

for the local population. In the book, the views of the (inter)national experts seem to be constructed in opposition to those held by the liquidators; yet some of the expert views cited in the book were also supported and promoted by some of the liquidators themselves (for instance, Sergii Mirnyi) in their struggle against stigmatization. This fact seems to be overlooked here.

On the whole, however, this is an insightful read that will be welcomed by scholars and intellectuals interested in Afghan and Belarusian politics and society, and/or the topics of biopolitics, international governmentality, and international humanitarian action.

**Evgenia Ivanova**

Centre for Gender Studies

European Humanities University, Vilnius

Evgeniy Chernyshev, *Kaliningrad—An Ambivalent Transnational Region within a European-Russian Scope*. Kaliningrad: Kaliningradskaja kniga, 2016. 220 pp.

Kaliningrad is a distinctive part of the Russian Federation, an enclave/exclave territorially separated from mainland Russia, situated on the Baltic Sea and squeezed in between the European Union and Schengen member states Lithuania and Poland. These geographical determinants are quite decisive for the evolution and characteristics of Kaliningrad society.

This book is a revised version of a doctoral dissertation by the same name, defended by Kaliningrad researcher Evgeniy Chernyshev in December 2015 at the Institute for European Ethnology of Humboldt University in Berlin. The study focuses on the “self-understanding” of Kaliningrad’s youth. It is an empirical examination of two major groups: “experts” and “ordinary” respondents. The experts are identified as “public people,” specifically “scientists, leaders of public initiatives, entrepreneurs, leaders of NGOs, government officials, and journalists,” up to 35 years of age. The second group is more numerous, but characterized merely as “ordinary people.” There is no quantification of reply patterns and no questionnaire is included. Questions and answers are merely quoted as illustrative examples.

Evgeniy Chernyshev outlines the intricate sociology of post-World War II Kaliningrad, tracing the political origin of the new administrative-territorial unit of the Soviet Union, later of the Russian Federation, to the wartime peace conferences in Tehran and Potsdam. After the German population of Königsberg and East Prussia had left, the region soon became the target of an “intensive Soviet resettlement policy,” the new inhabitants sometimes being referred to as *homo sovieticus kaliningradiensis*.

Peculiarly, the repopulation process was highly unstable. Between 1946 and 1958, 1,286,000 migrants arrived, while 820,000 or nearly two-thirds left. The lack of population permanence may be one factor explaining why the efficient East Prussian agriculture with its advanced irrigation system fell into dismal disrepair. The author argues that the complete shift of population provided the perfect testing ground for engineering a new identity and the creation of a collective memory masterminded by Soviet spin doctors. Kaliningrad was the object of keen observation, even suspicion, by Moscow, but also an ideal laboratory for the Soviet propaganda machine since a secret decree as early as 29 June 1946 declared the entire *oblast* a “closed border zone,” where “access was allowed only with permission issued by the militia.”

The dissertation provides much empirical information and makes numerous pertinent observations about the dynamics of the formation of the new Soviet city and region of Kaliningrad and shaping the identity of its population. However, the English text reads very poorly, often to the point of making it difficult to decipher the intention of the author. Anyone expecting from an academic treatise precision and accuracy is likely to be disappointed. The text is replete with errors, the syntax is disastrous and completely destroys the pleasure of reading the book. In addition, there are numerous typographical mistakes, such as words inadvertently joined together without space in between, something that even the most cursory proofreading—or the simplest spell-check on the computer—could easily have remedied.

An academic institution is expected to maintain higher standards. Let us take but one minor case in point and at the same time offer an illustration of another methodological problem. The

dissertation provides the following quote from the Helsinki Final Act of 1975, the fundamental international document for the European peace and security order ever since:

“The participating states are considering as inviolable border of each other and the boundaries of all states in Europe and, therefore, they will refrain now and in the future from assaulting on these boundaries.”

This is not, however, what the original text actually says. Instead it reads:

“The participating States regard as inviolable all one another’s frontiers as well as the frontiers of all States in Europe and therefore they will refrain now and in the future from assaulting these frontiers.”

Ironically, the author of the dissertation argues that “there is no excuse for... using the terms ‘frontier’ and ‘boundary’ as synonyms” (22). The dual concepts of border and boundary used by the author in his self-styled paraphrase of the Helsinki Document has no basis in the original: It uses neither border nor boundary, the two terms tried by the author in his paraphrase. Also, it is not by accident that the original document uses only one term for the crucial concept: frontier.

Grammatical and terminological mistakes aside, one may wonder how the author drafted what is presented as an excerpt from the Helsinki Final Act. Probably by retranslating from another language, most likely Russian.

The original document was negotiated and officially agreed in six languages, all with equal status. How is it possible that it did not occur to either the author or his academic advisors that the long-awaited pan-European peace treaty could not possibly have been available in Russian only, but—at the very least—also in the languages of the other victorious powers in World War II, most particularly English, the official language of both the United States and Britain?

**Manne Wängborg**

Ambassador, Consul-General of Sweden in Kaliningrad

2006-2009