

Posted to H-EarlySlavic Mon, 30 Jun 2014 12:00:37 -0400

New book: Filiushkin on the invention of the Livonian War

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A[leksandr] I[l'ich] Filiushkin. *Izobretaia pervuiu voynu Rossi ii Evropy. Baltiiskie voiny vtoroi poloviny XVI v. glazami sovremennikov i potomkov*. Studiorum Slavicorum Orbis, vyp. 6. Sankt-Peterburg: "Dmitrii Bulanin", 2013. 880 pp., 282 ill., maps. ISBN 978-5-86007-726-3

This is the seventh monograph by Aleksandr Il'ich Filiushkin, one of the most productive Muscovite history specialists, who teaches at St. Petersburg University. His earlier books include one on titulature (reviewed at length by the late Isabel de Madariaga in *Kritika* 8/3 [2007]) and both popular and academic and biographies of Prince Andrei Kurbskii. The latter includes a long "hermeneutic" phrase-by-phrase analysis and commentary on the letters to Ivan IV, emphasizing their use of scriptural references. The end product of that analysis is versions of the letters rendered as "translations/interpretations," in which Filiushkin interpolates what he understands Kurbskii really meant. In important ways, that approach informs his analysis in his new book.

A substantial collection of essays Filiushkin edited, entitled *Baltiiskii vopros v kontse XV-XVI vv.*, appeared in 2010, some of them anticipating the volume under review here. He has been working on this subject for nearly two decades and promises yet another book ("a large academic history of the Livonian War") to which this massive volume is preliminary. In a sense, it constitutes the conventional review of the literature and sources that introduces many a monograph, but in fact it is far more than that, as the treatment is encyclopedic in its range. Even if concerned specifically with the parts of the primary sources which reflect on the war, he does a very good job of contextualizing each and every one of them. Filiushkin is not one to shrink from bold conclusions or innovative analytical approaches. Not the least of his qualifications is his command of an impressive array of the most relevant languages, something few others can boast.

The goal here is not to write a history of the war as such, with a full account of military campaigns and diplomacy. Rather, the subject is the "invention" or imagining of what contemporaries, especially in Muscovy, seem not to have viewed as a single quarter-century-long conflict, but rather as a series of distinct episodes. Since initially the events of the 1550s tended to be seen as merely the continuation of the earlier history of international relations in the region, even defining the beginning of "the war" was problematic. What started as a possibly minor, localized problem quickly expanded, but at each stage there was little sense that the conflicts were all part of a larger cataclysmic event. As events unfolded and the dramatis personae changed, at least the Western response to what was happening shifted substantially. As much as anything, the war was important for its role in shaping what came to be the common Western treatment of Muscovy as the barbarian "other." Within Russia the idea that the conflicts together

constituted a single, major and disastrous chapter in Ivan's reign, developed fully only in the writings of Russian historians of the 19th century; that narrative has continued to dominate in almost all subsequent scholarship. Western attempts to treat the conflicts in some kind of coherent and linked fashion began to appear not long after it had ended. As Filiushkin points out, ironically it is the Western sources which have done so much to shape Russian perceptions of the war; whereas to study it using in the first instance Muscovite documents is in a sense still a task for the future (i.e., the one he plans to tackle in his next volume).

Since his focus is the primary sources, Filiushkin treats the secondary literature in somewhat cursory fashion. Importantly, he emphatically rejects the common assumption that Muscovy's goal, connected with economic interests, was to gain warm-water access to a Baltic port. In fact, he insists, nothing in the Russian sources supports such an idea, much less any notion that the Muscovite military actions were intended from the start to result in permanent occupation of Baltic territories. In dismissing these ideas common to most modern treatments of Ivan's reign, he comes across as rather harsh in particular on Anna Khoroshkevich's work, even as he frequently draws upon it. He feels hers exemplifies a kind of "liberal" romanticized interpretation common in the immediate post-Soviet period. More generally, he expresses little sympathy for reading earlier history through the lens of present concerns.

He makes it clear that his approach to this material is not unique. For example, Reinhard Frötschner has recently taken a similar approach, writing about a "Glaubenskrieg," although possibly in fact reflecting the influence of Filiushkin's own views. Without engaging in distracting excursions into the theoretical and methodological literature, Filiushkin plunges into his discourse analysis (using throughout that good Russian term *diskurs*). That is fine by me, though I do have to wonder a bit when he characterizes as "feminist discourse" some of the sixteenth-century propaganda that used examples of violence to women to underscore the barbarity of Muscovite actions.

Filiushkin systematically examines first the Russian sources and then the Western ones, summarizing often in some detail and with extended quotations of what each one in turn had to say about the war. While he explicitly states that his goal is not to determine how accurate each source is, perforce in many cases while contextualizing the sources, he has to comment on their accuracy. Perceptions here in the first instance are what is important. The Russian sources (chronicles, epistles, diplomatic documents) are in many ways quite uniform in their treatment of the conflicts (especially in their religious justifications for Muscovite policy), at the same time that they lack the depth and variety of the Western sources. Indeed, the Russian material has major lacunae, not necessarily because "much has been lost" but rather because much of what was happening was probably perceived as not meriting special comment. He supplements the standard published Russian sources with a considerable amount of archival material, a reminder of how key parts of the documentation for 16th-century Muscovite history as yet remain in manuscript.

Filiushkin admits that the quantity of western material is much greater, much of it unpublished and unstudied (e.g., private correspondence, scattered in all too many collections). Hence, perhaps a bit modestly considering the scope of what he does here, he feels he can but point the way to its future analysis. That analysis, he suggests, must employ a whole team of scholars

competent in a dozen languages. His treatment of the western material focuses to a considerable degree on the “usual suspects” (among the most influential, Balthasar Rüssow), although where possible he draws on published archival documents that may not be familiar to most readers. I found his pages on Livonian correspondence of particular interest in this regard. To a considerable degree the responses to the conflict reflected not so much foreign policy concerns as domestic ones. This is especially clear in the Polish, Lithuanian and Livonian sources, where Catholic or Protestant sympathies were often the defining factor in the discussions. Discussion of the war often seems to have provided merely a rhetorical framework for addressing very different concerns.

Among the texts considered here are Western pamphlets and news sheets, precursors of regular newspapers. They were a key source of anti-Muscovite propaganda and did much to carve in stone what became the standard perceptions about Muscovite tyranny. As much as anything this was a propaganda war. Filiushkin clearly appreciates the significance of what some argue was the communications revolution embodied in such publications. He is indebted to the pioneering study by Andreas Kappeler which appeared nearly half a century ago (*Ivan Groznyj im Spiegel der ausländischen Druckschriften seiner Zeit*) and to the recent treatment of the shaping of the Western image of Muscovy by Stéphane Mund (*Orbis Russiarum*). Importantly, the relationship between Western *muscovitica* and *turcica*, which they and others have noted, gets full play here, since it is essential for our understanding of how the image of Russia developed. (As an aside, I should mention that years ago I offered an undergraduate seminar on “the barbarous kingdome” and “the terrible Turke,” which treated this literature comparatively. A spokesman for an organization defending the image of Turks saw the course title and came by to give me a lecture, thinking I was engaged in defaming them. I launched into a summary of the material from my dissertation on Muscovite *turcica*; he quickly got bored and left. Can’t blame him.)

150 pages of appendices follow the main text, several of them containing reprints of primary sources (with accompanying analytical introductions) published by Filiushkin and V. E. Popov; others publishing for the first time some key archival documents. The primary goal is to make the material readily available in Russian translation. Nonetheless, one might wish that the source publications had included all the non-Russian originals (where they exist) and might question decisions about which one of multiple copies to publish.

The book is illustrated throughout with more than 200 (!) decent black-and-white images of contemporary engravings, title pages, and modern photos of the remains of fortresses and buildings. Also, there is an insert of high quality color plates, most being miniatures from the Muscovite *Litsevoi svod*. While there are geographic and name indexes, alas, there is no bibliography.

A number of people subscribed to H-EarlySlavic are more qualified than I to write the long and serious review(s) this important book deserves. Perhaps my notes here will encourage them to consider doing so. I hope that Filiushkin completes his history of the Baltic wars, although I would argue that what he does in this volume is much more stimulating than any detailed history of campaigns and the diplomacy of the period is likely to be.