

*Russia's Century of Revolutions: Parties, People, Places. Studies Presented in Honor of Alexander Rabinowitch.* Edited by Michael S. Melancon and Donald J. Raleigh. Bloomington, IN: Slavica Publishers, 2012. x, 248 pp. \$29.95 (paper). ISBN-13: 978-0-89357-402-4.

*Festschrifts* are often a labor of love, a respectful way to reciprocate what a beloved and influential mentor has given to his or her students. In this collection of essays dedicated to Alexander Rabinowitch, a varied group of scholars, all of whom studied with him, demonstrate in their work the skills and insights that they have developed after being guided and inspired by their teacher. Rabinowitch, whom all of us of a certain generation of historians of Russia know well (and have learned from), was one of the first of the so-called "revisionists" who reinterpreted the Russian Revolution and the reasons for the Bolshevik victory in October 1917. His pioneering work, along with the social historical investigations that followed his initial forays, not only changed the predominant view of October as a coup d'état by a group of power-hungry conspirators to a genuinely popular movement (at least in key cities like Petrograd) but also established a new orthodoxy about 1917 that has remained the hegemonic scholarly consensus ever since.

Collections of this sort are often faulted for not being coherent or having a single unifying theme. But the very eclecticism of the essays in this volume is testimony to the variety of scholarly projects that emerged from the Indiana shop of Rabinowitch and his colleagues. Robert Weinberg, a historian of Russian and Soviet Jews, reveals the myriad forms of late imperial Russian anti-Semitism, combining both medieval and modern features, that he found in letters connected with the infamous Beilis trial of 1913. Barbara Allen looks at the relationship of Aleksandr Shliapnikov and Vladimir Lenin to show how the younger Bolshevik differed from the leader in greater tolerance of heterodoxy within the Bolshevik ranks. Lenin's divisive treatment of potential allies had a baleful effect on party activists, and Allen goes so far as to claim that "Lenin's tendency to see organized attempts to thwart him would echo in Stalin's terror. . . ." (p. 52). This seems somewhat of a stretch, especially since one of those Bolsheviks who in those prerevolutionary years also warned against Lenin's harshness toward dissenting Bolsheviks was none other than Stalin himself.

One of the editors, Michael Melancon, gives a careful reconstruction of the debates that led to the formulation of Lenin's post-October decree on land and the early 1918 land law. Melancon shows how Lenin basically adopted, though with some reluctance, the views of mobilized peasants and highlights the central role of the Left Socialist Revolutionaries in shaping the law in the direction of socialization and equal distribution of land among peasants. His essay is followed by T. Clayton Black's revealing account of how the Putilov plant in Petrograd and its workers were mythologized into a symbolic bastion of Bolshevism even though their actual experiences shifted from radical support of the party in 1917 into critical opposition after October. Sally Boni-

ece's vivid portrait of the Left Socialist Revolutionary Maria Spiridonova, based on her autobiographical letter from prison before her trial and execution, leaves this reader with admiration for this indomitable woman's resistance to tyranny and her commitment to her own sense of truth.

Moving into the war years, Richard Bidlack demonstrates how the Soviet leadership in Leningrad contended with Stalin's harsh orders from Moscow but time after time succumbed to his threatening authority. A stunning quotation from one of the dictator's messages commanded his satraps not to be sentimental and to fire on human shields if the Germans used hostages. Donald Raleigh, the second editor of this collection, interviewed Soviet baby boomers who had graduated in 1967 from a Moscow and a Saratov high school to discover their lived experience during *Perestroika*. Their opinions range from "God willed it" to contradictory accounts favoring or condemning the reform-turned-revolution initiated by Mikhail Gorbachev. Graffiti aficionado John Bushnell carries his earlier investigations into Brezhnev era wall writing into the post-Soviet period and finds that graffiti lost much of its punch with the fall of the USSR, and the old forms died out by the end of the 1990s.

In the dislocations of post-Soviet Russia nostalgia for what has been lost has found consumers on the internet, where cinephiles surf to find representations of Soviet everyday life. Sudha Rajagopalan reveals how old films and the internet are the means to recover memories of another time that now appears more peaceful, makes more sense, and is remembered as infused by patriotism and a feeling for community. Finally, Suzanne Ament's essay on revolutionary song from 1917 to 2007 reviews the many shifts in Soviet popular songs, from the triumphal marches of workers, through Stalinist mass songs, to the bards of the Thaw (Galich, Okudzhava, and Vysotsky), on to the rock and roll revolutionaries of the last Soviet years.

While no essay in this book offers major shifts in interpretations of Soviet history, many of them offer important adjustments to existing paradigms and pointed criticisms of the official historiographies of the Soviet period. Like their mentor, Alex Rabinowitch, so the authors here built careful cases, some from observation and interviews, others from digging in archives, to offer the interested reader valuable investigations of the many faceted phases of the Soviet past.

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