

Ivan the Terrible in the Russian Historiography of the 19th–21st Centuries

Problems, Methodology, Opinions

VLADIMIR PANOV

Hardly any Russian ruler has been subjected to such contradictory handling or has inspired heated centuries-long arguments as Ivan IV the Terrible (Russian „Ivan Grozny“). During the last two centuries one could witness the rise of an interdisciplinary field of academic knowledge which can be called „the Grozny studies“ (in Russian, *groznovyedenie*).¹ Its main task could be stated as studying his personality and rule, often with the addition of adjoining problems and usually with the reflection on Ivan's role in Russian history. European historians of early modern period are also interested in that figure in no small part due to a milestone in the 16th century European politics, the Livonian war that Ivan unleashed. That said, the Russian historiography of the whole field is still relatively unknown, so this paper is going to describe its main problems, concepts and opinions that have been forming since the 19th century.

The 19th Century and Ivan's Personality: Tsar's Paranoia as the Destiny of Russia?

Since the assessment of Ivan's personality and rule has always played an important role in the Grozny studies, we can safely say that three lines of studies emerged along these lines – „apologetic“, „criticizing“ and „objectivist“. The naming is somewhat arbitrary since those lines has never existed in their pure forms (they even rarely perceive their own existence.) In a paradigm of descriptive and politically tilted „history of reigns“ that dominated the Russian historiography from the 18th century, those lines studied mainly four categories of problems.

The first category embraces the personality of Ivan the Terrible which was long considered to be the key to his reign (1533–1584), hence the deep academic interest in his nature, mind and psyche (especially mental pathology), his religious and ecclesiastico-political beliefs, and lastly, in moral assessments of his rule.

.....

¹ The notion „*Grozny studies*“ (*groznovyedenie*) is not at all common in Russia. Quite the reverse, it is barely recognized and used. Still, we deem it promising (not only because the other possible names – *The Terrible studies? Terriblistics?* – sound like an academic joke). Firstly, it enables to operate within an interdisciplinary field. Secondly, it describes a group of precisely stated problems connected with the key figure of the „Russian 16th century“ and is very convenient to use. Thirdly, the Russian historiography has already collected a huge body of literature about Ivan IV created by successive, intertwined and polemizing lines of study. Therefore, the Grozny studies have already become an important and notable field of the Russian historical thought and should be recognized as such.

Methodology-wise, that contributed to deep psychological logic and background of the Russian national school of history. At the intersection of history and medical science there even emerged a so-called psychiatry sub-line² of the Grozny studies that explained Ivan's heavy use of terror solely by his paranoia. Although it never succeeded in tying up Ivan's policies to the greater historical context of his time and thus led to a dead-end, professional historians through all of the 19th century customarily described Ivan the Terrible as a „maniac“³, „beast“⁴, „half-mad“⁵ or „crowned psychopath“.⁶

The second category embraced home policies of Ivan IV and his wars against the Tartars. Administrative reforms that led to monarchical consolidation of power hold their special place here, along with the conquests of Kazan and Astrakhan. In the late 19th century an academic interest in the shaping of Russian estates (landowning servicemen/nobility), socioeconomic

history (the enslavement of peasants) and social conflicts swiftly arose.

This category adjoins to the third one, studying the oprichnina⁷ and Ivan's terror that often formed a separate field of studies owing to its immense and unprecedented scale. As for the fourth and the last category of historiographic problems, it is formed by foreign policy of the early modern Russian state with the special place of the Livonian war in it. It should be noted that we arranged those categories in an order close to chronological, i.e. according to how early or late they got massive or focused attention of Russian historians, though in this contribution we are giving special consideration to the Livonian war.

Nikolay Karamzin (1766–1826), a founding father of the modern Russian historiography and the alleged founder of the objectivist line in Grozny studies, highlighted the tsar's personality and his home policies in their interrelatedness. It was he who established many of the

² Here is one example of an author who was both a historian and a brilliant psychiatrist Pavel KOVALEVSKY, *Ioann Grozny i Yego Dushhevnoye Sostoyaniye [Ivan the Terrible and His Mental State]*, Saint Petersburg 1901, volume 3.

³ Nikolai MIKHAILOVSKY, *Kriticheskiye Opyty [Critical Essays]*, Saint Petersburg 1887–1894, volume 1, p. 112.

⁴ Nikolai KARAMZIN, *Istoriya Gosudarstva Rossiyskogo [A History of the Russian State]*, Moscow 2016, p. 1190.

⁵ Nikolai KOSTOMAROV, *Russkaya Istoriya v Zhiznyeyepisaniyach Yeyo Glavnyeyshich Deyatelei [A History of Russia Through Biographies of Its Main Figures]*, Moscow 1995, p. 378.

⁶ Alexander KIZEVETTER, *Ivan Grozny i Yego Opponenty [Ivan the Terrible and His Opponents]*, Moscow 1898, p. 5.

⁷ The oprichnina (stemming from the Russian word „oprich“ meaning „apart from/except for that“) was a land and administrative reform of 1565–1572 that gave a large swath of Russia under direct control of Ivan IV and spawned a raider and punishing force (the oprichniki, oprichniki) comprised of the nobility, notorious by its bloody mass terror. See also Isabel de MADARIAGA, *Ivan the Terrible: First Tsar of Russia*, New Haven–London 2005.

reference points in the Grozny studies. Namely, Karamzin is known to give Ivan both his epithet „the Terrible“ and his regnal number.⁸ As a historian deeply influenced by ideas of the Enlightenment Age and natural law, he held moral value of historical characters in great esteem. Being the court historiographer of the Russian Empire at the same time, Nikolay Karamzin was writing a history of the state in the first place. Both factors were critical to his choice of themes and subjects.

It comes as no surprise that Karamzin gave high appraisal to Ivan's efforts of power consolidation, his legislative, judicial and administrative reforms and to his victories over the Tartars and colonization of Siberia.⁹ Interestingly, he pays scarce attention to Ivan's coronation as a tsar at the same time, despite the fact that it was the first and the most noticeable political act of the monarch. The reason is that formally Ivan wasn't the first tsar of Russia and Karamzin knew it.¹⁰ The political motive behind the coronation was pretty

clear: Ivan wanted to be treated as equal to other monarchs of Europe and Asia.¹¹

Conversely, Karamzin pays much more attention to the oprichnina, although he describes its campaign of mass terror more vividly than the land reform itself. Constantly citing Russian chronicles and historical stories (istoricheskiye povesti; both belonged to his most heavily used sources), Nikolay Karamzin covers Ivan's extermination of opposition in great detail. He considers exiles and execution to be mainly Ivan's bloody and morally unacceptable whims (and the author never hides his disgust.) In his eyes, the repressions were both historically aimless and fruitless and had nothing to do with the struggle against the real political opposition headed by Prince Vladimir Staritsky. The fact that later Ivan did had the prince killed only looks like another meaningless execution after all the bloodbaths in Moscow, Tver and Novgorod.¹² Lastly, it was also Karamzin who came up with the historiographic concept of „the dualized tsar“, of two actors hidden

⁸ Interestingly, Ivan's father and grandfather were also called „Grozny“ (meaning „terrible“, „formidable“, „fearsome“). The tsar himself got it through folk songs of his time. As for the regnal number, during Karamzin's life he was officially called „Ivan the First“ because he was the first ruling Russian tsar, not „Ivan IV“.

⁹ N. KARAMZIN, *Istoriya*, p. 1191.

¹⁰ *IBIDEM*, p. 932–933. As Karamzin notes, the first coronation of a tsar in the history of Russia happened at the behest of Ivan's grandfather, Ivan III the Great, who crowned his grandson Dmitry back in 1498. In 1547, when Ivan himself was crowned, the ritual was borrowed from precisely that coronation. Later his tsar's court decided to downplay the Dmitry's precedence for political reasons so that Ivan IV could call himself the first tsar of Russia. It worked well: Dmitry's tsardom was forgotten for years to come not only by his successors, but by some historians as well. Later this fact was highlighted by Solovyov who also gave scarce attention to Grozny's coronation Sergey SOLOVYOV, *Istoriya Rossii s Drevnyeyshikh Vremyon [History of Russia from the Earliest Times]*, Moscow 2001, p. 208.

¹¹ N. KARAMZIN, *Istoriya*, p. 1191.

¹² *IBIDEM*, p. 1074.

in the same person. A far-seeing reformer and a successful general of 1550–1560s in the blink of an eye becomes a tyrant who alternates sadistic executions with public repentance.¹³

Karamzin was opposed by the founder of apologetic line of the Grozny studies, **Konstantin Kavelin** (1818–1885). The latter insisted that Ivan had laid the foundation for the whole political development of Russian since he fought both boyars and princes who undermined the young monarchy, and the Poles who tried to spread their influence in the north-eastern regions.¹⁴ Kavelin's approach was pioneering: he called to study Ivan's rule in the context of politics of Muscovite dynasty and to consider him as a herald and defender of tsarist autocracy.¹⁵ As for the terror of oprichnina, Kavelin describes it as fruitless but not meaningless. Rather, it was an alleged attempt to reach the right goal by the wrong means.

Sergey Solovyov (1820–1879), a well-known follower of the objectivist line and the founder of so-called statist school of history, succeeded in separating the terror

of oprichnina from other deeds of Ivan the Terrible. Solovyov was interested in Ivan's personality much less than in historical backbone of his reign. The main feature of Ivan's rule, the historian argued, was the end of centuries-long process: the system of feuding princely and boyar clans (rodovoye nachalo) gave way to a statist monarchical rule. Hence his emphasis on administrative reforms of Ivan the Terrible and his conquests of Kazan and Astrakhan, feats that Solovyov appreciated the most. The tsar secured a triumph for the whole Old Continent (that now „marched under the Christian colours of the ruler of Muscovy“¹⁶) and thus symbolically headed Europe.¹⁶ That's how the study of Ivan's achievements in the European historical context little by little began.

Ivan the Terrible also attained Solovyov's appraisal as an educated tsar who had allegedly consolidated his power basing on will of the people. A democratic monarch of sort, Ivan got popular support in his struggle against the boyars who tried to stop Russia in her drift towards the autocratic rule.¹⁷ That's why,

.....

¹³ IBIDEM, p. 1026–1027. This concept is probably rooted in the famous correspondence between Prince Andrei Kurbsky and Ivan the Terrible, where Kurbsky notes some striking changes in Ivan's way of ruling Nikolai USTRYALOV (ed.), *Skazaniya Knyazya Kurbskogo [The Writings of Prince Kurbsky]*, Saint Petersburg 1868, p. 213.

¹⁴ KONSTANTIN KAVELIN, *Mysli i Zametki o Russkoy Istorii [Thoughts and notes on the History of Russia]*, Saint Petersburg 1904, p. 640. This thought definitely echoes official and religious publicism of 17th–18th centuries.

¹⁵ A. KIZEVETTER, *Ivan Grozny*, p. 6–8.

¹⁶ S. SOLOVYOV, *Istoriya Rossii*, p. 214. Solovyov's influential multivolume edition became a paradigmatic work and an example for the next generations of Russian historians.

¹⁷ A. KIZEVETTER, *Ivan Grozny*, p. 15. This Solovyov's framework, an evident offspring of Kavelin's, was later criticized by Kizevetter. The latter insisted that the boyars, in a strict sense, never formed well-established aristocracy whose economic oppression could be so tough that peasants would seek

in a radical departure from Karamzin's writings, Solovyov evaluates not only the moral side of Ivan's terror, but its political rationale as well. The tsar, he insists, was opposed by real, not imaginary foes whom Ivan IV nevertheless fought with horrible weapons. Morality-wise, the terror was even more horrifying and dangerous. Ivan's efforts to drown boyars and princes in their own blood, with the killing of common people by thousands along the way, eventually destroyed social institutions and ties, crushing the moral foundation on which the Russian society was resting upon. The result was the Time of Troubles (Smuta of 1598–1613) with its crises and unrest.¹⁸

Not long before Solovyov wrote that, the criticizing line had emerged in the Grozny studies at the behest of **Mikhail Pogodin** (1800–1875). It paid a lot of attention to Ivan's personality and psychopathological traits. Pogodin, a Karamzin's student and later a famous historian and archaeographer himself, insisted that every Ivan's reform and achievement, starting from coronation, was designed and put to life by the tsar's inner circle and in no way by Ivan himself. The tsar, as described by Pogodin, looked more like an unruly sadist whose mind and soul succumbed to humiliation, loneliness and scenes of

violence, all deeply rooted in his parentless childhood.¹⁹ Later Pogodin's co-thinkers considered Ivan IV as a useless political figure in the Russian historical process at best and an utterly pernicious at worst, since his unfinished reforms, the Livonian war and utterly immoral and despicable repressions led straightly to the Time of Troubles. Problem-wise, the critics placed the emphasis on the terror of oprichnina, mass extermination of Novgorod population and massacre of apaganee princes. It was noted that although Ivan hadn't been the first ruler of Muscovy who resorted to bloodbaths, he outmatched his own father and grandfather by the scale and uselessness of his terror.

A consistent and brilliant psychological narrative combining criticizing and objective approaches became the trademark of **Vassily Klyuchevsky** (1841–1911). With the use of the same frequently cited Russian chronicles he managed to complete one of the key tasks of the 19th century Grozny studies. Klyuchevsky highlighted the psychological background of Ivan's deeds while showing them in the context of political, social and religious history. He also opened new grounds in another field of studies. It was Klyuchevsky who looked at Russia „by the eyes of the others“ and summarized an array of important primary

.....
 tsar's defence to escape enslavement. Princes of Muscovy themselves enslaved peasants with the same vigor, though in different ways.

¹⁸ S. SOLOVYOV, *Istoriya Rossii*, 2001, p. 666.

¹⁹ It is no coincidence that one of the most detailed and cited Pogodin's works dedicated to Grozny handled personality and temper of the tsar Mikhail POGODIN, *O kharaktere Ivana Groznogo [On Ivan the Terrible's Nature]*. In: Mikhail POGODIN, *Istoriko-kriticheskiye Otryvki [Historical and Critical Excerpts]*, Moscow 1825.

sources – writings of foreigners about the 16th century Russia.²⁰

Klyuchevsky called Ivan IV an overestimated politician who failed to act upon his own plans and thus became a hindrance in the way of Russia's development. Ivan allegedly wasn't a distinguished statesman at all, rather he became an unnecessary, redundant actor in the Russian state-building of the early modern period.²¹ That said, Ivan the Terrible was an eminent and well-educated political writer and thinker of his time, a spiritual father of the Russian tsarist autocracy.

Klyuchevsky was one of the first historians who looked at the oprichnina from the politico-administrative point of view and thus called it a mistake which „aimed to extinguish unrest but paved way to anarchy instead“.²² It helped to cope with no state task but created social rifts, exhausted economy and thus became a prelude to the Troubled Times. In a way, the oprichnina could have served to Ivan IV only as a security tool amidst a number of treasons, mostly imaginary but sometimes real (for instance, when Prince Andrei Kurbsky fled to Lithuania after one of terror campaigns.) As we can see, Klyuchevsky once again underlines a psychological motive here.

His student **Alexander Kizevetter** (1866–1933) conducted a somewhat deeper and more detailed study of the oprichnina origins. Kizevetter's aim was to prove that Ivan's personal drawbacks influenced only shape and scale of his terror campaigns but not the essence and implication of that old political practice of Muscovy.²³ According to Kizevetter, Ivan was fighting real and powerful foes, and those were not the boyars but the apauage princes. The mighty house of Muscovy fought them one generation after another, at the same time building its own ruthless tool of a state, a military and economical machine deprived of any freedoms for any societal class.²⁴

That's why Kizevetter tried to disprove what could be called „the Kavelin – Solovyov framework“ of the age-old struggle between clan and monarchical elements that Ivan IV was said to successfully end in favour of monarchy. Kizevetter was proving that Moscow princes had been building not the all-Russian state but a regular apauage principedom (ud'elnoye knyazhestvo) from the very start. In times of Ivan the Terrible adjectives „Russian“ and „Moscow“ were not at all synonyms since the all-Russian national consciousness

²⁰ Vassily KLYUCHEVSKY, *Skazaniya Inostrantsev o Moskovskom Gosudarstve [Foreigners' Stories About the Muscovy State]*, Moscow 2012.

²¹ Klyuchevsky openly calls Ivan the first but „needless“ tsar: „Without Ivan the life of Moscow State would have established itself the same way as with Ivan, only that without him everything would go easier and smoother than it went with him and after him“. Vassily KLYUCHEVSKY, *Polny Kurs Lektsiy po Russkoi Istorii [A Full Study Course of the History of Russia]*, Moscow 2005, p. 311.

²² V. KLYUCHEVSKY, *Polny Kurs*, p. 304.

²³ A. KIZEVETTER, *Ivan Grozny*, p. 14.

²⁴ *IBIDEM*, p. 14–15.

was in its infancy. As for Ivan's supposed position of an ideologue of autocracy, that doesn't make sense either because what he preached looks more like a God-blessed tyranny than like a typical autocracy.²⁵

To study not terror campaigns but the oprichnina land reform in its depth (and to separate the two) was the task of **Sergey Platonov** (1860–1933), one of the first Russian historians to tackle it. As an objectivist, he nevertheless called the oprichnina a meaningful measure and even more, a relatively progressive one. Its alleged aim was to „crash-change“ the land-tenure system of the old apauage principdoms with a belt of economically effective lands. That should have placed high agricultural, trade and customs revenues under the tsar's control.²⁶ It is therefore evident that Platonov considered the oprichnina to be a successful weapon against old aristocracy. In his eyes it was mostly a weapon of economy, not of violence, in spite of terror waves that the historian never justified.²⁷ In due course we'll see how the Soviet historiography would develop that concept of the progressive oprichnina.

Meanwhile the critical line in the Grozny studies almost came to an end in the end of 19 century. It culminated (and came to a dead-end at the same time) in writings of **Nikolay Kostomarov** (1817–1885). It was not only terror that the historian was mostly keen to study, but also the process of shaping Ivan's personality and mind, although Kostomarov seemed to break no new grounds there. As for the tsar's policies, he described them as a string of failures (though he never studied most of them in great details.) In Kostomarov's view, Ivan the Terrible was a victim of childhood mental traumas that made him a deeply dependent, malicious person²⁸ and thus laid the groundwork for his whole rule.²⁹ Ivan was pictured as the incarnated evil. Kostomarov describes mass terror against the people of Novgorod and the old boyar and apauage prince families not even as a politically meaningless act (as Karamzin did), but rather as some sadistic sport, a bloody end in itself.³⁰ As for Kostomarov's pioneering studies of Russian foreign politics of early modern

.....
²⁵ *IBIDEM*, p. 68.

²⁶ Sergey PLATONOV, *K Istorii Oprichniny XVI Vyeaka [Notes on the 15th Century Oprichnina History]*, Moscow 1897, p. 13. Among his works there is also an Ivan's biography that caused much less debate but nevertheless entered the short bookshelf of the Russian monographs about Grozny translated into a foreign language – Sergey PLATONOV, *Ivan the Terrible*, Gulf Breeze 1974.

²⁷ Platonov assumes that the terror might have nothing to do with the land reform itself. It allegedly wasn't used as its tool and only coincided with it, but later they nevertheless were fused together by some indiscriminate authors S. PLATONOV, *K Istorii*, p. 15.

²⁸ N. KOSTOMAROV, *Russkaya Istoriya*, p. 367–368. Even the regulation for the oprichniki force (ustav), Kostomarov alleges, was written not by Ivan himself but by some of his „favourites“. *IBIDEM*, p. 375.

²⁹ *IBIDEM*, p. 327.

³⁰ *IBIDEM*, p. 370. Kostomarov often notes that Ivan the Terrible „amuses himself with bloodbaths“.

period, including the Livonian war, they showed much more depth and detail.

The Livonian War: the Apogee of the Russian Foreign Policy of 16th Century

This quarter century-long conflict in the Baltic region, Ivan's main undertaking in foreign policy, was mentioned by every Russian historian, though Kostomarov was the first to explore it thoroughly. He used mostly German and Livonian chronicles and to a lesser extent, Russian chronicles and chronographs as primary sources. The primary cause for the war, as seen by Kostomarov, was not a breakthrough to the Baltic Sea trade routes (a motive that later dominated the Soviet historiography), but rather constant expansionist outspread of the Moscow state, some kind of aggression inertia started by the conquests of Kazan and Astrakhan.³¹ Kostomarov wrote about the Baltic trade too. But again, he described it an assertive effort of catching up military and technical backwardness of Russia, an act that made her worried neighbours to unite and oppose her militarily.³² The historian presented an in-depth description of hostilities along with the vivid scenes of

Ivan's terror campaign in Livonia. A large swath of study covers diplomacy and the foreign policy of Poland, Denmark, Sweden and the Holy Roman Empire. The account of events ends in 1562, so Kostomarov analyzed only the first period of the war which was successful enough for Ivan IV, although it provoked two more decades of not so victorious hostilities. It should be noted here that Russian historians started to explore the Livonian war within a wider paradigm of the so-called Baltic question only in late 19th century, abandoning their habitual and relatively narrow regional-political context.³³

That new approach called for more detailed and in-depth study of European politics of the time. It was **Konstantin Bestuzhev-Ryumin** (1829–1897) who presented such a comprehensive story of war preparations and its diplomatic support using German and Livonian primary sources. According to the historian, Ivan IV started the conflict that proved to be pivotal for his reign because Livonia had been blocking Russo-European trade, while the conquest of Livonia itself was a secondary task for Moscow.³⁴ Note that similar causes of the

³¹ „Muscovy emerged with the help of land grabs, being subject to a rule that every state survives by that very means that helped to establish it“. Nikolai KOSTOMAROV, *Istoricheskiye Monografii [Monographs on History]*, Saint Petersburg 1867, volume 3, p. 48.

³² N. KOSTOMAROV, *Istoricheskiye*, p. 48.

³³ This approach was followed in a number of works, including Georgiy (G. V.) FORSTEN, *Baltiyskiy Vopros v XVI–XVII Stoletiyakh (1544–1648) [The Baltic Question in the 16th–17th Centuries (1544–1648)]*, Saint Petersburg 1893, volumes 1 and 2; Alexander BASHMAKOV, *Baltiyskiy Vopros [The Baltic Question]*, Revel 1894.

³⁴ Konstantin BESTUZHEV-RYUMIN, *Russkaya Istoriya [A History of Russia]*, Saint Petersburg 1885, volume 2, p. 230–233. Bestuzhev highlights the political motive of defeating the Livonian Order, „an old foe of Russia“, hence the imminent need to occupy its territory that could be grabbed by some aggressive neighbours of Russia and used to her disadvantage.

war were highlighted earlier by Solovyov (Livonia was valued by Muscovy as both a western trade route and an easy prey³⁵) while Klyuchevsky emphasized what could be called a war for better trade.³⁶ No matter what exactly caused the conflict, Russia was unable to win owing to her structural weaknesses, forays of the Crimean Tartars and Ivan's lack of diplomatic and military talents, concluded Bestuzhev. As soon as those factors ceased to have impact, the same historical task was successfully completed by Peter the Great.³⁷

The last phase of the Livonian war (1570–1582) was explored by **Witold Novodvorsky** (1861–1923) in the context of Russo-Polish struggle. His monograph presented very detailed, if somewhat arid, description of hostilities and diplomatic contacts through the lens of German and Polish primary sources barely touched by the Russian historiography. Among the main results of the war that would fully come into play in the Troubled Times Novodvorsky mentioned fast strengthening of Poland along with sharp decline of Russian economy.³⁸ To put it briefly, in the 19th century the Livonian war came to

dominate foreign policy problems of the early modern period that the Russian historiography was prone to leave in neglect. Still, at that point historians started to closely examine some adjacent problems including diplomatic ties of Muscovy and the Holy Roman Empire in the early 16th century.³⁹

The Oprichnina in the Soviet Historiography: Indifference, Praise, Condemnation

The revolution of 1917 gave life to the Soviet historical studies with their special methodology, thematical emphases and framework of categories and concepts. The new heavily politicized paradigm of historical materialism made it impossible (and outright dangerous) to develop the „old-time“ legacy of Russian historiography. At the same time it established class-specific approaches to history with the domination of political context and predetermined opinions. That resulted in stagnation in the Grozny studies where hardly any groundbreaking research emerged up to the late 1940s. Since Bolshevik historians were prone to diminish

³⁵ S. SOLOVYOV, *Istoriya Rossii*, p. 215.

³⁶ V. KLYUCHEVSKY, *Polny Kurs*, p. 297.

³⁷ K. BESTUZHĚV-RYUMIN, *Russkaya Istoriya*, p. 319.

³⁸ Witold NOVODVORSKY, *Bor'ba za Livoniyu Mezhdū Moskvoyu i Ryetchyu Pospolitoyu [The Fight For Livonia Between Moscow and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth]*, Saint Petersburg 1904, p. 303.

³⁹ This problem was brought to light namely by Wilhelm (V. V.) BAUER, *Snosbeniya Rossii s Germanskimi Imperatorami [Russia's Relations With the German Emperors]*, in: Zhurnal Ministerstva Narodnogo Prosveshcheniya [*Journal of Ministry of Education*], Nr. 3, 1870; Grigoriy PISSAREVSKY, *K Istorii Snosbeniy Rossii s Germanskimi Imperatorami v Nachale XVI Veka. [To the History of Russia's Relations with the German Emperors at the Beginning of the 16th Century]*, in: Chteniya v Imperatorskom Obshchestve Istории i Drevnostey Rossiyskikh [*Readings in the Emperor's Society of Russian History and Ancientries*], Nr. 2, 1895.

the role of an individual in history in favour of classes and socioeconomic formations, personality, mental traits and religious beliefs of Ivan the Terrible meant nothing to them. That approach brought the whole layer of historical studies to a halt. Equally, Soviet academics lost almost any interest in Ivan's foreign policy, which they often oversimplified. Instead they wrote volumes about social and economic history, including social conflicts.

Relying on precisely that Marxist methodology and choice of themes, **Mikhail Pokrovsky** (1868–1932), the head of the Soviet historiography and the author of so-called theory of trade capitalism (that allegedly predated industrial capitalism), rewrote the whole course of Russian history. As a result, every character of early modern period was officially proclaimed a tool of a trading or a land-owning class, while the autocratic tsarist rule of 16th century was downgraded to mere trade capital in Monomakh's cap. As an alleged servant to the trade capital Ivan IV conquered both the Tartars and Livonia to control trade routes.⁴⁰ The oprichnina was now defined as a coup

d'état, „*the dictatorship of the nobility and merchantry*“ and a wave of class terror, to which Ivan was only a tool but not a mastermind.⁴¹

Yet in 1936 the concept of trade capitalism was formally dethroned as a distortion of Marxism. The Soviet historiography saw an unexpected rise of positive-only appraisals of personality and policies of Ivan IV, probably for the first time since the 17th century. The enslavement of peasants that originated from Ivan's rule was proclaimed his pivotal achievement that helped to abolish the moribund class of boyars. (As bad from the class viewpoint as it was, the enslavement was still treated as a historically progressive move on the way to higher socioeconomic formations.) Ivan was officially admitted to have some „*psycho-pathological traits*“⁴², but in the light of his class-specific policies that meant nothing. At that point the Soviet academia were using some ideas of a Russian émigré historian **Robert Wipper** (1859–1954) who had been developing his own apology of Ivan as early as in 1920s, and twenty years later replanted it to the Soviet soil.

.....
⁴⁰ „*The trade capital, resting upon landowners, starts its fight for the access to the Baltic Sea*“. Mikhail POKROVSKY, *Russkaya Istoriya v Samom Szhatom Ocherke [A Russian History in the Most Concise Review]*, Moscow 1925, p. 44.

⁴¹ IBIDEM, „*Ivan mattered not so much for the coup d'état*“. A showcase of the class approach and dominating Marxist dogma.

⁴² This attitude was cemented by an official academic mouthpiece of the USSR, The Great Soviet Encyclopedia (*Bolshaya Sovetskaya Entsiklopediya*, entry „Иван Грозный“ (Ivan Grozny) by Militsa NYECHKINA, Moscow 1932.) It strikes the eye that the „Grozny's cult“ emerged right before the start of the Stalin's terror campaign and meant liquidation of the Pokrovsky's school (including physical extermination.) Ivan the Terrible was now a historically progressive figure who was praised even more in the years of the World War II and the Cold war. That was a stone in the ideological foundation of the renewed Russian patriotism that Stalin's regime looked for and ultimately found.

Wipper openly idolized Ivan the Terrible, claiming that accounts of his atrocities and paranoia were no more than exaggeration of foreign propaganda and of „*some sentimental enlighteners*“ like Karamzin.⁴³ Wipper insisted that Ivan IV was managing the same historical tasks of power consolidation and international expansion as William of Orange or Queen Elisabeth I did. And since the tsar acted in much more severe conditions of chaos in a young state, he deserves much more praise than them. Needless to say that the oprichnina was justified while the Livonian war was described as a catastrophe not for only Russia but mostly for its ruler. Wipper's Ivan thus evolved from a politician responsible for the long and bloody Baltic gamble to its mere victim, a sort of tragic character.⁴⁴

A new approach to Ivan Grozny's historiography was secured by a set of generalizing works of the late 1940s.⁴⁵ As a rule, their authors preferred to describe Ivan's reign briefly but comprehensively, combining most of its politic, economic, social and even cultural aspects. The oprichnina was now regarded as an inevitable step of the struggle for autocracy following the unsuccessful reforms of

1550s that failed to limit the influence of the boyars. Ivan's cruelty was proclaimed inevitable too since the historians now saw the terror of oprichnina as a common political tool. That said, the repressions were now implicitly perceived as too large-scale because the authors made great lengths to defend them.

It's easy to see that the arid monographs of 1940–1950s developed the same concise and predetermined positive view of Ivan IV. Although cinema has nothing to do with the history studies, we must pay attention here to a famous document of the Soviet epoch, a film called „Ivan the Terrible“ (by Sergei Eisenstein, 1945, shot 1941–1945). It embodied the „Ivan's catechism“ for every Soviet historian at the behest of no less than Josef Stalin who had ordered the film, corrected its screenplay and personally instructed Eisenstein. A rare academic casus: the official image of „Soviet Grozny“ created in the Kremlin migrated to cinemas, reflecting the all-powerful historiographic dogma.⁴⁶

Ivan IV was now proclaimed a founder of the Russian centralized state, albeit the Soviet history counted its shaping from the 15th century. In the Livonian war he opposed the collective West, while back

⁴³ Robert WIPPER, *Ivan Grozny [Ivan the Terrible]*, Moscow 1944, p. 149. Interestingly, Wipper called Karamzin the first and the harshest critic of Ivan IV. According to Wipper, for Karamzin it was the way to highlight the virtues of tsar Alexander I and his grandmother Catherine the Great.

⁴⁴ Ivan „*lost the war owing to circumstances beyond his control*“. R. WIPPER, *Ivan Grozny*, p. 120.

⁴⁵ Sergey BAKHRUSHIN, *Ivan Grozny [Ivan the Terrible]*, Moscow 1942, p. 91. There was another work of lesser influence but with the same name (1944), written by another Ivan's advocate, Sergey Smirnov.

⁴⁶ This phenomenon, barely noticed in Russia, gave some Western authors an idea of „Grozny's personality cult“ mirroring that of Stalin – Maureen PERRIE, *The cult of Ivan the Terrible in Stalin's Russia*, Palgrave 2001.

at home he fought selfish and treacherous feudal lords who hindered the unification of Russia. Ivan embraced the image of a patriotic tsar who defended his people from the boyars' strife. What's more, he wasn't cruel and resolute enough in his cause, since the Troubled Times were now considered the result of a regrettably unfinished wave of terror.⁴⁷

Socioeconomic Trend in the Grozny Studies

Problems of social and economic history received much more of a deep and detailed coverage in the Soviet historiography. They were explored, among the others, by **Stepan Vesselovsky** (1876–1952), a representative of the prerevolutionary school of the Grozny studies and a criticizer (in the spirit of Klyuchevsky, not of Kostomarov) who considered oprichnina historically meaningless but used economic arguments that were irrefutable for Marxists. Vesselovsky, in his virtual debate with Platonov, argued that the oprichnina land fund comprised mainly of „new“ manorial lands,

not of „old“ apanage principedoms. Thus it had nothing to do with so-called progressive struggle against the boyars but instead boiled down to indiscriminate terror.⁴⁸ The book was allowed for publishing only after Stalin's (and by chance Vesselovsky's) death.

After the Soviet communist party denounced Stalin's personality cult in 1956, the apotheotic line in the Grozny studies abruptly came to an end. The criticizers prevailed again with their habitual academic focus on oprichnina. It was now proclaimed a meaningless terror campaign that caused the Times of Trouble but did nothing to promote consolidation of centralized state power, a process that was over before Ivan's rule.⁴⁹ Some historians went as far as to insist that the lost alternative to Ivan's reforms was parliamentary rule similar to that of England.⁵⁰ But soon the objectivistic line with its emphasis on social and economic problems came to the fore once again. Notably, **Alexander Zimin** (1920–1980) conducted a deep and thoughtful historic and economic

.....
⁴⁷ The concept was expressed and cemented in a famous saying of Joseph Stalin himself: „*Ivan the Terrible's didn't have a chance to butcher five of the most prominent feudal families and that was a mistake. If he had eliminated them, no Troubled Times would have come at all. But Ivan used to repent and pray for a long time after executions. God was only a hindrance to him... Ivan should have behaved much more resolutely*“, *Rossiyskaya Gazeta* (The Russian Newspaper) dated 25.01.2012, the official newspaper of the Russian Government.

⁴⁸ Stepan VESSELOVSKY, *Ocherki po Istorii Oprichniny [An Outline of History of the Oprichnina]*, Moscow 1963. He also summarized the pre-revolutionary historiography of the Grozny studies Stepan VESSELOVSKY, *Tsar Ivan Grozny v Rabotakh Pisatelei i Istorikov: Tri Statyi [Ivan the Terrible in the Works of Writers and Historians: Three Articles]*, Moscow 1999.

⁴⁹ V. N. SHEVYAKOV, *K voprosy ob Oprichnine pri Ivanye Groznom [Revisiting the Ivan the Terrible's Oprichnina]*, *Voprosy Istorii* 12, 1956, Nr. 9, p. 71–77.

⁵⁰ Sergey DUBROVSKY, *Protiv Idealizatsii Deyatelnosti Ivana IV [Against the Idealization of the Acts and Deeds of Ivan IV]*, *Voprosy Istorii* 12, 1956, Nr. 8, p. 121–129.

analysis of the oprichnina and zemshchina lands. It was the last of socioeconomic researches of such scale and depth.⁵¹ He was the first historian of Soviet training who used foreign literature within the approach he called pragmatic. To present the most detailed picture of establishing and liquidation of oprichnina the Soviet historiography ever produced, Zimin used the wide foundation of primary sources: chronicles, cadastres, monastery deposit books, lists and books lists and books of noble families, (*razryadnye knigi*), to name but a few. Like Platonov, he stated that the oprichnina had a clear objective, although he opposed Platonov's concept of „the relatively progressive oprichnina“ useful for the building of the Russian state. According to Zimin, that measure was intended to break to backbone of feudal separatism, represented by the Staritsky principedom, the Russian Orthodox Church and Novgorod. Although Ivan accomplished his task, the oprichnina became dangerously prolonged and thus degraded to a fatal terror campaign.⁵²

Zimin thus separates the repressions from the land reform itself, an allotment of lands under the special administrative and sometimes economic management. As for the rest, he wrote of Ivan the Terrible as of a controversial but outstanding ruler whose

main task was to overcome the feudal fragmentation of Russia. Other Soviet historians of 1970s also experimented with new approaches and gave more attention to foreign policy of early modern period using foreign primary sources and literature. Some of them put into practice the so-called method of horizontal time slices by Boris Porshnev who suggested studying Russian and foreign historical events in their entirety during limited time periods.⁵³

Ivan's Foreign Policy in the 20th Century Historiography: the Baltic Question Prevails

Soviet historiography is known for its scarce attention to Ivan's foreign policy and the Livonian war in particular since home policy (and socioeconomic trends) always came to the fore. Still, when studied in the 20th century, the conflict was always handled within a wider paradigm of the so-called Baltic question, usually from the viewpoint of the Russian government and its interests. A wider approach can also be noted which mentions the redefinition of Russia's role, place and interests in Europe (abandoned by Muscovy for centuries due to the Tartar yoke) among the reasons for war.

The one and only Soviet monograph dedicated to the Livonian war meets all of

⁵¹ In 1950, when Stalin was still alive, Pavel Sadikov published his own work about the oprichnina. He was also exploring economy of the oprichnina lands, but Zimin's large-scale and balanced monograph written on the new stage of historiography overshadowed that book. See Pavel SADIKOV, *Očerki po Istorii Oprichniny [An Outline of History of the Oprichnina]*, Moscow–Leningrad 1950.

⁵² Alexander ZIMIN, *Oprichnina Ivana Groznogo [The Oprichnina of Ivan the Terrible]*, Moscow 1964, chapter 10.

⁵³ Sergey SHMIDT, *Stanovleniye Russkogo Samoderzhavstva [The Establishing of the Russian Tsarist Autocracy]*, Moscow 1973, p. 201.

the mentioned requirements. It incessantly hailed Ivan the Terrible as a successful reformer, an opponent of the reactionary boyars and the mightiest of European monarchs.⁵⁴ The cause of war was the struggle for the Baltic shore convenient for trade. However, before taking up arms it would be prudent to solve the Crimean problem first and take into account the imminent opposition of Poland, Sweden and Denmark.⁵⁵ Ivan failed to do any of that, although Russia allegedly lost because of economic demise since the tsar didn't crush the opposition of princes and nobles in due course.⁵⁶ In context of Stalinist Grozny's historiography the message was unmistakably simple: the terror campaign was unleashed too late and waged not resolutely enough.

In the late 20th century foreign policy problems start to come to the fore in the Grozny studies. Some of them were handled in monographs of **Boris Florya** (1937) that set new standards in the Grozny studies. They bridged the gap in research of the diplomatic aspects of the Livonian war and of the Russo-Polish relations of 16th–17th centuries in general. The historian analyzed how foreign-policy ties between Russia and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth developed over time in all their width and with due

consideration of their „class content“ (an important requirement of the Marxist methodology.) According to Florya, Russia and Poland, although competing for Belorussian and Ukrainian lands, were steadily moving towards a feudal quasi-federation and military-political alliance. Among their common aims there were settling „the Baltic issue“ and opposing the Ottoman Empire together. However, in the late 16th century those plans were scrapped due to presumably aggressive stance of the Poles who intended to impose an unequal union on Moscow.⁵⁷

Florya explored the Livonian war again in his another influential book, a biography of Ivan the Terrible where he covered the topic within the traditional paradigm of the „trade breakthrough to the Baltic sea“ and long Russian struggle against the Livonian Order. Nevertheless, he assesses the hostilities and results of the conflict from a fresh perspective. Florya underlines an inextricable connection between the war, political development of Russia itself and shaping of Ivan's ruthless regime of unchallenged power. He ties the tsar's military failures, stemming from his efforts to simultaneously defeat Livonia and the Crimean Khanate, directly to the establishing of oprichnina. Both the war and the oprichnina had the same two points of

⁵⁴ Vladimir KOROLYUK, *Livonskaya Voïna [The Livonian War]*, Moscow 1954, p. 17. The author also hails Russia as „the mightiest military power in Europe“.

⁵⁵ V. KOROLYUK, *Livonskaya Voïna*, p. 24

⁵⁶ IBIDEM, p. 107.

⁵⁷ Boris FLORYA, *Russko-polskiye Otnosheniya i Politicheskoye Razvitiye Vostochnoi Evropy vo Vtoroi Polovinye XVI – Nachale XVII V. [Russo-Polish Relations and the Political Development of the Eastern Europe in the Second Half of 16th – early 17th Century]*, Moscow 1978, p. 288–289.

no return. The first one was passed when Ivan disbanded the inner circle of counselors and confidants headed by Alexei Adashev and metropolitan Sylvester. The second was the removal of the noblest boyar families from power, a coup d'état of sort. At that point Ivan assumed full personal responsibility for the subsequent home and foreign policy of Moscow.⁵⁸

The foreign-policy problems of early modern period gained fresh perspectives of the newly emerged Russian military history studies, historical anthropology and history of mentalities after the Soviet Union crumbled in 1991. The Livonian war, scarcely explored before, became the subject of a dozen of books.⁵⁹ Monographs of **Alexander Filyushkin** (1970) stand there in the league of their own by their scale and methodology.⁶⁰ His approach is strikingly fresh since what Filyushkin described were not hostilities and diplomatic contacts but a history of perception of the Livonian war from the 16th century and up to our day. His academic style is a fusion of heuristic research, cultural

anthropology, military history and history of mentalities. The so-called perception of the other, a look at people of different cultural, religious and ethnic background, becomes a full-fledged topic of exploration along with political events. Using a wide range of Russian, German, Polish primary sources, the historian compares Russian records and opinions with that of Europeans, their understanding of their own roles in history, and also explores different discourses of the war.

Some notable novelties should be underlined here in greater detail. Filyushkin questions both the notion of the Livonian war itself (he writes about a string of several interconnected conflicts⁶¹) and the paradigm of fifteen-decade Russian fight for the Baltic. The latter, as Filyushkin argues, looks more like a historical discourse than like a valid political stimulus of the Russian government because Moscow did have its own stripe of Baltic shore both before and after the Livonian war. What was much more important, continues the author, is the first large-scale conflict

⁵⁸ Boris FLORYA, *Ivan Grozny [Ivan the Terrible]*, Moscow 1999, p. 103.

⁵⁹ Among those the following works should be noted: Vladimir VOLKOV, *Voisko Groznogo Tsarya [The Terrible Tsar's Army]*, Moscow 2016; Valery POLUYKO, *Polotsky Pokhod Glazami Sovremennikov [The Polotsk Campaign as Seen by Contemporaries]*, Moscow 1998; Alexander SHAPRAN, *Livonskaya Voina 1558–1583 [The Livonian War, 1558–1583]*, Yekaterinburg 2009; Andrei YANUSHKEVITCH, *Livonskaya Voina 1558–1670 Godov i Velikoye Knyazbestvo Litovskoye [The Livonian War in 1558–1570 and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania]*, Minsk 2013.

⁶⁰ Alexander FLYUSHKIN, *Ivan Grozny Protiv Evropy: Livonskaya Voina Glazami Sovremennikov i Potomkov [Ivan the Terrible vs Europe: the Livonian War as Seen by Contemporaries and Descendants]*, Saint Petersburg 2013.

⁶¹ This concept was developed in the monograph where Filyushkin deconstructs the Livonian war as a more or less artificial notion brought to life by Nikolai Karamzin Alexander FLYUSHKIN, *Izobretaya Pervuyu Voynu Rossii i Evropy: Baltiyskiye Voiny Glazami Sovremennikov i Potomkov [Inventing the First War Between Russia and Europe: the Baltic Wars as Seen by Contemporaries and Descendants]*, Saint Petersburg 2013.

of Russia and the West as two different cultures and civilizations.

A prominent medievalist **Anna Khoroshkevitch** (1931–2017) diligently explored 16th century Russia's role and place on the international scene, showing why and how Moscow came back to European power game using political connections and matrimonial relations.⁶² It should be noted though that in spite of those stimulating researches and the refreshed interest in the 16th century Russian foreign policy, post-Soviet historians haven't produced a single book about Russian and European (Habsburg in particular) diplomacy yet. The reason may lie in a traditional dominance of home policy subjects along with the high politicization of foreign relations that many historians tend to avoid.

Post-Soviet Historiography: A Plethora of Problems, Methodologies and Opinions

In the twilight years of Soviet academia new approaches in the Grozny studies were already on the move, while historians' interest shifted mostly from Ivan's foreign policy to home policy. **Ruslan Skrynnikov** (1931–2009) explored the terror campaign of oprichnina and proclaimed it a wave of violence without a single meaningful target that shifted from massacre of princes to indiscriminate executions of high and low.⁶³

Later he turned to writing of an objectivist biography of Ivan the Terrible⁶⁴ (a genre which was relatively new for the Soviet Grozny studies). Although Skrynnikov denied Ivan IV's military talent, he repeated a historiographic cliché of praising the tsar for defeating the Tartars (a necessary victory from historic perspective), colonization of the Black Earth Belt (Chernozemie), Siberia and the Urals. He also noted Ivan's efforts to step up the international relations (which was not so typical in the USSR.)

Apart from that, Skrynnikov underscores that economic demise caused by the Livonian war belonged to the main results of Ivan's reign. The economic crisis was therefore once again understood as the result of military defeat, not as its cause. The historian argues that establishing a new administrative apparatus wasn't the primary task of the tsar's rule, centered on the war against Ivan's own nobility. Skrynnikov was the only Soviet historian who wrote about the so-called second oprichnina, meaning repressions that followed after the establishing of the „tsar's manor“ (tsarsky udyel) in 1575. He insisted that the manorial system of land tenure had finished its shaping during the reigns of Ivan's grandfather and father, so Ivan the Terrible should not be credited with its establishing. On the contrary, his repressions and the resulting strife among the nobility catapulted Russia

⁶² Anna KHOROSHKEVITCH, *Rossiya v Sisteme Mezhdunarodnykh Otnosheniy Serediny 16 V.*, [Russia in the Mid-16th Century System of Foreign Affairs], Moscow 2003

⁶³ Ruslan SKRYNNIKOV, *Oprichny Terror [The Terror of Oprichnina]*, Leningrad 1969.

⁶⁴ Ruslan SKRYNNIKOV, *Ivan Grozny [Ivan the Terrible]*, Moscow 1975. Skrynnikov is rightly credited with looking back at the tsar's psychological profile after another shift in the Russian historiography, although he didn't consider it too important and dominating the whole Ivan's rule.

directly to the Times of Trouble. Overall, the viewpoint that the oprichnina was a tool of terror that led to the catastrophe of Smuta instead of Ivan's personal dictatorship became common knowledge in the Russian historiography of the early 1990s.⁶⁵ The more so, as Skrynnikov noted, since the tsar's unchallenged rule put the brakes on the estates-shaping along the lines of the Central Europe, depriving Russia of any „auxiliary“ mechanisms of governance.⁶⁶

The latter conclusion is largely accepted by Boris Florya who also shines some light on the shaping of the Russian estates in his aforementioned Ivan the Terrible's biography. Among the results of Ivan's reign he mentions a fundamentally new kind of relationships between the nobility and the state.⁶⁷ Old hereditary nobles of princely and boyar origin gave way to state-serving landowners who supported Moscow rulers and depended on them. Simultaneously, the shaping of estates abruptly stopped. All of them degraded into different corporations of state servants, loyal and obedient

to a tsar, a process that was momentous for Russia for centuries ahead.⁶⁸

The early 1990s saw an unprecedented number of problems and research methods in the Grozny studies together with the pluralistic approach to Ivan's reign and personality, this time in the psychological and sociocultural context of early modern period.⁶⁹ For example, terror of oprichnina is now being studied as a product of criminal law and non-codified punishment practices as well.⁷⁰

As for the regent period of Ivan's reign (1530–1547), historians turned it into an independent subject of studies. It is now explored not only as the tsar's traumatic formative years, but also as a string of unexamined political crises of the 1530s' as well.⁷¹ Research of administrative matters and estates-shaping are growing in numbers. A separate shelf of literature is being devoted to state-serving nobility, including high military commanders (voyevodas).⁷²

Interest arises in the problems that were irrelevant or outright prohibited

.....
⁶⁵ This can be clearly seen in the works like Vladimir KOBKIN, *Ivan Grozny [Ivan the Terrible]*, Moscow 1989

⁶⁶ V. KOBKIN, *Ivan Grozny, chapter „Istoricheskaya Rol“ [The Role in History]*.

⁶⁷ B. FLORYA, *Ivan Grozny*, p. 393.

⁶⁸ IBIDEM, p. 324.

⁶⁹ Sergey BOGATYRYOV (ed.), *Grozny Tsar ili Groznoye Vremya? Psikhologichesky Obraz Ivana Groznogo v Istoriofrafii [A Terrible Tsar or a Terrible Time? The Psychological Profile of Ivan the Terrible in Historiography]*, Moscow 2006.

⁷⁰ Vladimir ROGOV, *Istoriya Ugolovnogo Prava, Terrora i Repressiy v Russkom Gosudarstve XV–XVII Verov [A History of Criminal Law, Terror and Repressions in the 15th–16th Century Russian State]*, Moscow 1995.

⁷¹ Mikhail KROM, *Vdovstvyuyuschbee Tsarstvo. Politichesky Krizis v Rossii 30–40-kh Godov 16 Veka [A Widowed Tsardom: the Russian Political Crisis of 1530–1540-s]*, Moscow 2010.

⁷² Dmitry VOLODIKHIN, *Voyevody Ivana Groznogo [Voyevodas of Ivan the Terrible]*, Moscow 2014; Vadim KARGALOV, *Moskovskiyey Voyevody [Voyevodas of Moscow]*, Moscow 2002; Irina MIKHAILOVA,

for studying during the Soviet rule (the 16th century court culture and etiquette,⁷³ organization of diplomatic service in the light of political and intercultural communication, to name just a few.⁷⁴) Attempts are made to shed light on Russian history and culture in the European context of early modern period⁷⁵ or, vice versa, to describe life and attitudes of foreigners who settled in Moscow.⁷⁶ Some pioneering books are dedicated to the totally uncharted waters of the Russian medieval self-awareness,⁷⁷ while the others examine all aspects of early modern period using relatively new means of historical anthropology.⁷⁸

Religion and Beliefs in the New Russia: a Foundation of the New Apologetics

So-called Orthodox renaissance and methodological diversity of 1990s gave life to unprecedented interest in faith and religious beliefs of the 16th century Russian society and in Ivan the Terrible's religious life in particular. His Orthodox background, theological writings and disputes are being actively examined together with Russian spirituality of the time in general. Historians are keen to use the methods of historical anthropology, philology and religion studies. For one, a religious studies scholar **Alexander Dvorkin** (1955) went back to Ivan's personality to examine it through the lens of the tsar's faith and theological

.....
Sluzhbiye Lyudi Severo-Vostochnoi Rusi v XIV – Pervoi Polovinye XVI Veka Avtoreferat Dissertatsii na Soiskaniye Stepeni Doktora Istoricheskikh Nauk [The State Servicemen of the North-Eastern Russia in the 14th – Early 16th Century: Synopsis of a Doctoral Thesis in History], Saint Petersburg 2004.

⁷³ Irina MIKHAILOVA, *I Zdyes' Sozhlis' Vse Tsarstva: Ocherki po Istorii Gosudareva Dvora v Rossii XVI Veka: Povsednevnyaya i Prazdnichnaya Kultura, Semantika Etiketa i Obryadnosti [And Here Have Met All Kingdoms: An Outline of the History of the Tsar's Court of the 16th Century: Everyday and Holiday Culture and the Semantic of Etiquette and Ritual]*, Saint Petersburg 2010.

⁷⁴ Leonid YUZEFOVITICH, *Put' Posla: Russky Posolsky Obychai. Povsednevnyy. Etiket. Tseremonial v Kontse XVI – Nachale 17 Veka [Path of an Ambassador: the Russian Diplomatic Ritual. Everyday Life, Etiquette, Ceremonies in the late XV – Early 17th Century]*, Saint Petersburg 2007.

⁷⁵ Tatiana CHERNIKOVA, *Evropeizatsiya Rossii vo Vtoroi Polovinye XV – XVII Veka [The Europeanization of Russia in the Late 15th – 17th Centuries]*, Moscow 2012.

⁷⁶ Tatiana OPARINA, *Inozemtsy v Rossii XVI—XVII Vekov [Foreigners in Russia of 16th–17th Centuries]*, Moscow 2007.

⁷⁷ The examples of such studies were given by Sergey SHMIDT, *Rossiya Ivana Groznogo [Russia in Times of Ivan the Terrible]*, Moscow 1999; Alexander YURGANOV, *Samosoznaniye Srednyevyevoroi Rusi: Kategorii Kultury: Dissertatsiya na Soiskaniye Uchyonoj Stypeni Doktora Istoricheskych Nauk [Self-Awareness of Middle-Ages Russia: Categories of Culture: a Doctoral Thesis in History]*, Moscow 1999.

⁷⁸ Methods of historical anthropology were successfully applied to the early modern history of Russia by: Mikhail KROM, *Istoricheskaya Antropologiya Russkogo Srednyevyevoroya: Kontury Novogo Napravlyeniya [Historical Anthropology of the Russian Middle Ages: Outlines of a New Line of Research]*, in: *Istorik vo Vremeni. Tretyi Ziminskiye Chtyeniya. Doklady i Soobshcheniya Mezhdunarodnoi Nauchnoi Konferentsii [A historian in Time. The 3rd Zimin Readings. Reports of an International Academic Conference]*, Moscow 2000, p. 61–68.

beliefs, utmost self-will and longing for autocratic power that eventually did harm the state⁷⁹. But most notably, A Dispute on Faith Between Ivan the Terrible and Pastor Rokita by **Nicoletta Marcialis** (1960) should be mentioned here.⁸⁰ This groundbreaking monograph is the first attempt to study the whole corpus of messages created by Ivan IV and a Czech Utraquist priest and diplomat. A masterful example of source studies compares all known versions of their writings thus explaining the meaning and contents of the dispute and describing Ivan's rarely shown sides of a polemist, writer and theologian in historical and cultural context of the 16th century.

Much more often, however, religious topics and problems form the base of what can be called the „new apologetic line“ in the Grozny studies of present-day Russia. This relatively prominent group aims to revise Ivan's role in history (and thus trying to zero out large swaths of their predecessors' work⁸¹). It often evaluates the most controversial episodes of his reign not from a socioeconomic standpoint, but

rather from viewpoints of political struggle (both the 16th century and modern) and the Orthodox doctrine. It is eager to polemize and tends to use mostly already well-studied Russian chronicles and chronographs as its primary source base, preferring academic tradition to methodological and heuristic novelties. As for the problems it examines, home policy of Ivan the Terrible, especially the oprichnina, clearly dominates.⁸²

Ivan's defence seem to be the aim in itself for „new apologists“ who revise the most notorious episodes of his rule, like the murder of pious metropolitan Philip Kolychev, a widely revered ideological opponent of the tsar, by oprichniks. Both in popular opinion of the time and in historiography this crime became one of the most notable symbols of Ivan's evildoing. However, the absence of direct proofs in Russian sources that it was the tsar who ordered to strangle Philip is now used to proclaim Ivan not guilty.⁸³ As for the terror of oprichnina, it also gets new but nevertheless apologetic understanding. The Terrible Tsar (which is

.....
⁷⁹ Alexander DVORKIN, *Ivan Grozny Kak Religiozny Tip [Ivan the Terrible as a Religious Type]*, Nizhny Novgorod 2005

⁸⁰ Nicoletta MARCIALIS, *Lyutor Izhe Lyut: Preniye o Vere Tsarya Ivana Groznogo s Pastorum Rokitoy [That Luther is Fierce: A Dispute on Faith Dispute Between Ivan the Terrible and Pastor Rokita]*, Moscow 2009.

⁸¹ A rare case of academic self-awareness: not only this apologetic line of the Grozny studies unites around the tsar's figure, but also strives to clear its image from alleged distortions concocted by all the previous Russian historiography starting from Karamzin. See Sergey FOMIN, *Pradva o Pervom Russkom Tsare: Kto i Pochemu Iskazhayet Obraz Ivana Groznogo? [The Truth About the First Russian Tsar: Who and Why Distorts the Image of Ivan the Terrible?]*, Moscow 2012, p. 5.

⁸² This approach is typical for a leader of this „new Grozny apologetics“. Note that the nickname „Grozny / The Terrible“ for the first time starts to sound favorably Igor FROYANOV, *Groznaya oprichnina [The Formidable / Fearsome Oprichnina]*, Moscow 2009.

⁸³ Dmitry VOLODIKHIN, *Mitropolit Filipp i Ivan Grozny [Metropolitan Philip and Ivan the Terrible]*, Moscow 2012, p. 117.

now a favourable name) is seen as a defender of Russia and its Orthodox faith who introduced the oprichnina as a radical but lawful measure against The Council of the Chosen (Izbrannaya Rada, an informal circle of Ivan's friends and councilors of unclear membership). Repressions were presumably aimed at reversing of administrative reforms that limited Ivan's autocracy and thus allegedly pushed Russia at the brink of political catastrophe.⁸⁴ Curiously, some tendencies of the Stalinist „Grozny's cult“ are clearly seen again in the beginning of the 21st century. Among them there is biased conceptual framework and language, along with the paradigm of never-ending conflict between Russia and the collective West (not merely a fight for strategic or geopolitical reasons but a clash of „right“ and „wrong“ faiths and ideologies.) For example, Ivan's brutalities are claimed to be exaggerated by Western propaganda in its war of ideological subversions against the Orthodox Christian state of Russia.⁸⁵

Conclusion

The 19th century Grozny studies were dominated by narrative, descriptive manner and well-established psychological logic that served different purposes, from Karamzin's educational writings full of moral lessons to Klyuchevsky's

⁸⁴ I. FROYANOV, *Groznaya oprichnina*, p. 559.

⁸⁵ IBIDEM, p. 531. Note the word „heresy“ as the synonym for the Reformation, the constant use of „Saint Rus“ instead of just „Russia“ and the handling of the collective West as an eternal enemy of Russia: „It is from the West engulfed by heresies of the Reformation that those heretics, corrupting Russian people with their Anti-Christian teachings, came to us“.

⁸⁶ It should be noted that archives lack many records even of key acts and deeds of Ivan IV. For example, decrees and other manuscripts dedicated to the establishing of the oprichnina are almost non-existent in numbers.

deep and multifaceted researches. Those methods quickly started to influence the style of writing, helping historians to compensate for sometimes scarce base of primary sources and the weaknesses of other academic methods.⁸⁶ Moreover, it was widely understood that Ivan's rule couldn't be explained properly without the means of psychology and sometimes even psychiatry. As many 19th century historians implicitly had it, Ivan the Terrible's state was the embodiment of his personality. In some ways, he was literally the state.

Psychology influence the historians' language itself, so the often use of epithets like „beast“ or „maniac“ wasn't accidental at all. The roots of oprichnina terror and the reforms (that Ivan was never able to properly finish) were searched for in his childhood traumas and harmful influence of his mentors and dignitaries. Still, the authors of the late 19th century were already studying Ivan's repressions and brutalities in the context of wider task of home politics that started to thematically dominate the research. The more the principles of historicism were strengthening, the more historians were keen to study the building of the 16th century state institutions (most of all the birth of absolutism) by unfortunate means of oprichnina. Note the fresh academic interest in reforms of state apparatus

and judiciary, while foreign policy and diplomacy remained mostly untouched, with the clear exception of the Livonian war.

It is no coincidence that many historians, Karamzin, Solov'yov and Klyuchevsky among them, harshly criticized Ivan IV's moral failure and ambiguity. The moral state of society was considered as an important force of historical development in Russian academic circles. When neglected, it could have easily led (and once did lead) to a full-fledged catastrophe, to the Troubled Times,

The Grozny studies of the Soviet period break succession with the older Russian historiography. They were growing inside the Procrustean bed of Marxist doctrine with its relatively poor choice of studied topics and sources, covering the lengths from unseen apology to sound and trustworthy objectivist researches to harsh and politicized criticism (which was quite a tumultuous path for a mere period of seventy years). That said, different Soviet history schools had some common traits, often rooted in Marxist historiographic dogma. Firstly, it was no small degree of politicizing that tainted the Grozny studies, forcing authors not only to obey ideological changes but sometimes to pander the tastes of a certain leader. Historians had to search the early modern period for every sign of class struggle and peasant protests (including any mutinies, religious strife or heresies). Secondly, the Soviet historiography developed the concept of tireless struggle between the boyars (boyarstvo) and serving nobility (sluzhiloye dvoryanstvo) who were presumably in constant opposition to each other, a notion that was

undermined in late 1960s with the help of Alexander Zimin.

Interestingly, even the Soviet historians failed to connect Ivan the Terrible to any class whose interests he was presumably representing and protecting. The tsar was too complex and controversial historical character for that, while societal changes of his time were tremendous. Moreover, the historians themselves were often confused by ideological flip-flops. Still, the more Ivan's deeds corresponded with the Marxist dogma of moving from the less progressive socioeconomic formations to the more progressive ones, the higher was the appraisal of his role in history.

As a rule, Grozny's reign was studied in the USSR separately from the European history of the early modern period. Russian realia and history facts were rarely compared with their European counterparts; at best the former was openly and starkly opposed to the latter. Paradoxically, while Ivan's rule was interlinked with Western affairs much closer than that of his father and grandfather, the Soviet academics nevertheless studied it mostly separately, wars excluded.

That's why Grozny's foreign policy and relations of Russia with another European powers, and with Habsburgs' monarchy especially, were often explored in a shallow way. In part that could be explained by the relative closeness of the Soviet society where historians rarely stayed in touch with their Western colleagues and had almost no access to libraries and archives of Europe. Methodology-wise, the Soviet Grozny studies could also be characterized by their relative narrowness. The same

holds true for its choice of studied themes and subjects. Priority was given to the oprichnina (in lesser extent to its repressions), forming of Ivan's autocratic regime, socioeconomic relations and to some military conflicts, including the Livonian war. The latter was considered mainly as a direct predecessor of the Great Northern war (1700–1721) fought by Moscow with the same intentions in mind but this time victoriously. Ivan IV, it was proclaimed, had paved the way for Peter the Great who later opened his famous „window to Europe“ and strengthened Russia's positions in the Baltic region. As for the Livonian war itself, it was studied less eagerly than, say, in 1990s–2010s, probably because of its unfortunate ending.

As for culture, book-learning, publicistic writing and the other forms of sociopolitical communications of the 16th century, they were given little attention in the USSR. Finally, one of the most important aspects of Grozny's life and rule was almost totally ignored, although it often animated Ivan in the first place. Here we speak of the tsar's faith, religiosity and theological opinions. The same holds true for the whole religious life of the time. The mere language for such researches never existed until 1990s. For the Soviet historians religious beliefs and institutions were deemed important only in the context of politics where they played secondary roles. The same poor attention was paid to psychological and psychiatric rationale of Ivan's terror, presumably since no subjective factor was interesting and influential enough within the Marxist historiographic framework.

In the post-Soviet Grozny studies polemic fervor and overwhelming political context of the Soviet academia survived. Moreover, in some fields they even grew stronger. Academic freedom gave birth to diversity of opinions and breathed a new life to the debates on Ivan's life and reign at the same time. A host of new themes and subjects emerged, for which no official or conventional handling existed. Descriptive, narrative political history of 16th still dominated the field but new methods soon paved their way to the fore. Historians could now use new approaches and widen their thematic horizons. The Livonian war came to the forefront of historians' attention, sparking even more interest than Ivan's campaigns against the Tartars. Religious culture is being explored, creating a new lens through which the 16th century could be evaluated with a fresh look. Conversely, once-popular economic socioeconomic studies of Grozny's time swiftly come out of fashion, in spite of the fast progress made by the quantitative methods. Monographs like that of Alexander Zimin became rare in Russian publishing houses.

Just like on previous stages, relations between Moscow and European powers still hasn't been covered in full in the post-Soviet Grozny studies. We can safely presume that this field is going to be examined in the near future. Covering new themes along with reevaluation of the well-studied chapters of history with the use of advanced methods will definitely enable Russian historians to produce new deep and generalizing monographs about Ivan the Terrible's life and reign.

Vladimir Panov

**Ivan the Terrible in the Russian Historiography of the 19th–21st Centuries
Problems, Methodology, Opinions (Abstract)**

The rise of academic interest in the Russo-European relationships shed light on one of the most intense periods of Russian history, the reign of Ivan the Terrible (Ivan Grozny). Although the ruler himself is known worldwide, his Russian historiography of 19th – 21st centuries is neither widely studied nor systematized. To set it in order, this contribution suggests a two-pronged approach. Firstly, it overviews the Grozny's historiography as an interdisciplinary field called the Grozny studies (Russian „groznovyedenie“), dealing with the tsar's personality and rule. They take the form of three lines of study, „apologetic“, „criticizing“ and „objectivist“, conflicting but nevertheless complementary. Secondly, it maps out four categories of problems on which historians focus. They are Ivan's personality (heavily tilted to his psychopathological traits in 19th century), his home policies and campaigns against the Tartars, the terror of oprichnina and lastly, the foreign policy, where the Livonian war clearly dominates.

KEY WORDS:

Russo-European relationships; Ivan the Terrible; Russian historiography of 19th – 21st centuries; the Grozny studies