

and basic linguistic skills to fulfill their task efficiently and, rather than educate themselves, preferred to drink and gamble. The situation was scarcely more encouraging among native administrators, the equivalent of the *zemstva* (local organs of self-government which did not exist in military governorships such as Turkestan). Corruption was an endemic problem among the ‘living wall’ and affected the population in direct ways. In dealing with the all-important issue of irrigation, which the Russians never managed to get a handle on, the problem became especially alarming. Failing to understand its workings, the Russians lost a tool of coercion that would undoubtedly have allowed them to strengthen their position – again in contrast to British India where the imperial state managed irrigation matters much more efficiently.

What can be concluded from all this? Mainly that European imperial powers did not uniformly wield the ‘colonial knowledge’ considered essential to successful rule. Its corollary, the significance of local agency, equally holds true. As a result, the Russian imperial administration of Turkestan was neither effective nor particularly harmful. Once again the contrast with the Raj is instructive. While the Indian administration paid for itself, in part because of the existence of rather severe taxation schemes, and could claim some success in ‘civilizing’ Indians, the Tsar’s men achieved neither of these goals in Turkestan. On the other hand, their policy of benevolent neglect had not only negative effects.

Morrison concludes that Russian rule in Samarkand, precisely because it was characterized by lack of money, knowledge, and power, turned out to be far less intrusive and hence destructive than its Soviet successor would be.

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John Dunn and Shamil Khairov, *Modern Russian Grammar: A Practical Guide* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009), xx + 469 pp.

It is gratifying to see that, at a time when the role of Russian as a *lingua franca* throughout the world has been much diminished, guides to the study of the language continue to appear. There have been numerous excellent English-language instances in the post-Soviet years. Wade’s *A Comprehensive Grammar* (1992, 2000), Smyth and Crosbie’s *Rus’* (2002) come immediately to mind, not to men-

tion the many courses produced in the Russian Federation, such as the publications of the Zlatoust publishing house in St. Petersburg.

This grammar serves as yet another illustration (if one were required) of the profound difficulties presented by *ab initio* teaching of a foreign language as structurally complex as Russian to tertiary level students. It applies the descriptive analytical approach (as opposed to the communicative) and covers the basic areas usually treated in the first two years of language acquisition. It claims to be a useful reference work for advanced students and those with an interest in Business Russian. Like others in the series (which includes guides to Mandarin Chinese, French, Spanish and German), the book is divided into two main sections: Part A – Structures, Part B – Functions. Not surprisingly, but in contrast to other guides in the series, Part A is noticeably longer than Part B.

Part A covers the topics which one would expect to see in an introduction to the language: sounds and spelling, nouns, verbs, adjectives, the case system, pronouns and numerals, preceded by a useful Glossary of grammar terms (xv–xx). On the whole the explanatory material is presented clearly and is well organized. It is obviously the work of someone who has taught Russian for some time (some thirty years according to the Introduction) as there are numerous alerts to the pitfalls for the English-speaking student. A welcome addition for me was the inclusion of a section on the transliteration into Russian of English words (17).

The section on Functions also includes the sort of material which needs to be brought to the attention of students with chapters such as: ‘Establishing identity’, ‘Establishing contact’, ‘Being becoming and possession’, ‘Negation’. This section is perforce to a degree grammar-based for all its thematic ordering. Expressing attitudes deals with among other items the differences between the verbs ‘to love’ and ‘to like’ with all the attendant grammatical implications, while the chapter on obligation deals with the many modal words which are used with the dative. Part B concludes with a chapter ‘Communication strategies’ which provides useful guidelines in the selection of various registers from formal written to informal spoken.

It is however the style and content of the illustrative material in Russian which marks this book as not just a guide to Russian but an appreciation of its linguistic resources. This will not suit everyone and indeed might prove to be off-putting to some students. The provision of such sentences as *С тех пор, как он уехал за границу, от него ни слуху ни духу* as a case of the use of the partitive genitive

(32) before any grammar has been broached may prove to be a step too far for those who prefer a more incremental approach. Occasionally the italicized words exemplifying the rule under discussion relied on grammar yet to be broached. For instance, in a discussion of impersonal constructions with the dative, the sentence *К вечеру больному стало лучше: он уже не кашлял, и температура спала* (63) uses the dative of the substantive form 'patient' when the adjectival forms are only commenced on page 135. The examples are framed in lively, contemporary and sometimes colloquial language, but there are few concessions made to comprehensibility, even though in all cases English translations are provided. I personally found the material exciting and stimulating but suspect that my Australian students would consider the vocabulary issues insurmountable.

In my view *Modern Russian Grammar* could be useful as a reference work for students in the first two years of their studies, who could then progress to Wade for more advanced work. It cannot easily be used for class work because it is essentially descriptive and the examples are too sophisticated. Each student (and each teacher) has to chart a path between knowledge of grammatical paradigms and an ability to manipulate them. This book fills a useful role for those embarking on the study of Russian who wish to tackle the language through its structures but it would have to be used with a range of other materials in order to achieve a corresponding level of oral communicative skills.

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Robert Horvath, *The Legacy of Soviet Dissent: Dissidents, Democratisation and Radical Nationalism in Russia* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), 293 pp.

This book is a history of several dimensions of dissident activity in the USSR, largely during the Brezhnev era from the mid-1960s until the early 1980s, complemented by an account of what happened when key dissident figures from that era were allowed to publish old *samizdat* works openly in Russia in the late 1980s and tried to influence Russian politics under both Gorbachev and Yeltsin (during the first half of the 1990s). Thus it is a history of two different levels of dissident activity, first the subterranean level of opposition to a repressive state during a period of stagnation and decline, and second the open engagement of Russian