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Richard F. Staar

Aleksandr Gol'ts, *Armiia Rossii: 11 poteriannykh let*, Moscow: Zakharov, 2004, 224 pp.

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Specialist of military questions, Aleksandr Gol'ts worked for *Red Star (Krasnaia Zvezda)*, the newspaper of the Russian Ministry of Defense, before joining various prestigious magazines such as *Itoги*. He is considered one of the most prominent journalist on military matters in Russia today. His book, "*The Russian Army : 11 lost years*", is dedicated to military reforms in post-Soviet Russia. With his extensive knowledge of institutional realities of the military establishment, Gol'ts provides a well-documented and precise observation of the politics of transformation within the army. The first part of his book is chronological. He analyses the four main periods of reform. Starting from 1992, he distinguishes the projects of Gratchev (1992), Baturin (1996), Sergeev and Kokoshin (1997) and finally Ivanov and Kvashnin (2003). His exposition is quite clear : the successive ministers of defense did not manage to propose and implement an effective reform of the army. His conclusion is pessimistic : no positive result was achieved in the military field for 11 years - even at the intellectual level – for the military and political leaders did not managed to reach a consensus on this subject.

The last three parts of the book are thematic and devoted to the social, political and economic background explaining the failure of military reforms in Russia. As far as politics are concerned, Gol'ts analyses the problem of civil-military reorganization and civil control over the armed forces. He underlines the negative impact of the two successive Chechen wars on military reforms. From an economic point of view, he highlights the permanent shortages and financial problems of the Russian armed forces. In conclusion, he stresses the responsibility of the military high command of the army concerning failed reforms and quotes B. Yeltsin saying in 1997 : "Generals are today the main restraint on military reforms" (p. 177). [Editors' note]

1 On 8 May 2004, marking the end of World War II, Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov announced that only professional armed forces could guarantee Russia's security and implementation of its international objectives. This implicit admission of failure to reform the military is superbly discussed by a former correspondent of *Krasnaia Zvezda*, the official daily newspaper of the Russian Army, in the book under review.

2 According to Colonel General Vasily Smirnov, chief of mobilization for the armed forces, about 18,000 potential recruits evaded military service during the latest conscription campaign¹. To solve this problem, a contract system has been instituted under which up to 70 percent of all future recruits will be paid to serve in uniform by the year 2008.

3 The military budget envisages an expansion in numbers of such servicemen as follows:

Year	Funding (billions of rubles)	Personnel (thousands)
2004	9.7	15.7
2005	20.9	54.5
2006	21.7	26.8 (sic)
2007	26.8	50.6

4 Incentives for enlistment include monthly bonuses from 3,300 to 5,000 rubles (the latter in Chechnia). Beginning with the year 2008, the term of military service will be reduced to one year.

5 However, the demographic crisis in Russia specifically affects the 18- to 22-year-olds, which permits recruitment to meet only between 40 and 50 percent of requirements. Thus, the goal of ten combat-ready divisions for the Caucasus and Central Asia by 2006 (compared with only three divisions and four brigades available now) appears beyond reach.

6 A meeting of some 500 generals and admirals from all service branches heard their commander-in-chief, President Putin, state that Russia's armed forces were not combat ready and also lacked up-to-date weapons².

- 7 Putin himself revealed that by the end of 2007, soldiers under contract would comprise almost half of those in uniform, which would allow draftees to serve only one year. By that time, he anticipated some 150,000 volunteers filling “high-readiness units.” At this same meeting, Defense Minister Ivanov stated that the armed forces totaled 1,130,000 men and women or some 30,000 fewer than the previous year.
- 8 Putin also has promised to increase the military budget for 2004, which had totaled the equivalent of \$13.5 billion during the previous year. Ivanov complained that less than 20 percent of all weapons were up-to-date. He also revealed that 35 percent of non-combat deaths in the military have been suicides.
- 9 Finally the Novosti news agency reported that the former Voluntary Society for Assistance to the Army, Air Force, and Navy (DOSAAF) is being resurrected. This organization had conducted pre-military training in the Soviet Union for youth between the ages of 16 and 18.
- 10 It is hoped that this valuable contribution to our knowledge by Aleksandr Gol'ts on a most important subject will be translated into English and, thus, reach the non-Russian reading public.
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Notes

1 *Nezavisimaia Gazeta*, 31 March 2004, p. 3.

2 Quoted by Lyuba Pronina, “Military Unready to Face Threats,” *Moscow Times*, 19 November 2003, p. 3.

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Author

Richard F. Staar

Senior Fellow, Hoover Institution at Stanford University

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