Persons’ themselves. These are important, wide-ranging claims, but to determine their validity we would need to analyze many more factors. To this reviewer, who has studied the world of Soviet and Russian media for many years, the inclusion of the political and economic environment would strengthen the argument. Philosophically, I find it puzzling that in a book whose subtitle refers to “the Person,” the text focuses not on the person but solely on the teacher. Does Wolfe assume that ordinary folks in the USSR were so malleable that we may assume that teachers’ lessons were always internalized? Is it not possible that messages even from the press as teachers were not automatically committed to memory, that they were instead the product of a negotiation between receiver and message, and that personal experiences and environment played an important role? How can the teaching of the press be judged in the total absence of its relationship to its readers (not letter writers, who are both unrepresentative and, for many, inauthentic)?

Or is it the case that, precisely because the revolution was made not by the workers but in their name by their so-called vanguard, the assumed “backwardness” of ordinary people cannot possibly be allowed to persist and is useless to analyze. Wolfe has ventured onto the most slippery of slopes.

Despite these reservations, Governing Soviet Journalism offers an interesting narrative of the stance of the press across different periods. The material from the former party archive is particularly interesting. Together with other studies that broaden the scope of investigation of the media, Wolfe’s book is worthy of note.


Reviewed by Ewa Thompson, Rice University

Since 1956, when the Moscow monthly Nash sovremennik emerged as a post-Stalinist creation of the Russian Writers’ Union, it has consistently represented the views of the nationalistic segment (likely a majority) of the Russian elites. The journal’s continuing importance is reflected in the fact that in 2007 it boasted the largest number of individual subscribers of all the periodicals in the Russian Federation. The journal’s editor-in-chief is still Stanislav Kunyaev, one of the key figures in Simon Cosgrove’s book.

Cosgrove provides an orderly and well-structured account of the politics of Nash sovremennik in the crucial decade leading to the disintegration of the USSR. He also provides a cultural history of the period, and scholars will delight in his meticulous attention to detail. Copious footnotes and two appendices add to the book’s credibility: Cosgrove’s work can serve as a model of relevant and dispassionate scholarship in Slavic studies. The book documents nearly ever statement and offers only a limited commentary. The appendices explain the structure of the Russian “thick journals” (a tradition that goes back to the nineteenth century) and provide capsule biographies of
the journal's principal editors and associates. Particularly valuable is Cosgrove's ability to avoid falling into the trap of mirror-imaging Russian society and seeing its culture as fundamentally similar to the cultures of the West. He points out that the cultural politics described in the book is not in any way analogous to the cultural struggles occurring in democratic societies. In Russia, it is a struggle for the version of orthodoxy that is to be adopted. Nearly all of Nash sovremenniki's associates have shared the view (espoused by Russian President Vladimir Putin, among others) that the disintegration of the USSR was a tragedy rather than a victory for Russians.

The book's centerpiece is the taxonomy of Russian nationalist authors. Cosgrove divides them into two groups: "popular" (conservative and reformist) and "statist" (Red and White). The White statist are the largest group and include such writers and journalists as Yurii Bondarev, Aleksandr Kazintsev, Vadim Kozhinov, Stanislav Kunyaev, Yurii Kuznetsov, Mark Lyubomudrov, Yurii Seleznev, Igor Shafarevich, and Vladimir Soloukhin. The second most numerous group consists mainly of the "conservative populist" writers such as Viktor Astaf'ev, Vasilii Belov, Valentin Rasputin, and, arguably, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn. Such writers as Leonid Borodin straddle the two camps. Cosgrove explains how the first group took over the leadership of the journal. He also shows that although many of the Nash sovremennik collaborators during the Soviet era were anti-Communist to varying degrees, the situation changed in the 1990s when the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (headed by Gennadi Zyuganov) adopted the ideology of Russian nationalism. Cosgrove calls this the first paradox of Russian nationalism. He offers several more, pointing out that although Nash sovremennik represented mostly the "White statist" nationalism, it contributed both to the demise of the Soviet Union (in which Russia was dominant) and to the viability of the Russian Federation. Despite the ascendance in 1991 of the Democratic Russia faction led by Boris Yeltsin, the nationalists eventually assumed power in the Federation. Even though the Yeltsin group intermingled with the popular and statist nationalists, its "liberal nationalism" failed to jell or attract a broad spectrum of other nationalists, let alone supporters of the "Red empire." The effect was that the Yeltsin government produced a nationalism that was "ethnic, statist, authoritarian and nation-shaping" (p. 144), including many who wanted to Russify the non-Russian fifth of the population. The epilogue takes the reader beyond the dates mentioned in the title and provides a summary and an interpretation of the remainder of the 1990s. Cosgrove points out that in the 1990s democratic institutions were installed "from above" by Russia's rulers rather than emerging "from below" through grassroots pressure. A genuine desire for a democratic society seems to elude Russians, no matter how educated and brilliant they otherwise may be.

The ideological move from "popular" to "statist" nationalism has been easy in Russia, as witnessed by the so-called village writers (derevenschikii) who became ardent defenders of Putin's increasingly authoritarian regime. Similarly, the nationalist-Communist alliance has been relatively easy to forge in past decades—an indication of a stubbornly persistent feature of the Russian state, which for centuries has included some minority groups that do not want to be under its jurisdiction. Some of them, especially in the North Caucasus, struggle to form (or at least dream of forming) sepa-
rate nation-states. Here the virtues of Cosgrove's book become also its liabilities. His scrupulous recording of the statements of Russian nationalists, and his purely empirical methodology, prevent him from paying sufficient attention to the fact that the Russian Federation, not unlike the USSR before it, is in many way a colonial state whose first priority is to defend its borders against the attempts by some of its own citizens to redraw them. The arbitrary nature of borders within the Federation (some borders divide nations, as in Buryatia) makes the defense of the state appear compelling to many Russians, and it partly accounts for the enduring strength of nationalism in that country. If Russia were a unified nation-state, the coercive police and military actions over the past fifteen years would not have been necessary. As things stand now, not only Chechnya but also other regions (Ingushetia, Dagestan, etc.) aspire to sovereignty, and attempts to reverse such aspirations sap a great deal of Russian political energy. Cosgrove quotes Vadim Kozhinov, a White statist nationalist who wrote about the "multinational Russian state" (p. 30), but Cosgrove does not rebut this oxymoron and does not point out that in relation to the Russians' annexation of non-Russian territories they have become victims of their own propaganda. Many Russians believe that such annexations were inevitable and that high priority should be given to policies that will make them irreversible.


Fifteen years have passed since John Gaddis produced a scathing critique of international relations theory for its failure to predict the collapse of the Soviet Union. In an article titled "International Relations Theory and the End of the Cold War," appearing in the Winter 1992/1993 issue of *International Security*, Gaddis threw into question the basic worth of the discipline because, in his view, its practitioners did not fulfill the criterion that defined their purpose: namely, to forecast future trends in the Cold War. Of course, no one anywhere predicted with certainty the end of the Cold War, and this academic controversy remains an instructive reminder that the forces governing international relations are notoriously unwilling to conform to behavioral models. But looking back, what if there was another determinant, far removed from the radar of political theory, that offered clearer signs of impending doom in the Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc?

For Arvid Nelson, the enormously destructive environmental policies of the USSR and its East European satellites lay at the heart of the Communist experiment that was bound to fail: plummeting forest resources, sterilized farmland, poisoned water supplies, cities deprived of fresh air, and a diseased citizenry are not the stuff of enduring empires. Nelson's incisive focus on the forty-year crumbling of the German Democratic Republic (GDR)—long considered by Western observers as the ultimate marriage of Soviet productivity and German ingenuity—demonstrates that Marxism-