

The reason one meets them in Lebina's book has a lot to do with their association with personal artifacts, including photographs—of herself as a girl growing up in the 1950s and 1960s, and other members of her family going back to the 1920s—recollections of particular incidents at school or summer camp, and sartorial or culinary madeleines. As for other sources, aside from *Leningradskaia pravda*, the municipal archive, and other (including Western) historians' works, she draws quite heavily on Soviet fiction writers: the prolific Vasilii Aksyonov on the dance crazes of the Thaw era; Vera Panova on enduring consolidation (*uplotnenie*) in 1919; Yuri and Mikhail German, Vikentii Veresaev, Daniil Granin, Yuri Trifonov, Nikolai Ostrovskii, to name just a few. And she uses them to good effect. "How can you live without a refrigerator?" Mikhail German recalls his future mother-in-law proclaiming upon visiting her daughter in her prospective son-in-law's relatively spartan apartment in the late 1950s, this cited in Lebina's chapter on electrical appliances (p. 458). She also employs published diaries. In her inevitable chapter on the *khrushchevka*, Lebina quotes a December 1958 entry in the diary of Erena Lur'e, an artist and a poet: "Lord, how I want a separate apartment! Even a tiny one!!" (p. 391).

Lebina describes her methodology as that of an anthropologist. Clearly, she privileges her role as participant observer, "anthropologizing" her own life as a Soviet *gorozhanka*. The choices she makes about what to address and how to address it are thus highly subjective. The Russian city of 1917–91 denoted in the title is essentially Leningrad, with occasional nods toward Moscow and fewer still toward any other city. Still, while some things were peculiar to or more prevalent in the capital cities, much resembled life in other towns. The dominant sensibilities evoked by Lebina's sausage train are wistful nostalgia and amusement at the follies, but also admiration for the resourcefulness of people who lived in the Soviet past. It is a measure of the book's generosity of spirit that even younger readers or those with no experience of Soviet urban life can easily imagine themselves as passengers.

Lewis H. Siegelbaum, Michigan State University (Emeritus)

Rogacheva, Maria A. *Soviet Scientists Remember: Oral Histories of the Cold War Generation*. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2020. xxii + 177 pp. \$90.00. ISBN 978-1-4985-7434-1.

This book presents highlights from Maria Rogacheva's substantial collection of oral interviews with Soviet-era scientists, a major source for her fascinating and provocative study, *The Private World of Soviet Scientists from Stalin to Gorbachev* (2017). Touching on issues ranging from housing and personal life to culture and politics, these interviews paint a rich picture of life and work of the inhabitants of Chernogolovka, a home town for a branch of the Academy of Science's Institute of Chemical Physics and several other research institutes near Moscow, from its founding in 1956 to the post-Soviet times. This collection is a valuable source not only for the history of Soviet science and technology, but also for the study of Soviet citizens' daily life.

Rogacheva's project is part of a remarkable turn toward "locality studies" among historians of Soviet science and technology. Soviet-era "closed" or "secret" towns built around significant scientific and engineering institutions located away from major cities have become the subject of a growing number of fascinating studies; see Kate Brown on Ozersk, Ekaterina Emeliantseva on Severodvinsk, Stefan Guth and Anna Wendland on Shevchenko, Paul Josephson on Akademgorodok, Roman Khandozhko and Galina Orlova on Obninsk, Laura Sembritzki on Chelyabinsk-40, and Asif Siddiqi and Xenia Vytuleva on ZATOs.

Rogacheva's entire oral history project includes interviews with twenty-eight scientists, and this book features only six, but these few interviews are representative of multiple facets of the scientific community. First, they illustrate some commonalities in the biographical background of the postwar generation of Soviet scientists. While their childhood was disrupted by World War II, they benefited from the government efforts in the 1950s to gather talent from all over the country in order to produce large numbers of scientists and engineers. Some of the interviewees came from remote parts of the Soviet Union, some from very humble backgrounds, and some from elite families who suffered heavily during Stalin-era purges. They had a lot of shared experience with non-elite strata of society and viewed their family lives as "the typical story of millions of Soviet families" (p. 5). This might explain their patriotic feelings and the internal justification for working on defense-related projects that strengthened the Soviet state, despite their sometimes liberal leanings.

Next, these interviews bring to the fore the sense of community among the town's scientists. One interviewee explained that Chernogolovka was "different because of the kind of people who lived there," referring to "a special atmosphere" and the high level of education and trust ("we didn't lock our apartment doors") (p. 51). An informal cinema club, which featured hard-to-find movies, concerts of popular singer-songwriters, and other trendy events in the town's House of Scientists created a cultural niche apart from the Soviet mainstream.

Finally, the interviews pinpoint important differences within this unity, in particular, a spectrum of opinions on political dissent. The range of interviewees includes: a close friend of an imprisoned dissident who helped him "see the world differently" (p. 135); a devoted scientist who viewed politics as distraction and called dissidents "idealists" (p. 75); and a staunch Communist supporter who feared that freedom of speech would become a "weapon for opponents of Soviet power" (p. 106). The interview with Rimma Liubovskaia, the only woman on the list, highlights striking gender inequality: she was denied work on a promising project after admitting that she planned to have children and might therefore have time constraints (p. 19).

The author demonstrates remarkable skill in prompting the interviewees to open up and tell their stories. Rogacheva does not shy away from confronting their interviewees on occasion, probing and questioning their account, and compelling them to go beyond their favorite tales and start talking about more sensitive and perhaps uncomfortable topics, though the topic of the ethics of working on nuclear weapons was never touched. The book features an excellent introduction, a helpful summary of each interview, explanatory footnotes, bibliography, and index, making it a well-annotated primary source.

Comparing Chernogolovka scientists to the cyberneticians whom I interviewed for *From Newspeak to Cyberspeak* (2002), and to the space engineers and cosmonauts interviewed for *Voices of the Soviet Space Program* (2014), one could see a remarkable spectrum of values, closely correlated with the degree of secrecy to which a particular professional group was subjected. While cyberneticians tended to view themselves as part of a global scientific community and emphasize exchange of ideas, the space engineers operated with the mindset of technological and political competition, hiding their innovations not only from Western rivals, but also from domestic competitors. Chernogolovka scientists occupied a position in between: they were accustomed to some of their research being classified, and valued the opportunity to attend international conferences, but mostly to establish their priority, rather than use it for intellectual cross-fertilization. They accepted that their science was in the service of the state and bracketed out inconvenient ethical questions by focusing on the technical aspects of their work.

Overall, the material in the interviews confirms Rogacheva's main thesis in *The Private World of Soviet Scientists* about the Chernogolovka scientific community's tight integration into the late Soviet system, appreciation of the state support for their research, and pride about their privileged status. Few of them viewed Chernogolovka as "an oasis of intellectual freedom"; most considered it just a comfortable place for interesting work that allowed them to do science and not worry about politics.

Slava Gerovitch, Massachusetts Institute of Technology

SOCIAL SCIENCES, CONTEMPORARY RUSSIA, AND OTHER

Trenin, Dmitri. *Russia*. New York: Polity Books, 2019. 200 pp. \$59.95. ISBN 978-1-5095-2766-3.

Dmitri Trenin's simply titled *Russia*, a short, refreshing book which packs a lot of material into a condensed space, gives an overview of the country's history in a manner that allows the reader to understand some of the unique features that make Russia so special. It would certainly be suitable reading for an upper-level undergraduate political science or sociology class or possibly included on a graduate level reading list. The author (who is also director of the Carnegie center in Moscow) aims "to help readers understand where Russia is coming from. In other words, I will attempt to unravel the logic of the country's history to make sense of its earlier development and its contemporary behavior, and what might be expected of it in the future" (p. vii). It is this frame which drives some of the structure of the book.

First, one of the book's strengths is its simplicity, and the author's ability to write for a Western audience which that may lack the background knowledge to become heavily involved in debates concerning Russia's history. Aside from a brief summary in the first chapter, the book concentrates exclusively on the twentieth and twenty-first centuries in Russia, understandably getting more detailed as we come closer to the present. It is for this reason that the book will appeal most of all to students of the social sciences.

The book does a good job of conveying the Russians' view of their country's history—a view more nuanced than the simplified Western statement that Russia's history is "tragic." For instance, while the Soviet Union and Russia are routinely condemned for the 1939 Molotov-Ribbentrop pact in the West, Trenin puts across the very common-sense view that, to the Soviet authorities, temporary peace with Hitler seemed like the least worst option. Indeed, "the Anglo-French policy of appeasing Nazi Germany, culminating in the 1938 Munich agreement to dismember Czechoslovakia, sent a chilling signal to Stalin that the Western powers were trying to pit Nazi Germany against the Soviet Union" (p. 74). Given the politicized nature of history in present-day Eastern Europe, appreciating the context in which such decisions were made is always worthwhile. Likewise, Trenin offers a balanced appraisal of Stalin's legacy—not denying the crimes he committed but also not downplaying his achievements either.

In more recent history, Trenin draws the reader's attention to the extreme shock that came in the aftermath of communism. With an eye to the experience of the common man, Trenin reports on the rapid privatization in the early Yeltsin years which "pushed most Russian people into a survival mode, while offering rapid enrichment for a few. Privatization was seen as a sham ... which meant a cover for stealing" (p. 136). This context allows the reader to appreciate Putin's genuine popularity. Trenin might overstate this logic at times—"the secret of Putin's staying power ... is his ability to reach out to millions of people and to feel their needs" (p. 156)—but there is no doubt that Putin is not as illegitimate as Western critics like to argue.