

THE RUSSIAN EMPIRE AND ITS NATIONALITIES IN POST-SOVIET HISTORIOGRAPHIES

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The implosion of the Soviet system, the collapse of the Soviet empire and the creation of fifteen new independent states has led to a historiographical reorientation. The unity of the field of research concerned with the Soviet Union and its tsarist predecessor and the uniform ideological approach have broken down. Simultaneously with the collapse of the Soviet Union, the interest in its origins, in the collapse of the Russian empire and in the history of its nationalities has risen.

The topic of this article, “The Russian Empire and its Nationalities in Post-Soviet Historiographies,” is a very wide one. It is not possible to cover all recent historiography on four centuries of the Russian empire with its over 100 nationalities. Rather, I am going to give an overview of some trends in Russia and in the other post-Soviet states, especially in Ukraine. Before starting the analysis of post-Soviet historiographies, I will look briefly at the Soviet historiography on the subject.

1. SOVIET HISTORIOGRAPHY

During the 1920s and the beginning of the 1930s, Soviet historians were rewriting the history of the tsarist empire, which had been russified and harmonized in prerevolutionary Russian scholarship. Now, in the context of indigenization and of Lenin’s battle against Great Russian chauvinism, the expansion of the Russian empire was characterized as a series of brutal military conquests, and the rule of the tsars was denounced as colonial domination and exploitation, whereas the protest movements of non-Russians were regarded as legitimate wars of liberation.

Under the rule of Stalin, this approach was gradually altered. From 1934 Soviet patriotism became the new leading ideology. It was little by little supplemented by Russian nationalism and traditional Russian myths, especially after World War II. The annexations of non-Russian peripheries were now labeled as “the lesser evil,” because they protected non-Russians from the rule of “barbaric” oppressors or foreign enemies; tyrannic Khans, Muslim Ottomans or Catholic Poles. From the beginning of the 1950s, annexations were interpreted as absolute positive and progressive events, uniting non-Russians with the great Russian brotherhood, who together would eventually accomplish the Great Socialist October Revolution. Non-Russian resistance and national movements were denounced as being reactionary or bourgeois. The myth of friendship of the Soviet peoples since antiquity had now become a dogma. Stalin’s “Great Retreat” to the values of tsarist Russia reproduced the legitimation of imperial conquest and rule, of Russia’s “mission civilizatrice” among non-Russians.¹

Although after Stalin’s death some of the most extreme elements of the dogma were eliminated, on the whole the axioms of the progressive union of non-Russian peripheries with Russia and of the friendship of the peoples continued to hold sway and were compulsory for all Soviet historians. Attempts by some

1 Lowell Tillett, *The Great Friendship. Soviet Historians on the Non-Russian Nationalities* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1966); Albrecht Martiny, “Das Verhältnis von Politik und Geschichtsschreibung in der Historiographie der sowjetischen Nationalitäten seit den sechziger Jahren,” *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 27 (1979), pp. 238-272; Andreas Kappeler, “Die Historiographien der nichtrussischen Völker der RSFSR in den siebziger Jahren,” *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 29 (1981), pp. 53-79; Gennadii Bordiugov, Vladimir Bukharaev, “Natsional’naia istoricheskaia mysl’ v usloviakh sovetskogo vremeni,” in K. Ajmermacher, G. Bordjugov, eds., *Natsional’nye istorii v sovetskikh i postsovetskikh gosudarstvach* (Moskva: AIRO-XX, 1999), pp. 21-73; Stephen Velychenko, *Shaping Identity in Eastern Europe and Russia: Soviet-Russian and Polish Accounts of Ukrainian History, 1914-1991* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1993); Alter L. Litvin, *Writing History in Twentieth Century Russia: A View from Within* [Translated and edited by John L.H. Keep] (Houndmills, Basingstoke, New York: Palgrave, 2001), pp. 117-127

scholars in the periphery at mitigating the dogma were suppressed by Moscow, and some areas of research, such as that of national movements remained taboo. The control of the party and state institutions in the Soviet center over the non-Russian historians of the peripheries was tighter than over Russian historiography.

However, compared with the prerevolutionary epoch, there were some advantages for the peripheral historiographies. Within the framework of Soviet federalism there existed a number of republican institutions such as the Academies of Sciences (with the exception of the RSFSR) and universities. National historiographies, even in the Autonomous Republics, were partially published in the national languages and tried to conserve the traditions of the prerevolutionary period and of the 1920's within the limits of the above mentioned dogmas. However, the conditions in the Soviet republics were quite different. Thus, Ukrainian, Tatar and Moldavian historiographies were more tightly controlled, whereas historians in the three Baltic republics, in Russia, Georgia and Armenia had more liberty of action. Accordingly, the quality of the historical works varied between a relatively high standard in the Russian capital (due also to a considerable brain drain from the provinces to the Soviet centre) and in Estonia and a lower standard in the provincialized and isolated Ukraine, Belarus', Moldova and Central Asia.

Between the centre and the peripheries there was a strict division of labor. The historians of the Soviet republics were responsible only for the history of their territories. There were very few specialists on the history of the greater regions such as the Middle Volga or the Northern Caucasus, and virtually none on the empire as a whole. The multivoluminous histories of the Soviet Union included chapters on the peripheries, usually written by regional historians, but they were only appended to the Russian-dominated main narrative and not integrated into a general cohesive history of the empire. They covered the history of the actual Soviet republics from prehistory to the present. So they included the whole history of Western Ukraine, although it had only been part of the USSR since 1939/45 and had never been part of Russia. On the other hand, they excluded the history of Poland and Finland, which for over a century had been

parts of the empire, the history of which can't be understood without an analysis of the Polish and Finnish questions.

2. THE REDISCOVERY OF NATIONAL HISTORY

In the late 1980s, these historical taboos collapsed along with the Soviet system. The historians of the post-Soviet independent states and of some republics of the Russian Federation were, for the first time in more than 50 years, able to deal with the questions of nations and empire without regard to Soviet ideologies. Historians began to reanimate elements of the national historical memory partially destroyed by Soviet power. The closed book-shelves and archives were (at least partially) opened, and “black spots” and taboos could now be tackled by national historians. They tried to resume the work of the pre-Soviet national historians, such as the great Russian historians of the 19th century Nikolai Karamzin and Vasilii Kliuchevskii, and the dean of Ukrainian historiography Mykhajlo Hrushevs'kyi, and of the traditions of the well-developed national historiographies in independent inter-war Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Others tried to revive the relatively liberal national historiographies of the 1920s. These old (methodologically outdated) works were reprinted. Others took the works written by Ukrainian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Armenian and other emigré historians as models for new national histories.

Many historians, among them party historians who had lost their old field of work, switched from the old Marxist-Leninist and soviet-patriotic ideologies to a new ethno-national ideology. In the first years of independence this nationalist ideology was sometimes applied in a dogmatic manner similar to that of the former axioms. An ethnocentric, partially xenophobic (rus-sophobic, armenophobic, azerophobic, etc.) nationalism seemed to replace the Soviet dogma of the friendship of the peoples. Historians imagined new and old national myths and constructed national histories in order to legitimize the young nations and the new nation-states by calling on images of their great past. Continuities of state traditions, of a national elite and of a national culture were invented or reinvented. “Golden Ages” in

antiquity or in the middle ages were praised and the protagonists of national cultures and of the national movements were heroified. On the other hand, periods of suffering under foreign, especially Russian or Soviet, rule were imagined as national martyrologies. Textbooks had to be rewritten, and popular literature, new historical monuments, bank-notes and symbols had to diffuse the national historical myths among a broader population.²

The Soviet dogmas of “voluntary unification” (*dobrovol’noe prisoedinenie*) of the peripheries with Russia and its progressive impact on their peoples were often replaced with interpretations of military conquest and colonial domination by Russia. The dogma of the reactionary or bourgeois character of protests against tsarist rule were altered into interpretations of anticolonial and antiimperialist or national wars of liberation. This can be demonstrated by the rewriting of the wars of the Volga Tatars and Cheremis (Mari) against Russia during the 16th century or those of the Kazakhs and the Caucasian mountaineers during the first half of the 19th century and by the fundamental reevaluation of the national movements of the second half of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries. In large sections of Russian historiography, however, the Soviet interpretations of the imperial expansion and the imperial rule remained fundamentally unchanged. The annexation of the Kazan Khanate, the Kazakh hordes and the Northern Caucasus remained heroic elements of Russian imperial history. This led to opposing interpretations of history in the centre and in most of the peripheries

2 My information about post-Soviet historiographies is taken partially from the papers and discussions of an international conference “A decade of post-communist historiography,” which I co-organized in Vienna in September 2001. The papers have been published in a special issue of *Österreichische Osthefte* 1-2 (2002). See also Vera Tolz, “Conflicting ‘Homeland Myths’ and Nation-State Building in Postcommunist Russia,” *Slavic Review* 57 (1998), pp. 267-294; Pal Kolsto, *Political Construction Sites: Nation-Building and the Post-Soviet States* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2000); Taras Kuzio, “History, Memory and Nation-Building in the Post-Soviet Colonial Space,” *Nationalities Papers* 30 (2002), pp. 241-264.

of the former empire, but also between historians of different republics in the periphery, as between Tatar, Mari and Chuvash historians in regard to the annexation of the Kazan Khanate in 1552.³

I will now illustrate these tendencies with some examples from post-Soviet Ukrainian historiography. The historical scheme of Hrushevs'kyi, elaborated a century ago, is accepted now by the majority of Ukrainian historians as the key to Ukrainian history, as “the historical bible of the Ukrainian people” (president Leonid Kuchma).⁴ In Hrushevs'kyi's interpretation, there is a continuity of Ukrainian history from Kievan Rus', the first “Golden Age,” through the principality of Galicia-Volynia and the Great Duchy of Lithuania to the Cossack hetmanate of the 17th and 18th centuries, the second “Golden Age,” labeled as the first Ukrainian national state. This continuity of statehood is prolonged to the Ukrainian national republic of 1917-1920, whose first president was Hrushevs'kyi, and finally to the Ukrainian nation-state founded in 1991. In this year, the Ukrainian Verchovna Rada proclaimed independence “in continuation of a tradition of a thousand years of Ukrainian statehood.” It is evident that this view of history, challenging as it does “the traditional scheme” of Russian history, was opposed by most Russian historians. For them, Kievan Rus' remained the first manifestation of Russian statehood and a “Golden Age” of their

3 L. Gatagova, “Severnyi Kavkaz: Metamorfozy istoricheskogo soznaniia,” in Ajmermacher, Bordjugov, eds., *Natsional'nye istorii...*, pp. 257-274; S. Iskhakov, “Istoriia narodov Povolzh'ia i Urala: Problemy i perspektivy natsionalizatsii,” in Ajmermacher, Bordjugov, eds., *Natsional'nye istorii...*, pp. 275-298; S.Kh. Alishev, *Kazan' i Moskva: mezhgosudarstvennye otnosheniia v XV i XVI vv.* (Kazan': Tatarskoe knizhnoe izdatel'stvo, 1995); V.D. Dimitriev, *Mirnoe prisoedinenie Chuvashii k Rossiiskomu gosudarstvu* (Cheboksary: Natsional'naia akademiia nauk Chuvashskoi respublik, 2001); A.G. Bakhtin, “Prichiny prisoedineniia Povolzh'ia i Priural'ia k Rossii,” *Voprosy Istorii* 5 (2001), pp. 52-72; Sergei Svechnikov, “Prisoedinenie Mariiskogo kraia k Russkomu gosudarstvu,” Avtoreferat na soisk. uch. step. kand. ist. nauk, Kazan', 2002.

4 Quoted in Kuzio, “History, Memory and Nation-Building...,” p. 253. For a smaller but nevertheless influential group of Ukrainian historians, the model was not the populist-socialist Hrushevs'kyi, but the conservative Viacheslav Lypyns'kyi and his emphasis on elites and state traditions.

collective memory, while the Cossack Hetmanate was first of all part of the history of the Russian state and an important step in the growth of the empire.

In Ukrainian historiography during the 1990's, which was heavily influenced by Hrushevskyi's interpretation, two periods clearly dominate: The period of the Ukrainian cossacks (16th to 18th century), which was the main historical national myth of Ukraine since the 18th century, and the history of the Ukrainian National Republic (1917-1920), viewed as the first Ukrainian modern national state. The tsarist period in between is interpreted as a period of suffering under foreign rule and of the national Ukrainian renaissance. The Soviet dogma of "the reunification of Ukraine with Russia" in 1654 has been replaced by the interpretation of a loose protectorate or a personal union with Russia which, in the following decades, was broken by Russia as it began to integrate Ukraine into the empire. Moreover, it could not be a *re*-unification, but only an annexation, because, prior to the 17th century, Ukraine had never been part of Russia. Most Russian historians, however, did maintain the view of the "voluntary reunification of Ukraine with Russia," having in view the reestablishment of the common Russian-Ukrainian co-existence in Kievan "Russia."

Similar discord exist in regard to the interpretation of the coalition of Hetman Mazepa with the Swedish king Charles XII. Mazepa is regarded either as a national hero who wanted to reunite Ukraine and liberate it from the Russian yoke (he features in many Ukrainian works and on the 10 hryvni banknote) or as a traitor of the common Russian fatherland (in Russia and partially in Eastern Ukraine). The subjects of the Ukrainian national movement and Ukrainian nation-building, which had been virtually taboo in Soviet times, now became popular. In Ukraine there is, however, little new research on the tsarist Ukrainian policy and the situation of Ukraine under Russian rule; the most important new book on the subjects was published by the Russian scholar Aleksei Miller (see below). Ukrainian historians usually follow the traditional schematic interpretations of repression and Russification during the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries and avoid topics such as the wide-spread multiple identities

or loyalties among Ukrainian elites and their partially voluntary Russification. In general, Ukrainian history is treated mostly as the history of Ukrainians; the numerous Polish, Jewish and Russian minorities living in Ukraine during the tsarist period and their contributions to Ukrainian history are rarely dealt with.⁵

These tendencies toward an ethnization of history appeared not only in the former non-Russian Soviet republics, but also in the Russian Federation. On the one hand, historians of the titular nations of the former Autonomous Republics, especially in Tatarstan, Chechnia and Sakha, started to (re-)construct national histories against the Soviet-imperial paradigms. On the other hand, many Russians also began to look for the essence of the Russian nation, for the “Russian idea” and the “Russian civilization,” and found it in several periods of medieval or imperial Russian history. Some are propagators of an ethnic-Russian history (*russkaia istoriia*), but most of them have remained faithful to the traditional state-oriented imperial history of Russia (*istoriia Rossii* or *Rossiiskaia istoriia*). The existence of a strong tradition of state was the main reason for the weaker ethnization of history among Russian historians than among most non-Rus-

5 Zenon E. Kohut, “History as a Battleground: Russian-Ukrainian Relations and Historical Consciousness in Contemporary Ukraine,” in S. Frederick Starr, ed., *The Legacy of History in Russia and the New States of Eurasia* (Armonk, London: M.E. Sharpe, 1994), pp. 123-145; Catherine Wanner, *Burden of Dreams: History and Identity in Post-Soviet Ukraine. Post-Communist Cultural Studies* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State U.P., 1998); Andrew Wilson, *The Ukrainians. Unexpected Nation* (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 2000); Valerii Vasil’ev, “Ot Kievskoi Rusi k nezavisimoi Ukraine: Novye kontseptsii ukrainskoi istorii,” in Ajmermacher, Bordjugov, eds., *Natsional’nye istorii...*, pp. 209-230; Taras Kuzio, “Post-Soviet Ukrainian Historiography in Ukraine,” *Historische Schulbuchforschung* 23 (2001), pp. 27-42; Yaroslav Hrytsak, “Ukrainian Historiography, 1991-2001: Decade of Transformation,” Paper Conference Vienna, September 2001, published in *Österreichische Osthefte* (2002). As an example of the paradigm of current national history of Ukraine, see a new textbook, recommended by the Ukrainian Ministry of Education: *Istoriia Ukraïny. Navchal’nyi posibnyk* (Kyïv: Vyd. “Al’ternatyvy,” 1997). Among its authors are many of the well-known established Ukrainian historians.

sians whose collective memory lacked continuity of statehood. Russian historians reacted against the dissolution of the common history of Russia, as they understood it, by the new national histories of the other post-Soviet states with a strengthening of the history of the Russian empire, not of the Russian people.⁶

The rediscovery of an ethno-national history was typical of the very first years of the post-Soviet independent states. At least in some of them, this trend tended to decrease after the mid-1990s. A special case is the historiography of Belarus', which was constrained by the authoritarian régime of president Lukashenka to revive Soviet traditions after 1994. In other republics, more and more professional historians were not satisfied with the new one-sided ethno-national approaches. They looked for new historical methods and theories and started to deconstruct the national myths. The opening of the iron curtain brought more and more historians into contact with their foreign colleagues from the U.S., Western Europe and Japan. Many of the younger scholars spent some time as fellows of the Central European University in Budapest, the Slavic Research Center in Sapporo or of other institutions in Western Europe or North America. They became acquainted with new fields of historical work, such as new cultural history, gender studies or post-colonial studies, and with new methodological thinking, such as post-modernism, constructivism, deconstructivism and discourse analysis. There are already many professionally well-trained historians among the Russians, Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians. There is also a growing number among the Ukrainians, Tatars and Armenians, but, as far as I know, there are very few in Moldova, Azerbaijan and Central Asia and most of the non-Russian republics of Russia. This new generation of historians, among

6 Elena Zubkova, "‘Goldene Zeit’ der Geschichtsforschung? Tendenzen der postsowjetischen Historiographie in Russland," Conference Paper, Vienna, September 2001, to be published in *Österreichische Osthefte* (2002); E. Zubkova, A. Kupriianov, "Vozvrashchenie k ‘russkoi idee’: krizis identichnosti i natsional’naia istoriia," in Ajmermacher, Bordjugov, eds., *Natsional’nye istorii...*, pp. 299-328; *Russkii narod. Istoricheskaia sud’ba v XX veke* (Moskva, 1993).

them also some older scholars, is beginning to overcome the pattern of an exclusive ethnic national history.⁷ On the other hand, in most of the post-Soviet states, the older generation has retained its positions at the head of academic institutions and universities and usually opposes the rise of younger Western-educated colleagues to these positions.

The differences in professional standards, methodical and theoretical diversification and in the ability to overcome an exclusive national paradigm between the post-Soviet historiographies can be explained by the preconditions in the field of historiography in the pre-Soviet era and during the Soviet period and by the political, ideological and economic conditions in the Soviet and post-Soviet era. The Russian historiography had a high scholarly standard even before 1917, and the three Baltic countries had a relatively well-developed national historiography between the wars, which partially survived through emigration. In the Soviet Union, Russian and Baltic historians were working under better political and ideological conditions than their colleagues in most other republics. Ukrainians, Armenians and Tatars, in the first two decades of the 20th century, had also developed a professionally good historiography, which also partially survived through emigration; but the Ukrainian historians suffered more than others under the severe political repressions of the 1930s and 1970s, while their Belorussian colleagues suffered a setback under the rule of Lukashenka.

During the last fifteen years the national historiographies already in existence in Soviet times have (re)discovered and (re)constructed their national histories. In the post-Soviet states national history was and is still the main focus of the profes-

7 The following are some examples from Ukrainian historiography: Natalia Yakovenko, *Narys istorii Ukraïny z naidavnishykh chasiv do kintsia XVIII stolittia* (Kyïv: Heneza, 1997); Yaroslav Hrytsak, *Narys istorii Ukraïny. Formuvannia modernoiï ukraïns'koï natsii XIX-XX stolittia* (Kyïv: Heneza, 1996); Georgii Kas'ianov, *Teorii natsii ta natsionalizmu* (Kyïv: Lybid', 1999); articles in: "Die ukrainische Nationalbewegung vor 1914," *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 49 (2001), pp. 161-263.

sional historians. At the same time, national history is an important force for the legitimation and integration of the young nation-states and it is furthered in textbooks, popular literature and films. The tsarist empire and the Soviet Union are losing their central place in the collective memory; they mainly function as foreign oppressor of the peoples. In some countries there are virtually no specialists in Russian history left, although the Russian and Soviet periods were important parts of their histories. The traditional interrelations between historians in Moscow and St. Petersburg and their colleagues in the peripheral republics have mostly been broken up. As far as I know, the historians of the non-Russian post-Soviet states have made few important general contributions to the history of the Russian Empire.⁸

What then happened in this respect in Russia, which regards itself as the successor of the Russian Empire?

3 THE REDISCOVERY OF THE RUSSIAN EMPIRE IN RUSSIA

The collapse of the Soviet Union provoked a discussion about the notion and the essence of the Russian empire (*Rossiiskaia imperiia*). In tsarist times, “*imperiia*” was the official name of the Russian state, but in the Soviet Union it became a negative term associated with imperialism and oppression. In the discussions of the period of “Glasnost,” Russian historians often condemned the tsarist, and especially, the Soviet empires that had suppressed both non-Russians and Russians. During the 1990s, however, the notion of empire became positive once

⁸ One exception is the recent Ukrainian volume *Rossia et Britannia: imperi ta natsii na okraïnakh Evropy, Skhid-Zakhid. Istoriko-kul'turolohychnyi zbirnyk*. vyp. 4 (Kharkiv: Novyi Vyd, 2001). However, among the authors of these articles only a few are Ukrainians. Another exception is the work of the Estonian historian Toomas Karjahärm, particularly the collection of sources *Imperskaia politika Rossii v Pribaltike v nachale XX veka. Sbornik dokumentov i materialov* (Tartu, 2000). See Silrje Kivimäe, Jüri Kivimäe, “Geschichtsschreibung und Geschichtsforschung in Estland 1988-2001,” Conference Paper, Vienna, September 2001, to be published in *Österreichische Osthefte*.

more, due to political currents and ambitions in the new Russian (Rossiiski) state and nation. The loss of the Soviet empire and the Soviet republics, and the growth of nationalism among many Russians resulted in a nostalgic idealizing of the prenational and transnational tsarist and Soviet empires.⁹

In this respect, the popular historical journal “Rodina” (Homeland) played an important role in organizing a wide-scale discussion about “We in the Empire – the Empire in us” (*My v imperii – imperiia v nas*) during the second half of the 1990s. In numerous articles many aspects of the problems of Empire were discussed from different perspectives. Special issues were devoted to such disputed questions as the Caucasian wars of the 19th and 20th centuries, Russian-Ukrainian relations and the Jewish problem. Although the editors of “Rodina” tended to a moderate Russian patriotism, they opened the journal for other voices, among them historians of the non-Russian “near abroad.” This interesting discussion contributed to the rehabilitation of the formerly pejorative term “Empire” among historians and a broader public.¹⁰

A similar trend is visible in the introduction of an interesting recent collection of articles. Its co-editor S. I. Barzipov states that “Today we have to treat the problem of the ideological rehabilitation not so much of the imperial-autocratic form of the organization of society itself, as of the role of the Russian state as an instrument of this organization, as a mechanism harmonizing the interests of society. By the way, in the North-American and European tradition the notion of empire does not have this negative meaning.”¹¹ The volume mentioned includes scholarly articles on various problems concerning the tsarist Empire; on the official concept of the “Great Russian nation” (compris-

9 L.S. Gatagova, “Imperiia: Identifikatsiia problemy,” in G.A. Bordiugov, ed., *Istoricheskie issledovaniia v Rossii. Tendentsii poslednich let* (Moskva: AIRO, 1996), pp. 332-353.

10 “Rossiia i Ukraina: Vekhi istorii,” *Rodina* 8 (1999); “Rossiia na Kavkaze,” *Rodina* 1-2 (2000); “Evrei v Rossii,” *Rodina* 4-5 (2002).

11 *Prostranstvo vlasti: istoricheskii opyt Rossii i vyzovy sovremennosti* (Moskva: Moskovskii obshchestvennyi fond, 2001), p. 16.

ing all Eastern Slavs), the question of “inorodtsy” (allogenes), and the Don Cossack, Baltic, Polish and Finnish problems. The Moskovskii obshchestvennyi fund not only produced this volume, but also two others: the first, published in 1997, focused more on the regional than on the ethnic factors of the empire; the second on problems of methodology (2001).¹² In explaining the tsarist Empire, this regional approach becomes more and more important.

The Institute of Ethnology of the Russian Academy of Sciences has published two useful collections of official documents concerning the Russian Empire from the 18th to the early 20th century. The long theoretical introductions of the editor Iu. I. Semenov are, however, disappointing; they follow the Marxist formation theory, so conspicuous in the titles of the two books (“The civilized borderlands” and “Late primordial and preclass societies”), without taking into account the large Western literature on the subject.¹³ Other Russian cultural anthropologists dealt with important aspects of the post-Soviet historiographies, with Victor Shnirelman, for example, writing on the competing national constructions of descent myths and ethnogenesis.¹⁴

12 P.I. Savel'ev, ed., *Imperskii stroi Rossii v regional'nom izmerenii (XIX - nachalo XX veka). Sbornik nauchnykh statei* (Moskva, 1997); *Puti poznaniia istorii Rossii: Novye podchody i interpretatsii* (Moskva, 2001). See also the articles of Liudmila Gatagova, Aleksandr Kupriianov and Tatiana Filippova in *Novyi mir istorii Rossi. Forum iaponskikh-rossiskikh issledovatelei* (Moskva: AIRO-XX, 2001).

13 Ju.I. Semenov, ed., *Natsional'naia politika v imperatorskoi Rossii. Tsivilizovannye okrainy (Finliandiia, Pol'sha, Pribaltika, Bessarabiia, Ukraina, Zakavkaz'e, Sredniaia Aziia)* (Moskva: Staryi sad, 1997); Iu.I. Semenov, ed., *Pozdnie pervobytnye i predklassovye obshchestva Severa Evropeiskoi Rossii, Sibiri i Russkoi Ameriki* (Moskva: Staryi sad, 1998). I did not find a first volume of documents, edited by A.M. Filippov, published in 1992.

14 Victor A. Shnirelman, *Who Gets the Past? Competition for Ancestors Among Non-Russian intellectuals in Russia* (Washington D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press and John Hopkins U.P., 1996); idem, *The Value of the Past: Myths, Identity and Politics in Transcaucasia* (Osaka: National Museum of Ethnology, 2001).

During recent years, the Institute of Russian History of the Russian Academy of Sciences in Moscow has begun to publish several volumes on the national problems of the Russian Empire. The first step was the organisation of an international conference in 1996 in Moscow. The proceedings, published in 1999, were devoted mostly to the Soviet period with the few articles dealing with the pre-revolutionary period being of limited scholarly value. Another volume written by members of the Institute was devoted to the administration of the peripheries of the empire, including, for the first time, the Polish provinces and the Grand Duchy of Finland. A third volume dealt with the Russian population in the national peripheries from the 16th to the 20th century.¹⁵ These three books, being welcome contributions to the growing literature on the multi-ethnic tsarist Empire, show, however, the limits of Russian historiography. Because of the traditional division of labor between the centre and the periphery, there is now a lack of Russian specialists on the history of the non-Russian regions of the tsarist Empire. The articles published in the three volumes mentioned above are therefore of uneven quality, most of them do not take into account important new studies published in the post-Soviet states and in other countries. Some of them show a neo-imperial thinking which perpetuates the traditional stereotype of a Russian “mission civilizatrice” in the peripheries and harmonizes the conflicts between the centre and the non-Russian peoples.

In books and collections of sources published by other institutions these tendencies toward a post-imperial nostalgia and of great-power thinking are even more evident. They follow directly the Soviet axioms of “the friendship of peoples” and of “the voluntary and progressive union” of non-Russian territories with Russia, thus legitimating the armed subjugation of many territories and the violent oppression of non-Russians by the

15 A.N. Sacharov, V.A. Michailov, eds., *Rossia v XX veke. Problemy natsional'nykh otnoshenii* (Moskva: Nauka, 1999); *Natsional'nye okrainy Rossiiskoi imperii. Stanovlenie i razvitie sistemy upravleniia* (Moskva: Slavianskii dialog, 1997); *Russkoe naselenie natsional'nykh okrain Rossii XVII - XX vv.* (Moskva: Slavianskii dialog, 2000).

tsarist state.¹⁶ This reactionary current is partially connected with the upsurge of chauvinic Eurasianism in Russia, which dreams of a new Eurasian empire under the leadership of Russia. On the other hand, there is a scholarly Eurasianism, for example, in the journal *Vestnik Evrazii*, which contains some valuable articles on the Asian dimensions of the tsarist Empire.¹⁷

Since the start of the Russian wars against the Chechens in 1994, the problems of the Caucasian peoples of the Russian Empire, and especially the Caucasian War of 1830-1864, has become the subject of numerous historical works. Most of the books and articles by Russian and Ossetinian authors, without denying the violence of Russian warfare, focus on peaceful contacts between Russia and the Caucasian mountaineers and interpret the tsarist colonial policy with indulgence, insisting in the civilizing mission of Russia. On the other hand, historians from Dagestan and Chechnia, like many Western historians, underline the Russian colonial rule and the traditions of anticolonial struggle among the Chechen and Cherkes peoples.¹⁸

During the 1990s, some individual Russian historians wrote important works on the history of the multi-ethnic Russian empire. Perhaps the first of them was Valentin Diakin (St. Petersburg), who, during the first half of the 1990s, was working in Russian archives and published in 1995 a long article on late tsarist nationalities' policy; a further collection of archival sourc-

16 R.G. Abdulatipov, L.F. Boltenkova, Iu.F. Iarov, *Federalizm v istorii Rossii*. Kniga pervaja (Moskva: Izd. Respublika, 1992); *Pod stiagom Rossii. Sbornik arkhivnykh dokumentov* (Moskva: Russkaia kniga, 1992); *Rossia i strany Blizhnego zarubezh'ia: Istoriia i sovremennost'* (Moskva, 1995); N.I. Ul'ianov, *Proiskhozhdenie ukrainskogo separatizma* (Moscow: Indrik, 1996, reprint from New York 1966).

17 *Vestnik Evrazii* [*Acta Eurasica*] 1- (Moskva, 1995-). On the first trend, see Markus Mathyl, "Der 'unaufhaltsame Aufstieg' des Aleksandr Dugin. Neo-Nationalbolschewismus und Neue Rechte in Rußland," *Osteuropa* 7 (2002), pp. 885-900.

18 See e.g. M.M. Bliev, V.V. Degoev, *Kavkazskaia voina* (Moskva, 1994); *Rossia i Kavkaz skoz' dva stoletia* (St. Peterburg: Zhurnal Zvezda, 2001); *Kavkazskaia voina. Spornye voprosy i novye podkhody. Tezisy dokladov mezhdunarodnoi nauchnoi konferentsii* (Makhachkala, 1998).

es he had found was published after his premature death.¹⁹ Promising for the future is the fact that during the last years some young Russian historians have published books of high quality on several aspects of the Russian Empire. I mention only three of them here; the innovative monograph by Leonid Gorizontov about the paradoxes of Russian policies towards the Poles (1999), the sophisticated analysis of the Ukrainian question in tsarist politics and the Russian society during the 1860s and 1870s by Aleksei Miller (2000), and the painstaking and extensive treatment of the history of the Nogai Horde by Vadim Trepavlov (2001).²⁰

These authors are aware of the international scholarly discussions and do take Western literature into consideration. There was, and still is, some direct international cooperation in the field of the history of the Russian Empire. Two volumes of articles published in 1997 reflect joint scholarly projects of Russian and foreign scholars. The first, the result of an international conference in Kazan (1994), consists of multidisciplinary contributions on imperial myths and institutions and the “multiplicity of spaces in which inhabitants of the empire lived.” This is expected to be followed by other collections of conference papers. The other presents the papers of a Russian-Ukrainian conference held in Moscow in 1996.²¹ A current international

19 V.S. Diakin, “Natsional’nyi vopros vo vnutrennei politike tsarizma (nachalo XX v.),” in *Voprosy istorii* 9 (1995), pp. 130-142, 11-12 (1996), pp. 39-53; *Natsional’nyi vopros vo vnutrennei politike tsarizma (XIX - nachalo XX vv.)* (St. Peterburg: Izdat. LISS, 1998).

20 L.E. Gorizontov, *Paradoksy imperskoi politiki: Poliaki v Rossii i russkie v Pol’she* (Moskva: Indrik, 1999); A.I. Miller, “Ukrainskii vopros” v *politike vlastei i rusском obshchestvennom mnenii (vtoraia polovina XIX v.)* (St. Peterburg: Izdatel’stvo “Aleteiia,” 2000); V.V. Trepavlov, *Istoriia nogaiskoi ordy* (Moskva: Vostochnaia literatura, 2001).

21 B. Gasparov, E. Evtuchova, A. Ospovat, M. von Hagen, eds., *Kazan’, Moskva, Peterburg: Rossiiskaia imperiia vzgliadom iz raznykh uglov* (Moskva, 1997); A.I. Miller, V.F. Reprintsev, B.N. Floria, eds., *Rossiiia-Ukraina: Istoriia vzaimootnoshenii* (Moskva: Shkola “Yazyki russkoi kul’tury,” 1997). See also Kimitaka Matsuzato, ed., *Regions: A Prism to View the Slavic-Eurasian World: Towards a Discipline of “Regionology”* (Sapporo: Slavic Research Center, 2000).

project, organized by the Moscow Open Society Institute, is devoted to a comparison of the Russian, Ottoman and Habsburg Empires and will bring together specialists from several countries in a conference in Moscow on June 1, 2003.²²

A recent testimony to the increased interest in the history of the Russian Empire is the scholarly journal *Ab Imperio* (From the Empire, in Russian and English), published since 2000 by five young Russian historians from Kazan University. In two and a half years, the journal has published many interesting articles (adding up to more than 3000 pages) about different aspects of the history of the tsarist and Soviet Empires, and of methodological, theoretical and contemporary political questions. Most authors are young historians from different regions of Russia or foreign scholars. Among them are specialists who have contributed to other volumes mentioned above such as N. A. Andreeva (the Baltic provinces), Mikhail Dolbilov (Lithuania-Belorussia), L. S. Gatagova (Caucasus), L. E. Gorizontov (Poland), V. V. Lapin (the polyethnic Russian army), Alexei Milles (Ukraine) I. N. Novikova (Finland), A. V. Remnev (Siberia), R. A. Tsiunchuk (nationalities in the Russian State Duma), and Diliara Usmanova Elena Vorob'eva/Campbell and Galina Yemelianova (all on Muslims). In one of the latest issues, the journal looked at the ongoing discussion on Edward Said's Orientalism and its applicability to Russia with a forum "Modernization of the Russian Empire and the Paradoxes of Orientalism." Thus, the journal *Ab Imperio* has already become a forum for international discussion. It is a clear sign of the vitality of research on the Russian Empire and its nationalities and of the historical of historian profession in Russia and in other post-Soviet states in general.²³

22 See the website of the project www.empire.ru

23 *Ab Imperio. Theory and History of Nationalities and Nationalism in the Post-Soviet Realm 1-* (Kazan', 2000-); the forum on orientalism can be found in *Ab Imperio* 1 (2002), pp. 239-310. See also several interesting articles in *Istoricheskie zapiski* 122:4 (2001).