

The crucial finding of the thesis is presented in the conclusion: in terms of factual history, the two perspectives – that of the actors and that of the historians – do not differ in any substantial manner. Nosková also offers an explanation of her findings: the studied community is largely very interested in its own history and thus possesses a substantial knowledge of the scholarly literature. She thus confirmed her hypothesis included in the introduction that interpretation of historical events in the work of historians, ethnologists and other scientists has an impact on the collective memory formation of the community that is a subject to the respective study. However, it is impossible to quantify or precisely determine their impact.

Appendix to this work is also quite extensive. Biographies of the interviewees, tables and maps showing the settlement of Volhynian Czechs, demographic migrations and contemporary political or press documents form the bulk of the materials.

This publication is undoubtedly a very valuable historical analysis based on a thorough historical research. The main stress is placed on the work with historical documents, hence it is not their form by their creator that matters the most. Apart from new finding, that the author acquired by her research, this work is valuable also as an overview of scholarly and popular literature on the topic of re-emigration and settlement of Volhynian Czechs in the lands of their forefathers.

Eva Pelíšková

Carolina Vendil Pallin, ***Russian Military Reform. A failed exercise in defence decision making***. London: Routledge, 2008, 248 pp. ISBN 978-0-203-89239-8.

Carolina Pallin as many other authors in the past looks into the question of what happened with the Soviet army after the break-up of the USSR. The transformation of a gigantic military complex into a viable post-bipolar world army is certainly not a neglected topic. The author has decided to bring some sacks to the literature mill on Russian military reforms by the use of institutional framework analysis and the impact of decision-making process on state defence. Pallin believes that the Russian military reform was a very specific example of the process that each and every European country had to go through after the end of the Cold War. Its analysis can thus provide a stepping stone for studies of military reform in other countries. As has already been mentioned, the author focuses primarily on the decision-making process and how its changes influenced the course of the reform. After the collapse of the USSR, Russia's new political leadership had also to take charge of the military command and subjugate the colossal Soviet military apparatus; however, at first new and appropriate institutions had to be created.

In the beginning of her study, the author summarizes the bulk of the explanations for the dragged-on military reform implementation. Arguments on the “Soviet legacy”, “economic problems”, “Cold War stereotypes of decision-making”, or “insufficient political leadership” are all on offer. It is the absence of pro-active political leadership that is perceived as one of the most plausible explanations. The decision-making body is in the limelight of the next section, i.e. the structure of who and how decides on security questions is depicted as well as its later evolution and ideal design for the future. Graphical illustrations accompany all theoretical conclusions. Furthermore, the author defines what a “military reform“ in fact means in the Russian case. She further elucidates its understanding on the Russian side and how it differs from the Western one. Pallin also categorizes the reasons for a military reform: firstly, internal, i.e. new weapons and new ways of conduct of war; secondly, external, i.e. new threats; and thirdly, the transformation of the entire society. Chapters that follow closely look at the period of Yeltsin’s presidency and the progress of the military reform, or better to say its stagnation. A breakthrough came with the defeat in the first Chechnya war, but even then radical measures had not been fully taken. It comes without saying that the next section deals with the period of Vladimir Putin’s presidency, which is generally considered to have brought the most progress in the issue of military reform. However, the author is of a different view: although Putin has created a sort of a “power vertical” and the system had undergone a number of changes, Pallin asserts that the Russian army as such has not really changed in any revolutionary way.

In her book Pallin also shows to what extent the course of military reform depended on motivation and the level of action-taking of the actual political leadership. The periods of intensified activity and reform zeal turned out to be short lived and followed by long stagnation, when the reform got “lost” somewhere in the bureaucratic apparatus. The lack of political will is claimed to be the main reason for the endlessness of the Russian military reform during Yeltsin’s as well as Putin’s presidency. Although the term of the latter had brought substantial changes, especially regarding centralization that vested more power in the hands of the president, some elementary problems of the Russian army such as opaqueness of financing, or clashes between individual army units have not been solved. Quite to the contrary, by the centralization and monopolization of power into Putin’s hands, the apparatus of Kreml has been locked into a self-nourishing vicious circle that offers no way-out.

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