

Review Essay

Sergei I Zhuk, *Nikolai Bolkhovitinov and American Studies in the USSR: People's Diplomacy in the Cold War* (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books–Rowman and Littlefield, 2017), 275 pp. + xvii, illustrations, index.

Nikolai Nikolaevich Bolkhovitinov (1930–2008) was probably the best known Russian historian in the United States because of his focus on early American history and Russian-American relations with much of this work translated into English and published by major presses. He also traveled widely in the United States for research in archives, and for lecturing and teaching. He very much deserved his being voted an honorary member of the American Historical Association belatedly in 2005. Bolkhovitinov has now received a special tribute by one of his few doctoral students, Sergei Zhuk, who now teaches at Ball State University in Muncie, Indiana. Though trained as his mentor in early American history, Zhuk is best known for a much praised book on Soviet popular culture, *Rock and Roll in the Rocket City: The West, Identity, and Ideology in Soviet Dniepropetrovsk, 1960–1985* (2010), based partly on his personal experience of growing up in Ukraine.

This book is not easy to review, since it is based largely on unpublished memoirs of Bolkhovitinov, numerous personal interviews with him, his wife, and many associates, private e-mails and other correspondence, as well as telephone conversations in America and Russia. Also, subjectively, I consider Bolkhovitinov as a long time personal friend and have been touched by his and his wife's hospitality and kindness over the years. The result of this book, however, is a well-produced and written work, which its subject would be proud of. The details of such spur of the moment sources can be flawed, as in one case that personally involved me.

The occasion was a conference in Kiev during the summer of 1984 celebrating the 50th anniversary of the recognition treaty of 1933, which had been postponed from a planned meeting in 1983 in Moscow, because of strain in relations produced by the Korean Airliner Incident. The American delegation, headed by the Honorable George F. Kennan, wondered about the absence of Bolkhovitinov at the conference. Zhuk quotes an e-mail from John Gaddis about a meeting arranged with B. after our return to Moscow, recalling that a few of us drove around several blocks in Moscow and picked him up and drove out in the country to a restaurant for lunch. I remember it differently in detail. The meeting was arranged

by Gennady Kuropiatnik, good friend of Bolkhovitinov, who was at the conference. There is no way we would have access to a car in Moscow. Prearranged by Kuropiatnik, we walked up Leninskii Prospekt a couple of blocks from the Akademicheskaya Hotel. At the appointed time, Bolkhovitinov drove by and picked us up to take us to the country. After a lovely lunch and walk in the woods, he brought us back and dropped us off not far from the hotel. My scenario was recently confirmed by Gaddis.¹¹ The point, however, was that Bolkhovitinov was clearly under a cloud politically at the time, and if the KGB was really keeping tabs, we all have files in their records.

Zhuk excels at describing a scholar navigating the currents of Soviet life with skill and luck. He had an excellent start, born in a Moscow academic family (his father a professor of physics at the Timiraevsky Institute) and in the house he inherited in a “green enclave” of northwest part of the city of individually owned houses, where he lived most of his life, with summer vacations on the Crimean shore. After mostly home schooling, he enrolled at IMEMO (Institute of World Economy and International Relations) rather than Moscow State University (MGU). Thus, he early came under the influence there of the two leading Russian historians of North America, Lev Zubok (1894–1967) and Aleksei Efimov (1896–1971). The former, a Jew from Odessa who emigrated to the United States in 1913, became involved in worker’s movements in Philadelphia, then re-emigrated to the Soviet Union in 1924 to become a historian of American imperialism. By contrast Efimov was the product of a Russian upper-middle class legal family, raised in the Caucasus, and served in a White Army during the Russian Civil War. He survived that to become a respected academic scholar of modern America.

Though benefitting from an excellent education with a Ph.D. dissertation (*kandidatskaia*) on the Monroe Doctrine (1959) from the Moscow Pedagogical Institute, and his *doctorskaia* on early Russian-American relations, defended at the Institute of World History, where he spent the rest of his career. His relations with its long-time director, Aleksandr Chubarian, and the director of its Center of North American Studies, Grigory Sevostianov (1916–2014), in its founding years deserves more attention by Zhuk, as well as that of the compatible relationship of the Nikolai and Liuda Bolkhovitinov with Vera and Gennady Kuropiatnik, leading Russian scholar on Civil War and Reconstruction, who I consider to be their closest family friends.

One reservation I have on this quite positive portrayal of Bolkhovitinov’s role as the leader of American Studies in Russia is his sometimes imperious, overbearing attitude at conferences and at other public appearances that could cause hostility and jealousy. For example, from Nikolai Sivachev of Moscow State University and Alexander Fursenko of the Academy of Sciences branch in Leningrad (St. Petersburg), who both probably deserve more recognition and collaboration.

A particular question produced by Zhuk’s account is the role of Sevostianov, who passed the leadership of the Center to Bolkhovitinov in 1988. Granted his emphasis on Sevostianov being a KGB agent, who subjected Bolkhovitinov to

¹¹ E-mail exchange with John Gaddis, late August, 2017.

reduced travel possibilities and access to graduate students, I am not sure I would agree with him, or with Bolkhovitinov himself, in his cited memoirs where he is apparently as portrayed as an *eminence gris* in Russian-American scholarship in the Academy. He did after all welcome Bolkhovitinov into the Institute, played a major role in the concentration of American Studies in a new, separate Center of North American Studies, nurtured young scholars, and promoted a wealth of documentary publications in Soviet international relations. Perhaps his role as a heavy weight KGB Americanist made a Bolkhovitinov possible? And allowing others to continue Bolkhovitinov's striving for objectivity in the current generation, such as Viktoria Zhuravleva and Ivan Kurilla, members of this journal's editorial board?

Perhaps Bolkhovitinov's greatest legacy is *Amerkanskie Ezhegodnik* (American Yearbook) that began under Sevostianov in 1973, was passed on to Bokhovitinov as chief editor in 1988 and edited for the rest of his life—and continues today under Vladimir Sogrin, as the main vehicle of Russian-American scholarship in Russia. Zhuk's book could have been enhanced by a glossary of acronyms, a chronological list of major publications, and a more complete index.

Nevertheless, Zhuk provides a fitting tribute to one of the most remarkable historians of the modern era.

SOME PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

My first encounters with Nikolai Bolkhovitinov were in 1973. I was granted an senior faculty exchange to the Soviet Ministry of Higher Education in Moscow during the fall semester and to Moscow State University. I met with my mentor at the university, Igor Dementev, a very respected intellectual historian and great scholar. He immediately recognized that the person I needed to work with in Russian-American relations was Bolkhovitinov and arranged my contact, thus putting me under the Academy of Sciences (though I continued to collect my stipend at the university).

Nikolai and I quickly arranged a schedule for meeting weekly at the Institute of World History, then located in an old building on a side street off of Leninsky Prospekt. It was in a large room apparently only frequented by him and others on Wednesdays. We would meet around 3:00 in the afternoon at a table in the institute room and converse, as he preferred, in English. About a half an hour of discussion about my work and the problem of access to archives, he would stand and announce loudly in Russian that we would go out to his rather beat up Volga and drive (an experience—he liked to talk animatedly while driving) to visit the Academy book store down the street and then to a local hotel for an early supper (where usually a loud band was playing). He would then drop me off at a metro station or sometimes at the Universitetskaya Gostinitsa, where I and my family (wife and three children were living in one room—one advantage was a direct telephone line and easy access to transportation). Once he prepared to visit them (with flowers) but was scared off by militia men supervising the clearing of snow from the parking area.

My efforts to gain access to the Archive of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Empire continued through the semester. At last on Christmas Eve (Western), I received a phone call in our room from Bolkhovitinov: "Merry Christmas, you have access to the archive." We had early determined that the main problem in access was two large bureaucracies and my being on the bottom of their list: the American embassy, since my admission had to go through it and then to the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs, since the archive was under its administration. Meanwhile, Bolkhovitinov had been working on it from the archive side. Unfortunately, I was committed to a teaching exchange at University College Dublin to begin in January, 1974. So, I had one week to work in this key archive, but I asked if my admittance would still be in effect for the following summer and was assured that it was.

So, from Ireland I re-applied to IREX and was granted one month on the Academy exchange. We thus resumed our weekly meetings at the institute with the usual routine, while I worked full time during the month of July. But the last week, starting off in his Volga, after having announced at the institute that we were going to a hotel for supper, he said, "why don't we go to my house for supper instead." I naively asked if his wife would be expecting this. He pulled over, borrowed a two kopeck coin from me and "pretended" to make a call. This became my first visit to a Soviet academic home. He showed me through the added on peasant cottage that his father had built and through his extensive library, including a complete Brokhaus-Efron Encyclopedia and a rich collection in American history. Then we sat on the veranda on a soft July evening, sipping white wine, while Liuda fixed one of the finest dinners I had ever had in Russia (obviously well arranged in advance). Our conversation was mainly about what it was like living there during World War II with the sound of German guns in the distance, and living on their garden of potatoes and carrots and from several fruit trees.

Three other occasions come to mind. One was a visit again to his home on the occasion of his 70th birthday in July 2000. It was a gala affair with a large group of colleagues from the institute assembled on the veranda and on the front yard to celebrate. I had also just published a volume on Russian-American relations so this was also celebrated. My wife and I were the only non-Russians in attendance.

Then, even more delightful was the invitation to the Bolkhovitinov dacha well out in the country. He picked my us up at Sportivnaya metro, and we journeyed well outside Moscow (again an experience with Bolkhovitinov driving) to a surprisingly large dwelling with a wonderful river and countryside views. I remember the last lap was through a field and across a creek on wooden planks and the need to really gun it to get up the hill beyond. There was no fresh running water there, but he explained how he had constructed a rainfall cistern system with a hand pump to tanks in the attic that supplied water for washing and a make-shift shower on the corner of the house (drinking water was brought from town). The Kuropiatniks joined us for a very tasty Russian picnic lunch on the grounds enjoying a great country view. I never felt more part of Russia *a la Chekhov*.

One more memorable occasion with Nikolai was when he and Liuda came to visit us in Lawrence. He gave a lecture at the university as he had once before.

But what I remember most was another aspect. I was editing a book on Russian-American cultural relations at the time and wanted to finish it with a suitable conclusion. So I asked him if he would join me in writing a postscript to the volume. We sat at my computer in my history department office and jointly wrote a “postscript” to Russian-American cultural relations that emphasized the importance of encouraging both Russian and American younger scholars in the field (as does this journal).² A real experience for me and I hope for him too. And then we sat on our deck while our wives prepared dinner and discussed Kansas and the Wild West. What memories!

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² N. N. Bolkhovitinov and Norman E. Saul, “Postscript: Past, Present, and Future” in Norman E. Saul and Richard D. McKinzie, eds. *Russian-American Dialogue on Cultural Relations, 1776–1914* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1997), 243–48.

Book Reviews

Lori Clune, *Executing the Rosenbergs: Death and Diplomacy in a Cold War World*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016, xv, 167 pp. Index. \$29.95, Hardcover.

Virtually every American citizen of a certain age is at least aware of the case of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, convicted of being Soviet spies and executed in 1953 during the height of the Red Scare. Few, however, know the details of the case and, even fewer, the global reaction that it incited. Lori Clune's book focuses on the global reaction and sets the case squarely within the context of the Korean War and the Cold War. Using newly discovered documents from the State Department, Clune demonstrates that the Rosenberg case and questions about its legitimacy and moral and ethical implications were the center of debates and protests around the world at a time when the United States could ill afford a negative portrayal of the American democratic system. This is not a book about the trial but rather an examination of the causes and reactions to the trial and the death sentence handed down to an otherwise normal unassuming couple.

Clune begins her study with a brief review of the Rosenberg case, but swiftly moves to the main point of her book. She points out that when the trial began, on March 6, 1951, Americans were immersed in the fear of the spread of communism and news about the many men dying in the Korean War. Indeed, when Judge Irving Kaufman sentenced the Rosenbergs to death, he blamed them for the Korean War, stating that they were "arch criminals in this nefarious scheme." (33) In the end, most Americans thought the punishment was fitting: "Public opinion indicated an overwhelming concern for ongoing violence in Korea and skewed in favor of executing the spies they held responsible for starting the war." (66)

The main focus of Clune's study, however, is the international reaction to the Rosenberg case. Clune recounts how the conviction and sentence led to protests around the world, including Australia, Tunisia, Iceland, Sweden, France, Brazil, Indonesia, and many other countries. American embassies across the globe began to receive letters after the Rosenbergs' conviction and this continued until their execution two years later. American diplomats were at a loss and sought guidance from the State Department. The opposition was not only from those who were sympathetic to communism, but from people of various political leanings, and in some countries, the criticism came from within the ranks of government officials.

The Jewish community was divided by the issue, some sympathizing with their persecuted brethren, others afraid to support a cause that would certainly fuel the flames of antisemitism. A number of famous intellectuals spoke out against the conviction of the Rosenbergs as well—Pablo Picasso, Bertold Brecht, Jean Paul Sartre, and Albert Einstein. In particular, the condemnation of Pope Pius XII led to greater opposition in Catholic countries. Many supporters of the Rosenbergs questioned Ethel's guilt and the appropriateness of executing young parents and leaving their children orphans. When Truman left office in January 1953, the international scorn and condemnation became Eisenhower's problem. Eisenhower, however, had no sympathy for the Rosenbergs and on June 19, 1953 the couple died in the electric chair.

At the end of Clune's study she discusses the efforts in recent decades to reveal the truth about the case. A key piece of the puzzle was made available in 1995 when the CIA and the NSA released nearly 3000 translated documents about Soviet espionage activities in the United States. These documents, the Venona transcripts, revealed that Julius Rosenberg was the head of a large military and industrial spy ring but Ethel was only an accessory, not an active agent. Subsequently, in 2001, Ethel's brother, David Greenglass, admitted that he had lied in his trial testimony that condemned his sister. In the years that followed federal officials released more key documents, underscoring Julius's guilt, but making Ethel's conviction and execution more problematic. Discussions of the Rosenberg case continue to be complex and divided. Clune concludes that "no one emerges from the Rosenberg story unscathed." The case reveals what can happen when actions are driven by paranoia and fear.

Clune's study is thorough and well-researched, though occasionally her story feels repetitive as she traces the pro-Rosenberg rallies and protests through the years between their conviction and execution. Nonetheless, this is a fascinating account of a shameful moment in American history, one we should remember and strive not to repeat.

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Dorothy Horsfield, *Russia in the Wake of the Cold War: Perceptions and Prejudices*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2017. xxvi, 191 pp. Cloth.

This is an ambitious effort to address an important topic. As Dorothy Horsfield, a visiting fellow at Australian National University, rightly observes, much analysis of post-Soviet Russia has been based on "geopolitical, sociological, and civilizational assumptions," as well as psychologizing of Vladimir Putin, rather than definite knowledge (ix). It would therefore be valuable to have a thorough and rigorous examination of the (mis)perceptions and prejudices that have contributed to the widespread and insistent Western vilification of Putin and demonization of Russia.

Unfortunately, as Horsfield warns in the Introduction, “the book is not structured within any kind of systematic research methodology” (x). Instead, it presents a rambling exploration of “public conversations” among intellectuals in Britain, Europe, America, and Russia (ix), with special attention to the words of Isaiah Berlin, Aleksandr Dugin, George F. Kennan, Gleb Pavlovsky, and John Le Carre. In five chapters Horsfield examines: (1) the legacy of Cold War “liberal pluralism”; (2) the lost causes of Russian liberal intellectuals from the Decembrists to Pavlovsky; (3) Dugin and Russian conservatism; (4) allegations of authoritarianism in Putin’s Russia; and (5) post-Cold War espionage, with a focus on Le Carre and Edward Snowden.

Patient readers may find many points of interest in the course of this “eclectic” discussion. Others may be frustrated and disappointed by the lack of “tightly framed arguments and clear conclusions” (x).

Too often the discussion is entangled in quotations and paraphrase of the ideas of other authors, which tend to obscure more than express Horsfield’s own ideas.

Horsfield makes a number of loose generalizations. Two examples must suffice. Her statement that “generally, Cold Warriors were a staunchly conservative kind of liberal, who idealized liberalism” (xiii) underestimates the ideological diversity of Cold Warriors, who ranged from anti-Stalinist socialists to conservative Catholic foes of liberalism. Her assertion that “from a Western perspective . . . the Manichean battle of good versus evil was seen as synonymous with global democratization . . .” (xiii) neglects how many Manichean Cold Warriors feared “premature” democratization would lead to the spread of communism and therefore preferred right-wing military dictatorships.

Although Horsfield has read widely in published English-language sources, her bibliography does not include books by a number of scholars who have written about Western perceptions, images, and prejudices about Russia, including David Engerman, David Foglesong, Andrei Tsygankov, and V. I. Zhuravleva. Acquaintance with such studies might have helped Horsfield to write a more solidly grounded and more richly conceptualized book.

More generally, the sources Horsfield draws on are often insufficient and at times peculiar. Although she refers repeatedly to George F. Kennan’s views, she seems to have read at most two of his many books and to be familiar with only one of the many biographies of him. No Russian-language sources are listed in Horsfield’s bibliography. A remark Lenin “reportedly” made in 1917 is taken from a Marxist internet site, not from Lenin’s *Collected Works* (p. 46).

Many scholars may share Horsfield’s aversion to glib pontification and her critical orientation against analysts who have remained wedded to Cold War assumptions about an unchanging Russia (x). But they will have to look elsewhere for systematic analysis and direct, explicit arguments.

Helen Rappaport, *Caught in the Revolution: Petrograd, Russia, 1917—A World on the Edge*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 2016, 464pp. Index. \$27.99, Hardcover.

St. Petersburg, called Petrograd between 1914 and 1924, known as the city of “clerks and foreigners,” has always symbolized the dynamics of western life, welcoming visitors from abroad. Veiled in uncertainty and shaken by perpetual sensation, the Petrograd of 1917 also “sheltered a large and diverse foreign community that was still thriving,” (2) despite direful deprivations, food shortages, spontaneous armed uprisings, and endless street demonstrations. It is to those foreign nationals who found themselves in the capital of the crumbling empire, that Helen Rappaport, the author of *Caught in the Revolution: Petrograd, Russia, 1917—A World on the Edge*, looks for “new insights” (337) into events that changed the course of world history a century ago.

Although significantly expanded upon by the testimony of additional eyewitnesses and enriched with American archival materials, the book patently resembles its most notable precursor, Harvey Pitcher's *Witnesses of the Russian Revolution*, first published in London in 1994. The eyewitnesses featured in Rappaport's volume, however, are from a broader variety of backgrounds, including ambassadors, the diplomatic corps and their families, both male and female journalists, writers, scholars, social reformers, and various professionals, such as engineers, military experts, bankers, doctors, nurses, relief workers, a chaplain, a servant, and even an unidentified narrator, who published his memoirs anonymously. They hailed from half a dozen countries, and their credos ranged from those of ardent sympathizers with the cause of radical socialists and advocates for women's rights, to more cautious and conservative observers, who refused to accept the winds of change and lamented the loss of the bygone grandeur of the empire and its once opulent capital. These chroniclers and, in some cases, participants in the dramatic events provided a broad spectrum of views, turning Rappaport's survey of the Russian Revolution into a multidimensional collective narrative, which, unlike more traditional scholarly works, based upon official documents, diplomatic dispatches, and military annals, reveals an array of witnesses' emotional responses to the immensity of the social upheaval and its aftermath. Along with fascination, curiosity and hope for a new democratic Russia, foreign observers expressed frustration, anger and a sense of loss, preserving, at the same time, unyielding sangfroid in the face of tangible danger and indiscriminate violence. Regardless of their differences, however, they were generally compelled by an intense sympathy for the deprived masses.

Rappaport challenges male-centric interpretations of history, making sure that in her polyphonic narrative all voices are heard and appreciated. She cites numerous sources, including unpublished papers by nurses, orderlies in military hospitals, and family members of diplomats and businessmen. Many of them have remained “still-unsung” and “long-forgotten,” despite the fact that they wrote “so vividly and movingly” of their experiences in Russia (328). The author also features prominent and outspoken female journalists, war correspondents and suffragists who had their own say in analyzing political realities and identifying national characteristics. Introducing female observers, Rappaport reveals the

totality of gendered discourses, to which no event was foreign or unimportant. The integral reconstitution of revolutionary Petrograd would not have been the same without a web of snapshots that make up the quotidian experience, such as the long lines of “scantily clad people standing in a bitter cold” (260), or the “most expensive, out-of-date, wasp-waist” corsets, looming in shop windows, when there was barely enough food for three days and no warm clothes to be bought anywhere (260). Similarly, the conceptualization of revolutionary events would have lost their dramatic effect without accentuation of the grim horror of un-coffined, blood-soaked bodies, frozen stiff “in grotesque, contorted positions” (153), or the screams of women soldiers from the Battalion of Death, “silenced with the butt of a rifle when they grew too troublesome” (292).

The author intersperses the anxieties of the British “gentleman-diplomat” Sir George Buchanan (6-7), the laments of David Francis, a self-made millionaire turned envoy, who terribly “missed his American luxuries” (13), and the political gossip of the French “accomplished socialite” Maurice Paléologue (14) with sincerely inquisitive quests into revolutionary developments and the life of city dwellers, penned by Philip Jordan, the American ambassador’s devoted black valet. Jordan expressed deep appreciation for the opportunity to travel, to see foreign lands and to become intimately acquainted with Russia and its capital. No one saw as much of revolutionary Petrograd from the back door as Phil, who learned Russian to be able to secure the ambassador’s meals, despite severe food shortages and the growing discontent of hungry mobs. That “loyal, honest, efficient and intelligent withal” fearlessly roamed the streets, bargaining at markets and “mixing in with the multicultural, polyglot crowd.”(13). Rappaport quotes from Jordan’s “unique and richly detailed” descriptions of what was transpiring in the streets of the capital and within the embassy.

For some foreigners, their Russian sojourn was not only a thrilling experience, but also an opportunity to see their own countries in an entirely different light. This was especially true for a flock of recent college graduates assigned to an American bank, who were enthralled by the sublimity of the city, touched by the benevolence of its residents, and tempered by the revolution. One of them, Leighton Rogers, became so accustomed to the ongoing tension, that he ventured to carry \$3 million in cash through a city ridden with unrest to protect his bank’s assets in the aftermath of the Bolshevik uprising. Rappaport reveals their unpublished memoirs, including Rogers’ journal, which he called “a virtual account-book” the Revolution.

In spite of such a diversified and subjective interpretation of events, their chronology is preserved with scholarly accuracy. Each chapter describes a consequent episode in an unfolding drama that culminated in the Bolshevik seizure of power. The chapters are entitled with pull-out quotes from featured narratives that simultaneously serve as epigraphs, summarizing content and luring readers from one sensational development to the next, following the eyewitnesses in their revolutionary journey.

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