

hearing to address the Council, providing one last sample of his oratorical skills (214). The last two chapters deal with the memory of Jerome, placing him on par with Wyclif and Hus and Martin Luther, occasionally finding his likeness with his famous beard in images from the early modern period.

The book shows Jerome was an independent thinker who caused much disquiet and alarm in different European university settings. Jerome made waves across Europe and in all probability heightened university masters' awareness of the connection between Wyclifism, already declared heresy, and the arising Hussitism.

Slava Gerovitch, *Soviet Space Mythologies: Public Images, Private Memories, and the Making of a Cultural Identity*, University of Pittsburgh Press: Pittsburgh, PA, 2015; 256 pp., 7 b/w illus.; 9780822963639, \$27.95 (pbk)

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The myth about the Soviet space programme can be summarized as 'a perfect hero conquering outer space with flawless technology' (131). It could hardly have been otherwise in a censorship-ridden country that used space exploration, in particular, to prove the superiority of socialism over capitalism. A great deal of information about the programme was for decades routinely concealed not only from the general public but also from the Communist rulers, whose versions of space flight communication transcripts were doctored for fear of funding withdrawal.

Even the cosmonauts and their ground control sometimes did not want to enlighten each other (until afterwards) about the full scale of in-flight problems. Thus, Gagarin, while in orbit, was misinformed about its height, because his engines turned themselves off too late and propelled his spacecraft to an apogee of 188 miles, instead of the expected 143 miles. In case of a retrorocket malfunction, the natural decay of the higher orbit could have taken up to twenty days, while Gagarin's module only had enough oxygen, water and food for ten days. Conversely, Aleksei Leonov initially kept quiet about his spacesuit ballooning during his space walk, which prevented him from re-entering the airlock feet first, as he had been instructed. He had to climb into it head first, 'in violation of the established procedure. He then performed an incredible acrobatic feat by turning around inside a narrow airlock' (63).

Dramatic events like these tended to elude public attention. This contributed to a gradual replacement of cosmic enthusiasm with cynicism and indifference. After all, what is so special about space flights if almost everything goes to plan? And would it not be wiser to divert some of the generous space funding towards a solution of the many serious issues plaguing planet Earth?

As the Soviet Union was nearing an end and the veil of secrecy over its space programme was being lifted bit by bit, several competing narratives emerged out of the Soviet space myth's remains. Space engineers, whose names and assignments were heavily classified, felt underappreciated and somewhat jealous of the

cosmonauts' worldwide fame. Hence a notion was advanced (not altogether baseless, especially at an early stage of the Soviet space endeavour) that cosmonauts were little more than passengers on board auto-piloted spacecraft. According to *Vostok's* manual control system designer, Boris Chertok, Gagarin's pre-flight instructions could be expressed in four words, 'Do not touch anything' (49). The chief of Special Design Bureau no. 1 and head of the Soviet space programme, Sergei Korolev, reportedly boasted that 'even rabbits could fly' (70) on his spacecraft.

Yet there was no unity among space engineers. Thus, Korolev famously quarrelled with the chief rocket engine designer Valentin Glushko, who refused to build engines for Korolev's lunar rockets. When Glushko replaced the deceased Korolev as the bureau chief, he made a 'determined effort to rewrite Soviet space history by emphasizing his own contributions and downplaying Korolev's. He even ordered to remove spacecraft designed by Korolev from the bureau's internal museum and to replace them with rocket engines of his own design' (156).

For his part, General Nikolai Kamanin, a military pilot with a polar record, responsible for cosmonauts' training, stressed his own role in their selection for space missions, as well as shaping the cosmonauts' post-flight public image. Among other things, Kamanin was instrumental in naming Valentina Tereshkova as the first woman cosmonaut ahead of four better qualified candidates, because he appreciated her potential as a public relations figurehead. In his diary entry of 3 November 1963, he claimed: 'It was I who created Tereshkova the most famous woman in the world' (137). Kamanin believed that Tereshkova as the 'head of a Soviet women's organization... would do for our country and for our Party a thousand times more than she can do in space' (148–9). Sure enough, Tereshkova left the cosmonaut corps to lead the Soviet Women's Committee in 1968–87. When Gherman Titov's repeated drunk driving led to the death of his car passenger in June 1964, Kamanin helped to cover up the incident while arguing that 'Titov's disgrace would be a disgrace for all the cosmonauts, for all Soviet people. We cannot afford that' (146). Titov's public reputation as a perfect cosmonaut hero remained intact.

Combining archival sources and personal interviews, the published diaries of Kamanin and Chertok, the embellished biopics of Korolev, such as *Taming the Fire* (1972) by Daniil Khrabrovitsky and *Korolev* (2007) by Yury Kara, as well as satirical fiction calling the Soviet space bluff (e.g. Viktor Pelevin's *Omon Ra*, 1991), Gerovitch competently, confidently and convincingly traces the mutation of the Soviet space mythology into the post-Soviet one. In the atmosphere of post-ideology and post-truth, space mythology has acquired a new lease of life, uniting a fragmented Russian society with the distorted memories of the glorious early days of the space race. As a Russian journalist put it in 2001, 'Gagarin is our national idea' (162). In Gerovitch's own words, 'remembering and mythologizing is the same thing. Just like false private memories reinforce the continuity of the individual self, cultural myths shore up national or group identity' (xii).