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Fascicolo 23. Luglio 2025 Storia Militare Moderna (6)



Società Italiana di Storia Militare

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Stendardo di Lepanto (1570), Lati A e B, Museo Diocesano di Gaeta. Wikimedia Commons. Lo stendardi fu dipinto a tempera su seta da Girolamo Siciolante da Sermoneta (1521-1575), su incarico del Cardinale Onorato Caetani. L'11 giugno 1570 fu benedetto da Papa Pio V nella Basilica di San Pietro e consegnato a Marcantonio II Colonna ponendolo al comando della flotta pontificia. Partito da Civitavecchia e giunto a Gaeta il 22 giugno 1571, Marcantonio Colonna, fece voto di consegnare lo stendardo al patrono della città qualora fosse tornato vincitore. Il 13 agosto Pio V fece consegnare un secondo stendardo della Lega a Don Giovanni d'Austria, comandante generale della flotta cristiana che, riunitasi a Messina, salpò il 24 agosto verso Lepanto. Durante la battaglia del 7 ottobre i due vessilli sventolarono rispettivamente sull'Ammiraglia e sulla Capitana pontificia e non furono mai centrati dal tiro nemico. Nelle stesse ore il papa ebbe la visione della vittoria e in ricordo rifinì l'Ave Maria nella forma attuale, aggiunse le Litanie lauretane alla recita del Rosario e l'appellativo mariano di Auxilium Christianorum e consacrò il 7 ottobre a Santa Maria delle Vittorie sull'Islam, celebrato con lo scampanio al mattino, a mezzogiorno e alla sera in ricordo della vittoria. Papa Gregorio XIII trasferì poi la festa alla prima domenica del mese di ottobre intitolandola alla Madonna del Rosario. Al ritorno da Lepanto, Marcantonio Colonna sciolse il voto consegnando lo stendardo al vescovo Pietro Lunello. Il vessillo fu poi conservato presso la cattedrale dei Santi Erasmo e Marciano.

OLEG RUSAKOVSKIY

European Military Books and Intellectual Cultures of War in 17th-Century Russia. From Translation to Adaptation



Leiden and Boston, Brill, 2024, pp. 352

here are two different approaches to the cognition of history: the position of an observer from outside and the feelings of an actor inside. It is fascinating that one of the rare examples of the second approach deals with the military revolution and Russian empire-building, the areas of much prejudice. In *European Military Books and Intellectual Cultures of War in 17th-Century Russia*, Oleg Rusakovskiy adheres to this approach. First, he looks at the military revolution and Russian empire-building by revealing the thoughts and animating the actions of two principal figures, Tsar Alexei I and Emperor Peter I the Great, through studying the military books that they ordered and read.

NAM, Anno 6 – n. 23 DOI: 10.36158/979125669174625 Luglio 2025 Second, Rusakovskiy explores the military books in their collections not only as literary sources. He presents them as the bridge connecting military and national transformation of Muscovy to the West European statecraft, sphere of information, and warfare. There is nothing wrong for Rusakovskiy that many of the books that he researches were not printed and spread in just a few copies because Tsar Alexei I and Emperor Peter I, who attended them, were the main actors of the Russian transformation. (pp. 21–22) In the historiographical tradition, Peter I is one of the protagonists of world history; Rusakovskiy creates a fresh itinerary through his intellectual life, highlighting its most important but relatively obscure period in the 1690s when his future overwhelming reforms were incepted. Rusakovskiy's book, especially its Parts 4 and 7, deserves the close attention of all students of Peter I's personality and reign.

Rusakovskiy turns about a discourse on the utility of the translated military manuals in 17th-century Russia. He views them not as a vehicle to transfer the innovations from advanced Western Europe to backward Russia but the "intellectual reflections" of the "ongoing military changes" created by the specific Russian cultural situation. (p. 17) It is a well-known phenomenon that only around 10 per cent of the senior officers and just over 30 per cent of the middle officers in the Russian "new-formation" regiments, trained in the Dutch fighting technique and tactics in the 1650s–1680s, were the Russian natives. The bulk of them, and as much as half of NCOs and rank-and-file soldiers, were the foreigners who were attracted by decent salaries and career prospects. They were mostly of Dutch, German, and French Protestant origin. They did not need the German military books translated to Russian or Slavonic to train their Russian recruits and lead them to combat. Rusakovskiy points out that military migrants were the principal agents of the transfer of the Western military culture to Russia. Not bookish knowledge but practical skills were the main matter of the transfer (pp. 14–15, 22–23). The translated books did not create the Russian military reforms, as it is widely believed, but they served for the Russian rulers to understand and utilise the military changes. It is one of the fresh conclusions that Rusakovskiy's study produces.

This function of the translated Western books was not less important than to be the textbooks for the reforming learners. However, it does not support the widespread belief in lagging-behind military development of Russia. The translated Western books were not its evidence. Russia raced fast in its military trans-



formation and empire-building, mixing the native traditions, foreign borrowings, and springing innovations. The Russian rulers and commanders needed the concept to grasp the changes, and they turned to their contemporary military books and Byzantine treaties. The translated books were not the textbooks for them but manuals to manage the new state and military structures that they faced. Rusa-kovskiy closely researches this topic in Parts 3 and 10. Studying Peter I's formation as a reforming monarch and military leader, Rusakovskiy proposes a method of research; however, he does not embrace some top customers and readers of the translated manuals who need to be attended to.

For example, three top courtiers of Tsar Alexei I's reign, Princes Yuri Dolgorukov, Nikita Odoevskii, and Alexei Trubetskoy, whom Rusakovskiy detected as owners of the copies of the most significant translated books (p.39, 60), were at the same time outstanding commanders of the Muscovite "new-formation" troops. Nikita Odoevskii was the first general of the Belgorod regular corps in 1646 and one of the political figures behind the merger of the Ukrainian Cossack Hetmanate with Muscovy in 1654. In the following Thirteen Years' War with the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, Yuri Dolgorukov successfully commanded the Muscovite troops. He overran Lithuania and endangered Poland, and provoked Sweden to enter the war to prevent Muscovy from conquering it completely. He also presided over the Russian military directorates at the end of the 1670s and the beginning of the 1680s when the decisive military reform to change the traditional Muscovite military to the "new-formation" order was accomplished. Alexei Trubetskoy commanded the Muscovite troops in the critical years after the death of Hetman Bohdan Khmelnytsky. He suffered disaster in the battle of Konotop against the united Hetmanate and Crimean army in 1659, and then managed to reverse the course of war in favour of Russia. How did reading the translated Western military books influence their warfighting practice and political vision?

The author's answers would be highly helpful. No doubts, they could resolve some enigmas of the Russian warfare, for example, the reason for the usage of the wagon-fort array in the field engagements by the "new-formation" troops in the second half of the 17th century despite their base training for the Dutch pike-and-shot tactics. Rusakovskiy points out on a particular tactical concept in the first Russian printed and widely distributed military manual, *Learning and Skill of Military Order for Infantrymen*, a translation of the German treatise by Johan Jacobi von Wallhausen published in 1647. Its adhesion to the traditional



Tsar Alexei I and Prince Yury Dolgorukov on his left were the principal customers and readers of the translated Western military books in pre-Petrine Russia. The tsar was the pillar of the intellectual circle that ran the Russian military reforms, while Dolgorukov was an outstanding commander of the Dutch-styled new-formation troops. An engraving by Erich Palmquist, circa 1674. A courtesy of the Runivers, Russia.

massive infantry formations instead of the new-fashion linear array (pp. 56-57) might have been responsible for the clumsiness of the Russian infantry. Rusa-kovskiy does not come to this conclusion. However, his discussion demonstrates how close the intellectual culture of war and combat practice might have been.

Rusakovskiy commits Parts 8 and 9 to researching on the actual influence of the translated military books on the fighting planning and practice, however mainly in the last two decades of the 17th century. A preceding half-century needs similar close attention as well. However, it is not a shortcoming of the book but its well-highlighted prospect. Rusakovskiy did a great job collecting the facts that might advance further studies of unresolved issues with completely new "intellectual" approach instead the routine discourse on the Muscovite backwardness.

Research on the ownership and usage of the translated military books could provide to the collective prosopographic portrait of the circle of the Russian elite that ran the Russian imperial transformation and expansion in the 17th and 18th centuries, still unshaped properly in the historiography. The translations fueled the intellectual culture that presided over the Russian military revolution and imperial transformation. Further researches in this direction might disclose the native and adopted components of the Russian development in the 17th and 18th centuries, ways of their interaction, and explain the phenomenon of long-term attraction of the Russian rulers to the Petrine political philosophy.

Rusakovskiy explores the crucial age of Russian history by moving from one translated book to another, from the Time of Troubles in the first two decades of the 17th century to the Great Northern War in the first two decades of the 18th century. He presents the detailed library descriptions of the translated military books collected in the Russian archives, finds their Western sources, researches on their translators and situations of translations, and traces their keeping and use. From Part 1 to Part 4, Rusakovskiy links the books to the main military events and outstanding figures of this period, and demonstrates evolution of the Russian state structures and decision-making that the usage of the books reflected.

Ordering and reading the translated military books was an integral part of the transition of the Russian elite from the religious-obsessed thinking to the Enlightenment, and Rusakovskiy follows it step by step, from a reader to reader. He also discloses the organizational technique of the translation and distribution of the military books in the Russian governmental structures tracing how the military revolution and the Enlightenment expanded over Russia transforming it into a world-class power in the Modern Period. *European Military Books and Intellectual Cultures of War in 17th-Century Russia* by Oleg Rusakovskiy is a study that turns investigation into the books and intellectual cultures from a marginal historiographical field to the methodology of research into the pivotal historical matters.

VLADIMIR SHIROGOROV



Carle Vanloo (1737 / 1747), *Le Voeu de Louis XIII au siège de la Rochelle en 1628*, esquisse du tableau du Maître-autel de l'église de Notre-Dame-des-Victoires. Musée Carnavalet, Histoire de Paris, P1912, CC0 Paris Musées / Musée Carnavalet - Histoire de Paris,

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