

of 1917 might have turned out differently. Douglas Smith points out that Grigorii Rasputin, not a thoughtful or admirable commentator on political issues, had an “innate antipathy to bloodshed” (53) and urged the tsar to avoid war, but despite his popularity at court his advice was rejected. Sean McMeekin describes how crucial Lenin’s leadership turned out to be in 1917. Shortly before the political turbulence erupted in Petrograd, Lenin had indicated that he did not expect to live long enough to witness the proletarian revolution in Russia, but once the unrest broke out he managed to pass from Switzerland through Europe to Petrograd, and within weeks succeeded in persuading skeptical colleagues in the Bolshevik party to accept his analysis that a proletarian revolution was feasible in the immediate future. Richard Pipes argues cogently that during the Kornilov Affair, when Prime Minister Aleksandr Kerenskii needlessly clashed with commander-in-chief General Lavr Kornilov, the opposition to the Bolsheviks became so weak that the resistance to them turned out to be pitiful; as a consequence, the seizure of power by the Leninists became “all but inevitable” (122).

Orlando Figes points out that Lenin, who persuaded the Bolsheviks to launch the insurrection in October, was lucky not to have been stopped by police in Petrograd on his return there from Finland, so as to be on hand for the final discussions of party leaders on whether to attempt a seizure of power: “Kerensky’s policemen mistook Lenin for a harmless drunk and let him proceed” (141). Had he been arrested, his Bolshevik colleagues might have lacked the backbone to vote for so daring an undertaking.

The essays in this book are thoughtful and provocative. A word of caution is in order, however. Only readers familiar with Russia’s history in the early twentieth century will grasp the significance of most of the arguments in the fifteen articles.

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Living the Revolution: Urban Communes and Soviet Socialism, 1917–1932. By Andy Willimott. Oxford Studies in Modern European History. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017. xl, 203 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Illustrations. Photographs. \$90.00, hard bound.

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How state and society made everyday life socialist and transformed the meaning of socialism in doing so has been a central question of Soviet history. Recently, scholars interested in these questions have focused on the post-Stalin decades when massive growth in housing and consumption created new opportunities to revive socialism and give it concrete form, but not without unintended changes to what socialism meant. The vexing question of how to bring socialist ideas into life did not first appear in the late Soviet era when people acquired separate apartments, purchased automobiles, and went shopping for household goods. There were much deeper roots, which Andy Willimott’s engaging study of urban communes demonstrates by refocusing our attention on the first decade of the socialist experiment.

Released on the centenary of the Russian Revolution of 1917, *Living the Revolution* is a timely contribution to our understanding of how urban dwellers struggled to make living spaces and the workplace socialist. Scholars have traditionally seen the urban communes as utopian communities that embodied a pure revolutionary spirit but were crushed by Stalinism. Whereas historians have privileged the impact of avant-garde architects and their house communes (*doma-kommuny*) on housing of

the Stalin and Khrushchev eras, the lived experience of communards and their influence beyond the 1920s have been largely ignored. *Living the Revolution* reveals a more complex story of these collectives of young activists, students, and workers who were at the forefront of translating socialist ideas into practice and then willingly rode the results into the Stalin era. This book makes an original contribution to the growing body of scholarship that interprets Stalinism as the radical realization of practices and ideas that initially took root among revolutionary activists and visionaries deeply frustrated with the pace and social values of the New Economic Policy (NEP).

Focusing primarily on Petrograd (Leningrad) and Moscow, *Living the Revolution* is based on impressive research in published and archival sources, including the collections of individual communards, local municipal governments, and factories. In the first chapter, Willimott shows that communards drew their understanding of “revolutionary collectivism” (26) from a constellation of pre-revolutionary texts, institutions, and practices including Nikolai Chernyshevskii’s *What Is To Be Done?* (1863), student *kruzhki*, worker artels, and the Paris Commune. Although they distanced themselves from rural life, the peasant commune likewise informed communards’ notions of collective living. From these various sources, they cobbled together a collectivist worldview that emphasized equality and comradeship, “self-regulation and plain asceticism,” enlightening those around them, and “shared-living space and the overhaul of family customs” (48). Whereas the young Bolshevik state took collectivism to mean falling in line behind its policies, the communards saw it more widely as a collection of ideas about proper living and working relationships that, once implemented, would be the foundation of socialism.

To illustrate how they did this, Willimott devotes a chapter to each of the three urban communes: student communes in dormitories; apartment communes in already existing housing; and workplace communes at factories. A final chapter traces their influence into the First Five-Year Plan. Willimott argues that urban communes gave form and meaning to critical concepts of early Soviet ideology such as “cultural revolution” and “civic-mindedness” (*obshchestvennost’*) from which a “new way of life” (*novyi byt*) would arise (15–18). The communards became an avant-garde promoting practices and campaigns that ultimately predominated during Iosif Stalin’s industrialization drive. These included scientific management of work and home; writing letters and diaries as methods of self-improvement and raised consciousness; criticism and self-criticism; shock-work at the factory floor; generational conflict and renewed class warfare.

By the early 1930s, however, most urban communes disbanded or were absorbed by factory management, but none were violently repressed or even heavily criticized as were some members of the architectural avant-garde. Instead, as Willimott shows, the end of the urban communes had more to do with communards’ own embrace of the Five-Year Plan as a confirmation of the priorities they had long espoused. Having outgrown their communes (and their youth), the communards were ready for the next stage of building socialism.

Although Willimott mentions the architectural avant-garde in passing, more could have been said about architects’ relationship to urban communes and whether there was any mutual influence between the two. Similarly, little attention is paid to the communal apartment (*kommunalka*) and its relationship to the urban communes, despite its ubiquitous presence in Leningrad and Moscow in the 1920s and its critical role in giving socialist ideals concrete form. These criticisms notwithstanding, *Living the Revolution* stands as a model for a renewed social history of ideas. Critical of studies of ideology that focus on disembodied discourses, Willimott’s painstaking research on the lived experience of the urban communes produces a far richer and more complex story of how socialist ideas changed over time.

Living the Revolution will be of particular interest to historians of the NEP and the early Stalin era, and it will work well in both undergraduate Soviet history courses and graduate seminars. As suggested at the beginning of this review, historians of housing and consumption in the post-Stalin decades should also read this book to understand how tensions between ideology and everyday life in late socialism were shaped by the earliest attempts to live the Revolution.

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Socialist Churches: Radical Secularization and the Preservation of the Past in Petrograd and Leningrad, 1918–1988. By Catriona Kelly. DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2016. xx, 413 pp. Notes. Glossary. Bibliography. Index. Illustrations. Photographs. \$59.00, hard bound.
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Vladislav Mikosha's 1931 film of the demolition of the Church of Christ the Savior in Moscow remains perhaps the most iconic, or iconoclastic, example of the Soviet regime's destructive break with the Russian nation's cultural and religious past. Costly, messy, and needlessly injurious to the already bruised sentiments of Orthodox believers, such sensational reconfigurations of public space and memory were, however, the exception. Catriona Kelly's fascinating new book focuses on the Soviet Union's second city, where urban planners, architects, and museum personnel worked out a less explosive, though resolutely interventionist, approach to managing the religious structures that filled the former imperial capital. Drawing on archival evidence and oral interviews, Kelly shows how church buildings became sites of contestation, as a diverse cast of state and non-state actors debated the meaning of religious architecture in an officially atheist society, what value the prerevolutionary past might possess for the Soviet present, and how public space ought to look, feel, and function in the world's first socialist state.

Party visionaries agreed that the radiant new future they were building had no need (or room) for creaky symbols of superstition inherited from the old regime. Anxious to avoid public disorder yet unwilling to leave religious properties in the possession of Church authorities, the new government legally reclassified churches, cathedrals, chapels, monasteries, and so-called "house churches" as "cultic buildings," declared them part of the "national patrimony," and criminalized their looting or desecration (10). Unique structures deemed to possess exceptional artistic or historical value were placed under the supervisory control of the Museums Department of the People's Commissariat of Enlightenment. In the absence of clear procedural directives from above, and facing chronic problems of underfunding and understaffing on the ground, local planning officials and heritage experts in Petrograd, as elsewhere, lacked the resources and clout to realize their dream of transforming every worthy church into a well-ordered museum. Motivated as much by aesthetics as ideology, these specialists came, ironically, to cultivate a "quasi-religious" commitment to the cause, improvising their own solutions to the problems of preservation (15). While the difference between an exemplary specimen of church architecture that merited preservation and an unremarkable structure that could be safely shuttered or repurposed seemed eminently reasonable to connoisseurs and consultants, such distinctions of taste were maddening and insulting to Orthodox believers, for whom all church buildings were, by definition, sacred liturgical spaces possessed