

spirit of these autobiographical texts will prove to be the study's coup de grâce' (p. 128). Whatever may have united Andreas-Salomé, de Beauvoir, Devi, Lacia, Mandel'shtam, and Nijinsky – the fact that they were postmodernist trailblazers whose life-story was inextricably bound up with the life of a male companion – surely pales in significance when compared to the manifold differences of cultural background, temperament, and aspirations that characterized the lives of these six extraordinary women who deserve to be known in their own right and on their own terms.

Susanne Hillman
University of California San Diego

Margarita Balmaceda, James Clem and Lisbeth Tarlow (eds.), *Independent Belarus: Domestic Determinants, Regional Dynamics, and Implications for the West*, Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2002, 483 pages.

Belarus had an election on 19 March 2006. As predicted, Alyaksandr Lukashenka was re-elected for a third term with 82.6 of the popular vote, even though a third term was not supported by the Belarus constitution. The electoral results (subsequently questioned by the United States and the European Union, but tacitly supported by Russia) have been dismissed by the small Belarusian oppositional movement as an unconstitutional seizure of power. At the behest of opposition leader and presidential candidate, Alyaksandr Milinkevich, ten thousand people initially gathered in Minsk in protest. While this prompted fleeting hopes for the opposition's claim to a nascent 'denim revolution' in Belarus, the protest was ultimately unsuccessful as group numbers dwindled with the onset of a driving snow storm and the (admittedly delayed) arrest of key protestors.

Belarus is distinguished as one of the only former Soviet republics to resist moves toward democratisation and market reform in 1991 following the collapse of the former Soviet Union, and more recently in reaction to the Rose Revolution of 2003 Georgia and the Orange Revolution of 2004 in Ukraine. *Independent Belarus*, edited by Margarita Balmaceda, James Clem and Lisbeth Tarlow, explores this recalcitrant country according to five perspectives: domestic politics, the Belarusian economy, the relationship between Belarus and Russia, the relationship between Belarus and its European neighbours, and

potential strategies for western engagement with Belarus. It was compiled from a conference held at Harvard in 1999, and includes contributions from a group of twenty-two scholars, policymakers and members of non-governmental organisations.

Through an examination of the political and economic developments in Belarus, many current issues are put into context. Economically, Belarus is a country whose primary asset is its location as a transit route between Russia and the West. Additional problems stem from the fact that Belarus has retained a command economy, abandoned the bulk of its privatisation programs, and continues to deal with its neighbours mostly through the barter system. More telling, private enterprise has been repeatedly stifled, with business entrepreneurs often imprisoned for prolonged periods without being formally charged.

It is, however, the political developments that are the most revealing. While repeatedly highlighting that the President cannot be solely blamed for all of the problems found in Belarus, Lukashenka is nevertheless exposed as a defining political force in this country. Balmaceda *et al* paint a picture that is full of political intrigue where Lukashenka held a questionable referendum on his presidency in 1996, proclaimed a new constitution that consolidated his authoritarian leadership, dissolved the Supreme Soviet of the 13th Session and, to mark his triumph, reintroduced a Soviet-style flag for Belarus.

Balmaceda *et al* moreover trace the weakening of Belarusian oppositional forces and documents the overt intimidation of potential leaders, which has been known to include mysterious kidnappings, prison sentences and physical attacks, even the arrest and beating of their children. Conversely, this book outlines the process through which the Belarusian opposition has become increasingly alienated from the people, and how this has translated into increased levels of support for Lukashenka, a self-professed man of the people.

Many chapters highlight the complicated relationship between Belarus and Russia. Often characterised as Europe's historic choice for the invasion of Russia, Belarus is strategically important to Russia and the West, primarily because of its geographical location and its continued rejection of an association with the EU and NATO. Within this arrangement, which is described in the book as one of 'asymmetrical interdependence', the deeper integration of Belarus and Russia is frequently discussed, but very little happens. This is, in part, because of Lukashenka's grandiose plans, at least

prior to 2000, to become the leader of a unified Belarusian-Russian state *and* to ensure that Belarus, despite the notable size differential, would enter into this arrangement as an equal partner to Russia.

Parts of this book are clearly dated as it was published in 2002 and only vaguely touches on several recent developments in international politics, i.e. the election of Vladimir Putin as Russian President, his subsequent crackdown on Russian oligarchs and tight control of the Russia media. It moreover predates the security-dominated political environment that emerged in reaction to international events of terrorism following September 11th, as well as the enlargement of the EU in 2004 to include ten new members, with eight of these from the CEE region.

The contributors nevertheless challenge the world to avoid treating Belarus as a 'curious sideshow' that is already annexed to Russia and has no value to the West. Further to this, it entreats the West to support the youth of Belarus, who want more out of life than collective farms can offer in the longer-term. Considering the protest movement that emerged against Lukashenka's recent election, as well as the slow, tempered response from the security forces, democratic change may yet be demanded.

Balmaceda *et al's* book provides valuable insight into how the current political and economic environment developed in Belarus during the 1990s, highlights the challenges facing those who currently desire democratic change in this environment and provides an explanation into why Lukashenka retains popularity despite his dictatorial leadership style and repressive economic policies.

Carol Strong
Deakin University

Stephen F. Jones, *Socialism in Georgian Colors: The European Road to Social Democracy, 1883-1917*, Cambridge, Mass., and London: Harvard University Press, 2005, 384 pp.

Two things distinguish Georgian Social Democracy from the greater socialist movement in late tsarist Russia. First, the Georgian Social Democrats envisioned an alliance between peasantry, proletariat, and bourgeoisie. Second, they strove to reconcile socialist ideology with the exigencies of the 'national