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HISTORY TEXTBOOKS IN RUSSIA (1992–2019)

BETWEEN MULTISIDED AND IMPERIAL PERSPECTIVES

In present-day Russia the teaching of Russian history is considered to be essential for the education of future citizens. Many politicians, teachers, and historians believe that its most important mission is to contribute to children's patriotic education. The narrative of school history is devised on the basis of a number of institutional instructions given to textbook authors via recommendations from the Ministry of Education, the body that 'authorizes' or 'recommends' a given textbook after it has passed through a number of reviews: scientific, educational, and public (*obshchestvennaia*).[1] The history textbook thus transmits a system of values to younger generations and shapes their view of the past. As such it is a major bone of contention for all those in Russia who oppose the official vision of history and the political use of history by the Russian government.

No study of Russian history textbooks should be seen as an overview of the whole of Russian historiography. The relationship between academic history and scholarly research on the one hand and didactic and official history on the other is a complex one. However, history textbooks remain one of the few educational sources that can be used to identify the processes of re-evaluating history underway in Russia since the collapse of the USSR, outside the circle of scholarly historiography. Moreover, because of their educational purpose, textbooks confine histor-

[1] On the textbook review procedure see http://273-фз.рф/akty_minobrnauki_rossii/prikaz-minobrnauki-rf-ot-05092013-no-1047. The procedure is often controversial, especially because of its lack of transparency. See for example http://www.sib-science.info/ru/ras/akademiki-utochnili-kuda-vpadaet-vo-18042018 and https://theins.ru/opinions/140359 . In March 2019, the Ministry of Education announced its intention to make new rules for textbook reviews: https://rg.ru/2019/03/20/minprosveshcheniia-anonsirovalo-novyj-poriadok-ekspertizy-uchebnikov.html (all last visited 30 October 2019).

ical representations to a simplified interpretative scheme to make them more widely readable. A long-term analysis of textbooks makes it possible to grasp the underlying changes in the official view of history and so textbooks deserve the attention of historians working on the fabrication of official national history.[2]

The first part of this article traces the general development of Russian history textbooks since they appeared in 1992 up to the present day, the major points of discussion that have arisen, and the controversies caused by some books within a shifting political context. It covers federal textbooks of Russian history for secondary schools, which in Russia comprise the sixth to eleventh classes. In these texts, history is told chronologically: the youngest learn early Russian history and the older pupils Soviet history. Russian history textbooks, as their name suggests, sometimes written by a single author, but more often by a team of authors that may vary from one edition to the next,[3] deal solely with Russian history. Pupils learn about international history from 'general history' (*vseobshchaia*

[2] A number of articles and books have been devoted specifically to post-Soviet textbooks, in Russia and Western countries. See for instance in French Wladimir Berelowitch, 'Les manuels d'histoire dans la Russie d'aujourd'hui: entre les vérités plurielles et le nouveau mensonge national', in *Un 'mensonge déconcertant'? La Russie au XXe siècle*, ed. Jean-Philippe Jaccard (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2003), 203–22; Annie Tchernychev, *L'enseignement de l'histoire en Russie: De la Révolution à nos jours* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2005); Korine Amacher, 'Les manuels d'histoire dans la Russie postsoviétique: visions multiples et nouvelles tendances', *Le cartable de Clio* 9 (2009): 117–27; eadem, 'Héros ou ennemis de la patrie? Les révolutionnaires russes du XIXe siècle dans les manuels d'histoire de la Russie', in *Le retour des héros: la reconstitution des mythologies nationales à l'heure du postcommunisme*, eds. Korine Amacher and Leonid Heller (Louvain-la-Neuve: Academia Bruylant, 2009), 215–38; eadem, 'L'empire russe dans les manuels d'histoire de la Russie', in *L'école et la nation*, eds. Benoît Falaize, Charles Heimberg, and Olivier Loubes (Lyon: ENS éditions, 2013), 329–40, available at http://books.openedition.org/enseditions/2310 (last visited 7 July 2020); and Olga Konkka's doctoral thesis on 20th-century history textbooks *À la recherche d'une nouvelle vision de l'histoire russe du XXème siècle à travers les manuels scolaires de la Russie postsoviétique (1991–2016)* (Bordeaux: Université Michel de Montaigne-Bordeaux III, 2016), available at https://tel.archives-ouvertes.fr/tel-01383230 (last visited 30 October 2019).

[3] Textbooks are regularly republished with changes, often minor, in historical narrative or visual presentation. The authors, who may work on more than one different textbook, are historians. However, among these only a small part actively engages in scientific research. Some of the best known are Andreĭ Levandovskiĭ, Sergeĭ Mironenko, and Aleksandr Chubarian. It must be noted that the overwhelming majority are men. Although it is impossible to read the entire vast production of history textbooks, we have analysed a wide range of secondary-school textbooks on Russian and Soviet history for all classes, published between 1992 and 2019. The references note only those from which citations are drawn, and not all the many other textbooks that contain the same idea or even the same citation.

istoriia) textbooks used alongside the Russian history textbooks, and which are also chronological in approach.

The second part of the article analyses two topics in history textbooks that are central to Russian and Soviet history: for the tsarist period – how the Russian Empire is presented, its construction, and the integration of non-Russian peoples; for the Soviet period – how the August 1939 German–Soviet Pact is described, with its secret protocols that divided up the territories to be annexed by Germany and the USSR. Although these two topics may seem at first sight far apart, they are in fact closely linked. In both cases the central issue is the annexation / integration of foreign territory. Can we perceive a change between 1992 to 2019 in the way the successive integration of non-Russian peoples into the Russian Empire, as well as annexations of foreign territories at the beginning of the Second World War, is being explained to schoolchildren? What place does the schoolbook narrative give to these events and how are they interpreted? The analysis of the general trend of history textbooks, followed by the study of a topic that is dealt with in all history textbooks, will allow us to offer some concluding thoughts on the official vision of history in present-day Russia.

I. From Pluralism to a Single View? Russian History Textbooks (1992–2019)

From the Single History Book of the Soviet Period to the Freedom for History Textbooks in the 1990s

The Perestroika years (1985–91) marked a break at all levels: political, economic, cultural, and national. Historiography was no exception. The disappearance of Soviet ideology brought with it a rejection of earlier historical representations, which had combined elements of nationalist ideology with simplified Marxist models. Swathes of the past that had been censored were now the subject of new historical research. Russia rediscovered its tsarist past, huge numbers of books were published by literary figures, historians, philosophers, politicians, and thinkers – whether liberal, conservative, or religious – who had previously been censored or discredited by the Soviet authorities. In 1990, even the Soviet government recognized its responsibility for the Katyn' Massacre (over 20,000 Polish citizens killed by the NKVD in 1940). Access to the archives, albeit still restricted for certain topics, provided a continual stream

of discoveries leading to new interpretations and lively discussion: the extent of the Great Terror of 1937–8, Stalin's role in the decisions taken, Lenin's personality, etc.

The disappearance of the previous explanatory models and the constant re-examination of history left history teachers at a loss. In May 1988, history examinations and compulsory curricula were abolished in schools. A single history textbook for the entire Soviet territory, with some national variants, was no longer used. Some teachers prepared their lessons from the latest historical interpretations, using documents retrieved from the archives and published in journals.

In the early 1990s, in a now post-Soviet Russia where Boris Yeltsin's pro-Western government professed a deeply anti-Soviet, anti-revolutionary discourse, it was a vision of tsarist Russia moving smoothly in the early years of the 20th century along a path of reform and Western modernization that was presented in best-selling popular history books and films. One example was the historian and playwright Ėdvard Radzinskiĭ's *The Last Tsar: The Life and Death of Nicholas II*,[4] reprinted several times. Stanislav Govorukhin's film, emblematically entitled *The Russia We Lost* (1992), describes the pre-revolutionary period as a golden age and the murder of the imperial family as the start of Russia's misfortunes. These were years of idealization of the Romanov dynasty, and the tragic history of Nicholas II's family gave rise to numerous popular history books, biographies, films, documentaries, exhibitions, and scholarly conferences.[5]

Such was the background to the publication from 1992 of the first post-Soviet Russian history textbooks. New publishers emerged and broke the monopoly of the Prosveshchenie publishing house.[6] But it was in 1994, following the Ministry of Education's authorization to publish more than one textbook on the same subject, that the market really took off and dozens of textbooks were published for all classes. During the 1990s, schools and teachers were free to choose their textbooks. The Ministry of Education's approval ('recommended' or 'authorized by the

[4] Ėdvard Radzinskiĭ, *'Gospodi... spasi i usmiri Rossiiu'. Nikolaĭ II: zhizn' i smert'* (Moscow: Vagrius, 1993).

[5] Maria Ferretti, 'Usages du passé et construction de l'identité nationale dans la Russie post-communiste: la métamorphose de l'image d'Épinal du dernier tsar et de son époque', in *Le retour des héros* (see note 2), 191–214.

[6] Prosveshchenie (Enlightenment) was founded in 1930 as Uchpedgiz (acronym for 'educational publishing'). It was the sole publishing house allowed to issue school textbooks during the Soviet era, and was privatized in the 2000s. It remains the largest and most influential school textbook publisher in Russia.

Ministry') did not make the use of a textbook compulsory, but only made its publication more financially worthwhile.

Most history textbooks reflected the rejection of the revolutionary model in Russia at that time and the fascination with the liberal, reformist, Western model. More generally, revolutionary violence and extremism were rejected, in favour of reforms, presented as the only acceptable way of transforming society.[7] However, unlike the popular history books and films depicting the pre-revolutionary period as a golden age and the Romanovs in an idealized light, this condemnation of revolutionary violence did not mean a rehabilitation of tsarism. The excessive conservatism of the tsarist government and its political obtuseness were often accused of causing Russian radicalism. Both government leaders and revolutionary extremists were criticized, as terror from the government led to revolutionary terror: "The police arrested the monarchy's opponents, but in this way aggravated the situation, because the radical and dogmatic elements came to lead the revolutionary movement", pupils were told in a textbook of Russian 19th-century history.[8]

As for Stalinism, no author would have dared defend it in the highly anti-Stalinist atmosphere of the early 1990s. The term 'totalitarianism' was widely used to describe the Stalin years, and Stalin himself was presented as responsible for the development of a system described as profoundly criminal.[9] Admittedly, some authors were quite radical in their criticism of Stalinism, while others were more prudent.[10] But in those years no history textbook presented Stalinism with any justification, and from this point of view it is easy to see a convergence between the historical vision contained in the textbooks and that advanced by Boris Yeltsin's pro-Western government.

By the mid-1990s, Russia was undergoing a serious social and economic crisis that peaked in 1998: rising prices, unpaid wages and pensions, deval-

[7] On representations of revolutionaries in Russian history textbooks, see Amacher, 'Héros ou ennemis' (see note 2).

[8] Ibid., 232.

[9] See for example L.N. Zharova and I.A. Mishina, *Istoriia otechestva: 1900–1940* (Moscow: Prosveshchenie, 1992).

[10] The textbook of Soviet history most critical of Stalinism is without doubt that by the historian and history teacher Igor' Dolutskiĭ: I.I. Dolutskiĭ, *Otechestvennaia istoriia XX vek*, 10–11th-years textbook, 2 vols. (Moscow: Mnemozina, 2001–2). First published in 1994, this best-seller had its 'recommended by the Ministry of Education' status withdrawn in 2003. Dolutskiĭ has for years regularly appeared on the Ėkho Moskvy radio station to talk about Russian history textbooks.

ued savings, instability, loss of social privileges, generalized corruption, and seizure of wealth by a minority. The Western values of liberalism and democracy on which Boris Yeltsin had based his legitimacy were no longer operative. Opinion polls showed that from the mid-1990s Russians were increasingly turning away from the Western socio-political model and once more perceived the West as a hostile entity. A sign of the times, by the end of the 1990s, monarchist textbooks were being published. Their representation of the past was similar to that under the tsars, and the history of the Orthodox Church stood centre stage. The 19th-century revolutionaries, whether moderate or radical, were all presented as enemies of the Russian state. The Decembrists, for example, were described as "disciples of Robespierre" and traitors to the Motherland. The revolutionaries of following generations took over their extremist, violent methods and caused "endless misfortune" for Russia at the beginning of the 20th century. As for the Westernizers, they were described as men who despised Russia, and idealized a Europe that was bourgeois, individualistic, and socially egotistical. The positive heroes in these textbooks were the tsars: generous, brave, excellent soldiers, deeply religious, unwearying workers, not to mention loving husbands and fathers. The use made of revolutionaries and tsars in these textbooks indicates what values the authors intended to emphasize in building pupils' common identity.[11]

Although these textbooks were always a minority in the flood of textbooks available on the market at that time, they were 'recommended' by the Ministry of Education and published under the auspices of the prestigious Institute of Russian History of the Russian Academy of Sciences in Moscow. The authors were historians well known to the Russian public. Aleksandr Bokhanov's books on the Russian monarchy[12] and his biographies of tsars were received enthusiastically by Orthodox reviewers and sarcastically by liberal ones.[13] And Andreĭ Nikolaevich Sakharov was Director of the Institute of Russian History from 1993 to 2010.

As these pro-monarchy textbooks were being published, the country's Soviet past was also beginning to be seen less darkly than before. A num-

[11] A.N. Bokhanov, *Istoriia Rossii (XIX–nachalo XX v.)*, 8th-year textbook, 5th ed. (Moscow: Russkoe slovo, 2005), 57–67 (1st ed. 1998); A.N. Sakharov and A.N. Bokhanov, *Istoriia Rossii, XVII–XIX veka*, 4th ed. (Moscow: Russkoe slovo, 2006), 291–304 (1st ed. 2003).

[12] Aleksandr Bokhanov, *Sumerki monarkhii* (Moscow: Voskresen'e, 1993); idem, *Rossiĭskaia Imperiia: Obraz i smysl* (Moscow: FIV, 2012).

[13] A.Iu. Polunov, 'Romanovy: mezhdu istorieĭ i ideologieĭ', in *Istoricheskie issledovaniia v Rossii: Tendencii poslednih let*, ed. G.A. Bordiugov (Moscow: AIRO-XX, 1996).

ber of researchers have shown that many groups in Russia who had fallen into social and economic hardship in the late 1990s gradually began to recall other images that seemed less dark as they receded. First, it was the 1970s, the Brezhnev years, which became "for most of the population still hankering after paternalism, the embodiment of the egalitarian Socialist ideal and nostalgia for order".[14] Increasingly, voices were heard from the various opposition groups and some close to Communist party structures that proposed another conception of history, an updated version of Sovietism, cleansed of its communist rhetoric, in which the national aspect once more stood centre stage. The Soviet period was being integrated into the long march of the history of the Russian state.

The Slow Return of the State's Firm Hand (2000–16)

As soon as he came to power in 2000, Vladimir Putin presented himself as the man to restore the tradition of a strong Russian state and offered his fellow citizens the image of a great country "which remains great in every age and honourably casts aside every misfortune".[15] He soon showed an interest in history textbooks. In August 2001, during a government meeting, he recommended that great attention be paid to their content. In 2003, in a meeting with historians, he explained that textbooks should arouse in pupils a sense of pride in their history and their country. And while there had been a time when historians stressed the "negative aspects of the old system, since the aim was to destroy it", the task was now to be "constructive".[16] The same year a development took place that was seen as a clear sign of the changes occurring: following a letter from veterans, the Ministry of Education removed the 'Ministry recommended' notice from a textbook on Soviet history that called the Stalinist regime "a terrorist regime", compared Stalin to Ivan the Terrible and described the status of the Baltic states during and after the Second World War as an "occupa-

[14] Boris Doubine, 'Habitude, incompatibilité, incompatibilité habituelle: Le rapport à "soi" et aux "autres" dans la Russie d'aujourd'hui', *Transitions* 46, 1 (2006): 153.

[15] Arseniĭ Roginskiĭ, 'La mémoire du stalinisme dans la Russie contemporaine', in *Le retour des héros* (see note 2), 253–62.

[16] Boris Dolgin and Vitaliĭ Leĭbin, 'Gordost' vmesto pravdy. Istoricheskaia i ideologicheskaia programma vlasti', available at http://www.polit.ru/culture/2003/11/28/gordost.html and http://www.vremya.ru/2003/223/4/86037.html (both last visited 30 October 2019).

tion".[17] From then on the major features of Stalinist policy were increasingly described, particularly in the official media, in a manner that justified them. However, this positive reassessment of Stalin peaked in 2007–8 with the publication of history textbooks under a plan to formulate new education standards at federal level, comprising teachers' manuals and textbooks for 11th-year pupils.[18]

The authors – the historian Aleksandr Danilov, member of the Institute of Russian History of the Russian Academy of Sciences, author of many previous textbooks, and Aleksandr Filippov, a specialist in political communication with no training as a historian – explained that these books had a threefold purpose: describe the government's policies positively, arouse national pride (history lessons must teach pupils to "love their Motherland") and not "exaggerate" the extent of the purges.[19] Political violence, the Stalin purges, the 1932–3 famine, and the 1937–8 Terror were presented as unavoidable "distortions" caused by the country's "forced modernization", thanks to which the USSR was able to defeat Nazi Germany. The conclusion Filippov draws in the teacher's manual is a clear one:

> "To solve the main problems of economic modernization and moral self-preservation, the country must rely on the experience of its ancestors, thanks to whose sacrifice we now have a precious freedom of choice… All of Russia's

[17] Dolutskiĭ, *Otechestvennaia istoriia* (see note 10), vol. 1, 257; vol. 2, 8. See Olga Zaharova, 'Uchebnik istorii. Pravitel'stvo v kachestve cenzora?', *Liceĭskoe i gimnazicheskoe obrazovanie*, 3 (2004). There were many negative reactions to this sanction in the Russian media, especially online. See for example www.vremya.ru/2003/223/4/86037.html (last visited 30 October 2019).

[18] A.F. Filippov, *Noveĭshaia istoriia Rossii, 1945–2006: metodicheskoe posobie* (Moscow: Prosveshchenie, 2007); A.A. Danilov, *Istoriia Rossii, 1900–1945*, *metodicheskoe posobie*, 11th-year textbook (Moscow: Prosveshchenie, 2008); A.A. Danilov and A.V. Filippov, *Istoriia Rossii, 1940–1945*, 11th-year textbook (Moscow: Prosveshchenie, 2009); A.A. Danilov, A.I. Utkin, and A.V. Filippov, *Istoriia Rossii, 1945–2008*, 11th-year textbook (Moscow: Prosveshchenie, 2008); A.A. Danilov, *Istoriia Rossii, 1945–2008*, 11th-year textbook (Moscow: Prosveshchenie, 2008).

[19] Aleksandr Filippov and Aleksandr Danilov, 'Ratsional'nyĭ podchod', 17 September 2008, available at http://www.ng.ru/politics/2008-09-17/4_history.html (last visited 30 October 2019). This was one of the criticisms made of Dolutskiĭ's textbook. One historian from the Russian Military History Centre of the Academy of Sciences claimed that the author of this 'russophobic' book was echoing ideas propagated by the CIA to weaken Russia by exaggerating, for example, the scale of the purges. See Ol'ga Dashovskaia, 'Igor' Dolutskiĭ: "Retsenzenty v shtatskom moĭ uchebnik kritikovali postoianno" ', 6 December 2003, available at http://ps.1september.ru/article.php?ID=200308604 (last visited 30 October 2019).

> good leaders stand out for their awareness of their country's special nature: a harsh climate and vast territories hard to join together. This explains the role of the state, of great importance in all developed countries, but critically essential in Russia. As in the past, our country now needs real strength."[20]

A centralized and authoritarian government, a strong state, whose interest prevails over that of individuals, and which can at any time require sacrifices from its citizens, such are the guarantees for Russia, besieged today as in the past by enemies within and without, to remain powerful. The Stalin period is described as a period of sacrifice, but above all of greatness, success and glory, while the post-Stalin years are depicted as a period of slow weakening for the country, due to errors by its political leaders, ending under Gorbachev in the collapse of the USSR.[21]

At the same time, opinion polls showed that Stalin's popularity in Russian society was rapidly rising. In late 2008, a competition was held, broadcast by the leading Russian television channel, to choose Russia's national hero. After leading for some weeks and being generally forecast as the winner, Stalin finally only came third, behind Aleksandr Nevskiĭ, victor over the Swedes in 1240 and the Teutonic Knights in 1242, and Pëtr Stolypin, Tsar Nicholas II's authoritarian prime minister. Given the controversy aroused by the competition, the organizers apparently preferred not to take the risk of naming Stalin national hero for 2008.[22]

On 19 May the following year, a presidential decree was issued setting up a commission to combat attempts to "falsify historical facts and events with the aim of adversely affecting Russia's interests".[23] Then in August, an inscription to Stalin in the Kurskaia metro station in Moscow was restored: "Stalin brought us up to be loyal to the nation, inspired us to labour and great deeds", a horrifying expression when one thinks of the human cost of the "great deeds" of the Soviet period.[24] In the view of a large number of Russian historians, sociologists, political scientists, and journalists, these events and the size of the festivities held on each anniversary of victory on 9 May 1945 were clear evidence of the government's desire to define the guidelines for the historical narrative, propose a posi-

[20] Filippov, *Noveĭshaia istoriia* (see note 18), 485.

[21] For more details on those textbooks see Amacher, 'Les manuels d'histoire' (see note 2).

[22] About Name of Russia project see http://www.nameofrussia.ru/; Liubov' Borusiak, ' "Imia Rossii": 100 minut nenavisti', 13 October 2008, available at http://polit.ru/article/2008/10/13/nameofrussia (both last visited 30 October 2019).

[23] See https://polit.ru/article/2009/05/19/komissia/ (last visited 11 July 2020).

[24] These words are taken from the 1944 Soviet anthem, removed in the 1977 revision.

tive vision of Stalin, and emphasize the grandeur of Russian and Soviet history. Considerable work to great effect was then done by those opposed to this creeping rehabilitation of Stalin – a wide range of historians, intellectuals, teachers, professors, journalists, and the Memorial association. In large numbers of publications and public statements, in lectures and conferences as well as in the media, they prevented that vision from triumphing.[25]

Admittedly, the alteration of historical memory in Russia during those years is still clearly perceptible in history textbooks: the term 'totalitarianism', for example, widely used to qualify the Stalinist regime in 1990s textbooks, became less frequent a decade later. Other examples abound. However, analysis of history textbooks from the 2000s shows that the dark sides of the Soviet regime, particularly under Stalin, continued to be shown.[26] Consequently, Danilov and Filippov's history textbooks were only a minority of the many available in bookshops, used in schools, and officially approved by the Ministry of Education. Nevertheless, Danilov and Filippov's books scandalized a section of the historian community. When the government appeared to want to impose a positive vision of Stalinism, the fierce controversy caused in the media by these books almost gave the impression that the only 20th-century history textbooks available in Russia were by Danilov and Filippov.

A Smaller Market, But No Single Textbook

As a result of the multiplicity of textbooks, endless controversies about Soviet history, and increasing politicization of history itself, especially what should be taught in schools, there began to be talk once more of having one single textbook as in Soviet times. Finally in 2013, after a number of official statements, none of which indicated any clear, decisive government view, after meetings of commissions and working groups, a *Concept for New Standards for Teaching National History* (*koncepciia novogo uchebno-metodicheskogo kompleksa po otechestvennoĭ istorii*) was produced under the auspices of the highly official Russian Historical

[25] See for example the 100-volume series *History of Stalinism* (*Istoriia stalinizma*) published by Rosspen.

[26] See for instance V.P. Ostrovskiĭ, *Istoriia Rossii, XX vek*, 11th-year textbook (Moscow: Drofa, 2004); A.A. Levandovskiĭ, Iu.A. Shchetinov, and S.V. Mironenko, *Istoriia Rossii, XX–nachalo XXI veka*, 11th-year textbook (Moscow: Prosveshchenie, 2007).

Society.[27] It is 80 pages long,[28] with an "explanatory note" that defines the bases for the teaching of Russian history at school and the principles underlying the *Concept*, and a long "historical and cultural standard" (*Istoriko-kul'turnyĭ standart*) as a foundation for the narrative in schools.

Among their many recommendations, the authors describe the need to stress the continuity between all periods of Russian history, to show that the historical process is based on the shared efforts of many generations of Russians, and that the history of Russia is an integral part of the global historical process. As before, school pupils study Russian history chronologically. However, whereas Soviet history used to be covered in the 9th year, the final year of compulsory schooling in Russia, and the last two years (10th and 11th) of full secondary education were years of revision and greater detail, now Soviet history is to be covered in the 10th year only, with 11th-year history lessons being used to prepare for the single state examination for the secondary leaving certificate (EGE).[29]

At present in Russia there is, therefore, no single textbook but three series, each with a number of volumes, considered to be the only textbooks that comply with the *Concept*. These were first published in 2016 by three publishing houses (Prosveshchenie, Drofa, and Russkoe slovo) and are regularly reprinted.[30] But they can hardly be said to differ greatly

[27] About Russian Historical Society see https://historyrussia.org/ (last visited 30 October 2019).

[28] Russian Historical Society, *Koncepciia novogo uchebno-metodicheskogo kompleksa po otechestvennoĭ istorii*, available at https://historyrussia.org/images/documents/konsepsiyafinal.pdf (last visited 30 Ocober 2019). The working group to produce the new *Concept* was chaired by Sergeĭ Naryshkin, Director of the Russian Historical Society. Other members were Russian historians, in particular, Aleksandr Chubarian, former Director and current Academic Director of the Institute of General History, Russian Academy of Sciences.

[29] The Unified State Exam (EGE) was adopted in Russia in 2009. It replaced the various university competitive entrance examinations.

[30] I.L. Andreev and I.N. Fedorov, *Istoriia Rossii s drevneĭshikh vremen do XVI veka*, 6th-year textbook (Moscow: Drofa, 2016); I. L. Andreev, I. N. Fedorov, and I. V. Amosova, *Istoriia Rossii: XVI–konets XVII veka*, 7th-year textbook (Moscow: Drofa, 2016); I. L. Andreev et al., *Istoriia Rossii XVII–XVIII veka*, 8th-year textbook (Moscow: Drofa, 2016); L.M. Liashenko, O.V. Volobuev, and E.V. Smirnova, *Istoriia Rossii: XIX–nachalo XX veka*, 9th-year textbook (Moscow: Drofa, 2016); O.V. Volobuev, S.P. Karpachev, and P.N. Romanov, *Istoriia Rossii: nachalo XX–nachalo XXI veka*, 10th-year textbook (Moscow: Drofa, 2016); E. V. Pchelov and P. V. Lukin, *Istoriia Rossii s drevneĭshikh vremen do nachala XVI veka*, 6th-year textbook (Moscow: Russkoe slovo, 2015); eidem, *Istoriia Rossii: XVI–XVIII veka*, 7th-year textbook (Moscow: Russkoe slovo, 2015); V.N. Zakharov and E.V. Pchelov, *Istoriia Rossii: XVIII veka*, 8th-year textbook (Moscow: Russkoe slovo, 2015); K.A. Solov'ev

from previous textbooks, since some authors of the old ones worked at producing the new ones. And despite this single *Concept*, the three textbook series vary widely in the way they present Russian and Soviet history. The Prosveshchenie series has most fully integrated the *Concept* requirements, particularly that of making pupils future patriots, proud of their country's history: the text boxes entitled 'Glory and Pride of the Motherland' (*Chest' i slava Otechestva*) are carefully designed to remind pupils of the many heroes in Russian and Soviet history. This recurring emphasis on the grandeur of the Motherland is a link between the Prosveshchenie series and Danilov and Filippov's textbooks, filled with ideas of patriotism and sacrifice for the Russian state, which is hardly surprising since Danilov is one of the writers for this series.

Conversely, the Drofa series, with its critical vision of any form of despotism, as symbolized by Ivan the Terrible, and the positive portraits of some opponents of tsarism – particularly the 1825 Decembrists, called "patriots for their Motherland"[31] – recalls the 'liberal' textbooks of the 1990s and 2000s. These texts also place particular emphasis on social and economic history.[32] In the textbook on the 16th and 17th centuries, the authors describe the harshness of daily life and social inequalities, which explain popular revolts, the exodus of peasants towards the frontiers of the Russian state, opposition to tsarism, and the lack of solidarity within society.

This is a far cry from the story told in the Prosveshchenie series, which tends to paint an idealistic picture of Russian society. In its 16–17th-century volume, the authors depict a harmonious peasantry united in a community of solidarity. When a needy neighbour required help, they explain to their young readers, the peasants "worked cheerfully, quickly, joking and singing songs".[33] But, for all their differences, none of the three

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and A.P. Shevyrev, *Istoriia Rossii, 1801–1914*, 9th-year textbook (Moscow: Russkoe slovo, 2015); V.A. Nikonov and S.V. Deviatov, *Istoriia Rossii: 1914–nachalo XXI veka, 2 vols. 10th-year textbook* (Moscow: Russkoe slovo, 2017); N.M. Arsent'ev et al., *Isto-riia Rossii*, 6th-year textbook, 2 vols. (Moscow: Prosveshchenie, 2016); N.M. Arsent'ev et al., *Istoriia Rossii*, 7th-year textbook, 2 vols. (Moscow: Prosveshchenie, 2016); eidem, *Istoriia Rossii*, 8th-year textbook, 2 vols. (Moscow: Prosveshchenie, 2016); N.M. Arsent'ev et al., *Istoriia Rossii*, 9th-year textbook, 2 vols. (Moscow: Prosveshchenie, 2016); M.M. Gorinov et al., *Istoriia Rossii*, 10th-year textbook, 3 vols. (Moscow: Prosveshchenie, 2016).

[31] Drofa series, 9th-year textbook (see note 30), 69.

[32] As stated in the introduction to the third volume of the Drofa series, 8th-year textbook (see note 30), 6.

[33] Prosveshchenie series, 7th-year textbook (see note 30), vol. 2, 105.

textbook series justifies the Stalin purges by any higher considerations. The Prosveshchenie authors for the three Soviet period volumes also include the historian Oleg Khlevniuk, respected for his major books on Stalin and Stalinism. And while his participation does help 'legitimize' the patriotic vision of history that comes across strongly in this series, it also prevents any presentation of a positive vision of Stalinism.

Textbooks published between 1993 and 2015 may still be used in Russian schools. However, as they will probably not be re-edited, they will gradually disappear, soon to be relegated to the status of sources, in the same way as history textbooks of the Soviet period.[34] Consequently, the market for Russian history textbooks has shrunk considerably since 2016, although the idea of returning to a single history textbook, opposed anyway by some historians and teachers, appears to have been abandoned. One reason may be that a single textbook would mean financial gain for a single publisher. And publishing houses are engaged in fierce competition, because the schoolbook market in Russia is highly lucrative: schools buy the textbooks they choose from a list published each year by the Russian Federation Ministry of Education.[35] The textbooks are then handed out free to pupils. And public criticism of a given textbook, whether in history or another subject, for lack of patriotism, say, often conceals a more self-interested motive: forcing a competitor out of the market.[36]

In 2016, when the first new textbooks were published, the historical narrative ended in 2014. Vladimir Putin's 18 March 2014 speech after the annexation of Crimea is inserted at the end of the Prosveshchenie series' 10th-year textbook:

> "Crimea is a unique blend of different peoples, cultures, and traditions. This makes it similar to greater Russia, where not a single ethnic group has disappeared or been dissolved over the centuries. Russians, Ukrainians, Crimean Tatars, and people of other ethnic groups have lived and worked side by side

[34] In Moscow's major schoolbook outlet, 'old' textbooks could still be found in April 2018, but by February 2019 there were far fewer of them and the shelves held virtually only the three new series.

[35] The list is available online at https://docs.edu.gov.ru/document/ 1a542c2a47065cfbd1ae8449adac2e77/ (last visited 30 October 2019).

[36] Boris Grozovskiĭ, ' "Prosveshchenie" ot Rotenberga. Kak "patriotichnye" uchebniki druga Putina zachvatili rynok obrazovaniia', *The Insider Russia*, 11 February 2019, available at https://theins.ru/opinions/140359 (last visited 30 October 2019).

on the land of Crimea, keeping their own identity, traditions, languages, and faith."[37]

That the textbook should close with the annexation of Crimea, which the Russian president describes as a sacred place of Russian history, is symbolic. But it also says much about the persistence in political discourse of the idea of the Empire and the very Soviet idea of 'friendship among peoples'.

And this leads us directly to the representation of the Empire in post-Soviet textbooks. How is the history of the Empire explained to schoolchildren in Russia? How do history textbooks describe the successive integrations of non-Russian peoples into the Russian state and the annexation of foreign territory after the Soviet–German Pact? What place does the school narrative give them? And finally, has there been a perceptible revamping of the 'imperial model' in the school narrative between 1992 and 2019?

II. Imperial Model(s) (1992–2019)

The Russian Empire in Post-Soviet Textbooks (1992–2015)

After the dissolution of the USSR in December 1991, post-Soviet historiography on imperial questions started virtually from scratch. The appearance in 1992 of the Swiss historian Andreas Kappeler's book *Rußland als Vielvölkerreich*[38] (first Russian translation in 1996) was a major event. Kappeler innovates by turning away from the prevailing view in Russia and the West of Russia as a national construction and focuses on the multi-ethnic nature of the Russian Empire. Eric Hobsbawm's *The Age of Empire* was translated into Russian in 1999.[39] Russian historiography then rapidly advanced in both methods and research topics.

Russian historians quickly abandoned Soviet views of the Russian Empire as either a 'prison of peoples' or an idyllic friendship between the peoples of imperial Russia. They abandoned not only the imperial models but also national ones, positioning their research within transnational or

[37] Prosveshchenie series, 10th-year textbook (see note 30), vol. 3, 106.

[38] Andreas Kappeler, *The Russian Empire: A Multi-Ethnic History* (London: Routledge, 2001).

[39] Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire, 1875–1914* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1987).

transregional history, questioning, for example, the concepts of Russification and assimilation. They were divided by certain questions: Can the Russian Empire be compared to the Western colonial empires? Was the Soviet Union analogous to the Russian Empire and a continuation of it? Given the innovative nature of the Soviet project, is it right to see this as a clear break, at least in the 1920s, when *korenizatsiia*, support for national minorities, went together with a rejection of the forms of social domination inherited from the imperial period? The state of research is reflected in the journal *Ab Imperio,* established in Kazan' in 2000 and now the most significant international scholarly journal devoted to imperial and national questions in the former Russian-Soviet area.[40]

In fact, although imperial questions were booming in research in Russia, their influence was virtually imperceptible in history textbooks. The historical model that had started in tsarist historiography and was taken up by Stalinist historiography in the late 1920s remains omnipresent in schoolbooks, with the formation first of Early Rus', then Muscovite Russia, then the Empire, whose destiny was to grow organically towards the seas by absorbing territory, constantly fighting hostile neighbours and invaders. Similarly, the reasoning used to justify Russia's imperial expansion is the same as that found in Soviet textbooks.[41]

First, the story goes, there is the "gathering of the lands of Rus'" around Moscow, including the integration of Left Bank Ukraine east of the River Dnipro in the 17th century, 'liberated' by Moscow from the feudal, national, and religious "triple Polish-Catholic yoke". As for the late 18th-century Partitions of Poland by three of the Great Powers, most textbooks insist on the fact that, unlike Prussia and Austria, Russia "recovered" Belarusian and Ukrainian lands which had formerly belonged to Kyïvan (Kievan) Rus': "Russia, as heir to the old Russian state, had always fought for the union of these lands... Thus, the centuries-old bonds between Slav peoples, which had been artificially cut, were finally restored".[42]

[40] See https://abimperio.net/ (last visited 30 October 2019).

[41] Most of the following examples are taken from textbooks published in the 2000s. However, many textbooks published in the 1990s that we have analysed were reprinted with no or only minor changes in the 2000s, and this mostly refers to the representation of the Russian imperial construction.

[42] For example, A.A. Preobrazhenskiĭ, *Istoriia otechestva*, 7th-year textbook, 13th ed. (Moscow: Prosveshchenie, 2008), 69–70, 191, 194.

The reasoning that justifies imperial expansion is also applied to the 'voluntary incorporation' (again the Soviet terminology) of territories that had never been Russian: such as the Kazakh khanates in the 18th century, that asked Russia for protection against the Dzungarian threat to the steppes, where protection gradually became an annexation that destroyed the Kazakh social and political system. Or the conquest of foreign territory to resist external aggression or for economic reasons: the khanates of Kazan' and Astrakhan' in the 16th century, then the khanate of Crimea in 1783, and the conquest of North Caucasus in the 19th century, described as necessary for the territorial continuity of the Russian Empire, which had already absorbed South Caucasus.

In the case of Crimea, textbook writers talk of the natural continuity of Russian territory, whereas for the Ottoman Empire, which claimed the peninsula, Crimea was an overseas territory and thus "foreign".[43] Defensive reasoning is also put forward to justify the annexation in Central Asia of the khanates of Kokand and Khiva and the emirate of Bukhara in the late 19th century. Here the term 'colonial' does sometimes occur. Some authors state that Russia was a "traditional empire", even if its colonies were internal.[44] One textbook says that "by absorbing Central Asia and the lands of the Far East, Russia was taking part in the colonial division of the world". However, the authors stress the benefits of annexation for the people in these territories, seen as economically, culturally, and politically inferior: "The Russian government stopped the civil wars waged by tribal chiefs, prohibited slavery, started building railways and factories".[45]

One author is more explicit about the "conflict, ruin, and violence that the annexation of these regions meant for the civilian population", pointing out that "the development of capitalist relations was forcing Russia to actively seek out new profitable markets". However, he adds, Central Asia "would not in any case been able to keep its independence". If Russia had not annexed Central Asia, it would have been subjected to Britain, "which would have been worse for the local population".[46] Here again we

[43] Ibid., 182.

[44] For example, E. N. Zakharova, *Istoriia Rossii: XIX–nachalo XX veka*, 8th-year textbook, 4th ed. (Moscow: Mnemozina, 2007), 197.

[45] D. D. Danilov, et al., *Rossiĭskaia istoriia: XIX–nachalo XX veka*, 8th-year textbook (Moscow: Balass, 2007), 214. Also see A. A. Danilov and L. G. Kosulina, *Istoriia gosudarstva i narodov Rossii: XIX vek*, 8th-year textbook, 6th ed. (Moscow: Drofa, 2006), 168, etc.

[46] A. A. Levandovskiĭ, *Istoriia Rossii: XIX vek*, 8th-year textbook, 2nd ed. (Moscow: Prosveshchenie, 2006), 243–6; idem, *Istoriia Rossii: XVIII–XIX vekov*, 10th-year textbook, 2nd ed. (Moscow: Prosveshchenie, 2006), 219–21.

have the 'lesser of two evils' argument, first put forward by Stalin in the 1930s for the integration of Ukraine and Georgia, although the term is not specifically used in post-Soviet textbooks.[47]

In some textbooks, Russia is described as the victim of hostile neighbours. However, it is the monarchist books that take this idea the furthest: the Polish uprising of 1863 is described as the work of a "group of nasty conspirators" supported by the Catholic Church. Emphasis is laid on the Poles' many exactions and cruelties against the Russians and the Russian army's concern to save human lives. The European press is virulently criticized for its "anti-Russian" stance:

> "[The press] did not mention the cruelties of the Polish 'patriots', the persecution of the Orthodox, the children taken away from their parents and sent to Catholic monasteries, or the tortured Russian soldiers. It did not say that the Russian army had never attacked the civilian population, burned cities, or plundered properties like Napoleon's army, which indeed included a Polish legion."[48]

The author even claims in the introduction that unlike Britain and France

> "... Russia did not plunder its new territories; their population did not pay tribute to the distant capital city. In the Russian Empire, there was no national or racial discrimination. Tribes and peoples kept their culture, traditions, and customs. Not one people in the Empire lost its specific features. Russia united many peoples, and the Russian language gave them access to the achievements of Russian and global culture."[49]

Ultimately, the narrative of the formation of the Russian Empire, taking central place in all the history textbooks, is that of Russian national con-

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[47] This argument triumphed as early as 1940, but some elements were already present before, as Stalin's observations about the acquisition of Georgia and Ukraine clearly suggest. These were written in 1937, following the result of the competition for a new textbook on the history of the USSR: "Georgia's transfer under Russian protectorate at the end of the eighteenth century, and Ukraine's transfer under Russian power are perceived by the authors as an absolute evil, without taking into account the actual historical circumstances of those times. The authors do not see that Georgia had the alternative of either being swallowed up by the Shah of Persia and the Sultan of Turkey, or coming under the power of Russia, in the same way as Ukraine also had the alternative of either being swallowed up by the Polish nobles and the Sultan of Turkey, or coming under the power of Russia. They do not see that the second alternative was nevertheless the lesser evil". See: 'Proekt postanovleniia po uchebnikam istorii (kontrbubnovskiĭ). 29 marta 1937 g.', in *Istoriiu – v shkolu: sozdanie pervykh sovetskikh uchebnikov*, ed. Sergeĭ Kudriashov (Moscow: Archiv Prezidenta Rossiĭskoĭ Federatsii, 2008), 245.

[48] Russkoe slovo series, 8th-year textbook (see note 11), 88.

[49] Ibid., 5.

struction. This is obvious in the chapters on culture, which is almost always presented as solely Russian. The integration of non-Russian peoples is mentioned, but after that they are mainly forgotten, although some authors will give them a few paragraphs or rapidly note the negative aspects of Russian expansion: forced conversion at times, repression of revolts, policies of officially decided settlement of Russian peasants on pastureland or transhumance routes, land confiscation, and sometimes forced Russification. One textbook says that

> "the autocracy restricted the rights of any peoples who showed signs of insubordination. This caused resistance, thoughts of independence, emigration, and created tensions between nationalities, which played no small part in the collapse of the Empire."[50]

In another, the section on the Partitions of Poland ends as follows:

> "The disappearance of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth from the map of Europe was bound to leave its mark. The Poles dreamed of a national revival and took up arms more than once. The Prussian, Austrian, and Russian governments put them down by force. But it is impossible to be free if one is oppressing other peoples. In the countries that partitioned Poland, the most conservative forces were strengthened."[51]

Despite their differences and occasional conspicuous exceptions,[52] most of the textbook authors agree on one point: The Empire's expansion was

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[50] N. V. Zagladin, *Vsemirnaia istoriia. Istoriia Rossii i mira s drevneĭshikh vremen do konca XIX veka*, 10th-year textbook, 7th ed. (Moscow: Russkoe slovo, 2007), 370.

[51] I. L. Andreev, I. N. Danilevskiĭ, and V. V. Kirillov, *Istoriia Rossii s drevneĭshikh vremen do kontsa XIX veka*, 10th-year textbook (Moscow: Mnemozina, 2007), 212.

[52] Igor' Dolutskiĭ describes Russification, anti-semitism, pogroms, land confiscation in Central Asia, censorship, national repression, etc.: Dolutskiĭ, *Otechestvennaia istoriia* (see note 10). The textbooks by Leonid Katsva and Andreĭ Iurganov, published from the mid-1990s to the end of the 2000s, constitute another notable exception in the way of addressing non-Russian populations and imperial construction: L. A. Katsva and A. L. Iurganov, *Istoriia Rossii: VIII–XV veka* (Moscow: Miros, 1995); eidem, *Istoriia Rossii: XVI–XVIII veka* (Moscow: Miros / Ventana-Graf, 1995); eidem, *Istoriia Rossii s drevneĭshikh vremen do kontsa XVI veka* (Moscow: Prosveshchenie, 2007); eidem, *Istoriia Rossii: Konets XVI–XVIII vek* (Moscow: Prosveshchenie, 2009). In the textbook published in 1995, the paragraph on the Partitions of Poland ends as follows: "While freeing Ukrainians and Belarusians from heavy religious oppression, Russia extended more cruel serfdom to the annexed territories and destroyed the existing liberties of Polish cities. … The Polish people faced a long and dramatic struggle for the revival of their state. … We must not forget the aggressive nature of the wars of the Russian Empire in the second half of the XVIII century" (p. 243). We can find almost the same passage in the textbook published in 2009, with the following significant addition: "Yet in that era, all the great powers sought to conquer foreign lands, ignoring the will of small countries and peoples" (p. 243).

necessary to preserve Russia's unity and integrity. That is a common theme that links post-Soviet textbooks with Soviet ones, although there are differences worth mentioning. In Soviet times, each people incorporated into the Russian Empire was described as strengthening the 'Russian people' in its fight against autocracy. The various peoples in the Empire, once united, showed solidarity together in their desire to free themselves from the tsarist yoke and their strictly national demands were left unmentioned.

In modern textbooks, there is no talk of any solidarity of subjugated peoples fighting for freedom from the tsarist 'prison of peoples'. What schoolchildren are now taught is the idea of the power of the Russian state. This power is only seen through the formation, development, and grandeur of the Empire. Geopolitical considerations – forming protective barriers against hostile neighbours, annexing land before another power does – are determining factors. Indeed, imperial history is now more confidently handled than it was in Soviet times. The 'lesser of two evils' explanation is taken further, and conquests and annexations are usually described as good in themselves: first for Russia, but also for the conquered peoples, caught up in a process tending towards 'progress' and modernization, within a sphere perceived as obviously superior. This comes at the expense of any consideration of how this was perceived by the 'other', the people belonging to a different geographical, cultural, and political sphere.

In this way, post-Soviet history textbooks maintain a conventional vision of Russia's history, inherited from tsarist historiography and repeated in the 1930s by Soviet historiography, in which Russia (*Rossiia*) was a synonym for the Russian Empire. That is also why non-Russian peoples are only mentioned when they are integrated into Russia. After their integration they disappear from view.

Textbooks published between 1993 and 2015 testify to the diversity of interpretations in these years on a large number of historical facts – for example tsarism, revolutions, and Stalinism. But they also display a convergence in their unchanging view of the Russian Empire, which is never discussed in textbooks, unlike in the Russian scholarly research that, at the same time, was producing innovative discussions of imperial questions in general and the construction and functioning of the Russian Empire in particular. Do the textbooks published since 2016 show any change from their predecessors?

A United Multi-Ethnic Russian State (2016–19)

According to the *Concept* approved in 2013, new textbooks are supposed to make the point

> "that reunion with Russia and their presence within the Russian state had a positive significance for the peoples of our country: security from external enemies, the end of internal unrest and conflicts, cultural and economic development, education and healthcare, and so on".[53]

Clearly, this recommendation merely perpetuates the conventional vision of the Russian Empire to be found in all post-Soviet textbooks. For example, integration into the Muscovite state was a "free, conscious choice by the Ukrainian people" subjected to Polish "cruel feudal oppression", "a demonstration of the cultural, historic, and religious community that united the two peoples".[54] Georgia in 1783, subject to devastating attacks from Iran and Turkey, asked Russia for protection, which, while it soon ended "its existence as a state", did stop the "bloodshed" and protected it from "external dangers".[55] Where the integration is not voluntary, it is justified or justifiable.

In the case of the 18th-century Partitions of Poland, since the Tsarina had no interest in seeing a weak neighbour disappear, "Catherine was forced" to accept the idea of partition put forward by Prussia. Russian victory in the Russian–Turkish war of 1768–74 convinced her that she had to agree "to divide the Rzeczpospolita". This was because there was "a real risk that Turkey and Austria would make an alliance to fight together" against Russia.[56] Partition was thus a preventive move by Russia. Furthermore, Poland is described as partly responsible for its dismantlement, since the Polish nobles had done nothing to grant the Orthodox faithful rights equal to those of the Catholics or to relieve the harsh lives of the peasants.[57]

Finally, the Partitions of Poland contained "a certain consistency" (*zakonomernost'*). They allowed the "return" to Russia of Ukrainian and Belarusian lands, which met "the interests of the Ukrainian and Belarusian

[53] Russian Historical Society, *Koncepciia* (see note 28), 11.

[54] Drofa series, 7th-year textbook (see note 30), 187–8.

[55] Ibid., 33–4.

[56] Drofa series, 8th-year textbook (see note 30), 144; Prosveshchenie series, 8th-year textbook (see note 30), vol. 2, 44.

[57] Drofa series, 8th-year textbook (see note 30), 154.

peoples".[58] Similarly, the annexation of North Caucasus met the interests of the mountain peoples, subject to a religious fanaticism that prevented good relations with 'other peoples'. In one of the three sets of textbooks, there is the story of Pëtr Zakharov[-Chechenets], the Chechen baby "saved during the Caucasian War by the Russian soldier Zakharov". Sent to Saint Petersburg by General Ermolov, the little boy who had taken his rescuer's name studied at the Academy of Arts, becoming "the first native of the Caucasus to be a member of the Academy of Painting".[59] What is not mentioned is that the baby was found beside his mother, who had died in a Chechen village destroyed by the Russian Army, and that he was also the only professional Chechen painter in the Russian Empire during the entire 19th century. In the Prosveshchenie series the conquest of North Caucasus is justified by the mountain peoples' raids on Georgia, forcing Russia to defend itself. The only victims mentioned are the Russian soldiers killed fighting. The narrative of the Caucasian War ends with a paragraph on the traditional benefits for local people of being incorporated into the Russian Empire:

> "With the new authorities there also came more advanced farming techniques, education and healthcare, progressive Russian culture and, later, industrial production. Thus began a process of mutual enrichment between the cultures of the multi-ethnic region of the Caucasus."[60]

However, describing the positive aspects of integrating non-Russian peoples into Russia is no longer enough: According to the *Concept,* the history of Russia is the history of all the territories, countries, and peoples that have ever integrated "our State at one time or another":

> "Russia is the largest multi-ethnic and multi-religious country in the world. For this reason, it is necessary to increase the volume of educational material devoted to the history of the peoples of Russia, focusing on the interaction of cultures and religions, the strengthening of the economic, social, political and other ties between people."[61]

The narrative taught in schools is now supposed to bring together into one united and harmonious whole the former pieces of the Russian Empire, some of which are still part of Russia, a country continually referred to in the Prosveshchenie series, from the distant past to the present, as a

[58] Ibid., 152–4; Prosveshchenie series, 8th-year textbook (see note 30), vol. 2, 38.

[59] Drofa series, 9th-year textbook (see note 30), 127.

[60] Prosveshchenie series, 9th-year textbook (see note 30), vol. 1, 88.

[61] Russian Historical Society, *Koncepciia* (see note 28), 11.

'united Russian state' (*edinoe russkoe / rossiĭskoe gosudarstvo*): rather as if the writers feared that this multi-ethnic Russia might split into pieces as the USSR did in 1991.

That is in fact the real innovation in the *Concept*: the space given to non-Russian peoples. As the historian Aleksandr Danilov explained in a radio interview while the *Concept* was being produced in 2013,[62] 22 years after the collapse of the USSR, pluralism in historiography was starting to "create problems in the regions". This was because "regional history textbooks were at variance with the opinions and conclusions coming from the centre". "Local patriotism" was increasingly developing, making it a matter of urgency, said Danilov, to place the "preservation of our country's unity" centre stage in federal history textbooks. That meant including more about the regions and their peoples in the narrative taught to schoolchildren. This could be done, he added, by introducing, say, a "national hero", to be mentioned together with "all-Russian" (*obshcherossiĭskie*) events. When the interviewer asked what was to be done if regions put forward national heroes who had fought against Russian annexation, he replied that these were unlikely to be included in federal textbooks. The aim, he said, was to show "what unites us".

This requirement to 'show what unites us' while placing 'the Russian people' centre stage concerns much more than school syllabuses. It is based on the 'State Ethnic Policy Strategy of the Russian Federation Until 2025', also mentioned in the *Concept*:

> "The Russian state was created as a unity of peoples, with the Russian people being historically the bond that formed the system. Thanks to the unifying role of the Russian people, and centuries of inter-cultural and inter-ethnic interactions, there has been formed on the historical territory of the Russian state a unique cultural diversity and spiritual community among differing peoples attached to common principles and values: patriotism, service to the Motherland, the family, creative work, humanism, social justice, solidarity, and collectivism."[63]

It is the Prosveshchenie series of textbooks that has best integrated this 'strategy'. Entire sections for every period are devoted to the traditions,

[62] 'Spornye voprosy istorii: shto voĭdet v uchebnik?', *Ėkho Moskvy*, 16 June 2013, available at https://echo.msk.ru/programs/assembly/1093926-echo/ (last visited 30 October 2019).

[63] See 'Ukaz Prezidenta Rossiĭskoĭ Federatsii "O strategii gosudarstvennoĭ natsional'noĭ politiki Rossiĭskoĭ Federatsii na period do 2025 goda" ', paragraph 11, available at http://pravo.gov.ru/proxy/ips/?docbody=&nd=102161949 (last visited 30 October 2019).

culture, literature, and religion of non-Russian peoples, described as being harmoniously integrated into the Russian body. As explained in a passage closing the subchapter on the "peoples of Russia in the 17th century", Russia was developing "as a multi-ethnic state":

> "Under its sway came peoples living in Ukraine, Siberia, and the Far East. These peoples spoke different languages, had different traditions, and preached different religions and cults, but henceforth all these peoples had one single common homeland: Russia."[64]

The textbooks recall that it was not only the Russians but also the peoples of the Volga, the North, and Western Siberia who joined the fight against foreign aggressors during the Time of Troubles. All of them fought "for the liberation of the Motherland". Then later, in 1812 "alongside the Russians, Belarusians, Ukrainians, Tatars, Bashkirs, Georgians, and representatives of many other peoples made their contribution to victory".[65]

The requirement to present the Russian state in its ethnic diversity does not, however, mean deconstructing the imperial model that still underpins the narrative:

> "[In the 17th century], the Russian, much more than before, felt he belonged to a huge united country and the Russian [*russkiĭ*] people whose base he formed. Even without any particular geographical knowledge, the Russian for the first time became aware of the vast spaces of his Motherland, whose territory stretched to the Pacific Ocean. Having overcome the Time of Troubles, the Russian for the first time acutely felt the role and sense of order and state stability. And that was true not only for the Russians but also the country's other peoples."[66]

And even though the "country's other peoples" are omnipresent in this textbook series, they remain relegated to a parallel and thus secondary position; usually information about the 'peoples of Russia', their traditions, culture, literature, daily lives, or about 'the national question', 'ethnic policy', or 'national movements' is placed in subsections that are optional for the pupil. Multi-ethnic Russia is in reality imperial Russia. Its multi-ethnic nature is admittedly emphasized much more than before, described as a great strength endowing Russia with a character unique in the world. However, within this multi-ethnic state, the Russians remain, as they had been in Soviet textbooks, 'first among equals'.

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[64] Prosveshchenie series, 7th-year textbook (see note 30), vol. 2, 86.

[65] Ibid., 23–4; Prosveshchenie series, 9th-year textbook (see note 30), vol. 1, 33.

[66] Prosveshchenie series, 7th-year textbook (see note 30), vol. 2, 103.

Thus, in the new textbooks, as in the previous ones, there is no attempt to deconstruct the Russian imperial model. The Russian Empire continues to be glorified. The narrative leaves unmentioned the imperialist nature of successive incorporations into Russia. Where the act of belligerence is obvious, integration into Russian lands is described as beneficial to the subjugated people. Nothing must allow the schoolchild to think that Russia might have done something bad to other peoples. For example, as in the previous textbooks, the pogroms against the Jews are barely mentioned in the new textbook series. And even if the negative aspects of annexations are occasionally touched on, these are mere details in a generally positive picture. Russia is described as having at all times brought benefits to the other peoples: in the tsarist era, it brought its civilization, technical progress, education, an end to inter-ethnic violence, slavery, and the foreign yoke; in Soviet times, its friendship, its economic support, and its pacifism.

The USSR's Protective Hand

Which brings us to the Soviet period and in particular the German–Soviet Pact, an event that has played a central role in the wars of memory that have pitted and continue to pit Poland and the Baltic countries against Russia. For the Poles, the German–Soviet Pact led to their country's 'fourth' Partition (between the Third Reich and the USSR). For the Baltic countries, it meant their annexation by the USSR until 1991. In 2004, the former Estonian prime minister, Mart Laar, published an article in the Wall Street Journal entitled 'When Will Russia Say "Sorry"?'.[67] But never has Russia intended to 'say sorry', and the textbooks of both 1992–2015 and the present time are evidence of that fact.

Indeed, the German–Soviet Pact is often justified by geopolitical circumstances. First, most authors point out that the Pact was the consequence of the failure of the 'collective security' policy, the Munich Agreement and the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia, and the Western powers' unwillingness to work with the Stalinist state. Western and Soviet policies are placed on the same footing: both camps wanted to avoid confrontation with Germany, even if this meant negotiating behind the other's back. Many textbooks explain that the USSR had no choice but to

[67] Quoted in Gabriel Gorodetsky, 'Le pacte germano-soviétique', in *Histoire partagée, mémoires divisées: Ukraine, Russie, Pologne*, eds. Korine Amacher, Éric Aunoble, and Andrii Portnov (Lausanne: Antipodes, 2020).

sign the Pact, since the country was not ready to go to war.[68] In the Russkoe slovo series, Vladimir Putin is cited in support of this view:

> "The Soviet Union signed a non-aggression pact with Germany. You may say, oh, that was wrong. But was it so wrong if the Soviet Union did not want to fight? ... The alternative to the non-aggression pact was war with Germany and her allies as early as September 1939, when the USSR was not ready. Without the pact, the USSR's defeat was likely, and also that of the entire anti-Hitler coalition during the Second World War. The pact gained time."[69]

With regard to the secret protocols, if many textbooks do not justify them, the term 'invasion' is never used. As most of the textbooks put it, Germany "invaded" Poland, whereas the USSR "crossed" the Polish border. By this act the USSR, it is pointed out, merely "recovered" Ukrainian and Belarusian territories lost under the Treaty of Riga in 1921.[70] Some authors state that the Soviet army only entered Poland after the Polish government had left the country.[71] This distortion of the facts (for the Polish government left the country just after the Soviet invasion) makes it possible to explain to readers that the purpose was solely to help the abandoned Ukrainian and Belarusian populations. That was the official explanation given at the time, as can be seen from a 1939 poster reproduced in many textbooks. A friendly Soviet soldier is extending his protective hand to "the fraternal peoples of western Ukraine and western Belarus".[72]

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[68] See for example A. A. Danilov and L. G. Kosulina, *Istoriia Rossii, XX vek*, 9th-year textbook (Moscow: Prosveshcheniie, 1996), 202–3; A. F. Kiselev and V. P. Popov, *Istoriia Rossii, XX–nachalo XXI veka*, 11th-year textbook (Moscow: Drofa, 2013), 125; A. A. Danilov and A. V. Filippov, *Istoriia Rossii, 1940–1945*, 11th-year textbook (Moscow: Prosveshchenie, 2013), 318–19; Prosveshchenie series, 10th-year textbook (see note 30), vol. 1, 171–4; etc. Once again Dolutskiĭ's text is the exception that confirms the rule. He openly addresses such issues as the USSR's 'neutrality' until June 1941, see Dolutskiĭ, *Otechestvennaia istoriia* (see note 10), vol 2, 8.

[69] Russkoe slovo series, 10th-year textbook (see note 30), vol. 1, 186.

[70] See for example V. V. Zhuravlev, ed., *Istoriia Rossii: Sovetskoe obshchestvo, 1917–1991* (Moscow: Terra, 1997), 248–9; V. S. Izmozik and S. N. Rudnik, *Istoriia Rossii*, 11th-year textbook (Moscow: Ventana Graf, 2009), 193; Russkoe slovo series, 10th-year textbook (see note 30), vol. 1, 187–8; A. F. Kiselev and V. P. Popov, *Istoriia Rossii: XX–nachalo XXI veka* (Moscow: Drofa, 2013), 127.

[71] See for example Prosveshchenie series, 10th-year textbook (see note 30), vol. 2, 4; Kiselev and Popov, *Istoriia Rossii* (see note 69), 127; Prosveshchenie series, 11th-year textbook (see note 30), 324.

[72] See for example, Drofa series, 10th-year textbook (see note 30), 141.

The same reasoning is used for Bessarabia, lost to Romania by Soviet Russia in 1918 and occupied by the USSR under the secret protocols in June 1940. For northern Bukovina, land that had never been Russian and was also incorporated into the USSR, the explanation is that Ukrainians formed the majority of the population. Some authors say that it was a 'compensation' for the unauthorized seizure (*samovol'nyĭ zachvat*) of Bessarabia by Romania in 1918,[73] encouraging the young reader to think that this was not an aggressive act against an independent state but the recovery of land that had been Russian. Like the incorporation of Left Bank Ukraine in the 17th century or the Partitions of Poland in the late 18th, these events are presented as the recovery of territories considered to be Russian and thus legitimate. Although some authors do say that repression soon descended on these Sovietized communities, most prefer to emphasize the fact that the Ukrainian and Belarusian inhabitants welcomed the Soviets as liberators, after suffering under the Polish yoke (Romanian yoke in Bessarabia) during the inter-war period.

As for the Baltic republics, the elections won by pro-Communist forces and the formation of people's governments are usually mentioned, but not always the fact that this occurred under occupation. Only one textbook by Igor Dolutskiĭ clearly states that this act marked the "start of 50 years' occupation of the Baltic states".[74] Finally, the Katyn' Massacre is not systematically mentioned in textbooks, or only briefly, as if to prevent the reader spending too much time on this embarrassing episode. In the Prosveshchenie series, it says that thousands of Polish officers were shot in Katyn' Forest, but never states clearly that the massacre was carried out on Stalin's orders.[75]

But it must be noted that the picture given above is not totally uniform. In the Drofa series, the German–Soviet Pact is also justified by circumstances. However, the authors add that "in formal terms, the non-aggression treaty contained nothing reprehensible". But everyone understood "that it gave the go-ahead to Hitler's aggression against Poland... While delaying Hitler's attack on the USSR, it created favourable conditions for the establishment of Germany's military and political plans in Europe".[76] Of the USSR's annexation of territory, they say that although

[73] See for example Russkoe slovo series, 10th-year textbook (see note 30), vol. 1, 190.

[74] Dolutskiĭ, *Otechestvennaia istoriia*, (see note 10), vol. 2, 8.

[75] Prosveshchenie series, 10th-year textbook (see note 30), vol. 2, 4, 34.

[76] Drofa series, 10th-year textbook (see note 30), 139–40.

> "officially, the Soviet government claimed its purpose was to liberate the western Ukrainian and Belarusian lands lost to Poland under the Treaty of Riga in 1921, unofficially it took advantage of the secret protocols to carry out the division of spheres of influence between Germany and the USSR".

From the Soviet authorities' point of view, the Red Army was waging a "campaign of liberation", whereas for the "Polish patriots, it was just another partition of Poland. And from all points of view, the result was the liquidation of Poland as a state".[77] And in the Drofa series, there is no ambiguity at all in the description of the Katyn' Massacre as a "crime of the Stalinist regime".[78] It must be noted, however, that one paragraph of the section on the German–Soviet Pact has disappeared from the 2019 edition of this textbook, implying that it will be aligned with a vision closer to official expectations.[79]

Conclusion

Despite there being a single official *Concept*, differences remain between textbooks, for example in the way they describe the 18th-century peasant community or handle the German–Soviet Pact. In fact, what the new history textbooks show is the state of official history policy in present-day Russia. Within a framework laid down by the political authorities, some margin for manoeuvre is, for the moment, allowed. Furthermore, it is easy to see in these new textbooks the desire to avoid controversial positions and to reconcile opposing views on certain historical periods, particularly the 20th century. And they all agree on some points: although the Stalinist regime is no longer pilloried, as it was in many textbooks in the 1990s, none of the new ones rehabilitate it or justify the purges, as some textbooks did in the late 2000s.

The new textbooks have also similar negative visions of Tsar Ivan the Terrible, described as a tyrant. Similarly, the most extreme assertions against opponents and any sort of opposition to Tsarism once found in monarchist textbooks have completely vanished. This reconciliation of opposing positions was seen in Russia in 2017 during the centenary of the

[77] Ibid., 142.

[78] Ibid., 144–5.

[79] Besides, the 10th-year textbook of the Drofa series is not included in the list of recommended textbooks, published in December 2018 by the Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation.

1917 revolutions. For the Russian government, describing the ideological differences between Reds and Whites, identifying the guilty, condemning one side or the other, was less important than emphasizing that both sides, whatever their mutual hostility in 1917, wanted "prosperity for Russia and a better life on earth".[80]

This is probably why the publication in 2016 of these three sets of textbooks aroused little public controversy and was not widely covered in the media, putting an end to more than 25 years of 'textbook warfare' in Russia: supporters of patriotic history can be satisfied and their opponents can say that the worst has been avoided. And the lack of any critical discussion of the Russian (and Soviet) empires in the new textbooks is unlikely to revive that 'war'. In present-day Russia, the memory of the imperial model remains still very much alive and uncontested. The positive reactions in Russia to the annexation of Crimea in 2014 were clear evidence of this. Which is why any deconstruction of the traditional vision that glorifies an imperial Russia is for the moment confined to the world of scholarly historiography.

[80] Ministerstvo kul'tury Rossiĭskoĭ Federatsii, 'K 100-letiiu Velikoĭ rossiĭskoĭ revoliutsii: osmyslenie vo imia konsolidatsii', 6 October 2017, available at https://www.mkrf.ru/press/news/k-100-letiyu-velikoy-rossiyskoy-revolyutsii-osmyslenie-vo-imya-konsolidatsii20171006171334/ (last visited 30 October 2019). On the centenary commemorations of the 1917 Revolution see: Korine Amacher, 'Fêter une révolution sans donner des idées', *Le Monde Diplomatique*, March 2017; eadem, 'L'embarrassante mémoire de la Révolution russe', *La Vie des Idées,* 14 April 2017, available at https://laviedesidees.fr/La-memoire-encombrante-de-la-Revolution-russe.html (last visited 30 October 2019).