

2008

h-diplo

H-Diplo Roundtable Reviews

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Volume IX, No. 5 (2008)

21 March 2008

David S. Foglesong. *The American Mission and the "Evil Empire": The Crusade for a "Free Russia" since 1881.* New York: Cambridge University Press, October 2007. ISBN-13: 978-0521855907 (hardback); 978-0521671835 (paperback).

Roundtable Editor: Thomas Maddux

Reviewers: Walter L. Hixson, Deborah Welch Larson, Katherine A.S. Sibley, Victoria Zhuravleva

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Introduction by Thomas Maddux, California State University, Northridge

David Foglesong's *The American Mission and the "Evil Empire": The Crusade for a "Free Russia" since 1881* joins a distinguished list of studies reaching back to 1950 that explore Russian-American relations before and during the Cold War with significant attention to the nature of public opinion and attitudes towards each other. Thomas A. Bailey's *America Faces Russia: Russian-American Relations from Early times to Our Day* (1950) brought this subject to generations of diplomatic historians, and William A. Williams joined Bailey two years later with *American-Russian Relations 1781-1947*. Perhaps the most influential studies in this field in the 1960s were Peter G. Filene's *Americans and the Soviet Experiment, 1917-1933* (1967) and Frank A. Warren's *Liberals and Communism: The 'Red Decade' Revisited* (1966). David Engerman also explored American views on Russian industrial development in *Modernization from The Other Shore: American Intellectuals and the Romance of Russian Development* (2003). Norman Saul has marched through the terrain with three volumes, *Distant Friends: the United States and Russia, 1763-1867* (1991); *War and Revolution: The United States and Russia, 1914-1921* (2001); and *Friends or Foes? The United States and Russia, 1921-1941* (2006). John Lewis Gaddis also swept through entire relationship with *Russia, the Soviet Union, and the United States: An Interpretive History* (1978, 1990).

What is distinctive about Foglesong's approach to the Russian-American relationship, beyond his carrying the story into the post-2000 period is, as Deborah Larson points out in her review, his exploration of popular American attitudes toward Russia from the origins of the first American crusade to reform Russia in the 1880s to the 1990s post-Soviet effort to bring democracy, capitalism, and Protestantism to Russia. As Larson and other reviewers note, Foglesong distinguishes between popular American attitudes on Russia, which he significantly relates to American views and hopes on their own society, and the perspectives of American policy makers. Foglesong also gives more attention and significance to the influence of American religious views in shaping perspectives on Russia and the Soviet Union.

The reviewers emphasize the strengths of Foglesong's study and Foglesong's response addresses the questions they raise including the following:

1) Larson notes that there is theoretical support for Foglesong's thesis that how "Americans view Russia has been shaped more by how they perceive the United States than political and economic developments in that country." She views Foglesong's work as "part of the literature on national identities and their relationship to foreign policy" and opines that Foglesong's thesis is consistent with this work. (1, 6) To affirm their own values and commitment to freedom, democracy, capitalism, and religion, Americans periodically want to remake Russia over to the American system.

2.) To strengthen his thesis on the motivating force of American self-images in shaping their views on and desire to reform Russia and the Soviet Union, Foglesong could have devoted more attention to the 1930s and the studies of Filene, Warren, and Engerman. The great depression certainly shook American faith in their political and economic systems more severely than the "crisis of confidence" that Foglesong links to the renewal of a reform crusade on the Soviet Union by 1975. The American reaction to the "Soviet experiment," particularly liberal enthusiasm for the image of Soviet economic progress, full employment, and the benefits of a planned economy, in contrast with depression realities at home in rising unemployment, increasing homelessness, and political drift until FDR and the New Deal arrived in town, would seem to strengthen Foglesong's thesis. The one significant time that the American mission to reform Russia was reversed is centered in American attitudes more so than Russian conditions.

3.) As Walter Hixson, Victoria Zhuravleva, and Katherine Sibley note in their reviews, Foglesong definitely enhances studies on American views on Russia by emphasizing the importance of religious motivations. As the first American mission was launched to free Russia in the late nineteenth century, Protestant evangelists initiated missionary work and joined with liberal activists and business interests. Later after 1905, American missionaries stepped up their campaign to liberate Russians from the Orthodox Church and they were active again in the 1920s with relief workers, business leaders, and engineers. During the Cold War Americans looked for a spiritual rebirth in the Soviet Union, and President Reagan, according to Foglesong, drew on his religious upbringing for his campaign to free Russians.

4.) Each crusade to reform Russia seems to end with some degree of disillusionment, and as Foglesong critically notes, the latest after 1990 is no exception. As Americans, led by economists, Christian evangelists, lawyers, and political scientists, rushed to help transform the new Russia, optimistic expectations soon gave way to dismay over the decline in Russian living standards, crony capitalism, and President Vladimir Putin's assertive leadership in a number of domestic and foreign areas. The reviewers agree with Foglesong's criticism of the enduring American failure to understand that Russia has to pursue its own course and follow Russian and not American designs. As Zhuravleva suggests, "today, as in the past, the Russian reality is a intricate interweaving of a great number of negative and positive trends, and comprehending Russia by means of bipolar evaluations, rigid transitional paradigms and messianic moralizing provokes a backlash

and accusations of hypocrisy and double standards leveled at American leaders as the war in Iraq continues, NATO expands, and the U.S. carries out its policies in the former Soviet republics.”

5.) There is some disagreement among Foglesong and the reviewers on whether or not American policy makers and the political elite have been enthusiastic participants in the American mission to reform the “Evil Empire.” Larson notes from Foglesong’s study a “gap between public attitudes and governmental policy” (6) as leaders tend to pursue power and interests as opposed to reform ideals. In his response, Foglesong responds that “key U.S. policymakers have shared the popular ambition to liberate Russia and they have at crucial moments succumbed to the illusion that American influence could inspire a rapid transformation of Russia.” Assessments of George H.W. Bush and William Clinton tend to support Larson’s observation as neither was prepared to back up cooperative diplomacy on some issues with substantial economic assistance. “The Bush administration was driven to a great extent by fears—of losing points in propaganda battles, wasting money in economic aid, even facing a reversion to a Stalinist ‘evil empire,’” Foglesong emphasizes, and the author views Clinton as offering more “grandly idealistic” public statements but similar policies and embraced Boris Yeltsin as Bush backed Mikhail Gorbachev rather than a democratic process. (198, 207) Woodrow Wilson and Ronald Reagan, however, back up Foglesong’s argument as they seem to have transcended the pursuit of interest in their quests to promote the spread of democracy and capitalistic values in Russia against, respectively, Lenin’s Bolshevism and the “evil empire” of the 1980s. Yet Sibley cautions about the “follies of contemporary history” and Foglesong’s effort to evaluate U.S. leaders with some degree of consistency.

6.) Foglesong does relate American policy makers to his central theme, but his most sustained analysis focuses on Reagan in Chapter 8. Foglesong depicts Reagan as the American leader most committed to the mission to reform the “Evil Empire” out of his religious beliefs and sense of mission. Along the lines of Melvyn Leffler’s recent evaluation of Reagan, Foglesong suggests that Reagan mixed condemnation of Soviet leaders and their system with hopes to win the same leaders over to reform and cooperation with the West, and “vacillated between his conflicting impulses while seeking to placate both militant anticommunist supporters and critics who called for better relations between the superpowers. Hence, contrary to the claims of partisan Republicans and neo-conservative ideologues, Reagan did not have a coherent, consistent strategy to cause the collapse of Soviet communism.” (175) Reagan’s most significant impact on Gorbachev, according to Foglesong, was not in his rhetoric, defense build-up, Reagan doctrine, or advice to the Soviet leader on religious freedom, but, instead, in “Gorbachev’s gradual realization that Reagan would not use force to compel the Soviet Union to alter its system [which] helped him to overcome the climate of fear and take the risks of launching a destabilizing restructuring of the Soviet system.” (195)

Participants:

David S. Foglesong is associate professor of history at Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey. He received his Ph.D. from the University of California at Berkeley, 1991. He is

author of *America's Secret War Against Bolshevism: US Intervention in the Russian Civil War, 1917-1920* (1995), and several articles including "American Hopes for the Transformation of Russia During the Second World War," in *Novaia i Noveishaia Istoriiia*, #1, 2003, 80-105 (in Russian); "Ten Myths About Russia," in *Problems of Post-Communism*, Vol. 49, No. 6 (November/December 2002), 3-15; "The Origins of the First American Crusade for a 'Free Russia': The Triumph of a 'Missionary' Mentality Over Russophilia," in *Rossiiia XXI*, No. 5, 2002, 100-133 (in Russian); "Roots of 'Liberation'" American Images of the Future of Russia in the Early Cold War, 1948-1953," in *The International History Review*, Vol. 21, No. 1 (March 1999), 57-79; "Redeeming Russia? American Missionaries and Tsarist Russia, 1886-1917," in *Religion, State and Society*, Vol. 25, No. 4 (December 1997), 353-368.

Walter L. Hixson is professor of history and Interim Chair since 2006 at the University of Akron. Hixson received a Ph.D. from the University of Colorado in 1981. His books include *Myth to Power: National Identity and U.S. Foreign Policy* (2007), the subject of a forthcoming H-Diplo roundtable; *Murder, Culture, and Injustice: Four Sensational Cases in American History* (2000); *Parting the Curtain: Propaganda, Culture, and the Cold War, 1945-1961* (1997); *Charles A. Lindbergh, Lone Eagle* (Longman, 3rd ed., 2006); *Witness to Disintegration: Provincial Life in the Last Year of the USSR* (1993); *George F. Kennan, Cold War Iconoclast* (1989.) which received the Bernath Prize, Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations. Among his recent articles and review essays are "Empire As a Way of Life," forthcoming in *Diplomatic History*; "Leffler Takes a Linguistic Turn," *Diplomatic History*, (June 2005): 419-421; and "The Vindication of 'X'? Reassessing Kennan After the Cold War," *The Historian*, 59 (Summer 1997): 849-58.

Deborah Welch Larson is professor of political science at the University of California, Los Angeles. She received her B.A. from Texas Christian University (1973) and her Ph.D. from Stanford (1983) before teaching at University of Southern California and Columbia University. Her dissertation won the American Political Science Association Helen Dwight Reid for international relations. Her research draws on cognitive social psychology to explain foreign policy decision making, as in *Origins of Containment: A Psychological Explanation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985). She is the author most recently of *Anatomy of Mistrust: U.S.-Soviet Relations during the Cold War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997) and *Good Judgment in Foreign Policy: Theory and Application* (Lanham, Md., 2003) (with Stanley Renshon).

Her current research concerns the use of pattern-recognition in foreign policy decision making and the role of mistrust in international relations. She is involved in research with Alexei Shevchenko on how status concerns and identity affect Russian foreign policy. An example of this line of research appears in "Shortcut to Greatness: New Thinking and the Revolution in Soviet Foreign Policy," *International Organization*, Vol. 57 (Winter 2003) (with Alexei Shevchenko), 77-110 which explains Gorbachev's foreign policy revolution.

Katherine A. S. Sibley, Professor and Chair, History Department, Saint Joseph's University, Philadelphia, received her Ph.D. in 1991 from the University of California, Santa Barbara. She is most recently the author of *Red Spies in America: Stolen Secrets and the Dawn of the Cold War* (2004); she also published *The Cold War* (1998) and *Loans and Legitimacy: The Evolution of Soviet-American Relations, 1919-1933* (1996). She is presently working on a

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book about First Lady Florence Harding. She also edits a book series, the *History of International Relations, Diplomacy, and Intelligence*, with Brill Publishers, Leiden, and serves on the editorial boards of *Diplomatic History* and *American Communist History*. She formerly sat on the SHAFR council and several SHAFR prize committees, and is a current member of the Historical Advisory Committee for the U.S. State Department's Office of the Historian.

Victoria Zhuravleva is an Associate Professor of History in the Department of World Politics at Russian State University for the Humanities, Moscow, Russia. Her field is American history, with a specialization in U.S. foreign policy and Russian-American relations. She is especially interested on the ways Americans and Russians used to think about each other. She prepared three parts in the edition of source documents *Rossiia i SShA: Diplomaticheskie Otnosheniia. 1900-1917. (Russia and the US: Diplomatic Relations. 1900-1917.)* (1999). She has also written more than 40 articles for leading Russian scholarly journals on images of Russian-American Relations and was the editor of volume *Russian-American Relations in Past and Present: Images, Myths, and Reality* (2007). In addition, she has published the text-book *Vsemirnaia Istorii XX veka (World History of the 21st Century)* (2002) co-authored with Igor Dolutskii. Now she is working on a book entitled "Understanding Russia in the United States: Images and Myths (1881-1914)."

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