

The logic of Kharms' position notwithstanding, of course, minimalism and the prose poem continue to have a productive existence, and in his epilogue Wannner notes not only postmodernist developments but also the moralising miniatures of Solzhenitsyn. *Russian Minimalism* not only provides a fascinating guide to a noteworthy though previously neglected aspect of the literature of modernism, it also provides a yardstick for the assessment of future minimalist initiatives.

David N. Wells  
Curtin University of Technology

Walter G. Moss, *A History of Russia*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., *Volume I: To 1917* (London: Anthem Press, 2002). xxii + 632 pp., maps, figures, chronology, glossary, bibliographies, index. Paperback: ISBN: 1-84331-023-6 24.95 US\$39.95.

This is the first of a two-volume revision of Professor Moss's *A History of Russia* (1997). It is much welcome. Beginning with the Varangians and concluding upon the eve of the February Revolution, Moss's narrative manages to embrace a wide range of topics while at the same time remaining accessible and interesting. A specialist on the period of Alexander II's reign, Moss seems more sure-footed once he enters the nineteenth century, but his recourse to passive constructions to describe Russia's earlier history should not unduly distract the average student reader. He balances humorous anecdotes with provocative concepts, and discusses historiography in a clearer and more contemporary fashion than that found in Riasanovsky's *A History of Russia*, now in its sixth edition and looking a bit musty by comparison. In addition to Moss's more conversational style, the text benefits from what are simply excellent maps (twenty-six in all) and a series of clearly reproduced engravings, prints, and photographs. Bibliographies of English-language sources are comprehensive and will appeal to student and instructor alike: each chapter has a separate listing and there is a more wide-ranging topical bibliography at the end of the book. The chronology, glossary, and tables of rulers are detailed, and the index includes conceptual terms such as "folklore," "literacy," and "prostitution."

Following the standard history textbook format, Moss divides his chapters among three categories: elite and state politics; economic and social life; and religion and culture. Part I concerns "The Rus Era," Part II "The Mongols and the Rise of Moscow to 1533," Part III "Muscovy and Its Expansion, 1533-1689," Part IV "Early Imperial Russia, 1689-1855," and Part V "Late Imperial Russia, 1855-1917." Part V includes a chapter devoted to "Russian Imperial and Foreign Policy, 1856-1905," whereas other periods' imperial and foreign policies are largely discussed within chapters concerning the monarchs.

There is little to fault with this volume. Except for the early pages' sometimes elliptical phrasing, it should be added that the captions excerpting primary sources are rather unnecessary. Although not numerous, they tend to originate as foreign observers' memoirs and date from translations over a century old. Foreign sources certainly add to an understanding of a country's history, but here their predominance may lead students to view Russia too much from a perspective which often distorts as much as clarifies. Anyone who adopts this text may therefore wish to assign as well a collection of Russian primary sources, such as Daniel Kaiser's and Gary Marker's *Reinterpreting Russian History: Readings, 860-1860s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).

Finally, as Moss writes, "this book's primary focus is on Russia; it barely touches on any distinct aspects of the social and cultural lives of Ukrainians, Georgians, Armenians, or other nationalities that were once a part of the Russian Empire or Soviet Union" (xxi). (However, the book-cover illustration incongruously portrays various ethnics from the empire.) While some may question this lack of inclusion, the historiography on Russia is enormous enough to justify Moss's focus. For those wishing to expand this focus, numerous texts on Russia's nationalities have been published in recent years. With these minor caveats, Moss's book is recommended for introductory Russian history courses at the tertiary level.

Andrew A. Gentes  
The University of Queensland