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REVIEW OF ANNA BOROVSKEYA'S THESIS "RUSSKAIA EMIGRATSIIA V SHVETSII: PROBLEMY VZAIMOOTNOSHENII DIASPORY, GOSUDARSTVA I OBSHCHESTVA (1918–1940)

The topic of Anna Borovskaya's dissertation work, Russian emigration and emigrants to Sweden in the aftermath of the Russian revolution, is indeed timely and relevant. During the last decades, and particularly since 2015, Sweden has received hundreds of thousands of emigrants, many of them refugees from Afghanistan, the Middle East and Africa, but also other migrants in search for better economic and life opportunities. Borovskaya's thesis deals with a much less voluminous emigration of Russians who moved to Sweden in the interwar period. Nevertheless, fundamental questions and problems of migration remain similar over time. A few examples may be sufficient to demonstrate such continuities. Like at present, there was a change from a migration politics characterized by generous migration and open borders to a situation of a more restricted immigration legislation and borders that, in times of international pressure, became more difficult to penetrate. Like at present, push and pull factors worked together in a complex pattern to force the pace of the migration process. In both cases the push aspect, the revolution and civil war in Russia, and nowadays the conflicts in Afghanistan and the Middle East, are crucial events. Like at present, immigrants to Sweden found it hard to integrate into Swedish society, were often met with suspicion and fear and in many ways formed émigré micro-societies or diasporas in Sweden.

To legitimize the study, the author correctly adduces the scholarly novelty of her topic. Quite a few scholarly works on Swedish interwar immigrations politics have been written lately as a result of an exploding interest in Sweden's involvement in the Holocaust, in particular in the Swedish unwillingness to open its borders to Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany. As a matter of fact, already in 1973, a classical work by Hans Lindberg – not mentioned in the present thesis – analyzed the Swedish protectionist migration politics in the period 1936–1941, focusing on political refugees and Jews who with little success tried to escape from

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Hitler's Germany.¹ However, as Borovskaya convincingly demonstrates in her survey on the research that already has been carried out, few works have dealt with the Russian interwar emigration to Sweden and its motives, or with Russian-Soviet emigration in general. In many respects, she has identified a blank historical spot.

It could be added that the reverse interwar migration, from Sweden to Russia, is somewhat better scholarly covered, thanks to a few interesting books. One of them, written by Bengt Jangfeldt, deals with "Swedish roads to Saint Petersburg" from the early 18th century to the Soviet period, including a final chapter on Swedish roads from revolutionary Petrograd.² The journalist Kaa Eneberg has published three highly interesting works on the so-called "Kiruna Swedes", Swedish communists who emigrated from northern Sweden to the Soviet Union in the 1920s and 1930s. In the Soviet Union, they encountered brutal Stalinist terror, and, when the survivors returned home, they were accused of slandering the good Stalinism by Swedish communist comrades.³ To be sure, this reverse migration is not Borovskaya's topic, but how the two migratory directions might have influenced each other certainly is. If most Swedes in Petrograd were more or less forced to return to Sweden by the new Bolshevik power, it certainly must have negatively influenced the Swedish attitudes towards Russian newcomers. However, in general, her knowledge on the scholarly literature and the documentation at hand is excellent.

Praiseworthy is also her careful and detailed overall estimation and mapping of the Russian migration movement, kept apart in different chronological "waves" but simultaneously kept together as a coherent demographic process. Although relatively few individuals were involved, the migration process contains an interesting historical variation. Behind the theses one can detect a heavy and impressive empirical work. She is observant of the Swedish political attitudes and administrative practices that controlled and regulated the Russian immigration, of the new international migration regime of the interwar era, and of political changes in the neighboring countries, both the ones that followed upon the end of the First World War and the ones that heralded the Second World War.

¹ Hans Lindberg, *Svensk flyktingpolitik under internationellt tryck 1936–1941*, Stockholm: Allmänna förlaget 1973.

² Bengt Jangfeldt, *Svenska vägar till S:t Petersburg. Kapitel ur historien om svenskarna vid Nevans stränder*, Stockholm: Wahlström & Widstrand 1998.

³ The first of these books is Kaa Eneberg, *Tvingade till tystnad. En okänd historia om några svenska flyktingöden*, Stockholm: Hjalmarson & Högberg 2000.

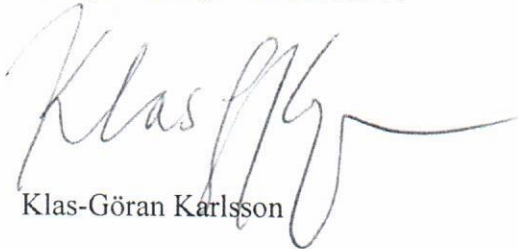
Borovskaya is sometimes less observant when she encounters problems and incompatibilities. Some of her results are indeed paradoxical: while she generally describes the Swedish immigration practice as strict and formal, she also demonstrates a reverse tendency, that, as she puts it, “for Swedish authorities the personal motives of immigration were put above political”. In reality, what she depicts is a Swedish politico-administrative migration system with grey zones, with individual variations related to the ethno-national origin of the migrant, a certain scope for lower level officials to act independently, and semi-legal possibilities for Russians to immigrate. Other examples: on the one hand, Russian migrants were treated worse than other ethnic groups entering Sweden, on the other hand “all foreigners were seen as undesirable guests in the country”. Fear and danger characterized the Swedish reception of the Russians, but nevertheless “the elite of the Swedish society was involved in the cause of preservation of the Russian church” in Stockholm. With advantage, such paradoxes, ambiguities and contradictions could have been paid more attention to, and even presented as historical problems to be analyzed.

In general, it had been fruitful for Borovskaya to formulate her research problems and questions explicitly at an early state in her work, and to identify a more distinct theoretical and analytical framework to apply through the entire study. The triangle diaspora – state – society, suggested in the title of her work, could have been elaborated and made visible throughout the work. “Pull” and “push” factors of the Russian migration process – revolution, ideology, war, economic scarcity, race etc. – could have been more systematically analyzed, as could continuity and change in the migration patterns and in Swedish attitudes. This does not mean that such analytical distinctions are entirely missing. A good example is her rewarding discussion of how different factors and circumstances influenced the citizenship process in Sweden. She is also anxious to analyze the migration process at hand from different perspectives that, taken together, gives the reader a comprehensive understanding of the Russian migration to Sweden.

Migration history has quite closely followed the general movements in scholarly historiography: from being part of political history, with a focus on politics and legislation, to social history, with a concentration on social and economic dimensions of migration, to the present incorporation of migration history into a wider cultural history, centered round various cultural, transnational aspects of the emigrants’ connections to and contacts with both their homeland and their new land of domicile, thus focusing on cultural continuities and breaks,

restrictions and possibilities. The great importance of Borovskaya's study is that she embraces all three levels. One can hope that she goes on working with the cultural dimensions of Russian-Swedish migration, especially since so many of what she calls "the brightest representatives" of Russian culture left to settle abroad after the revolution. With advantage, leading individuals such as Vera Sager deserve to be further studied, or even biographed. As it is, Anna Borovskaya has written an ambitious, scholarly and extra-scholarly relevant, empirically rich and analytically satisfying study on Russian migration to Sweden that clearly answers to the scholarly qualities required.

Lund, Sweden, 5 October 2017

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Klas-Göran Karlsson', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

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