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PUTIN'S RUSSIA AND THE FALSIFICATION OF HISTORY, REASSERTING CONTROL OVER THE PAST, By Ayse Dietrich*, Published by Bloombury Academic, Written by Anton Weiss-Wendt, Year of Publishing: 2021. Subject Area: History. Book Type: Chronicle. Total Number of Pages: 336. ISBN: 978-1350130555, paperback, \$26.09.

Anton Weiss-Wendt states that his book *Putin's Russia and the Falsification of History, Reasserting Control over the Past* is a chronicle that reflects on Russian history politics. Weiss states that his intention in writing this book is to demonstrate how history-related practices are used by Putin to strengthen his power, and how the word politics is designed and manipulated from the top.

In *Chapter 1*, the author discusses how authorities have consistently restricted access to researchers, foreign and local correspondents. He states that “policymaking on history in Putin’s Russia has three important elements: commitment to the cause by the state, failure to find receptive foreign audiences to a Russian perspective on history, and a stranglehold on academia at home”. He believes that since 2012, the Russian government has strengthened its control over history in order to forge a single, consistent policy on the writing of history, however, the government’s undemocratic mindset has hobbled this effort with substandard methodology and unachievable goals. Specifically, he states that the Russian policymaking on history limits academic freedom; and the government’s limitations on foreign research funds and restrictions on academic travel, tie the hands of Russian historians and make them incapable of devising new approaches to conduct research. Weiss claims that since the survival of the regime depends on silencing the opposition, any interpretation of history different from their view becomes “falsification.”

In *Chapter 2*, the author discusses the major organizations, and government-funded bodies active in the field of Russian historymaking in 2012. One of the organizations was the *Russian Historical Society* (RIO), that acted as a nongovernmental organization, but tightly linked to the government. *The Historical Memory Foundation* (2008) and *World without Nazism* (2010) were established to support the work of the *Commission to Counteract Attempts to Harm Russia’s Interests by*

Falsifying History (2009). The author also talks about the role the Russian Orthodox Church has played in history making, how Patriarch Kirill received support from the Night Wolves biker club, a highly centralized quasi-paramilitary force that had close ties with Putin, and how they established their presence in Russian history politics.

Chapter 3 The author talks about the *Immortal Regiment*, a massive grassroots initiative during the Victory Day celebration, and the cult of the Great Patriotic War, which has a religious connotation, and the character of a civil religion. Being a sacred endeavor, any questioning of the war becomes in and of itself a heresy. Weiss states that the Putin regime takes credit for a record-high sense of pride in the Soviet victory over Nazi Germany in today's Russia. The author also talks about how critical views on Stalin get censored. He states that Stalinism has deeply penetrated the state's foundational myth.

In Chapter 4, the author discusses a Soviet modelled militaristic civic patriotic education program provided by the state for five years in Putin's Russia, to promote unquestioning support for the state's ideology, loyalty to the present authorities and intolerance toward opponents. Weiss states that patriotism in Russia serves as a uniting factor for government and pro-government agencies like the military and the Orthodox Church, the United Russia Party and youth organizations, and that this patriotic education is provided within the framework of geopolitical confrontation with the West with an emphasis on military duty.

In Chapter 5, the author discusses the process of Soviet style memorialization and monuments that have been built in Russia since the late 2000s, and states that the statues of tsars, saints, and military men that have been erected in Putin's Russia manifests a penchant for historicism and reveal the government perspective on history.

In Chapter 6, the author talks about Holocaust commemoration in Putin's Russia. The author states that the present Russian discourse on the Holocaust is surprisingly similar to the late Soviet one, and that it becomes significant only when it fits the story of a heroic Red Army that saved Europe from the Nazis; and the story of a Jewish rebellion led by the Red Army officer Pechersky in the Nazi death camp *Sobibor*, and the Soviet liberation of Auschwitz form the core of the official Russian narrative of the Holocaust.

In Chapter 7, Weiss examines the efforts of the state to silence political dissent and the impact of articles in the criminal code based on certain interpretations of history on nonconformist individuals, memorial projects, and independent institutions.

In the Conclusion, the author states that his book provides evidences for the existence of a centralized state policy on history that influences historymaking in Russia in order to strengthen Moscow's position internationally since the field of history is considered an essential part of soft power in Russia.

Putin's Russia and the Falsification of History, *Reasserting Control over the Past* provides a convincing picture of the state monopoly on the writing of history under Putin and a detailed analysis of the results of this policy in historical research and writing. The book is well-written and has an extensive bibliography. While this book could be of interest to anyone in the broad field of Russian history, it is of particular value to anyone with an interest of the the use (and misuse) of

history by Russian political leaders.

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