

The new history school textbooks in the Russian Federation: 1992-2004

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Abstract

The article examines the ideologically-articulated shifts, and the images of transformation, and nation-building process presented in the new generation of school history textbooks in Russia. This article analyses the new content of post-Soviet history textbooks used in Russian secondary schools that represent various transformations from communism to a western-style democracy. It discusses the resultant issues of searching for a new national identity and citizenship during the present transitional period. It critiques the new versions of Russia's post-Soviet history taught in schools, and evaluates their officially defined status as instruments in the Russian process of ideological transformation, and nation-building, currently closely monitored by the State. In other countries, including Australia, these processes are still present but in less formal and more ad hoc ways.

Key words: Russia, history, citizenship education, democracy, and ethnic groups

History and historical consciousness

The main aim of this study is provide a new insight in understanding the nexus between ideology, the state, and nation-building—depicted in the new narratives in Russian school textbooks, especially the interpretation of social and political change, significant events (looking for possible new biases and omissions), leadership (the contribution of key individuals), and continuities, as demonstrated by the above. The specific objectives are to:

- Analyse new narratives in prescribed Russian school textbooks in history
- Articulate the nation-building process of Russia as it is reflected in these narratives.

School history texts, as instruments in the Russian process of ideological transformation, and nation-building, are currently closely monitored by the State. In other countries, these processes are still present but in less formal and more ad hoc ways. In the Russian Federation, it represents an ideologically driven and changing nation-building process, overseen by the Putin government.

Some scholars have examined structural forces and processes exerted by the state and other major stakeholders in defining a 'new direction for history education' (Erokhina and Shevyrov, 2006: 11). They illuminate further the complex, and ideologically and culturally saturated landscape of Russian school textbooks, which is grounded in a new approach to comparative historiography and context-specific processes. Vera Kaplan (1999) in her study of Russian school textbooks notes that they pay little attention to the Soviet repressions and mass deportations of ethnic groups. Furthermore, many Russians do not like to know of the Red Army's wartime atrocities and about complete indifference to human life by the Soviet high command.

Recent and continuing public and political debates in the USA, China, Japan, and elsewhere, dealing with understandings of a nation-building and national identity, point out to parallels between the political significance of school history and the history debates globally (Smith, 1991, Macintyre & Clark, 2003, Taylor, 2003, Sherlock, 2005, and Nicholls, 2006). Due to these

on-going debates, history education has become a high profile topic of national and global significance. Consequently, the article's focus on school history textbooks, as medium for nation-building in Russia, is of geo-strategic significance, for it helps to create a powerful form of global accountability of nations.

International research on school history has been done by the UN, the Council of Europe (Nicholls, 2006: 8). The Council of Europe has played a major role in funding projects to improve teaching history and history textbooks in Europe, and especially in the Russian Federation between 1999-2003. Its latest publication is *History Education in Europe: Ten Years of Cooperation between the Russian Federation and the Council of Europe* (2006).

The Council of Europe's major three-year project (1999-2001) *Learning and Teaching about History of Europe in the 20th Century* (2001), culminated in the final report *The 20th Century: an Interplay of Views* (2001). One of the special goals of this three year project was to produce teaching resources for secondary schools which would encourage both teachers and students to approach historical events of the 20th century from a critical and analytical perspective, using the same skills and assessment criteria as historians. Both reports emphasize that no single version of history should be considered as final or correct, and encourage critical thinking and diverse approaches to learning and teaching history. The reports also stressed:

- the role of historical interpretation and memory in forming identity,
- history dominated by prejudice and myth

Continuing public and political debates globally about the role of historical explanation and the development of historical consciousness in schools when dealing with popular understandings of a nation's growth has given history a significant role in re-positioning competing discourses of historical narratives and processes (Manne, 2003; Macintyre & Clark, 2003). These discourses will continue to define and shape the nature of historical knowledge, dominant ideologies and values. Taylor (2003), referring to the role of historical explanation and the development of historical consciousness with respect to a nation's growth, argues, that the main issues are—national identity, and balanced representations of the past. In Russia, as in other countries undergoing a similar process of nation-building, the three most significant issues defining the re-positioning of the politically correct historical narratives are—preferred images of the past (reminiscent of Anderson's 'imagined community'), patriotism and national identity.

Current debates, around the main issues in historiography and the role of historical narratives in nation-building process, echo similar controversies in the UK in the 1980s (Phillips, 1998) in the USA during the 1990s (Nash, Crabtree, and Dunn, 2000), as well as recent debates in Japan, Canada, Germany, France, Italy, Korea, China, and the Russian Federation.

The new generation of history textbooks in Russia

Specifically, this research attempts to analyze the representations of Imperial Russian, Soviet and post-Soviet history in prescribed school textbooks in Russian secondary schools. The new textbooks portray a new, post-Soviet, national identity, thus signalling a radical ideological repositioning and redefinition of what are seen a 'legitimate' culture and values in Russia. School history textbooks particularly set out to overturn the Soviet emphasis on orthodoxy in historical interpretation, by encouraging a critical consciousness among in students. They do this by approaching history from a multiple perspectives and inviting students to confront certain periods in the country's past in a questioning and analytical manner (for other discussions of

post-Soviet educational reform in Russia, see McLean & Voskresenskaya, 1992, Kaufman, 1994, Polyzoi and Nazarenko, 2004, Zajda, 1998, 1999, 2003, 2005). In the textbooks, pluralism, and critical awareness have replaced Marxism-Leninism as the new dominant discourse.

One of the obvious sources in defining national identity is one of re-defining and re-positioning the historic origin of the ancient kingdom of Rus—the seat of old Slavonic and Balto-Slavonic culture. In their Grade 8 school textbook, *Istoriia Otechestva*, (History of the Fatherland, fifth edition) of which 2.6 million copies were circulated, Russian fourteen year-olds discover a new source of national identity, both the etymology and the aetiology of the word *Rus* (Rybakov and Preobrazhenski, 1993). The earliest written Old Slavonic documents mention the word *Rus* (Russia) in 862 AD, even though the name Rus (denoting ginger and white people) was used much earlier by the Greek, Arab, and Goth historians between V-VII centuries. The Byzantine historians mention the attack by the Rus in 860 AD on Constantinople.

The debate, concerning both the origins and the meaning of Rus continues in the 2001 edition of *Istoriia Rossii s drevneishikh vremion do kontsa XVII veka* (History of Russia: from the ancient times to the 17th century, 7th edition), the prescribed history textbook by Sakharov and Buganov for 10th grade, (recommended by the Ministry of Education). It is one of the core school texts, with the print run of 150,000. In the section “The Origin of the Word Rus”, the authors explain that the word ‘Rus’, from ‘*rusyi*’ in Slavic means ‘clear’, or ‘bright’ (p. 45).

The term *Rus*, as noted by Sakharov and Buganov (1995) in *Istoriia Rossii*, an earlier Grade 10 school history text, is now increasingly the preferred name to Kievan Rus. Students learn that ‘There appeared a singular Ancient Russian State, with Kiev as its center. All this happened in the year of 882 AD’ (Sakharov and Buganov, 1995: 42). What is explained here is the origin of the Russian State or Rus, with its capital Kiev.

Prince Oleg, known as the brave warrior prince in the medieval literature and chronicles, assumed the title of the ‘Prince of Princes’ or the Grand Prince (*veliki kniaz*). His aim was to consolidate his power. It becomes apparent that the students learn about the early attempts by various warrior-kings and princes to unify Rus and create the State. One of them, Prince Sviatoslav, who conquered a huge territory between 964-972 AD, was called ‘Alexander the Great of the Eastern Europe’ by the authors of the textbook, as indicated by the name of the heading to section 6, Sviatoslav—Aleksandr Makedonski Vostochnoi Evropy (Sakharov and Buganov, 1995: 49).

The 2001 edition continues to refer to Rus, ruled by Oleg from Kiev, his capital (p. 46). This is also stressed in Grades 10-11 school textbook by Ionov, I. (2000) *Rosiiskaia Tsivilizatsiia*. In the chapter ‘United Ancient Russian State IX-XI centuries’, dealing with Ancient Russia (pp. 34-69)—‘Rus’ and ‘ancient Russia’ are the preferred terms and the rulers of Kiev are known as the royal princes.

The spirit of patriotism, and nationalism, and other images are used to depict the evolution of Russian national and cultural identity. For instance, in the afterward and conclusion of the Grade 8 textbooks (Rybakov and Preobrazhenski, 1993, Davilov and Kosulina, 2000) students are reminded that history is about patriotism and citizenship, and that Russia became a ‘great nation in the world’:

...To treasure...this heritage—means to cultivate within oneself the love of *Rodina* (Motherland), the feelings of patriotism, and citizenship.’ (Rybakov and Preobrazhenski, 1993: 273).

XIX century finally created Russia into a great nation in the world...This was achieved through our people's sufferings and won by a complete defeat [of Napoleon] in the 1812 war...Not a single issue of the world's politics could be decided without Russia (Davilov and Kosulina, 2000: 253).

Similar comments, concerning the great achievements of Russia and its people are found in *Istoriia Rossii, konets XVII-XIX Vek* (History of Russia, 17th to the 19th Centuries, 2000), the prescribed history textbook for 10th grade, (recommended by the Ministry of Education), which is one of the key school texts, with the print run of 150,000:

Everything that was achieved—is the fruit of the efforts by the Russians. However, taking into the account of the collective achievements of the whole population of the Russian empire, one also needs to consider the contributions of its leading individuals... the history of Russia is infinite, excitingly interesting, full of mysteries...and 'blank pages' (Buganov and Zyrianov, 2000: 10)

One of the goals of teaching history in schools is values education and patriotic upbringing, in this case, through the study of WW2. It is 'mainly through the study of *Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny* (the Great Fatherland's War) that civic and patriotic upbringing is achieved' (Lebedkov, 2004: 1).

Competing discourses in historiography, diversity in interpretations of events, and a more analytical approach to the process and content of history in school textbooks, offer new challenges to both students and teachers, who have been exposed to traditional, descriptive and authoritarian views of the politically correct history. Danilevskoi (2005) argues that teaching history in schools is not just to do with changing ideologies, but the fact that new school history textbooks cover a great deal of new data, where every teacher can express his or her views and interpretations:

History has become one of the most complex subjects to teach in schools. This is simply due to the fact that those who write history textbooks, design curriculum, develop standards and programmes have been influenced by changing ideological perceptions. The catalogue of problems in teaching history has become incredibly daunting...Everybody has their own opinion and offer their own solutions [on teaching history in schools JZ, <http://www.ug.ru/?action=topic&toid=12005>]

The above account suggests a shift towards a more subjective, personal and inclusive interpretation of historical events. Far more emphasis is now placed on national identity, patriotism, and the need to become familiar with the history of one's country (Zajda, 2003). It has been argued by some scholars that 'nation builders rarely make new myths—rather they imagine history and mine the past for suitable heroes and symbols' (Zajda, 2002: 373). The *imagined community* is a concept coined by Benedict Anderson (1991), which states that a nation is a community socially constructed and ultimately imagined by the people who perceive themselves as part of that group.

Putin (2003) had directed the Russian Academy of Science to examine all history textbooks used in schools throughout Russia. 'Numerous' complaints of WW2 veterans served as a basis for the President's letter. Putin wrote:

I fully share opinions and feeling of all the veterans of the WWII. I am authorizing historians and scholars to examine today's history textbooks. They should be able to report their results to me by February 1, 2004. (http://english.pravda.ru/printed.html?news_id=11904)

Some final year history textbooks were even pulped as they portrayed an unfavourable image—huge losses and prisoners of war taken of the Soviet army during the early period of WW2, particularly during the darkest days of World War II for the Soviet Union, when many Soviet

armies were either defeated, annihilated or captured (Zajda, 2003: 370-371). The textbook by Ostrovskii *Istoriia otechestva* (1992), mentions that some 2 million Red Army soldiers were captured during the June 1941-May 1942 period. The battle of Kiev resulted in 600,000 captured soldiers, and the early phase of the battle for Moscow resulted in the destruction of 5 Soviet armies and the capture of 663,000 soldiers (pp. 22-37). These specific figures are not mentioned in the more recent history textbooks. Students discover that some 6 million Soviet prisoners of war died in captivity (p. 61).

By 2004, the new history textbooks have returned to traditional symbols of nation-building and patriotism. In the *History of Russia and the World in the 20th Century* textbook by Zagladin (2004) for Grade 10, photos on the cover carry Soviet propaganda images: Moscow's soaring 'Worker and Collective Farm Girl' statue, a poster reading 'The Motherland is calling' and the Soyuz-Apollo space docking. They tell students the Soviet past was all pride and glory. A major history textbook scandal involved the seventh edition of Igor Dolutsky's (2002) *National History: 20th Century* for Grade 10. Students were asked to discuss whether Putin's style of leadership could be considered as an 'authoritarian dictatorship', and whether Russia had become a 'police state' (p. 351). Dolutsky's textbook emphasizes crimes, failures and abuses the Soviet state committed against millions of its own citizens. Putin's reaction was that Russian history was full of dark spots, but one should not dwell on them, but focus on the bright spots, and some of the great achievements of the nation. Hence, according to him, school history textbooks should depict historical facts:

...that they should inculcate a feeling of pride for one's country... We should be happy that we departed from a one-party system and a mono-ideological perception of history... We must not allow ourselves to fall into another extreme (http://www.edu.ru/index.php?page_id=5&topic_id=3&date=&sid=471).

Dolutsky's textbook was stripped of its Education Ministry license in November 2003, just days before the December parliamentary elections. Since then, the Ministry of Education decreed that, in view of new state standards in education, all history textbooks had to be examined and evaluated by panel of experts, including the Federal Experts Council on History, the Academy of Sciences, and the Academy of Education. Approved textbooks would be selected on competitive basis.

New Narratives in History School Texts

Grades 10 and 10 history school textbooks

In the 2001 prescribed history textbook for Grades 10 and 11 (recommended by the Ministry of Education), *Rossii v XX veke* (Russia in the 20th century, fifth edition), by Levandovski, and Shchetinov, which is one of the key texts, judging by the print run of 100,000 copies, Russian 16 year-olds are urged to take, which is new, a more *analytical* and critical approach to history:

The crucial periods of the past will pass by our reflective gaze: Russia with her bright and dark pages of life prior to 1917...the depressing shadow of massive repressions...the growth of our Fatherland, with great achievements and unforgiving errors...More than ever before it is necessary for you to explain...the inner logic of a historical process, and find the answers to the questions why such events occurred... You need to understand historical facts for what they are, rather than guessing and rushing to categorise them in ideological schemes (pp. 3-4).

Similar, reflective comments were in the foreword to the 2000 history textbook for Grade 11 *Istoriia Otechestva* (History of the Fatherland) by Denisenko, Izmozik, Ostrovskii and Startsev: In your hands you have a new history textbook. With its help we suggest that you consider a complex and contradictory past of our country...We hope that you will develop your own view point...Let's reflect together

about our past, so that we could walk bravely the path towards democratic and humane society (Denisenko, et al. 2000: 5).

The concluding comments in another Grade 11 textbook (circulation 30,000 copies), stress the role of history in developing moral values and critical thinking:

Is the re-birth of Russian civilisation possible? The answer is 'Yes'. The necessary condition for it is the re-birth of national and spiritual culture, which forces us to look inside (ourselves) rather than outside...The moral dimension of understanding becomes foremost. Historical problems are perceived to be a means for self-analysis, self-evaluation, and self-criticism (Ionov, 2000: 312).

Nearly half of the 2001 book, which covers over 100 years of Russian modern history, is taken up by the wars and revolutions, reinforcing the image that Russia's history is one of blood, suffering and anguish, resulting in the needless sacrifice and death of tens of millions of people during the two World Wars alone, not to mention the Civil War and the subsequent Red Terror, and Stalinism. The Civil War, is now described as the struggle between the 'two evils'—the Reds and the Whites, which resulted in the death of 8 million people, who perished as a result of famine, the Red Terror, or were killed on the battlefields:

For Russia the Civil War became the greatest tragedy. The damage done to the economy was in excess of 50 billion gold roubles. In 1920 the industrial output was seven times less than it was in 1913... (p. 165).

One of the questions students are asked is: "In your opinion, of the 'two evils'- the Whites and the Reds, why did the majority of the population of the former Russian empire chose the latter? 'Was there such a real choice', the textbooks authors ask? This is an attempt to re-think the role of the masses during the Civil War and to suggest that the victorious Bolshevik army (which grew from 300,000 in 1917 to 5.5 million in 1920) was not necessarily representative of the masses. New archival documents describe the political ideals and manifestoes of the Whites. In the section 'The ideology of the White movement', students learn, for the first time in history, about the Whites and their slogan '*Za edinuiu i nedelimiuiu Rossiuu*' (For the united and singular Russia), a slogan that is more applicable today in the post-Soviet Russia (p. 156).

Grade 9-history textbooks

In their newest 2001 edition of *Istoriia Rossii* (History of Russia), by Danilov and Kosulina—the latest core history textbook for Grade 9 (recommended by the Ministry of Education), which is one of the key school texts, with the print run of 200,000 copies, Russian 15 year-olds learn about the 'Silver Age of the Russian Culture' (pp. 72-81), 'Russia in Search of Perspectives' (part 2), 'Stalinist Modernisation of Russia (part 3), the history of the Soviet Union between 1939-1991, the *perestroika* years of 1985-1991, and 'The New Russia: 1991-1998' (pp. 322-336). The text focuses on the twentieth century Russia (1900-1998).

The events of February and October 1917 are described on pp. 82-91. The October Revolution of 1917 is described in two paragraphs (p. 90), or less than half a page (out of ten pages dedicated the February/October events). Fifteen-year-olds now learn that the tsar Nicholas had 'missed his last chance' of transforming the 'revolution the begun from "below" into a less painful for the country revolution from "above". The sentence is almost hinting that had the tsar ruled like a constitutional monarch (as George V did in Britain), history could have taken different course in Russia after 1917. Instead, the tsar issues a decree on dissolution of the Duma, thus depraving the liberal movement of any hope of the transition to a constitutional monarchy (p. 82).

In the section 'The Bolsheviks seize power' (pp 89-91), (part 2, 'Russia in Search of

Perspectives—1917-1927’) the students learn of the true role of Lev Trotsky (Lev Davidovich Bronstein)—who became one of the most charismatic military leaders of the Revolution, so vividly portrayed as a much-feared Strelnikov in the film ‘Doctor Zhivago’. The textbook also contains a brief bio of Trotsky (who was ‘written out’ of Soviet history school textbooks after the 1930s), and his photograph (pp. 89-90), who, as the elected chairman of the Petrograd Soviet in October 1917, at the time equal, if not more powerful than Lenin himself, and towering over Stalin, who was still climbing the Party apparatus, and the chairman of the Petrograd Military-Revolutionary Committee, played a critical role in taking over the power and arresting the Provisional Government, located in the Winter Palace:

On 24 October the armed detachments of the Red Guard and the revolutionary soldiers of Petrograd began to seize bridges, post office, and telegraph and railway stations. No one opposed them in the slightest...A slow delay occurred during the seizure of the Winter Palace, which was defended by a Junker (cadets) detachment and a volunteer women’s battalion...Kerensky, prior to the storming of the Winter Palace, left for the front. The remaining members of government were arrested. The total losses during the “armed uprising” consisted of six dead (p. 90).

One of the questions at the end of the chapter is: In your opinion, what variants of possible scenarios were possible after February 1917? This question already demonstrates a more critical and reflective approach to teaching history in schools.

The chapter ‘Civil War: The Reds’ (pp 112-120), the section ‘The Red Terror’ (*Krasny terror*), in less than half a page, describes the September 1918 decree, following the assassination of M. Uritski, the Chairman of the Petrograd Extraordinary Commission (the forerunner of the NKVD), which resulted in the execution of 500 hostages (p. 115). Trotsky’s role is described as follows:

In the armoured train where Trotsky travelled across the various fronts there was working the military-revolutionary tribunal with unlimited powers...The first concentration camps were created...(p. 115).

The establishment of concentration camps is first mentioned in another prescribed textbook *Istoriia Otechestva* (History of the Fatherland) by Shestakov, Gorinov, and Viazemski (2001). Students learn that by 1921, some 80,000 individuals were held there (p. 118). This is one of the few Grade 9 textbooks that specifically address the notion of different interpretation of historical processes (Lebedkov, 2004, p. 3).

In another section, of the 2001 edition of *Istoriia Rossii* (History of Russia), by Danilov and Kosulina, ‘The Liquidation of the Romanovs’ is now described as one of the most ‘evil’ chapters of the “Red Terror”—the extermination of the former tsar’s immediate family and other members of the Imperial family:

On 16 July, evidently by the order from the Sovnarkom, the Ural regional Soviet had decided to execute Nikolai Romanov and his entire family. During the night of 17 July...a bloody tragedy occurred. Nikolai, together his wife, his five children and servants were executed—eleven people in total...Earlier, the tsar’s bother Michael was executed in Perm...Also were executed and thrown down the mine shaft were eighteen members of the Royal Family (p. 115).

The fact that ‘The Red Terror’ is described in such a short space, demonstrates that historians are not very keen to dig deep into the recesses of the past. The Red Terror that can be compared to the terror during the French Revolution would have been one of the bloodiest and barbaric episodes in the Russian history. It simply defies the human imagination that so much terror and bloodshed was unleashed by the leaders simply to crush the opposition and ‘dubious elements’, to consolidate their power base and ‘build’ the new State.

What is new is the timely inclusion of documents (which, for political reasons, were not available before) are the brief bios and photographs of prominent leaders, like G. Lvov, L. Trotsky, M. Alekseev, A. Kolchak, A. Denikin, P. Vranghel, and M. Tukhachevsky, seen for the first time ever after a seventy year period of ‘air brushing.’ The author during his schooling in the USSR never saw these photos.

In the section ‘Repressions’ (less than 2 pages) students learn that the entire leadership group of Lenin’s faction—Zinoviev, Kamenev, Rykov, Bukharin (the ‘Party’s favourite’), and later Trotsky (who was murdered in Mexico) were executed within the 24 hours of the sentence:

During the early 1930s the final political trials were held and the accused were the former opponents of the Bolsheviks...Most of them were either shot or sent to prison and concentration camps (p. 172).

The 1999 textbook for Grade 10, *Istoriia Otechestva* (History of the Fatherland), which was approved by the Ministry of Education (print run of 50, 000 copies) is one of the few books providing a more detailed account of arrest and execution of top leadership in the party and the armed forces, including the execution of thousands of high-ranking officers, including 3 out of 5 marshals, and 154 out of 186 generals (Mishina and Zharova, 1999: 386-387). Even former heads of NKVD—Yagoda (1938), and Yezhov (1940), who both played a major role in the Red Terror, were executed. The textbook, like those written by Danilov and Kosulina (2002), Zagladin (2004), Pashkov (2000) and Shestakov (2002), attempts to construct a genuine dialogue between the students and historical past.

According to ‘official sources’, between 1930-1953, some 3, 778 234 individuals were accused of ‘counter-revolutionary’ and ‘anti-government’ activities and were sentenced, including 786, 098, who were executed (p. 173). These tragic victims of the brutal regime have indeed been written out of history. At the same time, secondary school students now learn the ‘cult of Stalin’ began in earnest in 1929, which coincided with Stalin’s 50th birthday anniversary:

All the newspapers, for the first time, published Stalin’s photos and numerous articles. Stalin is cited as the ‘leader of the global proletariat’...Stalin’s deification continues. The 270-page pamphlet *Comrade Stalin* appeared...There were 700 greetings, and ‘shouting’ slogans: ‘To the Leader of the World’s Revolution’...The Organiser of the Victories of the Red Army’...It seems that comrade Stalin is higher than Lenin, and above the entire Party...Where is the humility demanded by Lenin? (From the *Diaries* of A. Sokolov, pp. 174-5).

World War 2 is described as a tragedy, which cost 27 million lives (including 10 million killed in the Armed Forces). Similar figures are mentioned in *Istoriia Otechestva* (Shestakov, Gorinov, and Viazemski (2001, p. 229). According to Overy (1999), the Red Army had lost 2,663,000 killed and 3,350,000 taken prisoners during the first six months of the war in 1941. The victories of 1941-45 were won ‘at a high cost’ (Stalingrad cost the lives of 470,000 soldiers, and the battle of Kursk, another 253,000 dead. ‘In two months of fighting’, writes Overy, ‘the Red Army lost almost as many men as the United States, or the British Empire did in the entire war’ (p. 212). What the textbooks avoid mentioning is the cost of victories. Twenty Soviet soldiers died for every German soldier killed (Overy, 1999, p. 117). At this crucial moment in history, Zhukov was appointed Deputy Commander-in-Chief in August 1942 (Stalin’s number 2 man). He is still regarded as a great military leader, who ‘saved’ the country. What the students are not told that there were many other great commanders, who together contributed to the defeat of Germany:

In the people’s memory, G. Zhukov has remained as the Victory Marshal, the Great Russian leader, who had saved the Fatherland from the enemy’s enslavement (p. 206).

One of the documents included is a fragment of Stalin's speech of May 1945, delivered at the reception of the Red Army officers. It refers to government's earlier mistakes during the conduct of the war and the incredible heroism of the Russian people in defeating the enemy. Other minorities are not mentioned in the textbook. Stalin concludes his speech with these emotional words: 'Thank you, the Russian people, for your trust (in the Soviet government) (p. 240).

The Storming of the Parliament House: 4 October 1993

The other event, mentioned briefly in history textbooks, refers to a mini uprising of 2-4 October, staged by members of the Upper House, who opposed Yeltsin's autocratic style of leadership. Yeltsin decided to dismiss the entire government—the House of Representatives (People's Deputies) and the Upper House (*Verkhovny Soviet*). Both the Speaker of the Upper House Khasbulatov and Vice-President Rutskoi lead the parliamentary revolt against the Presidential *ukaz* (decree):

The Speaker (of the Upper House) Khasbulatov, and the majority members of the Constitutional Court declared the President's actions unconstitutional and relieved him of his duties. Vice-President Rutskoi assumed the office of President and commenced the formation of the parallel government...President Eltsin issued his ultimatum (to the opposition) to leave the 'White House' before 4 October...

On October 4, the 'White House' was subjected to artillery bombardment, which resulted in catastrophic fire and the deaths of people. In the end the building was occupied by the army and the leaders of the opposition were arrested (p. 331).

What the students are not told is that this incident was far more serious than we are lead to believe. Furthermore, the students are not likely to know the full story of this tragic event, and other yet to be disclosed excesses of the ancient regime. More people were killed during the October 1993 'crisis' than during the storming of the Winter Palace back in 1917. This event became another form of 'characteristic amnesia'.

A New Historical Critical Consciousness

Nation builders rarely make new myths. Rather, they mine the past for suitable heroes and symbols. just as Lenin (and later Stalin during 1941) resorted to borrowing religious symbols and myths from the Russian Orthodox Church and giving them a socialist interpretation to attract peasants (Tumarkin, 1983) and Stalin reopened the churches during the darkest days of World War II in order to boost morale, so too did Russia's immediate post-communist leaders and intellectuals turn to Russia's cultural past in an effort to redefine national identity.

In their Grade 8 textbook, *Istoriia Otechestva* (History of the Fatherland), of which 2.6 million copies were circulated, Russian 14 year-olds examine maps and charts to learn about the contributions made by both the Romanov and the Rurik imperial dynasties to the growth of Russia's territory (Rybakov & Preobrazhenskii, 1993). It devotes much space (32 pages out of 289 pages) to Peter the Great and his major social and economic reforms (Rybakov & Preobrazhenskii, 1993, pp. 188-220). Although the students learn that under Peter tsarist rule became absolute, he is portrayed as a great builder of symbolic power. One of his major reforms included his civil and military service division ranks (*tabel o rangakh*). To consolidate the centralisation of power and the monarchy, he also popularised the design of the Imperial Coat of Arms (Ivan III used it in 1497, as his royal seal, the year that marked the centralisation on the state), the now-renowned czarist two-headed eagle symbol that was resurrected after the fall of the familiar hammer and sickle in 1991 to decorate official Russian documents and the new parliament house.

Peter was a “revolutionary on the throne,” and the changes he initiated in Russia constituted “revolution from above” (Buganov & Zyrianov, 1995, p. 4; all translations from Russian language documents are the authors). Reliance on this particular historical figure in the search for national identity had further developed by 1995 when the textbook treatment of Peter the Great grew almost to the point of cult-fostering proportions. In the 1995 prescribed history textbook for 10th grade, *Istoriia Rossii, Konets XVII-XIX Vek* (History of Russia, 17th to the 19th Centuries), students learn that Peter the Great’s reforms were so significant that they mark a watershed in Russian cultural history, with Russia’s past being divided into pre-Petrian and post-Petrian periods. Similarly, Buganov and Zyrianov (2000), in *Istoriia Rossii, Konets XVII-XIX Vek* (History of Russia, 17th to the 19th Centuries), the history textbook for 10th grade, mentioned earlier, devote much space to Peter the Great. Chapter 6, ‘Russia during the end of 17th-18th centuries’, begins with a section ‘The Beginnings of Glorious Deeds of Peter’ (*Nachalo slavnnykh del Petra*, pp. 11-43).

In another textbook, *Istoriia Otechestva 1900-1940* (History of the Fatherland), a popular Grade 10 textbook (circulation 50, 000 copies), first published in 1999, the authors advocate the discursive analysis of history, focussing on the analysis of the theme of ‘progress’ and a new multi-paradigm approach to the study of history:

We have attempted to depict the specifics of history as a humanistic discipline to be viewed through a personal perspective. For this reason there is no need to be afraid of incorrect answers...Questions are designed for discussions during lessons and do not require the singular ‘correct’ answer. It is not the answer to the question that is important but rather the importance of the question that leads you into other questions and reflection (Mishina and Zharova, 1999: 3).

This also reflected in Grade 11 textbook by Denisenko, Izmozik, Ostrovskii, and Startsev (2000) *Istoriia Otechestva*, where students are asked to reflect on Russia’s transition, from totalitarianism to democracy (p. 376):

Do you engage in arguments with your family, and friends concerning Russia’s future development? What is dominating during such discussions: arguments or emotions? Do you believe that your generation is likely to play a crucial role in the political, economic and moral and spiritual rebirth of Russia?

There is also an attempt to teach feeling and emotions, and the love of one’s country in the study of history in school textbooks. This is clearly defined in the foreword of the newest Grades 6-7 textbook by Preobrazhenski and Rybakov (2001) *Istoriia Otechestva* (History of the Fatherland, seventh edition), of which 200, 000 were circulated. Here, Russia’s 12 year-olds study narratives, maps and charts to learn about the greatness of the Russian state and its imperial past:

Knowing the history of one’s *Rodina* (Motherland) is important for every human being. History is correctly called the people’s memory and the teacher of life...The most important thing in the study of history of one’s Motherland—is learning to love her. To love the Fatherland means to love the country, the geographic space where a person was born. To love the Fatherland means loving one’s people, norms, customs, culture and native tongue.

... You need to be able to answer the question: Why this even occurred? Only when you can answer such a question will you be able to *understand history*...Understanding history will enable you to understand how it influences our cotemporary life (Preobrazhenski and Rybakov, 2001: 5-6).

Conclusion

Given that the students are exposed to so many heroes and role models—from Aleksandr Nevsky (who defeated the Swedes in 1240), to Vladimir Putin, which values are they to internalise on their journey of discovering democracy and citizenship in the Russian Federation in the 21st

Century? Russia is not alone in discovering a moral vacuum, and the current absence of a sense of cohesion or a sense of belonging to the civic culture. Similar discoveries have been made in other societies (Torney-Putra, Schwille, and Amadeo, 1999: 14).

In general, school history textbooks continue to emphasise the historical greatness of the Russian State—from the ancient *Rus*, the Imperial Russia, to the Soviet Union, as a super power, during the period between 1950s-1980s. Added to this nostalgia for the past is the new concern for teaching the concepts of participatory democracy, active citizenship, human rights, and social justice, never experienced by the ex-Soviet citizens. There is need for a new hybrid of national identity, and patriotism, as Russia has yet to become a ‘real nation state’ (Bogolubov, 1999: 532). New school textbooks in history have become a major symbol for inculcating a new sense of national identity and patriotism in Russia between 1992-2004. This is supported by Russian President Vladimir Putin’s policy directive in 2003 on school history textbooks that ‘Textbooks should provide historical facts, and they must cultivate a sense of pride among youth in their history and their nation’ (Danilova, 2004).

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