



ГАУГН-ПРЕСС



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ВЕКИ СОВМЕСТНОЙ ИСТОРИИ В КОЛЛЕКТИВНОЙ ПАМЯТИ



XX ВЕК

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THE POLITICS OF
REMEMBRANCE
OF RUSSIA, GERMANY
AND THE CONCERNS OF
CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE
**COMMENTS ON THE MARGIN
OF A RUSSIAN-GERMAN HISTORY
TEXTBOOK OF THE 20TH CENTURY**

Review

Россия – Германия. Вехи совместной истории в коллективной памяти. Vol. 3: XX century. Moscow: Институт всеобщей истории РАН, ООО “Интеграция: Образование и наука”, 400 pp., ISBN 9785904914080.

Abstract

This review article discusses a textbook on twentieth-century history, prepared in collaboration between German and Russian historians. The analysis of the publication's content is set in a broader context—the place of Germany in Russia's politics of remembrance (legislation, historical education). Of particular interest are the chapters whose caesuras are marked by the Revolution of 1917

and the end of Stalinism. The constitutive elements of the authors' historical reflection, that are beliefs imposing the interpretation of events (the primacy of geopolitics, superpower), are indicated. The polemical remarks concern both the conceptual and methodological shortcomings of the textbook and the controversial interpretative approaches. The latter primarily concerns the genesis of World War II and the evaluation of the Yalta order. The above historiographical vision is contrasted with the collective memory of the national communities of Central and Eastern Europe.

Keywords: Russia, Germany, Central and Eastern Europe, politics of remembrance, collective memory

Introductory Remarks

This review article does not aspire to be a comprehensive description of the issues announced in the title. This is because Russian politics of remembrance consists of several multifaceted phenomena that cannot be captured in short formulas. The most analytically profound study devoted to Russian "the politics of the past" after the collapse of the USSR, based on the representative source material and taking into account the extensive literature on the subject, is the work of Nikolay Kopusov (Kopusov 2018, pp. 207–99). Formally considered, the author focuses on legislative interference in the "official" collective memory, but in fact, makes a number of critical general observations. A significant advantage of the work is its comparative slant: the Russian case is shown against the background of solutions adopted in European countries. Kopusov's arguments make it clear what role in Russia's politics of remembrance is played by linking the dispute about the nature of the Soviet presence in Eastern Europe with the Russian argumentation in favour of the thesis about the inadequacy of comparisons between Nazism and Communism (Kopusov 2018, pp. 253–59).

On the other hand, the best-conceptualised study of this issue is that treating the politics towards symbols [*символическая политика*], which is an intrinsic part of the politics towards identity [*политика идентичности*] (Malinova 2015, pp. 5–31). Of the three case studies, two are

particularly instructive: one on the reevaluations of the 1917 Revolution in post-Soviet Russia, the other on the political use of the symbolism of the Great Patriotic War. As will be explained further, these issues are the axis of the Russian narrative of the reviewed textbook.

The term “politics of remembrance” and its derivatives appeared in the Russian discourse (academic and journalistic) relatively late, which reinforces the belief of some scholars that incorporating its typical political technologies into the arcana of power was secondary. A leading scholar of this trend, among others, speaks in such a spirit (Miller 2012b, pp. 328–67). Incidentally, A.I. Miller has repeatedly commented on this topic and, as far as I understand the meaning of those statements, he has attributed to the Polish debate the “merit” of naming the phenomenon using a carbon copy of the German term “*Geschichtspolitik*”: *феномен резкой интенсификации использования истории в политических целях, который в первые годы XXI в. стал характерен для всех стран Восточной Европы* [The phenomenon of the rapid intensification of the use of history for political purposes, which in the first years of the twenty-first century became characteristic of all Eastern European countries], compare with (Miller 2012a, p. 7). It should be noted that A.I. Miller’s views and the dynamics of their changes would require a separate analysis regarding their intensity and a fragment of a broader phenomenon). The same author maintains that the Russian government avoids defining its position on the knotty issues of the state’s past (the 1917 Revolution, Stalinism), which he believes is the right strategy to pursue, as it does not polarise society beyond measure (*Politika* 2018, pp. 176–77). There is one monographic study on Russian politics of remembrance (Materski 2017) in the Polish academic literature, elsewhere reviewed in the *Institute of National Remembrance Review* (Wasilewski 2020).

The actual subject of this paper is the nature of German presence in the “official” remembrance of contemporary Russia, as well as the consequences of the Russian-German vision of shared history for space (nowadays contoured by borders, but already existing in the imagination sphere of its inhabitants) of Central and Eastern Europe. The author intends that the following observations and comments do not

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constitute a final evaluation of the efforts to create a coherent vision of the past century centred on the experiences of Germany and Russia. Even less do author's observations constitute a fully-fledged alternative to such a vision, as such a vision could only be attempted by an expert who knows the epoch from its origins. This article has three minimalist aims. Firstly, it shows the place of the "German question" in the legislation of the Russian Federation, which reinforces (sometimes regulates) popular historical awareness (the so-called *memory laws*), and in the curricular assumptions of local historical education, as well as the efforts of Russian and German historians focused on bilateral research and the project's popularisation. Secondly, he discusses the textbook's contents at length, highlighting the differences between the positions and pointing out the synthetic approaches' interpretative orientation and their weaknesses at times. A stipulation is necessary here: in this text, only the chapters whose caesura is marked by the death of Joseph Stalin are of detailed interest, the content of the remaining chapters are merely annotated (compare with Banaszekiewicz 2020); since the text does not have the character of a critical study, it does not confront individual theses with national historiographies from outside Russia and Germany, as well as the latest literature on the subject (German, Russian, or English-language). Thirdly, the article formulates polemical remarks against the conceptual assumptions of the project and signals the different ways in which the ideological message can be received when the recipient of the content is a reader from Central and Eastern Europe who emphasises his/her own subjectivity.

The "German Question" in Russia's Politics of Remembrance

The German presence in the official collective memory of Russians is grounded in legislative provisions that interfere in the symbolic sphere. The most important of these is the 1995 law "On Days of Military Glory and Memorable Dates of Russia" (*Federalnyi* 2020), which contains as many as ten (out of 34 in total) direct references to Russian-

German military confrontations, of which only two do not concern World War II: April 18—Alexander Nevsky’s victory over the Order of the Knights of the Sword (dubbed the “German Knights,”—since 1237 it was an autonomous branch of the Teutonic Order) on Lake Peipus in 1242 (Battle on the Ice), and August 1—commemorating soldiers who died during World War I. Whenever Soviet victories over the Third Reich are mentioned (this applies to four dates: December 5—the beginning of the Soviet counter-offensive in the Battle of Moscow 1941; February 2—victory in the Battle of Stalingrad, August 23—victory in the Battle of Kursk, October 9—victory in the Battle of the Caucasus), the legislator uses the term “German-fascist armies”; an exception is a provision introduced by the 2014 amendment, where the epithet “fascist” is used without any further specification (this applies to January 27—the lifting of the blockade of Leningrad). Two dates are particularly firmly rooted in social consciousness: the June 22 date, recalling the Nazi attack on the USSR, called the Day of Remembrance and Sorrow [*День памяти и скорби*], and May 9, described as the Day of Victory of the Soviet Nation in the Great Patriotic War of 1941–1945 [*День Победы советского народа в Великой Отечественной войне 1941–1945 годов*]. The importance of the latter, which is in fact, the foundation myth of contemporary Russia, is emphasised by its status as a public holiday. Another state holiday, the Day of the Defender of the Motherland, celebrated on February 23, which the legislator originally intended to commemorate the victory of the newly-established Red Army over the Kaiser’s Germany in 1918, also has significant overtones. The issues of this law and the meaning of individual days of war glory and remembrance have been discussed elsewhere (Banaszkiewicz 2012, pp. 29–33).

The German theme is also present (true, not directly) in Article 354.1 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation, adopted by the Law of May 5, 2014 (*Ugolovnyy* 2020). Formally aimed at revisionist tendencies to rehabilitate Nazism, it is, in fact, an essential oppressive instrument, a kind of “punishing sword” of Russian politics of remembrance. The law’s provisions provide for sanctions (ranging from fines to imprisonment) against those who deny the findings

“facts”) contained in the Nuremberg Tribunal’s judgment. The narrowing nature of such a regulation, which allows the questioning of historical assessments concerning aspects outside the sphere of interest of the investigators of the time, is of lesser importance; what seems to be more important is the equating of the above crime with “the public dissemination of false information about the actions of the USSR in World War II.” This, in turn, given the susceptibility of the judiciary to administrative pressure, poses a real threat to freedom of expression (as evidenced by the Perm court’s ruling ordering the payment of a hefty fine by blogger Denis Luzgin, who described the actions of the Communists and Nazis against Poland in 1939 as cooperation; the ruling was upheld in 2016 by the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation).

The strands of “common/shared” history highlighted in the legal acts refer to events threatening Rus’/Russia in existential (survival of confrontation) and identity (preservation of cultural distinctiveness) dimensions. Moreover, they form the core of the Russians’ historical self-consciousness—they constitute a trauma deeply engraved in collective memory, which is evidenced not only by the vivid experience of the 1941–1945 war, revived both from above and below, but also by the extraordinary attention paid to Alexander Nevsky (the winner of the TV poll “The Name Russia” in 2008). Paradoxically, however, this policy towards remembrance does not fuel anti-German resentment. One might even get the impression that it intends to transform the German opponent into a bearer of evil devoid of national identity.

This is best illustrated by the annual state-wide celebrations of the “Great Victory,” to which the German Chancellors are invited. The rhetoric of the public speeches made by the President of the Russian Federation during these celebrations consistently refers to the all-human triumph over the Nazi ideology that embodies the darkness of history. Also, the activities of institutions established to defend the Russian historical narrative are free of anti-German accents, as exemplified by the Commission for Counteracting Attempts to Falsify History to the Detriment of Russia [*Комиссия по противодействию попыткам фальсификации истории в ущерб интересам России*], which functioned in the years 2009–2012.

The message and theses of the book under review are worth confronting with the vision of 20th-century history propagated in Russian historical pedagogy. There is still a loud discussion in Russia about creating a uniform and compact history curriculum. In the context of the issue, we are interested in how a given book in question is positioned in the face of a clear tendency to standardise the school curriculum as of considerable importance. In February 2013, under the influence of a suggestion and then a formal order from President V. Putin, the development of the so-called “cultural-historical standard” (CHS) [*историко-культурный стандарт*], began. In the course of the year, the first of the most important events in the history of the Soviet Union was the creation of the CHS which formed the core of the “Concept of the New Didactic-Methodical Complex of the Motherland’s History” [*Концепция нового учебно-методического комплекса по отечественной истории*]. In the words of its creators, the latter is intended to serve, among other things, “the formation of a unified cultural and historical sphere of the Russian Federation.” Experts from the Ministry of Education and the Russian Academy of Sciences worked on the project, as did representatives of two organisations whose names and activities refer to the achievements of their pre-revolutionary “prototypes”: the Russian Historical Society and the Russian War-Historical Society. Materials (including the texts of successive versions of the abovementioned “Concept” and behind-the-scenes work on them) are regularly published on the home page of the Russian Historical Society (<https://historyrussia.org/istoriko-kulturnyj-standart.html>).

In the CHS version, published in the latest issue of “Concept” (September 2020), out of nine chapters covering the history of Russia from the beginnings of Ruthenian statehood to the present day, as many as four concern the period discussed in the reviewed textbook. Each of them contains a general characteristic (with elements of evaluation) of the time period, the specification of aspects that require a presentation, a list of terms, and a calendar of events. The chronological and problematic arrangement has been

subordinated to the course of national history. It opens with the years 1914–1922, describing a series of “great upheavals”: World War I, the Great Russian Revolution, and the Civil War. The authors show the common fate of European countries: the changes of borders, the disintegration of institutions and values, the crisis of economies, the pauperisation of societies, and the resulting radicalisation of sentiments. In their view, Russia was at the epicentre of events, the significance of which for it lay primarily in the threat to the continued existence of its statehood. The German theme appears in the military context (the German-Austrian front) and twice in the calendar of events (Germany’s declaration of war and the conclusion of the Brest peace treaty).

The chapter devoted to the 1920s and 1930s deals mainly with the socio-economic transformations in the USSR, highlighting the civilisational achievements of the Soviet state (including the pioneering nature of several social reforms on a world scale). The undertakings of this time are described in terms of a modernisation theory. Political phenomena have a weaker tone: they are not omitted but softened (for example, the lack of use of the word “totalitarian” to describe the political system of the Land of the Soviets). Reference to relations with Germany occurs only in the context of international politics (the Treaty of Rapallo and the Non-Aggression Pact of 1939).

The chapter on the Great Patriotic War occupies a special place in the CHS: it is the only case where a separate block is reserved for the discussion of an episode lasting several years. However, this distribution of emphasis is justified both by the role the conflict played in twentieth-century world history and by the presence of the war experience in Russian collective memory. The authors raise the racial-ideological motivation of the invaders and the impact of the conflict on the consolidation of society and the individual peoples of the USSR around patriotic slogans referring to the defence of the homeland (and therefore statehood). The German “presence” in the chapter takes the form of terms referring to various categories. Only in three cases—to the ethnic category (“German colonisation”, “German army grouping”, “German attack”). In the remaining cases—in terms of the state subject (Germany [*Германия, германский*]), only once is there an incomplete official name of

the state—“Reich”); to the identification with the leader (“Nazi occupiers”, “crimes of the Nazis,” and as a subject specifier); and finally to the concept of political ideology (“Nazi doctrine”, “Nazi threat”, “Nazi occupation regime”, “Nazi captivity”, but already, the “anti-fascist underground”).

The last chapter of the CHS, the closing caesura, coincides with the reviewed textbook, concerns 1945–1991. The characteristics of the post-war half-century covers the multidimensional phenomena occurring in the USSR in a very balanced way. In contrast to the earlier chapters, the authors avoided an apologetic tone, drawing attention to the symptoms of systemic crisis, already noticeable at the peak of its development. What draws attention is the dispassionate and analytical characteristics of *perestroika*, far from its apocalyptic tone. The collapse of the USSR did not acquire the features of a geopolitical catastrophe or degradation of statehood. German affairs were addressed twice in the context of the Berlin crisis and the reunification of West and East Germany.

The publication that constitutes the focus of our interest is worth considering as part of a broader phenomenon, which is the textbook dialogue—a form of international dialogue culture dating back to the interwar period and gaining increasing popularity (also outside of Europe) (Kąkolewski 2019). It was Germany that paved the way for undertakings of this kind, first in collaboration with France, then with Poland. However, while the transnational textbooks created with German participation in the early 21st century can be seen as an element that strengthens the integration of European Union states, a similar project in cooperation with Russia instead emphasises the will to deepen bilateral relations. The German-Russian dialogue on textbooks should have a lively resonance among the representatives of historical research and the actors of political remembrance in Central and Eastern Europe. Independently of the presentation of historical processes and concrete events, it gives value to an area that is usually neglected by western historiography. Several circumstances, including its mismatch with the core

curriculum of history teaching in both countries, testify to the book's scholarly, rather than strictly didactic, purpose.

The reviewed publication deserves attention, however, and by no means only as of the result of a collective analytical effort of individual German and Russian researchers, capable of entering into historiographical dialogue and ready to revise (to some extent, of course) their initial positions in a substantive confrontation. In fact, the publication is the result of many years of coordinated cooperation between historians of both countries, whose activity has enjoyed the protection and support of the most important political factors for the past two decades. The institutional platform for this cooperation is the Joint Commission for Research on the Recent History of Russian-German Relations [*Совместная комиссия по изучению российско-германских отношений*], set up on the initiative of the then German Chancellor Helmut Kohl and Russian President Boris N. Yeltsin. Information on the Commission's activities is available on its homepage (*Sovmestnaya* 2020). At the inaugural meeting in January 1998, the teams headed by Alexander O. Chubarian and Horst Möller agreed on the principles, nature, and directions of future cooperation. According to the communiqué of this meeting, the parties decided to focus their attention on the history of the 20th century, more precisely: on the years 1914–1970. The document declared mutual assistance in making archival and library collections available to researchers.

The output of research inspired and supported by the “Commission” seems to prove that the formula of basing joint efforts “on the principles of academic freedom and exchange of opinions in a spirit of openness and mutual understanding” has not turned out to be just a conventional platitude. Since 1999 (alternately in Germany and Russia), experts from both countries invited by the “Commission” have met for monographic colloquia. The thematic spectrum of the symposium is broad: the individual sessions deal either with a particular aspect of bilateral relations in the past, an event or period, or with social phenomena, ideas, or processes analysed from a comparative perspective. A material trace of the colloquia is the regularly published bilingual *Komunikaty* [Communiqués], containing expanded versions of the delivered papers (*Soobscheniya* 2020).

The most reliable indicator of the “Commission’s” activity, and at the same time a barometer of its interests, is the research and publishing projects it has initiated. The completed projects reflected the preferences of traditionalist historiography, that is they emphasised the collection and processing of sources on the one hand and their analysis to fill in gaps in the politics of remembrance and social history on the other. Projects on the Soviet Military Administration in Germany (1945–1949), on Khrushchev’s foreign policy towards the West, on the influence of the Comintern on German-Soviet relations, and on Soviet and German prisoners-of-war and internees during wartime stand out in terms of the abundance of studies; this group also includes a bilingual online database of annotated documents illustrating the period 1917–1991 in the history of both countries. As far as current projects are concerned, there is a clear shift towards research into phenomena neglected in conventional historiography: memory and the collective identity of political communities. One of these is the plan to create an interactive map of Soviet-German memorial sites; another is the intention to write a three-volume Russian-German history textbook on the 18th-20th centuries. The volume reviewed below has long remained the sole result of the latter initiative (in 2018, the first volume of the Russian-language variant of the textbook, covering the 18th century, appeared on the market).

The premiere of the reviewed version of the textbook passed almost unnoticed. Its only trace in leading Russian academic journals is an apologetic reporting review in a periodical published by the Institute of World History of the RAN, a project partner (Timofeeva 2015). Naturally, the level of interest in the textbook varies from country to country in the region. For its Polish readers, the reference point is primarily the comprehensive volume, which is the aftermath of the work of the Polish-Russian Group on Difficult Matters (*Białe* 2010); the academic (rather than educational) nature of the synthesis, which is a kind of protocol of divergence, however, makes it inaccessible to the average mass school-age reader, which, however, does not diminish the interest it arouses outside Russia. The most significant interest, of course, lies in Central and Eastern Europe, a peculiar area: distinguishable on account of its distinct political, cultural, ethnic, religious, and

internally differentiated European sub-identity, but lacking equally precise political and economic contours, and at the same time united by the experience of the neighbourhood with Germany and Russia, and in the past also by the experience of incorporation by these states (Szlajfer 2008, pp. 5–8).

The best overview (that I know of) in the Polish academic literature of the historical concepts, as well as political projects defining Central and Eastern Europe, supplemented by important critical remarks and research postulates, is provided by Tomasz Stryjek (Stryjek 2008). The limited impact of the concept of Central and Eastern Europe on the imagination of young people is determined by the barely symbolic presence of this region in Polish school textbooks, contrasting with the relatively abundant information on the history of Russia (Wiśniewski 2013, pp. 9–21). Often treated as a buffer in Russian historical and political thought, the countries between Russia and Germany are usually classified as Eastern Europe. Regardless of the terminology used, it is worth noting a very characteristic feature of Russian thinking about this region. It downplays the importance of the political traditions of the constituent states dating back to the Middle Ages and the advancement of the nation-building processes taking place in them while highlighting their status as peripheries of empires (Ofitserov-Belskiy 2017, p. 217). One may wonder what role post-Soviet superpower resentment plays in a similar definition of space. Moreover, in contemporary Russian studies, there is a clear tendency to juxtapose the politics of remembrance of the tsarist and Soviet periods, undermining its continuity and merely repressive character towards the dominated peoples of Central and Eastern Europe (Diskussiya 2020, p. 263).

Russian-German History Textbook— Comments on the Project and Discussion of its Contents

The reviewed book was published in a limited edition of 1,500 copies, which proves the pilot character of the undertaking and resignation from using the publication for educational purposes on a large scale. This is also proved by the only distribution channel of the textbook—the publisher's Internet

shop. Other reasons for this state-of-affairs remain in the realm of conjecture; attention should be drawn to the incompleteness of the study (at the time of publication, second volume of the textbook was still not ready) and the ongoing debate on the teaching curriculum. A noteworthy circumstance is the delay of almost two years in launching the Russian version of the textbook. At the time of its publication, the German reader could get acquainted in two independent German editions of the same title: *Deutschland – Russland. Stationen gemeinsamer Geschichte – Orte der Erinnerung. Bd. 3. Das 20. Jahrhundert* and in the same layout (De Gruyter, Berlin 2013; *Lizenzausgabe für die Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung*, Bonn 2014; both 352 pages in length).

The 400-page synthesis, which is printed on heavy B5 format chalk overlay paper, stitched and hardbound, presents itself quite elegantly. This impression clashes with the educational purpose of the textbook, which in turn is suggested by the colourful highlighting of the chapter titles, which assigns them unambiguous connotations (history of Russia and the USSR, German history, international events, socio-cultural issues). Regardless of the actual addressee of the study, the rich illustrative material, especially the illustrations made available by archival institutions in both countries (primarily German) and the source extracts, is an invaluable asset; the bibliography cited at the end of each chapter contains selected books.

Apart from the introduction written by the co-chairmen of the Commission, the central part and the final “proclamation” of the Russian editor to the reader with an invitation for dialogue and an indication of the context for the development of a new history curriculum (as I wrote above), the book consists of chronological tables (covering the events of 1914–1991 and in themselves providing material for linguistic analysis, which would show how, with the help of short clusters of words, an interpretation of phenomena can be imposed), an index of personal names, and an index of geographical names (limited only to cities, thus omitting lands, as well as imaginary spaces/areas functioning in the collective consciousness of Germans and Russians, which creates a significant gap).

The group of people involved in the project, including authors and editors, consists of 35 people. They represent

various research and academic centres. In terms of numbers, the Institute of World History of the Russian Academy of Sciences (RAS) stands out, as 9 of the 12 Russian authors come from there, which is reflected in how the topic is presented (which will be discussed later). On the other hand, the German side took care of the milieu's diversity and, above all, the broader range of the experts' specialisations; among their representatives, there were two museum researchers, an employee of the *Bundesarchiv* and a researcher dealing with the analysis of school textbooks. The analysed volume had four editors (two from each side), but—as it seems—unevenly more significant influence on the shape of the individual chapters was exerted by the “moderators” of the individual parts. They preceded each of them with an extensive introductory commentary, similar in volume to the chapters. The high level of competence of all project participants should be emphasised. There are no haphazard people among them without adequate preparation. This also applies to the youngest researchers, who display methodological maturity. All of them deserve a short scholarly biography; however, due to the size of this article, as the résumé of achievements concerns only the authors of chapters crucial for the sensitivity of the non-Russian and non-German reader.

A diligent reading of any of the blocks causes cognitive dissonance, as many times, the authors of the introductions formulate opinions contrarily to the authors of individual chapters. This applies both to the evaluations and to the details (such as from the introduction to the first part of the textbook, we learn that in 1920 Poland initiated the aggression against Soviet Russia, see p. 21). Furthermore, even before the reader gets acquainted with the relevant chapter, they become familiar with the critical commentary of the “co-chairman” of the given section (which is a reviewing remark formulated *ex cathedra*. For example, the introductory remarks to the part devoted to the Cold War are supposed to show that the different title of the parallel section is inferior in precision to the one chosen by the Russian authors). Polemical moments also take other forms: be it a separate sentence in the form of endnotes to a joint text (the chapter on the Potsdam Conference of 1945) or the questioning of quotations or formulations (the chapter on the Soviet-German Non-Aggression Pact). Critical comments always belong to the Russian side. Leaving aside the

somewhat unpleasant impression created by such customs, it is worth emphasising their negative impact on the reception of the message: the polyphony of voices may prove beyond the strength of the recipient of the content.

The first part of the textbook, which deals with the years 1917–1933, is a successful attempt to reconcile the line of interpretation of the political transformations in both countries and the reasons for the impermanence of the international order after World War I. Affiliated with the Institute of World History of the Russian Academy of Sciences (RAS), the Russian State University for the Humanities, and the State Academic University for the Humanities, Aleksandr V. Shubin (born in 1965) is the author of numerous works on Soviet Russia: from its revolutionary beginnings, through Stalinism, to *perestroika*. The textbook he wrote to teach ninth graders twentieth-century history had multiple editions beginning in 2000. The scholar's perspective values left-wing, yet non-Bolshevik political currents, including anarchism; he prefers processual history. On the other hand, Manfred Hildermeier (born in 1948) spent his career at the University of Göttingen. He was shaped by the so-called Bielefeld School, which emphasises the social dimension of historical processes. This is why both in his synthetic works on the history of the USSR and in his monographs on the 1917 Revolution, great importance to the category of modernisation is attached. Not without significance for the idea of the textbook is his scepticism towards research on historical remembrance (compare with the interview he gave in 2015 in *Cahiers du Monde russe* where he stated, among other things:

“Recently there is a change of perspective centring on the ‘construction’ of October [1917] in memory; this, so to say, is overdue if you consider the vast literature on the ‘remembrance of...’ history, e.g. of the Holocaust in German. But, leaving aside the complex problem of the relationship between ‘history’ and ‘remembrance’—our knowledge about the developments of 1917 is not profoundly touched by these new kinds of approaches” (Hildermeier 2017).

In looking at the Revolution, he moves the starting point back to the outbreak of World War I; he is also interested in the causes of the crash of liberal constitutionalism in pre-revolutionary Russia.

The opening caesura of the 20th century is marked in the textbook by the Russian Revolutions of 1917 and the German Revolution of 1918. M. Hildermeier and A.V. Shubin do not mention the previous decades. The domestic and foreign policy field revealed the entanglements of political mechanisms and interests of both empires, which had remained traditional allies for decades. The argument as to the origins of the February Revolution and the October Revolution of 1917 is limited to a hint of a deep social crisis aggravated by hostilities (p. 23). Such a position gains the sanction of a calendar depicting the sequence of events leading to the victory of the Bolsheviks. Not only has the view of the Revolution as a process been abandoned, but also the search for economic, ideological, and political (such as the national conflicts of the periphery bursting the imperial centre, including the role of the Belorussian and especially Ukrainian national movement) premises of the collapse of the Russian *ancien régime*. The characteristics of the period between the February and October Revolutions does not contain a single word about the achievements of that time, which gives the later triumph of the Bolsheviks after the dispersal of the Constituent Assembly a feature of non-alternativity. Also absent is even a mention of the enthusiastic mood after the overthrow of self-rule (and there are quite a few such testimonies, as evidenced by the exhibition “Man and Power in Russia in the XIX–XXI centuries,” presented since 2013 at the Museum of Political History of Russia in St. Petersburg); the authors do not accidentally use the impersonal term “collapse” in this context. They use the term “upheaval” to refer to the events of October/November 1917, with which they in turn distance themselves from historiosophical justifications of old Russia’s end.

The textbook emphasises the importance of the separatist peace of Brest-Litovsk, concluded on March 3, 1918 by the Bolshevik government of Russia with Germany and Austria-Hungary. The co-author of the chapter, Nikolaus Katzer (born in 1952), Professor at the University of Hamburg, was director

of the German Historical Institute in Moscow from 2010 to 2018. From the point of view of the publication's didactic merit under discussion, it is worth noting his experience as a secondary school teacher and his developing research interests in the direction of literary and cultural studies. Although his main effort is directed towards the history of the USSR (especially of the 1960s and 1970s), he does not shy away from excursions into the more distant past—to the times of Alexander I and Nicholas I. Due to the breadth of his interests, it is difficult to compare his contributions to research on various historical periods with those of researchers dealing with specific issues.

The peace of Brest-Litovsk was a success for the new Russian government: the Bolsheviks made the promise of ending the gruelling war the main slogan of their anti-tsarist, and later anti-republican, propaganda, the authors explain. The peace of Brest-Litovsk, forced on the party comrades by Lenin, lent credibility to the Bolsheviks in the eyes of the masses and accelerated the collapse of the Russian Empire within its pre-war borders. Moreover, it catalysed the institutional solidification of the regime, hastily forming the diplomatic apparatus in a dual role: spokesman for the interests of the state and propagator of a world revolution. This last element is emphasised by N. Katzer and A. Shubin, noting its influence on the model of Soviet foreign policy. Wartime communism, as the Bolshevik antidote to the economic and humanitarian catastrophe of the civil war, was not given a characteristic feature of the Soviet state in the study; thus, the fundamental and well-documented study by Jörg Baberowski (Baberowski 2003) was passed over in silence. Yes, attention was drawn to the attempt of resolving social and ethnic conflicts through draconian measures. However, these were supposed to be an attempt to “solve acute problems in a practical manner” (p. 39) while simultaneously pursuing ideological objectives.

The narrative of the chapter on the November revolution in Germany provides a glimpse of the dilemmatic nature of the choices made by participants in the events. H. Möller (born in 1943), Professor at Ludwig Maximilian University in Munich, for two decades (from 1992) headed the Institute for Contemporary History, specialising in the study of Nazism. Several years ago, he advocated the need for a critical edition

of *Mein Kampf*, pointing to the risks associated with the inevitable (due to the expiry of its copyright) appearance on the market of editions devoid of academic commentary. He specialises in German history of the first half of the 20th century and has a substantial body of work to his credit, particularly on various aspects of the Weimar Republic. His participation in the Franco-German memorial project of the first half of the 1990s should be noted. The co-author of the text, Andrey V. Doronin (born in 1962), deals with the modern history. His studies of 20th-century history are limited to translations and source editing of documents concerning World War II and the first post-war decade. Holding a PhD in history, hailing from Moscow State University, he held a managerial position at an important archival institution (now: the Russian Archives of Social and Political History, RGASPI), then worked at the RAS Institute of World History, and is currently a full-time employee of the German Historical Institute in Moscow. Due to A.V. Doronin's specialisation in modern history, it is difficult to assess his output against the background of scholars of twentieth-century German history. However, it is worth noting the accusations against him by nationalistically oriented Russian scholars who see him as a representative of the EU's Eastern Partnership Programme concerning Belarus and Ukraine, which is perceived as a manifestation of the EU's anti-Russian policy.

H. Möller and A.V. Doronin clearly outlined the then alternative between social democracy and “left-wing” socialism. While the former represented the ideals of parliamentary democracy, the latter advocated a people's dictatorship; the difference in visions is well illustrated by the quoted fragments and entourage of speeches by Philipp Scheidemann and Karl Liebknecht. It is interesting to compare the processes of delegitimation of the Russian and German monarchies due to the postponement of sociopolitical reforms (including the reform of electoral law) *ad acta*, with the simultaneous rise in importance of opposition forces offering hope for fundamental change. As the authors show, the revolutionary situation in Germany could have turned into a civil war, as it did in Russia. A similar scenario was avoided but at the price of a bloody crackdown on radicals. A harbinger of a non-revolutionary way out of the crisis resulted from

the vote at the All-German Congress of Workers' Councils and Soldiers' Deputies on December 16, 1918, which gave its preference for a model of parliamentary democracy. Despite the tensions, elections to the National Assembly were possible to be held on January 19, 1919. They brought success to the reformists, forced to resolve pressing issues in a short period and to defend themselves against leftist and rightist radicals (the failed Kapp Putsch in March 1920 was an illustration of the latter's aspirations). Unlike its eastern counterpart, the young republic managed to withstand the onslaught of extremist forces and stabilised over time. The authors reject the sometimes put forward thesis of the existence of a "third way" that would have saved Germany from dictatorship and at the same time spared it the fate that ultimately befell the Weimar Republic in 1933.

The most important chapter of the first part of the textbook deals, of course, with the origins and consequences of the Treaty of Rapallo. Johannes Hürter (born in 1963), now a professor, works at the aforementioned Institute for Contemporary History and as *Privatdozent* at Johannes Gutenberg University in Mainz. As a historian of twentieth-century Germany, he focuses on military history but treats it broadly. He often analyses war issues against their social background and also addresses the problems of self-identification and imagery—important categories of remembrance studies. All this makes his oeuvre significant in historical circles. Aleksandr I. Boroznyak (1933–2015), Professor at Lipetsk State Pedagogical University, was a member of numerous bodies debating Russian-German relations and an active participant in the dialogue held in the pages of academic journals of both countries. He was predisposed to take part in this project not only by the circumstances mentioned above but also because he had referred in his work to categories of remembrance studies for many years. He specialised in 20th-century German history, devoting much attention to the legacy of totalitarianism and the problem of identification of current generations with the deeds of their ancestors. He occupied a prominent place among experts in the field.

J. Hürter and A.I. Borozniak emphasise the common fate of Russia and Germany. Both countries became great defeated of World War I, which was sealed by the conclusions

of the Paris Peace Conference, to which they were not invited. International isolation, resulting in the status of “pariahs” [*напущу*, p. 15] or “outcasts” [*уздюу*, p. 56] were, next to the military humiliation, economic crisis, and internal destabilisation, the main factors of the rapprochement, despite the initial resistance of the German elites, either because of the fear of irritating the West or because of their aversion to the Bolsheviks who made no secret of their ambitions to start a world revolution. In the textbook’s interpretation, the Rapallo Agreement of April 16, 1922 was motivated by the desire to neutralise the Versailles system, which excluded the two potential powers from full participation in international relations. For “red” Russia, it also had the significance of an act sanctioning a non-capitalist property system. The authors do not decide whether the positive sides of the agreement outweighed the negative ones (foreign reception). Discussing Soviet-German economic cooperation in the 1920s, they draw attention to the Weimar Republic’s participation in the industrialisation of the USSR and the growing share of goods exported to the Land of the Soviets. Military cooperation was equally important, allowing Germany to circumvent imposed bans. The authors add that the rapprochement was directed with a pointed spear against Poland—both countries’ enemy in common. In their opinion, the political assessment of the cooperation is negative because it was a breach of international law and a threat to the existing world order.

The most reliable test of the textbook’s coherence is its second part, which covers the period 1933–1945, the sensitive period for both countries, specifically the apogee of Stalinism, Hitlerism, and the murderous military confrontation. The authors’ decision (however motivated it may be) to narrow the spectrum of interest to the international aspect of bilateral relations is objectionable. From the statements in the “Russian” chapters, it can be inferred that the restriction of the field of view was by no means dictated by an economy of space, as suggested in the introduction; the inclusion confirms this supposition by German historians of a characteristics of the internal situation of the USSR and the Third Reich—contrary

to the agreed common position. The incompatibility of the two visions of events is clearly shown in the key chapters devoted to the diplomatic genesis of World War II and one of the key clashes of the war—the Battle of Stalingrad. From the point of view of a reader reliant on the “calculations of the defeated side,” the most important articles are those by Bianca Petrov-Ennker and A. Chubarian. They present the intentions and context of the German-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact of August 23/24, 1939. It is well known that the problems raised by the authors are the main subject of dispute not even between Polish and Russian historiographies, but between historians within the respective “camps.” This was demonstrated by the flagship project of the Polish Institute of International Affairs and the Moscow State Institute of International Relations (*Crisis [Kryzys]* 2009).

Bianka Petrov-Ennker (born in 1951), a professor (now retired) at the University of Konstanz, is a scholar of at least several specialisations dealing with the history of Russia and the USSR, and also Poland. Her impressive output includes works on political, social, and cultural history. She has repeatedly spoken on theoretical and methodological issues and finally explored new perspectives in historical research (such as women’s history, film). Her long-standing and active participation in multilateral projects, resulting in numerous publications, deservedly ensures her authoritative statements. It is equally difficult to give a brief description of the work of Anatoly Chubarian (born in 1931). His publications consistently deal with the history of international relations, the relationship of Russian political ideas with Europe, and the first decades of Soviet history; his work on Stalin’s foreign policy from September 1939 to the Nazi attack on the USSR remains in the context concerned here (Chubar’yan 2008). For years he has also published his works abroad, in French, English, and German. They remain an important point of reference for other researchers. Simultaneously, he attaches great importance to the didactics of history, having been actively involved in developing textbooks for years. From 1988 to 2015, he was director of the Institute of World History of the Russian Academy of Sciences (he currently holds the honorary post of research director there). Among his memberships in various academic and expert bodies, which are difficult to enumerate, it is worth mentioning his co-chairmanship of the

Russian Historical Society and his participation in the work of the aforementioned Commission under the Russian president.

The authors do not go far back, unanimously recognising the Munich Agreement (September 29/30, 1938) as a turning point in the sequence of events. The Appeasement, satiating Hitler's unbridled appetite, was to deepen the USSR's sense of isolation, the overcoming of which required the immediate choice of one of two exits: an anti-German alliance with Britain and France or an anti-Western alliance with Germany. In this interpretation, the leadership of the Soviet Union was driven by defensive motivations, or more precisely by the need to guarantee its own security, threatened by the bankruptcy of the concept of collective security within the framework of the League of Nations. However, this is where the consent ends. A. Chubarian puts part of the responsibility for the failure of negotiations with Western countries on the "nonconstructive position of Polish ruling circles", who opposed allowing the Red Army on Polish territory in case of a conflict. B. Petrov-Ennker notes that the initiative to divide the spheres of influence in Eastern Europe came from the Third Reich but was enthusiastically accepted by the Soviet side, which was fostered by "Soviet nationalism," drawing on "traditional Russian big-state thinking" (p. 123). The Russian author presents a clearly polemical position. He points out that Hitler had conceived his intention to attack Poland long before the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact was concluded. The only hesitation concerned the timing of the attack. At this point, it is worth noting a fundamental difference in the authors' construction of the narrative. The German author writes bluntly about the calculations of both sides, explaining them with the conditions of totalitarian dictatorships (with the emphasis on the will of the leaders of both states), ideological premises, and last but not least—aggressive intentions. On the other hand, the Russian author questions the merits of such an approach, opting for a "multifactorial method of analysis" that reconciles the contradictory phenomena of the period under study (pp. 129 ff.). The implementation of this postulate took the form of a particular interpretative equilibrium, combining elements of ahistoricism (that is interpretation in isolation from the historical context) with thinking about the world in purely geopolitical categories. The passages concerning

September 17, 1939 illustrate the aberration of this way of describing reality.

The Russian authors clearly do not recognise the areas annexed by the USSR in 1939 of “Western Belarus” and “Western Ukraine,” inhabited partly by Belarusian and Ukrainian populations, as proper Polish territories [*часть собственно Польши*], resorting to the odd argument—for a historian—that the shape of post-war Poland’s borders supports such a treatment after World War II [*в пользу чего говорит и послевоенное устройство Польши*] (p. 81). It should be noted here that the territory of “Western Belarus” annexed in 1939 also included the historically Polish lands of north-eastern Mazovia and Podlasie and had a relative Polish majority. On the other hand, it is difficult to take seriously the argument that the inadequate delimitation of borders before World War II should be evidenced by their shape after World War II. The statement by the German researcher caused A. Chubarian’s loud opposition to the statement that “terrorist occupation regimes” had been installed in the areas of divided Poland since the eastern provinces were formally incorporated into the USSR. The authors of the text proper and the introduction did not pay any attention to the Soviet repressions against the conquered population, limiting themselves to perfunctory information about the new authorities’ fight against class enemies (there are premises justifying the statement that Katyn, mentioned only in the German study, reflected a national criterion rather; it is certain, however, that the national aspect had an important place in the doctrine and political practice of Marxism-Leninism), and considering it inappropriate to compare it with the ruthless conduct of the German occupants. The Russian historian’s opinion is developed in the explicitly formulated conviction about the inadequacy of comparing the regimes of the USSR and the Third Reich, which is a relic of the allegedly outdated current research on the totalitarian system that does not take into account the national specificity of particular political systems and fundamental differences between Hitlerism and Stalinism.

The authors of this textbook’s intention were to present the cruelty of World War II on the example of the Battle of Stalingrad. The discrepancy between the two chapters is not due to the different perspectives of the victors and those

vanquished, nor to the difficulty of reconciling the facts. What clearly prevailed was a different approach to realising the textbook's objectives—the article by Mikhail Yu. Miagkov (born in 1968) is a sound text without going beyond the subject matter announced by the title, which may pose some difficulty for a non-professional. The author points out the economic and geo-strategic motivations for choosing the Caucasus as the target of the attack, then presents a chronology of the battle, and finally summarises the Soviet victory, emphasising its significance for the outcome of the war. The dispassionate tone of the narrative (striking when discussing the draconian order of “Not One Step Back”) contrasts with the pro-individualist assertion that “fate itself was pushing the German Wehrmacht towards Stalingrad” (p. 142). However, the formulations about the symbolic dimension of the confrontation, on which Johannes Hürter weaves his text, find no development. The German author explains why Stalingrad (the city identified with the commander) became the site of a decisive struggle for possession of cultural symbols. Nazi propaganda transformed the battle into Germany's Thermopylae, and a peculiar shift took place in the consciousness of the postwar generation: the hecatomb somehow legitimised the Germans' recognition of themselves as victims of the war. In turn, Soviet propaganda, most fully expressed by the monumental Motherland monument in Volgograd, made military success the leaven for the positive myth of Stalingrad, which ignored the terrible price of victory but presented it as the beginning of the Red Army's triumphant march westward. An important addition to the characteristic silence in the “Russian” text is the information about the price consolidating the society of the defending side, specifically Soviet repressions (deportations, death sentences) against the citizens of their own country considered traitors and collaborators. In order to show the broader context of the Battle of Stalingrad, Hürter bolstered the chapter with an explication of the genocidal intentions (Holocaust) and criminal methods of the attacking side, emphasising the German (nationally defined) responsibility for the crimes and firmly rejecting attempts to cede collective responsibility for the guilt on Hitler alone.

The only article of the module that the textbook authors agreed on (admittedly not without a *votum separatum* from

the Russian side on some details) concerns the post-war order sanctioned by the Potsdam Conference (July 17 to August 2, 1945). Chapter co-author Aleksey M. Filitov (born in 1938), a long-time employee of the RAN Institute of World History and a lecturer at the Russian State Humanities University, focuses his work on German-Russian relations from the Munich Conference of 1938 to the present. His views on the antecedents of the Munich Agreement influence both the circle of future diplomats (publications in specialist periodicals) and public opinion (participation in the preparation of the concept of the Moscow exhibition on the topic in 2018). The consistent development of strictly defined interests guarantees him an essential place among researchers of the subject. On the other hand, Hermann Wentker (born in 1959) is a researcher with the Institute for Contemporary History and a lecturer with the University of Potsdam. The focus of his interest is the German Democratic Republic. The results of his research take on various forms: sometimes a narrowly defined political theme, at other times a synthetic presentation of international issues. The scholar's research horizon is not limited to the 20th century, as he has also done work on 19th-century history, which undoubtedly broadens the perspective. His work on the history of the second half of the 20th century makes him an equal member of the team of authors.

In the discussion of the evolution of the position of the Western Allies and the USSR towards Germany, presented at the preceding summits (starting from the conference of foreign ministers held in Moscow in October 1943), there is a controversy about the Soviet motivation at the "Big Three" meeting in Teheran (November 28 to December 3, 1943). According to A.M. Filitov, the statement about the plans to move the Polish borders westward as a consequence of the intention of the USSR to annex the eastern Polish lands is false. He refers to the position of the Soviet government at the time of the negotiations of the Sikorski-Maysky agreement, according to which Poland should be reborn within ethnic borders, including those areas which had been "recently" incorporated in the USSR: Filitov here quotes an explanation received by Soviet Ambassador in London I.M. Maysky from the USSR government on July 3, 1941:

“Мы стоим за создание независимого Польского государства в границах национальной Польши, включая некоторые города и области, недавно отошедшие к СССР”
 [We support the creation of an independent Polish state within the borders of national Poland, including some cities in the region, recently passed on to the USSR].

Filipov further deduces:

“Таким образом никакого намерения “аннексировать” польские земли советской стороны не было” [In view of this, there was no intention on the part of the Soviet side to “annex” Polish lands] (p. 172).

This is supposed to prove that the assumption about the incorporation of Polish territories is groundless. The reviewer can hardly refrain from the opinion that the above argument lacks unambiguity: is it possible that the Russian historian assumes *a priori* that the decisive argument for questioning Poland’s right to rule the territories east of the Bug River is the numerical superiority of the non-Polish element? This example illustrates the durability of mental maps imprinted in the historical consciousness: here, the division into ethnographically homogeneous Kingdom of Poland and the so-called western *gubernias*, sanctioned in 1815, organises Russian ideas about the legitimate course of territorial borders and justifies the claims of Russia to rule over the Ruthenian lands and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania which constitute the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

As far as the Potsdam Conference arrangements are concerned, Hermann Wentker and Filitov are sceptical about their implementation, explaining the divergence of opinions on two fundamental issues: it was not possible to agree on the method of punishing Germany before the restoration of international political rights (“restoration to the family of civilised nations”), nor was it possible to agree on the political shape of the future German state. According to the textbook’s authors, the ambiguously interpreted formulas about demilitarisation, de-Nazification, and democratisation of the political system can hardly be regarded as a clear directive; the vagueness found its expression in post-war political

practice. Among the not fulfilled Potsdam demands was the humanitarianism of the forced resettlement of the German population from the territories that had fallen to Poland and the USSR. On the other hand, the Nuremberg Trial was regarded as an only, albeit partial, success. In the authors' opinion, the most evident proof of the ineffectiveness of the Potsdam arrangements was the failure of the concept of rebuilding a "united Germany," which, after all, required the unity of the allied states. This failure reflected the realities of the Cold War, but its primary cause was the push for an agreement, well-fraught with resignation from resolving contentious issues.

The third part of the textbook deals with the Cold War phase of Soviet-German relations, which took place between 1945 and 1961. Unlike the previous chapters, reading this module does not so much make one aware of discrepancies in interpretation but rather reveals deep and perhaps indelible differences in the perception of reality. This observation is all the more interesting, given that the alternative articles use almost identical factual material. On a general level, the Russian narrative is biaxial. On one axis is geopolitical "tooling" (this element was already present in the above-covered discussion of 1939). According to Russian historians, the superiority of the post-war order over the Versailles system is determined by its stability, resulting in particular from the stability of the delimited borders; thus, the territorial breeding ground for conflict was to be removed. At least as important a function is performed by the second axis, which relieves the argumentative structure of moral objections that the Soviet system is evil. This procedure, too, had been used in earlier parts of the book. However, this time it was justified not by the apparent exhaustion of the totalitarian paradigm but by "the low productivity of calculating the degree of guilt and responsibility of each or both sides at the same time for this or that act of confrontation" (p. 187). The alternative adopted was to identify the objective factors determining the development of international relations in the postwar decades. The proposal of Russian researchers appears on the surface to be a challenge to historiography that applies moral qualification of past deeds

and events. In fact, it by no means rejects ethical reflection but bases it on other grounds. This is illustrated by the dispute with German authors about the faithful depiction of the position of Europe and the world by using the appropriate word: “division” [раздел]. They oppose the axiological term for “split” [раскол]. In fact, both assumptions disavow attempts to describe the post-war situation in terms of good and evil, with the attribution of negative characteristics to the Russian (Soviet) side, including superpower inclinations. Furthermore, they sanction *ex-post* the equivalence of political models realised on both sides of the “Iron Curtain.” Moreover, the term “раскол” suggests that the different development of the two parts of Europe was determined by internal rather than external factors (the outcome of the war, totalitarian systems).

The chapters devoted to the so-called “first Berlin Crisis” already reveal an interpretative contradiction. According to A. Filitov, it was the culmination of a confrontation between the USSR and the West. Their accelerators turned out to be the Marshall Plan and the London Conference of the Allied States (February-March 1948), which opened the way to creating an independent state covering the territories of the three occupation zones, which broke the Potsdam agreement. This, combined with the unilateral introduction of a separate currency in Berlin’s “western” sectors, provoked a blockade of land communications between the zones and the capital. Stefan Kreuzberger (born in 1961), who blames the Soviet Union for the rise in tension, opposes this sequence of events. He emphasises the clash of two political concepts as a conflict of values. He also points to the repression of political opponents in the Soviet occupation zone, the filling of key positions with communists, and above all, the secret efforts to create an independent state on the controlled territory. According to the Russian researcher, the responsibility for the failure of the negotiations lies with the “local” representatives of both sides. In contrast, according to the German researcher, it lies with the intransigence of the Soviet political elite. Both of them, however, unanimously evaluate the outcome of the confrontation as a defeat for Stalin.

The differences are most striking in the chapters on June 17, 1953—the first uprising against communist authorities behind the Iron Curtain. Hubertus Knabe (born in 1959) with his

description of the popular uprising contrasts the cool and distanced approach of Boris L. Chavkin (born in 1954), who labels the events as a crisis. A characteristic move by the Russian historian is the reduction of the causes of the revolt to the failure of the peoples' economic demands and the difficult economic situation that marked the building of socialism; there is no mention of anti-Soviet political motivations as the primary source of the protest, or even equivalent, but instead focuses on the ineptitude of the policies pursued by Walter Ulbricht and his party acolytes. Meanwhile, as the German researcher demonstrates, the non-economic hotbeds of conflict were the monopolised political life by communists, typical of Stalinism (which involved the liquidation of "bourgeois" structures and a crackdown on "class enemies"), and the struggle against Protestantism. Contrary to Chavkin's claims about the inspiring role of the American radio station broadcasting from the western occupation sectors, Knabe insists on the spontaneity and mass character of the protest. He also stresses the impossibility of the communist activists and their coercive apparatus to remain in power without the intervention of the Soviet army in the strength of 13 divisions. Finally, he questions the humanitarianism of the interveners. He describes the repression of the participants in the events, including death sentences handed down by Soviet military tribunals and exile to forced labor camps on Soviet territory. This information is replaced in the Russian historian's article by information about economic support in the form of cancellation of reparation deliveries and the rest of the "Polish" part of reparations. There is also a significant difference in the emphasis of the summary: on the one hand, the admission of strategic defeat, which made it impossible to reform socialism; on the other hand, the statement that open opposition to the communist system had no chance of success as long as the latter was supported by the armed forces of the USSR.

On the other hand, the authors of the chapters on Konrad Adenauer's Moscow visit in 1955 and on the second "Berlin Crisis" managed to reach a consensus. The first of these, written by Hanns Jürgen Küsters (born in 1952) and Faina I. Novik (born in 1937), apologises for the dialogue conducted despite personal convictions (the Chancellor's lack of illusions about the USSR's expansionist aspirations). The praise of

Adenauer's pragmatism is significant for Russian historians, who, despite public opinion, renounced setting unrealistic preconditions. Küsters and Novik unanimously considered the outcome of the visit a success, even though the maximalist goal, that was pushing through German unification under Bonn's dictates, was not achieved.

The personification of events also shines through in the second chapter, written by the same author along with Gerhard Wettig. The conflict is personified by Nikita Khrushchev and its political expression by the 1958 ultimatum demanding a change in the status of West Berlin under the threat of a separatist peace with East Germany. The authors point out the divergence of the USSR's global ambitions and the goals of the German satellite state, interested mainly in international recognition of its existence, the cessation of West German radio and television broadcasting on its territory, and preventing its citizens from fleeing. The West's inflexibility in the face of the CPSU General Secretary's demands meant that the only way to meet the threats (and thus save face) was to build a wall—"a testimony to the moral defeat of the Eastern side"—this is the phrase the authors use: [(Берлинская стена) свидетельствовала о моральном поражении восточной стороны] (p. 266).

The fourth and final part of the textbook stretches the narrative from 1962 to 1991, from the apogee to the perigee of the confrontation between East and West. It is distinguished from the others by the consensual and almost unemotional tone of the narrative. The consensus on the essentials is well reflected in the insignificant difference in the titles of the introductions: the starting line in both cases is the Cold War, the finishing line is the "European peace" (in the Russian version), or the "pan-European house" (German version). Helmut Altrichter's (born in 1945) assertions are unobjectionable, including the conclusion that intentions to make the Old Continent a space of solidarity and shared values still remain not fulfilled. For a Central and Eastern European reader, the view presented by A. Filitov is more significant. He attributes the end of the Cold War not to the victory of the West but to the "policy of détente," the cornerstone

of which was the 1975 OSCE Final Act, which “guaranteed the balance of interests of its participants” (p. 280). Once again, the attachment of Russian scholars to geopolitical calculations in their assessment of the past is evident, as witnessed by their passing reference to the Hungarian Uprising of 1956 as one of the crises that prevented the triumph of détente policy after Stalin’s death. The suggestion that the expansion of the sphere of civil rights and liberties in the Eastern bloc was hindered by conservative forces trying to maintain the image of the enemy in the consciousness of the governed seems to be a euphemism: does the moderator treat “communism with a human face” as a real, though not fulfilled alternative? Or did the condemnation of communist crimes in effect turn against attempts at liberalisation? Filitov’s remarks about the Soviet Union’s relations with East Germany illustrate how contemporary scholars view the role and position of the USSR in Eastern Europe. In his view, these relations were much more complex than the categories of hegemony and subordination suggest. This observation seems interesting to reflect the perceptions some Russian historians have about relations with Moscow’s satellite countries, which are very distant from the dominant thinking of the current elites of these countries about the Comecon or the Warsaw Pact.

Among the chapters, the text on the so-called Moscow Agreement of August 12, 1970 between the Federal Republic of Germany and the USSR, which sealed the post-war territorial organisation of Europe and the inviolability of its borders, contains a clear ideological message. The conclusion of the agreement—emphasised unanimously by A. Filitov and Bernd Faulenbach (born in 1943)—required the West German republic to give up its demands for German reunification under its aegis and the restoration of the pre-World War II borders. Chancellor Willy Brandt was induced to adopt the principles of the “new Eastern policy” by observing that the USSR’s hegemonic position in Eastern Europe made it impossible to push through any solutions against Moscow.

The transition from the reorientation of German policy to the collapse of the USSR required the authors to zoom in on international developments in which *perestroika* played a key role. This is the only instance in the last part of the textbook where a common text could not be agreed upon.

The German author attaches great importance to the “new thinking,” the ideocratic aspect of the reforms; the Russian one to the economic issues (including the breaking of ties between the republics), nationality (the centrifugal forces of social movements within the individual republics, the “unfrozen” ethnic conflicts). The detailed description of the internal politics of the USSR in the second half of the 1980s gives the impression of being detached from the assumptions of the textbook, which almost completely ignored these issues. The disappearance of the Soviet Union from the map of the world is seen here as visible proof of the failure of *perestroika*, which has an anti-reformist meaning (a threat to statehood). At the same time, the necessity of undertaking such measures in the middle of the 1980s is ignored.

And finally, the last chapter—on the fall of the Berlin Wall on November 9, 1989, closes the textbook with an over-optimistic statement that German reunification crowned the attempts to create a collective security system in Europe, ending the conflict between East and West. Eberhard Kuhrt and A. Shubin see the sources of the GDR crisis in the growing gap between public (including social) expectations and the reality of Erick Honnecker’s dictatorship. The authors place the internal situation in an international context, referring to the events in Poland (beginning with the lifting of martial law), Hungary, and Czechoslovakia, and emphasise the importance of Gorbachev’s strategy of giving back some political autonomy to the satellite states. They point out that the GDR—unlike the other states allied with the USSR—was not a nation-state but an ideological one, with the result that the erosion of socialism took away its *raison d’être*.

The above discussion does not include the chapters dealing with socio-cultural phenomena, which constitute almost a quarter of the textbook and are integrated into its individual parts. Their inclusion is justified not only by their cognitive value (showing history detached from strictly political issues) but also by enlivening the narrative by bringing it closer to individual cultural experience, specifically to the sphere close to each recipient. The decision to include culturological texts

sanctions the declarations of Russian experts about a turn towards anthropology in textbook history-telling, which should be applauded: the reduction of history teaching to facts about political changes and military clashes puts off many students and impoverishes their view of the past. Although very fragmentary and unsatisfactory, the sample presented in the reviewed publication reveals a great potential of such a description slant. In my opinion, these sketches are the best suited to the needs of the reader.

The first part is completed by A. Borozniak's and Eva Oberloskamp's text on Russian intellectual and artistic emigration in the Weimar Republic. The authors introduce the reader to Charlottenburg, a Berlin district where the pulse of the Russian diaspora was most robust and where emigrant publishing houses, newspapers, stores, and cafés had their headquarters. On the one hand, the chapter allows us to see the German capital of the 1920s as a multicultural centre, creating conditions for visiting intellectuals, students of literature and fine arts to work freely; on the other, it makes us aware that economic difficulties brought the fate of the diaspora and the native residents closer together. This is an unusual image, considering that we are talking about the heirs of two fallen empires, the main Great War competitors.

The theme of emigration also appears in the second part of the textbook in the context of the fate of the German newcomers to the USSR: not only the future party elite of the GDR headed by Wilhelm Pieck but also the mass of workers who in the time of the world financial crisis decided to stay in the Soviet Union. Yakov S. Drabkin (1918–2015) and C. Tischler showed the situation of Germans during the Great Terror when almost 70% of them were repressed (imprisoned or shot). They discuss the so-called German operation of the NKVD initiated by Order No. 00439 of July 25, 1937, which, contrary to doctrine, was proof of the vitality of the nationality criterion; they do not use the word “genocide” to describe it. The attack on the USSR provoked the second act of the drama. Alongside the tried and tested repressions against potential enemies of the system of German origin, mass deportations to Siberia and Central Asia were carried out; the symbolic act was the liquidation of the autonomous republic of the Volga Germans. The authors point out that years later, the vast

majority of the repressed repatriated from the USSR chose the Soviet zone of occupation, and in time the GDR.

Yekaterina O. Grantseva and Robert Maier's (born in 1953) two-part discussion of the Third Reich and the USSR pavilions at the 1937 Paris World Exposition allows us to look at the antagonistic political systems through the lens of their aesthetic message. The Russian author points out that Socialist Realism developed in parallel to changes in German art parallel to the ideals of Hitlerism. Thus, the reversal of the previous hierarchies of genres and artists brought the two countries closer, which Grantseva sees as a reflection of the worldwide turn to neoclassicism. The German author sees it differently, analysing in detail the ideological message of both over-reaching pavilions, symbolised respectively by an eagle with a swastika towering over the surroundings and a sculpture representing a factory worker and a kolkhoz woman. Meier weaves his argument into the context of the internal transformations in the USSR and the Third Reich, referred to neutrally as a "top-down revolution" (the very characteristics leaves no doubt as to its criminal nature). This can be seen as a break in the concept of the textbook: the reader learns about the totalitarian nature of both regimes only in this chapter.

A counterpoint to the main topic of the third part is the chapter by Stefan Wolle (born in 1950) and F. Novik on the impact of Soviet culture on the collective consciousness of East Germans. The title, *Light from the East*, aptly conveys the paradox: the oppressiveness of the political system was mitigated in the eyes of many by the conviction that communism represented universal values. The authors demonstrate how the myth of saving German culture was born and developed by the Red Army, which by defeating Nazism ensured the triumph of humanism over imperialism. A symbolic act was the donation of requisitioned pictures to the Dresden Old Masters Picture Gallery in 1955. The propaganda value of this gesture considerably warmed the image of the USSR in West Germany and the West. The mass consciousness was, however, more strongly influenced by popular culture, including film. An important role, especially in the era of the Khrushchev Thaw, was also played by literature, which showed aspects of reality that had been passed over in silence by official historiography.

The cultural and social themes add life to the fourth part of the textbook. Unlike the earlier threads on emigration, the chapter discussing Alexander I. Solzhenitsyn's visit to West Germany (1974) is a typical case study with no pretensions to generalisations. Ya. Drabkin and Yuliya von Saal (born in 1979) present the phenomenon of *inakomyslie* ['heterodoxy'] in a dictatorship as a defensive reaction to the lack of individual freedom and hypocrisy, reminding us of the price of persecution by authority. And finally, a chapter on the 1980 Moscow Olympics: Viktor V. Ishchenko and Thomas Raithel (born in 1958) go back to the 1936 Berlin Olympics, whose boycott appeared to be an effective protest against the anti-Semitic and racist excesses of the Third Reich. Awarding the prestigious event to the USSR was part of the policy of detente. The entry of Soviet troops into Afghanistan provoked a strong reaction from Western countries—refusal to participate in the competition. Like many events of the post-war period, the authors conclude that this one too was etched differently in the memory of the divided Germans.

Discussion Remarks by a Reader from "the Other Europe"

I have touched on polemical remarks on specific issues when discussing the content of the reviewed publication. Here, however, I formulate objections of a general nature. The fundamental doubt arises in executing the textbook title's promise, which announces more than the content gives. It is hard to pass over the disappointment brought by reading the following chapters, subordinated to the intention of confrontation of historiographic visions, and not to the insight into the meanders of collective memory. The authors' attachment to the traditional view of history and classical historiography methods is evident here. The force of habit prevailed over the declared desire to look at the past from the perspective of *memory studies*. For a long time now, memory studies have not been a purely sociological perspective: it has earned the right of citizenship—along with many others—from the fields of historical research, which, after all, is constantly changing (compare with Cubitt 2018, among others). It should

be noted that the premise of the textbook is already expressed in its title: *Россия-Германия. Вехи совмесиной истории в коллективной памяти* [Russia-Germany. Signposts of modern history in collective remembrance]. A.O. Chubarian in the afterword to the textbook wrote:

“Книга не раскрывает хронологию всего столетия, но содержит выбранные по согласованию темы, наиболее актуальные в коллективной памяти двух стран” [The book does not unveil chronologically the entire century, but covers topics chosen in unison, the most current in the collective memory of two countries].

Leaving aside the awkwardness of the phrase “collective memory of both countries,” the intention is clear—as I mentioned above. Therefore, I classify the textbook initiative as a research project in the spirit of memory studies. The aspiration to treat the issue in terms of “memory studies” (though treated rather superficially) is not a problem. It is evident in several chapters by the German authors, while Russian researchers have given preference to synthetic encyclopedic-style studies. This decision, even if not intentional, is not substantively justified. In the last two decades, Russian humanities have drawn extensively on the theoretical achievements of memory studies. They have eagerly incorporated them into a whole array of methods of research on the past. Perhaps, in the case of the reviewed publication, the habit of separating historians from sociological and anthropological studies prevailed, which, of course, does not justify ignoring the original assumptions and following the well-worn path of academic historiography. Moreover, the resignation from presenting “the milestones of common history in collective memory” deprives the book of its didactic value. It is difficult to imagine that the average textbook reader would be able to draw a lesson from the polemical arguments of professional historians, juggling with the interpretation of events and phenomena. Besides, the added value of including the experience of remembering in the description of facts lies primarily in the confrontation of the reader’s imagination with the memory of previous generations—in this way, they become a link in the chain of history and not only the recipient of a message in the form of a textbook.

This opportunity has not been seized, despite the accumulated experience of recent years in the humanities. An overview of “memoryological” trends in Russian humanistics of the first decade of the “remembrance boom” has already been formulated (Banaszkiewicz 2015); it is worth confronting with it the self-reflection of Russian researchers (Rostovtsev, Sosnitskiy 2014; Leontyeva 2015). The journal *Диалог со временем—Dialogue with Time*, published under the banner of the Russian Society for Intellectual History [*Российское Общество интеллектуальной истории*] in cooperation with the Institute of World History of the Russian Academy of Sciences, aims studies on the borderline between memory and history. The reserve with which Russian historians approach memory studies may result from a poor grasp of the methodological concepts behind the key terms of this sub-discipline. At the same time, its absence in the didactics of history is significant, which is indirectly evidenced by the absence of such traces by the promoter and an experienced expert on the issue (Repina 2019). Paradoxically, however, the fashion for borrowed terminology headed by “place of remembrance” [*lieu de mémoire*] does not at all determine better research “instrumentation,” as confirmed by the case of the historiography of Central and Eastern Europe (Górny, Kończal 2014). The Russian and English-language literature on the subject lacks studies along the lines of the British non-cognitive publication (MacGregor 2014). For unknown reasons, a valuable volume on memorials (understood non-metaphorically), produced under French auspices (*Les sites* 2007), was not continued.

If, however, one were to come to terms with this circumstance and pretend that the content corresponds to the announcement, then the statement that the realisation of the textbook’s assumptions has also revealed another conceptual weakness of the original idea—that of the book’s title “...*Вехи совмесиной истории в коллективной памяти*” [Milestones of modern history in collective remembrance]. The question that arises is who on both sides of the Russian (Soviet)—German border was and is the bearer of collective remembrance. Do the national communities: German and Russian? If so, it is worth taking into account their non-heterogeneity (it is reflected in the letter of the law by the

phrase about “a multinational nation [многонациональный народ] of Russia, united by a common historical fate” opening the Constitution of the Russian Federation of 1993) and the difficulty to find an amalgamating bond. Perhaps (in the case of Russia) a more appropriate term for the remembering subject would be the imperial community, lasting independently of Russia’s political forms, united by the unchanging idea of dominion in a changing ideological and political context (*civitas imperii*); the term appeared in the introduction to the thematic issue of *Ab Imperio* (4, 2009, p. 9)? However, it is impossible to assume that representatives of numerous minorities (including the German minority, whose presence in the Russian Empire dates back to the 18th century) would be susceptible to this narrative. If the internal differentiation—and conflict—of the Russian state’s collective makes it incapable of evoking uniform experiences and memories of itself, then perhaps the default collective subject is the civic community in *statu nascendi*, whose horizons are defined by the experience of the empire’s double collapse in 1917 and 1991. It is somewhat natural that in the “logic” of the historical process outlined in this way, there is a striving for the restitution of the lost superpower, which in turn makes it necessary to look at German statehood (in its successive twentieth-century hypostases) from the perspective of increasing the power of successive incarnations of Russia. This implicitly assumes a complete consonance between the aspirations of the state and the emerging civic community. This interpretation is difficult for historians to accept and utopian for researchers of social phenomena but ideal for the demiurges of imperial politics, making it possible to defend the implementation of the goal outlined in the title. For it is difficult to identify the emerging Russian civic community with the Russian state pursuing imperial goals.

A good starting point for reflection on the complex correlations between the nation’s remembrance and the empire’s remembrance is polyphony in the formula of an “absentee roundtable” with scholars representing different cultural circles and historiographical traditions (*Razmyshleniya* 2004). It is possible that the litmus test of Russian superpower disrelishments (which characterises not only the actions of the power elite, but also the yearnings

of a significant part of society) is the revision of the assessment of the totalitarian heritage of the USSR, which takes the form of voluntary amnesia, or attempts to question the vision of history judging Stalinism, supposedly promoted by Russia's enemies who are implementing the eternal plan of the destruction of the Russian state (Nowak 2005, pp. 98–9, 105–06, 117–18). Comparing contemporary debates (initiated already in the Yeltsin era, but particularly heated after Vladimir Putin took power) about the Russian idea with intra-German discussions about variants of patriotism after discrediting the German idea in the twentieth century seems to be a worthwhile direction for detailed analysis (Wolff-Powęska 2008).

The above interpretative cliché—let us add by way of digression—dictates a way of studying sites of remembrance that makes it drastically difficult for representatives of many Central and Eastern European countries to enter into bilateral research projects involving Russia. Making statehood the central category of analysis favours the most robust political communities that have their own long-lasting statehood (including Poland) and thus are based on real political being or its tradition), pushing into the background the proper object of analysis, namely regional or national identities (sometimes postulated or in the process of being defined) that make the area so unusual. Examples can be found in the states created in place of the former Russian Empire: the Ukrainian population's sense of separateness took on a modern form in the arduous struggle with Russian nationalism when it was the St. Petersburg-Moscow narrative that gave meaning to symbols (even the monument to Bohdan Khmelnytsky erected in Kyiv...); despite Russia's appropriation of Rus' historical tradition, and Russian administrative pressure in the 19th and, to some extent, in the 20th century, this separateness has been growing and is no longer in doubt today. The situation is further complicated when considering the national communities that took on their modern form in confrontation with Russian statehood and foreign social elites (Finns, Estonians). An additional conceptual difficulty would be to create a list of parallel memorials that have a comparable weight of meaning for Russians and representatives of other communities (Stryjek 2014, p. 227).

The Russian variant of the textbook title contains a troublesome ambiguity due to the word “*веху*” [pronounced: vyekhy]. A modern dictionary (*Bolshoy* 2014) gives three meanings of this word, used in the singular. In surveying terminology, the term is used to denote a pole, either marking the boundary of plots of land or acting as a signpost, milestone; in maritime jargon, it refers to a warning sign protruding from the water; and finally, in a figurative sense, it means the most crucial stage in the development of something. A reader from Central and Eastern Europe might be concerned that in the plural it is also the name of a *Cicuta virosa*, a poisonous plant; the coincidence of meanings here is peculiar, even if it is unjust (for the natural association brings to mind a monumental work of Russian social thought—the collection *Вехи. Сборник статей о русской интеллигенции*, published in 1909). I am concerned with instead making Central and Eastern European sensibilities aware of the metaphorical message of the Russian-German “textbook” initiative. After all, the distribution of the “milestones of common history” of Russia and Germany in the twentieth-century *post factum* depends on whose collective memory was taken into account. Meanwhile, the burden of Central European historical experience cannot be ignored when considering Russian and German interpretations of the region’s history. Czesław Miłosz was not wrong when he claimed that [it is] memory that is “our strength, the strength of all of us from ‘the other Europe,’” the strength that makes “the feelings and thoughts of its inhabitants suffice to draw mental lines that seem to be more durable than national borders” (Miłosz 2011, pp. 96, 118).

Finally, it is worth considering what meanings the reviewed publication brings to mind for readers from “the other Europe,” reading it according to the title’s metaphor. Let us start with the most straightforward reading, which refers to Cicero’s hackneyed formula from the dialogue *De oratore* (*historia magistra vitae est*). The stage in the twentieth-century history of Russia and Germany, indisputably closed by the turning point of 1990/1991, is of paramount importance for the identity of the collective populations of each of these countries. This is not only because of their chronological

proximity or because they are kept in the “cache” of the bearers of historical experience. In both cases, the homeland’s history is the point of reference for today’s political orientation, especially for the state’s politics of remembrance policy. Nazism indelibly marked Germany’s imperial splendour, and the decades following the fall of the Third Reich were a struggle with guilt for a significant part of the German community, imposing the imperative of endlessly overcoming the fatal legacy of the recent past. However, the final act of the 20th century—reunification—marked the beginning of a new period that can be successfully regarded as a shining point on the arrow of time, especially if one considers the success in spreading the constitutive values of constitutional and civic patriotism positively. For many Russians, on the other hand, the end of the twentieth century marked the collapse of the empire and thus the end of hegemonic ambitions, through the prism of which they often view the communist legacy in a positive light. There is little room for expiation for the wrong done to others but plenty of room for power-seeking. Consequently, the search for an optimal formula for civic patriotism and the democratic reforms of the political system initiated in the second half of the 1980s can be considered at best an ill-fitting prosthesis to an imperial identity. The pedagogical value of the history of German-Russian relations is necessarily bivalent: positive for one, negative for the other. The teaching message is blatantly contradictory: the German perception of expansionist and domineering tendencies is a source of defeat and shame, while the Russian perception is almost a precondition for success and pride. As we can see, the milestones of history, stuck into the map of past perceptions, neither set clear boundaries for proper conduct nor serve as trustworthy signposts.

The second possible reading of the textbook is close to a longing for prophecy or even a Pythian judgment. The object of reflection here is not the events whose main perpetrators were the USSR and Germany in their successive incarnations, but the approach to them and the position of researchers of the past who identify themselves with these states—experts who shape public opinion, not the opinion itself. The textbook under review provides fertile ground for such analyses, and it is these that are of most interest to readers from “the other

Europe.” Amidst the *vyekhy*, the warning signs, an essential motif of the subsequent chapters, specifically the attitude towards the subjectivity of the buffer zone—Central and Eastern Europe—causes concern. It does not seem possible to determine this relationship conclusively without knowledge of the earlier volumes, which chronologically cover a period of dynamic nation-building processes, including the seizure of the consciousness of non-Russian and non-German (in the ethnic sense) inhabitants by modern nationalism. Without the necessary data, one must confine oneself to the inter—and post—WWII period. From the Russian perspective, which often views reality in geopolitical terms and thus focuses on the supposed geo-strategic coordinates in each system of political coordinates, the view of the “borderland” territories is subordinated to the assessment of the durability of borders in particular historical periods (which ignores the identity of the communities living in the territories under consideration). This assumption determines the negative judgement of the decisions of the Treaty of Versailles, which restored to life the political and cultural communities previously subordinated to the global powers. Criticism of the map of Europe agreed to at Versailles would not, therefore, stem from a particular reluctance of the beneficiaries of the arrangements of the time. However, it is due to a conviction of the value of what is permanent and a conviction that the aggressive aims of Soviet Russia and Germany, both Weimar and Nazi, were instrumental in destroying the criticised order. For the same reasons, the decisions of the Yalta Agreement are valued positively by Russian authors as more resistant to the challenges of the time; in fact, this was a consequence of the military power of the USSR living off them. The political imagination, dominated by the contours of maps and subordinated to the axiom of superpowerhood, somehow unreflectively relegates the issue of the subjectivity of “temporary” neighbours into the background. The chapters written by German authors bring the opposite associations, strengthening the hopes of “the other Europe” for Germany’s permanent abandonment of its hegemony. Apparently, the emphasis on the injustice of the nations of Central and Eastern Europe and the opening up of their sensitivities is dictated by the strong presence of ethical reflection on the part of the German authors of the textbook

(and the reference to universal norms of co-existence between peoples and nations). It even gives the impression of catharsis. On the narrative level, this is expressed by the absence of any revisionist tendencies in the interpretation of the history of the Third Reich. Suppose one treats the group of authors in a representative manner. In that case, the prospects for a long-term historical dialogue with Germany appear to be unthreatened. At the same time, the significant difficulty of reaching an agreement with the Russian elite becomes apparent once again.

From prophetic considerations, let us move on to the third variant of reading the title, the closest one to a professional researcher of the past, and thus to the authors of the reviewed volume. The *vyekhy* (signposts), as the most critical stage in the historical process, is an approach that is admittedly free of controversy but nevertheless deserves a detailed commentary. It is necessary to start with a trivial observation: the history of Russo-German relations has a much longer history than is assumed in the textbook project, which only covers the period from the 18th to the 20th century. The baggage of experience from earlier centuries affected the perception of both sides both at the “dawn” of relations according to the textbook scenario (Germanness identified with Latin influences threatening Orthodoxy in the pre-Petersburg, and probably even pre-Moscow period of Rus’ history, is an image that strongly affects historical consciousness), as well as at its apogee (19th-century grassroots nationalism with its slogan of eliminating German influence from all areas of social and cultural life as a necessary condition for the manifestation of the indigenous element in the Russian Empire). It is peculiar that the concluding volume was the first to appear of the three volumes planned by the Joint Commission for the Study of Recent History of Russian-German Relations. Although the events of the twentieth century are strongly present in the memoirs and influence the present international configuration, in retrospect, not all the stages of bilateral relations identified by the authors necessarily turn out to be constitutive of Russian and German history; phenomena and processes of earlier centuries overshadow them, sometimes of extended duration (the origins of Nazism and the transposition of Marxist ideas into the Russian hue are only two of many examples). As far as the 20th-century

milestones are concerned, it is in the well-understood interest of “the other Europe” to enrich them with native motifs, either underestimated or not realised by academic historians of both countries. So far, one can only speculate how a consistent promotion of research by scholars from Central and Eastern Europe (but necessarily published in congressional languages) would change the view of specific issues presented by textbook synthesists.

And finally, an ultimate reading that resurrects the ghosts of the past and brings to life in the imagination the dangers inherent in neighbouring Germany and/or Russia. The reader from “the other Europe” has little empathy for the fears and prejudices present in the mutual perception of Russians and Germans; he is sometimes inclined to disavow them, which only increases his uncertainty. Indeed, a deeper study of Russian-German stereotypes and prejudices, or at least a catalogue of complex issues, would falsify the popular opinion about the ease of entering into a “Byzantine-Germanic” alliance against Central and Eastern Europe. The point is that fear is a bad counsellor and publicly formulated fears that persistently recall historical experiences can easily be used by the accused as a testimony to the accusers’ phobias that make it impossible to build a common future and testify to the enslavement of the past. The plausibility of such a characterisation would drastically weaken the position of the accuser states, labelled as noisy destructors not worthy of being called partners of “civilised” interlocutors—irrespective of the falsity of this opinion and its inherent peculiar assumption of the incompleteness of “the other Europe” as a supposed consequence of their late entry into the arena of history. However, it is not only the medium-term political consequences that are at stake here. The destructive properties of the milestones as a poison designator lie, after all, mainly in recognition of national historical policies (updated regularly yet unpredictably with changes in the preferences of voters in parliamentary and possibly presidential elections in individual countries) as the correct and optimal formula for shaping collective identities within national communities, as well as for establishing relations with neighbours. In reality, this must lead to a complete dismemberment of the historic area encompassing the post-imperial territories of the “three black eagles” (Russia, Prussia, and Austria): the reactions triggered

by the turns of politics towards memory in the individual states of the region allow the commonality of historical fates, specifically the experience of subordination to empires, to be forgotten. In this way, as if unknowingly and at their own request, the old (and often outdated) conflicts, which in their time were instigated by the enforcers of the policy of *divide et impera*, grow into a *casus belli*—this time, however, into a war of remembrance between those who should instead seek an understanding of remembrance.

The questions and doubts of the reader from “the other Europe” formulated above are not only addressed to the participants in the Russian-German textbook project. Coming from Central and Eastern Europe, the recipient of the textbook under review does not always appreciate the deep cultural embeddedness of German-Russian relations; their bilateral cultural ties at the beginning of the twentieth century have reached unprecedented dimensions before and since (Schlögel 2006, pp. 7–8). One of the far-reaching consequences of the two world wars, which dismantled the German-Russian geopolitical alliance and the gyrating intensity of contacts a century ago, is the historic opportunity to strengthen the autonomy of memory of the communities (Hahn 2008, p. 42) that make up the cultural-political mosaic of Central and Eastern Europe. These memories deserve equal treatment, respect, and above all, they undermine the validity and academic legitimacy of the idea of describing the history of this area through the prism of mere rivalry and cooperation between two dominant political communities. It is worth contrasting these grand narratives with a narrative that separates itself from particularistic views and emphasises the will to preserve the region’s distinctiveness (and thus not simply strengthen its constituent states’ sovereignty). This does not have to mean a disavowal of the role of the nineteenth-century nationalisms of the periphery that burst the imperial centres, nor disbelief in the very idea of the nation that still frames the thinking of the majority of citizens of the Russian-German “borderland.” Instead, it should mean an unconditional readiness to consider the relations of the

hitherto drowned-out bearers of collective memory. Taking up this challenge would be a genuine alternative attempt to describe (delineate?) the *vyekhy* (milestones) of the common history of Central and Eastern Europe. A truly fascinating challenge, both for the historian and the inhabitant of “the other Europe.”

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