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Between Radical Shifts and Persistent Uncertainties: The Cold War in Russian History Textbooks

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Remembering and teaching the Cold War proves a tough challenge to anyone working within the Russian context. Since 1991, hegemonic discourse on the question of who is to blame for the Cold War has experienced three radical shifts. Whereas during the Soviet era the Americans had been portrayed as the main culprits, the first half of the 1990s witnessed the emergence of a more critical attitude towards the USSR, increasingly perceived as aggressive. Despite a dominant trend towards a perspective on history and history teaching emphasising patriotic values, current historiography remains somewhat vague when it comes to the Cold War. Against the backdrop of these shifts and the uncertainties they foster, this chapter compares Cold War narratives in the four most widely used history textbooks in Russia. Focussing on how authors ascribe responsibility for the escalation of the conflict, on differences and similarities between textbooks, and on inconsistencies within each textbook, I proceed in four steps: Firstly I summarise the curricular requirements

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and provide a brief overview of these textbooks, paying particular attention to the authors themselves and how each imposes their own structure upon the history of the Cold War. I then examine portraits of the USA and the USSR in narratives on the origins of the conflict, its main crises, and the history of decolonisation.

Marc Ferro stressed that images of history live in our hearts from childhood (Ferro 1992, 8). It is difficult to define the role of school history textbooks in the construction of these images, which can remain with us, if unquestioned, for the rest of our lives. In the last 25 years in Russia, the circumstances within which historical memories are constructed have altered, however, with the change in the global outlook after the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. How the history of the Cold War is interpreted and taught plays a key role in prompting changes in how memory is constructed. The Soviet view, in the second half of the twentieth century, was that its former ally, the United States, was responsible for causing the Cold War. Yet the term 'New Thinking', coined at the end of the 1980s, suggested both the consideration of universal values and the interdependence of countries, and many Soviet people began to adopt a more pro-Western euphoria. The turn of the twenty-first century saw Russia's search to consolidate its identity and national interests in order to become a great power, a successor to the Soviet Union. This cultural environment might have had, and may continue to have, a direct or, more often, indirect impact on Russian historiography and the teaching of Cold War history in schools.

Reforms and State Educational Standards in History and Historiography

According to a long-established tradition, there are two main options for teaching history in the Russian school curriculum: either the course 'History of Russia' or 'World History'. The former is allocated more hours by the curriculum than the latter. This can be explained by the demands placed upon teachers by the Federal State Educational Standard (FSES), which makes its mission to educate future citizens of Russia and patriots. The teaching of history is complicated by the

introduction of two different educational standards, FSES-2004 and FSES-2010. The main difference between them is a concentric system, which recommends students study all history from grades 5 to 9, as a linear, uninterrupted course, and then the same periods again from grades 10 to 11, this time in greater depth. While FSES-2004 required twentieth-century history to be included in the curriculum for both grades 9 and 11, the new 2010 standard stipulates history be taught at grade 10 only. In the school year 2016/2017, the new standards for history teaching were used in grades 5 to 6, while the old standard from 2004 was still applied to grades 7 and 11.

The debate on history teaching in schools became even more heated in 2013, when the ‘Historical and Cultural Standard’ (*Istoriko-Kulturny Standart*) was issued by a group of educators and scholars. This document sought to instigate the discussion of the most disputed and controversial issues in history education between academic historians and the teaching community. Since the group was formed, the authors have also written school textbooks together. The ‘Historical and Cultural Standard’ includes a significant supplement, an ‘Exemplary List of Difficult Questions of Russian History’, with no less than 31 controversial issues, more than half of which pertain to the history of Russia in the twentieth century. Article 23 of the document declares that ‘assessing the role of the USSR in the outbreak of the Cold War’ is one of the most ‘difficult questions’ (*Istoriko-Kulturny Standart* 2013, 49), this conclusion being reached after some 25 years of intensive investigations into precisely this question.

The list of critical questions, complaints and suggestions from school teachers and specialists in the field of history teaching shows that teachers are concerned about the current disparity between teaching hours available within the school curriculum for Russian history as compared to World History, and also by the increasingly reduced hours allocated to the history of other countries. At congresses of history educators, teachers also spoke of their concerns about students developing neither a global outlook nor values which are important in an open and multicultural world. Ironically, the State Standard demands these qualities and students must answer questions on the topic of multiculturalism during the Universal State Exam in History (Strelova 2013, 183).

The first version of the 'Historical and Cultural Standard' comprised seven sections, each consisting of a short introduction, table of contents, a wordlist combining the basic concepts and terms of the section, personalities, and a list of events set out chronologically. The distribution of material across these sections showed that Section 6, 'Apogee and the Crisis of the Soviet System (1945-early 1980s)', oddly includes only a small number of concepts and terms (with 45, it takes third place when the sections are ranked accordingly), the fewest mentions of names from all seven sections (with 32, it ranks second to last), and few events and dates (in sixth place, with only 47). Based on these indicators, the section 'Formation and Evolution of the Soviet System' is clearly in the lead, along with 'The Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945' (Akul'shin and Grebenkin 2013, 11). Further, the detailing of historical material and dates reaching back to the early centuries of Russian history dramatically outweighs information provided on more recent periods. This increases yet more the difficulties involved in teaching the second half of the twentieth century and thus the Cold War.

A study of the Cold War by Russian historians in the 1990s took the question of responsibility for the conflict to a new level. In the Soviet period, the weight of responsibility for its origins was placed on the United States. American historiography, particularly the works of American revisionist and post-revisionist historians, influenced Russian as well as European historiography between 1980 and the end of the 1990s (Zubok and Pechatnov 2003, 144), also inspiring the beginnings of Russian revisionist historiography. However, in Russia the revisionist interpretation was associated with historians who blamed the Russians rather than the American leaders for causing the Cold War, more often accusing Stalin and his close circle of being at fault for the increasing tension in relations with former allies between 1945 and 1946.

Another trend in Russian historiography in the 2000s concerns the transition from seeing the Cold War as a complex process to analysing its inherent contradictions on both sides. This trend emphasises how the Kremlin lacked a clear plan for the post-war period, particularly regarding a long-term strategy for developing relations with the United States. Because of this uncertainty, it is maintained, the USA saw a threat in the actions of the USSR and adopted a strategy of containing the Soviet Union's power after the Second World War (*ibid.*, 147-148).

While the 'Historical and Cultural Standard' did not put an end to the debate on interpretations of the Cold War, it at least avoided exacerbating disputes between historians on key issues. Its wording almost completely avoids ideological assessments and its interpretations are reduced to a minimum. For example, the genesis of the Cold War is described in the following neutral expressions that record only historical facts and processes: 'The Beginning of the Cold War', 'The Truman Doctrine', 'The Marshall Plan' and 'The Formation of a Divided World' (Istoriko-Kulturny Standart 2013, 40). There are no set standards for World History.

General Profile of the Texts

We chose four widely used textbooks for the study, for eleventh grade and the last year of secondary school, covering the history of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first century. The first textbook (Chubar'yan et al. 2011) is the work of a team of famous Moscow historians: Alexander, scholar and expert on the foreign policy of Russia and the USSR, Alexander A. Danilov, author of many textbooks on the history of Russia over the last 25 years in cooperation with a specialist in history teaching methods, and Lyudmila N. Aleksashkina, author of the methodological questions and exercises in the textbook. The authors of the second book are experts from St. Petersburg: Historian Oleg Yu. Plenkov is a specialist in German history with a focus on the National Socialist period, and Tatyana P. Andreevskaya is a well-known expert in pedagogical approaches to history. Oleg V. Volobuev, author of the third book, is a well-known textbook author working in Moscow, combining the talents of the researcher and the didactics expert. Nikita V. Zagladin and Yuri A. Petrov, who wrote the fourth textbook, are well-known historians and, at the same time, have authored school textbooks for twenty years. Petrov is also the Director of the Institute of Russian History of the Russian Academy of Sciences. These names are renowned among both teachers and the wider Russian public in connection with the world of history and history teaching.

Table 4.1 Number of pages allocated to each topic

	Volobuev	Plenkov	Zagladin	Chubar'yan
Total:	70 (31%)	93 (28%)	80 (18%)	53 (18%)
National issues	11 (16%)	5 (5.4%)	41 (51%)	30 (57%)
International issues	50 (71.1%)	67 (72%)	20 (25%)	15 (28%)
Economy	0	13 (14%)	4 (5)	4 (7.5%)
Culture	6 (8.6%)	8 (8.6%)	12 (15)	4 (7.5%)
Everyday life	3 (4.3%)	0	3 (4%)	0

There are differences in approach to the material in the textbooks for the Russian History course and its World History counterpart. In the textbook for World History by Oleg Plenkov, Tatyana Andreevskaya and Sergei Shevchenko, the Cold War occupies a large number of pages. The peculiarity of this text is that the authors pay more attention than other textbooks to confrontations on a global scale in 'third world' countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America during the Cold War period, perhaps due to the affiliation of the editor. Associating the 'third world' with Asia and Africa is a Russian tradition, and Myasnikov is a specialist on the history of China, one of the key countries in the 'third world' story of the twentieth century told in Russian textbooks. For this reason it is understandable that some sections of the textbook describe the 'establishment of the communist regime' in China, the Korean War of 1950 to 1953, the confrontation of the two superpowers in Indochina, and other events related to this topic. The text emphasises the confrontation between powers on a global scale during the Cold War in all parts of the world. Key concepts are widely used: 'The Third World', 'Global Opposition in Asia', 'Decolonisation of Africa' and 'Authoritarianism and Democracy in Latin America'. However, the histories of Western and Eastern Europe, as well as of America, are allocated more space in the book than other parts of the world.

The textbook by Nikita V. Zagladin and Yuri A. Petrov, *Istoriya* (History), is intended for eleventh grade of secondary school. The text is designed to convey the history of Russia and the world in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, and so the authors include information about cultural issues and changes to economic life as well as significant international events. However, the text lacks accounts of everyday life. By volume, it is the largest of the texts selected for analysis. Cold War conflicts are dealt

with in paragraph 36. The authors emphasise the bipolar nature of the post-war world, with the USA's growing power and the increased authority of the USSR, whose army dominated Eurasia. Soviet troops controlled much of Central and Eastern Europe, North Iran, Manchuria and North Korea (Zagladin and Petrov 2014, 267).

In the textbook authored primarily by Oleg V. Volobuev there is no specific chapter dedicated to the 'Cold War'. Material on the history of the conflict is placed in Chapter 4: 'The World in the Second Half of the Twentieth and the Beginning of the Twenty-First Century', with two paragraphs of section 17, 'Post-war Organization of the World: International Relations from 1945 to the Beginning of the 1970s' (8 pages) and section 18, 'International Relations 1970s-1980s' and 'The End of the Cold War' (9 pages). The history of the Cold War is 'scattered' within other paragraphs, such as on the 'Social and Political Development of the West', 'Socialist Countries and Features of their Development', and 'Countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America in the Second Half of the Twentieth Century'. Aleksandr O. Chubar'yan's textbook, on the other hand, clearly seeks to reveal more about national Russian matters than global problems during the Cold War. Chubar'yan does, however, have a chapter dedicated to the Cold War story.

Ultimately, Russian history textbooks still bear the legacy of the Soviet era. The authors dedicate much space in the textbooks to political events at the expense of culture, economics and, especially, everyday life in the past.

The Origins of the Cold War

In the textbook by Plenkov et al. the question of which country was to blame for the origins of the Cold War still goes unanswered. While earlier Soviet historians believed that it was the US that unleashed the conflict, the most objective view, according to these authors, is that of common responsibility of both the USSR and the US (Plenkov et al. 2011, 136). Two reasons are given: the different interests of the United States and the Soviet Union, and the developing mistrust between the two countries.

Oleg V. Volobuev's text book states that the beginning of the Cold War is associated with the split of the world – primarily on the part of the USA – into warring blocs. In this version of post-war events, entitled 'Соединенные Штаты Америки вышли из Второй мировой войны самой сильной в экономическом и военном отношении державой. США, по словам президента Г. Трумана, способны были показать «железный кулак» всякому, кто воспротивился бы их мировому господству', the USA withdrew from the Second World War as the most economically powerful entity and could therefore 'show an iron fist' to anyone who opposed their plans for world domination (Volobuev 2012, 149). According to this interpretation, the USSR sought to ensure peace, restore its collapsed economy, and create a bloc of friendly states to secure its borders. In addition, the authors ascribe to Stalin the desire to achieve the traditional foreign policy goals of the Russian Empire, on the basis of increasing the power and authority of the USSR in the international arena. The reasons for these goals are not explored by the text-book authors.

Zagladin and Petrov's textbook states that the Cold War was caused by a 'clash of national state interests', which was 'aggravated by profound differences in economic and socio-political development in the dominant values'¹ (Zagladin and Petrov 2014, 267). The authors implicitly suggest that both superpowers had their own reasons for the confrontation and are thus both guilty of rivalry. Equally, they argue that:

The prestige of the USSR has become stronger; its influence in the international arena has increased. However, the Soviet leadership could not use all this to ensure the peaceful development of the country. The Soviet Union was involved in a 'cold war' with its former allies.²

The scholar A. O. Chubar'yan was a direct participant in most conferences and projects that changed Russian historiographical approaches to the Cold War between 1990 and the 2000s. In Chapter 8 of *Istoriya Rossii*, Chubar'yan explains the beginning of the debates taking place at the end of the Second World War and the creation of a new world order, including the growing displeasure in Moscow at the 'delay in

opening a second front' against Germany. At the same time, he points out that the old ideological confrontation between the 'socialist Soviet Union and the capitalist states lessened during the war'. The disagreement between these powers concerned the fate of the countries of Eastern Europe. The leadership of the USSR wanted to see them 'socialist', and the United States, Britain and France hoped to keep them under their own influence (Chubar'yan et al. 2011, 193). The fate of Germany was another source of tension. While in the Soviet zone a policy of supporting pro-communist forces was followed, in the Western zone of Germany 'events developed in the opposite direction. The old political parties were restored' (ibid. 2011, 194). This textbook portrayal is not fully correct, however: West German political parties were not merely the old political parties restored, but were certainly at least re-conceived, especially those to the right of the middle. According to Chubar'yan, as of the end of 1945 there were clashes between allies who accused each other of failing to fulfil their obligations. While the question of responsibility, for him, is answered, as the guilt of both the USSR and the United States is clear, Chubar'yan points to certain events and actions which seemingly contradict each country's foreign policy aims.

These different interpretations of the origin of the Cold War show that in all four textbooks the authors place the blame on both sides of the conflict. The traditional Soviet interpretation blames the United States. No texts criticise the Soviet Union regarding the events of the Cold War according to a revisionist line of interpretation which was popular in the 1990s. These revisionist historians called for another interpretation, and thus a change in the Russian historiographical tradition, suggesting that the blame for the Cold War beginnings lay with the USSR. In Western historiography, on the contrary, the revisionism label is used when blame is placed on the USA. The coverage of the principal international and domestic events of the epoch is extensive. The textbooks pay a great deal of attention to various aspects of domestic and international politics, with very little information about everyday life. On the whole, it must be said that the history of the Cold War (1946-1989) is not the key era for fostering identity construction in Russian school textbooks; this role rather falls to depictions of the 'Great Patriotic War' (1941-1945).

Narratives of Cold War Crises

One might imagine that Cold War crises would be central to the general narrative about this global confrontation. The Cold War played out in such a way that the main participants, the USSR and the US, did not utilise direct military operations, which threatened the use of nuclear weapons. Superpowers had to demonstrate their strength and influence in crises through actions that substituted direct military activity and, as victory or defeat in such a crisis was nevertheless comparable in importance to a victory in a real military clash, the memory of the crises must, according to the logic of military history, endure. Russian historians Aleksandr S. Seniavskii and Elena S. Seniavskaya stress:

After a war has ended, it persists in the memory of many – its immediate participants, its contemporaries, and the direct offspring of those forced to experience the extremities of war. Where war is an event of significance to the social organism, its memory is preserved both in individual and in collective consciousness and may be reinforced in the official (ideological, political, etc.) discourse across several post-war generations (Seniavskii and Seniavskaya 2010, 54).

The Cold War, it seems, did not leave a long and preserved collective memory. It was a war in which Russia was defeated. Russian textbooks show the events of the Cold War generally in a neutral style, without reinforcing the official ideological and political discourse, and their authors avoid thorough details and analysis. They even omit certain crises, treating these as insignificant.

Plenkov and colleagues state that the Cold War was accompanied by a series of regional conflicts, most caused by ideological struggle and geopolitical confrontation between the two superpowers USSR and USA. In 160 conflicts between 1945 and 2000, 7.2 million soldiers were killed. According to the author, this is comparable to the number of victims of the First World War, which they place at 8.4 million (Plenkov et al. 2011, 135). They also cover, in a short phrase, the uprising in Hungary in 1956, including a photograph of these events. At the same time we are told that Romania achieved the withdrawal of Soviet troops from its territory in 1958 (*ibid.*, 140).

The CSSR in 1968 is the first serious conflict to be mentioned in the textbook by Plenkov et al. Using the phrase 'The Prague Spring', the textbook relates how a group of reformers, led by Alexander Dubček, set out to remodel socialism. In Moscow this was perceived as a threat to what the Soviets considered socialism. In August 1968, under the pretext of 'protecting socialism' and 'the integrity of the socialist community', the troops of the Warsaw Pact entered Czechoslovakia: 'The attempt of the population of Czechoslovakia to repel the invasion by success failed' (ibid., 141).

On page 142 readers are informed about the Berlin crisis of 1948 and 1949. Apparently the authors considered this crisis less serious than the Prague Spring, the Berlin crisis being referred to as 'one of the first crises of the Cold War'. The authors present as its cause the attempt of the Western allies to carry out monetary reform in West Berlin. In the view of the leaders of the USSR, this step was considered a departure from the agreements concerning Berlin, and Moscow decided to organise a blockade of West Berlin. It is a story about the unsuccessful sanctions applied by the USSR against the population of Berlin. Western vehicles were not allowed to travel to West Berlin either by rail or by road. In order to communicate with the Western sectors of Berlin, the European countries established an effective airlift in which American and British aircraft successfully supplied the population with food. The blockade ended within a year. According to the authors of this text, the USSR came out worse in this conflict, now publicly perceived in a negative light because of its actions. In geopolitical terms, the blockade led to the unification of the Western zones of occupation and to the creation of the Federal Republic of Germany, as well as the emergence of NATO in 1949 (ibid., 142).

This textbook displays noticeably new attitudes to Western science and includes newly accessed documents from archives. This is a more recent trend, indicating that Russian textbook authors are trying to include different historiographical approaches. For example, an excerpt from a book by modern American historian Kathrin Weathersby about the role of the USSR in the war in Korea is provided as a source (ibid., 163). The textbook also utilises a clear method of avoiding a country-specific presentation of material, which prevailed in Soviet times at the expense of muting any problematic aspects that might interrupt the master narrative. The authors used the following headings: 'Confrontation in the

Arab World and the Problem of Israel during the Cold War', 'Decolonisation of Africa', 'Latin America between Authoritarianism and Democracy', and other headings with which they organise the material on a problem-related basis. The end of the chapter sums up the history of the Cold War as follows:

- The Cold War has become an important factor in the developments of post-war decades,
- The events of the Cold War affected various nations,
- History had never before known an ideological confrontation of this kind,
- The confrontation of the Cold War was due to differences in the social systems of the West and the East and was almost inevitable,
- The peak of confrontation occurred in the first post-war decade, while the confrontation itself continued,
- Rivalry and different approaches to solving world problems remained between the United States and Russia after the end of the Cold War (ibid., 185).

Such rivalry the author considers 'a natural process of political development', however, further claiming that 'the rivalry relations will continue in the future, but it is not at all necessary that they should take the character of militant ideological confrontation, as in the days of the Cold War' (ibid., 185).

Insurrections and conflicts against the domination of the USSR in the Eastern Bloc are not fully represented in this textbook. While there is information about the uprising in Hungary and the crises in the GDR, none is given about the Polish crises. Here again we see the features of the above-mentioned neutral style, which, of course, is associated with a common patriotic narrative: that the government of the USSR sought to protect the country's security during the Cold War and avoided mistakes. Consequently, according to Plenkov et al., some details of the events of the Cold War can be omitted as it ended without victory for the Soviet Union.

In the textbook authored by Oleg Volobuev, in paragraph 15 of Chapter 4, 'The World in the Second Half of the Twentieth to the

Beginning of the Twenty-first Century', the authors examine the history of socialist countries and features of their development after the Second World War. In fact, this chapter tells the story of the Cold War. It is in this context that the main crises in this region are mentioned. The authors emphasise that divided Germany has more than once been an arena for serious conflicts. The first conflict examined by the authors is related to the events of 1948 and the Soviet blockade of the 'transport routes leading from the Western zones of occupation to the Western sectors of Berlin' (Volobuev 2012, 132). This conflict is explained by the fact that the stream of depreciated bank notes 'flowed from the western zones into the Soviet zone because of the monetary reform'. In the Soviet zone there was the threat of economic chaos (*ibid.*, 132). We can see in this interpretation the desire of the authors to explain the blockade of West Berlin between 1948 and 1949 not as a political confrontation, but as a conflict that arose due to economic reasons.

The next crisis arose in the GDR in 1953. The authors state that, after Stalin's death, disturbances began here that grew into an uprising against the pro-Soviet regime (*ibid.*, 132). The authors again seek the cause of the crisis in the economic state of the GDR: 'This was the Germans' response to the decline in their standard of living', while in the FRG, they state, thanks to the reforms, 'the situation ha[d] improved' (*ibid.*, 132). The communist elite failed to suppress the opposition and Soviet troops entered Berlin. However, according to the authors, the GDR increasingly lost the competition with living standards in the FRG, and, in 1961, the border between West and East Berlin was closed. In August 1961 the Berlin Wall was built: 'This construction became a symbol of the Cold War and the split of the German nation' (*ibid.*, 133).

Further on in the textbook, the authors analyse the crisis in Poland and the uprising in Hungary in 1956. In accordance with a long tradition, they are referred to as 'events', a common term used both in historiography and many textbooks. The authors discuss the call of the Soviet leader Nikita S. Khrushchev to establish socialism in Eastern Europe in accordance with national characteristics, a desire he expressed at the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU. Unexpectedly for the Soviet leadership, the condemnation of the old policy in Eastern Europe and Stalinism had outgrown the denial of 'socialist gains' and communist ideology (*ibid.*, 133).

In Poland, a general strike began, which, according to the authors, was suppressed thanks to the policies of Vladislav Gomulka. In 1956, Poland succeeded in repressing further Soviet control. In Hungary, the communist leadership was less able to overcome Stalinism, and the people began an uprising. In November 1956, the uprising in Hungary was suppressed with the help of Soviet troops. The head of the rebellious government, Imre Nagy, was executed, and power passed into the hands of János Kádár (Volobuev 2012, 133-134).

The textbook authors subsequently interpret in detail the events of 1968 in Czechoslovakia. The general conclusion of this section differs significantly from earlier interpretations of the history of the socialist countries, the events being considered undoubtedly positive. The authors draw attention to the fact that, in the countries of Eastern Europe, communist governments came to power with the support of the USSR. Despite some successes in the development of the economy, leadership policies for these socialist countries led to acute sociopolitical crises. The power of the communist governments in these countries was preserved only thanks to the intervention of the USSR (ibid., 136). This conclusion comes close to describing events accurately, but it does not say that these socialist countries were occupied by the Soviets.

According to the textbook by Zagladin and Petrov, the most serious issue developing in the late 1940s was the question of Germany's place in Europe. Zagladin believes that each side in the Cold War fought for the resources and potential of Germany. This textbook provides brief information about the Berlin crisis of 1948 to 1949, stressing that, despite the critical nature of the conflict and the willingness of both sides to move towards an open military confrontation, 'the Berlin crisis was resolved peacefully, but the solution of the German question – the creation of a unified, neutral and democratic Germany – was frozen for many years' (Zagladin and Petrov 2014, 270). This idea of an unresolved German 'question' is common in recent Russian history textbooks.

The authors also analyse the main events of the Cold War in Asia. The text includes information about a clash in China, the victory of the CCP and the formation of the PRC, the war in Korea from 1950 to 1953, and the Vietnam War. The authors call the Caribbean Crisis of 1962 'the most critical conflict of the Cold War' (ibid., 273). The

settlement came about, according to the authors, ‘thanks to the restraint and prudence shown by President John F. Kennedy and the Soviet leader Nikita S. Khrushchev. Soviet missiles that caused an aggravation were shipped from Cuba, the United States abolished the naval blockade of Cuba, and the USA promised to respect its sovereignty and to remove missiles from Turkey targeted at the USSR’ (ibid., 273). The Caribbean Crisis of 1962, known in the West as the Cuban Missile Crisis or the October Crisis, is present in all the history textbooks used. In the Plenkov et al. textbook the Cuban Missile Crisis and the increased danger of military confrontation it brought is explored over two pages (Plenkov et al. 2011, 220). Chubar’yan’s textbook also treats the crisis, the authors arguing that the reason behind the behaviour of the Soviet leadership was to use Cuba to exacerbate issues in the USA: ‘The existence of a socialist Cuba pushed the Soviet leaders to use this country to create difficulties for the United States’³ (Chubar’yan et al. 2011, 200).

Zagladin’s textbook examines in detail the events occurring in Eastern Europe, which was in the ‘orbit of the USSR’, during this period and mentions all serious conflicts and crises. Separate pages are devoted to the conflict between the People’s Republic of China (PRC) and the USSR in the 1960s (Zagladin and Petrov 2014, 280-283).

Chubar’yan’s textbook applies a chronological approach to the distribution of historical facts. In Chapter 8, the principal stages of the history of the Cold War are delineated: the origin, the ‘split of Europe’, the crises of the Cold War between 1950 and 1960, and detente. The Berlin crisis of 1948 is portrayed as the main crisis during the post-war period, from which the authors explore the remaining events of the East-West conflict: the creation of Germany and the GDR, the emergence of NATO, the Warsaw Pact, and Comecon (CMEA) (Chubar’yan et al. 2011, 196). The authors of the text connect the causes of the Berlin crisis of 1948 with the closure of checkpoints leading to West Berlin by the Soviets. The authors neither mention monetary reform in West Germany, nor do they include the economic reasons for the crisis and monetary reform which are mentioned (again ‘neutrally’) in Plenkov’s and Volobiev’s textbooks. The closing of Berlin checkpoints by the Soviets goes unexplained.

In Chubar'yán's text the author pays particular attention to the close relationship between foreign confrontation and the repressive domestic policy in the Soviet Union during the Cold War crisis. Anti-Western sentiment grew and accusations against citizens and artists who seemed to 'worship' the West mounted. At the same time: 'Similar processes related to the repression of dissidents, criticism of communism and the Soviet Union occurred in the United States and Western European countries'⁴ (ibid., 197).

According to the authors, the United States outstripped other countries in its reaction to anyone sympathetic towards the Soviet Union or communism in general, with anti-communist hysteria leading to a 'witch-hunt'. In the United States, even those merely suspected of sympathy for the communists were persecuted (197). However, the term McCarthyism is not mentioned in the textbook. We find more details about McCarthyism in the Volobuev textbook, which argues that, during the presidency of D. Eisenhower in the United States in the early 1950s, rumours of a pro-Soviet communist conspiracy spread, fuelled by Soviet support for the American Communists and the success of Soviet intelligence. However, the 'witch-hunt' discredited the American political system and Senator McCarthy's commission was terminated in 1954 (Volobuev 2012, 120).

The crises in Central and Eastern Europe – Hungary in 1956, the aggravation of the situation in the district of Berlin, and the Czechoslovakian crisis of 1968 – are all covered in relative detail in this chapter of the textbook. However, a large amount of space is also allocated to the 'big' crises of the Cold War, such as the Caribbean Crisis and the conflict in the Middle East (198-201). The authors suggest that events occurring between 1953 and 1955 went some way towards easing the conflict between the powers, thus referring to them as 'the first detente' of the Cold War era. After the death of Stalin in 1953, they claim, dialogue opened up between the opposing sides. As a result, an agreement was signed to end the war in Korea, the Berlin meeting was held in 1954, and in 1955 Soviet troops withdrew from Austria. However, the authors conclude this argument with the statement that the 'first discharge' did not put an end to the more general conflict (Chubar'yán et al. 2011, 198).

We can therefore see a broad selection of facts and arguments in these textbooks. For those in modern Russia who support one unified version of history and a single explanatory narrative for schoolchildren, recent textbooks will be disappointing. While the liberalisation of history, the emergence of new interpretations of the past, and discussions among historians are all developments which can be easily reversed, it is to be hoped that open debate and multiple perspectives in the field of history education cannot be completely suppressed; at least, that the memory of more liberal times will endure.

Decolonisation and the Cold War in Russian Textbooks

The USSR pursued a policy of ‘proletarian solidarity’ with other countries striving for national liberation in the context of decolonisation. Vladislav Zubok argues that between 1950 and 1960 the Soviet people felt pride in the USSR’s foreign policy in this regard. For example, Khrushchev’s course toward internationalism and sympathy for the national liberation struggles of the peoples of Asia and Africa found sincere and wide support among many people in the Soviet Union. Soviet people also sympathised with radical change in Egypt, Syria, Iraq and Algeria, as well as with the peoples of Asian countries such as India, Burma and Indonesia. At the same time, such a policy was consistent with optimistic and romantic sentiment in the educated ranks of Soviet society (Zubok 2011, 264).

The Cuban Revolution was particularly important for people in the USSR in the early 1960s. Cuba gave the Soviet people, it seems, hope that a real revolution could happen without major casualties. Thanks to Cuba, Soviet foreign policy received an injection of revolutionary romanticism. In Soviet society, a craze for anything Cuban began, which endured even beyond the Caribbean Missile Crisis. When, in the spring of 1963, Fidel Castro paid a visit to the USSR, he was greeted everywhere by enthusiastic crowds (ibid., 264). All these processes affected the teaching of history, with new scientific centres founded for the study of decolonisation and new pages written for textbooks (Khodnev 2014, 180-181).

In the textbook by Plenkov and colleagues, a separate paragraph is devoted to the decolonisation of Africa. The very term ‘decolonisation’ is new in Russian school textbooks. Previously, to describe one of the most important processes of the twentieth century, the Marxist expressions ‘the collapse of the colonial system’ or ‘the destruction of colonial empires’ had been broadly employed in their Russian equivalents. The authors apply a socio-geographic approach when presenting the facts, choosing to arrange the material of the text not according to the problems of decolonisation, but in terms of geographical region: ‘Far East’, ‘Indochina’, ‘North’, ‘Tropical’ and ‘South Africa’. The textbook reports that, for a short period at the turn of the 1950s and 1960s, several dozens of independent states appeared in Africa, although in 1945 only three remained: South Africa, Liberia and Egypt. By 1975, the last Portuguese colonies of Angola and Mozambique were granted independence (Plenkov et al. 2011, 163).

Without explaining the reasons for such rapid decolonisation, the textbook lists the problems of the newly independent states in some detail. However, the influence of the Cold War remains the focus of the text, which emphasises that ‘the West supported some odious regimes in Africa because they opposed the spread of communist ideology’.⁵ The US guaranteed support for the dictators of these regimes, the textbook continues, acting not in the interests of the people but rather pursuing their own targets as well as tribal and foreign interests (ibid., 164). At the same time, according to the authors, the USSR helped these young states to break free of any remaining dependence on the former metropolises. This prompted many young African countries to choose the Soviet model of development, whereupon they received aid from Moscow. Further on, the text explores the history of decolonisation in two specific countries: Ghana and Algeria. The choice is telling: Ghana was probably one of the first independent countries in Africa to declare socialist reforms, and a protracted anti-colonial war began in Algeria.

The textbook also covers the problems of the postcolonial era. The authors note that only a few of the African states (Botswana, Cameroon, Congo, Gabon and Kenya) ‘improved their standard of living’, and that 28 of the 45 countries were among the most backward countries in the world in the UN classification (ibid., 168). Countries that chose a socialist model of development failed to achieve their goals. However, according to the authors’ interpretation, the countries that chose the capitalist

market model also found that their elected path of development brought its own difficulties, particularly with high unemployment levels⁶ (ibid., 168). It should be said that many of the assessments the authors make in this part of the paragraph are outdated and much is changing in modern Africa. It will not be easy to answer the question of the influence of the Cold War on decolonisation, since one of the main factors in the rapid completion of this process is not set out in the text of the paragraph, but in an additional passage from the work of the Norwegian anthropologist T. Eriksen (ibid., 172). Eriksen mentions that the Soviet Union and the United States, rivals in the Cold War, both supported the process of decolonisation. Perhaps the authors were hoping that students would think and discover this argument for themselves.

In Volobuev's textbook, the main cause of decolonisation is the outcome of the Second World War and the weakening of ties between the colonial possessions of Britain, the Netherlands, France and the metropolises. According to the authors, after the war the peoples of Indochina, Burma and Indonesia resisted the return of former European masters (ibid., 137). The textbook also explores India's independence under the questionable heading 'Western Orientation in South Asia' (ibid., 140-139); the course of reform has actually changed several times in independent India. Another distinguishing feature of this textbook is its portrayal of the influence of Islam on Asia and Africa. The author of this part of the text finds reasons for the strengthening of Islam in processes of Westernisation and the establishment of Western (largely American) values and standards of life. For many, Islam constitutes a form of 'protection' from the Western influence. The author considers the Iranian revolution the beginning of the spread of Islamism in 1979 (Volobuev 2012, 141-142).

A small paragraph, 35, is devoted to 'The Fall of the World Colonial System' in Zagladin's textbook. The main reasons given for the collapse of these colonial empires include the strengthening of the Soviet Union's influence in the international arena, as desired by the USSR leadership, who even drew links between the liberation of the colonies and the disintegration of NATO, which included the leading colonial powers (Zagladin and Petrov 2014, 261). Peoples struggling for national independence, it states, could also rely on China, where the revolution succeeded in 1949. The textbook also emphasises the role of the United Nations, which gave

international legal support for countries to decolonise (*ibid.*, 261), evidenced with facts: Between 1958 and 1974, the USSR delivered arms to the value of 55 million dollars to Angola (*ibid.*, 262). The same text claims that, despite its desire for allies in the Afro-Asian world, the USSR did not have sufficient opportunities to create modern industries in these newly liberated countries, disappointing both the leaders of the latter and the Soviet authorities (*ibid.*, 264).

In the 'academic' textbook by Chubar'yan there is no specific section devoted to decolonisation, possibly because the book focuses on conflicts experienced by the USSR and Russia in the twentieth century: the confrontation between the USA and the USSR, and crises and conflicts in which the USSR participated. However, twentieth-century history is neither clear nor complete without this context, which renders this omission particularly troubling. For example, the authors state that the USSR intervened in the process of decolonisation relating to the conflict in the Middle East in 1956 by condemning the war against Egypt, in which Britain and France were participating. In the authors' opinion, events in Egypt evidenced the desire of the peoples of Asia and Africa to rid themselves of the pressure from their ex-colonisers. The Cold War continued, according to the authors, not least because the USSR and the USA sought to 'spread the positions of socialism and capitalism in Asia, Africa and Latin America' (Chubar'yan et al. 2011, 199).

This analysis shows that, while decolonisation was one of the most significant processes of twentieth-century history, this subject is overshadowed in the historical memory of many Russians. Modern textbook authors are not inclined to support the romanticism of the generation of the 1960s and to admire the feats of the peoples of Asia and Africa in crushing the colonial empires. The Soviet Union's role in this process appears from the pages of the textbooks as contradictory and inconsistent. Students can pose questions: if assistance was provided, why did it not lead 'third world' countries onto the road of progress? The texts confirm two features of the modern view of history in Russia: a lack of in-depth and complete scientific studies of decolonisation, and the tendency to build on the positive example of Russia's history in the era of the Great Patriotic War of 1941 to 1945.

Conclusion

In the case of Russia over the last 25 years, with changes in world outlook after the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, ways of constructing historical memory have shifted at least three times. This cultural environment might have had a direct – or, more often, indirect – impact on Russian historiography and the teaching of history, particularly the Cold War at school. The multiple interpretations of the origins of the Cold War show that many authors actually place the blame for the conflict on both the United States and the Soviet Union. The traditional Soviet interpretation of the origins of the Cold War, which lays the blame on the United States, is reproduced in one text. The revisionist school of thought in the Russian historiographical tradition instead locates responsibility for the beginning of the Cold War with the USSR. Yet in none of these textbooks can we see revisionist interpretations, which would criticise the Soviet Union as was popular in the 1990s.

While the textbooks pay attention to various aspects of domestic and international politics, there is very little information about daily life in any of the books. It seems that neither the authors nor the specialists in pedagogical approaches to history have a clear solution to the question of how to select content for modern school textbooks, what should be included in the Russian history course material, and what should be taught in the more general courses. We can also identify changes in the use of key terminology: The modern Russian history textbooks categorically do not recognise the occupation of Eastern Europe by the USSR from 1945 to 1989, and when describing the relations of the USSR with the countries of Eastern Europe, the terms ‘Support of Communists in Eastern Europe’, ‘Support for the USSR’, ‘Soviet influence’ and ‘Deployment of Troops for the Defence of Socialism’ are used most frequently.

It is interesting to note another linguistic feature of educational literature on the history of the Cold War: In all teaching texts and in school curricula, the term ‘Cold War’ is written in inverted commas, probably an indirect comment on the geopolitical context in which the term was first coined by Bernard Baruch, advisor to the US president and Cold War enemy, in 1947, borrowing the phrase from George Orwell.

In spite of the fact that the authors of these textbooks seek to write in neutral tones, a patriotic master narrative dominates in modern history textbooks in Russia. The new Federal State Educational Standards directly require schools to mould students into patriotic citizens through the teaching of history. At the same time, and especially in the context of the Cold War, it cannot be said that the authors of modern history textbooks in Russia avoid acute social issues altogether; indeed, they portray serious crises of the Cold War as well as errors made by the Soviet leadership. In addition, the ‘Historical and Cultural Standard’ has failed to bring about a consensus on the interpretation of the history of Russia in the twentieth century. While all textbooks are different, each is affected by the individual authors who contribute to them, and their evaluations of Cold War events as well as their respective selection of facts vary greatly. However, the principle of including ready-made ‘lessons of the past’ in these textbooks remains. Ultimately, it must be said that portrayals of the Cold War are not paramount in the processes of identity construction engaged in by textbooks: The history of the ‘Great Patriotic War’ (1941-1945) is evidently considered more essential.

Notes

1. ‘Столкновение национально-государственных интересов усугублялось глубокими различиями в экономическом и общественно-политическом развитии, в господствующих системах ценностей’
2. Укрепился авторитет СССР, возросло его влияние на международной арене. Однако советское руководство не смогло использовать все это для обеспечения мирного, спокойного развития страны. Советский Союз оказался вовлечен в “холодную войну” со своими бывшими союзниками (Zagladin and Petrov 2014, 232).
3. ‘Существование социалистической Кубы подтолкнуло советских лидеров к тому, чтобы использовать эту страну для создания трудностей для США’ (Chubar’yan et al., 2011, 200)

4. ‘Схожие процессы, связанные с репрессиями против инакомыслящих, критикой коммунизма и Советского Союза, происходили в США и странах Западной Европы’ (Chubar’yan et al., 2011, 197)
5. ‘Запад поддерживал в Африке некоторые одиозные режимы, поскольку те выступали против распространения коммунистической идеологии’ (Plenkov et al., 2011, 164).
6. ‘так как здесь сильно сказывался низкий уровень работников’

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