Russia Beyond Communism: A Chronicle of National Rebirth. by Vladimir Krasnov
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This philippic is by a former Soviet citizen born in Perm and educated at Moscow University, who, after defecting to Sweden, became a U.S. citizen in 1976 and received a doctorate from the University of Washington and now serves as director of the Russian Studies Program at the Monterey Institute of International Studies. It is not an analysis of the important and vexing question of Russian nationalism. Such analyses exist, most notably that of John Dunlop, whom the author cites approvingly. Instead, what we are offered is a timely but stylistically underachieving and ultimately self-defeating polemic aimed at those who would scare us with the specter of Russian nationalism.

Accusing the accommodationist "left-liberal" media and academic establishments of continuing the dirty work of the KGB by equating communism with progress and anticommunism (understood as Russian nationalism) with fascism and anti-Semitism, the author challenges us to rethink what he feels are our misconceptions about Russian nationalism. Wrongly denounced as the greatest danger should perestroika fail, Russian nationalism in the author’s view is the one ideology that holds out the possibility of delivering the peoples of the Soviet empire nonviolently from communism. Shorn of the chauvinism and anti-Semitism espoused by vastly overinflated marginal extremist groups (such as Pamyat), true “Russites” are patriots offering a “third way” between socialism and capitalism, East and West, that represents the only way to avert “apocalypse.” Behind this rhetoric reminiscent of certain religiously inspired Russian thinkers of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is the reality of Boris Yeltsin’s victorious 1991 rebirth-of-Russia presidential campaign, which the book in a way anticipated and might well have illuminated, but does not.

The book is, moreover, not really a book. Rather, it is comprised of a 1988 speech the author already published celebrating Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn’s 1973 “Letter to the Soviet Leaders,” whose main points are recapitulated, along with those of Solzhenitsyn’s 1990 pamphlet “How to Rebuild Russia” (chapter one); a survey of twelve articles by Soviet intellectuals that are outside the framework of Marxism-Leninism and thus said to represent “genuine new thinking,” in contrast to the Gorbachevian variety (chapter two); a continuation of the survey into 1989 (chapter three); a summary of a public debate between a “supposed Russian nationalist” and a “supposed liberal Westernist,” with the author’s commentary (chapter four) showing the common ground; and an account of what the author sees as the cultural infrastructure needed for the Russian rebirth. Additionally, the author has chosen to reprint three other brief articles of his own as appendices. The disjointed result is a partisan and partial intellectual history of Russia past and present directed at portraying Solzhenitsyn and his defenders as liberal nationalist saviors partaking of a long and venerable tradition. In over 350 pages on the way toward a refurbished “Russian idea,”
nary a word is uttered about property relations, laws, investment, or social programs.

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Correction: The last sentence of the last paragraph on page 65 of Louis Bolce, Gerald De Maio and Douglas Muzzio's article, Blacks and the Republican Party: The 20 Percent Solution, (PSQ Spring 1992: 63–79) should have read: Similarly, Susan Welch and Lorn Foster, using Joint Center for Political Studies (JCPS) data, reported that higher SES blacks were less supportive of welfare policies.