

Russian opposition. Which leaves us with the inertia-based, “muddling through” option. Although the most plausible of the four scenarios, its likely outcome is grim. Regime consolidation will do nothing to solve the problems of poor governance, and the costs to the regime in terms of ever increasing payoffs to political and economic rent-seekers as well as rewards to social groups in return for their loyalty will be high.

Despite the gloomy prognosis, Gel'man ends on a high. Over the years I have spoken to many people in the Russian “non-systemic” opposition and often finish meetings by asking whether they take a pessimistic or optimistic view of Russia’s future. Despite the frequently parlous state of the opposition over the years, to a man and woman they have stated their optimism. “This is our country,” they say, “we have to remain optimistic.” Gel'man suggests he has a similar mindset when he concludes the book by asserting that Russia will, one day, become a free country. In terms of the way he conceptualizes the Russian political system in the book’s title as authoritarian Gel'man gets it absolutely right. No scholar would be taken seriously referring to Russia as a democracy, even in its most diminished form, and increasingly it appears that the “competitive” and “electoral” prefixes are becoming redundant, leaving Putin’s Russia as simply authoritarian. Gel'man’s innate optimism is reflected by his prediction that one day, readers will welcome a book entitled *Democratizing Russia*. If that were to be the case I wouldn’t bet against Vladimir Gel'man being the author.

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David Satter, *The Less You Know, the Better You Sleep: Russia’s Road to Terror and Dictatorship under Yeltsin and Putin*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2016. 221 pp.

This collection of book chapters which treat a range of disparate topics constitutes David Satter’s attempt to sum up the lessons that he learned during the approximately forty years that he worked as a journalist covering both the USSR and post-communist Russia. One of the chapters extends the coverage to the revolutionary events

occurring in Ukraine which led to the ouster of a pro-Russian president, Viktor Yanukovich, from power.

Satter first arrived in Moscow as a correspondent for the *Financial Times* in 1976. He remained there until 1982, the year of Brezhnev's death. During the rest of the 1980s he was *persona non grata* in the USSR, finally being permitted to return in 1990 after pressure was exerted on his behalf by *Reader's Digest*. He then spent the next two decades traveling freely to Russia, a subject about which he authored two books and hundreds of articles. In December 2013, Satter was once again declared *persona non grata* and since then has not been able to visit Russia.

Few Western correspondents have spent as much time in Russia as Satter has and even fewer have chosen to focus relentlessly on the flagrant crimes and outrages committed first under the Yeltsin presidency and then during Putin's seemingly interminable period of authoritarian rule. The opening chapter, which is entitled "The 1999 apartment bombings," sums up what Satter and other researchers have been able to learn about the false flag terrorist operation which brought an unknown former KGB operative to the Russian presidency. He appropriately concludes:

The greatest barrier to accepting the evidence that points to the FSB as the perpetrator of the bombings is not that it is unconvincing but that it is difficult to believe such a thing possible. By any standard, murdering hundreds of randomly chosen civilians in order to hold on to power shows a cynicism that cannot be comprehended in a normal human context (38).

I have published a book of my own on the apartment bombings and am able to testify that Satter has gotten everything right. In his new book, he reveals that he was greatly assisted by a Russian operative with good contacts in the security services—the operative put him in touch with two disaffected members of those services—who helped him in comprehending the unthinkable events which had occurred.

The Moscow bombings set the tone for the ensuing years of Putin's rule. Satter unblinkingly examines the spate of grisly political killings which took place. A number of those murdered were persons with whom Satter was acquainted—American journalist Paul Klebnikov, who was shot, leading Duma deputy Sergei

Yushenkov, who was also shot, and journalist Yuri Shchekochikhin, a member of the public commission, headed by Duma deputy Sergei Kovalev, to investigate the apartment bombings. Like Roman Tseпов, Putin's former bodyguard, Shchekochikhin is believed to have died of thallium poisoning. Satter also covers the well-known death by shooting of intrepid journalist Anna Politkovskaya and by radiation poisoning of former secret police officer Aleksandr Litvinenko, who was murdered in London.

Another object of Satter's keen attention is the horrific terrorist incidents in Moscow at Nord-Ost in 2002 and in a school in Beslan, North Ossetia, in 2004. I have published my own findings concerning the covert involvement of Russian operatives in these two incidents, and Satter's conclusions tend to mirror my own.

Satter's concluding sixth chapter, which is entitled "Russia's Fate," speculates upon the possible futures of a post-Putin Russia. He focuses his attention upon two scenarios: a palace coup, which would be unlikely to lead to qualitative improvement in the life of the country; and a democratic revolution of the type of anti-criminal revolution which took place in Ukraine. He also examines a third scenario: the removal of the Putin regime in a free and fair election, concluding that, unfortunately, there is little chance that this could take place.

Satter concludes by emphasizing that true improvement will come about for Russia only when it is able to come to terms with and admit responsibility for the 1999 apartment bombings and the other sanguinary acts committed under Yeltsin and Putin. "To restore respect for the individual as the foundation for a new beginning," he writes, "Russia must take an honest look at its past." In my own book devoted to the Moscow bombings, I came to a similar conclusion, noting that it seems self-evident that the formation of a Russian 9/99 Commission, on the model of the 9/11 National Commission—which would be chaired by Russian citizens of integrity, who would be charged with ferreting out the truth concerning what occurred during September of 1999—remains a pressing necessity.

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