

of a few people whose lives were forever changed by this experience, but not one that should be taken for the full and complete picture of Ukraine today.

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SOCIAL SCIENCES, CONTEMPORARY RUSSIA, AND OTHER

Travin, Dmitrii, Vladimir Gel'man, and Andrei Zaostrovsev. *Rossiiskii put': Idei, Interesy, Instituty, Illiuzii*. St. Petersburg: European University of St. Petersburg Press, 2017. 304 pp. R3,100.00 (paper). ISBN 978-5-94380-241-6.

This book presents a comprehensive, coherent account of Russia's political development in the period since the end of Communist Party rule. Dmitrii Travin, Vladimir Gel'man, and Andrei Zaostrovsev's goal is not to provide a political history, but rather an interpretive account of the contemporary Russian regime. They emphasize the interplay of the four "I's" cited in the title—ideas, interests, institutions, and illusions—giving each due attention. They make it clear that, in their view, the current regime is predatory and based on the redistribution of rents extracted from natural resource exports.

The book is an extended essay. It reviews the history of economic reforms beginning in the late 1980s, showing that particular power centers such as major industrial industries rationally pursued their own organizational interests by resisting structural reform and instead prevailing on the Central Bank to keep them afloat with cheap credits. The collapse of the massive pyramid of state debt in 1998 brought about a reconfiguration of interests and a renewal of efforts at structural reform.

The authors digress into nineteenth-century Russian history to trace the interplay of ideas and interests, showing the power of Marxist-fed illusions about the world revolution. The power of ideas was again manifest in the manipulation of the illusion of a besieged Soviet fortress state to justify the forced industrialization and collectivization drives. The basic argument is that while elites have rationally pursued their interests, they have fostered illusory ideals and fears at the mass level. Most recently, for example, despite the fall in living standards since 2013, public opinion has supported the annexation of Crimea out of a deep attachment to the idea of *derzhavnost'*—Russia's putative status as a great world power.

The authors discuss the problems of governance and policymaking. They cite a number of comparative indices of governance, rule of law, and protection of property rights to show that Russia ranks comparatively low in the world on these dimensions. They argue that poor governance is in fact a relatively stable outcome that serves the interests of many. The pattern of patrimonial rule, whereby *vlast'* (state power) extends not only the administrative functions of the state but also over property and property relations throughout society, enables those who are atop rent-extracting and rent-distributing structures to cultivate their own networks of support and patronage. The enormous deadweight losses caused by this system hold back development, but enable large segments of society to maintain an acceptable standard of living. Sporadic efforts at reform can provoke powerful backlash reactions on the part of interests that fight to maintain their steady stream of privileged rents. If there had been some hope that the authoritarianism of the Putin regime would usher in a period of technocratic modernization—as appeared possible in 2000–2002—those expectations have long since been dashed.

The book's treatment of contemporary Russia offers a broad-brush interpretation, so inevitably some important details are omitted. I would have welcomed some discussion of the actual power centers whose interests are accommodated in the regime, such as the powerful industrial and extractive industries, the regional barons, and the various security and law-enforcement hierarchies. There is little here on employment relations, ethnicity, or demography. The mutual dependence of formal and informal institutions could have been analyzed further. Nevertheless, in its clear-eyed treatment

of the rent-based nature of the political system, and the way it deploys ideational resources to complement the administration of sticks and carrots, *The Russian Way* is an authoritative and valuable study.

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Schlögel, Karl. *Das Sowjetische Jahrhundert: Archäologie einer untergegangenen Welt*. Munich: C. H. Beck, 2017. 912 pp. €38.00. ISBN 978-3-406-71511-2.

The Soviet Century is not another attempt to explain the Soviet experiment and its failure. Instead, Karl Schlögel aims to recall the history of the Soviet Union from the vantage point of a quarter-century after the country's dissolution. The Soviet Union, he argues, was not only a political system. It was also a peculiar "way of life," a civilization with its own life cycle and complexity that went far beyond any theoretical model, much less the "totalitarian" one.

Schlögel describes his approach with two metaphors. The idea of an "archeology of a vanished world" is key to his method of data collection. The author deciphers "broken bits" found in various places at the "site" of the former Russian-Soviet Empire, putting them together like a mosaic. The second metaphor, "musée imaginaire," borrowed from André Malraux, characterizes the way he presents his findings. The book consists of about sixty pieces that are arranged in eighteen blocks, as if these were exhibition rooms through which the reader is invited to stroll. Thus, one visits places and spaces like the "construction sites of communism" at the banks of the Dnieper River and in Magnitogorsk, the world of the Gulag, but also that of the *kommunalka* and the *khreshchevki*. On the road, one encounters astounding, often tragic, stories; for example, the *Great Soviet Encyclopedia*, Russian and Soviet cookbooks, and the most famous Soviet perfume (which is a direct relative of Chanel N° 5). One also delves into carefully selected and masterfully narrated life stories of people who lived in this world, such as prisoners and bosses of labor camps (the latter soon turning into prisoners themselves), the country's most famous radio announcer, a world-famous Soviet collector of Modern Russian avant-garde art, and many more.

As in his previous work, the author refuses to teach lessons; readers are requested to draw their own conclusions. What impressed me the most was that "Homer"—whom he identifies with in front of his students—appears as a true dialectician, convincingly tackling the ambivalences and ambiguities of the "Soviet century." On the one hand, Schlögel emphasizes that the selection of the findings, while based on his life experience of over fifty years of intensive contact with the Soviet Union, especially Russia, is not purely subjective, but also "intersubjective and transgenerational" (p. 25). His approach is also informed by academic discourses about Soviet history, as well as by the experiences of journalists, writers, and contemporary witnesses. In fact, the reader often forgets for a moment that the author did not experience the first Soviet decades himself, because of the impressively vivid descriptions.

On the other hand, Schlögel interprets the Soviet century following the logic of "the negation of negation." Thus, he calls the dissolution of empires a "happy catastrophe," because the uncertainties of the collapse enable new beginnings, including new narratives (p. 47). With a time lag of a quarter-century later, this becomes even more visible. Many of the "deep" structures of the pre-revolutionary and Soviet past shine through the seemingly new of the early twenty-first century, yet they reappear transformed. Unobtrusively, the author gives a series of examples of how the Ariadne thread of history is taken up again, for example in the many reinterpretations of the Russian festival calendar over the last century, or in the resumption by post-Soviet oligarchs, politicians, and top bureaucrats of the Russian nobility's tradition of maintaining country estates in metropolitan suburbs.

Of course, some of the rooms in this museum are bigger or more delightfully decorated than others, and on some pieces, one wishes the author had tried a little harder, but overall, the visit is exceptionally captivating and instructive. The prose is elegant and compelling, containing the erudite reflections and sharp insights of a seasoned historian who is also an attentive and compassionate