



Title	Roundtable: What Is a School? Is There a Fitzpatrick School of Soviet History?
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Discussion

Roundtable: What Is a School? Is There a Fitzpatrick School of Soviet History?

Roundtables are exciting because of the multiple perspectives. To add a comparative perspective, I will try to frame the core sentiments and activities of the only two “schools” I know about in any detail. Despite vast differences, Fitzpatrick is certainly in good scholarly company with Vasil’ev and Zelnik.

The appendix to my book *To the Harbin Station* analyzes the evolution of Russian sinology in the nineteenth century. The key figure, was V.P. Vasil’ev, who died in 1900 after fifty years of professorial duties in Kazan and then St. Petersburg. His students, everyone who mattered in Russian sinology at the time, venerated him for his high standards, his love of China and his commitment to finding them good jobs. This feeling comes across nicely in the letter penned by A.M. Pozdneev, Russia’s leading Mongologist, to P.S. Popov of the Foreign Ministry.¹

Our old man has grown old, very old. Sometimes the old flame still flares up, but then it dies down. His previous sympathy for all that is good and the old desire to do good still remain, but there is already little activity.

But although his students may have respected Vasil’ev for his insistence on originality and his emphasis on self-study, an art he had perfected during ten years of studious isolation in the Russian mission at Beijing, one can well understand the illustrious V.V. Bartol’d’s doubts that these two classic loner traits could produce a school. But V.M. Alekseev, no less gloriously erudite, insisted “no shkola Vasil’eva – fakt!”²

In 2004, my dissertation advisor Reginald Zelnik was run over by a truck after producing 28 PhDs during 40 years of teaching at the University of California at Berkeley, I queried myself on what we had in common, other than deep grief and great loss, for as one of my fellow “orphans” wrote in memoriam.³

Reggie’s person-centered approach [to history and life in general] also found expression in his legendary generosity and concern for his students as human beings. In the years since I left Berkeley I have learned what I scarcely sensed then: graduate students are time-consuming. It remains an enigma to me how Reggie managed to give detailed and illuminating comments on so many dissertation chapters, so many articles and manuscripts by colleagues across the country and overseas. In his capacity as academic adviser, Reggie was sure not to neglect the tasks of stonecutting: he paid scrupulous attention to details

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- 1 P.E. Skachkov, *Ocherki istorii russkogo kitaevedeniia* (Moscow, 1977), p. 228. Half of Vasil’ev’s students ended up in the Foreign Ministry, although only one advanced to ambassadorial rank.
 - 2 David Wolff, *To the Harbin Station: The Liberal Alternative in Russian Manchuria, 1898-1914* (Stanford, 1999), p. 236.
 - 3 Benjamin Nathans, “In and Out of Class: Reggie Zelnik as Teacher and Mentor,” in *Perils of Pankratova: Some Stories from the Annals of Soviet Historiography* (Seattle: Donald Treadgold Studies on Russia, East Europe and Central Asia, 2005), pp. 105-106.

like funding opportunities for his students, letters of recommendations (and their deadlines!) and job hunting. It again remains an enigma to me how he cheerfully managed to write so many letters for fellowships and jobs, make so many phone calls on our behalf, take so many students out for a celebratory drink after they passed their qualifying exams.

This kind of behavior also produced comradeship and at least one romance among the successive and overlapping cohorts. For the text-driven world of our beloved profession, in Zelnik's computer we were files and files of cross-woven text, growing over time, expanding into space, propelling us into IREX slots (there were three other UC-Berkeley students working with me in the Imperial Archives when in Leningrad in 1989) and then university chairs from which we sought grants and publications by turns, writing Russian history and always in need of additional letters. Such was and is Reggie's *shkola*.

In this sense, Sheila Fitzpatrick has also her school, and it continues to grow. Since perestroika, if you meet four students from one university working in Soviet archives simultaneously, it is certainly going to be U of C. Her PhDs hold the Soviet History positions at both Harvard and Berkeley. New ones come out almost every year. During a recent conference in Melbourne, Sheila's students were present in force, and a roundtable considered the questions in the title above. I am grateful to Matt Lenoe for realizing that this discussion might also be of interest to a wider audience. Below are views on the phenomenon from those who have spent long periods in the Chicago Soviet history community.

(David Wolff, Slavic Research Center, Hokkaido University)

■ Jonathan Bone (William Paterson University of New Jersey) Is There a "Fitzpatrick School" of Soviet History?

My answer is no, but yes.

No, I contend, there isn't one according to commonplace understandings of the term "school of history." The rather postmodern essence of her "school" is that it has no methodological or topical essence; thus it does not formally exist. Or to put it somewhat differently, the only orthodoxy we progeny of hers tend to recognize is that there is no Fitzpatrickian orthodoxy. In fact, I believe that were one ever to emerge, it would be incumbent upon us immediately to subvert it. Still, I will argue, there *is* something unique that we her students have taken from our illustrious teacher, mentor, colleague, critic, editor, advisor, and in many cases friend. That something is Sheila Fitzpatrick as the consummate professional role model. I will return to this point at some length later in these remarks.

Schools of thought, of course, are intellectual constructs rather than physical realities. Prominent examples in the Western tradition go back at least as far as classical Greece, as for example the so-called Platonic School of philosophy in which a succession of disciples developed the metaphysical insights first revealed by Plato. More recently, the so-called Frankfurt School of social

research saw such scholars as Max Horkheimer, Teodor Adorno, and Walter Benjamin bring sophisticated neo-Marxist analysis to bear on mid-20th century social conditions that Marx had not (and arguably could not have) foreseen. Somewhat closer to home in history, the self-named Annales School has seen such scholars as Ferdinand Braudel and Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie meld geography, demography, sociology and history into an approach to the study of long-term historical structures rather than events. Very close to home in Russian studies, the so-called "totalitarian model" that held sway in the West throughout most of the Cold War postulated an expansionist Soviet Union in which a ruthlessly power-seeking and hierarchic Communist Party sought to institutionalize top-down control over the bodies and minds of an atomized, subject population. Fundamentally, all of these sorts of examples involve more or less like-minded investigators producing variations on their common themes. In my opinion, Sheila's students have been nowhere near so wittingly or unwittingly conformist.

Space precludes me from mentioning more than a few whose dissertations were supervised by Sheila, and who now have moved on to careers of our own. From her early, non-Chicago students, consider for example Yuri Slezkine, now Professor of Late Modern Europe: Russia at the University of California, Berkeley. To the extent that his two "big" books, *Arctic Mirrors: Russia and the Small Peoples of the North* and *The Jewish Century* can be brought under the same conceptual umbrella, they have to do broadly with the politics and practices of contested identity.⁴ Save Russia writ large, what do they have in common with the multi-volume explorations of Russian/Soviet military history written by Roger Reese, also one of Sheila's University of Texas students and now Professor of Russian History at Texas A & M University?⁵ Excellence, yes. Rigor, yes. Methodology, not really, other than a broad commitment to social history. Topic, not even remotely close. From the *Chikagtsy*, as Sheila's much larger flock of University of Chicago students sometimes call ourselves, consider Julie Hessler, now Associate Professor of Russian History at the University of Oregon. Her book *A Social History of Soviet Trade: Trade Policy, Retail Practice, and Consumption, 1917-1953* sheds pioneering light on the way the Soviet allocation system evolved and functioned (or failed to function, as the case may have been).⁶ Other than the Stalinist Soviet Union, and again a broad methodological commitment to social history, what does it have in common with Harvard University Professor Terry Martin's magisterial *The Affirmative*

4 Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 1994 and Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004, respectively.

5 See *Stalin's Reluctant Soldiers: A Social History of the Red Army, 1925-1941* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1996); *The Soviet Military Experience: A History of the Soviet Army, 1917-1991* (London: Routledge, 2000); *Red Commanders: A Social History of the Soviet Officer Corps, 1918-1991* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2005).

6 Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004.

Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union 1923-1939, the definitive account of nationalities policies under Stalin?⁷ Excellence, yes. Rigor, yes. Empirical grounding, yes. Specific topic, again not remotely close. To list for comparative purposes everything produced by Sheila's students would reveal not variations on themes but rather extraordinary heterodoxy. We have our collective preferences and prejudices, to be sure, but I repeat myself. The basic essential of our output is that it has no distinct methodological or topical essence, no substantial genetic link either to itself or to Fitzpatrick's formidable oeuvre. Most importantly, we take this heterogeneity to be a cardinal virtue. And we get it from doing our best to emulate Fitzpatrick, not replicate her.

Sheila herself, I scarcely need to remind us, has demonstrated astonishing breadth and growth in her own scholarship. Her first book, *The Commissariat of Enlightenment. Soviet Organization of Education and the Arts under Lunacharsky, 1917-1921* was a straightforward bureaucratic-institutional study.⁸ Fortunately for our discipline, she quickly moved on from there to look at arts policies during the Cultural Revolution of the late 1920s; from there to broader questions of what the Cultural Revolution represented, and how it played out; from there to the even broader question of what social mobility and affirmative action had to do with the consolidation of what might be called the maturing Stalinist state⁹ – and that intellectual journey had only taken her chronologically from 1970 to 1979. She was just getting started. Since then she has written monographs on the contextualized Russian Revolution (and had the courage to revise her work substantially when her own understanding of it changed), and on the challenges of quotidian survival in the countryside and in the cities under Stalin in the 1930s.¹⁰ She has edited or co-edited a host of volumes on a wide variety of topics, ranging from NEP-era culture to denunciations in modern European history. Most recently, *Tear Off the Masks!* engages the issues of identity and imposture in twentieth-century Russia.¹¹ Projects known to be in

7 Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001.

8 London and New York, 1970-71; paperback, 2002.

9 *Education and Social Mobility in the Soviet Union, 1921-1932* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979; paperback 2002).

10 *The Russian Revolution* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1982/3; paperback edition, 1984; Braille edition, U.K., 1986); second (revised) edition, 1994; translated into Italian as *La Rivoluzione Russa* (Milan: Edizione CDE, 1997); *Stalin's Peasants: Resistance and Survival in the Russian Village after Collectivization* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994; paperback edition, 1996); translated into Russian by Lada Pantina as *Stalinskie krest'iane. Sotsial'naiia istoriia sovetskoi Rossii v 30-e gody*, vol. 1: *Derevnia* (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2001); *Everyday Stalinism. Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times: Soviet Russia in the 1930s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999; paperback 2000); translated into Russian by Lada Pantina as *Povsednevnyi stalinizm. Sotsial'naiia istoriia sovetskoi Rossii v 30-e gody*, vol. 2: *Gorod* (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2001); translated into French by Jean-Pierre Ricard and Francois-Xavier Nerard as *Le Stalinisme au Quotidien. La Russie Sovietique dans les Annees 30* (Paris: Flammarion, 2002).

11 Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005.

the pipeline are a monograph on the way Stalin and Molotov practiced politics and further down the road, a self-described *History of the Emotions in Stalinist Russia*.

To this need to be added the dozens of journal articles – including one for *Acta Slavica Iaponica* – and probably hundreds of talks, presentations, lectures, discussions, commentaries, and the like that she has done.¹² Sheila's output is not only prodigious but also invariably significant, in ways that constantly open up new directions and modes of inquiry for other sovietologists. Like anyone else, she has her preferences and her dislikes, e.g. I have found her to be less than enthralled by purely economic issues or by the guns/tanks/planes/doctrine side of the Red Army. And as is well known, she also has had little patience over the years with hardcore Kremlinology. On the other side of the coin, she can be fascinated by backwater topics that her fellow historians have tended to ignore. For example, perhaps because she is Australian by birth and formative youth, she always has evinced rare and genuine interest in the Asian face of Russia and the USSR. This includes support and encouragement not only of my own dissertation, *Socialism In a Far Country: Stalinist Population Politics and the Making of the Soviet Far East, 1929-1939*, but also the Far Eastern topics of several others who came after me.¹³ In short, I can't think of a single prominent figure in our field who has demonstrated anything close to the range of interests that Sheila has. And it bears repeating that whatever she does, she does well.

The breadth and the quality of Fitzpatrick's scholarship give vital testimony to what I regard as perhaps her most admirable professional quality. From the start, Sheila has managed to combine an insatiable curiosity about most things Soviet with the conviction that "methodology" means bringing theory to bear heuristically. She believes that insights from all manner of social-science sources can be used – judiciously – to tell us something new that we might otherwise misconstrue. Or to put this somewhat less abstractly, she tends to proceed from the empirical novelty to the available theory rather than the other way round. Deeply skeptical of attempts to shoehorn documentary evidence into neatly predetermined frameworks, she appropriates theory for its interpretive utility. And when she runs up against its limits, generally when there's something unique or messy about the Soviet case(s) she is examining, she is more than capable of amending such existing theory as may exist so that it fits the available data. Best of all, by force of example she strongly encourages her graduate students to do likewise.

In conclusion, then, to the extent one can speak of a "Fitzpatrick school," it is very much in the sense of emulation. Sheila Fitzpatrick has fostered, nur-

12 "Origins of Stalinism: How Important Was the Civil War?" in *Acta Slavica Iaponica* 2 (Sapporo, 1984); For a full list of Fitzpatrick's activities, see <http://history.uchicago.edu/about/fields/russia/fitzpatrickCV.pdf>, Internet source, accessed 25 November 2006.

13 Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 2003.

tured, poked, prodded, and otherwise managed to develop an ever-expanding group of extraordinarily well-trained, small-s sovietologists determined to appropriate the best of her personal qualities as a scholar/academic. I modestly suggest that the resulting effects on Soviet history – revisionism and subversion by my peers and betters, in the very best sense of the terms – speak to her resounding success.

■ Mark Edele (The University of Western Australia)

I would argue that there is a “Fitzpatrick school” in Russian history for at least four reasons: (1) there is a group of scholars trained by Fitzpatrick; (2) who communicate with each other frequently, share knowledge but also stories and anecdotes, which all creates an *esprit de corps*; (3) who are frequently seen as a school by scholars outside of it, sometimes leading to the accusation of constituting a “Fitzpatrick mafia”; (4) and who, more substantially, share a distinct style of historical research, and tend to work with broadly similar methodologies and approaches on overlapping topics.

1) A Group Trained by Fitzpatrick

If we take a historical school to be constituted by a senior scholar who trains and mentors a large group of new scholars in a particular field, then there certainly is a Fitzpatrick school in twentieth century Russian history. Sheila Fitzpatrick is one of the great mentors and advisors in our field, who has trained several generations of historians of Russia. During her tenure at the University of Texas at Austin (1980-1989) she advised the dissertations of Yuri Slezkine (1989) and Roger Reese (1990) which then became the first two important books of the new school.¹⁴ Since moving to the University of Chicago in 1990 she established this institution as one of the largest doctoral programs in Russian history worldwide.¹⁵

The first generation of Chicago graduate students produced, by and large, studies on the formative years of Soviet society from World War I to World War II: James Andrews on science and technology in revolutionary Russia; John McCannon on the “Red Arctic” (both 1994); Matthew Payne on the Turksib (1995); Golfo Alexopoulos on outcasts and citizenship; James Harris on the periphery in the making of the Soviet system; Terry Martin on nationalities policy; Steven

14 Roger R. Reese, *Stalin's Reluctant Soldiers. A Social History of the Red Army 1925-1941* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1996); Yuri Slezkine, *Arctic Mirrors. Russia and the Small Peoples of the North* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1994).

15 For a list of Chicago PhDs and PhDs in progress on Russian history see <http://history.uchicago.edu/about/fields/russia/students.html> (accessed: 26 September 2006).

Richmond on theater censorship (all 1996); Matthew Lenoë on journalism; Emily Pyle on veterans' policies and their impact on village social relations (both 1997); Joshua Sanborn on military conscription (1998); and Jonathan Bone on the Soviet Far East (2003). Of this first cohort, only Julie Hessler reached out into the war and postwar years with her study of Soviet trade between the revolution and the death of Stalin (1996).¹⁶

This changed markedly in the next cohorts of doctoral students under Fitzpatrick's supervision, who nearly all worked on the war and postwar years: Christopher Burton on the medical profession in late Stalinism (1999); Stephen Bittner on Moscow's Arbat district after Stalin (2000); Kiril Tomoff on the composers' union (2001); Steven Harris on housing under Khrushchev (2003); Mark Edele on World War II veterans (2004); Charles Hachten on property relations (2005); Rachel Green on war orphans; and Brian Lapierre on hooliganism under Khrushchev (both 2006).¹⁷ This period still garners most interest from current Chicago PhD candidates, with dissertations in progress on Vorkuta, the Soviet garment industry, postwar refugees, postwar reproductive policies, Stalinist

16 The books resulting from these dissertations are James T. Andrews, *Science for the Masses: The Bolshevik State, Public Science, and the Popular Imagination in Soviet Russia, 1917-1934* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2003); John McCannon, *Red Arctic: Polar Exploration and the Myth of the North in the Soviet Union, 1932-1939* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998); Matthew J. Payne, *Stalin's Railroad. Turksib and the Building of Socialism* (Pittsburgh, Pa: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2001); Golfo Alexopoulos, *Stalin's Outcasts: Aliens, Citizens, and the Soviet State, 1926-1936* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003); James R. Harris, *The Great Urals: Regionalism and the Evolution of the Soviet System* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996); Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire. Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2001); Matthew Lenoë, *Closer to the Masses. Stalinist Culture, Social Revolution, and Soviet Newspapers* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2004); Joshua Sanborn, *Drafting the Russian Nation. Military Conscription, Total War, and Mass Politics 1905-1925* (DeKalb, Ill.: Northern Illinois University Press, 2003); and Julie Hessler, *A Social History of Soviet Trade. Trade Policy, Retail Practices, and Consumption, 1917-1953* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004).

17 So far, only one of these dissertations have been transformed into a book: Kiril Tomoff, *Creative Union: The Professional Organization of Soviet Composers, 1939-1953* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006). Articles resulting from those not yet published include: Christopher Burton, "Soviet Medical Attestation and the Problem of Professionalisation Under Late Stalinism, 1945-53," *Europe-Asia Studies* (December 2005), pp. 1211-1229; Stephen Bittner, "Remembering the Avant-Garde: Moscow Architects and the 'Rehabilitation' of Constructivism, 1961-64," *Kritika* 2:3 (2001), pp. 553-576; Mark Edele, "Soviet Veterans as an Entitlement Group, 1945-1955," *Slavic Review* 65:1 (2006), pp. 111-137; Charles Hachten, "Separate Yet Governed: The Representation of Soviet Property Relations in Civil Law and Public Discourse"; and Brian Lapierre, "Private Matters or Public Crimes: The Rise of Domestic Hooliganism in the Soviet Union, 1939-1966"; both in Lewis H. Siegelbaum, ed., *Borders of Socialism: Private Spheres of Soviet Russia* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

orientalism, Soviet-Cuban relations, the punished peoples in Kazakhstan, party discipline, as well as psychiatry and mental illness after the war.¹⁸

2) *Integration through Communication*

More than simply sharing an advisor, these scholars are also connected through a relatively thick web of communications, which transcends particular cohorts. One site of this communication is the annual get-together of Fitzpatrick students at the AAASS, which allows them to share stories, crack jokes, gossip, talk about Russian history, and disagree vehemently about nearly everything (including whether they form a school or not). During the year such communication is upheld through regular email contacts between members of this group who share information fairly freely. It is not uncommon to receive emails out of the blue alerting to a new publication, an archival document, a declassification, or even a newly “discovered” archive, all communications pertinent to one’s field of expertise. Many former Fitzpatrick students also remain on the email list of the Russian Studies Workshop at Chicago, which further facilitates communication. While such interaction, of course, exists within the wider academic community as well, it is much more frequent within this group – in large part because the already thick communication results in greater awareness of colleagues’ work in progress.

3) *The “Fitzpatrick Mafia”*

This dense network is also noted by outsiders, and might be one of the reasons why the Fitzpatrick school is sometimes perceived as cliquish. I have been told more than once, and only half in jest, that I am part of the “Fitzpatrick mafia.” Whatever the dark machinations of this group of academic gangsters are believed to be, there is clearly a sense in the wider field that we do form a group with a distinct *esprit de corps* and shared loyalties.

4) *The Fitzpatrick School*

This sense is reinforced by a fourth commonality – a style of doing history, which is clearly inspired by Fitzpatrick’s example. Members of this school are, as a rule, archival rats – or “archival fetishists” as critics say. A lot of pride is taken in knowing the archives well and mastering a large number of primary sources. Projects are usually driven by an open-ended question and

18 This ongoing work has already yielded some publications. See for example Mie Nakachi, “Population, Politics and Reproduction: Late Stalinism and Its Legacy,” in Juliane Fürst, ed., *Late Stalinist Russia. Society between Reconstruction and Reinvention* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), pp. 167-191 and idem, “N.S. Khrushchev and the 1944 Soviet Family Law: Politics, Reproduction and Language,” *East European Politics and Societies* 20:1 (2006), pp. 40-68; Andrew Paul Janco, “The Soviet Refugee: Problems of Imposture and Contested Identity in the ‘Displaced Persons’ Camps, 1945-1947,” in Johannes-Dieter Steinert and Inge Weber-Newth, eds., *Beyond Camps and Forced Labour: Current International Research on Survivors of Nazi Persecution* (Osnabrück: Secolo Verlag, forthcoming).

a set of sources rather than by a clearly articulated theory. Within the Fitzpatrick school, theorizing happens as part of the process of making sense of data; it is usually not seen as the most important or the most prestigious aspect of research.

Moreover, the theories employed tend to be of a specific flavor as well: whether classical anthropology, as in the case of Slezkine; the rethinking of modernization theory as “neo-traditionalism” as in the case of Martin and Lenoe; neo-totalitarianism as in the case of Payne; welfare state theory as in the case of Burton; anthropology and sociology of property as in the case of Hachten; or sociology of group formation and disintegration as in my own case – the inspiration tends to come from the social sciences rather than the humanities. Fitzpatrick’s students, like Fitzpatrick herself, are much more likely to be steeped in the classics of social thought than in literary theory or post-modern philosophy. This orientation, together with the strong empiricism – critics would say “positivism” – created a literature with a particular style which can be seen as distinctive to this school.

Moreover, this literature is also connected thematically. Fitzpatrick’s strong involvement in the hammering out of dissertation topics – nearly each one of “her” PhDs has a story of how she “talked me out of my original topic” (stories, incidentally, which make up part of the lore integrating the school) – and her continuous critical engagement with the evolving work of her students leads to overlaps in questions, fields of study, and expertise. This was driven home to me as I reflected on the entanglements of my own work with that of other members of the school. When I started my research on World War II veterans in Soviet society, there was very little literature addressing the questions I was most interested in. Much of the little there was came out of the Fitzpatrick school: two articles on war and society in the Soviet context by Fitzpatrick herself;¹⁹ Sanborn’s M.A. thesis on the frontline brotherhood as well as his dissertation-cum-book on military conscription, Alan Barenberg’s M.A. thesis on pension law, and the dissertations of Pyle and Burton.²⁰ Clearly, the interests of our advisor had steered us towards topics which could talk to each other. If that is not evidence for the existence of a “school,” then what is?

19 Sheila Fitzpatrick, “Postwar Soviet Society: The ‘Return to Normalcy,’ 1945-1953,” in Susan J. Linz, *The Impact of World War II on the Soviet Union* (Totova, N.J.: Rowman & Allanhead, 1985), pp. 129-156; idem, “War and Society in Soviet Context: Soviet Labor before, During, and after World War II,” *International Labor and Working-Class History* 35 (Spring 1989), pp. 37-52.

20 Joshua A. Sanborn, “**Brothers under Fire: The Development of a Front-Line Culture in the Red Army 1941-1943.**” M.A. thesis, The University of Chicago, 1993; idem, *Drafting the Russian Nation*; Alan Barenberg, “‘For a United, Clear Pension Law’: Legislating and Debating Soviet Pensions 1956-1965.” M.A. thesis, The University of Chicago, 2000; Emily E. Pyle, “Village Social Relations and the Reception of Soldiers’ Family Aid Policies in Russia, 1912-1921.” Ph.D. diss., The University of Chicago, 1997; Christopher Burton, “Medical Welfare During Late Stalinism. A Study of Doctors and the Soviet Health System, 1945-53.” Ph.D. diss, The University of Chicago, 2000.

■ Matthew Lenoë (University of Rochester)

Is there a Fitzpatrick School of Soviet history? To answer the question it is necessary to specify what we mean by “school.” Relevant definitions of the term in Webster’s Third New International Dictionary are:

- (1): the disciples or followers of a teacher
- (2): persons who hold a common doctrine...or follow the same intellectual methods
- (3): people forming a distinguishable group, and sharing common principles, canons, precepts, or a common body of opinion...
- (4): a group (as of painters, sculptors, or musicians) under a common personal influence producing a general similarity in the work.

To begin with Webster’s first definition above, the terms “disciples” and “followers” suggest a relationship in which students venerate their teacher in quasi-religious fashion. A “disciple” has a “Master.” As an undergraduate at the University of Chicago in the 1980s I saw certain professors, most notably Allan Bloom, cultivating the aura of “Master,” and students treating them as such. Professor Fitzpatrick did not present herself as any kind of “Master” during the time I studied with her (1992-1997), and I don’t believe that her students saw her in this way. When she read her own papers to our graduate workshop, students often challenged Fitzpatrick sharply. There was no sense that this was out-of-bounds. Nor was there any sense that it was our duty as graduate students to “wait on” her, literally or figuratively.

It would be equally absurd to claim that Prof. Fitzpatrick’s students shared with her any particular “doctrine,” “principles,” “a canon,” “precepts,” or “common body of opinion,” Fitzpatrick herself has no “doctrine” or “precepts” that I can discern. Her understanding of historical process does not fit classical or any other Marxism, for example. In her short survey history of the Russian Revolution, first published in 1982, Fitzpatrick used Crane Brinton’s distinctly un-Marxist schema for the stages of revolution as her organizational framework. Claims that Fitzpatrick was a “fellow-traveler” of Soviet Communism seem outright bizarre. Reading Fitzpatrick’s earlier works, it strikes me that she viewed the existence of the Soviet Union above all as a fact. The historian’s job was not to praise or deplore, but to describe and analyze. This does not mean that Fitzpatrick condoned Stalinist terror or considered that the Russian Revolution had, on balance, a positive outcome. Close reading of *The Russian Revolution* (mentioned above) reveals an almost Burkean skepticism about utopian schemes and social change through revolution.

Among Fitzpatrick’s students there was and is no unity of political opinion or of attitudes toward the Bolshevik regime. Self-identified “conservatives,” “liberals,” and “socialists” have worked with Professor Fitzpatrick. Certainly, however, students and former students share skepticism of Soviet authorities’ ideological claims.

Might the unity of a Fitzpatrick School appear in common “intellectual methods” or topics of study? Fitzpatrick’s own work has ranged from institutional history (her first book on the Commissariat of Enlightenment) to the deconstruction of Bolshevik categorizations of class (her 1993 article on “Ascribing Class”). Her best-known contributions, however, have been in social history and the study of everyday life in the 1920s and 1930s. Professor Fitzpatrick’s students have not confined themselves to these areas. Roger Reese and Matthew Payne, for example, have published on social history, but in very different fields than Fitzpatrick. Reese works on the Soviet military, and Payne’s book on the construction of the Turksib Railway focuses on labor history. Yuri Slezkine’s first project was an analysis of Soviet discourse about and state policies towards “the small peoples of the North.” A major part of John McCannon’s dissertation was an institutional history of Glavsevmorput. Steve Richmond studied 1920s theater repertory. Although my own book on the early Soviet press and the origins of Stalinist culture was strongly influenced by Fitzpatrick’s studies of *vydvizhenie* and the Cultural Revolution, I found myself drawn further and further into study of Soviet high politics during “the struggle against the Right Deviation” of 1928-1929. Nor have Fitzpatrick’s students limited their research to the Soviet era. Joshua Sanborn moved into the late Imperial period early in his dissertation research and now works nearly exclusively on that era.

I do think that Prof. Fitzpatrick has methodological and topical inclinations that many of her students and former students share. Fitzpatrick seems to me to be a classical Rankean historian. She aims to understand a period in its own terms first, to discover the specifics of a former time “as it was,” using as broad a source base as possible. Anyone who has read *Stalin’s Peasants* or *Everyday Stalinism* will recognize that she shares Ranke’s “joy in the particular.” Her insistence that her students focus on primary sources and make inductions from them also fits with Ranke’s view of the historian’s practice.

In line with the focus on induction from primary sources, there is a general skepticism among Fitzpatrick and her students about overarching theoretical schemas. However, I would not say that Professor Fitzpatrick was hostile to theory, period. She is pleased enough when graduate students find theoretical approaches that fit their data. Terry Martin made extensive use of Ernest Gellner’s writings on nationalism in *Affirmative Action Empire*, I used M.A.K. Halliday’s functional linguistics to analyze the language of Soviet newspapers, and Julie Hessler introduced many Fitzpatrick students to Hungarian economist Janos Kornai’s theory of the “economy of shortage.” But both Fitzpatrick and her students tend to view theories as evocative ways of laying out primary source evidence or as hypotheses to be tested, rather than as powerful explanatory machines.

The common inclinations I have sketched are not sufficient to define a “school.” Very many historians see their primary task as recovering the past “as it was” and many are wary of fealty to particular theoretical approaches.

Focus on primary sources is basic to the discipline. So, in my view there is no Fitzpatrick School of Soviet history. I believe that there is a community of scholars who worked with Professor Fitzpatrick, and who are connected by their graduate school experiences, by a sense of gratitude for Fitzpatrick's rigorous training and commitment to her students, and by respect for her intellect, hard work, curiosity, honesty, and resolute professionalism. That no "school" has formed around Fitzpatrick is, I think, a measure of her integrity as a scholar and teacher.

■ Ronald Grigor Suny (University of Michigan)

The first question to be asked about the question is: what is a school? Were there people who learned from, were trained by, Sheila Fitzpatrick at Columbia, Texas, and Chicago? Certainly! Arguably, the cadre (to use a favorite Soviet word) of historians who came out of her courses and workshops make up a stellar generation of scholars teaching and training themselves another generation of historians. Do these scholars share a single approach to history, a common intellectual agenda, be it social history or the history of categories or a hostility to the Marxist concept of class? It does not seem easy even to argue that two historians of Soviet nationalities policies, like Yuri Slezkine and Terry Martin, one who deals with discourses and representations among other things, the other who focuses on policies and institutions, employ a common approach to their shared subject. My own sense is that "school" is too narrow a term to encompass the variation among Sheila's students or the colleagues most influenced by her.

What I believe distinguishes both Sheila Fitzpatrick's scholarship and teaching has been its broadness, inclusiveness, willingness to adapt to and adopt new approaches and evidence. There is no orthodoxy here, no commitment to a single explanation. Sheila has always been more interested in varieties of approaches to history than in confirming or disconfirming a particular model or paradigm. She has moved from studies of bureaucracy through social history on to cultural study of discourses and categories, from the world of what is to what does it mean, exploring emotions and the everyday. When one reads through her work, one finds a rich, complex story of the Soviet experience that defies reduction to a formula. She eschews the idea that there is a magic key, an essential factor, that explains the changing complexities of the Soviet experience – whether it be the totalitarian model, *What Is To Be Done?*, Lenin or Stalin's personality, or, as has now become fashionable, modernity. If that openness and commitment to hard thinking about hard problems constitutes a school, then one could argue there is a Fitzpatrick school, but such broad inclusiveness would belie the very notion of a school. A more fruitful question might be: what characterizes the work of Sheila Fitzpatrick and in

which ways are those qualities captured in the work of one, more, or many of her students and colleagues?

The first characteristic both of Fitzpatrick and the great majority of her students is the affection for, the infatuation with, the archives. Even before it was customary or easy for Western historians of the USSR to use Soviet archives, Sheila managed to push through the door, overcome the myriad obstacles placed in her way, and endure the tedium necessary to find the gems that gave clues and insights to a darkly understood society. Sheila's work builds from the ground up, not from grand theory or master narrative or modernist or Marxist teleology, but from the sources. Her work is very often ethnographic, the fieldwork done largely in the archives. While archives are certainly central to the work of those students and colleagues most closely associated with Sheila Fitzpatrick, more of them have worked with institutions and legislation – nationalities policies, laws on property – or the history of collectivities – musicians, doctors, veterans, journalists – than in the pointillistic reconstruction of the daily lives of ordinary people, as in her two groundbreaking books on Stalin's peasants and the urban population.

The second characteristic of Fitzpatrick and many of those closest to her illustrates one of the great ironies of our profession. While Sheila has been vilified as an apologist of the Soviet project, even a Stalinist, while she has been calumniated by the most conservative critics of Soviet historiographical revisionism for changing her mind over time, the great consistency in her work has been a coolness rather than an emotional attachment to the USSR or Marxism, on the one hand, and a reluctance to adopt the easy Soviet-bashing of aspiring organic intellectuals of the American state, on the other. Here again her students and close colleagues have shared with her a critical attitude toward the practices and aspirations of the Soviet regime but not the visceral hatred or disdain that passed for judgment in the Cold War years.