea'. Katarzyna Stoklosa considers Rowmund Pilsudski's role in the Polish federalist movement in Britain. Kazimierz Mochlinski's active participation and personal acquaintance with Western Europe's federalist organisations lends an air of authority to his chapter on East Central European federalism in the 1950s. Moving to the 'peripheries' of the continent Jose Faraldo looks at Radio Madrid and the contribution of Polish *émigrés* in Spain during the Franco era to thought about Europe's future. Thomas Lane's own chapter weighs up the merits of exiles' involvement in the Council of Europe and the European Movement and speculates on the possibility of this being a forlorn venture. Lane's contribution is complimented by Slawomir Lukasiewicz's chapter focusing on American Polish Federalist organisations' mainly unsuccessful attempts to influence United States' policy toward Central Europe. The last two chapters of the book deal with the present reality of the European Union and reflect on the image of federalism. Elzbieta Stadtmuller concentrates on Poland's ascension to the European Union and on the ideas of federalism in contemporary Polish discourse, while Wieslaw Bokajlo's chapter approaches the issues of federalism from a more theoretical perspective and asks 'What kind of federalism for Europe?'.
Overall, this edited volume includes plenty of concise, well-written and clear information on the history and chronology of East Central European *émigré* organisations and the notable

people within them during the socialist era. It is also an excellent source of information about the specificity and development of thought on European unity and federalism from the East Central European perspective.

University of Newcastle

KATARZYNA B. BYŁOK © 2008

Anders Åslund & Michael McFaul (eds), *Revolution in Orange: The Origins of Ukraine's Democratic Breakthrough*. Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2006, viii + 216 pp., £19.99 h/b, £9.99 p/b.

REVOLUTION IN ORANGE IS A RIVETING ALBEIT CONFLICTING blend of politics, Westernisation advocacy, and policy-relevant political science. It was inspired by de Tocqueville's *L'Ancien Régime* (a famous 1856 study of pre-revolutionary France) and, similar to what has been said about its great predecessor, this book is as much an assertion of personal opinion and a commentary on one's own times as an historical account of contemporary politics. The explicit purpose of this edited volume is to record 'the short-term variables that combined to produce the Orange Revolution' and, in doing so, to draw up a list of essential conditions 'under which other countries might undergo color revolutions of their own' (p. 7). Thus, despite the book's stated emphasis on the origins of Ukraine's democratic breakthrough, most of it reads as a vaguely concealed twenty-first century cook book on how to overthrow 'soft-authoritarian' governments by non-violent means.

This edited volume is based for the most part on personal, rather remarkable yet often misleading, anecdotes, as well as on 'on-the-ground experience interacting with the various Ukrainian, Western, and Russian *dramatis personae* of the Orange Revolution' (p. viii). And in the latter lies *Revolution in Orange's* major strength and its biggest problem—the book is written by a mix of conservative commentators, policy consultants for the US government, active opinion-makers and participants in the event who, nevertheless, present themselves merely as keen observers of it. Thus, one has to keep in mind that what is in the book is not only how the Orange Revolution was engineered and performed, but also how the revolutionaries and their supporters overseas would like it to be perceived and remembered.

One of the co-editors, Anders Åslund—an eminent guru of neo-liberalism based in Washington, DC—starts with a description of 'The *Ancien Régime*' in Kuchma's Ukraine. He recapitulates a popular story of pre-revolutionary Ukraine as a highly oligarchic and aggressively competitive regime dominated by three regional rent-seeking clans that enjoyed the privileges of a close connection with President Kuchma—a godfather, the ultimate arbiter in a world without formal laws' (p. 15). Åslund's main argument is a peculiar combination of American modernisation theory and Marxist economic sociology—a rather startling move for the well-known economic adviser. He argues that Kuchma's oligarchic regime came under challenge as a result of the economic transition of the 1990s and early 2000s that has fostered pluralism and competition and generated a surging middle class, fully confident of its rights, needs and interests. Hence Åslund's chapter—as well as the entire volume in general—appears to confirm Barrington Moore's 40-year-old dictum 'No bourgeoisie, no democracy'. The rather obvious question one might pose to this neat line of reasoning is why, by contrast, the similarly aggressive and competitive oligarchic regime of 1990s Russia combined with that country's large middle classes led not to yet another democratic breakthrough but to Putin's 'managed democracy'? As we learn from the rest of the volume, structural modernisation does not seem to work on its own; it needs one crucial extra ingredient tactfully described by the book's other editor as 'external forces' that 'can facilitate the development of many of these domestic factors' (p. 166). One can learn a great deal both about the identity of those external forces as well as the

targets of their fieldwork, not just from the book's contents, but also from studying the institutional affiliations of the authors recruited for this book.

The volume's second chapter on 'The Fall and Rise of Ukraine's Political Opposition: From Kuchmagate to the Orange Revolution', by Adrian Karatnycky, a senior expert at Freedom House, portrays the Orange opposition in good detail as a mass movement led by a broad-based unified umbrella coalition and financed by the emerging upper middle class and new millionaires, who were pouring 'millions of dollars' towards the cause of freedom and democracy. Karatnycky argues that 'various components' of Western financial support 'were strictly non-partisan' (p. 40). Nonetheless, on the same page he mentions the youth activists of *Pora* ('It's Time', a major anti-Kuchma and anti-Yanukovich organisation) receiving foreign training 'in organizing techniques and in non-violent civic protest, such as crowd control and the logistics of organizing mass protests'. The chapter by Taras Kuzio, 'Everyday Ukrainians and the Orange Revolution' succeeds in providing the reader with the feel of the 2004 presidential campaign-cum-revolution. The lack of public support for the Kuchma administration is very well depicted. However, the chapter fails to explore the desires, hopes, and aspirations of those everyday Ukrainians (48% of voters in total), who did not back the Orange Revolution and its leader. One cannot escape the feeling that those 'non-Orangeist' citizens are not considered (truly) Ukrainian but merely 'eastern Slavic Russophones'.

Chapter 4 on 'The Triumph of Civil Society', authored by Nadia Diuk, enumerates the most important 'Orangeist' civic/non-governmental organisations and further argues that it was Ukraine's rising middle class that provided the bulk of financial assistance. Nevertheless, she concedes that 'without years of foreign support of Ukraine's nascent civil society', it remains a question whether the Orange Revolution would have materialised (p. 82). Chapter 5 on '*Pora*', by Pavol Demes and Joerg Forbrig, who had worked with *Pora*, explain how 'democratic contagion' could be enhanced with Western assistance (p. 85). Besides providing the reader with an extremely rich, insider analysis of the various ingredients of *Pora*'s success, the authors make an interesting observation: 'distinct from its [Slovak, Serbian, and Georgian] predecessors in the region, the *Pora* campaign was only sparsely supported by international donors. A mere \$130,000 was contributed in foreign funding' (p. 97).

The next chapter by Olena Prytula deals with 'The Ukrainian Media Rebellion'. Prytula is the editor-in-chief of *Ukrayinska Pravda*—the most popular 'Orangeist' Internet newspaper which was founded by Heorhiy Gongadze in 2000. It was the disappearance and murder of Gongadze in September 2000 by allegedly rogue elements of President Kuchma's security entourage that resulted in 'Kuchmagate'—the prelude to the Revolution. Given the tragic fate of her colleague and particularly close friend, some of Prytula's World War II style rhetoric (for example about 'oppression', a 'censorship blockade', and 'the D-Day of the Ukrainian media resistance movement') is all but understandable. Yet the acknowledged existence of the vibrant, free print media (the average daily circulation of opposition newspapers was over 500,000) combined with the totally unregulated Web suggests that the regime's control over the nation's media was hardly tyrannical.

The following chapter on 'Western Influence' by Oleksandr Sushko and Olena Prystayko is by far the book's weakest, in which the authors seem to indulge in unfettered propaganda. We are told, as if in a glossy colour brochure, that 'true' Western interests were guided by common values such as spreading democracy, stability, and prosperity in the region. In contrast to 'authoritarian, corrupt, post-Soviet' Moscow, 'Brussels, Berlin, and Washington were preoccupied with the election being conducted according to international democratic standards rather than with the identity of the victor' (p. 129). Yet given the well-documented fact (shown in Table 2.2 on p. 37) that the West's favourite candidate enjoyed an 11.5% lead over his main opponent in opinion polls, it is fairly obvious (as indeed suggested elsewhere by Kuzio) that 'calls for free and fair elections were in Yushchenko's interest as they would automatically

benefit him over Yanukovich' (p. 49). Would the West persist with its allegedly 'values-driven' approach, if Yanukovich were to enjoy superior opinion poll ratings?

The book's most stimulating, original, and critical work is its penultimate chapter on 'Russia's Role in the Orange Revolution' by Nikolai Petrov and Andrei Ryabov. The chapter provides a vivid and detailed portrayal of the Kremlin's 'conspicuous, crude, and clumsy intrusion', which ended in 'not simply a defeat, but a scandalous humiliation' (p. 145). The book's concluding chapter is written by Michael McFaul, the second co-editor. Putting 'The Orange Revolution in a Comparative Perspective', he draws up a list of crucial prerequisites for an externally-facilitated regime change in the non-Western world. These are: a semiautocratic regime; an unpopular leader of the ancien regime; a strong and well-organised opposition; an ability to create the perception quickly that election results were falsified; enough independent media to inform citizens about the falsified vote; a political opposition capable of setting in motion tens of thousands of demonstrators to protest electoral fraud; and a division between intelligence forces, the military, and the police (p. 166). No doubt, this list will be carefully scrutinised and acted upon in more ways than one.

University of Glasgow

VLAD MYKHENKO © 2008

Alex Danilovich, *Russian and Belarusian Integration: Playing Games behind the Kremlin Walls*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006, xv + 234 pp., £55.00 h/b.

THE 1990S SAW A RAFT OF AGREEMENTS SIGNED THAT CREATED the impression that Russia and Belarus were irreversibly set on the path to closer integration and indeed full union. At the turn of the century it was becoming clear that as the rhetoric of signing ceremonies moved towards the reality of implementation, the whole process had in fact stalled and the union appeared to be stillborn. Over recent months, however, there has been some renewed interest on the part of the Russian and Belarusian press in the creation of a union state as a possible vehicle for Putin to maintain a significant political role after the end of his second term as Russian president. Danilovich's first book, chronicling the Russian–Belarusian integration process from 1994 to early 2006 under Presidents Yel'tsin and Putin, is therefore a timely account of the realities of the whole integration process and of the importance of domestic politics and power struggles in Moscow in explaining the failure of a genuine unified state to emerge.

The first part of the book outlines the theoretical model for the research. Danilovich argues that while conventional realist theories would anticipate the unification of Russia and Belarus, an approach that instead examines the interplay between competing domestic players better explains the extent to which integration was genuinely pursued. He goes on to provide an overview of Russia's constitutional framework and foreign policy models in comparison to those of the United States.

In the second part, the process of Russian–Belarusian integration under Yel'tsin from 1994 to 1999 is outlined, with a chapter for each year linked to the signing of a treaty or agreement. The most significant of these are the 1994 Monetary Union Treaty, the 1996 Treaty on a Community of Sovereign Republics, the 1997 Union Treaty and the 1999 Union State Treaty. In each chapter Danilovich describes the main points of the treaties and the negotiations around them, before setting them in the context of electoral politics, the political strength of Yel'tsin at the time and antagonisms with the *Duma*. Domestic politics in Belarus under President Lukashenka are briefly touched upon. The author shows that Yel'tsin and his advisors opportunistically played the Belarus card in the run up to elections and during periods of perceived weakness in order to 'draw voters nostalgic of the USSR, appease the opposition, and [potentially] provide legal basis for constitutional amendments and postponement of [elections]' (p. 65). However,

these political declarations were filled with contradictions and inconsistencies, with no real procedures for implementation. Danilovich posits that ‘genuine union was never [Yel’tsin’s] objective’ (p. 56) and that any steps towards unification that were taken were deliberately crafted ‘in a way that left no room for Lukashenka in the Russian political space’ (p. 83).

Integration under Putin from 2000 to the beginning of 2006 is outlined in three chapters in the third part of the book. By this time the parade of treaties and signing ceremonies was over. Danilovich characterises these years as a string of disagreements and reconciliations between Moscow and Minsk, notably Putin’s suggestion that Belarus simply join Russia as a federal unit in 2002 and the gas conflict in 2004. The author argues that Lukashenka had pushed for a strong union state when he believed he had a chance to be the heir to Yel’tsin, however with a highly popular Putin in the Kremlin, Lukashenka’s emphasis shifted instead to a partnership of equals and the defence of Belarusian sovereignty. Meanwhile, Russia was stressing the economic aspects of integration such as a common currency (in effect the introduction of the Russian rouble in Belarus) and access to oil refineries and gas pipelines in Belarus for Russian companies. Minsk feared the introduction of the Russian rouble as a step towards a common presidency for a unified state, which would probably not be held by Lukashenka, and insisted that a Constitutional Act preceded the introduction of the common currency in an attempt to guarantee Lukashenka’s political survival. As a result progress on integration was deadlocked.

Danilovich makes a well argued case that Yel’tsin used the issue of integration for domestic political gain rather than to actually create a union state, although he is careful to note that the direct effect of the rhetoric of unification compared to other electoral technologies and political developments is impossible to determine. Furthermore, Yel’tsin could not risk following through on these grand gestures without risking opening up the Russian political space to Lukashenka as a potential challenger. Under a strong, popular Putin with a pliant *Duma* and a weak opposition, the need to exploit unification as a tool for domestic politics was less urgent and so the integration process slowed. Danilovich states at the beginning of his work that he did not intend to focus on domestic politics in Belarus as a variable; however it clearly becomes more difficult to avoid addressing it in the context of integration in the Putin era. By then Lukashenka was playing his own games and becoming an obstacle to unification on the Kremlin’s terms. The striking conclusion of the book is that the integration process is not one of the unification of peoples but the unification of presidents pursuing the immediate interests of themselves and those around them. Since the book has been published there has still been no breakthrough in the deadlock over the introduction of a common currency or an agreement on a Constitutional Act.

University of Birmingham

MATTHEW FREAR © 2008

Andrei Sinyavsky, *Ivan the Fool: Russian Folk Belief. A Cultural History*. Translated by Joanne Turnbull & Nikolai Formozov. Moscow: Glas Publishers, 2007, 416 pp., £12.99 p/b.

THIS BOOK IS PUBLISHED IN THE SERIES ‘GLAS NEW RUSSIAN WRITING’, which aims to provide contemporary Russian literature in English translation. It is however somewhat anomalous within the *Glas* list, not only because—unlike most other *Glas* titles—it is a work of non-fiction, but also because it is hardly ‘contemporary’. *Ivan the Fool* was first published (as *Ivan-durak*) in 1990 in Paris, where Sinyavsky had been living in exile since 1973. He had moved there after his release from the Soviet labour camp in which he had been imprisoned after his landmark trial (with co-defendant Yuli Daniel) in 1966 for publishing his works abroad under the pseudonym Abram Tertz. Sinyavsky (who died in 1997) began to write *Ivan the Fool* in the camp, and developed the material in a course which he taught at the Sorbonne in the late 1970s.

The genre of the work is hard to define. In his Preface, the author states that it was 'intended for a broad readership', and that it was influenced by the folk beliefs that he had first encountered on the many trips he made to the Russian North, and later in camp (pp. 11–12). From time to time Sinyavsky refers to his own experience. For example, he describes a terrifying encounter with a *Vodyanoi* (Water Spirit) while canoeing at night on a northern river (it is not clear whether the reader is expected to take this seriously), and recounts his visit in 1959 to the deserted settlement of Pustozorsk, where the Old Believer Archpriest Avvakum was burned at the stake in 1682. Some of the tales and anecdotes he cites are ones which he himself had heard in Soviet Russia; others are referenced as 'Author's archive'. Finally, in his 'In Place of a Conclusion', Sinyavsky recalls some of his fellow-prisoners from the camp, all religious dissidents—a *Begun* (Runner), an Adventist and some Pentecostals—and he ends the book with a moving account of a meeting in a camp boiler-room in which the prisoners recited passages from the Bible from memory, thereby preserving the Christian tradition in conditions of harsh persecution.

The theme of cultural continuity underpins the work, and explains many of its idiosyncrasies. Discussing Patriarch Nikon's Church reforms, against which the Old Believers had rebelled, Sinyavsky criticises 'the idea of state centralisation and world hegemony', a process which recurred under Peter the Great, and also in the twentieth century, for its 'annihilation of inner, spiritual values in the name of outer greatness' (p. 279). He evidently sees folk belief as the true bearer of Russian spiritual values—richer, freer and more creative in many ways than the official religious culture, which was compromised by the subjection of the Orthodox Church to the state from the seventeenth century onwards.

The main body of the work comprises four parts: 'The Folktale'; 'Paganism and Magic in Daily Life'; 'In Search of Holy Russia'; and 'The Schism and Religious Sects'. The first part is the most successful, permitting Sinyavsky to display his skills as a literary critic in his analysis of the aesthetics and morality of the folktale, and his discussion of its choice of heroes, such as fools (including the eponymous Ivan), thieves and jesters. The second and third parts are primarily descriptive, introducing stock figures of pagan origin such as House Spirits, Water Spirits and Forest Spirits, and favourite Christian saints such as Nikola and Egory (George). In these sections of the book, Old Russian culture is presented as strangely timeless and homogeneous (no mention is made, for example, of regional differences). It is only when we come to the final part of the work that Sinyavsky has to recognise that the Schism of the seventeenth century led to a fragmentation of Russia's religious culture, with the creation of the Old Belief and subsequently of various sects. Not surprisingly, the author's sympathies lie with the unofficial churches: the Old Believers opposed Nikon's 'cold, Greek erudition' (p. 292), and the sectarians, however bizarre their beliefs, were typically Russian truth-seekers.

It is difficult to know what kind of market the publishers have in mind for this book: presumably the broad readership for which Sinyavsky himself intended it. Such readers might find his frequently lengthy retelling of folktales and anecdotes appealing; and the author's often *faux-naïf* style undoubtedly has a certain charm, which is well conveyed in this very readable translation. University teachers should not, however, recommend it to their students on Russian Studies courses without warning them that this is neither a textbook nor a scholarly monograph, but rather a personalised and highly subjective essay on Russian popular culture, which provides a very idealised picture of its subject matter. The author does not engage with either Western or Soviet secondary literature on the subject. (One assumes that the almost complete absence of references to Soviet folkloristics or ethnography reflects his contempt for this literature, rather than ignorance of it.) The intellectual influences that he acknowledges in his Preface are those of the pre-revolutionary scholars S.V. Maksimov, F.I. Buslaev and A.S. Prugavin, and the *émigré* G.P. Fedotov (1886–1951). The works of these authorities feature prominently in the endnotes, alongside references to classic nineteenth century collections such as A.N. Afanas'ev's folktales

and P.A. Bessonov's spiritual verses. Sinyavsky's discussion of the Schism is based on pre-revolutionary works such as those of V.V. Andreev and F.V. Livanov, and his account of the *Khlysty* (Flagellants) and *Skoptsy* (Castrates) is heavily based on V.V. Rozanov's book on these sects, published in 1914. In short, we are not dealing here with a piece of cutting-edge scholarship: for the specialist, perhaps the book's greatest value is the evidence it provides of the neo-Slavophile and neo-Populist intellectual tendencies which permeated certain types of post-war Soviet dissident thought.

University of Birmingham

MAUREEN PERRIE © 2008

Emil Souleimanov, *An Endless War: The Russian–Chechen Conflict in Perspective*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2006, 266 pp., £26.00 p/b.

THE CHECHEN CONFLICT HAS GRABBED MANY HEADLINES IN RECENT YEARS, and a series of works have already been published trying to analyse, critically assess, predict and even resolve it. This latest study by Souleimanov positions itself alongside other more recent publications by Moshe Gammer and John Russell. It provides an overview of Russo–Chechen relations in the last few hundred years, coupled with a close analysis of the most recent events, especially the resumption of hostilities in 1999 and the subsequent official Russian policy of 'normalisation'. The focus of the work provides insights on a wide-range of issues, including the cultural tradition of revenge in Chechen society, the political events leading to the two recent conflicts in 1994 and 1999, and the role played by Chechnya in President Putin's regime-building strategy since 1999. This breadth of analysis makes this a welcome addition to other studies on this subject.

The study begins by laying out the political and socio-cultural background of the region and its people, while simultaneously trying to position Chechnya first within the Russian empire, and later the Soviet Union. Souleimanov suggests that even in the eighteenth century, at the time of the Great Caucasian war, the Chechens' resistance to the imposition of the Russian state in their region was primarily a response to the brutalising tactics of the Russian army, rather than a result of their religious or ethnic identity. While some of these issues have already been covered by other works, Souleimanov's succinct and comprehensive account offers a valuable overview of the key events in the complex and often bloody relationship between Russia and Chechnya. For a specialist reader, the early part of the book provides interesting and well-researched insights into often overlooked parts of Chechen culture, such as the tradition of honour, the position of women in Chechen society, the Chechen sense of humour, the effect of the Sovietisation programmes on Chechen society, and the factors behind the emergence of the Chechen mafia in the 1980s.

The middle section of this work examines the sequence of events following the Chechen declaration of independence in 1991, leading to the deployment of Russian federal troops to restore constitutional order, and the de facto independence of Chechnya during the ceasefire period 1996–1999. Its analysis broadens beyond the usual focus on the military operations during 1994–1996, and provides a colourful and intricate analysis of the shifting psychological, socio-economic and cultural dynamics of Chechen identity, resulting in the 'ideologisation of Chechnya' at this time (p. 129).

It is, however, the last few chapters which provide the most interesting section of this study. The often under-explored and most recent parts of the Russo–Chechen relationship are analysed, such as the re-launch of the Russo–Chechen conflict in 1999, the subsequent policy of normalisation and its effects on the socio-economic and, most importantly, cultural situation in Chechnya. The nature of the ongoing resistance, as well as the impact of the Chechen war on Russian society, is also touched on. For example, Souleimanov suggests that *sachistiki* (raids by

military operatives) were an integral part of Russian tactics in Chechnya because the second conflict was 'planned and waged as retaliation' (p. 173). To highlight the severity of the problems with regards to societal security in Chechnya during the initial stages of the second conflict, extensive use is made of reports from human rights organisations who are working on the ground. There are also detailed accounts of the different militia and military groups, their structures and affiliations, providing a lot of hard to find information for anyone who wants to better understand the different forces currently at play in Chechnya.

It seems that Russia's successful trick to pacify Chechnya has in fact led to the dwindling of its control over the region and has failed to establish a functioning state. In a twist of irony, if the aim of this policy was, as Souleimanov notes in a streak of dark humour, to 'sow the seeds of hatred between Chechens then the task has been accomplished' (p. 214), and past feelings of revenge may re-emerge in the future. Although, credit is given to the recent efforts of the Chechen authorities to revive the socio-economic situation, he suggests that this has been achieved through fear rather than reconciliation.

Despite the significant successes of the new Chechen regime of President Ramzan Kadyrov in suppressing the remnants of Chechen resistance, more secretive pockets of resistance remain. This new form of resistance is now individual and apolitical, reflecting the cultural shifts within Chechnya. Individual modes of revenge, centred on various Islamic teachings and small groupings have spread throughout the North Caucasus, and have replaced the previous large-scale, separatist and organised campaigns against the federal and regional authorities. In his conclusion Souleimanov characterises the aim of such groups to be 'the hope that terrorist propaganda through action committed by these military groups, leading to (none too discriminate) reprisals by the regime will attract more and more recruits to the resistance' (p. 301).

The final chapter considers the effects of the Chechen war on Russian society, which will be fascinating for anyone interested in contemporary Russia in general. It explores the rise in xenophobia, the development of a Chechen syndrome following the return of Russian military personnel from the region and increasing spy mania within Russia, all of which highlights the detrimental effect this conflict has had, not only inside, but also outside Chechnya.

To conclude, Souleimanov's book is a very succinct and up to date account of Chechnya's turbulent relationship with Russia. Despite covering a lot of the same ground as previous works, it offers an incisive, interesting and broad account for anyone not familiar with this subject. For an expert, this book provides very detailed and original insights into some of the neglected cultural aspects of Chechen society, such as the themes of revenge and the link between Islam and resistance to occupation. It brings this subject right up to date—and more importantly shows ways in which the Chechen problem has more recently spread to certain parts of the North Caucasus and has also had a very detrimental effect on Russia in general. In the end one cannot but agree with Souleimanov's succinct, yet devastating conclusion that Chechnya has become the Putin regime's 'military and political laboratory' (p. 303).

University of Birmingham

AGLAYA SNETKOV © 2008

Anders Åslund, *How Capitalism was Built. The Transformation of Central and Eastern Europe, Russia and Central Asia*. Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007, xvi + 365 pp. p/b.

ANDERS ÅSLUND HAS BEEN ONE OF THE MOST PROLIFIC AND INFLUENTIAL WRITERS on his subject ever since the onset of systemic change in Europe. The volume under review is his seventh book devoted to communist and postcommunist transformations. It is a comprehensive account

of changes in 30 countries, written in an accessible style for policy makers and the business community. Its straightforward and opinionated formulations mean that it is suitable for classroom use in a variety of courses. Åslund, as we have come to know over the past 25 years, is an author to remember. Whatever he has to say stirs controversy, a fact he obviously has been enjoying in his capacity as academic and policy adviser alike.

The book is composed of 11 chapters. The first seven of these examine the demise of communism; shock therapy versus gradualism; causes of output slump and recovery; stabilisation; liberalisation; privatisation; and the inefficient social security system. The remaining four chapters are devoted to the issues of democracy versus authoritarianism; the role of criminalisation versus the rule of law; the role of the oligarchs; and the impacts of the outside world, focusing specifically on international financial institutions and the European Union.

The current volume is an update and sequel to his 2002 volume on the same subject brought by the same publisher. This second edition also provides a broad-brush portrait of the landscape of postcommunist change, this time with considerably fewer tables of data, references and footnotes than were included in the first edition. This reflects the multi-purpose nature of the book, which is aimed at not only academics and students, but also at policy makers and business-people. Appealing to such a wide readership is a tall order. Obviously the latter two will appreciate the change in focus and exposition, while the first two may wish to be confronted with more nuanced arguments.

Taking strong positions is one of the defining features of this volume. However, a key feature of the argument is its coherence, both within itself and with positions previously held by the same author—a true rarity in the profession. Furthermore a specific characteristic of Åslund's approach is that it highlights processes that allow him to give a favourable assessment of the role of oligarchs as agents of change for better and more positive restructuring. In his view they offer an alternative which has clearly been superior to President Putin's centralising dictatorship (pp. 276–80). The author rightly notes (p. 309) that the weak and captive postcommunist state has created both the room and the microeconomic incentives for large-scale rent-seeking by oligarchs, foreign direct investors and bureaucrats alike. His continued strongly upbeat assessment of the transformation process as a whole stands in sharp contrast to the more reflective mainstream, as represented by János Kornai and Saul Estrin and Grzegorz Kolodko.

We may also disagree with a number of Åslund's assessments, especially in his lumping together all central Europeans as part of a general continental welfare model which has indeed been conducive to slow growth in Western Europe. In reality, this description holds for Hungary and Slovenia only. By contrast, the rest, including Romania and Slovakia, have been showing remarkable economic dynamics in the 2000s, cutting back the state and privatising vigorously. Also in Poland and the Czech Republic an economy resilient to political turmoil is still growing fast and an export oriented strategy has come into being. And one could extend this list at will. Still—or perhaps just therefore—the new book of Åslund is a must-read for serious analysts of the region and also well worth buying for any good academic library.