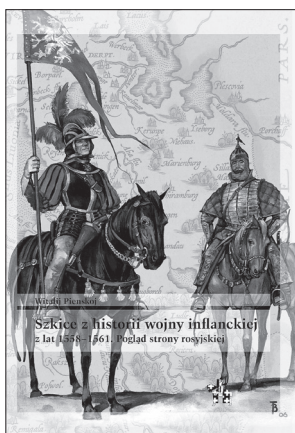
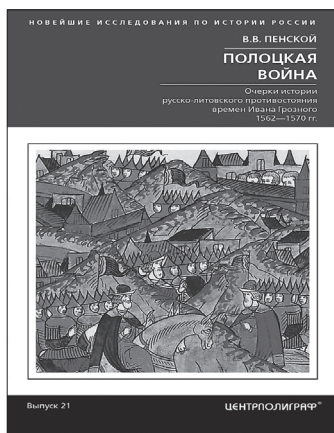


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WARS ON THE DAUGAVA RIVER
IN THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY ON THE MARGINS
OF VITALII PENSKOJ'S BOOKS



Vitalii Penskoj. *Polotskaia voina. Oчерки istorii russko-litovskogo protivostoianiiia vremen Ivana Groznogo. 1562–1570.* Moskva: Tsentrpoligraf, 2019. 350 pp. ISBN 978-5-227-08932-8

Witalij Pienskoj. *Szkice z historii wojny inflanckiej z lat 1558–1561. Pogląd strony rosyjskiej [Essays from the history of the Livonian War from 1558–1561. The view of the Russian side].* Trans. by Ryszard Przybyliński. Zabrze; Tarnowskie Góry: Inforteditions, 2019. 207 pp. ISBN 978-83-65982-44-5

Recenzijā aplūkotas Vitālija Penskoja (Vitalii Penskoj) divas grāmatas par Livonijas karu: divos izdevumos krievu valodā iznākušā darba (“Ot Narvy do Fellina: oчерки voyennoi istorii Livonskoi voiny 1558–1561 gg.”; “Oчерки istorii Livonskoi voiny. Ot Narvy do Fellina. 1558–1561 gg.”) tulkojums poļu valodā “Szkice z historii wojny inflanckiej z lat 1558–1561. Pogląd strony rosyj-

skiež” [Esejas par Livonijas kara vēsturi, 1558–1561. Skats no Krievzemes puses] un “Polotskaia voina. Očerki istorii rusko-litovskogo protivostoianiiia vremen Ivana Groznogo. 1562–1570” [Polockas karš. Esejas par krievu–lietuviešu konfrontāciju Ivana Bargā laikā, 1562–1570]. Vitālija Penskoja grāmatas uzskatāmas par vērtīgām, taču ar zināmām iebildēm. Tas galvenokārt attiecas uz to, ka autors pārsvarā izmanto krievu valodā pieejamos materiālus, kas līdz ar to nav objektīvi. Tas savukārt liek mums būt piesardzīgiem attiecībā uz daudziem abās grāmatās aprakstītajiem aspektiem.

In recent years, two books have been published on armed conflicts on the Daugava River in the 16th century. The author of both of them is Vitalii Viktorovich Penskoj, a Russian historian specialising in the research on the second half of the 16th century, professor at the Belgorod State University of Technology (Belgorodskii gosudarstvennyi tekhnologičeskii universitet). In 2014, a book on the war in Livonia (Estonian Liivimaa, Latvian and Lithuanian Livonija, German, Swedish, and Danish Livland, Russian Lifliandiiia, Polish Inflanty) in 1558–1561 was published in the Belgorod publishing house Politerra.¹ Five years later, the same work, updated and under a slightly changed title, appeared in print in Moscow issued by the publishing house Tsentrpoligraf.² In the same year, INFORTeditions produced a Polish translation of this book.³ Penskoj’s second work was also produced in 2019 by the Moscow publishing house Tsentrpoligraf and it focused on the Lithuanian–Russian conflict over Polotsk in the years 1562–1570.⁴

V. Penskoj wrote that he received inspiration for his books from the works by the Belarusian researcher Andrei Nikolaevich Ianushkevich and the Russian researcher Aleksandr Il’ich Filiushkin. The former, in 2013, published a monograph on the Livonian War of 1558–1570.⁵ A. Filiushkin is the author of numerous scholarly and popular science works on both conflicts in Livonia and battles for Polotsk.

¹ Penskoj, Vitalii (2014). *Ot Narvy do Fellina: očerki voyennoi istorii Livonskoi voiny 1558–1561 gg.* Belgorod: IPTS “POLITERRA”.

² Penskoj, Vitalii (2019). *Očerki istorii Livonskoi voiny. Ot Narvy do Fellina. 1558–1561 gg.* Moskva: Tsentrpoligraf.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Penskoj, Vitalii (2019). *Polotskaia voina. Očerki istorii rusko-litovskogo protivostoianiiia vremen Ivana Groznogo. 1562–1570.* Moskva: Tsentrpoligraf.

⁵ Ianushkevich, Andrei (2013). *Livonskaia voina. Vil’no protiv Moskvy 1558–1570.* Moskva: Kvadriga; Russkaia panorama.

Interestingly, in 2017, two years before the publication of Penskoi's book, the work of the aforementioned Filiushkin and Andrei Valentinovich Kuz'min on the conflict over Polotsk in 1563–1579 came out in print and evidently was used by Penskoi.⁶

While preparing both of the books, the author collected a large bibliography. When we look at the list of sources and literature at the end of both works, we see that a vast majority of works are Russian-language materials. For this reason, in the Polish translation of the book about the war in Livonia, a subtitle was added: "View of the Russian side". In this monograph, it would have been useful to use the works of Danish, Estonian, German, Latvian, Polish, and Swedish researchers.⁷

- ⁶ Filiushkin, Aleksandr (2007). *Andrei Mikhailovich Kurbskii. Prosopograficheskoe issledovaniie i germenevticheskii kommentarii k poslaniiam Andreia Kurbskogo Ivanu Groznomu*. SPb.: Izdatel'stvo Sankt-Peterburgskogo universiteta; Filiushkin, Aleksandr, Popov, V. E. (2009). "Voina koad'iutorov" i Pozvol'skie soglasheniia 1557 g. *Studia Slavica et Balcanica Petropolitana*, 5/5 (1/2), pp. 151–184; Filiushkin, Aleksandr (2012). Mifologija i realii bitvy pod Nevelem 1562 g. *Studia Slavica et Balcanica Petropolitana*, 11 (1), pp. 197–202; Filiushkin, Aleksandr, Kuz'min, Andrei (2017). *Kogda Polotsk byl rossiiskim. Polotskaia kampaniia Ivana Groznogo 1563–1579 gg.* Moskva: Russkie Vitiazii.
- ⁷ Ligi, Herbert (1961). *Eesti talurahva olukord ja klassivõitlus Liivi sõja algul: (1558–1561)* [The situation of the Estonian peasantry and the class struggle at the beginning of the Livonian War: (1558–1561)]. Tallinn: Eesti NSV Teaduste Akadeemia Ajaloo Instituut; Koit, Jakob (1966). Estnische Bauern als Krieger während der Kämpfe in Livland 1558–1611. *Eesti Teadusliku Seltsi aastaraamat*, 4, pp. 22–60; Angermann, Norbert (1972). *Studien Zur Livlandpolitik Ivan Groznyjs*. Marburg/Lahn: J. G. Herder-Institut; Rasmussen, Knud (1973). *Die livländische Krise 1554–1561*. Kopenhagen: Kebenhavns Universitets Slaviske Institut; Tiberg, Erik (1984). *Zur Vorgeschichte des Livländischen Krieges. Die Beziehungen zwischen Moskau und Litauen 1549–1562*. Uppsala: Academia Ubsaliensis; Wijaczka, Jacek (2010). *Albrecht von Brandenburg-Ansbach (1490–1568). Ostatni mistrz zakonu krzyżackiego i pierwszy książę "w Prusach"*. Olsztyn: LITTERA; Laidre, Margus (2006). Der Hundertjährige Krieg (1558–1660/61) in Estland. *Forschungen Zur Baltischen Geschichte*, 1, pp. 68–81; Wijaczka, Jacek (2010). *Albrecht von Brandenburg-Ansbach (1490–1568). Ostatni mistrz zakonu krzyżackiego i pierwszy książę "w Prusach"*. Olsztyn: LITTERA. This article is from 2017, but it can be helpful in the work on the next edition of book: Maasing, Madis (2017). Tartu piiskopkonna küsimus Vene-Liivimaa sõja ajal [The question of the Bishopric of Tartu (Dorpat) during the Russo-Livonian War]. *Õpetatud Eesti Seltsi Aastaraamat*, pp. 18–43.

This is especially true concerning the descriptions of fortifications in these areas.⁸ The work on Polotsk lacks more Polish- and Lithuanian-language literature, whereas the used works are mostly dated.⁹ There are no biographies of Sigismundus Augustus in the bibliography¹⁰, nor biographies of Polish and Lithuanian commanders, published in the *Polish Biographical Dictionary*.¹¹ We find it surprising that the author started a discussion on the Union of Poland and Lithuania without considering adequate literature sources on the subject.

Let us start with the book about the war in Livonia. The first edition consists of a prologue, four chapters, an epilogue, and two annexes (Prilozheniie I. O literature po Istorii Livonskoi voyny 1558–1561 gg.; Prilozheniie II. Gosudarev pokhod 7066 gg. Al'ternativnaia istoriia Livonskoi voyny). It also includes 17 illustrations from the epoch as well as contemporary ones. Most of them show the Russian army of the 16th century. In the second edition, there were no illustrations, but in turn, there appeared a preface by the author (Ot avtora), a bibliography, and a list of events described in the book. In the Polish translation, elements of both previous editions are found: illustrations, bibliography, and a list of events. That is why we considered this edition the most up-to-date one, and therefore, we have chosen it for analysis.

⁸ Caune, Andris, Ose, Ieva (2004). *Latvijas viduslaiku pilis: Latvijas 12. gadsimta beigū–17. gadsimta vācu piļu leksikons*. Rīga: Latvijas vēstures institūta apgāds.

⁹ Lesmaitis, Gediminas (2017). Zaciężni rotmistrzowie w popisach pospolitego ruszenia Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego z lat 1565 i 1567 [Mercenary captains in military registers of the levée en masse of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in 1565 and 1567]. *Biblioteka Epoki Nowożytniej*, 5, 57–70.

¹⁰ Cynarski, Stanisław (1988). *Zygmunt August* [Sigismundus Augustus]. Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich. Wydawnictwo; Sucheni-Grabowska, Anna (2010). *Zygmunt August: król polski i wielki książę litewski 1520–1562* [Sigismundus Augustus: King of Poland and Grand Duke of Lithuania 1520–1562]. Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych Universitas.

¹¹ For example, a biographical slogan dedicated to Roman Sanguszko, the winner of the Battle at Chashniki on the Ulla River: Machynia, Mariusz (1993). Sanguszko (Sanguszkowicz) Roman [Sanguszko (Sanguszkowicz) Roman]. In: Henryk Markiewicz (ed.). *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*. 34/4. Wrocław-Warszawa-Kraków: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich – Wydawnictwo Polskiej Akademii Nauk, pp. 500–505.

In the Polish version there are more illustrations than in the Russian second edition, since besides the images of the 16th century Russian army we see portraits of significant figures who participated in the described events, and importantly, maps showing the development of hostilities. The maps were mostly prepared on the basis of Filiushkin's works, although the description does not indicate which exactly. On all maps, there is the name "Vasknarwa" (Estonian Vasknarva, German Neuschloss, Russian Syrenets), which does not appear in the text. Readers must guess that Neuschloss is the location described in the text, which at first may appear somewhat puzzling. In general, the lack of maps in the Russian editions of the book about Livonia is a serious drawback. Due to this, the reader finds it difficult to interpret the content in the geographical aspect. A drawback is also the lack of personal and geographical indexes in all editions.

In an extensive introduction, Penskoi describes the Livonian War as part of the struggle for the control of Eastern and Northeastern Europe, which he believed to have lasted intermittently between 1555 and 1595. The author puts forward the thesis that the Livonian War was not the most significant war of Tsar Ivan IV. In his opinion, the fight against the Tatars and Lithuania was more relevant for Muscovy at that time. The problem is that it is difficult to separate these matters from each other. Especially since the Livonian War quickly turned into a conflict with Lithuania and Poland, which became a struggle for dominance in this part of the continent, as the author himself has pointed out.

According to Penskoi, Russia did not want to attack Livonia (the lands of the Teutonic Order, the Archbishopric of Riga, and the Livonian bishoprics), but to keep them in a state of permanent weakness. At that time, Muscovy focused its main political goals in the south and south-east. The initiative in the case of Livonia was to come from Sigismundus Augustus, King of Poland and Grand Duke of Lithuania. Counting on Ivan's involvement in Kazan and Astrakhan, he would not have been able to show a forceful response at the Daugava River. The author of the Polish-Lithuanian strategy in Livonia was Albrecht, Prince of Prussia, vassal of Sigismundus Augustus. However, this was not the end of it. Penskoi writes that, on the Russian side, they also looked greedily at the strategically located and at the same time relati-

vely weak Livonia. In that era, the Novgorodians were an influential force in Russia and were very interested in occupying these areas.

The extension of the Lithuanian sphere of influence to Livonia was not well received in Moscow and forced a reaction, which became the eponymous war of 1558–1561. Ivan IV found a pretext for the aggression in the failure of the Livonia to pay tribute from the territory of the Bishopric of Dorpat (Estonian Tartu, Russian Derpt or Iur'ev, German and Polish Dorpat) to Russia, which in the times of Yaroslav the Wise had belonged to the Kievan Rus.

In the four chapters devoted to the four campaigns of 1558, 1559, 1560, and 1561, there are descriptions of the preparations of both conflicting sides for military action and the actions themselves in the form of sieges and clashes. The detailed account begins with the capture by the Russians of Narva in 1558 and ends with their capture of Fellin (mod. Viljandi) in 1560. Further there is the description of the Lithuanian counteroffensive and capture of Tarvast (mod. Tarvastu).

The Russian side was much stronger than the Livonian side in this war and systematically conquered Livonia. This included conducting methodical sieges and sending plundering expeditions deep into Livonia, which weakened the Livonians. The author gives his assessment to the issue of war damage, however, he is inconsistent in this. Sometimes he calls it the favourite tactic of the Russian troops and writes about it with admiration. Elsewhere, he notes the tragic fate of the looted civilians, and in the second book he explains this by the military custom of the time.

During one of the expeditions in 1560, the Russian army defeated the Livonian forces at the Battle of Ermes (mod. Ērgeme). In author's estimation, the Russian side did not have several thousand soldiers in the battle, as it was believed previously. However, it still had a clear advantage over the other side, which numbered up to 1000 people. Separate units of 12 000 Russian soldiers operating in the region took part in the battle.

The second book, devoted to the Lithuanian–Russian war over Polotsk, includes a preface by the author, six chapters divided into subsections, conclusions (*Kak vyigrat' srazheniie, no proigrat' voinu... Vmesto zakliucheniia*), and two lists: the most significant events and a bibliography. The edition lacks illustrations, maps, and indexes, which creates some inconveniences for the reader.

Penskoi's aim is to present, in his opinion, the most decisive war among the conflicts in Northern and Central and Eastern Europe in the 16th century in the form of battles over Polotsk in 1562–1570. As a result, an independent Lithuania, which would not have been able to compete with Russia on its own, was to collapse and the Commonwealth was to be created. It is a pity that Penskoï, when describing this issue, relied for the most part only on Russian literature without taking a broader look at Polish- and Lithuanian-language literature. This would have made the work more impartial.

The first chapter focuses on the course of Lithuanian–Russian fights in the 16th century, with a particular emphasis on the town and region of Polotsk. The attacking and victorious side was Russia, which captured numerous Ruthenian lands, which previously belonged to Lithuania. The author also describes the involvement of Sigismundus Augustus and Ivan IV in Livonian affairs, which became a pretext for resuming fighting on the Daugava River.

In the second chapter, Penskoï presents the diplomatic and military preparations of both sides for the campaign of 1562. One of its most significant events was the victory of the Polish Army over the Russian army in the Battle of Nevel, about 100 kilometres north of Polotsk. On the basis of Filiushkin's article about the clash, the author has reduced the size of the Russian army – from 45 thousand men to about 1.5–2 thousand (the Polish army had approximately the same number of troops). According to Filiushkin and Penskoï, the exaggeration by the Poles and Lithuanians of their success at Nevel in 1562 and later on the Ulla River or at Chashniki in 1564 was to cover their defeat in the form of the fall of Polotsk, which took place in 1563.¹² Belarusian researcher Ianushkevich wrote about 15 thousand Russians fighting against four thousand opponents at Nevel.¹³ This estimate

¹² Filiushkin, Aleksandr (2012). *Mifologija i realii bitvy pod Nevelem 1562 g. Studia Slavica et Balcanica Petropolitana*, 11 (1), pp. 197–202. See: Filiushkin, Aleksandr (2007). *Andrei Mikhailovich Kurbskii. Prosopograficheskoe issledovanie i germeneticheskii kommentarii k poslaniiam Andreia Kurbskogo Ivanu Groznomu*. SPb.: Izdatel'stvo Sankt-Peterburgskogo universiteta, s. 32–34.

¹³ Ianushkevich, Andrei (2013). *Livonskaia voina. Vil'no protiv Moskvy 1558–1570*. Moskva: Kvadriga; Russkaia panorama, s. 61.

was based on a letter from Tsar Ivan IV himself to prince Andréi Mikháilovich Kurbskii, the Russian commander.¹⁴

The third chapter covers the capture of Polotsk by the Russians in 1563. The author accurately describes the Russian preparations for the winter campaign specifying the size and composition of the army of Ivan IV and the fortifications of Polotsk. During the siege, the Russian army was mostly deployed on the northern bank of the Daugava River, to shield itself from a possible Lithuanian attack from the south. This agrees with the earlier findings of Filiushkin and Kuz'min.¹⁵ Penskoi does not agree with the opinion of Ianushkevich that the defenders could have prolonged the defence, having previously left the Old Town (Velikii posad).¹⁶ According to Penskoi, the fate of Polotsk was sealed at the time of the appearance of Ivan IV's troops under it, and such decision would not have mattered much.

The fourth chapter focuses on the geopolitical consequences of the capture of Polotsk by Ivan IV. The Tsar had a plan to control the whole of Daugava, and thus to conquer Vitebsk, Dünaburg (mod. Daugavpils, Polish Dynaburg, Russian Dwinsk), and above all Riga. According to Penskoi, the cost of capturing Polotsk was at least twice as high as that of the Livonian campaign of 1577, which cost Russia 350–400 thousand roubles and was exhausting for the state. However, the author does not provide the purchasing value of the rouble at the time, so it is difficult to comprehend this value.

In the further part of the chapter, Penskoi tries to convince the reader that the Russian defeat at Chashniki on the Ulla River, over 80 km south-east from Polotsk, at the beginning of 1564, had only a psychological and propaganda dimension, as it had been in his opinion in the case of the clash at Nevel in 1562. However, it is difficult to

¹⁴ “Kako zhe ubo pod gradom” nashim” Nevlem”piat'iunadesyit” tysiashch” chetyrekh” tysiashch” ne mogoste pobiti” [What a shame under our city of Nevel, fifty thousand four thousand cannot beat], Vaneevoi, E. I., Lur'ye, Ia. S., Tvorogova, O. V. (eds.) (n.d.). *Pervoe poslaniie Ivana Groznogo Kurbskomu*. Available at: http://lib.pushkinskijdom.ru/Default.aspx?tabid=9106#_ednref119 (viewed 30.09.2022.).

¹⁵ Filiushkin, Aleksandr, Kuz'min, Andrei (2017). *Kogda Polotsk byl rossiiskim. Polotskaia kompaniia Ivana Groznogo 1563–1579 gg*. Moskva: Russkie Vitiazii, s. 32.

¹⁶ Ianushkevich, Andrei (2013). *Livonskaia voina. Vil'no protiv Moskvy 1558–1570*. Moskva: Kvadriga; Russkaia panorama, s. 71.

overlook the fact that the Russian westward advance was stopped. Prince Petr Ivanovich Shuiskii was defeated by a less numerous opponent who seized numerous spoils of war. Naturally, the winners tried to capitalise on their success.¹⁷ This is clearly evidenced by the author's comparison of the Battle of Ulla to the Battle of Orsha in 1514. In both cases, the fighting took place after Russia captured significant fortresses: Smolensk and Polotsk. In both of the field clashes Russia experienced a defeat, which, however, did not lead to the loss of its gains.

In 1564, there was also a Lithuanian attempt to regain Polotsk, which had no chance of success. According to Penskoï, the Lithuanians assembled a large army, but it did not have a sufficient number of infantry and artillery. An army of cavalry was more suited for a field combat than for a siege, but exactly the latter was their primary purpose. In the following part, the author describes the battles taking place on the Lithuanian–Russian border in 1564–1565 and summarises them, recognising it as a draw. He also offers a commentary on the genesis of oprichnina. Penskoï, following in the footsteps of Dmitrii Mikhailovich Volodikhin, the author of the latest biography of Ivan IV, sees in it a military-administrative reform, the genesis of which were failures on the north-western front.¹⁸

In the last parts of the book, i.e., in chapters five and six, there is a description of peace talks and the continuation of the fighting conducted at the border. It was important for both sides to erect new fortresses, and in this the Russians were the leaders, which Penskoï exemplifies with the case of Ulla. Initially, Lithuanians planned to build a fortress on this site, but they did not have the means to do so. The Russians took advantage of this and got ahead of the enemy. Despite this, in 1568, the Lithuanians managed to capture and hold the fortress. A year later, such an attempt failed at Izborsk, located only 30 km west of Pskov and almost 300 km north of Polotsk. The fortress was captured by the Lithuanians as quickly as it was regained by the Russians.

Considering the potential and the government system of the two countries, it is hard to disagree with Penskoï's assessment that

¹⁷ Ianushkevich, Andrei (2013). *Livonskaia voina. Vil'no protiv Moskvy 1558–1570*. Moskva: Kvadriga; Russkaia panorama, s. 83–99.

¹⁸ Volodikhin, Dmitrii (2018). *Ivan IV Groznyi. Tsar'-sirota*. Moskva: Molodaia Gvardiia, s. 150.

Lithuania was only capable of short-term military operation, unlike Russia, which could afford a lengthier effort. The author compares Polotsk war of 1562–1570 to the war of 1512–1522. During the latter, Moscow captured the town and region of Smolensk and held it despite the heavy defeat that Russians suffered in the Battle of Orsha.

In conclusion, Vitalii Penskoï's books should be considered both valuable and risky. This concerns the author's use of primarily Russian-language literature, which robs him of objectivity. This, in turn, urges the reader to be cautious with regard to many of the issues presented in both books. The reader should keep in mind that almost all aspects of the book are viewed from the Russian side, as was clearly stated in the Polish edition with the respective subtitle.

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