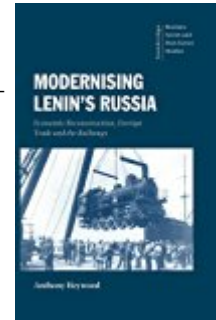


Anthony Heywood. *Modernising Lenin's Russia: Economic Reconstruction, Foreign Trade, and the Railways, 1917-1924.* New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999. xviii + 328 pp. \$69.95, cloth, ISBN 978-0-521-62178-6.



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"Railroads of the World, Unite." This slogan, enjoying some support in Russian official circles in 1919-20, advocated changing Russia's railway track gauge of 1524 mm. to make it compatible with the standard European gauge of 1435 mm. Strongly opposed by the Red Army and Cheka leadership on security grounds, the change was never implemented. But the controversy illustrates the extremely fluid situation of Russia's railroads during the critical post-revolutionary period, the subject of Anthony Heywood's very useful monograph, *Modernising Lenin's Russia*.

In the course of preparing his 1991 University of Leeds Department of Russian Studies dissertation under the direction of David Collins and Richard Davies, Heywood gained access in the Leeds Russian Archive to the papers of Professor Iurii Vladimirovich Lomonosov. Lomonosov becomes the primary player in the dramatic events Heywood recounts, and appropriately so.

Born in 1876 to a Smolensk landowner of modest means, Lomonosov studied with distinction the somewhat esoteric subject of design and operation of steam locomotives, applying rigorous sci-

entific standards to his research. During World War I Lomonosov also demonstrated command of the practical aspects of his subject, reorganizing railway traffic in Moscow (and Romania!), and representing the Directorate of Railways on the Imperial Special Council for Defense. By 1917 he was acknowledged as a leading Russian authority on railroads.

Yet there was another important dimension to Lomonosov the official: his radical politics. In 1905-6 he helped Leonard Krasin prepare and distribute bombs for the Bolshevik Central Committee. Krasin would become the Bolshevik's leading authority in foreign trade matters after they took power. In addition to this close friend and political ally, Lomonosov enjoyed the support of other important patrons close to Lenin, notably Lev Kamenev and Felix Dzerzhinski (one of the rare errors of fact in this work is spelling Dzerzhinski's last name as though he were Russian rather than Polish). Dzerzhinski's support was particularly important after he left the Cheka to assume the post of People's Commissar of Transport, a post he

held until he became head of VSNKh after Lenin's death in January 1924.

Lomonosov also had considerable though varying support from both Trotsky and Stalin, although their increasingly bitter rivalry by the mid-1920's would complicate his efforts to continue government support for an aggressive expansion of Russia's railroads. By January 1927, Lomonosov perceived that his position in Stalin's Soviet Russia had become untenable. He defied a recall to Moscow and became an emigre in the West. At first, he deliberately disassociated himself from White emigre circles, and proudly maintained his Soviet citizenship. But Stalin's execution of his friend and patron Lev Kamenev led Lomonosov to take British citizenship shortly before the outbreak of World War II. He died in 1952 in Montreal at the age of seventy-six.

Lomonosov's most enduring accomplishments included expanding Soviet Russia's railroad capacity under the extremely difficult, sometimes treacherous conditions Heywood describes. His efforts brought into Russia some 1200 new foreign steam locomotives plus 70 reconditioned locomotives, 1500 tankers, and 80,000 tons of rails and fittings, as well as numerous other items. This was accomplished at the considerable cost of over 220 million gold rubles, approximately 30 percent of Russia's gold reserves during the years immediately after the civil war.

With gradually increased production of railroad stock in Russia's own factories (a source increasingly favored by the Soviet government, especially as Stalin took firmer control over the country), plus a substantial one-time windfall of railroad equipment seized from the collapsing White forces toward the end of Russia's civil war, the new Soviet government managed to survive what some called "supercatastrophic" conditions in the economy from 1918 to 1920. In turn, the rapid expansion of the Soviet economy under the Five Year Plans owed a great deal to the dramatic improvement in the country's transportation in-

frastructure, for which Lomonosov deserves considerable credit.

Exploring in some depth this hitherto neglected subject, Heywood throws light on a variety of related topics. Although the reader needs a rather substantial grasp of the international diplomatic background, Russia's relations with a variety of nations are directly related to Lomonosov's success or failure in negotiating contracts with various foreign companies for production of rolling stock and supplies and rehabilitating existing equipment. Of particular importance were his efforts with considerable success to finalize contracts with Germany, Great Britain, Sweden, and later Estonia.

The United States could have been the largest beneficiary of Russia's attempts to purchase rolling stock and supplies abroad, for the tsarist and Provisional government had both entered into significant contracts with American companies, and the Soviets attempted to reach additional contracts after they took power. But after the US government prohibited further shipments to Bolshevik Russia in early 1918, most American-built railroad equipment originally intended for Russia were either sent to the White forces by way of Vladivostok or remained in the US, as property of the US War Department. US railroads took over much of that equipment after World War I.

Various struggles within Soviet Russia seriously complicated Lomonosov's efforts. Heywood's analysis throws light on a number of the controversies Bolshevik leaders confronted in their efforts to rebuild Russia's feeble and trouble-plagued economy during and after the civil war. They had to seriously weigh:

1. Under conditions of serious financial weakness on the part of the Soviet government combined with considerable hostility toward the new regime on the part of most western governments, to what extent could (and should) Russia rely on imports from the capitalist countries to prime its

economy, especially its industries; or should priority be placed on placing orders only in Russian factories, even if they were short on capacity and often were less efficient than their western counterparts? and

2. What branches of Russia's industry were in most desperate disarray and which branch or branches were most likely to be of greatest value in improving the rest of the country's troubled economy as well?

Initially the Soviet leadership leaned toward the approach Lomonosov favored: extensive reliance on foreign factories in support of an all-out drive to bring Russia's railroad system back to its earlier pre-eminent role as a springboard to the rebuilding of the entire national economy, as had been earlier advocated by tsarist Finance Ministers Reutern and Witte. But, with a certain degree of irony, that policy peaked in support and effectiveness in late 1920 and early 1921, just as the Soviet government was about to promulgate the New Economic Policy ostensibly designed to expand, albeit reluctantly, Russia's economic ties with the capitalist world. Thus, despite the expressed goals of NEP, in the area of transportation policy, political, economic, and diplomatic realities brought the government to seek relief domestically. And with the promulgation, in late autumn 1920, of a new program drawn up by the Goelro Commission, calling for primary emphasis on electrification of the country as the driving force behind expanding the national economy, Russia's railroads lost their primacy in the struggle for scarce resources in the country.

Heywood's study brings well-deserved attention to the role of important individuals in the unfolding of the events described above. Lomonosov's administrative competence and sound grasp of the technical aspects of the complex subject of railroad management initially served him well in winning the support of Lenin and his inner circle. But Heywood vividly illustrates that in his personal relations Lomonosov

was often arrogant and unsympathetic to alternative points of view. His shortcomings in interpersonal relations were exacerbated at times by the involvement of his even less diplomatic spouse, Raisa, whom he installed as his personal secretary. He involved her in some delicate negotiations that went seriously awry, hastening his rather rapid fall from his position of influence. Raisa appears, although Heywood's evidence here is admittedly somewhat sketchy, to have engaged in some rather questionable financial maneuvers which, when they began to come to light, considerably weakened Lomonosov's bargaining position in a setting of serious, often cutthroat political infighting.

Surprisingly absent, in the supposedly highly ideology-driven period in Soviet history often labeled "War Communism," is evidence of significant ideological influence on decisions in this matter. References to Marxist-Leninist thought are conspicuous by their absence in the debate on the importance of strengthening Russia's railroads in the immediate post-revolutionary years. Perhaps the desperate situation and the high stakes involved made ideology a luxury the Bolsheviks felt under the circumstances they could ill afford.

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