

**CONFRONTING THE WEST: COLD WAR NARRATIVES IN RUSSIAN
SCHOOL HISTORY CURRICULA SINCE 1991**

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NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION

The paper transliterates the Russian alphabet using the simplified system of the Library of Congress except for names and titles with common spelling (e.g. Andrey Vyshinsky instead of Vyshinskii).

ABSTRACT

This paper explores how images of the Cold War developed in the Russian history curriculum for secondary schools from 1991 until the present. It places the process of textbook writing into a broader context of educational reforms regulating Russian history. It connects major changes in the content of textbooks with the pluralisation of history in the 1990s, the standardisation and first censorship attempts in the 2000s as well as with the unification of the history vision which was initiated in the 2010s.

In the first period, narratives of the Cold War included more criticism of the USSR and described the shared responsibility of both sides for the confrontation. In the following decade, the criticism toward the USSR was softened but the account of the shared responsibility for the conflict remained in the textbooks. Textbooks of the 2010s eliminated criticism of the USSR blaming the West for aggression throughout the conflict. Besides, these textbooks employ more emotionally charged language and make the links between the Cold War and the present. This trend intensified in the newest unified history textbook issued in 2023.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	1
Chapter 1. Three Decades of Rewriting the History Curriculum	8
1.1. Pluralisation of History Education in the Yeltsin Era.....	8
1.2. Standardisation and Patriotic Values in the 2000s.....	23
1.3. Toward the Unified History Textbook.....	31
Chapter 2. Plural Discourses of the 1990s and 2000s	41
2.1. Methodological Part.....	41
2.2. Transitional Textbooks: Challenging or Following the Soviet Path?.....	45
Ostrovskii et al. (1992–2006)	45
Dmitriento et al. (1995–2010).....	50
Levandovskii (1997–2015)	55
2.3. Soros Textbooks.....	60
Dolutskii (1997–2003).....	60
Kreder (1995–2006).....	66
Chapter 3. Consolidating the Discourse under Putin	71
3.1 Three Decades of Rewriting the Cold War in Two Books	71
Danilov, Kosulina (1995–2016), Gorinov et al. (2016–2023).....	71
Dmitrienko at al. (1995–2010), Shestakov (2010–2015).....	83
3.2. Developing the Hostile Image of the West	88
Volobuev et. al (2016–2024)	88
Nikonov and Deviatov (2017–2024)	91
3.3. Unified History Textbook.....	93
Medinskii (2023–2024).....	93
Conclusion	97
Appendices	99
Bibliography	100

INTRODUCTION

This paper investigates how the image of the Cold War has changed in Russian secondary school history curricula since 1991. Cold War history was an important subject for revisionism in post-Soviet Russia: the idea of inevitable confrontation with the capitalist block went down in history with the Soviet Union and the neoliberal economic transition started in the newly emerged Russian Federation. The confrontation with capitalism was inscribed in the communist ideology and the reevaluation of the Cold War legacy became one of the most prominent topics for revision. The 1990s ushered in many possibilities for communication and collaboration with the West — the attitude toward the West could not be merely framed by hostility or mutual distrust which previously created the Cold War propaganda.

Glasnost revealed dissatisfaction with Soviet education, especially in social sciences, and already in the late 1980s people started refusing to use old textbooks on history. In several years after the collapse of the USSR, a great many revisionist textbooks which harshly criticised the USSR were issued.¹ Nonetheless, after the start of Putin's presidency, this revisionist trend in history education faded and was replaced by the specific version of patriotism which did not allow harsh criticism toward the USSR. The state started actively using history education for nation-building purposes.² What is more, under Putin, Russian patriotism became more hostile to the West and Western values.”

¹ Joseph Zajda, “The Politics of the Re-Writing of History in Russia: School Textbooks and Curriculum Material,” *Education and Society* 18, no. 3 (January 1, 2000): 99–123.

² Joseph Zajda, “The Politics of the New History School Textbooks in the Russian Federation,” in *Globalisation, Ideology and Education Policy Reforms*, ed. Joseph Zajda, Globalisation, Comparative Education and Policy Research (Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 2010), 3–17.

Many political scientists trace the shift in Putin's attitude toward the West back to the Munich Conference in 2007.³ Others claim that the confrontation with the West and Cold War legacy never stopped being a reference point of Russian geopolitical thinking.⁴ Researchers started devoting more attention to the role of Cold War imagery in Russian foreign policy after the annexation of Crimea in 2014.⁵ Nowadays, it has become clear that the idea of a confrontation with the West constitutes an important part of Russian nation-building strategy and geopolitical thinking.

History education under Putin has become very sensitive to ideological changes. Researchers explain how Russian patriotic upbringing employed the Soviet victory in World War II, promoted Orthodox religion as the main source of Russian traditional values, and built a positive image of Stalin as a strong leader who made Russia a great power.⁶ Studies focus mostly on strategies for building a positive image of Russia in history textbooks but do not pay much attention to how Russia builds its image through confrontation with other countries and cultures.

³ Roland Freudenstein, "Facing up to the Bear: Confronting Putin's Russia," *European View* 13, no. 2 (December 1, 2014): 225–32;

David E. McNabb, *Vladimir Putin and Russia's Imperial Revival* (New York: Routledge, 2017). Edward Lucas, *The New Cold War: How the Kremlin Menaces Both Russia and the West* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2009).

⁴ Michael Cox, "Learning from History? From Soviet Collapse to the 'New' Cold War," *Cold War History* 14, no. 4 (October 2, 2014): 461–85;

Robert Levgold, "Managing the New Cold War: What Moscow and Washington Can Learn from the Last One," *Foreign Affairs*, 73, no. 4 (2003): 74–84.

⁵ Marvin Kalb, *Imperial Gamble: Putin, Ukraine, and the New Cold War* (Brookings Institution Press, 2015); Marcel H. Van Herpen, *Putin's Wars: The Rise of Russia's New Imperialism* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2015).

⁶ Tsyrlina-Spady, Taryana, and Lovorn, Michael. "Patriotism, History Teaching, and History Textbooks in Russia: What Was Old Is New Again." In *Globalisation, Ideology and Politics of Education Reforms: Globalisation, Comparative Education and Policy Research*, edited by Joseph Zajda, 41–57. Cham: Springer (2015); Joseph Zajda, "The Politics of the New History School Textbooks in the Russian Federation," in *Globalisation, Ideology and Education Policy Reforms*, ed. Joseph Zajda, Globalisation, Comparative Education and Policy Research (Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 2010), 3–17;

Todd H. Nelson, "History as Ideology: The Portrayal of Stalinism and the Great Patriotic War in Contemporary Russian High School Textbooks," *Post-Soviet Affairs* 31, no. 1 (January 2, 2015): 37–65;

Mariya M. Yarlykova and Xunda Yu, "Rethinking War History: The Evolution of Representations of Stalin and His Policies during the Great Patriotic War of 1941–1945 in Soviet and Russian History Textbooks," *Studies in East European Thought* 72, no. 2 (July 1, 2020): 161–84.

Nonetheless, anti-Western rhetoric became very prominent in recent years and culminated in a new unified history textbook written after the start of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine. This textbook connects the Cold War with contemporary politics and explains history in terms of the confrontation with the West. Without careful study of previous textbooks, it remains unclear to what extent this book, with its extremely hostile image of the West, fits into the tradition of textbook writing which existed before. Does it continue the line of earlier Russian textbooks or break with it? Only a few studies touch upon the topic of the Cold War in Russian history textbooks dealing with the limited number of books.⁷ Broader research of images of the Cold War in Russian history textbooks of different years would allow us to understand how history textbooks built the image of the West over different years. In this study, I try to create a timeline for these changes and identify key features of the Cold War narratives in different periods.

I show how in the 1990s values of pluralism in education affected textbooks which tried to present more Western-oriented approaches and accommodated critique toward the USSR. My analysis of textbooks shows that even though many textbooks of the 1990s blamed the West for the initiation of the Cold War, their images were different from those introduced in recent years. By the mid-2010s, the state took control over the history curriculum making many steps toward the unification of history narratives and fighting against “history falsifications.” In this period, the tone of voice to describe the role of the USA in the Cold War was changed and new textbooks started depicting the West as the responsible for all confrontation. These books

⁷ Pavel V. Teterin, “Historiographic Analysis of the ‘Cold War’ Theme in Modern Textbooks on the History of Fatherland,” *Bulletin of the Moscow State Regional University (History and Political Science)*, no. 2 (2018): 40–50;

Alexander Khodnev, “Between Radical Shifts and Persistent Uncertainties: The Cold War in Russian History Textbooks,” in *The Cold War in the Classroom: International Perspectives on Textbooks and Memory Practices*, ed. Barbara Christophe, Peter Gautschi, and Robert Thorp, Palgrave Studies in Educational Media (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2019), 51–74.

actively defend the Soviet position in the Cold War, condemn the USA and describe confrontation with the West as a part of contemporary politics.

In this research, I do not differentiate between different actors constituting the West since I analyse the Cold War period, where a split by blocks was logically justified. What is more, textbooks themselves do not differentiate between actors and, in this case, it is justified to consider the collective image of the West.

Besides, my research does not deal directly with political discourse about the West in contemporary Russia. Textbook writing does not merely represent current ideology and should be analysed as a complex process. This process has its logic related to the educational agenda in a given period, the activities of publishers, authors, commissions evaluating textbooks before they enter school, public procurement mechanisms which prioritise one book over another, etc. The history curriculum can hardly keep up with the rapid changes in politics. Writing a new textbook and coordinating it with all authorities takes at least several years, and approving a new programme at the federal level takes even longer. Therefore, textbooks bear the imprint not only of the current position of the state but also of education policies of previous years or even decades.

This study focuses on the logic of textbook writing and institutional dynamics of Russian school history education showing which versions of Cold War confrontation and images of the West were permitted by the state in different periods. In 1997, the Ministry of Education started evaluating textbooks so that only books authorized by the state could be used in schools. Russian history textbooks received great attention from the authorities in the first years of Putin's presidency. This list of permitted books became an instrument of censorship in the following years and allowed for removing history textbooks which did not fit the state's vision of history. Therefore, everything in textbooks was carefully read by censors, and administrators

who considered this narrative appropriate, truthful, or patriotic to present them in secondary school. In this regard, they represent the view on history which was permitted by the state

It is important to stress that the study of textbook narratives cannot provide an exhaustive explanation of how history is perceived by Russian schoolchildren. For instance, a teacher's personality can still play a more important role in presenting the topic or stressing different aspects of it than boring textbook material. What is more, the history curriculum in Russian schools has been overloaded with material which can hardly be studied having 2–4 academic hours per week.

In effect, students can hardly study such vast amounts of information having poor knowledge of history. The Russian Federal Institute of Pedagogical Measurements analyses the results of the Unified National Exam on history every year and concludes that one-third of the students who choose to take the exam do not even know the most important events of the Great Patriotic War.⁸ The knowledge of events in the second half of the 20th century is much worse, and that is still among the students who passed this exam to get university admission, not to mention those who do not take the history exam. But even those who carefully prepare themselves for the exam barely rely on textbooks, using a wide variety of preparatory books for the Unified National Exam. Indeed, it would be easier to prove that Russian schoolchildren do not open the textbook's chapters about the Cold War.

However, this suggestion that indoctrination based on history education might not effectively work does not negate the fact that the state perceives history education and textbooks as an important source of patriotic upbringing. The first chapter of the thesis shows how the state

⁸ Sergei Kravtsov, "More than a Third of Russian Schoolchildren Have a Poor Knowledge of Russian History [Bolee Treti Rossiiskikh Shkolnikov Plokho Znaiut Otechestvenniu Istoriiu]," *TASS*, January 11, 2019, <https://tass.ru/obschestvo/7070620>.

tried to take more control over history education and censor textbooks which were not considered patriotic enough.

What is more, this study assumes that the Cold War is an excellent indicator of the extent to which a textbook allows for an alternative viewpoint and discussion about history. The 1990s witnessed a great many such discussions and textbooks of this period mentioned different opinions on the same event. The value of pluralism in education created textbooks which mentioned alternative positions even if they did not support them. The first attempts to censor textbooks in the first years of Putin's presidency reduced the number of alternative positions available for schoolchildren. In the following decade, Russian authorities initiated a campaign against "history fakes" and "falsifications" which again reduced the number of authorised versions of the past. From 2007 Putin wanted school history textbook to be unified and his dream came true in 2023. In this regard, the Cold War in textbooks can be used not only as an indicator of the attitude toward the West but also as an indicator of the level of pluralism in history education.

The transition from the plural to unified history curriculum accompanied the shift from more positive (or less negative) evaluations of the West in history books to a very hostile image of it. The newest unified conception of history creates such an approach when only one side can be right and only one argument can be correct. This process of transition from pluralism to unification influenced the Cold War in textbooks and they stopped depicting the Western position in the Cold War as justified (or at least reasonable), mentioning American guilt in every episode. In other words, this thesis explores how the educational reforms of the 1990s enabled pro-Western narratives of the Cold War and how more anti-Western narratives accompanied attempts for standardisation and unification of the history curriculum under Putin.

The first chapters outline major shifts in education policy which influenced textbook writing. The following two chapters provide a close reading of textbooks and aim to identify major characteristics of textbooks in a given period and changes in their rhetoric. The second chapter examines the narratives of the Cold War which emerged in the 1990s. The third chapter examines which narratives were present in textbooks of the 2010s: firstly, it analyses textbooks which were created in the 1990s but were used in the following decades with some editions, secondly, it deals with completely new books which have emerged in the mid-2010 and present a new hostile image of the West in the Cold War connecting it with contemporary politics.

CHAPTER 1. THREE DECADES OF REWRITING THE HISTORY CURRICULUM

1.1. Pluralisation of History Education in the Yeltsin Era

Attempts to Reform the Curriculum during Perestroika

Perestroika and *glasnost* brought about a wide public discussion about the need to renovate education in social sciences which yet remained oriented on Marxist ideological principles. Education and work with youth were the main channels of Soviet ideology indoctrination. Education was to be revised and renewed; a prominent part of the revisionism programme constituted history education. *Glasnost* allowed for expressing different opinions on historical events and brought about the publication of previously prohibited historical sources, especially, memoirs with testimonies from the first account. History textbooks tried to accommodate changes in public opinion and the editions of the 1980s included some negative evaluations of political repressions and economic problems. However, these slight changes did not meet public expectations. People demanded a more serious reassessment of history.

In February 1988, the plenum of the Central Committee of the Communist Party agreed upon the need to renew methods of teaching social sciences.⁹ The State Committee in Education initiated an open competition for textbook writers which would foster “individuality,” “critical thinking,” and “values of humanism.” These words were a cliché in the programme which continued the previous state’s line. For instance, it says that the Soviet system has to teach “Soviet young men and women to be zealous bearers of revolutionary ideas and traditions,

⁹ *Papers of the Plenum of the Central Committee of the Communist Party 17-18 February 1988 [Materialy Plenuma Tsentralnogo Komiteta KPSS 17-18 Fevralia 1988 Goda]* (Politizdat, 1988).

people who are eager and capable of defending and carrying out the Party's policy of fully developing the possibilities and advantages of socialism.”¹⁰ Critical thinking was described as “the ability to assess social phenomena from class positions.”¹¹ Humanism should lead to the “class vision of the world, understanding of the connection between universal and class interests.”¹² This version of humanism was built upon unchallenged ideological principles.

Attempts of the state to combine humanism and socialism failed and in the following months of 1988 when teachers and students rejected using Soviet textbooks. During *glasnost*, numerous books, articles, and memoirs criticising repressions and ineffective economy flooded the Soviet media market — “any citizen who opens a newspaper can learn the opposite of what classroom history texts are teaching their children.”¹³ It led to the state when students argued with teachers during classes.

The situation reached its peak in the summer of 1988 when such discussions about the content of textbooks became a part of the exams. Students did not stop debating even on the graduation exams on history. Namely, exam questions were based on the book¹⁴ which was popularly known as “Kukushkin’s junk” (*kukushkinskoe star’e*) in honour of the editor of this textbook.¹⁵

¹⁰ Ibid. 39.

¹¹ Ibid. 41.

¹² Ibid. 42.

¹³ Tezra Bowen, “USSR — A Fresh Breath of Heresy,” *Time Magazine*, June 18, 1988, Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty Research Institute; HU OSA 205-4-20:123/3.; Social Issues: Education: General [1971 - 1990]; Old Code Subject Files; Soviet Red Archives; Records of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute, Vera and Donald Blinken Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest, Hungary.

¹⁴ V. D Esakov, IU. S. Kukushkin, and A. P. Nenarokov, *History of the USSR: The Socialist Era [Istoriia SSSR: Epokha Sotsializma]*, ed. IU. S. Kukushkin, 3rd edition (Moscow: Prosveshchenie, 1988).

¹⁵ Inna Kostiuhenko, “Modernisation of Humanities Education during Perestroika [Modernisatsiia Gumanitarnogo Obrazovaniia v Usloviakh Perestroiki],” *Gosugarstvennoe Upravleie. Elektronnyi Vestnik*, no. 34 (2012): 18.

This discussion led to the cancellation of history graduation exams in Soviet schools in 1988 “because textbooks have been outpaced by media exposures about the country’s past.”¹⁶

The state also promised to issue new textbooks with additions, but the community of pedagogues demanded not slight corrections but a complete revision of the textbook’s conception. Pedagogues refused to use the latest Kukushkin’s book on history issued in 1988.¹⁷

Teachers wrote collective letters and petitions expressing disagreement with history textbooks:

“Current textbooks for the 9th–10th grade hopelessly outdated, the concept of Russian history expressed in them is dogmatic and essentially continues the concept of Stalin’s ‘Short Course.’

We consider inexpedient the promised 1989 reprint of these textbooks ‘with corrections and additions.’”¹⁸ The development of new history books demanded the allocation of financial resources, and the state would be unable to provide them quickly. To resolve this problem, the party initiated an open competition for new history textbooks and “160 teams of authors submitted manuscripts” in 1988.¹⁹ However, the collapse of the USSR happened before new textbooks covering 20th-century history were issued.

Renewing the Curriculum in the 1990s

Rapid economic and political changes in Russia after the collapse of the USSR accompanied the process of restructuring institutions inherited from the Soviet era. The urge to leave Soviet ideology behind, shift to the capitalist economy, and newly emerged opportunities for

¹⁶ “USSR - Soviet History Exams Restored ... But With a Twist,” January 31, 1989, Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty Research Institute; HU OSA 205-4-20:123/3.; Social Issues: Education: General [1971 - 1990]; Old Code Subject Files; Soviet Red Archives; Records of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute, Vera and Donald Blinken Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest, Hungary.

¹⁷ V. D Esakov, IU. S. Kukushkin, and A. P. Nenarokov, *History of the USSR: The Socialist Era [Istoriia SSSR: Epokha Sotsializma]*, ed. IU. S. Kukushkin, 3rd edition (Moscow: Prosveshchenie, 1988).

¹⁸ “What Will Today’s High School Students Who Study the History of the USSR from Old Textbooks Grow up to Be?” (Münich, March 19, 1989), Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty Research Institute; HU OSA 205-4-20:123/3.; Social Issues: Education: General [1971 - 1990]; Old Code Subject Files; Soviet Red Archives; Records of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute, Vera and Donald Blinken Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest, Hungary.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

collaboration with the West after the end of the Cold War marked the first post-Soviet decade in the Russian Federation. In particular, the Soviet education system which previously constituted a crucial part of the patriotic upbringing and ideological indoctrination, was to be revised under the new conditions. Soviet education in humanities and social sciences did not match the new political and economic reality and became the subject of numerous reforms in the Russian Federation. One of the biggest changes in the educational system was the reorientation to Western standards and active work with transnational funds, international organisations, and experts from the West. A new focus on collaboration with the West contrasted with the closeness and anti-Western propaganda embedded in Soviet education. It stimulated a search for new approaches to education which would fit into the international agenda.

Various actors in the newly emerged state supported this pro-Western shift and contributed to the creation of new educational approaches, especially, to teaching the history of the 20th century. The state established a legislative framework which encouraged the reevaluation of history and Russia's place in the global arena. Teachers, scientists, and politicians actively participated in the public debates about how history should be taught nowadays. This discussion split the public into three camps. First, those who followed rigorous critique of the Soviet regime and wanted to completely revise Russian history from the perspective of democratic values and human rights humiliations stressing the faults of the previous authorities. The second group still stuck to the Soviet project did not support Westernisation and wanted Russia to be a great power again. While the first group stressed the negative aspects of Soviet history and tried to present it as a history of aggression, colonialism, repressions, and ineffective social politics, the second one did not accept an active critique of Soviet history looking for a new positive Russian national narrative.

Legislations and media of the late 1990s and early 2000s called the first group “liberal” and the second one “patriotic.”²⁰ Namely, the federal list of textbooks permitted by the Ministry of Education in 1997 mentioned that a textbook should present a coherent vision of history and main events, be it a “liberal” or “civic-patriotic” vision.²¹

There was also a big group consisting of those who wanted to combine new “Western” values with remnants of the Soviet system and invent a new way for Russia which would include democracy and capitalism but at the same time remain patriotic in the evaluation of the Soviet period. Namely, the wind of change of the 1990s demanded the criticism of the Soviet period, especially, the ineffectiveness of the planned economy and repressions. A rigid and one-sided approach to history was associated with Soviet ideology, thus educators praised the plurality of opinions on the most heated topic in history. Even conservative textbooks reproducing Soviet narratives and promoting Russian nationalism should adjust their discourse to this agenda and add some notes about the negative aspects of Soviet policies. This all led to the situation that both “liberal” and “patriotic” approaches to history writing accommodated some criticism of the Soviet era recognising repressions, ineffective economy, and decisions in foreign policy which led to the escalation of the Cold War.

One could not say that all textbooks during that time presented a novel and revisionist vision of history. On the contrary, Soviet narratives were persistent and many books approached their revisionist task superficially. During that period the state and international NGOs actively

²⁰ As an example in this discussion see S. Grishachev, “The Publisher Has Not and Does Not Refuse to Publish Kreder’s Textbooks [Izdatelstvo Ne Otkazyvalos i Ne Otkazyvaetsa Ot Izdaniia Uchebnikov Kredera],” *Pervoe Sentiabria*, 2001, <https://ps.1sept.ru/article.php?ID=200109121>.

²¹ Russia, Ministry of Education. *On Approval of the Federal List of Textbooks and Teaching Aids Recommended by the Ministry of the Russian Federation for the Year 1998–1999*. Order №2184, adopted October 30, 1997, https://lawrussia.ru/bigtexts/law_3112/index.htm.

encouraged writing “liberal” textbooks with alternative positions on history and such textbooks took a prominent place in history teaching.

Flexible Curriculum

The first important regulation of secondary school education in the Russian Federation after the collapse of communism was introduced in 1992. The new law “On Education” declared “universal human values,” “humanism” as well as “freedom and pluralism in education” as a national priority.²² In contrast to the Soviet era with omnipresent governmental control of education, this law encouraged freedom in developing educational approaches and gave institutions the right to develop any curricula they wanted as well as use any textbooks.

The main problem of *perestroika* was that the state still claimed socialism as its official ideology and kept the language of Soviet ideology while trying to add new values of “humanism.” At the end of the 1980s, the state showed its inability to renew the curriculum which provoked public criticism. For this reason, transitional reforms aimed to provide as much freedom as possible as well as proclaimed ideological pluralism. In 1992, the law “On Education” recognised that curricula and textbook choices should remain flexible, variable, and open to different opinions. It allowed for the creation of new textbooks which were critical to communism and Soviet policy.

“Linear” and “Concentric” System

The law of 1992 changed the structure of history teaching in schools from “linear” to “concentric” (in other words, circular). In 1986, the USSR introduced 11-year school education

²² Russia, Ministry of Education. *On Approval of the Basic Curriculum of General Educational Institutions of the Russian Federation*, Federal Law №237, adopted June 7, 1993, <https://normativ.kontur.ru/document?moduleId=1&documentId=26597>.

which should change the previous 10-year system. Such structure allowed pupils to start professional education after 9th grade or continue studying until the 11th grade to get university admission. The law of 1992 approved the 11-year cycle of school education with 9 mandatory years.

For teaching subjects, it meant that the course should be split into two parts: the basic obligatory course of history until the 9th grade and the advanced course in the 10th and 11th grades for students who continue education and want to get university admission. Previously, history was taught in the “linear” manner when 5th and 6th grades started from Ancient and Medieval history and students of the highest grade studied the 20th century. The “linear” system worked well when all school grades were mandatory. After the reform which split education into a mandatory cycle until the 9th grade and 10th – 11th voluntary grades it would create a problem with the curriculum: with the “linear” system students of the 9th grade would not be able to study the most important events of the 20th century.

For this reason, Russia initiated the transition from the “linear” to the “concentric” historical curriculum when the history was studied from the 5th to the 9th grade and then repeated with a more detailed overview during the 10th and 11th grades. The governmental regulations prescribed that the transition would last from 1993 to 1996. It took more years due to the lack of money in the regional budget to order new textbooks for schools. In some regions, schools did not receive new “concentric” textbooks until the very end of the 1990s and it led to the situation that teachers could not use old textbooks but did not receive new ones being forced to teach completely without textbooks for many years. The difficulties with textbook supply were persistent in the Soviet era, the creation of new textbooks in *perestroika* led to the problem that new textbooks very often did not reach their audience from the mid-1980s, and the shift to the “concentric” system in the 1990s worsened the situation further. Russian schools were

challenged by the shift to a “concentric” curriculum which made all previous textbooks useless since they did not match the chronology of the new curriculum but did not allow for supplying new textbooks from 1992 until 1998–1999. This transition was completed by the end of the 1990s when new textbooks presenting different approaches to history were issued and supplied to schools.

During the 90s teachers very often used articles about controversial problems in the history course or declassified documents published in the press as well as books on history which were not intended for secondary school instead of textbooks. This period is commonly known as the time when teachers taught without textbooks.

In 1997 the Ministry of Education started issuing the federal list of recognised textbooks splitting them into two categories: “recommended” and “permitted.”²³ The label “Recommended” was used only for complete textbook series for the “concentric” system, “permitted” meant that a book needed some conceptual development and revision but could still be used. This system gave priority to textbook series for all grades rather than separate books covering a particular period. Regional authorities who ordered books interpreted it such a way that they seldom bought books from the “permitted” list preventing their popularisation. Nevertheless, in 1999 the federal list included almost 200 historical textbooks with several completed textbook series by different publishers and it was possible to choose from different options. In the following years, the categorization of “recommended” and “permitted” books stopped being used. New lists did not include textbooks which only partially complied with the requirements of the Ministry, namely, only “recommended” books became “permitted.”

²³ Russia, Ministry of Education. *On Approval of the Federal List of Textbooks and Teaching Aids Recommended by the Ministry of the Russian Federation for the Year 1998–1999*. Order №2184, adopted October 30, 1997, https://lawrussia.ru/bigtexts/law_3112/index.htm.

History from a Global Perspective

In 1993, the Ministry of Education introduced a transitional version of the minimum requirements for school education called the “Basic Educational Plan.”²⁴ It required teaching social sciences at least 2–4 hours per week depending on the grade²⁵ with the freedom to choose the proportion of different subjects. Social sciences could include such disciplines as Russian history (“history of the Fatherland”), world history, law, political science, economics, sociology, “contemporary civilisation,” “contemporary world,” “global economics and social geography,” and “other disciplines that meet the needs of the region and the school.”²⁶ Practically, the “Basic Educational Plan” included approximate curricula for different school types and recommended teaching history 2 hours per week. Thus, this regulation provided a great degree of freedom for educational institutions that aimed at “ensuring the equivalence of education in the country in the context of its decentralisation and differentiation” stressing the importance of regional and local components in creating curricula.²⁷

History teaching was regulated only by the “Basic Educational Plan” which prescribed only a minimum number of hours devoted to the subject. In 1998, the “Basic Educational Plan” was slightly changed and the previous division between general categories of social sciences and natural sciences disappeared.²⁸ From this period, history (not law, economics or “contemporary

²⁴ Russia, Ministry of Education. *On Approval of the Basic Curriculum of General Educational Institutions of the Russian Federation*, Federal Law №237, adopted June 7, 1993, <https://normativ.kontur.ru/document?moduleId=1&documentId=26597>.

²⁵ Minimum 2 hours per week in 5th-7th grades, 3 hours in the 8th grade, 4 hours in 10th-11th grades.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Russia, Ministry of Education. *On Approval of the Basic Curriculum of General Educational Institutions of the Russian Federation*. Order №322, adopted February 9, 1998, <https://docs.cntd.ru/document/58816004>.

civilisation” as it could be according to the previous document) should be taught at least 2 hours per week.

This law did not regulate the content of disciplines and allowed for the implementation of new experimental subjects in the curriculum. What is more, it suggested the number of experimental subjects which should challenge the narrow nation-centred perspective and allowed students to gain more knowledge about other countries by studying “contemporary civilisation,” “contemporary world” or “global economy.” Especially the first “Basic Educational Plan” of 1993 encouraged shifting the focus from a national perspective to a more global one.²⁹

These suggestions in the “Basic Educational Plan” were consistent with the law “On Education” which defined the mission of educational institutions as the “integration of an individual into national and world culture.”³⁰ The law of 1992 mentioned the fostering of “love to the Motherland” as its value, nonetheless, it was not mentioned among the priorities, and the focus of this law was rather on fostering universal human values, democracy, and a global perspective on education.

Furthermore, in 1993 a research group in the Ministry of Education consisting of scientists and teachers prepared a project on the national standard in teaching history. In the Soviet period, history was split into two courses: “History of the USSR” and “History of Foreign Countries.” This project introduced a new subject, “Russia and the World,” for 10th and 11th grades instead of separate courses on national and global history. It should analyse Russian history in the context of Western historiography and describe the most important events of national history

²⁹ Russia, Ministry of Education. *On Approval of the Basic Curriculum of General Educational Institutions of the Russian Federation*, Federal Law №237, adopted June 7, 1993, <https://normativ.kontur.ru/document?moduleId=1&documentId=26597>.

³⁰ Russia. *On Education*, Federal Law №3266-1, adopted July 10, 1992 https://www.consultant.ru/document/cons_doc_LAW_1888/.

from a global perspective. This project of the national standard did not come into force as obligatory regulation and became an object of harsh criticism for minimising the role of Russia in history. Namely, the subject “Russian and the World” disappeared as an obligatory subject from the drafts of the national standard in the following years (1996, 2002, 2003). Nonetheless, the first standard of historical education came into force only in 2004 and until that time some authors could promote such an approach to textbook writing. Besides, several textbooks following this integrated approach were issued for the highest grades.³¹

Educational reforms of the 1990s created room for building flexible curricula, writing innovative textbooks, criticising Soviet history, and reevaluating national history from a global perspective. The reassessment of the national history and openness for Western historiographical approaches was encouraged by international organisations.

International Organisations in Russian History Education

Amidst the economic crisis in Russia, collaboration with international organisations was a key important factor influencing approaches to the curriculum. During the early 1990s, the Ministry of Education actively cooperated with the Open Society Institute founded by George Soros. Besides, from the mid-1990s Russia consulted with the European Council and European Association of History Educators “EuroClio.”

A significant contribution to the development and publishing of new pedagogical materials was made by the Open Society Institute which initiated the programme for “Renewal of Humanities Education” in 1992. Russian Ministry of Education had no money to start the programme and

³¹ See L. N. Zharova, A. A Kreder, and I. A. Mishina, *Russia and the World in the 20th Century [Rossiia i Mir v 20 Veke]* (TSGO, 2001).

A. A Kreder and N. A. Troitskii, *Russia and the World in the 19th Century [Rossiia i Mir v 19 Veke]*, vol. 1 (TSGO, 2001).

the Open Society's foundation covered all its expenses. This program generously supported the publishing of new books for educational institutions, guided the development of new curricula, sponsored the reeducation of Russian teachers within the international environment as well as established numerous grants for talented scholars and pedagogues. In 1993–1994, the programme allowed for developing and publishing of more than 10 history textbooks as well as about 400 textbooks in humanities and social sciences during the 1990s. Activities of the foundation played an important role in the development of new curricula in social sciences. In 1992–1994 the Open Society Institute had the most active direct collaboration with the Ministry of Education and organised joint commissions for developing new laws. In the second half of the 1990s, its direct collaboration with the Ministry was less active since it did not agree to allocate enough funds for the collaborative programme in the renewal of the curriculum and Soros refused to fund the whole programme from his funds. Furthermore, the activity of Soros in Russia was firstly subjected to explicit criticism. In 1995, the State Duma evaluated accusations against Soros and issued the decision that Soros' contribution to humanitarian education in Russia should be assessed positively. After this process, the Duma even issued an official letter of commendation to Soros.

1998 witnessed a scandal with a textbook on global history whose author Alexander Kreder received a grant from Soros' foundation. Kreder started writing this book in the organisation established by the Russian government to develop a new conception of education in humanities ("Tsentr Gumanitarnoro Obrazovaniia" or "TSGO"). "TSGO" constitutes an interesting example of the collaboration of different actors in the Russian textbook market. It was a think-tank established by the Russian government to develop new approaches to education in humanities. Kreder received funding from Soros' foundation and wrote this book for the governmental think-tank.

His book “Contemporary History. 20th Century”³² was accused for the following reasons: “The book allegedly ignores the role of the USSR in world history and does not honour the memory of soldiers who fell in the Great Patriotic War.”³³ The book was criticised since it did not pay enough attention to the important battles of the Great Patriotic War, e.g. Stalingrad and Kursk, and did not stress the contribution of the Red Army paying more attention to the actions of the allies.

This accusation was very interesting in itself because this book covered the history course on “Global History” which should be taught together with “Russian History.” The Great Patriotic War was supposed to be described in the course on Russian history while this book should add new information from the global perspective which was not covered there. The publisher of this book mentions that critics were mostly members of the Russian Communist Party, and they presented this book to the veterans of the Great Patriotic as a book “diminishing the role of the Red Army in the Great Victory.”³⁴ Veterans wrote letters to the Ministry of Education and the Ministry should answer every time that this book follows national educational standards.³⁵

What is more, this book was prohibited in several Russian regions. In 1998 Voronezhskaiia, Volgogradskaiia, Altaiiskaiia, and Tulskaia Oblast banned this book, in the following years other regions joined this prohibition. Despite this regional ban, this textbook gained popularity. From 1995 to 2001 the circulation of the book reached two million (or two and a half million if considering pirated copies printed by publishers who do not have the rights to the textbook).

³² A. A Kreder, *Contemporary History, XX Century: Textbook for Secondary School [Noveishaia Istoriia, XX Vek: Uchebnik Dlia Osnovnoi Shkoly]* (Moscow: Tsentr Gumanitarnogo Obrazovaniia, 1995).

³³ S. Grishachev, “The Publisher Has Not and Does Not Refuse to Publish Kreder’s Textbooks [Izdatelstvo Ne Otkazyvalos i Ne Otkazyvaetsa Ot Izdaniia Uchebnikov Kredera],” *Pervoe Sentiabria*, 2001, <https://ps.1sept.ru/article.php?ID=200109121>.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

What is more important, the state defended this book following the proclaimed principle of plurality. Kreder's book was excluded from the federal list of permitted textbooks only in 2007 when the list underwent substantiation revision. Before that time this textbook remained authorised by the state and attempts to prohibit it were not successful. As in the case of Soros' accusation, the state evaluated accusations and decided that they were not justified.

This example of Kreder's textbook shows that during the 1990s there was no foreign influence separate from the work of state institutions, on the contrary, authors and collectives could be simultaneously affiliated with international organisations as well as governmental think tanks which participated in the development of new national educational standards. In the following years, this centre developed and issued textbooks with integrated history courses teaching national and global history together (such courses were called "Russia and the World").³⁶ This publisher was criticised for publishing one-sided liberal literature. Nonetheless, the director of the publisher answered in one interview that they also issued a textbook by another historian who stuck to communist ideas and praised the Russian revolutionary movement³⁷; besides, this new textbook was coauthored by Kreder.³⁸ Namely, the publisher answered that they will print both "liberal" and "revolutionary-patriotic" books if they comply with the recent scientific and pedagogical standards.³⁹ This position embodied the principle of ideological plurality which was introduced by the law "On Education". The publisher's books were used from their first publication in 1995 until they were eliminated from the list of permitted books for the 2008–2009 academic year.

³⁶ L. N. Zharova, A. A. Kreder, and I. A. Mishina, *Russia and the World in the 20th Century [Rossiia i Mir v 20 Veke]* (TSGO, 2001).

³⁷ S. Grishachev, "The Publisher Has Not and Does Not Refuse to Publish Kreder's Textbooks [Izdatelstvo Ne Otkazyvalos i Ne Otkazyvaetsa Ot Izdaniia Uchebnikov Kredera]," *Pervoe Sentiabria*, 2001, <https://ps.1sept.ru/article.php?ID=200109121>.

³⁸ A. A. Kreder and N. A. Troitskii, *Russia and the World in the 19th Century [Rossiia i Mir v 19 Veke]*, vol. 1 (TSGO, 2001).

³⁹ S. Grishachev, 2001.

Not only Soros supported textbooks writing in the Russian Federation. From 1996 the Council of Europe supported educational reforms in Russia and contributed to the creation of educational plans and provisional standards. The activity of the Council was focused on the Europeanisation of educational programmes in newly emerged states. It promoted universal human values to prevent nationalism, weaponisation of history, and new dictatorial regimes in the post-Soviet space. The Council of Europe provided training for teachers, organised international conferences to discuss the new approaches to education, and supported the publishing of pedagogical literature.

Its influence ceased after 2004 when the first detailed Russian educational standard came into force. Even though the Council of Europe formally continued collaboration with the Ministry of Education, the focus on universal values and democracy was replaced by patriotism which should be promoted by the textbooks on history according to new legislations.

Another organisation which contributed to the development of Russian historical education was “EuroClio.” It started working in Russia in 1992 and organised many conferences and seminars for schoolteachers. “EuroClio” initiated a big project “Lessons of Clio” which should have resulted in the creation of new school textbooks in different countries which would cover the national history and at the same time correspond to cutting-edge European pedagogical practices and historical research. This project was successful and resulted in the publication of experimental books which were included in the federal list of permitted textbooks in 2000–2001.

To conclude, international organisations influenced the process of textbook development and promoted revisionist approaches to history. This approach immediately faced some resistance from the conservative audience. Nonetheless, during the 1990s and early 2000s novel textbooks

were under state protection. The most exemplary case was Kreder's book which remained permitted by the state despite all inclinations against it.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we can see that the state not only allowed for the creation of a great many revisionist versions of the past but also encouraged their creation, especially in the early and mid-1990s. The new legislation supported the break with the Soviet clichés, freed the curriculum from government control and allowed for using textbooks reevaluating the national history and inscribing it into the broader Western perspective. International organisations such as the Open Society Foundation, Council of Europe, and "EuroClio" contributed to this process and funded activities for Russian history teachers who wanted to renew the curriculum. It had an impact on the whole textbook writing process and new textbooks should present themselves as keeping up to date with the new course of educational politics.

At the same time, this liberalisation of history immediately faced resistance from the conservative audience, as it was in the case of accusations against Soros in 1995 or against Kreder's textbook in 1998. However, these accusations did not lead to the prohibition of new textbooks on the federal level since they were protected by the principle of ideological plurality in the law "On Education."

1.2. Standardisation and Patriotic Values in the 2000s

If the 1990s in Russia were under the flag of pluralism in textbook writing and this principle was supported by the state and international NGOs, the 2000s were under the flag of standardisation. Legislations passed in the 1990s were only transitional and provided much freedom. New legislation should build a coherent curriculum and evaluate newly issued textbooks following pedagogical standards. Effective management of education does not

necessarily mean censorship, patriotism does not necessarily imply the elimination of the pro-Western perspective. Nevertheless, it happened with history in secondary school under the flag of standardisation of the 2000s.

The 2000s were marked by the start of Vladimir Putin's presidency. The change of the regime immediately affected secondary school education and the primacy of universal human values in education was replaced by the primacy of patriotic upbringing.

This sub-chapter examines how previous focus on revisionism and modernisation of history teaching following Western standards became incompatible with new patriotic values and led to the slow elimination of pro-Western narratives. The chapter stresses that this process was slow and not even, which allowed pro-Western textbooks to have permission from the state for a relatively long time.

Censoring Textbooks

In August 2001, the government devoted a meeting to discuss the problem of history textbooks covering recent history. Then Prime Minister Kasyanov criticised the historical textbooks issued by the two main publishers in the field of education, namely, "Drofa" and "Prosveshchenie." His main points were that these textbooks used outdated Marxist historiography, did not cover the formation of the Russian Federation during the previous decade and did not reflect the democratic values of the current Russian society.⁴⁰ Interestingly, the impulse to establish control over history textbooks first appeared in a seemingly democratic context.

⁴⁰ "Kasianov Criticised A Textbook on Contemporary History [Kasianov Raskritikoval Uchebnik Po Noveishei Istorii]," August 30, 2001, <https://lenta.ru/news/2001/08/30/history/>.

What is more, in April 2001, the Minister of Education, following the instructions of Putin, created a new expert group which would examine educational and teaching aids on the history of the 20th and 21st centuries.

The early 2000s were marked by the shift to patriotic values in history education. The requirements for the approval of textbooks by the council created in 1997 directly mentioned that both “liberal” and “civic-patriotic” textbooks should be allowed.⁴¹ The main criterion was not “ideological correctness” but the conceptual and methodological unity of a book. On the contrary, the expert group of 2001 stated that permitted textbooks should encourage “patriotism” and “love to Fatherland.”⁴² Of course, liberalism does not logically contradict patriotism but regarding Russian school history textbooks in the 1990s and 2000s, these terms were used as the opposite.⁴³

This turn to “patriotism” was also depicted in legislations passed in 2001, namely, in “The National Educational Doctrine,” “The Conception of Modernisation of Russian Education until 2010,” and the first governmental programme “Patriotic Upbringing of Russian Citizens.” “The Conception of Modernisation” suggested the creation of the Federal Component of the State Educational Standard for each discipline and began the development of the Unified State Exam. The course for standardisation and growing federal control was taken from the first years of Putin’s presidency.

⁴¹ Russia, Ministry of Education. *On Approval of the Federal List of Textbooks and Teaching Aids Recommended by the Ministry of the Russian Federation for the Year 1998–1999*. Order №2184, adopted October 30, 1997, https://lawrussia.ru/bigtexts/law_3112/index.htm.

⁴² Russia, Ministry of Education. *On Approval of the Federal List of Textbooks and Teaching Aids Recommended by the Ministry of the Russian Federation for the Year 2002–2023*. Order №4229, adopted December 25, 2001, <https://docs.cntd.ru/document/901811040?marker>.

⁴³ For example, see discussion about “liberal” books in S. Grishachev, “The Publisher Has Not and Does Not Refuse to Publish Kreder’s Textbooks [Izdatelstvo Ne Otkazyvalos i Ne Otkazyvaetsa Ot Izdaniia Uchebnikov Kredera],” *Pervoe Sentiabria*, 2001, <https://ps.1sept.ru/article.php?ID=200109121>.

This urge to have proper textbooks led to the passing of a new federal law “On the State Standard of General Education” in 2002.⁴⁴ This new law renewed, refined and slightly Russified the previous Western-oriented standard, namely, by stressing the role of Russian national history in contrast to the law of 1992 which praised global history and universal democratic values.

Furthermore, the new law established more strict rules for the federal list of textbooks. Previously, permitted textbooks could be used in schools as main textbooks even though they did not constitute a full textbook series. According to the law of 2002, “permitted” textbooks became allowed only as supplementary books, while “recommended” should be chosen as the main didactic source. The expert commission reduced the number of books on the list in 2001, but more Western-oriented books, for instance, Kreder’s book, remained on the list.

Furthermore, in 2002, the Open Society Institute faced resistance from the authorities in coordinating the plans for the democratisation of education and stopped major funding projects. It continued minor publishing projects and support of educational initiatives until 2014 but stopped influencing the history curriculum in Russia.

The explicit political censorship of textbooks happened with the book about Russian history of the 20th century by Igor Dolutskii whose publishing was financed by the Open Society Institute. This textbook was first issued in 1993 and underwent 7 reprints. Besides, in 2001 it was “recommended” for secondary school by the Ministry of Education. In 2003 this book drew the attention of authorities due to the negative evaluation of Putin. Namely, describing the 2000s it presented two quotes from Russian political activists who described the current state as “a coup d’etat with the prospect of establishing the authoritarian power of the president”

⁴⁴ Russia, Ministry of Education. *On the Enactment of the State Educational Standard for Secondary Education*. Order №1799, adopted May 16, 2002, <https://docs.cntd.ru/document/901811040?marker>.

and a “police regime.”⁴⁵ Then-Vice President Viktor Bolotov claimed that during the 1990s such a textbook was appropriate because there were still “many adaptations of Soviet textbooks, and a different point of view was needed to leave space for self-determination of schoolchildren. But today the task is different.”⁴⁶ Besides, Putin commented on the situation with history textbooks and stressed that “the authors nowadays go to the other extreme” and ignore the topic of patriotism instead of “fostering pride in students.”⁴⁷ From this period history textbooks became the focal points for authorities which should encourage a sense of national pride and praise rulers in Russian history avoiding excessive criticism

The case of censorship of Dolotskii’s book intensified the discussion about pro-Western textbooks issued with the help of the Open Society Institute which did not align with the new state’s course on consolidation of power and patriotic upbringing. This textbook disappeared from the federal list in 2003 as well as the other textbook “Russian Civilisation and the Origins of Its Crisis” by Igor Ionov which was also sponsored by Soros.⁴⁸ Ionov’s book was prominent for criticising despotism and dictatorship in Russian history which, according to him, led Russian culture to crises.

Already in 2001, most of the members of the commission for evaluating books were changed and they issued new regulations which stressed that textbooks should encourage patriotism and

⁴⁵ I. I. Dolutskii, *Otechestvennaia Istorii. XX Vek: Uchebnik Dlia 10-11 Klassa [National History: 20th Century: Textbook for 10-11th Grade]*, vol. 2, 2 vols. (Moscow: Mnemozina, 2002). P. 254.

⁴⁶ Sedel’nikov, Sergei. “Putin Interfered in the Historical Process [Putin Vmeshalsia v Istoricheskii Process],” *Gazeta.Ru*, November 27, 2003, accessed May 15, 2024. <https://www.gazeta.ru/2003/11/27/putinvmesals.shtml>.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ I. N. Ionov, *Russian Civilisation and the Origins of Its Crisis. 9th Century - the Beginning of the 20th Century. Manual for Student of the 10-11th Grades [Rossiiskaia Tsvilisatsiia i Istoki Ee Krizisa. X Vek - Nachalo XX Veka. Posobie Dlia Uchashchihsia 10-11]* (Moscow: Interpraks, 1994).

“civic engagement” (grazhdanstvennost). In 2003, the first censorship episode happened with Dolutskii’s book, and the state initiated the revision of permitted books.

New Federal Standard

To censor existing textbooks and prevent them from presenting too critical versions of the past the Ministry of Education wanted to implement a new educational standard which should establish the minimum of required topics, certain pedagogical principles, and particular values which a textbook should promote. For instance, according to this logic, there should be no textbooks such as Ionov’s “The Origins of the Crisis of Russian Civilisation,” since it did not provide a positive evaluation of Russian history and stressed the humiliation of human rights by the prominent rulers of Russian Empire and Soviet leaders.

It is important to stress that most of the documents issued by the Ministry of Education before that were only advisory in nature. Namely, different groups of scientists and educators came up with different approaches to teaching history, published their decisions in the press, reacted to the commentaries from the audience, discussed their new doctrines at conferences, etc.

By 2004, the Ministry of Education finally presented the completed version of a new education standard which it tried to approve since the late 1990s but could not agree upon the content. “The Federal Component of the State Educational Standard” described the primary goal of historical education as “fostering patriotism, respect for the history and traditions of our Motherland, human rights and freedoms, and democratic principles of public life.”⁴⁹ Moreover,

⁴⁹ Russia, Ministry of Education. *On the Approval of the Federal Component of State Educational Standards for Primary, Basic and Secondary (Complete) General Education*, Order № 1089, adopted March 5, 2004. <https://docs.cntd.ru/document/901895865>

it presented an 8-page set of topics, periods and events which should be covered throughout the school years.

Furthermore, after passing the new federal standard in 2005 the Ministry of Education reformed the procedure of evaluating textbooks. The first Federal Expert Council was established in 1997 including both historians and schoolteachers. In 2001, the members of the commission were changed by Putin's initiative and in 2005 the members of the commission were replaced again. From this year teachers were excluded from the expert commission, and it became represented only by historians of the Russian Academy of Sciences. For the 2007–2008 year, they issued a list which excluded most of the textbooks written in the 1990s, especially, so-called "Soros' books."

Despite all measures regulating the content of history lessons, the remaining plurality of textbooks (even under state control) did not fulfil the patriotic ideals of politicians. For instance, after the revision in 2005, 13 textbooks covering 20th-century history were permitted (8 on national history, 5 on global). In 2007, Putin first mentioned the idea of creating a new history book which would tell the history according to the state's interests. It was immediately supported by conservative Russian historians who published teacher's guidelines for the 20th century in the series of the major publisher "Prosveshchenie." This book proclaims patriotism as the priority of history education. It suggests that history textbooks should describe "the path of the Soviet Union from its greatest historical triumph to its tragic collapse."⁵⁰ This textbook was negatively evaluated by teachers and historians for its ultra-patriotism and omitting problematic facts of Russian history, such as Soviet, and the publisher did not continue this enterprise.

⁵⁰ A. V. Filippov and A. I. Utkin, *Russian History: Book for a Teacher. 1945-2008. [Istoriia Rissii. Kniga Dlia Uchitelia. 1945-2008]* (Moscow: Prosveshchenie, 2008).

Another important reform of the 2000s was the introduction of the mandatory Unified State Exam. In 2007–2008, it was implemented in several regions and from 2009 it was held on the national level. It suggested passing two mandatory exams in Russian language and math, while other subjects were chosen freely based on the higher education programme for which students wanted to apply. This reform implied a rapid increase in standardisation and, in many cases, the historical discipline started meaning not teaching history but rather preparing students for exam criteria.

To sum up, by the end of the decade the state managed to prohibit textbooks expressing “undesirable” political opinions, changed the members of the expert council which evaluated textbooks, substantially reduced the list of recognised textbooks, set the requirement to the content of historical disciplines and started promoting patriotic values using history education. However, this shift was not rapid, and some radical measures were not supported by the public, for example, the issue of the ultrapatriotic textbook by the main publisher in 2007. Besides, new legislations coupled patriotism and humanism, pride for the Motherland and democratic values mixing the vocabulary of the revisionist approach to the education with etatism and nationalism. It was the first big step of the Russian state toward the unification of history, but it still allowed a certain degree of plurality and eliminated only those textbooks which were written explicitly too critical to the USSR.

Conclusion

During the 2000s, the state was preoccupied with controlling and reducing the plurality inherited from the 1990s. Putin expressed his desire to make textbooks more patriotic and exclude those books which excessively criticised the state. Then-Ministers of Education Kasianov and Fillipov immediately supported this idea and initiated the first attempts of censorship under the flag of standardisation of the curriculum. At the end of the decade, the

state managed to prohibit textbooks expressing undesirable political opinions, twice changed the members of the expert council which evaluated textbooks, substantially reduced the list of recognised textbooks, set the requirement to the content of historical disciplines and started promoting patriotic values through history education. However, this shift was not rapid, and some radical measures were not supported by the public, for example, the issue of the “ultrapatriotic” book on history in 2008. These reforms still allowed a certain degree of plurality and eliminated only those textbooks which included harsh criticism of the state.

1.3. Toward the Unified History Textbook

Unified Standard and “Formal” Textbook Pluralism

The first federal standard for the historical curriculum of 2004 was perceived as a temporary measure and endeavours to specify it emerged already in 2007. Firstly, it was connected with the experience of conducting the Unified National Exam and further codification of requirements and guidelines for it. Secondly, it was fostered by the prioritisation of patriotic upbringing which demanded knowing the history and recognising the past deeds of the Russian nation. The next standard for general school was introduced in 2010 and for high school — in 2012.

A new step in governing the plurality of textbooks was the suggestion to create a unified history textbook. This suggestion was made by Putin in 2013. He criticised the wide range of textbooks in the federal list and insisted that “history textbooks should have a unified concept and official assessment of what happened.”⁵¹

⁵¹ “President: History Textbooks Should Have a Unified Concept [Prezident: Uchebniki Istorii Dolzhny Imet’ Edinuiu Kontseptsiuu],” *Rg.Ru*, April 25, 2013, accessed May 15, 2024. <https://rg.ru/2013/04/25/uchebnik-anons.html>.

The suggestion of Putin did not imply reducing all series to only one. He stated that the idea of the unified textbook should be realised in the form of a general conception which would unify all textbook series. Namely, Putin allowed some visible plurality of textbooks but ordered them to guide their content and structure. This conception should include the unified evaluation and explanation of major events in Russian history which different textbooks would represent. This idea of unifying history education without reducing all textbooks to only one permitted edition characterised educational reforms in Russia of the 2010s.

The development of the requirements for the unified conception was delegated to the Russian Military-Historical Society (“Rossiyskoye Voenno-Istoricheskoye Obshchestvo”). The previous Federal Standard was developed by the Ministry of Education, and the task of developing a new one was given to the organisation with dubious expertise and a controversial status. Russian Military-Historical Society is infamous for inaccuracies, factual mistakes, and strict moralising tone in describing historical events. It organised many pro-regime events and most of its members do not have a degree in history. Besides, from the legal perspective, this institution had no force to develop the curriculum and should be done by the Federal Expert Commission in the Ministry.

The Chairmen of this society Vladimir Medinskii started his career in the Presidential Administration fighting “against falsifications of Russian history.” His first position was in the Presidential Commission on Countering Attempts to Falsify History to the Detriment of Russia's Interests in 2009. Since 2009, Medinskii has become a prominent advocate of Russian traditional values, and he popularised the fight against fakes and falsifications which became an important part of Russian propaganda.⁵²

⁵² “President: Julie Fedor, “‘Historical Falsification’ as a Master Trope in the Official Discourse on History Education in Putin’s Russia,” *Journal of Educational Media, Memory, and Society* 13, no. 1 (March 1, 2021): 107–35.

Despite all these problems, in 2013 the organisation prepared the project of the Historical-Cultural Standard as a part of the minimum requirements in school. In contrast to the 8-page document of 2004, this standard took 50 pages, 25 of which were devoted to the 20th century. It meticulously covered different historical periods suggesting the periodisation, topic choice, difficult questions, important dates, terms, and personalities. This document was the turning point in controlling the historical curriculum. It deprived authors of choosing their framework for describing historical events. However, it was not the complete elimination of plurality from the curriculum — authors still were to some extent free to choose the words for describing a particular period, for instance, they were still potentially able to choose the more or less positive, restrained or critical tone of a voice describing particular events, for instance, to criticise Stalinism and Soviet foreign policy. There was no reason to be very critical since this document implied that there was only one official version of history and that all textbooks should promote it.

This reform met resistance from historians and teachers who signed the petition against the new changes. The petition was signed by more than 50 prominent Russian historians and included the following passage:

“Our society is once again being forced into a single ideological paradigm and ‘historical uniformity.’ No one should be misled by the fact that instead of a ‘single history textbook’ we will be faced with a ‘lineup’ of several ‘single-minded’ textbooks that create the appearance of pluralism. Their appearance will mean for our society another step (and a very big step!) toward the imposition of conservative, bureaucratic-patriotic ideology in contradiction to the Constitution of the Russian Federation and the ‘introduction of single-mindedness’ from above,

toward the strengthening and, most importantly, the preservation of authoritarian rule and the spirit of unfreedom in Russia.”⁵³

Unfortunately, the expression of public disagreement was not able to influence the decisions of the state and the Historical-Cultural Standard came into force in 2014. After that, publishers started editing their textbook series and presented them for approval to the Federal Expert Council. Only three major publishers “Prosveshchenie,” “Drofa,” and “Russkoe Slovo” won the competition, and these new textbooks have been in schools since 2015.

Nonetheless, the list of textbooks has been rewritten many times since that reform. For instance, the series issued by “Drofa” disappeared from the list in 2018 but returned to it in 2019 with two separate series on the basic and advanced levels. In 2019, the list was expanded by the series from the publisher “Ventana-Graf” which belongs to the same holding as “Drofa.” The structure of these textbooks completely relied on the Historical-Cultural Standard, but the amount of text devoted to different events and processes slightly varied from book to book, as well as their evaluations of events varied. For instance, some textbooks allowed some extent of criticism and critical questions about repressions and expansionism in Russian history, while others completely avoided it stressing only positive aspects of these policies or blaming all responsibility for conflicts on political opponents.

In 2020 the Ministry of Education issued more detailed regulations for the historical curriculum. It took 100 pages in contrast to 8 and 50 pages in the previous documents. It included dates, periods, events, and several paragraphs about each period including logical chains between events with their evaluation. Another important change was that the course

⁵³ “Statement to Historians - Authors of School Textbooks [Obrashchenie k Istorikam - Avtoram Shkolnykh Uchebnikov],” *Polit.Ru*, May 22, 2014, <https://polit.ru/articles/arkhiv-proektov/obrashchenie-k-istorikam-avtoram-shkolnykh-uchebnikov-2014-05-22/>.

“Russia and the World” which was previously mandatory for 10-11th grades became optional and the amount of time for teaching Russian history increased. Furthermore, the new programme for teaching history suggested the shift to the “linear” model from the “concentric” one. Before those pupils studies the history of the 10th century twice: in the 9th grade and the 11th. From 2020, students started studying the 20th century in 11th grade from 1945 until recent times including the annexation of Crimea and the territories in Donetsk and Luhansk oblast.

These reforms prepared the ground for the introduction of the unified history textbook which started being developed after the Russian full-scale invasion in 2022. It was supplied to some schools in September 2023. The list of permitted textbooks still allows the usage of previous books in the next years. Regarding the structure, it followed the regulations of the programme of 2020. This textbook series intensifies the praise of the Russian state and the criticism of its internal or external enemies and epitomises the attempts of the state to fight against “history falsifications.”

Conclusion

The 2010s and early 2020s are characterised by the urge to create a unified conception of history. However, the high level of control was first achieved through controlled pluralism after the introduction of the first Historical-Cultural Standard. The Standard was expanded while the federal list of permitted books was substantially reduced. These reforms happened by Putin’s initiative and were guided by Vladimir Medinskii who was in charge of creating the unified vision of history.

In this decade, the state actively worked on the problem of the historical truth implementing unified versions of the past and new textbooks should translate the official position. The censorship of the previous decade happened under the banner of non-compliance with

pedagogical standards and because of the insufficiently positive or insufficiently patriotic image of the past in textbooks. In this decade, the censorship of books determined whether or not they conformed to the official version of history and complied with its truth.

1.4. Writing and Publishing Textbooks over Three Decades

Notes on Publishing and Writing Textbooks in Russia

In the 1990s and early 2000s, 5 main publishers issued textbooks on history. “Prosveshenie” was the successor of the Soviet main publisher. “Mnemoznina” was founded in 1993 to publish textbooks and literature for youth. “Drofa” was founded in 1990 for publishing criminal novels but switched to textbooks in 1994. “Russkoe Slovo” was founded in 1994 to publish textbooks and books for children. “TSGO” was founded in 1995 to publish innovative textbooks in social sciences, initially, the scandalous Kreder’s book. The same publishers except for “TSGO” remain in Russia until recent days.

An important funding source for publishing new books was the programme of Soros “The Renewal of Humanities Education in Russia.” The programme sponsored authors who won the open call and funded their publication. Soros’ foundation established its own publisher, nonetheless, textbooks on history supported by Soros were issued by the other Russian publishers “Mennozina”⁵⁴ and “TSGO.”⁵⁵

A prominent example of how textbook publishers worked in Russia is the publisher “Drofa” which was mostly interested in gaining profit in Russia during the 1990s. It entered the textbook

⁵⁴ I. I. Dolutskii, *Otechestvennaia Istoriia. XX Vek: Uchebnik Dlia 10-11 Klassa [National History: 20th Century: Textbook for 10-11th Grade]*, vol. 2, 2 vols. (Moscow: Mnemoznina, 1997).

⁵⁵ A. A. Kreder, *Contemporary History, XX Century: Textbook for Secondary School [Noveishaia Istoriia, XX Vek: Uchebnik Dlia Osnovnoi Shkoly]* (Moscow: Tsentr gumanitarnogo obrazovaniia, 1995).

market to participate in public procurement and started issuing textbooks which got positive evaluations from the Ministry of Education. One might suppose that the main goal of the publisher was to be included in the list of governmental procurements to gain money. For instance, in 1996 and 1997 key figures in this publishing house were killed and its textbooks were excluded from the procurement list. In the following years, the publisher returned to the list of textbooks ordered by the state and continued intensive collaboration with the state until the present day. The lack of information and sources would not allow us to reconstruct the reasons for these murders in the 1990s, but this case explicitly shows that the mechanisms of public procurement were highly corrupted, and publishers somehow tried to split the market between each other and collaborate with the state. It also meant that they would have no financial motivation to issue very controversial textbooks. For instance, “TSGO” was a small publisher issuing a limited range of books and it managed to issue the highly criticised book of Kreder.

Another case was the publisher “Prosveshchenie” which issued a very prominent full series of textbooks in the 1995s adjusted to the “concentric” programme. The textbook for the 9th grade was written by Alexandr Danilov and Liudmila Kosulina. Danilov is a historian specialising in 20th-century history who took important administrative posts during the 1990s. In 1993, he became a Deputy Chairman of the Scientific and Methodological Council in the Ministry of Education (Nauchno-metodicheskii sovet).⁵⁶ This group was in charge of developing the curriculum and setting up the agenda for reforming school education. In addition, he took over as a Counsellor in the Presidential Administration and the Committee on Education and Science

⁵⁶ “Danilov Alexandr Anatolievich,” *Moscow Pedagogical State University [MPGU]* (blog), accessed May 29, 2024, <https://mpgu.su/scientists/danilov-aleksandr-anatolevich/>.

of the State Duma in 1994. These two posts allowed him to become a co-author of a major textbook series in the 1990s.

His co-author Kosulina does not have a prominent career as an administrator or politician and focused mostly on pedagogical materials in history teaching. Kosulina issued more than 200 books about history teaching, including textbooks and articles about pedagogical methodology.⁵⁷ Although her research focused on the first quarter of the 20th century, in particular, the Socialist Revolutionary Party, she participated in writing textbooks on all historical periods.

The example of this book shows how Russian publishers collaborated with research institutions such as the Russian Academy of Sciences and different pedagogical or historical institutions which contributed to the development of new legislations in the Ministry. What is more, they invited authors who worked in these institutions to ensure the success of their series. Open calls for textbooks happened only in the early 1990s and after that time textbook writers for history 20th century textbooks were already affiliated with the Ministry, Academy of Sciences or publishers. Authorship might be important there to legitimise the textbook for its further approval by the Ministry, for instance, by inviting an author affiliated with the Russian Academy of Science whose members write reviews for the Ministry or with the Russian Military-Historical Society which established standards for the discipline since 2013.

There is no research about Russian publishers but the key players in the industry belong to Russian oligarchs. In the 1990s small publishers also supplied textbooks in humanities, but after the revision of the list of permitted textbooks which happened in 2006–2007, only the

⁵⁷ “Kosulina Liudmila Gennad’evna,” *Moscow Pedagogical State University [MPGU]* (blog), accessed May 29, 2024, <https://mpgu.su/staff/kosulina-lyudmila-gennadevna/>.

biggest players were left in the market. Furthermore, textbook publishers were affiliated with the bigger holdings of publishers who issued not only teaching aids. For instance, Drofa was created by directors of a publishing house which issued criminal novels in the 1990s and 2014 it was unified with one of the biggest Russian publishers “AST.” “AST” initially wanted to buy “Prosveshchenie,” but another Russian media company “Olma Media Group” managed to buy it in 2011. We do not know how Russian publishers split and share the market. I can only suppose that all these publishers are interested in inviting authors who have authority in the Ministry of Education and the Russian Academy of Sciences to ensure that their books will get permission. It creates a situation when it is hard to assess the agency of each publisher and the main actor regulating their work is the Ministry which gives them a mandate to issue books for schools.

What is more, textbooks changed publishers and vice versa depending on the year. The authors of textbooks also very often migrated from one author team to another or appeared on its editorial boards. The regulation of 2001 on the list of recommended and permitted books gave preference to complete series on each subject. From that time only big teams having the support of both publishers and the Ministry could issue new textbooks. In this case, an author of a distinct textbook aligned with a bigger team, and it became unclear which part was written by whom and how the personality of an author influenced the content.

What is more, I analysed two textbook series in section 3.1. and concluded that teams of authors changed but some parts of the text remained the same. In such cases, it was hard to evaluate the influence of the position of a particular person on their textbook. Sometimes reviewers, editors and minor contributors are included in bibliographical data but sometimes we see only one name of an author. Furthermore, the textbook cannot be issued separately from the whole series as well as cannot be chosen separately from the series in public schools. For these

reasons, my study focuses on how textbooks are circulated and which of them get permission from the state. In the 1990s, the role of an author was more prominent when the series of textbooks were not already written. In 2010, history textbooks were reissued numerous times changing co-authors, so it is not possible to identify the authorship of a particular chapter.

All in all, from the mid-2000s textbooks are issued in series by big publishers and should align with the newest regulations to get permission from the Ministry which is the main way to monetise this enterprise. In this situation, the main criterion for textbook writing was this permission to issue textbooks.

The first part of the chapter shows that during the 1990s and mid-2000s, the situation was different. For instance, Kreder's textbook created in 1995 was developed in a governmental think tank, financially supported by Soros, publicly condemned and banned at the regional level in 1997–1998 being at the same time permitted by the state until 2007. What is more, even its publisher "TSGO" issued textbooks with different positions and Kreder co-authored a textbook on 18th-century history with communist historian Troitskii. It was one situation when permitted textbooks represented different positions.

In 2005, the commission evaluating books was changed. By 2007, the most revisionist books were excluded from the list not corresponding with new patriotic values. The biggest publishers which remained in the market were affiliated with the state and were not interested in encouraging critique of the country's past. The introduction of the history standard in 2014 and the shift to a "linear" system demanded substantial revision of textbooks and their adjustment to new regulations. In 2023, the new unified history book was issued on a personal order of Putin to Medinskii to represent the official vision of history.

CHAPTER 2. PLURAL DISCOURSES OF THE 1990S AND 2000S

2.1. Methodological Part

In the following two chapters, I suggest looking at the content and circulations of different textbooks. I regard a book issued by different co-authors in different years as the same book if I find that some parts of the text are identical. I mention details about authors and publishers if these details allow me to connect the creation of a textbook with particular institutional dynamics. For example, the first textbook issued after the collapse of the USSR by the successor of the main Soviet publisher “Prosveshchenie” (Ostrovskii et al.), textbook issued over 25 years by Prosveshchenie (Danilov and Kosulina; Gorinov et. al.), textbook supervised by Vladimir Medinskii, a loyal presidential advisor, etc. It is unclear which author edited each chapter, especially when the board has changed but some parts of the text remain the same. I analyse books as collective texts whose authorship is not crucial for interpreting their narrative.

In the second chapter, the books are represented by their first edition. The comparison of different editions of these textbooks does not show substantial changes. These earliest editions are indicative of the understanding that Cold War narratives which were introduced after the end of the Cold War in the atmosphere of education pluralism encouraged by national legislations.

The third chapter approaches textbooks dynamically. Firstly, it examines different editions of two books which were first issued in 1995 but were used in the next decades. Besides, it analyses the editions of two books which emerged in the second half of the 2010s and examines what new they brought to the description of the Cold War. Moreover, this chapter deals with the newest textbook on Russian history and tries to analyse recent changes in the context of the previous tradition of textbook writing.

The analysis of textbooks includes chapters on foreign policy covering the period from 1945 to 1991. Different books might omit some events or provide very brief descriptions of particular periods. To compare their content, I chose three main topics which every textbook covers and explains. Firstly, it is the question about the origins of the Cold War and its initial stages. In this section, all textbooks frame the Cold War and describe who is guilty or responsible for it.

The second topic is socialism in Eastern Europe. This topic is important to evaluate the criticism of Soviet leaders in textbooks. Some books criticise the establishment of communist regimes and call it “totalitarian,” accusing the USSR of the suppression of democratic forces in Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, etc. Other books mention that new territories in Eastern Europe were important for Soviet security, explain that the USSR had the right to control these territories after the victory in WWII or that the West confronted the USSR, and it defended the socialism and autonomy of these countries. This topic is important to indicate how textbooks evaluate political violence in the socialist block and if they criticise it or not. Besides, the moment of velvet revolutions shows how a textbook explains the end of the Eastern block and presents Russia’s position in the new geopolitical situation.

The last topic is how textbooks evaluate Soviet leaders and policies of their era which allows us to understand what is described as positive or negative, effective or ineffective and what extent of criticism a textbook allows. This topic indicates which actions of Soviet leaders a textbook considers as escalation initiated by the USSR and where it sees the responsibility of the West.

The extent of the criticism of Soviet actions in the Cold War is directly connected to the image of the West. Textbooks with the most hostile image of the West recognise the lowest level of Soviet responsibility for Cold War escalation.

To analyse these topics, I employ the methodology of narrative discourse analysis. This study pays attention to the sequence of presented events, causal links between them, and evaluation of events which a textbook provides. What is more, this study pays attention to events which are omitted or left without evaluation (e.g. a book says that socialism in Eastern Europe was “totalitarian” but does not elaborate which negative consequences it had). Particular attention is given to the register of words which implies on negative or positive evaluation and frames events (e.g. “democratic revolution” in Hungary V. S. “crises,” “turmoil,” and “terror on the streets”).

This paper examines each episode questioning who is depicted as guilty and responsible for it as well as whose actions are “unjustified,” “ineffective,” “unreasonable,” “expansionist,” “aggressive,” or “peace-looking,” “justified,” “ensuring safety,” “democratic,” etc.

This study describes only three actors: the USSR (national interest in general and motivations of different Soviet leaders), the West, and socialist countries. It omits the agency of all other countries involved in the Cold War focusing only on the confrontation with the West. The analysis includes one episode in the “Third World” countries, namely, the Afghan War to examine the evaluation of Brezhnev’s and Gorbachev’s policies.

This study measures pro-Western and anti-Western narratives of textbooks in a simple manner: the more criticism of Western actions it provides, the more anti-Western it can be regarded. However, a textbook can harshly criticise both sides but not being pro-Western supporting more the Soviet position. Nonetheless, I presume that if a textbook equally criticises both sides the narrative of the Cold War becomes balanced. For this reason, an important dimension of this study is the criticism of the USSR. For instance, a textbook might defend Stalin’s position at the beginning of the Cold War but criticise Khrushchev and Brezhnev for escalation and, in general, provide an account of shared responsibility for the Cold War period. By the anti-

Western narrative, I understand versions of the Cold War which blame only the USA in the conflict and do not provide room for shared responsibility of both sides.

This table includes all the books used in the following sections.

Table 1

Circulation of permitted textbooks

Esakov, Kukushkin	1981–1988
Ostrovskii et al.	1992–2006
Dmitriento et al. (1995–2010), Shestakov (2010–2015)	1995–2015
Levandovskii	1997–2015
Dolutskii	1997–2003
Kreder	1995–2006
Danilov, Kosulina (1995–2016), Gorinov et al.	1995–2024
Volobuev et al.	2002–2024
Nikonov, Deviatov	2019–2024
Medinskii	2023–2024

2.2. Transitional Textbooks: Challenging or Following the Soviet Path?

Ostrovskii et al. (1992–2006)

After the Soviet collapse, this book created by a team of four historians was the first textbook for school which covered the second part of the 20th century.⁵⁸ It was issued in 1992 by the main publisher “Prosveshchenie” which remained from the Soviet era. It was excluded from the list of permitted books in 2006 for the academic year 2007–2008. The reason for it was not the matter of political censorship but rather the fact that by this date “Prosveshchenie” had a complete textbook series with other authors.

A) Beginning of the Cold War

It starts the Cold War chapter with the description of the American plans to use atomic weapons against the USSR: “Two months after the end of WWII, the United States began to develop plans to attack the USSR with new weapons of mass destruction [...] In the 1980s, Truman's archives contained sketches of an ultimatum to be presented to the Soviet Union.”⁵⁹ It explains that Soviet policy should “counterbalance” American “nuclear blackmail” with the development of new weapons. The presence of Soviet military forces in Eastern Europe is explained in the following way “it was necessary to create a powerful tank armada in Central Europe [...] so that in the event of a nuclear conflict the surviving tanks could form wedges to break into Western Europe.”⁶⁰

⁵⁸ V. P. Ostrovskii et al., *History of the Fatherland. 1939-1991. Textbook for the 11th Grade [Istoriia Otechestva. 1939-1991. Uchebnik Dlia 11 Klassa Srednei Shkoly]* (Moscow: Prosveshchenie, 1992).

⁵⁹ V. P. Ostrovskii et al., *History of the Fatherland. 1939-1991. Textbook for the 11th Grade [Istoriia Otechestva. 1939-1991. Uchebnik Dlia 11 Klassa Srednei Shkoly]* (Moscow: Prosveshchenie, 1992). 143.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

It also underlines Soviet “peaceful” attempts to initiate “nuclear disarmament” and prevent the creation of military blocks in Europe, which only led to inclinations from the “Western propaganda.”⁶¹ In this regard, this book is very close to the last Soviet book which devotes a lot of attention to Soviet peace initiatives.⁶²

This book shows that the USSR should be military strong and be ready to answer Western aggression (e.g. have tanks in Eastern Europe) as well as resist to anti-Soviet propaganda. This narrative emphasises more that the USSR had to defend itself from aggression from a position of strength not merely organising initiatives for peace in international organisations.

Nonetheless, it mentions that the Cold War created aggressive propaganda from both sides and “Soviet propaganda instilled in people's minds a stereotype of the aggressiveness of Western countries and the impossibility of reaching any agreements with them.”⁶³ By stating it, it admits that the confrontation was not inevitable, and that the West was not always hostile.

B) Socialism in Eastern Europe

This book stresses the importance of the Soviet military presence in Eastern Europe to defend it in the potential scenario of nuclear escalation initiated by the USA. It omits the way how communist regimes emerged in Eastern Europe explaining that “internal processes” led to the establishment of communist rule in Eastern European countries.⁶⁴ What is more, these “internal processes” happened with direct Soviet support. New elites were trained in the USSR, and they started “mechanically” imposing the Soviet experience on their countries to which it was not “organic.” Namely, they initiated industrialisation, collectivisation, “dogmatisation of cultural

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² V. D Esakov, IU. S. Kukushkin, and A. P. Nenarokov, *History of the USSR: The Socialist Era [Istoriia SSSR: Epokha Sotsializma]*, ed. IU. S. Kukushkin, 3rd edition (Moscow: Prosveshchenie, 1988).

⁶³ Ibid. 146.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

life” as well as repressions.⁶⁵ It is interesting how it admits negative aspects of Soviet policy in Eastern Europe accusing not the Soviet leadership but local elites. Additionally, the authors stress that some parts of the population wholeheartedly supported “Sovietisation” due to the Soviet prestige after the victory over fascism in contrast to those people who considered “Sovietisation” as not “organic”.

In 1953, “signs of mass discontent have emerged” in Czechoslovakia, Hungary and GDR. These strikes were caused by “deterioration in living standards” and were suppressed by the army and police to “prevent a general strike.”⁶⁶ In these episodes, the textbook admits that something “negative” happened but does not elaborate on how and why.

It confirms that in the Brezhnev era after two decades of socialism, a crisis began in Eastern Europe because the “Soviet totalitarian model was stopping to work there.”⁶⁷ In 1968, Czechoslovakia started renewing socialism by “rejecting deformed socialism” which followed the “Stalin’s model.”⁶⁸ It stresses that Brezhnev wanted to restore control over this country which started making decisions independently and there was “no security threat” to suppress protests by Soviet tanks. Authors call it an “aggressive action against the sovereign country” and conclude that Brezhnev’s policy led to “spiritual estrangement from the USSR even of those countries that historically had close ties with Russia.”⁶⁹ This episode explicitly claims that Soviet actions were unjustified.

According to it, the main success of Gorbachev’s new political thinking was that he did not intervene in velvet revolutions. Namely, “the confidence in the Soviet leadership was steadily

⁶⁵ Ibid. 147.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid. 225.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid. 227.

declining” while “opposition sentiment of the masses was growing.”⁷⁰ “Anti-totalitarian movements” fighting for “democratic freedoms and human rights” led to the collapse of the party structures. At the end of the chapter about “new political thinking,” it states that some people negatively assessed the fact that the USSR did not intervene in velvet revolutions thinking about Eastern Europe as if it “were a province” of Russia.⁷¹ It mentions that after the collapse of the socialist block, the Soviet economy faced severe economic problems. It concludes that there was no consolidated opinion about these events and the discussion about it was open which “demonstrated the success of *glasnost* policy.”⁷² Here it presents a balanced account of velvet revolutions and positively evaluates the fact that the USSR did not intervene in the socialist countries.

C) Evaluating the Soviet Leadership

This book does not explicitly criticise Stalin’s foreign policy and stresses that the Soviet Union made many “reasonable” suggestions to the USA to lessen confrontation.⁷³ Nonetheless, it mentions that Soviet diplomacy of that period could not “ensure prolific negotiations.”⁷⁴ For instance, Vyshinsky who became the Foreign Minister “was famous for his speeches as a prosecutor in rigged political trials in the 1930s” and gave speeches “dominated by accusations or predictions of the inevitable and imminent collapse of imperialism.”⁷⁵ It claims that after the death of Stalin, “new leadership showed more dynamism in foreign policy.”⁷⁶ It admits that

⁷⁰ Ibid. 260.

⁷¹ Ibid. 261.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid. 146.

⁷⁴ Ibid. 145.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

Soviet policy under Stalin was not ideal and the USSR also escalated confrontation, even though its general strategy was “reasonable.”

Describing the Khrushchev Thaw, it says that “de-Stalinisation” caused “crises in the leadership of communist parties” which showed inconsistencies in the new policy. It does not focus on the crises stressing successes of the Khrushchev era, for instance new treaty with neutral Austria, underlining that the “thaw in foreign relations was real.”⁷⁷ The book underlines that Khrushchev’s reforms allowed the USSR to substantially reduce the number of people in military forces.⁷⁸ The overall image of Khrushchev is extremely peaceful, the textbook even says that “Khrushchev's personality was so hard to link to the threats” that even the shoe-banging incident did not damage his reputation in front of Americans.⁷⁹

Less positive evaluation it gives to Brezhnev but stresses that mutual mistrust did not allow for developing a détente policy. Firstly, “the USSR did not always honour the Helsinki Accords honestly and accurately, which objectively undermined confidence in the USSR and its numerous peace-loving proposals.”⁸⁰ Describing Brezhnev, it says that he was not “well versed in the details of international politics” in contrast to the “broadminded” Foreign Minister Gromyko.⁸¹ But even Gromyko followed “ideologically outdated principles” which influenced the efficiency of decisions in foreign policy. The weakest point of foreign policy was the deterioration of relations with the socialist countries in Eastern Europe” and “their growing ‘spiritual’ distance from Russia.”⁸² Another substantial problem of Brezhnev’s foreign policy was the “ill-conceived” decision to invade Afghanistan.⁸³ Economic problems worsened the

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid. 186.

⁷⁹ Ibid. 188.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid. 224.

⁸² Ibid. 227.

⁸³ Ibid. 228.

relations with Eastern European countries, and it all led to the need for radical political change.⁸⁴

According to the book, “new thinking” of Gorbachev stopped the “vicious circle” when the USSR tried to preserve ineffective structures in socialist countries and did not provide opportunities for improving the situation.⁸⁵ The fact that the Soviet leadership did not suppress the right to self-determination during the velvet revolutions showed that the Soviets respected the norms of international law. The book stresses that nobody could predict the collapse of the socialist block and some people were dissatisfied with it but underlines the positive contribution of “new thinking” which enabled the pluralisation of public discussions.⁸⁶

All in all, this book explains that the West was guilty at the beginning of the conflict but admits that the actions of the Soviet side might worsen the whole situation. It stresses the aspect of mutual propaganda and criticised the Soviet side for it. This account is not ideally revisionist, but it recognises that the Cold War involved the responsibility of both sides and positively evaluates the end of it with the Soviet collapse.

Dmitrienko et al. (1995–2010)

This book was issued by a collective of historians in 1995.⁸⁷ One of the co-authors Vladimir Esakov was the co-author of the controversial Soviet textbooks from the 1980s (“Kukushkin’s junk”).⁸⁸ This book was used for 15 years and was excluded from the list of permitted books in 2010.

⁸⁴ Ibid. 259.

⁸⁵ Ibid. 260.

⁸⁶ Ibid. 263.

⁸⁷ V. P. Dmitrienko, V. D. Esakov, and V. A. Shestakov, *History of the Fatherland. 20th Century. 11th Grade [Istoriia Otechestva. XX Vek. 11 Klass]* (Moscow: Drofa, 1995).

⁸⁸ V. D. Esakov, I. U. S. Kukushkin, and A. P. Nenarokov, *History of the USSR: The Socialist Era [Istoriia SSSR: Epokha Sotsializma]*, ed. I. U. S. Kukushkin, 3rd edition (Moscow: Prosveshchenie, 1988);

A) Beginning of the Cold War

In the beginning of the Cold War chapter, it describes the growing influence of the USSR in Europe and other parts of the world. Then it introduces Churchill's "Iron Curtain speech," calling it "aggression toward Eastern communism" and explains that it meant "a coordinated shift of the USA and UK to a hardline policy toward the USSR."⁸⁹

In a manner close to the textbooks of the 1980s, it describes "peace" initiatives suggested by the USSR, for instance, the UN resolution prohibiting propaganda of war in 1947, Soviet suggestions to prohibit atomic weapons in the late 1940s and the prominent Soviet role in the World Peace Council. The book follows the narrative of the Soviet textbooks of the 1980s which underlined Soviet devotion to peace ideals and meticulously describes all the Soviet peace initiatives to stress that the USSR wanted peace from the very beginning and aggressive actions of the West did not allow it to pursue a "peaceful" ideal. Besides, it explains that the "growing influence of the USSR "has provoked a reaction from the capitalist countries."⁹⁰ Namely, it connects the start of the Cold War with the prestige of the USSR which the USA did not want to recognise.

Such a framework does not leave room for shared responsibility between the two blocks claiming that the USA unleashed this war as well as neglected Soviet initiatives for global peace. It follows the structure of textbooks that emerged in the 1980s and mentions mostly the same facts which were mentioned in the 1980s books. At the same time, it is important to stress

V. D Esakov, IU. S. Kukushkin, and A. P. Nenarokov, *History of the USSR: The Socialist Era [Istoriia SSSR: Epokha Sotsializma]*, ed. IU. S. Kukushkin, 2nd edition (Moscow: Prosveshchenie, 1986);

V. D Esakov, IU. S. Kukushkin, and A. P. Nenarokov, *History of the USSR: The Socialist Era [Istoriia SSSR: Epokha Sotsializma]*, ed. IU. S. Kukushkin (Moscow: Prosveshchenie, 1981).

⁸⁹ V. P. Dmitrienko, V. D Esakov, and V. A. Shestakov, *History of the Fatherland. 20th Century. 11th Grade [Istoriia Otechestva. XX Vek. 11 Klass]* (Moscow: Drofa, 1995). Ibid. 394.

⁹⁰ Ibid. 474.

that they depict the West as open for negotiations in different episodes of the Cold War and did not harshly criticise its politics toward the USSR focusing mostly on the Soviet “successes.”

B) Socialism in Eastern Europe

This book stresses material assistance provided by the USSR to the countries of Eastern Europe, for instance, grain which was given because of drought in 1946–1947, technical equipment, reduced reparations for Romania and Hungary, etc. It admits that countries under Soviet influence tried to follow their own path, but Stalin imposed “the Soviet model of socialism” on them with “bureaucracy” and “the monotonous stamps in the public consciousness” that have done much harm. Soviet troops in these countries helped to create “totalitarian regimes.”⁹¹

Describing the Khrushchev Thaw, it stresses that the Soviet leadership “rhetorically recognised the sovereignty and equality of the socialist countries, but in practice, the USSR acted as a ‘big brother.’”⁹² It omits uprisings in Hungary and Poland in the 1950s paying attention to Soviet successes with the liberation of the “Third World” countries.

Brezhnev’s period is characterised as the policy of “limited sovereignty” and “paternalism” when the USSR “repeatedly resorted to force.”⁹³ The Prague Spring is described as “an attempt to democratic renewal of socialism.” The Communist Party started losing support and power monopoly because it “did not consider country’s national interests and national specificity.”⁹⁴ Criticism of the national Communist Party meant also criticism of the USSR and Brezhnev decided to commit troops to Prague. The book stresses that “there were casualties on both sides,

⁹¹ Ibid. 391–392.

⁹² Ibid. 437.

⁹³ Ibid. 526.

⁹⁴ Ibid. 527.

but the action was without much bloodshed.”⁹⁵ It concludes that after the Prague Spring the Soviet leadership managed to “stabilise the situation in Eastern Europe.” Such an account of the conflict “without much bloodshed” after which the situation was “stabilised” softens criticism of the Soviet side. Nevertheless, it provides a “positive” image of the Prague Spring and admits that Brezhnev did not recognise the Czechoslovak sovereignty using “force” after its “democratic renewal.”

This book does not touch upon this matter in the following periods and its narrative about the Cold War ends with Brezhnev’s *détente*.

The perspective on socialism in Eastern Europe is twofold in this book: on the one side, the USSR imposed its “totalitarian” model not respecting the sovereignty of these countries, on the other side, it financially sponsored them and looked after stability. Such perspective removes most of the responsibility from the USSR but does not eliminate it at all.

C) Evaluating the Soviet Leadership

This book criticises Stalin for imposing one unified model on diverse socialist countries and the creation of “totalitarian regimes” in Eastern Europe.⁹⁶ For instance, it depicts Stalin’s conflict with Tito as an “intervention in Yugoslav domestic policy” and calls it “the biggest fault of Stalin’s foreign policy.”⁹⁷

What is more, it blames the worsening of diplomatic relations with Yugoslavia on Khrushchev, saying that his negative personal character led to the stop of the “thaw” in foreign policy.⁹⁸ It underlines that “sovereignty and equality” in fact meant that the USSR controlled other

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid. 391–392.

⁹⁷ Ibid. 392.

⁹⁸ Ibid. 437.

countries. It also depicts Khrushchev as the initiator of the Cuban Missile Crisis, stressing that it led to the decline of Soviet international prestige and “Cuban shame” also marked the end of Khrushchev’s era.⁹⁹

It describes Brezhnev’s doctrine as a “dead-end”: the conception of “peaceful co-existence” was associated with Khrushchev’s failures and the USSR under Brezhnev shifted to a stricter policy.¹⁰⁰ It criticises “paternalism” and “invoking force” against other socialist countries in the Brezhnev era. It also negatively evaluates Brezhnev’s economic policy in relations with socialist countries which worsened the situation and led to “enormous debts” for both the USSR and Eastern Europe. It explains that due to “failed” economic policy socialist countries started reorienting toward the West. The textbook describes that in this situation the USSR should improve relations with the West and initiated détente.¹⁰¹ Nonetheless, détente did not last for a very long time: “A serious blow to détente was dealt by the Soviet troops in Afghanistan.”¹⁰²

“By the mid-1980s, the failure of the USSR's global foreign policy became obvious,” “the Soviet system could not provide an adequate response to the new round of the arms race” and “new approaches to foreign policy were required.” It stresses that Gorbachev’s new political thinking lessened confrontation and made the USSR more open to the world. What is more, it frames the confrontation with the West as an “outdated” element of Soviet policy which was challenged by new political thinking.

According to this book, the beginning of the Cold War was “aggression” toward the USSR but the following confrontation was complicated by Soviet faults and ineffective policies. This book sometimes softens its criticism of the Soviet leadership, as in the case of the Prague

⁹⁹ Ibid. 477.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid. 525.

¹⁰¹ Ibid. 528.

¹⁰² Ibid. 531.

Spring, but generally provides a lot of criticism of the USSR. This narrative of the Cold War blames Khrushchev and Brezhnev for escalation which deferred the end of the Cold War and positively evaluates Gorbachev. Moreover, such a frame implied that the USA were ready to end this confrontation and was not intrinsically hostile.

Levandovskii (1997–2015)

This book was issued by the main publisher “Prosveshchenie” in 1997.¹⁰³ It was excluded from the list of permitted books a year after the implementation of the new Historical-Cultural Standard. After this reform, all textbooks were revised, and many new books were created.

A) Beginning of the Cold War

This book also presents an aggressive image of the West at the beginning of the Cold War. The author regretfully notes that “the potential for cooperation accumulated during the years of joint struggle against fascism quickly faded with the advent of peace.” It explains that Truman’s Doctrine not merely implied the “containment of communism” but also “weakening and elimination of communism in Russia.”¹⁰⁴ According to the book, “the USA has made no secret of its intentions for world domination.”¹⁰⁵ In contrast to it, Stalin just wanted the West to recognise the Soviet zone of influence in the “countries liberated by the Red Army.”

Besides, the book stresses Soviet “frustration” when “Washington abruptly suspended lend-lease law.”¹⁰⁶ Stalin was “willing to make certain compromises” except for “the most onerous conditions like the complete withdrawal of the Soviet army from Eastern Europe.”¹⁰⁷ What is

¹⁰³ A. A. Levandovskii and IU. A. Shchetinov, *Russia in the 20th Century [Rossiia v XX Veke]* (Moscow: Prosveshchenie, 1997). 260.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. 260–261.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. 261.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid. 262.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

more, the USSR refused from the participation in the Marshall Plan because it would not allow the USSR to preserve its freedom to choose economic policies. Furthermore, “Stalin found an unconventional way to curb the excessive ambitions of the aggressive circles of the Western states by embarking on a large-scale support of the international social movement of supporters of peace.”¹⁰⁸

This narrative explains that this confrontation was caused by American expansionism and the ambition to rule over the world, stressing the importance of Soviet resistance to it for the “global community.” This narrative of the Cold War includes a lot of emotionally charged sentences: “elimination of communism in Russia,” Stalin’s “frustration” with the West, “the most onerous conditions” in negotiations, “excessive ambitions of the aggressive circles,” etc. The actions of the West were depicted as inappropriate and demanded a harsh defence strategy from the Soviet side.

B) Socialism in Eastern Europe

Firstly, Levndovskii calls the requirement to withdraw troops from Eastern Europe “extremely onerous.”¹⁰⁹ His book quotes Khrushchev suggesting that “the USA with its strong economy prevented European economies from revolutionary changes from capitalism to socialism.”¹¹⁰ Thus, the Soviets concentrated their efforts on Eastern Europe and Asia to “strengthen the achievements of socialism.” Other books try to provide some evaluations of the negative sides of socialism and use the word “totalitarianism” to describe it, but this one argues that the USSR had the right to control these territories and omits any negative aspects of this fact.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid. 263

¹⁰⁹ Ibid. 262.

¹¹⁰ Ibid. 264.

According to it, “de-Stalinisation” led to a “crisis in pro-Stalinist ruling circles in Eastern Europe.”¹¹¹ Namely, in 1956, “anti-Soviet demonstrations” started in Hungary. The new government led by Imre Nagy organised “anti-communist armed troops” and killed “supporters of the former communist regime.”¹¹² The former government “asked Soviets to stop the bloodshed” and the USSR “after enlisting the support of the Warsaw Pact countries” send tanks to Hungary.¹¹³ In the same manner, the USSR was ready to use military force “to prevent disorder in Poland” but managed to regulate this conflict “peacefully.” It describes “Prague Spring” in the following manner: it was “disorder” and “instability” in the socialist block which demanded military force to solve the conflict.¹¹⁴ Anti-Soviet uprisings in Eastern Europe are described with “negative” connotations as “crises,” “disorder,” “instability,” and “anti-communist armed troops.” The invasion of the Soviet troops is presented not as the Soviet decision but as the request from these countries to “stabilise” the situation.

Furthermore, this book underlines “instability” which was caused by “new political thinking.” It states that Gorbachev’s policy led to worsening of relations in the socialist block and “the Soviet leadership management adopted a non-interventionist stance.”¹¹⁵ It pays particular attention to the unification of Germany and complains that the leadership was “self-distanced” even though the USSR had “historical and moral reasons as well as reasons based on international law to say a final word about the fate of Germany.”¹¹⁶

¹¹¹ Ibid. 296.

¹¹² Ibid. 297.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid. 324.

¹¹⁵ Ibid. 329

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

Overall, this textbook depicts Eastern Europe as a territory for which the USSR had a “moral right” to govern and describes all anti-Soviet moves as causing “instability” and “insecurity” removing no room for the critique of the USSR.

C) Evaluating the Soviet Leadership

It calls Stalin a “dictator” when it mentions that he had a plan of spreading the influence of the Soviet block on other parts of the world but does not add any negative evaluations of his policy to explain why he was a “dictator.”¹¹⁷ It stresses his “extraordinary” approach to resist Western expansion by supporting international peace movement¹¹⁸ and positively evaluates Soviet help to national liberation movements all over the world.¹¹⁹

In Khrushchev’s period it mentions the rise of “anti-totalitarian” forces which led to “the crises in pro-Stalinist ruling elites in Eastern Europe.”¹²⁰ It also states that the harsh critique of Stalinism became a problem in relations with Albania and China¹²¹ and led to uprisings in Czechoslovakia.¹²² In this regard, Khrushchev’s Thaw is presented as a policy of coping with instability created by de-Stalinisation.

Brezhnev’s détente is depicted as rather impossible to be fully fulfilled since the West was still aggressive toward communism. For instance, the Helsinki Accords become there not the desired by Soviet leadership’s “recognition” of their zone of influence but “a new reason to sophisticatedly criticise the USSR for violations of human rights.”¹²³

¹¹⁷ Ibid. 261.

¹¹⁸ Ibid. 263.

¹¹⁹ Ibid. 295.

¹²⁰ Ibid. 296.

¹²¹ Ibid. 297.

¹²² Ibid. 298.

¹²³ Ibid. 325.

Furthermore, the textbook says that the USSR introduced a “limited military contingent” and “was plunged into a bloody war in Afghanistan” without mentioning that it was Brezhnev’s decision which was not accepted by the elites and the population.¹²⁴

According to it, Gorbachev’s policy was aimed at solving structural problems created by the previous decade: the arms race which the USSR could not afford anymore, big financial aid to communist forces in the “Third World” countries, “hopeless war in Afghanistan,” etc.)¹²⁵ “New thinking” allowed to resolve these problems but this book does not accept velvet revolutions stressing that the USSR had a “moral and historical right to intervene.” What is more, Western partners deceived Gorbachev and “did not provide substantial financial aid to the USSR” which was previously promised.”¹²⁶ Finally, the book stresses that the collapse of the USSR made the USA the only great power which won the Cold War.

Overall, this book depicts the West as an untrustworthy partner, did not accept any Soviet fault in the Cold War and claims the Soviet moral and “historical” rights to control countries in Eastern Europe. What is more, it warns that the Cold War did not end positively and the situation where there is only one great power cannot “ensure global security” which was previously bipolar.

These three textbooks state that the USA was responsible for the initiation of the Cold War confrontation. Nonetheless, the first two accept some negative sides of Stalin’s policy, whether it be Vyshinsky’s skills in negotiations or “totalitarianism” in Eastern Europe. The last book presents such an image when the criticism of the Soviet leadership except for Gorbachev is not possible. He is accused of ending the Cold War under unfavourable terms. If the first two books

¹²⁴ Ibid. 327.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid. 330.

positively evaluated the end of the Cold War as the end of confrontation, the last one implies that it was not the end of “Western” hostility toward the newly emerged Russian Federation.

2.3. Soros Textbooks

Dolutskii (1997–2003)

This book was written with the help of Soros’ grant to its author.¹²⁷ In 2003, the book was accused of criticism toward Putin and constituted the first episode of censorship for Russian history textbooks. This textbook tries to accommodate different perspectives on the same event by quoting documents, public speeches, and opinions of different persons. Besides, it pays great attention to the roles of personalities in history paying much more attention to it than other history textbooks.

A) Beginning of the Cold War

It starts the Cold War chapter with a quote from the memoir of Gromyko, then-Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs.¹²⁸ Gromyko complains that then-Minister of Foreign Affairs Molotov left the room one of the UN meetings after hearing negative reactions to his words. Gromyko stresses his dissatisfaction that Stalin found such diplomatic action of Molotov “amusing.” Then it mentions that the USSR wanted to take control over the Turkish Straits and quotes one Turkish document which says that control of the sea contradicts with “its right for sovereignty, liquidates its security,” and “challenges independence.”¹²⁹ This remark presents criticism of

¹²⁷ I. I. Dolutskii, *Otechestvennaia Istoriia. XX Vek: Uchebnik Dlia 10-11 Klassa [National History: 20th Century: Textbook for 10-11th Grade]*, vol. 2, 2 vols. (Moscow: Mnemozina, 1997).

¹²⁸ I. I. Dolutskii, *Otechestvennaia Istoriia. XX Vek: Uchebnik Dlia 10-11 Klassa [National History: 20th Century: Textbook for 10-11th Grade]*, vol. 2, 2 vols. (Moscow: Mnemozina, 1997). 160.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

Soviet foreign policy for “unprofessional” behaviour during negotiations and for suppressing the sovereignty of Turkey.

Then it begins the explanation of the Cold War phenomenon. It starts with a question and suggests thinking about the following statement: “It is true that the US and the USSR were required to: [...] to reject of national limitations and the great-power political thinking; be politically flexible and have broad-minded politicians capable of compromise and mutual concessions for the sake of the birth of a universal ‘we’?”¹³⁰

Then it provides more facts to be able to answer it calling Truman “narrow-minded” or “an average man for an average mind” which only accidentally came to power. The book contrasts Churchill to Truman and positively evaluates his “Iron Curtain Speech.” Churchill “expressed admiration and respect for the valiant Russian people, emphasising that Russia does not want a new war.”¹³¹

The authour stresses that, in fact, there was a threat of war and tyranny over the world,” namely, Moscow now controlled Central and Eastern Europe, and the “communist parties in these countries were trying to establish totalitarianism.”¹³² It adds a special section with a nota bene below this paragraph: “NB: No democracy exists in Eastern Europe, and the expansionist tendencies of the USSR know no bounds.” For this reason, the United States “at the height of its power” must take on this “humane role” and “stop the onset of tyranny.”¹³³

¹³⁰ Ibid. 162.

¹³¹ Ibid. 163.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Ibid.

Furthermore, it presents the opinion of Stalin that it was not expansionism but a reasonable and justified desire for security along the Soviet borders and suggests students thinking whether it was “expansionism” or not.

Then it describes that how Kennan’s “Long Telegram” influenced the turn of American foreign policy: only the USA could resist Russia, defend freedom in the world, and, therefore, should take the control over the world. It did not leave it without critique and asks the following question: “What such a formulation was inevitably going to lead to, where the US is in charge of the whole world and US interests are everywhere?”¹³⁴ The author adds that not only an “average man” (Truman), an “amateur historian” (Kennan) but also a “mad” American Minister of Defence (Forrestal) and “pathological hater of the USSR” (Churchill) initiated this campaign against the Soviet Union.¹³⁵

This book criticised the USA more in this episode but confirms that Stalin’s policy was “expansionist” and states (even with *nota bene*) that he tried to establish totalitarianism in Eastern Europe. In fact, this textbook explains what the Western side feared and why it initiated this conflict. However, it adds that not only Stalin’s expansionism was the reason for it but also the anti-Soviet biases of the actors who were in power.

B) Socialism in Eastern Europe

This textbook underlines that Marshall Plan not only aimed at economic help to Europe after the war but also inevitably led to establishing control over politics in those countries who accepted American conditions.¹³⁶ Stalin said that “American credits were unreliable and under the flag of help USA wanted to isolate the USSR.”¹³⁷ For this reason, after “consultation” with

¹³⁴ Ibid. 165.

¹³⁵ Ibid. 166.

¹³⁶ Ibid. 167.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

Stalin all Eastern European countries rejected this plan. What is more, it showed Stalin that there is “no strong unity” between socialist countries and he sent “advisers” to these countries to control political decisions there.¹³⁸ Dolutskii stresses that “Western politicians did not care much about Stalin's actions in his ‘domains’, although they used numerous facts to accuse the Soviet regime of being undemocratic and imposing totalitarianism.”¹³⁹ Furthermore, he claims that Western politicians wanted to use Western Germany as a staging area for blocking “Russian” expansion in Europe.

The fact Soviets created the bomb significantly changed the situation. For example, after Churchill never spoke about nuclear war and changed his strategy to defending British security by preventing a new war. While Truman decided to accelerate the production of bombs and missiles to enforce the “Dropshot” plan which “supposed nuclear war in Eastern Europe with its following occupation.”¹⁴⁰

It highly evaluates Khrushchev’s policy when he started treating other socialist countries “not as Soviet domains but as allies” providing them with autonomy.¹⁴¹ It stresses that the USSR gave “a friendly helping hand” to many countries funding their industry, giving soft loans, and even grant aid. What is more, Khrushchev believed that communists could come to power democratically and “gave up tight control over socialist countries” relying more on the “international prestige of the USSR.”¹⁴²

Describing the Hungarian Revolution in 1956, it states that Imre Nagy and his followers wanted to improve the economy but soon realised that “no reforms would have been possible without

¹³⁸ Ibid. 170.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid. 171.

¹⁴¹ Ibid. 229.

¹⁴² Ibid.

political changes.”¹⁴³ Nagy started very quickly passing new laws, granting amnesty to all 20 thousand political prisoners of Stalinism without examination of who these people were (the book implies that they might be dangerous: “Who were they? Who knows?”). The following passage states that “armed clashes” broke out on the streets and the Soviet troops intervened to stop this “chaos.” Finally, it mentions that Nagy was promised to leave the country safely but was shot and when the UN tried to discuss “the Hungarian issue” the USSR rejected it stating that it was a domestic issue.

This textbook returns to socialist countries only describing velvet revolutions when it stresses that new political thinking allowed to treat these countries as sovereign and do not intervene in their democratic revolutions.¹⁴⁴

Its overview of socialism in Eastern Europe is twofold: it accepts that Soviet policy was against the “sovereignty” in the socialist countries but justifies Soviet actions stressing Soviet financial help to them or calling anti-communist protests “chaos” which should be stopped by the troops.

C) Evaluating the Soviet Leadership

Dolutskii’s book provides a detailed critique of historical personalities and after criticising Truman, Churchill, and Kennan in the chapter about the Cold War it describes Soviet politicians as incompetent. The Soviet side had an “extremely boring” functioneer Molotov in the role of the Minister of Foreign Affairs until 1949 and a “liar-prosecutor” Vyshinskii “infamous worldwide for his involvement in Stalin's repression” who became the Minister after Molotov.¹⁴⁵ These diplomats were “completely loyal to Stalin” and dependent on him and, according to the narrative of this textbook, were too rigid to negotiate compromises which

¹⁴³ Ibid. 234.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid. 334.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid. 166.

international politics needed at that time. At the same time, it positively assesses the role of Gromyko who became the Minister from 1957 to 1985.

It focuses on Khrushchev's disarmament attempts and stresses that it was the USA and not the USSR who did not want to stop the arms race. In Brezhnev's period, it criticises the start of the Afghan War but also blamed failures of détente on the USA which was not ready to stop the confrontation.

Describing Gorbachev's policy, it stresses that the USSR and USA continued mutually blaming each other as well as violating treaties which regulated nuclear weapons.¹⁴⁶ Nonetheless, Gorbachev's new political thinking allowed him to find compromises with the USA and minimise confrontation. About velvet revolutions, it says that "hundreds of thousands of people went to streets" to demonstrate against communist regimes and "attempts to disperse the crowds only made things worse", because "the armies were also supporting the people." Namely, it suggests that there was no other way than not intervening in this process.

What is more, this book presents the opinion of people who believe that Gorbachev "ruined the country," "worsened national security" and that the USSR which previously was a "great power" turned out to be a country with a "wrong past," "bleak present," and "hopeless future."¹⁴⁷ In contrast, Dolutskii describes the opinion of "reformers" who strongly believe that "national security cannot be ensured by huge weaponry but demands radical reforms supporting the economy and improving living conditions of the population."¹⁴⁸ Moreover, the book exemplifies it by the opinion of Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze who says that the

¹⁴⁶ Ibid. 332.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid. 334.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

political structure of Europe collapsed not due to perestroika but due to the will of the people who “were no longer willing to tolerate the violence.”¹⁴⁹

To sum up, this book provides criticism of both sides but tends to criticise the West more. The least criticism it presented in the paragraphs about socialism in Eastern Europe. Nonetheless, it positively evaluates the end of the Cold War and give preference to peace and collaboration with the West without arms race and constant confrontation. It depicts the Cold War not as inevitable process but as a historical period which was created by different factors and personalities which are a thing of the past not of the present.

Kreder (1995–2006)

The creation of this textbook¹⁵⁰ was funded by Soros and institutionally supported by the governmental think tank “TSGO” which was established to renew curricula and textbooks on social sciences. In 1998, it was accused of the not very “patriotic” vision of the WWII and prohibited in some regions. Nonetheless, it remained one of the most popular textbooks on global history over a decade. It was excluded from the list of permitted books only in 2007.

A) Beginning of the Cold War

Regarding the Cold War, he suggests that “the fact that after WWII the superpowers became countries with opposing visions of the world and its ways of development could not but give rise to rivalry between them.”¹⁵¹ It explains that the USA fought first against German “totalitarianism” and then “naturally” switched to the Soviet one. The USSR fought against “the most aggressive imperialist state” in Germany and Japan but after the end of the war its

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ A. A Kreder, *Contemporary History, XX Century: Textbook for Secondary School [Noveishaia Istoriia, XX Vek: Uchebnik Dlia Osnovnoi Shkoly]* (Moscow: Tsentr gumanitarnogo obrazovaniia, 1995).

¹⁵¹ Ibid. 195.

target changed to the USA. For this reason, only the collapse of the USSR led to the end of this ideological confrontation of the Cold War.

This book also stresses that WWII led by authoritarian regimes made democracy “a new universal value” so that even undemocratic countries tried to prove it democracy, implying on ‘people’s democracy” in Eastern Europe and calling them later “totalitarian” regimes under the Soviet hegemony.¹⁵² Regarding the post-war borders, it stresses that the USSR expanded its territory and the military present of the Red Army in Europe created risks for further expansion. Kennan’s Telegram is depicted as a suggestion to contain this expansionism and prevent new Soviet attempts to gain more control. Furthermore, Truman’s Doctrine aimed to “to assist free peoples resisting attempts at enslavement,” in other words, “a conflict between democracy and totalitarianism.”¹⁵³

Kreder summarises that in the Cold War “each side blamed everything on the other” and created “black-and-white thinking.”¹⁵⁴ Namely, in the USA it led to “massive violations of civil rights and freedoms”, while in the USSR to “the strengthening of the totalitarian features of the regime.”¹⁵⁵ In the end of the chapter it stresses the cyclic character of the Cold War that détente followed escalation and vice versa because great powers did not want a new world war but wanted to gain more control.

This book presents the version of shared responsibility of the two superpowers. It explains motivations of both sides and does not claim American motivations as “agressive” or “unjustified.” On the level of wording, it gives slightly more preference to American

¹⁵² Ibid. 197.

¹⁵³ Ibid. 215.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid. 219.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid. 220.

“democratic” motivations than Soviet “totalitarianism.” But the general framework for the Cold War is ideological confrontation where was no “right” side.

B) Socialism in Eastern Europe

This book does not cover the topic of relations with socialist countries in Eastern Europe. This topic is covered in the complementary book by Mishina and Kreder on Russian History. It means that the author team considered this issue as a part of internal policy and national history rather than a part of global history.

C) Evaluating the Soviet Leadership

The first critique of the Soviet leadership considers the Cuban Missile Crises. According to the book, the Soviet leadership perceived the success in building the Berlin Wall without direct confrontation with the West as its strength and for this reason “easily decided” for the next step on Cuba.¹⁵⁶ However, after this crisis, both great powers understood that further confrontation would bring the global war and started negotiating peacefully.¹⁵⁷ It connects the Cuban Missile Crises with successful negotiations about setting limitations for strategic atomic weapons in 1969 and the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty in 1972. However, “the Soviet leadership tended to think very highly of the results of the policy of the 1970s.”¹⁵⁸ Namely, “the newfound sense of security prompted the Soviet leadership to make decisions that caused a new aggravation of international relations.”¹⁵⁹ The start of the war in Afghanistan provoked very negative reactions of the USA and other countries in the world. It stresses that the USA worsened the situation by placing intermediate-range ballistic missile in Europe in 1983. However, Gorbachev’s politics allowed him to improve relations between the USA and the USSR as well as stop the war in

¹⁵⁶ Ibid. 227.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid. 233.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid. 235.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

Afghanistan. Peaceful revolutions in Europe and the collapse of the USSR led to the end of the Cold War,

All in all, this book does not tend to personalise criticism and tries to tell the story of the Cold War as a structural ideological confrontation showing different stages of it which could only end by the end of the Soviet era. It does not depict the West as “expansionist” and “untrustworthy” but explains that inevitable ideological confrontation made the two blocks hostile to each other. It positively evaluates the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the USSR which made the new world order possible without the confrontation of the two camps. The hostility of the West toward the USSR and vice versa is not blamed there but is described more “neutrally” from the structural perspective.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I presented different books written in the 1990s. All the books except for the book by Levandovskii create the overall narrative of the Cold War with shared responsibility for the confrontation. This responsibility might not be equal, for instance, the USA is blamed more for the initiation of the conflict but textbooks accept “faults” and “mistakes” of the Soviet leadership in the following decades of the Cold War. Textbooks try to justify Soviet policy in Eastern Europe but admit that it was “expansionism,” “intervention” in “sovereign states,” and “totalitarianism.”

One cannot say that textbooks (even those supported by Soros) were radically pro-Western. On the contrary, they harshly criticised the West and its aggression toward the USSR. Nonetheless, they admitted that not only the West supported the high level of confrontation but also the USSR. It is more important that they admit Soviet faults and see the end of the Cold War as a positive moment when the confrontation stopped.

There is only one textbook by Levandoovskii which significantly differs. It does not criticise the Soviet leadership and finds in every episode of the Cold War some aggression and expansionism of the West. What is more, it does not celebrate the end of the Cold War and creates the image of the West which might remained hostile and unreliable even after the end of the conflict.

This analysis shows that the main trend in the Cold War narratives was on the mutual responsibility for the whole conflict but with the focus on the Western responsibility in the beginning of it. In fact, the book of Levandovskii is important to show which versions of the past the pluralism of the 1990s accommodates. However, the broader trend was on the reevaluation of history with criticism of Soviet actions.

CHAPTER 3. CONSOLIDATING THE DISCOURSE UNDER PUTIN

3.1 Three Decades of Rewriting the Cold War in Two Books

This part presents the analysis of two textbooks over time to show how censorship worked in textbook writing and how textbooks changed their evaluations of particular events.

Danilov, Kosulina (1995–2016), Gorinov et al. (2016–2023)

This textbook was issued by the main Russian textbook publisher “Prosveshchenie” from 1995 until 2023.¹⁶⁰ One cannot deny that the textbooks of 1995 and 2023 were very different as well as the collective of authors and editors were changed many times. Changes in the textbook’s content were also affected by new regulations and the implementation of historical standards. Nonetheless, the comparison of editions revealed that some parts of the text remained identical even in the latest edition.

The Edition of 1995

A) Beginning of the Cold War

In the chapter about the Cold War, the book stresses the leading role and the international prestige of the USSR as a WWII victor.¹⁶¹ It explains further that “the growth of influence in the world gave rise to Stalin's desire for further territorial claims and the reanimation of the seemingly forgotten idea of world revolution.” It mentions negotiations about the Oder–Neisse

¹⁶⁰ A. A. Danilov and L. G. Kosulina, *Russian History. 20th Century [Istoriia Rossii. XX Vek]* (Moscow: Prosveshchenie, 1995).

¹⁶¹ “The victorious end of the war significantly changed the international position of the Soviet Union, which began to play the role of one of the recognised leaders of the world community” in A. A. Danilov and L. G. Kosulina, *Russian History. 20th Century [Istoriia Rossii. XX Vek]* (Moscow: Prosveshchenie, 1995). Ibid. 192.

line, German reparations, military bases in the Black Sea, and the presence of the Soviet forces in Syria, Libya, and Iran. Nonetheless, it does not elaborate on why pursuing interests in these countries was problematic and was regarded as “expansionism” by the Western countries.

Then it suggests that “concerned about Stalin's growing appetite, the U.S. and Britain began to think seriously about containing ‘Soviet expansion’” and describes the Truman Doctrine. It is important to stress that the textbook always uses “Soviet expansionism” in quotation marks referring to it not as a fact but as a specific opinion of the West on Soviet interests. The textbook adds that the Truman Doctrine also allowed for “nuclear blackmailing of the USSR.” Moreover, the USA approved a potential scenario of attacking “20 Soviet cities with 196 atomic bombs.”¹⁶²

However, the textbook does not completely disqualify the position of the West stressing that the Truman Doctrine should serve “preventing the expansion of the USSR and communist ideology.” The blame for unleashing the Cold War also remains twofold since it stresses that the Soviet leadership perceived it as “the war against the USSR which immediately complicated the already difficult situation in the world.” In this regard, it presents an account of the shared responsibility for the beginning of the conflict even though it does not elaborate much on “Soviet expansionism.”

Furthermore, describing the first Berlin crisis the book confirms that “both sides have been reluctant to take steps in preventing confrontation in Europe.” At the end of the chapter, it concludes that Stalinist policy was too “tough” as well as ineffective, therefore, the period led to “the understanding that no one would benefit from a tough foreign policy, and if it continued, the Cold War could turn into a hot war.”

¹⁶² Ibid. 192.

Moreover, this book presents several questions in this sub-chapter. Firstly, it asks a student to express their opinion on whom we should blame for the outbreak of the Cold War: the West, the USSR or both sides. Secondly, it asks how a student can explain the “growth of Stalinist expansionism” after WWII. Thirdly, it raises the question of how “socialism was built” in Eastern Europe. Even though this chapter tends to blame more responsibility on the USA and justifies dictatorships in Eastern Europe, it still creates a framework for claiming shared responsibility and criticises Stalin for “tough” foreign policy, purges, and “expansionism.”

B) Socialism in Eastern Europe

The next sub-section describes the establishment of communist regimes in Eastern Europe and the “export of the Stalinist model.”¹⁶³ The outcomes of this “export” are presented ambiguously: the textbook admits that Stalin “relied on military force” to set the communist rule in Eastern Europe but underlines “the enormous material assistance” from the USSR which helped the regimes in Eastern Europe. Besides, the book admits that Stalin “dictated politics” and allowed for “no independence” within the block. For instance, Stalin expelled Yugoslavia from the block for “excessive independence.” The authors do not hesitate to mention purges in the socialist camp “with the direct participation of Stalin's ‘advisers’” which led to power people only being “unconditionally loyal to Stalin.” According to the authors, repressions “united” Eastern European countries around the Kremlin. However, it does not evaluate these events or explain why purges to set “unconditionally loyal” people in the socialist governments were not an easily justifiable strategy.

The book devoted particular attention to the countries of the “socialist camp” and their “democratisation attempts” after Stalin’s death.¹⁶⁴ For example, it depicts the Hungarian

¹⁶³ Ibid. 193.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid. 212.

Revolution of 1956 as the democratic critique of previous functionaries. This textbook describes the main logic behind the suppression of the revolution by military troops with detachment putting Moscow's vision of the situation in quotation marks, namely, Moscow saw the causes of the crises ““machinations of Western intelligence services”” and the ““activities of internal enemies.””¹⁶⁵ All in all, the book acknowledges that after the Hungarian Revolution Moscow “tightened the screws.”

Describing the Prague Spring, the textbook takes the side of Dubček calling his programme a “consistent economic reform and comprehensive democratisation of society.”¹⁶⁶ Namely, the deployment of troops was an “aggressive action” which “intensified the split among the countries of socialism.” Besides, it positively evaluates the Solidarity movement in Poland and concludes that the suppression of the resistance led to deep crises within the socialist block. In particular, the book mentions that this crisis became so explicit that “it was no longer possible to attribute its costs to ‘CIA intrigues.’”

It depicts the collapse of the Eastern bloc as the logical step of national-democratic movements. The end of the Cold War created opportunities for international collaboration and economic integration. At the same time, the book contends that the end of the bipolar system created potential instability in the global order and left Russia “in a difficult position, having failed to gain the kind of alliance with Western countries that Gorbachev had hoped for.”¹⁶⁷

C) Evaluating the Soviet Leadership

In the following chapter, it presents “peaceful coexistence” as the main Soviet strategy after the death of Stalin. It underlines the role of Malenkov as the first leader who claimed “the

¹⁶⁵ Ibid. 211.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid. 230.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid. 247.

inadmissibility of global conflicts in the nuclear age.”¹⁶⁸The authors, nonetheless, acknowledge that the “actions of the Soviet leadership were not always in line” with the proclaimed doctrine of “peaceful co-existence.” It outlines that this doctrine remained problematic since there were no mechanisms for controlling the nuclear weapons of the other side. For this reason, “the foreign policy of both the Western powers and the USSR was conducted from a position of strength.” For instance, it underlines that when Khrushchev claimed the reduction of the army size it was not for the sake of “peaceful coexistence” and practically played only a “propagandist role” since the USSR was yet able to use nuclear missiles instead of troops. Furthermore, the chapter criticises Khrushchev’s actions which led to the escalation of the confrontation, namely, the initiation of the Berlin Wall, the series of nuclear tests conducted by the USSR despite negotiations with the USA, and especially the Cuban Missile Crises.

The next sub-chapter about détente begins with the following statement: “By the mid-60s, the international situation remained complex and contradictory for the USSR: the formerly united ‘socialist camp’ was in a state of division due to the ‘anti-Soviet activities’ of the Chinese leadership; relations with the West were again complicated due to the outright aggression of the USA in Vietnam; the USSR’s policy in the countries of the ‘Third World’ did not bring the expected results.”¹⁶⁹ It suggests that the Soviet leadership after achieving the strategic parity “regarded the West’s agreement to negotiate a détente as a sign of its weakness.” On the contrary, it states that the USA perceived détente as a way to undermine the strength of the Soviet regime which built its legitimacy around confrontation.

The chapter depicts the Helsinki Final Act as the climax in the détente negotiations. Then it blames the responsibility for unsuccess of both sides: “The Soviet leadership regarded the

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid. 228.

Helsinki process solely as its victory and tried to consolidate it. They considered its outcome only from the point of view of recognising the borders in Europe [...] The Western countries, on the other hand, believed that the key point was respect for human rights in the USSR and the countries of Eastern Europe, and tried to use it to support anti-totalitarian tendencies in them.”¹⁷⁰ “Following the human rights campaign launched in the West, the USSR began to deploy intermediate-range nuclear missiles on the territory of the GDR and Czechoslovakia.”

It harshly criticises the unleashing of the Afgan calling it Brezhnev’s “ill-conceived decision.”¹⁷¹ It underlines that such “fraternal aid” to the Afghan people cost the Soviet people the loss of thousands of people, severe economic problems, and the loss of authority in the world.

Regarding the “new political thinking,” authors also take a critical stance claiming both its “unprecedented successes and big failures.”¹⁷² Namely, the textbook stresses that Gorbachev’s actions did not correspond with the values of the new course “including attempts to oppose and separate the United States and its allies, and to alienate the Third World countries from the.”. The textbook positively evaluates the fact that the USSR stopped intervening in the affairs of African countries and Middle Eastern Countries which allowed it to de-escalate or stabilise domestic conflicts.¹⁷³

Even though the textbook in some episodes remains very reluctant to criticise the USSR, it recognises the mistakes of the Soviet leadership, their responsibility for the escalation of the Cold War, unsuccessful “proxy wars,” and dictatorship in the socialist block. Furthermore, it differentiates from the episodes when the USA triggered the escalation and when the Soviet

¹⁷⁰ Ibid. 229.

¹⁷¹ Ibid. 229.

¹⁷² Ibid. 245.

¹⁷³ Ibid. 246.

leadership only blamed problems within the block on the “American intrigues.” What is more, the notion of Soviet expansionism remains undeveloped, especially regarding Stalin’s foreign policy. The textbook does not criticise the decision of Stalin to set up the socialist rule in Eastern Europe, it mostly judges authoritarian methods of suppressing uprisings within the block in the following decades. To sum up, this narrative of the Cold War provides a lot of room for criticism of the Soviet authorities and analysis of events accepting the existence of the Western perspective on them.

Editions of 2003, 2004, and 2012

The textbook of 1995 entered Putin’s era and has been reshaped over time. Nonetheless, these changes were not rapid and show that critique toward the USSR faded slowly. By 2003, this textbook was reissued 10 times with no changes in the content of the Cold War chapters. Following the decrease in the number of permitted textbooks and the shift toward “patriotic values” in 2001–2002 we could expect some changes in the tone of voice in the textbook. Namely, in 2003 the textbook was slightly changed. Another historian of the 20th century, Alexandr Pyzhikov who became the Deputy Minister in the Ministry of Education in 2003 joined Danilov and Kosulina.

The first explicit change in the 2003 edition is the title of the Cold War sub-chapter for 1945–1953. Stalin’s foreign policy is no longer “tough”¹⁷⁴ and well as Stalin’s “desire for further territorial claims”¹⁷⁵ turns out to be a “desire for further strengthening the Soviet Union’s position in the world.”¹⁷⁶ What is more, the new edition does not mention that the Truman’s

¹⁷⁴ A. A. Danilov, L. G. Kosulina, and A. V. Pyzhikov, *Russian History. 20th Century - The Beginning of the 21st Century [Istoriia Rossii. XX Vek - Nachalo XXI Veka]* (Moscow: Prosveshchenie, 2003).

¹⁷⁵ A. A. Danilov and L. G. Kosulina, *Russian History. 20th Century [Istoriia Rossii. XX Vek]* (Moscow: Prosveshchenie, 1995). 192

¹⁷⁶ A. A. Danilov, L. G. Kosulina, and A. V. Pyzhikov, *Russian History. 20th Century - The Beginning of the 21st Century [Istoriia Rossii. XX Vek - Nachalo XXI Veka]* (Moscow: Prosveshchenie, 2003). 153.

Doctrine was triggered by “concerns about Stalin's growing appetite.”¹⁷⁷ If the previous edition stresses that the Soviet reaction to this policy “complicated the already difficult situation in the world,” this edition blames the escalation completely on the Western side.

The “obedience” of new socialist regimes in Eastern Europe is explained now not by the deployment of Soviet troops but by “the strength of the USSR.”¹⁷⁸ Regarding the protests in Hungary and Poland in the 1950s, it only suggests that these events were evaluated negatively by Moscow. The Prague Spring was previously presented as “a programme for the renewal of socialism without attacking its foundations.” with a detailed evaluation of its positive suggestions. The new edition only states that “there was growing anxiety in Moscow about the ‘fate of socialism’” and “attempts to democratise society ended with the introduction of troops into Czechoslovakia.”¹⁷⁹ Furthermore, it rejects calling this action “aggressive” in contrast to the previous editions.

Then the book continues criticising Khrushchev and Brezhnev with the same language and still allows for criticism of the Soviet side. Overall, it significantly softens the image of Soviet policy in Eastern European countries and the evaluation of Stalin’s policy but continues criticising Khrushchev, Brezhnev, and Gorbachev.

2003 witnessed the scandal with Dolutskii’s book, and we might expect some changes in the following year. In fact, Pyzhikov disappeared from the edition of 2004 and now it was co-authored with Alexandr Brandt, a historian of the Medieval Ages and Early Modern history. Allegedly, he joined this author collective more like an expert in pedagogy because he was also very active in publishing methodological material for school and university teachers. Besides,

¹⁷⁷ A. A. Danilov and L. G. Kosulina, *Russian History. 20th Century [Istoriia Rossii. XX Vek]* (Moscow: Prosveshchenie, 1995). 192

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*. 155.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.* P. 167.

he held the post of an issuing editor and then a chief editor in the other leading publisher “Drofa.” This episode shows that there was no actual competition between the main publishers’s series in history and the authors of one series might become editors of another series in different years.

The following edition of 2004 has only minor corrections and the main interesting change in the text touches the description of the detente in the 1970s when the USSR and allied countries were not called “totalitarian and authoritarian” as it was previously.¹⁸⁰

By 2006–2007 the most “critical” books did not get the permission of the state. 2007 witnessed the introduction of the Unified National Exam. New policies still did not regulate the exact content of books and many books remained in the “list” from the 1990s. At that time, even the Unified National Exam encouraged “critical thinking” and suggested students answer open questions on the most heated topics in Russian history. For instance, the question “Who was responsible for the beginning of the Cold War: the USA or the USSR?” was included in the exam’s structure until 2018.

The edition of 2012 presents us with some minor editions compared to the version of 2004. If previous editions evaluated the actions of Khrushchev before the Cuba Missile Crises as “ill-conceived” and leading to confrontation, the edition of 2013 only states that he faced threats from the USA to use atomic weapons.¹⁸¹ Another change in this textbook is that it does not describe the Afghan War as “the biggest foreign policy mistake of the Soviet leadership.”¹⁸² Besides, it avoids the previous statement that the war “significantly undermined the authority

¹⁸⁰ A. A. Danilov, L. G. Kosulina, and M. IU. Brandt, *Russian History. 20th Century - The Beginning of the 21st Century [Istoriia Rossii. XX Vek - Nachalo XXI Veka]* (Moscow: Prosveshchenie, 2004). 313.

¹⁸¹ A. A. Danilov, L. G. Kosulina, and M. IU. Brandt, *Russian History. 20th Century - The Beginning of the 21st Century [Istoriia Rossii. XX Vek - Nachalo XXI Veka]* (Moscow: Prosveshchenie, 2012). 279.

¹⁸² A. A. Danilov, L. G. Kosulina, and M. IU. Brandt, *Russian History. 20th Century - The Beginning of the 21st Century [Istoriia Rossii. XX Vek - Nachalo XXI Veka]* (Moscow: Prosveshchenie, 2003). 178.

of the USSR in the world” and only suggests that the West started “using the Afghan War to criticise the USSR.” Nonetheless, the book still acknowledges that the Afghan War was a “severe political mistake”. Besides, it slightly changes the tone of voice in the description of the anti-Soviet uprisings in the socialist countries. For instance, when it describes the Polish Solidarity movement, it concludes that “only the declaration of a state of emergency temporarily stabilised the situation” in 1981.¹⁸³ Now it becomes unclear while the suppression of it was “harsh” and “undemocratic.” All in all, these changes only soften the criticism of Soviet actions in the old narrative without adding anything new to it. The new descriptions and logical chains first appear only in the edition of 2016.

Building the “Great” Image of the USSR in 2016

This textbook was the first book in the “Prosveshchenie” series issued under the guideline of the new “Historical-Cultural Standard.” The author collective for this book slightly changed and Kosulina left the project while two other historians joined it. It included a new editor of the series Anatolii Torkunov, a scholar in the field of foreign relations and the Rector of the Moscow State Institute of International Relations, who closely works with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Since the year Torkunov started editing most of the history textbooks issued by “Prosveshchenie.”

The new textbook should meet the criteria of the new cultural standard which mentions the order of events in a textbook, the main events for each period, as well as briefly describes logical chains between events. However, the document focuses mostly on domestic policy and says almost nothing about the meaning of the Cold War events. It only underlines the Soviet

¹⁸³ A. A. Danilov, L. G. Kosulina, and M. IU. Brandt, *Russian History. 20th Century - The Beginning of the 21st Century [Istoriia Rossii. XX Vek - Nachalo XXI Veka]* (Moscow: Prosveshchenie, 2012).302.

power and prestige after the end of WWII and the advantages of socialism in the competition between the two blocks.¹⁸⁴

Nonetheless, this brief paragraph exemplifies the shift in the narrative of the Cold War. The previous narrative was focused on the confrontation between the two parties and the risks of nuclear war. This narrative tends to stress the successes of the USSR as a great power more than the global security risks. It follows the structure suggested by the new “Historical-Cultural Standard” of 2014 and starts describing the Cold War in the separate chapter “The Place and the Role of the USSR in the Post-War World.” If former textbooks only mentions “the strength of the Soviet army,” the new one depicts the military armoury of the USSR in detail mentioning different types of weapons of the Red Army. Then, it says that “after the war, the Soviet Union controlled large parts of Europe, Northern China, Korea, and Iran.”¹⁸⁵ Previous books mention events in these countries in terms of successful negotiations with the local authorities, this rather implies that the USSR as a powerful victor has the right to control a large part of the world. It also adds new information about “territorial gains,” namely Königsberg, South Sakhalin and the Kuril Islands.

The conflict of interests in the Cold War the book describes explicitly taking the pro-Soviet position. The Soviet leadership only wanted to “consolidate the positions gained from the victorious war” as well as “create security belts from friendly states along their borders.” While

¹⁸⁴ “In the 1950s–1970s, the Soviet Union was at the zenith of its power. Under the influence of the USSR, the socialist system emerged, the CMEA was in operation, and the Warsaw Pact was signed. The country's successes in science and technology [...] should have clearly demonstrated the advantages of socialism in the conditions of competition between the two systems. However, the maintenance of military parity with NATO, assistance to allies in the socialist camp, and fulfilment of social obligations required ever greater resources.” in Russia, Russian Military-Historical Society. *Conception of a New Educational and Methodological Framework for National History*, Act, adopted May 19, 2014. <http://school.historians.ru/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/%D0%98%D1%81%D1%82%D0%BE%D1%80%D0%B8%D0%BA%D0%BE-%D0%BA%D1%83%D0%BB%D1%8C%D1%82%D1%83%D1%80%D0%BD%D1%8B%D0%B9-%D1%81%D1%82%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%B4%D0%B0%D1%80%D1%82.pdf>

¹⁸⁵ M. M. Gorinov, A. A. Danilov, and M. IU. Morukov, *Russian History. 10th Grade [Istoriia Rossii. 10 Klass]*, ed. A. V. Torkunov (Moscow: Prosveshchenie, 2016). 171.

Truman's doctrine meant that "the USA were ready to actively counteract Soviet influence by asserting their hegemony."

In the editions from the 2000s and the early 2010s, it stated that the USSR used "military troops" and "put pressure" to establish the communist regimes "dictating its rules." The new book only says that the "presence of the Red Army and its direct help" allowed to establish the communist rule in many countries. Besides, the authors add that the "fight against Nazism" stimulated the growth of power among the communist parties in Western Countries since "communists constituted an important part of the anti-Nazi resistance" and finally "took power" in 1947–1948.¹⁸⁶ Regarding purges in the socialist block, it only says that Stalin closely monitored the situation and personally authorised the death sentences of past officials. Most of the changes are present in the section about the late 1940s and the following chapters remain unchallenged reproducing the same narrative as in 2012. However, this narrative already does not include much criticism of the Soviet side.

All in all, the textbooks of the 1990s and 2000s present criticism of the Soviet actions, criticise the USSR in many episodes (then only in some), and portray shared responsibility at the start of the conflict and during its course. The book of 2016 includes more positive evaluations of the Soviet authority, prestige, and help to the "Third World" countries and defended Soviet expansionism through the need to ensure security by the "security belt from friendly states along the borders." The role of the USA is not evaluated positively but the main argument against it was that they did not accept the role of the USSR as the "great power" after the war and it led to the inevitable confrontation between the blocks.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid. 172.

The textbook of 2016 builds the narrative by omitting some important explanations and leaving many events without explicit evaluation. It is directly connected to the fact that in many cases there were previous explanations from the 1990s and 2000s versions which stopped sounding “appropriate” later. What also happens with the 2016 version is that it does not set questions for discussion anymore and does not ask, for instance, who is responsible for initiating the Cold War (mentioning the USSR, USA or their “shared responsibility”) or how Stalin set control over Eastern European countries.

The main changes happened in this book in 2016 allowed for building more positive “great power” narrative of the USSR in the Cold War. Nonetheless, this narrative rather implies that the USSR was strong and powerful than criticises the Western aggression. In fact, this edition does not reevaluate the actions of the West in the Cold War.

Dmitrienko et al. (1995–2010), Shestakov (2010–2015)

This textbook was introduced in 2007 after the biggest changes in the list of permitted textbooks. Firstly, Shestakov was a co-author of this book alongside with Dmitrienko and Esakov. Their book firstly issued by “Drofa” in 1995 was present until 2005 in the list of the Ministry of Education. In 2006 this book reappeared in the list in the new edition created by Shestakov, Gorinov, and Viazemskii.¹⁸⁷ Viazemskii was in charge of adapting the book following the newest pedagogical principles (images, links to interactive materials, questions for students after each section, notes with important explanations, dictionary including main terms of the chapter, etc.).

In 2005 and the following years, the textbook kept the structure from the editions of the 1990s. In 2010 it was edited by academician Anatolii Sakharov and the textbook changed its structure.

¹⁸⁷ V. A. Shestakov, M. M. Gorinov, and E. E. Viazemskii, *History of Russia. 20th Century - Beginning of the 21st Century. 9th Grade [Istoriia Rossii. XX Vek - Nachalo 21 Veka. 9 Klass]* (Moscow: Prosveshchenie, 2005).

The section about the role of the USSR in global policy after WWII was completely rewritten as well as the section about the beginning of the Cold War, while later periods remained mostly unchanged. I suggest analysing three episodes in these textbooks which were completely rewritten: the beginning of the Cold War, the Prague Spring, and the Afgan War.

A) Beginning of the Cold War

The previous editions of the textbook presented a more “moderate” account of why the USA should be considered guilty in the conflict. That textbook describes the “Iron Curtain Speech” as “aggression toward Eastern communism” and explains “hard-line” Soviet policy toward the West as a reaction to its aggression.¹⁸⁸ The strategy of this textbook is to present the USSR as a peace-loving country and blame the West for not supporting Soviet peace initiatives.”¹⁸⁹ It explains why the USSR had to defend itself but does not present the USA as intrinsically hostile only stressing their reluctance for peace initiatives. In the same manner as Danilov’s book, it more defends the USSR and tries to create a positive image of it than condemns the Western countries.

The new edition has a completely different strategy and more aggressive rhetoric toward the West. Firstly, it suggests that “the origins of the confrontation between the two systems date back to the creation of the Bolshevik state, which proclaimed a course of ‘world revolution.’”¹⁹⁰ Besides, it remarks that “there is no coincidence that the USSR and the US did not have diplomatic relations until 1934” underlining the incompatibility of the two systems and their mutual hostility.

¹⁸⁸ V. P. Dmitrienko, V. D. Esakov, and V. A. Shestakov, *History of the Fatherland. 20th Century. 11th Grade [Istoriia Otechestva. XX Vek. 11 Klass]* (Moscow: Drofa, 1995). 394

¹⁸⁹ Ibid. 474.

¹⁹⁰ V. A. Shestakov, *History of Russia. 20th Century - Beginning of the 21st Century. 11th Grade [Istoriia Rossii. XX Vek - Nachalo 21 Veka. 11 Klass]*, ed. A. N. Sakharov (Moscow: Prosveshchenie, 2012). 245.

It says that the West “feared that Stalin wanted to ‘swallow’ Europe.”¹⁹¹ For example, British leaders expected that “the USSR might attack Turkey, Greece and Norway and so America and Britain” and had a plan to attack the USSR immediately after the end of WWII.¹⁹² For this reason, Stalin also “did not rule out that the Red Army would have to reach Paris.”¹⁹³

Furthermore, it states that the Soviet leadership linked the security of the country with the expansion of territory, namely, “more territory means more security.”¹⁹⁴ It underlines that “Stalin realised how much the USSR had lost after the war” and did not seek a new confrontation with the West, he only wanted to “consolidate territorial gains after the war and his sphere of influence.”¹⁹⁵ What is more, the book blames the American leadership because they hid its atomic developments from the USSR, while sharing it with Britain.

“Iron Curtain Speech” is described as “an ultimatum intended to sow the seeds of discord between the Allies” which provoked “harsh” Soviet reaction to the ultimatum.¹⁹⁶ Finally, the West “embarked on a campaign¹⁹⁷ against communism,” in which it particularly relied on the Marshall Plan.¹⁹⁸

This textbook uses more emotionally charged words, for instance, “aggression,” “hard-line policy,” the West thinks that Stalin wants to “swallow” Europe, “ultimatum,” “campaign/crusade against communism.” Furthermore, it suggests that there was no possibility for “friendship” between the USSR and the USA from the very beginning. It also stresses that America and Britain had developed nuclear weapons and had plans of war with the USSR.

¹⁹¹ Ibid. 246.

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ Ibid. 247.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid. 248.

¹⁹⁷ *Pokhod* in Russian, the closest association to these words in historical context would be religious crusades.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

Moreover, it stresses the importance of Soviet post-war territorial acquisitions for ensuring security.

B) Socialism in Eastern Europe

The former book tries to justify Soviet control over Eastern Europe mentioning huge financial help to them but admits that the USSR imposed its economic model, “monotonous bureaucracy,” and, what is more important, established “totalitarianism”.¹⁹⁹ It also mentions that the USSR only “rhetorically recognised the sovereignty and equality of the socialist countries”²⁰⁰ Besides, it admits that in the Prague Spring revolutionary government “democratically” tried to renew socialism, while the Soviet leaders did not recognise the country’s “national interest and specificity.”²⁰¹ The book tries to minimise the negative effects of Soviet actions and notices that there was not so much “bloodshed” and it led to the “stabilisation” of the situation. As in the case of the narrative about the initial stages of the Cold War, this approach is rather a defence of the USSR when the textbook cannot omit some facts but interprets them in a way so that all Soviet actions were reasonable and justified.

The latter book does not aim to justify the USSR, it creates a narrative that blames the West for everything. Firstly, it does not mention that the new government wanted democracy or renewal of socialism and simply calls it “a socio-political crisis.”²⁰² What is more interesting, it emphasises that “the Soviet leadership viewed it in the context of confrontation with the West.”²⁰³ It explains further that “there was a fear of the loss of Czechoslovakia as a result of

¹⁹⁹ V. P. Dmitrienko, V. D. Esakov, and V. A. Shestakov, *History of the Fatherland. 20th Century. 11th Grade [Istoriia Otechestva. XX Vek. 11 Klass]* (Moscow: Drofa, 1995). 391–392.

²⁰⁰ Ibid. 437.

²⁰¹ Ibid. 527.

²⁰² V. A. Shestakov, *History of Russia. 20th Century - Beginning of the 21st Century. 11th Grade [Istoriia Rossii. XX Vek - Nachalo 21 Veka. 11 Klass]*, ed. A. N. Sakharov (Moscow: Prosveshchenie, 2012). 310.

²⁰³ Ibid.

a possible pro-Western government coming to power.”²⁰⁴ Under these circumstances, “the Warsaw Pact leadership” (stressing that it was a collective decision, not solely Soviet) decided to bring in Soviet troops.²⁰⁵ In contrast, the former book stresses that “paternalism,” “force,” and ineffective economic policy worsened Soviet relations with socialist countries in Europe so they started reorienting toward the West.²⁰⁶ The difference is explicit here: the former book describes problems in relations with Eastern European countries as the Soviet fault, and the latter book depicts it as the confrontation with the West and blames crises on it.

C) Evaluating the Soviet Leadership

Furthermore, the first book criticises Brezhnev’s foreign policy calling it “too strict” and “dead-end”²⁰⁷ when the start of the war in Afghanistan constitutes one of Brezhnev’s biggest failures.²⁰⁸ An interesting anti-Western shift happens in the description of the Afghan War in the second book. It narrates the story of the war in the following way: Afghan leaders turned to the USSR for support, the USSR did not expect it in Afghanistan, but “positively evaluated its communist potential” and saw it as “an opportunity to expand the Soviet zone of influence.” It does not admit that it was a “mistake” of the Soviet command but incorporates here the image of the hostile West which tried to confront the USSR: “This war eventually changed its character and evolved into a war against Soviet intervention.”²⁰⁹ So it explains why the USSR continued this “dead-end” way, namely, because it became not only the matter of Afghan “liberation” or “communisation” but also the battles with the West.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ V. P. Dmitrienko, V. D. Esakov, and V. A. Shestakov, *History of the Fatherland. 20th Century. 11th Grade [Istoriia Otechestva. XX Vek. 11 Klass]* (Moscow: Drofa, 1995). 528.

²⁰⁷ Ibid. 525.

²⁰⁸ Ibid. 531.

²⁰⁹ V. A. Shestakov, *History of Russia. 20th Century - Beginning of the 21st Century. 11th Grade [Istoriia Rossii. XX Vek - Nachalo 21 Veka. 11 Klass]*, ed. A. N. Sakharov (Moscow: Prosveshchenie, 2012). 313.

Conclusion

After the implementation of the Historical-Cultural Standard in 2014, both textbooks examined in this section changed their rhetoric. Danilov's book made the critique of the USSR vague or removed it. The main change in the book of 2016 is the image of the post-war USSR. This book pays attention to building a great image of the USSR.

The second book has a different strategy. Its new version of the Cold War includes more inclinations against the West, and it describes Western responsibility for confrontation in every episode. It also includes more negatively connotated words describing the West.

3.2. Developing the Hostile Image of the West

This sub-section deals with the two textbooks which were developed after the implementation of the "New Historical-Cultural Standard" in 2014.

Volobuev et. al (2016–2024)

The first textbook in this section was written by three co-authors, one of which already issued textbooks from 2002. Oleg Volobuev was a co-author of a textbook for the 11th grade "Russia and the World" presenting national history with some elements of global history.²¹⁰ Due to the shift from "concentric" to "linear" system, this textbook became irrelevant since it was supposed to study the whole history course again in 10th–11th grades. Volobuev joined a collective with two other historians to write a new book for the "linear" curriculum.²¹¹ His first textbook is already very anti-Western and blames more guilt on the USA describing the Cold War.

²¹⁰ O. V. Volobuev, V. A. Klovov, and M. V. Ponomarev, *Russia and the World. 11th Grade [Rossiia i Mir. 11 Klass]* (Moscow: Izdatelskii Dom "Novyi uchebnik," 2002).

²¹¹ O. V. Volobuev, S. P. Karpachev, and P. N. Romanov, *Russian History. From the Beginning of the 20th Century to the Beginning of the 21st Century [Istoriia Rossii. XX Vek - Nachalo 21 Veka]* (Moscow: Drofa, 2012).

Nonetheless, the book of 2016 includes some remarks which are novel in contrast to the narratives of the Cold War which we can find in the 1990s and 2000s. What is more, this book represents the recent discourse of the Cold War in history books, and it is still used in Russian schools. This analysis will include only the most prominent passages of the book which seem novel in contrast to other textbooks of the 2000s and 2010s as they were described in the previous sections.

All textbooks quoted some parts of the “Iron Curtain Speech”, but no one mentioned that Churchill compared Stalin with Hitler as it was done there.²¹² This book refers to the interview with Stalin in the “Pravda” newspaper when he answered that this comparison to Hitler made Churchill a warmonger. Besides, it interprets the Truman Doctrine in the way that it enabled “continuous pressure on the USSR and the possibility of interference in the affairs of other countries.”²¹³ What is more, it “started a network of American bases in foreign territories.”²¹⁴ Such interpretation “disqualifies” the remarks about Soviet expansionism and makes the American position completely unjustified, especially, mentioning this comparison to Hitler. The notion of military bases can be linked to the current Russian discourse against NATO and military bases on Russian borders.

The section about socialism in Eastern Europe does not mention any force and coercion stating only that communist parties came there to power in many countries and that the USSR helped with their “Sovietisation.”²¹⁵ It also says that the USSR “carefully monitored the loyalty of its allies.”²¹⁶ It is important to stress that it does not mention “totalitarianism” which was a

²¹² O. V. Volobuev, S. P. Karpachev, and P. N. Romanov, *Russian History. From the Beginning of the 20th Century to the Beginning of the 21st Century [Istoriia Rossii. XX Vek - Nachalo 21 Veka]* (Moscow: Drofa, 2012), 217.

²¹³ Ibid. 218.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ Ibid. 219.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

common referral point for all textbooks of the 1990s and early 2000s calling Eastern European countries “people’s democracies.” What is more, it provides the most negative evaluation of the Yugoslavian conflict with Stalin calling Yugoslav leaders a “gang of murderers and spies.”²¹⁷

The protest movement in Eastern Europe after Stalin’s death is described as a “controversial reaction to the decisions of the 20th Congress of the Communist Party.”²¹⁸ It blames the revolutionary government in Poland for “mass riots” and “distribution of weapons to the population.”²¹⁹ In the Hungarian case, “an anti-communist revolution began” and “a radical part of the rebels resorted to terrorism.”²²⁰ It “disqualifies” the perspective of socialist countries adding such emotionally charged words as “terrorism,” “mass riots,” “gangs of murders and spies,” etc.

Finally, it adds a remark about Gorbachev’s foreign policy saying that “the concessions made by Gorbachev to the West were not well thought out” and it “harmed the interests of our country.”²²¹ The textbook implied that the West is an unreliable ally and depicts its image in a way that compromises cannot be easily found, and the West deserved a “tough” policy.

Nikonov and Deviatov (2017–2024)

The second book in this section was written from scratch in 2017 to follow the new standard in history and has not left Russian schools until now.²²² In this section, I use the edition of

²¹⁷ Ibid. 220.

²¹⁸ Ibid. 240.

²¹⁹ Ibid. 241.

²²⁰ Ibid.

²²¹ Ibid. 293.

²²² V. A. Nikonov and V. A. Deviatov, *Russian History. From 191 to the Beginning of the 21st Century. 10th Grade [Istoriia Rossii. 1914- Nachalo XXI Veka. 10 Klass]* (Moscow: Russkoe Slovo, 2017).

2019²²³ to represent the changes in the textbook's content after the issue of the new "Historical-Cultural Standard" in 2018.

This book also includes more emotionally charged passages and starts the description of the Cold War with the following words: "The Soviet Victory Generation saved humanity. Everyone on the planet understood that in 1945. Many do not realise it now."²²⁴ What is interesting, is that this book makes an explicit link between past and present politics referring to the Cold War. Then, it concludes that the Cold War started because "the USSR won the war and considered itself entitled to play a significant role in shaping the post-war world" and this "met with fierce resistance from the Western allies."²²⁵

Stalin's politics in Europe is explained so that "Moscow wanted to create independent but not hostile governments."²²⁶ The far more interesting explanation it gives to American motivation: "The experience of two world wars and the shock of Pearl Harbor gave rise to a complex of vulnerability in the US [...] Hence the attitude to maintain combat readiness at a level sufficient to defeat any enemy and to conduct operations as far away from American territory as possible [...] deploying military bases around the world. To justify such a strategy, one thing is missing — the enemy [...] By the spring-summer of 1945, this role increasingly began to be assigned to the USSR."²²⁷ Furthermore, it mentions that Eastern Europe was "allegedly" occupied by the USSR and Marshall's Plan was "servile" to Eastern European countries.²²⁸

²²³ V. A. Nikonov and V. A. Deviatov, *Russian History. From 191 to the Beginning of the 21st Century. 10th Grade [Istoriia Rossii. 1914- Nachalo XXI Veka. 10 Klass]* (Moscow: Russkoe Slovo, 2019).

²²⁴ V. A. Nikonov and V. A. Deviatov, *Russian History. From 191 to the Beginning of the 21st Century. 10th Grade [Istoriia Rossii. 1914- Nachalo XXI Veka. 10 Klass]*, vol. 1, 2 vols. (Moscow: Russkoe Slovo, 2019). 273.

²²⁵ Ibid.

²²⁶ Ibid.

²²⁷ Ibid. 274.

²²⁸ V. A. Nikonov and V. A. Deviatov, *Russian History. From 191 to the Beginning of the 21st Century. 10th Grade [Istoriia Rossii. 1914- Nachalo XXI Veka. 10 Klass]*, vol. 2, 2 vols. (Moscow: Russkoe Slovo, 2019). 17.

The crises in the USSR and allied communist countries which followed “de-Stalinisation” it blamed completely on the West. It claims that “Khrushchev's secret report [on the 20th Congress of the Communist Party], communicated to the world public by the full force of the Western propaganda machine, dealt a powerful blow to the USSR's foreign policy positions.”²²⁹ Because of “Western propaganda” “Polish Communist leader shot himself,” “Albania broke away from the USSR,” and “contradictions with China intensified.”²³⁰

In the Afghan War, the USSR introduced troops to support “the friendly regime” but the West “labelled it as interference in the affairs of an independent state.”²³¹ It mentions that “Brezhnev was worried about the decline of his favourite child — détente” and such wording which is “compassionate” to Brezhnev implies that it was not Brezhnev’s fault but Western one that détente did not continue.

In Gorbachev’s era, this book finds very similar reasons to blame the West. In 1988, Gorbachev started a military drawdown and waited it from the USA but it “did not come true.”²³² Namely, “the behaviour of Western countries and all other states continued, as usual, [...] to be dictated by their ability to exploit the weaknesses of others.”²³³ This remark “as usual” characterises the whole narrative about the West and implies persistent Western aggression and the inevitability of mutual mistrust. The end of the Cold War there does not mean the end of the Cold War logic after it. The textbook implied that it continued as usual and there was nothing to celebrate.

Conclusion

²²⁹ Ibid. 43.

²³⁰ Ibid.

²³¹ Ibid. 80.

²³² Ibid. 101.

²³³ Ibid

The textbooks issued in 2016 and 2017 depict the confrontation with the West as not completed even in the description of its end. What is more, they create some links of the Cold War history and the present (e.g. the USA “always” was interested in building NATO bases in other countries). These textbooks use emotionally charged vocabulary to disqualify the position of the West and connect anti-communist forces in Eastern Europe with Western activities.

3.3. Unified History Textbook: A Break with the Tradition or Its Logical Continuation?

Medinskii (2023–2024)

After the start of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the unified history textbook was introduced.²³⁴ It was issued by “Prosveshchenie” for the academic year 2023–2024. The textbook was written on Putin's personal order to Vladimir Medinskii, a Chairmen of the Russian Military-Historical Society which created the Historical-Cultural Standards in 2013 and 2020. His new book was co-authored by Anatolii Torkunov who was involved in editing the book by Gorinov and Danilov in “Prosveshchenie” series since 2016.

This analysis will include only episodes which present new logical connections or “vocabulary” for describing the Cold War.

This book describes the USA as an untrustworthy ally which started “encouraging anti-Soviet sentiments” during negotiations regarding the Kuril Islands.²³⁵ Then it moves to the explanation of the term “Cold War” and provides several reasons why the USA is guilty of the start of the conflict. For instance, the USA “sought to impose its will on the USSR, which had suffered

²³⁴ V. R. Medinski and A. V. Torkunov, *Russian History. From 1945 to the Beginning of the 21st Century. 11th Grade [Istoriia Rossii. 1945 God - Nachalo XXI Veka. 11 Klass]* (Moscow: Prosveshchenie, 2023).

²³⁵ Ibid. 43–44.

huge losses” and “discredited socialism.”²³⁶At the end of the section, it concludes that “the responsibility of Washington and its allies for initiating the confrontation is clear.”²³⁷

It suggests an interesting explanation for the “Sovietisation” of people’s democracies: “There was nationalisation of the property of former large owners, especially those who had previously supported the fascist regime.”²³⁸

The division of Germany is also explained in a “novel” way: “Allies were in favour of splitting Germany into dozens of states. In essence, they wanted to politically return the Germans to the 19th century. [...] The Soviet Union to the last was in favour of creating a united Germany headed by a neutral democratic government (which was later achieved in Austria, which remains neutral to this day).”²³⁹ The most interesting moment is how it refers to the “neutrality” of Austria connecting the Cold War history with the present day.

It mentions that immediately after the first American visit of Khrushchev the US Congress passed the Law “On Captive Nations”: “It directly linked US strategic interests to the need to break up the USSR into dozens of independent states under the pretext of ‘liberating them from communism’. Russians were declared ‘enslavers’ of all other peoples of the USSR. (Even after the collapse of the USSR, this law was not cancelled, and every year the US celebrates ‘Enslaved Peoples Week’).”²⁴⁰ This passage implies that the Cold War dynamics remain until nowadays.

In the Hungarian Revolution it finds “foreign influence”: “Believing with good reason that the Hungarian crisis was catalysed by the actions of Western intelligence services” the USSR

²³⁶ Ibid. 45.

²³⁷ Ibid.

²³⁸ Ibid. 48/

²³⁹ Ibid. 50.

²⁴⁰ Ibid. 126.

brought troops to Hungary.²⁴¹ In the Prague Spring, “the public debate erupted into an internal crisis, which the West actively contributed to fuelling.”²⁴²

Previous textbooks mention huge losses in the Afghan War but the recent one states that the “Afghan Brotherhood” of Soviet soldiers was “a unique phenomenon of valour, mutual support and bravery.”²⁴³

The USA was the first to violate the Helsinki Accords by “interfering in internal affairs of other states”: “It became immediately clear that the US and Western countries were not going to respect the sovereign rights of other states at all.”²⁴⁴

It radically criticises the “new thinking” of Gorbachev: “This had catastrophic consequences for the geopolitical position of the USSR. There was a sharp weakening of our country's influence, loss of positions acquired by the USSR as a result of the Second World War.”²⁴⁵

According to this book, the “troop withdrawal” from the socialist countries was an “ill-conceived decision” which “activated nationalist resentments.” The West took advantage of this and supported velvet revolutions. It summarises that after velvet revolutions and the Soviet collapse “the West was not going to support the Russian Federation at all, let alone take into account its interests in the sphere of international security.”²⁴⁶

This textbook follows the trends which already emerged in the previous books and its main innovation is that it more frequently refers to the present day describing the Cold War.

²⁴¹ Ibid. 130.

²⁴² Ibid. 198.

²⁴³ Ibid. 197.

²⁴⁴ Ibid. 197.

²⁴⁵ Ibid. 244.

²⁴⁶ Ibid. 249.

CONCLUSION

This study outlines the main narratives of the Cold War confrontation in the Russian school history curriculum. The first category of books includes those who equally criticise both sides or criticise the USA more. The second category includes those who also criticised the USSR but implies that in most of the episodes the USA was more guilty in the Cold War and actions of the USSR can be justified. Another group of textbooks depicts the USA as guilty throughout all episodes and does not provide a critique of the USA. The difference between the second and third categories is that the second concentrates more on the defence of the Soviet position while the third tries to present the West as guilty in all the problems.

- A) In the 1990s and early 2000s, all three versions of the Cold War coexisted. Only one textbook examined in this study does not completely criticise the USSR in the Cold War. The rest of the books presented more balanced and revisionist versions of history presuming that both actors had different positions and shared their responsibility for this conflict. These books and their co-existence were brought about by the reforms of the 1990s which enabled the pluralisation of education.
- B) In the early 2000s, the state started promoting the specific vision of patriotism and by 2007 disqualified all textbooks which actively criticised the USSR. Only books with restrained criticism remained permitted by the state but they still provided some room for interpreting Soviet policy and suggested shared responsibility in the Cold War even though they gave more credit to the USSR.
- C) Textbooks with restrained criticism remained in the mid-1990s alongside newly written books whose narrative of the Cold War has changed. Textbooks written in the 2010s did not accept the idea of shared responsibility and created the image of the West which remained hostile during the Cold War. They negatively evaluated the end of the Cold

War and Russian positions after it. What is more, they employ more emotional words to criticise the West.

D) In 2023, a new unified history textbook was introduced, and it intensified the tendencies of the 1990s acceptance only the position when the USA was guilty in the confrontation. What is more, this book makes links between the past and the present and makes the Cold War confrontation logically not completed.

APPENDICES

Table 1

Circulation of permitted textbooks

Esakov, Kukushkin	1981–1988
Ostrovskii et al.	1992–2006
Dmitriento et al. (1995–2010), Shestakov (2010–2015)	1995–2015
Levandovskii	1997–2015
Dolutskii	1997–2003
Kreder	1995–2006
Danilov, Kosulina (1995–2016), Gorinov et al.	1995–2024
Volobuev et al.	2002–2024
Nikonov, Deviatov	2019–2024
Medinskii	2023–2024

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