

liberalization. The positing of a “trustworthy relationship between scientists and the state” (118) challenges longstanding views of a reformist or “liberal” intelligentsia, which should spark new thinking about the place of educated elites in the late Soviet Union. In a wider sense, the book presents a novel account of the informal yet decisive “rules of the game” (151) through which the conservative Soviet state of the Brezhnev years maintained the loyalty of an elite social group. In the process, the book sheds light on the roles of localism, social privilege, and personal relationships that are too often passed over in discussions of conformity and dissent in the Soviet context.

The Private World of Soviet Scientists is an important contribution to historical scholarship on the post-Stalin period as well as on Soviet science, and it deserves a wide audience.

BENJAMIN TROMLY
University of Puget Sound

American Girls in Red Russia. By Julia Mickenberg. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017. viii, 427 pp. Notes. Acknowledgements. Index. Illustrations. Photographs. \$35.00, hardbound.
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“Go East, Young Woman!” could have been the mantra of the women and some men discussed in Julia Mickenberg’s fascinating new book. It is hard now to conjure up a time when the Soviet Union was a promised land to which US idealists flocked. Mickenberg documents the diversity of those who made the pilgrimage and the reasons that impelled them to go, ranging from belief in the Bolshevik revolution, escape from US racism and sexism, cultural opportunities, or simple curiosity.

The title of the book is a misnomer, as Mickenberg describes in detail the adventures not of girls, but of many fascinating grown women who traveled to Russia and the Soviet Union. Her book is comprehensive, covering well-known journalists and creative artists, such as Isadora Duncan, Lillian Hellman, Anna Louise Strong, Louise Bryant, Jessica Smith, Dorothy West, and Margaret Bourke-White, as well as lesser-known but important sojourners. Their experiences ranged from idyllic idealism to various levels of disillusionment, to sexual harassment and rape.

Although she mentions some pre-revolutionary female travelers to Russia, and Russians who came to the US, most notably Catherine Breshkovsky, the bulk of Mickenberg’s account centers on US travelers to the “Red Russia” of the twenties and thirties and the wartime forties.

Dancers were among those drawn to the socialist paradise, such as twenty-three-year-old Pauline Koner. First exploring her Jewish heritage in Palestine, Koner came to Russia as a place where, in theory, national identity was not stigmatized. One of the young dancer’s “gravity-defying leaps on the Leningrad beach” (241) graces the cover of the book. Koner followed in the footsteps of Isadora Duncan and other modern dancers who sought to experience the new, revolutionary society, and bring their techniques and philosophy to young Soviet women. In the process, like Duncan, she became romantically involved with a major cultural figure. Duncan married the poet Sergei Esenin; Koner had an affair with the married filmmaker Vsevolod Pudovkin. Mickenberg observes the transformational and problematic aspects of both dancers’ encounters with the ideals and reality of Soviet life: “Duncan and Koner cited their time in Russia and the Soviet Union as crucial to their work and their social conscience. But neither woman publicly acknowledged the personal or ethical concessions that were necessary to finding love and dancing revolution in Soviet Russia” (241).

One of the important chapters in the saga documented by Mickenberg is the pull of the Soviet experiment to African-Americans. Several African-American women had settled in Russia before 1917, but after the Bolsheviks seized power and made critiques of racism, sexism, and colonialism central to their message, the appeal of the revolutionary land grew, especially among intellectuals. In a chapter entitled “Black and White—and Yellow—in Red: Performing Race in Russia” (243), Mickenberg documents and analyzes the voyage of twenty-two African-Americans, including eight women, to the Soviet Union in the summer of 1932. Among the travelers were the Harlem Renaissance writers Dorothy West and Langston Hughes. The group’s destination was Moscow, where they were to take part in an English language film entitled *Black and White*, touted as “the first ‘authentic picture of Negro life in America’” (243). Treated like royalty in Russia, the group’s filmmaking efforts came to naught despite events in the US, especially the Scottsboro Boys trial in Alabama on trumped-up rape charges. The Comintern pulled the plug on the film, but Mickenberg uses the film trip for a larger discussion of complicated Soviet race attitudes and propaganda, not only in relation to African-Americans but Asians, such as the dancer Sylvia Chen. She also includes a brief discussion of Soviet policies in Central Asia, to which some of the group traveled after their aborted film project. Extolling their solidarity with the Central Asians, Louise Thompson exclaimed: “The people looked like many of us. They were brown; a number of them were very dark brown. The only thing they didn’t have that we had was curly hair” (274). Meeting unveiled women now working outside the home, the group praised the liberation of their formerly-colonized sisters. But this was a fraught time in the Soviet Union. While touting the advances made for women in some areas, members of the group dismissed the “manufactured stories about ‘starvation and famine’” (265).

One of the most fascinating cases of black migration to the Soviet Union documented in the book is that of the prominent African-American communist Williana Burroughs. Fired from her New York City teaching job, in 1936 she became the voice of Radio Moscow broadcasting to the United States throughout World War Two using the name “Ooma Perry” (279). Mickenberg’s study goes through the Great Patriotic War and she is strong on discussing and analyzing the role of American women such as Margaret Bourke-White and Lillian Hellman in projecting a positive image of our wartime ally.

Mickenberg has done truly comprehensive research. Although she does not have a formal bibliography, in her acknowledgements she lists an impressive range of archives and special collections from across the US, Europe, and Russia. She has tracked down personal reminiscences and been in touch with relatives of those featured in her book, and she has read widely in Russian and US history, especially the history of the American left. Her important monograph enriches our understanding of the complicated relationship between Russia, women of the American left, and the Soviet revolutionary ideal and its reality.

ROCHELLE GOLDBERG RUTHCHILD
Harvard University

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The issue of bringing anthropology back to Jewish Studies has been an important one for several decades. It gave rise to a growing body of research that questions