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How Bloody was the White Baron? Critical Comments on James Palmer's *The Bloody White Baron: The Extraordinary Story of the Russian Nobleman who Became the Last Khan of Mongolia* (Faber & Faber 2008. 274pp. ISBN 0-571-23023-7)

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Roman Fyodorovich von Ungern-Sternberg (1885–1921) was a Russian-German general, participant in the Civil War in Russia, Manchuria and Mongolia in the early twentieth century. The life of this person, who wanted to suppress revolutions and return monarchies to Russia and other countries of Europe and Asia, was really extraordinary. He failed to reach this goal, but the independent State of Mongolia would not be possible without his activities. Here I will not discuss the personality and biography of Baron Ungern, as these topics have been discussed in many publications, c. 700 in total.

After the fall of socialism in the USSR and Mongolia, many formerly secret archives were opened. These data have been partly published, and this has allowed James Palmer to use not only materials formerly available in the West, but also some new data. As a result, his non-fiction book has become very popular in the West, and it is often considered a historical source. Its German translation appeared in 2010, and we can expect new ones. In this regard, it seems to be reasonable to analyse this book from the point of view of historical facts.<sup>1</sup>

In his book Palmer kindly quotes me in many places and acknowledges me in the Introduction for books where I am the editor and compiler (Kuzmin 2004a; 2004b). I am indebted to him and thank him for the interest in my works. Considering this, as well as the importance of the new materials presented to the West by Palmer, I am not eager to criticise his book. However, *amicus Plato, sed magis amica veritas*.

The book consists of the following sections: Contents, Acknowledgements, Maps, Introduction, nine chapters, Epilogue, Notes, Bibliography and Index. Chapter one, 'A Son of Crusaders and Privateers', provides a review of the genealogy of Roman Ungern. Chapter two, 'The Ends of the World', is a biography of Ungern before the First World War in the context of the structure of Russian society, its stratification and the maturation of the revolutionary situation. Chapter three, 'Suspended between Heaven and Hell' (using a quotation from philosopher H. Keyserling), is dedicated to the first travels of Ungern to Mongolia and provides a brief description of this country, its peoples and reli-

gion. Chapter four, 'Things Fall Apart', describes Ungern's participation in the First World War. Chapter five, 'Carrion Country', is a discussion of the Civil War in Transbaikalia in the context of Ungern's activity. Chapter six, 'Ragged Crusade', describes Ungern's invasion of Mongolia and his warfare there. Chapter seven, 'Lord of the Steppe', studies the stay of Russian White troops in Mongolia. There is also an analysis of Ungern's political and religious views. Chapter eight, 'A Hundred and Thirty Days' narrates mainly his campaign in Siberia and its results. Chapter nine, 'The Last Adventurer', describes the capture, trial and execution of Ungern by the Reds. And the 'Epilogue' discusses Stalinist repressions in Mongolia, the status of this country after the revolution, comparisons with Tibet and the author's personal observations of the attitude to Ungern in modern Mongolia.

Easy and fascinating to read, as the material is allocated logically, Western readers will find in this book many facts. I will not analyse the strengths of this book: they are more or less successfully reflected in laudatory reviews, from Internet sources to well-known newspapers. Although a Russian reader can hardly consider this book to be the last word in history, Palmer provides some data unknown from other sources but, in all probability, based on information from eye-witnesses. Unfortunately, the sources are not indicated in several cases.

At the same time, the book contains defects. First, the title is not correct. Ungern was not 'the Last Khan of Mongolia'. In Mongolian '*khaan*' (Mong: '*ezen khaan*' or '*bogd khaan*', i.e. emperor, or great khan) is not the same as '*khan*', a high princely title, which does not indicate authority over the whole of Mongolia. According to the decree of the 8th Bogd Gegeen (who was a real Great Khan), Roman Ungern was awarded the title of 'hereditary grand duke Darkhan Khoshoi Chin Wang in the dignity of khan' (Kuzmin 2004a: 91). He became a grand duke, but not a Mongolian monarch.

The following shortcomings are found in the description of the period prior to the Mongolian epos. It is not correct that, in Estonia during the first Russian Revolution, 'The main cause of unrest here was not socialism, but national revival' (pp. 24–5). Actually, pogroms by peasant rebels occurred also in other parts of the Russian Empire, though nationalism was one of the elements in some areas. In general, the riots were spontaneous irrespective of satisfaction of claims: the search for an image of 'evil' was most important (Sukhova 2006: 65–9).

Roman Ungern's father was not an amateur geologist (p. 17), but a professional who defended a dissertation in geology at Leipzig University. Ungern had been awarded a service medal not by the end of the Russian-Japanese War (p. 22), but much later, in 1913. It is also incorrect that 'His record mentions various "incidents", for which read quarrels, fights and duels' (p. 39) during the period of service in the Amur Regiment. Ungern's service records at that time (see Kuzmin 2004a: 50–54) do not mention 'incidents'. Palmer writes about Ungern's second duel in Blagoveshchensk Town (the first had occurred in Dauria). However, primary sources mention one and the same duel. It is therefore not correct to claim that Ungern left both the Argun and Amur regiments as result of two duels (p. 39).

There are also errors in the description of Ungern's activity in Transbaikalia during the Civil War: the Asiatic Cavalry Division was formed not in February of 1920 (p. 112), but in 1919. It is not correct that Ataman Grigory Semenov 'rewarded Ungern in March 1919 with another Cross of St George, fourth class, for his disarming of the garrison at Hailar; he also promoted him to lieutenant-general' (p. 101). This Cross was given him according to the decision of the St George Cross Council, whereas the rank of lieutenant-general was received from Semenov much later, in 1921, for the capture of Urga.

Palmer gives a realistic account of anti-Chinese movements of Mongols in the early twentieth century. Like many other authors, he designates the Qing Empire as China; however, in reality, it was a multinational Manchu empire which included China, Mongolia and other parts. Its collapse to nation states, including China, gave Mongols the right of self-determination. There were Manchu and Mongolian imperial officials representing the Manchu dynasty, but not Chinese control and Chinese administration (p. 45). At the time of Galdan Khan, western Mongols had challenged the Qing Empire, but not China and Russia, for dominance in central Asia (p. 128).

Let us proceed to the Mongolian epopee. The author's bias and selective use of sources are the main defects there. Among all the memoirs, he used mainly those written by D. Alioshin (1941) and N.M. Ryabukhin (Ribo n.d.), whose incomplete memoirs are significantly ideologised treatises. I can understand why the author has not used N.N. Knyazev's memoirs: the latter was a follower of Ungern, so his memoirs may have been inconvenient for Palmer's account. However, it is impossible to understand why Palmer ignored neutral and detailed memoirs by M.G. Tornovsky: he quoted the publication of both sources (in Kuzmin 2004b). Indeed, these two sources have not been translated into English, in contrast to those of Alyoshin and Ryabukhin.

According to Palmer, the 8th Bogd Gegeen was displeased by excesses of Chinese soldiers in Urga because 'He was no longer allowed to drive his beloved cars during festivals and had to heave himself through the crowds of pilgrims on foot' (p. 125). Moreover, the main goal of the 8th Bogd Gegeen 'as ever, was to secure a comfortable living for himself and his entourage' (p. 166). In fact, the Bogd Gegeen played a decisive role in the fight for independence of Mongolia.

The map and descriptions of Ungern's operations in Mongolia contain many errors. According to Tornovsky's memoirs (published by Kuzmin 2004b: 200), which were the only witness accounts, Ungern invaded Mongolia, not in early September, but on 1 October 1920. Preparations to assault and fight for Urga are described quite fragmentarily by Palmer. Instead, he fills his pages with descriptions of individual tortures, executions, small incidents and other particulars, making this reader wonder what other sources he could have used. One reads a funny story about an elephant that has escaped from the Bogd Gegeen's zoo: the elephant is said to have been found a week later at the distance of a hundred miles, pastured in a herd of camels (p. 151). And this all occurred during the Mongolian winter with snow and temperature of 30oC below zero!

Let us move to the second fight for Urga: transports of the Asiatic Division were certainly in the area of the Tuul [Tola] River, but not the Onon River (p. 132), which is 200 km from Urga, not 20. There were not a couple of thousand Chinese soldiers in Urga (p. 132), but about 7,000 (Tornovsky in Kuzmin 2004b: 211). After the first defeat, Ungern retreated to the Gun Galutai area on the Kherlen [Kerulen] River, but not 'Zam Kuren' (p. 135 and map) (= Zuun Khuree?). There were no mobilised Russian peasants in the Asiatic Division (p. 135). Cases of plague after consumption of marmot meat (p. 136) are not confirmed by available sources. Marmots are sleeping during hibernation, and summer is the right time for their hunting.

Plundering of the Lamyn Gegen Dedlen Khid Monastery by Ungern's men (p. 135) was not found in sources. In addition, it seems stupid to plunder a monastery, as the clergy supported the baron. The same concerns the following phrase: 'Like all good conquerors, he was rumoured to have left hidden treasure behind him, plundered from monasteries and buried somewhere on the steppe' (p. 2).

Palmer, following D. Alyoshin's memoirs, described the story of the poisoning of wounded men in the field hospital by A.F. Klingenberg, as if it was ordered by Ungern. However, memoirs by Golubev and A.S. Makeev provide more reliable and detailed data: Lieutenant-Colonel Laurentz, on behalf of the baron, ordered medical attendant Logunov to poison wounded men, for which he was shot by Ungern's order (Kuzmin 2004a: 448, 529). Execution by fire of deserters or recalcitrant recruits (p. 137) is not confirmed by documents and memoirs. Palmer quoted Alioshin, who described a fierce punishment of deserter soldiers led by Ruzhansky, as well as punishment of Ruzhansky and his wife (p. 139). However, the author did not mention that Ruzhansky, having forged Ungern's signature, defalcated 15,000 roubles in gold and tried to flee – just at the time when the division starved in the frozen steppe. By the way, Ruzhansky's wife was raped not by Chakhar Mongols, but by Ungern's intelligence agents.

According to Tornovsky's memoirs, before the main assault of Urga, Ungern had not 5–6,000 men (p. 143), but 1,460 (in Kuzmin 2004b: 208). The Japanese did not serve Ungern as gunners (e.g. p. 153), but composed a cavalry company. There were Russian gunners led by Captain Dmitriev, which is also known from Tornovsky. The name of the Japanese officer was not Hiro Yama (p. 128), but Koutarou Hatakeyama. There are no reasons that Buryats composed the main force in Ungern troops (p. 195 and elsewhere). The main assault of Urga was the realisation of a plan; it was not caused by an accidental shot of a rocket into the sky (pp. 153–4). The main lines of the Chinese trenches were not at Maimaicheng (pp. 150–51), but near the settlements of the Upper and Lower Modochins. It is not correct that Ungern's men kept fires on the Bogd Uul (Bogdo Ula) Mountain near Urga for two months (p. 146): the fires appeared only a day or two before the assault, for orientation at night. There are no statistics of the Chinese losses at Urga; the data provided by the author (p. 155) are a mere supposition. Urga was cleared of corpses by captive Chinese but not by Ungern's soldiers (p. 161).

After the capture of Urga, the main events in expelling the Chinese invaders were battles in the Tuul River valley, at Ulaan Khad Hill, near Choiryn Khuree Monastery, and the campaign against Zamyn Uud. They were not indicated on map, and in the text there are only mixed fragments. However, these events were clearly described in detail by Tornovsky. In the area of Zamyn Uud the Chinese were pursued, not by Rezukhin, but by Ungern and Meiren Dugarjav. Ude (= Zamyn Uud) is not 'twenty or so miles north of Urga' (p. 158), but 592 km south-east of it. Palmer, when he mentioned heaps of corpses not far from the Tuul River (p. 158), was basing this on F.A. Ossendowski's (1922) book. These were other fights, initially conducted by Rezukhin, in the valley of the Tuul River at Talyn Ulaan Khad westwards of Urga, which were nothing to do with Zamyn Uud. The history of surrender and flight of the Chinese, given in Palmer's book, actually belongs to the fights in the Tuul River area. The Chinese surrendered to Ungern, then some of them escaped, and others comprised a separate Chinese detachment. Escaped soldiers were pursued for a long time and some were killed by Ungern's men. The quotation from Haslund on p. 159 belongs to another, much earlier episode (i.e. before the fights at the Tuul): the defeat of the Chinese at Choiryn Khuree (c. 240 km south-east of Urga). They were crushed not by Khalkha Mongols, but by multinational troops led personally by Ungern. Then the Whites moved southwards to Zamyn Uud.

The situation in Mongolia, when Ungern's troops were stationed there, is described incorrectly. It is not the case that he restored five ministries in Mongolia, effectively controlled its government and was dictator of Mongolia (p.167) (for details, see Kuzmin 2011: 200–28). It is also incorrect that each department initially had representatives from Ungern (p. 167). There were several Russian advisers to Mongolian Government: they had assisted the Mongols long before Ungern's invasion, and then they were not his representatives.

Palmer found similarity with communist measures in Ungern's market regulation in Mongolia. He explained this by the baron's bad attitude towards traders, as they were too close to Jewish-capitalist ideals, as well as by the capture of Chinese banks by Ungern, and the killing of traders (pp. 195–6). This is not correct. The economy after the expulsion of the Chinese troops started to improve. However, Mongolia strongly depended on its trade with Russia and China. In 1921 it faced a real blockade. Regulation of commodity–money relations is a common measure in such conditions. The first paper banknotes in the new Mongolia were not 'issued by the Bogd Khan on behalf of Ungern'. The real history of these monies is different from that written by Palmer (for details, see Nyamaa & Ganbold 2007).

When describing terror in Mongolia, Palmer wrote that the priest F. Parnyakov was killed because of his son, who was a Red activist. Later he again noted this (p. 230). However, F. Parnyakov himself had left-leaning views, and assisted Communists fleeing from Russia to Manchuria; he was one of the creators of the legal 'roof' for underground work in Urga, participating in the establishment of an underground revolutionary committee and information

bureau for secret tasks (Darevskaya 1997). M.G. Tornovsky laid the blame for mistreatment in prison and for shooting of the Russians in Urga on the Red council of its Russian community, including F. Parnyakov (Kuzmin 2004b: 189).

The description of Ungern's military campaign to Siberia is rather superficial, though again, the author had detailed memoirs by Tornovsky. Although the author has tried to follow chronology, it is often incorrect. For example, different colours of *bashlyks* (hoods worn over caps) in different detachments of Ungern's appeared only before the Siberian campaign (May 1921), but not during their stationing on the Kherlen (winter 1920/21) (p. 144). The famous Order no 15 by Ungern was prepared not only by F.A. Ossendowski but also by several other persons (see Kuzmin 2011: 238). It would be more reasonable to translate the order in full than to analyse it without knowing its details!

Palmer inexactly explains the real cause of invasion of the Soviet troops in Mongolia in 1921 (p. 208). Penetration of the Socialist revolution from Russia to China through Mongolia was the strategic goal of that time (see Zheleznyakov 2009: 202–9). After the death of Bayar Gung ar Kyakhta, Ungern maimed doctor Klingenberg, not for that death (p. 207), but for failing to render medical assistance to wounded Chakhars. P. Sukharev really led his detachment to China, but not together with colonel N.N. Kazagrandi (p. 211): this occurred after the latter had been shot by him. The Mongolian prince Sundui Gung was supposed to have said to Ungern: 'Russians, in general, are all bad people' (p. 223). However, the quotation in the book is given wrongly: such a phrase is absent in the quoted source (Kuzmin 2004a: 208). And Sundui Gung was not executed later (p. 237); he died after fracturing his leg, caused by a fall from his horse.

The author's statements on national issues are notable. According to him, some Russian nobles considered themselves a race different from the peasantry (p. 23). Cossacks were 'honoured' by the following estimations. After a routine reminder of anti-Semitism, the author provides a note on the 'brutality' of Cossacks, who 'seemed to many to be a throwback to the Mongols'. Proof for this statement was found in a quotation from historian John Keegan that the brutality of the Cossacks recalled 'cruelty which stirred in their Western European victims a reminder of the visitations of the steppe peoples ... buried in the darkest recesses of the collective memory' (p. 33). 'The Cossacks were also seen as cowards, preferring the easy work of spearing peasants and massacring Jews to the dangers of battle. They were rarely willing to face any form of resistance head-on' (p. 33). However, it is unclear how this corresponds to another statement that 'they could be capable of tremendous bravery, making suicidal cavalry charges against fortified positions' (p. 34). Palmer wrongly thinks that the 'majority of ethnic Russians maintained profoundly racist attitudes towards the various Asian peoples' (p. 36).

I will not compare attitudes to Asian peoples between Russians and, for example, Anglo-Saxons in general. Rather, I will quote statements from Palmer: 'Ungern's Mongol troops looked down upon the ethnically Russian villagers with the age-old contempt of the nomad for the soft, settled farmer, an attitude that Ungern encouraged' (p. 106). The first thing which the author preferred to

indicate before describing the Mongolian capital, was smell and dirt (p. 44). Further description of the capital looks like something intermediate between Communist propaganda and eurocentrism. For Mongols, 'drinking and boasting were considered equally important' as 'three manly sports', the main amusement besides religion (p. 46).

Germans got their share, though. According to Palmer, 'Ethnic Germans such as the Ungern-Sternbergs did not regard themselves as belonging to their adopted country. In some ways they were still colonists' (p. 14). Moreover, 'The Baltic German community was closely associated with the *Völkisch* pan-German movements, and produced a remarkably high number of Nazi leaders and thinkers'. 'The Germans in Estonia were divided between their identity as Germans and their role as servants of the Russian Empire. It was a conflict full of contradictions' (p.15). Actually, Russian Germans, having retained their ethnicity, considered themselves a part of Russia, like other peoples.

At the same time, readers must discover with happiness that the author never allowed himself any 'critical comments' towards Jews. Moreover, the latter are mentioned, appropriately and inappropriately, on 42 out of 274 pages of the book.

However, Palmer is not so ceremonious with the religion alien to him. 'The history of Tibetan Buddhism is a corrupt and Byzantine affair, seemingly tailor made to suit old-fashioned anti-clericalism' (p. 55). 'The vast majority of Buddhists worldwide, however, are enthusiastic believers in all manner of gods and spirits' (p. 3). Actually, the basis of Buddhism is not a belief in gods and spirits. Palmer's impressions from works of Jesuit missionaries and from a temple in Inner Mongolia (pp. 5–6) reveal his ignorance of Buddhism. This deep ignorance is visible also in many other places. 'Theosophy was a kind of stripped-down and generalised version of Hinduism and Tibetan Buddhism' (p. 28). Actually, theosophy is neither Buddhism, nor Hinduism. 'Tibetan Buddhism focused on magic, secret teachings, spirits and demons, the acquisition of special powers, and the superior status of the monk or lama' (pp. 4–5). Actually, Tibetan Buddhism is an exact Tibetan-language copy of the late Indian Mahayana Buddhism (14th Dalai Lama 2008: 50, 56, 57). Its core is self-perfection, which was, however, not listed by Palmer.

'Buddhist theologians, particularly those trying to promote the religion in the West, have manfully tried to co-opt the corpses and skulls and bloodstained weapons into images of peace and salvation. Their efforts – "The corpse being trampled beneath his feet represents the death of the material world" – are unconvincing' (p. 62). In fact, images of aggression in Buddhism mean spiritual powers eliminating bad karma and attacking internal enemies, the defilements of consciousness. These images in Buddhism are considered as guidelines for actions in the inner, spiritual world, but not in the outer, physical world. Sexual images in Tibetan Buddhism are also symbols. They symbolise the necessity of joining the realisation of emptiness (Sanskrit. *shunyata*) and the method (compassion) for Liberation (e.g. Kuzmin 2010: 125–6).



These are simple elements of Buddhism, which Palmer does not want to recognise. From there comes his listing of ‘dark sides of enlightened gods’, tantric deities of Buddhism (p. 62). From there also estimations like ‘the religious art occasionally strayed into outright pornography’ (p. 64). Or, otherwise, ‘The gods were usually depicted in a warlike stance, brandishing weapons and trampling on corpses, but some were joined together in elaborate and implausibly athletic couplings, no doubt to the ribald amusement of the more elderly and worldly-wise female pilgrims’ (p. 45). Palmer thinks that ‘holocausts were an integral to Mongolian ritual’ (pp. 60–61). Actually, meat is the main food of nomad Mongols. They slaughter cattle for food. Before a meal, the meat might have been offered to deities. But, for Palmer, this was bad, at least in Urga: ‘Temples were everywhere, dark and smoky’ (p. 45).

The author also demonstrates ignorance of Buddhist iconography. Yamantaka is not a god of death, (p. 47) but quite the contrary, the victor of death. *Dokshits* (not ‘dashgid’) are not ‘spirits of air’ (p.59), but Guardians of the Teaching. A gigantic statue of Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara, but not that of the Buddha (p. 61), was imported to Urga from Dolonnor. Incidentally, Palmer made a mistake: the 8th Bogd Gegeen’s vision actually improved after that (Kuzmin & Oyuunchimeg 2009: 61). It is wrong to claim that, at the beginning of the twentieth century, the swastika was already recognised as an anti-Semitic symbol (p. 96). The listing of this symbol as ‘Buddhist, esoteric and anti-Semitic symbol, which was also very common in Mongolia’ (p. 96) clearly aimed at combining and blaming all these. Parallels between the ‘Protocols of the Elders of Zion’ and ‘esoteric religions of the East’ as a quotation from F.A. Ossendowski (pp. 96–7) are unconvincing: the latter has a poor knowledge of Buddhism (see Kuzmin & Rejt, 2008: 97–110, for details). This led to an erroneous conclusion that Roman Ungern used the swastika as not only a Buddhist but also an anti-Semitic motif, as this could be done by the majority of White guards (p. 129).

Neither source stated that Ungern was ‘worshipped as a god’ in Mongolia (Ossendowski 1992: 1), but not Mongols, considered that there is a King of the World in Shambhala (p. 65). There are no proofs that the 4th Dalai Lama was killed by Tibetans because he was a Mongol (p. 5). It is wrong that ‘The influence of Theosophical language and ideas is evident whenever Ungern discusses religion’ (p. 29). Theosophic ideas were attributed to him by Ossendowski, while the known words of Ungern correspond to Buddhism but not Theosophy.

Palmer’s ignorance of Buddhism corresponded with a primitive propaganda against this religion. Providing further quotations from his book, I will not comment on them: all have been refuted more than once (see overviews: Kuzmin 2010; 2011):

‘Tibetan Buddhism made some inroads into China, but had a poor reputation. Popular stories often associated it with sexual rituals, human sacrifice, corruption, and a host of other evils. Buddhism as a whole was often stuck with this reputation, but the Tibetan branch got it worst. Most of this was due to religious jealousy, prurience, and xenophobia’ (pp. 124–5). Homosexuality ‘was considered an

entirely acceptable vice among Mongolian monks' (p. 53): an anecdotal statement of a Japanese spy in Tibet in 1940 is provided as evidence. 'Monks were certain of a full bowl and a comfortable place to sleep, if nothing else, and the temples were major money makers, storing most of what wealth there was in Mongolia' (p. 45).

Not surprisingly, Palmer repeats a full collection of discreditable gossip about the theocratic leader of Mongolia, the 8th Bogd Gegeen (pp. 52–5). Palmer writes that there are exaggerations, but 'contemporary Mongolian and foreign witnesses, including prominent lamas and anti-communists, have testified to his ruthlessness, alcoholism and greed' (p. 54). Among these 'witnesses', however, only foreigners with doubtful reputation are quoted, F. Larson and F. Ossendowski. Again, this is not surprising: real proofs from the 'first hands' are absent (Kuzmin 2011: 330–35). However, Palmer has discovered something new: Roman Ungern (p. 177), the 8th Bogd Gegeen (p. 55), the 13th Dalai Lama (p. 130) and the majority of Chinese warlords (p. 181) were paranoid. Palmer's knowledge of psychology is similar to his knowledge of Buddhism. Nazi expeditions to Tibet are noted by the way. It does not matter that no alliances existed between the Nazis and the Tibetan theocracy. It was important only to make an additional insinuation aimed at associating Tibetan Buddhism with anti-Semitism.

Palmer discovered that, during the coronation of the 8th Bogd Gegeen, 'Ungern himself was declared to be a reincarnation of the Fifth Bogd Gegen, the Bogd Khan's predecessor, a rather dull figure of the early nineteenth century' (p. 163). Palmer was admired for this nonsense: at that time the 8th Bogd Gegeen was the reincarnation of the 5th Bogd Gegeen. Where does this paradox come from? Probably, from Anvan's memoirs (quoted in Kuzmin 2004a, p. 554). However, there is another wording: 'That time [people] vastly praised baron Ungern, that he is reincarnation of the 5th Bogdo' (Kuzmin 2004a: 554). The 5th Bogd Gegeen, 'dull' according to Palmer, was famous in Mongolia, as his short rule was known for the establishment of religious schools and monasteries.

It is wrong to assert that Roman Ungern transferred to reality tortures depicted in Buddhist temples (pp. 67, 141, 161). Tortures used by Ungern's men were similar to those in the Soviet *Cheka* (secret service) (for a list of the tortures, see Kuzmin, 2011: 407), but not to the tortures in Buddhist images.

Ignorance of Buddhism and propaganda against this religion in Palmer's book generally corresponds to the style of Stalinist and Maoist destruction of religions in the USSR, the Mongolian People's Republic and the People's Republic of China. Unfortunately, this is not a metaphor: I encountered very similar 'arguments' in the sources. So the official Chinese Communist Party propaganda comes to mind: the author lives in Beijing. However, in the Epilogue James Palmer, contrary to the Communist propaganda, provides an impartial description of repressions in Mongolia, and reasonable parallels with the situation in Tibet after its occupation by PR China.

There are many small shortcomings in the book, for example, accusations and harsh words, in many cases undeserved. The author of the book would hardly rejoice if all these were addressed to himself: the 'bloody baron' (title), who felt

‘joy of slaughter’, ‘bloody-handed pillager’ (p. 2), ‘monster’ (p. 19) etc.; ‘deeply stupid Nikolas II’ (p. 102); Russian government was the ‘tsarist regime’ (p. 34) (as in Red propaganda); Krauthof’s book is a ‘trashy novel’ (p. 243). The name ‘Ungern-Sternberg’ is discussed in strange discourses (pp. 11, 12). The author also plays on the name of B.P. Rezukhin, Ungern’s friend, as ‘Rezun’ [Russ. ‘cutter’]. Nevertheless, his knowledge of Russian does not exclude a few mistakes: Zagorsk instead of Zagorsky, Special Manchurian Division instead of Special Manchurian Detachment, Evtina instead of Evtin, Dutova instead of Dutov, Bakicha instead of Bakich, Guzino instead of Gusinoe (pp. 75, 96, 175, 176, 215).

In general, this book, unfortunately, should be estimated as ideologised propagandistic writing with numerous mistakes in facts and explanations. It cannot be used as a scientific source. We can be sorry for Western readers who, the majority being unfamiliar with the Russian and Mongolian languages and being persuaded by a flow of laudatory reviews, may look to this book for historical facts.

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## NOTE

<sup>1</sup> I have used two versions of the book for my review: an electronic version with the above-mentioned title, and a hard copy entitled: James Palmer. *The Bloody White Baron*. London: Faber & Faber, 2008, 274 pp. The paginations coincide in both versions; I have not found differences in their texts, so I will not divide them in my review.

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