against a kind of Russian exceptionalism that has characterized much previous work in the field.

There are some quibbles. The employment of Russian archives is selective and has been limited to a relatively small number of files. In the transition from dissertation to book, the author was in places too reluctant to excise detail that adds little to the general flow of the work. And the absence of a bibliography proves a nuisance.

On balance, assets far outweigh liabilities and this is a solid book. It offers a fresh and insightful approach to Russia's transition in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

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This book, by historian Richard B. Spence, presents the first scholarly account in English of the fascinating and legendary life of the infamous terrorist and "errant anti-Bolshevik" patriot, Boris Viktorovich Savinkov (1879-1925). From start to finish, one is amazed by the contradictions in Savinkov's existence: an aristocratic dandy fighting Tsarism by terrorism, in the name of the Russian people which, in 1905, he despised for its backwardness, who rejected parliamentary democracy, but who waxed patriotic, even chauvinistic and authoritarian in defense of Russia and her peasants, after 1917, against Bolshevism.

Claiming a revolutionary background, Savinkov was born the second son, among six children, into a typical family of the "tsarist bureaucracy" and "the landed hereditary gentry of St. Petersburg Province." (p. 5) At the exclusive First Warsaw Boys' Gimnazia, Boris was regarded as the "perfect little Russian" (p. 10) by his teachers, while he was also a member of the illegal radical Polish Socialist Party. Having moved to St. Petersburg University to study law, Savinkov was drawn deeper into subversive political activities. After having sampled neo-populism and other fashionable ideologies, he finally identified with Plekhanov's Social Democrats until imprisonment and exile radicalized him sufficiently to join the terrorist "Battle Organization" of the Socialist Revolutionary Party in 1903. Under the command of the notorious Azev, Savinkov planned and eventually executed successfully the terrorist murders of Plehve and Grand Duke Sergei but failed dismally in his attempts on the Tsar, Stolypin, Trepov, Kleigels and Gerasimov.

Always the man-of-action, Savinkov cared little about the theories, strategies and politics of terrorism. He dismissed the members of the SR Central Committee and their concerns as "gutless chatter boxes." The moralistic qualms of his fellow terrorists he ignored, but the tasks of throwing the fatal bomb and pulling the trigger he delegated to others. And yet he evidently showed great personal
courage and never avoided personal danger. However, one finds amazing the inefficiency of Savinkov’s terrorist acts which were very wasteful in time and money, marred by disobedience, indolence, indecision, betrayal, and sheer incompetence. During the Duma period, with terrorism less popular, Savinkov not only enjoyed the admiration of left leaning artists and intellectuals at home and in Paris, but under the guidance of Zinadia Hippius he also published two controversial semi-fictionalized books which depicted the moral and intellectual bankruptcy, the cynicism and callowness of Russian terrorism and perhaps of Savinkov himself.

Savinkov, a morphine addict, savored ostentation and luxury throughout his life. “A concerned and sentimental father” (p. 89) who also loved his two wives, Savinkov never failed to appreciate the talents of the women in his vicinity, but he always treated all of them as his sexual prey, with several chosen for lengthy periods of special mistress status. The outbreak of World War I rescued Savinkov from the doldrums; he returned to journalism supporting the Russian war effort.

The final two-thirds of Professor Spence’s work analyze Savinkov’s remaining years from 1917 to his suicide/murder in 1925. Back in Petrograd in April 1917, Savinkov supported the patriotic Left, becoming first a military commissar and then Kerensky’s Deputy Minister of War. Disillusioned by the lack of political will among the “patriotic” politicians and fearful for Russia, Savinkov began his search for a “strong arm” which involved him in the mysterious and controversial Kornilov debacle. His involvement not only discredited him among Right and Left patriots, but after October 1917 it increased the obstacles in his path to organize effective resistance against the Bolsheviks’ coup d’etat. Subsequently, as “the errant anti-Bolshevik,” Savinkov searched to find a leader’s niche within the White forces. Perceived by leading Western diplomats, generals, politicians and agents as a Russian “strong” man, Savinkov easily hobnobbed with the likes of Noulens, Knox, Lloyd George, Churchill, Pilsudski, Masaryk, even Mussolini, Lockhart, Reilly and Somerset Maugham. One is, however, never quite sure in examining these contacts of who is using whom.

Despite Savinkov’s arduous and often extremely dangerous labors as instigator and participant in acts of anti-Bolshevik terrorism, as delegate to the Paris Peace Conference, as Information Bureau Chief, as the founder and inspirer of the abortive Slavonic army and as sponsor of the unsuccessful Russian “Third Army” in Poland and various other anti-Bolshevik schemes, he realized — it seems — in 1923 that his opportunities in the West were exhausted. Whether this fact induced Savinkov to contemplate return to the USSR, or whether he was lured by Trest’, is impossible to conclude with certainty. Perhaps, he believed that having settled their differences, his erstwhile foes would honor his life-long struggle for Russia and the Russian people with an appropriate post in the new USSR. But, as so often in Savinkov’s career one cannot be certain; and although the author has assembled an abundance of evidence, based on a thorough and thoughtful study of Western archival materials and of the extensive corpus of secondary literature, no definitive conclusions are offered. Perhaps a future