

While housing was an integral part of the new post-war welfare state order across Europe, Varga-Harris shows how, in practice as well as rhetoric, Khrushchev's housing program went further, providing "the foundation of byt" (214). Building on Mark Smith's demonstration of how the housing program tuned into a notion of individual rights which had emerged from the suffering of the Great Patriotic War, Varga-Harris shows how citizens engaged in the housing program as an expected benefit of communism.

Dwelling less on the quantitative data which shows the scale of the project, Varga-Harris concentrates on individual stories of a range of house movers—from those who were ecstatic about the results, those who were disappointed with their new housing, to those who failed to get a new apartment allocated. What all of these categories shared was an understanding that a new apartment was a right they had earned as workers and a sign of the achievements of socialism. The communist context is never far away, informing the plans and methods of construction, furnishings and decoration, and the way that new apartment complexes were sites of collective living and endeavor as well as of individual fulfilment. These stories are illustrated through memoirs, petitions, letters to newspapers, backed up by references to popular culture in the form of the satirical magazine *Krokodil*, cinema, and literature.

This book neither idealizes nor ridicules Khrushchev's housing program. By examining it in a detached way through the eyes of those who were affected by the program, Varga-Harris provides a keen insight into how post-Stalinism represented a real departure from Stalinism, not just in rhetoric, but in its aims for a better society which, for all its shortcomings, had genuine impact on daily lives.

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***Russia's Far East: New Dynamics in Asia Pacific and Beyond.*** By Rensselaer Lee and Artyom Lukin. Boulder, CO: Lynner Rienner Publishers, 2015. xi, 276 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Figures. Tables. Maps. \$68.00, hard bound.  
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The late 1990s saw a number of books and edited collections published about political and economic developments in the Russian Far East. This work was part of a wider canon that emerged during the 1990s around the role of Russia's regions and Russian federalism in what was then hoped to be a transition to a western-style democracy and a market-economy. This focus on the regions reflected the fact that President Boris El'tsin had lost authority over the then eighty-nine federal subjects. While few thought that the Russia would disintegrate, there was the sense that it could become a functioning federal state with a major role for regional governance. This was particularly true of the Russian Far East, which, as is documented in this volume, had a history of greater independence and which, even under the Soviet regime, had been allowed to develop trade relationships with neighboring states. Hopes for a more regional Russia were dashed when President Vladimir Putin came to power and reasserted what he called the "power vertical." The authority of Moscow was reimposed via tight control of the budgetary process, Presidential Districts were created as a new layer of vigilance, and Governors were no longer elected, but appointed—and fired—by the Kremlin.

One consequence of Putin's recentralization, as part of a wider authoritarian stance—was a loss of academic interest in the role of the regions. It is in this context of relative neglect that this new book on the Russian Far East is particularly welcome. The book is a joint venture between an American scholar based in Washington DC

and a Russian Scholar based in Vladivostok. At times, it is not difficult to discern who has written what, but this adds an element of intrigue as you search for tensions and contradictions between the authors. The book is organized into twelve chapters and the first quarter is scene setting. The bulk of book then presents different perspectives on the region; first, the view from Moscow, then Moscow's view on China and the role of the region in the evolving relationship between Moscow and Beijing. The analysis suggests a tension between Russia's strategic concerns about increased cooperation with a large and increasingly powerful neighbor, and its need to promote trade and attract Chinese investment. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the Russian Far East, where federal government plans, statements of intent, and presidential appointments have made little material difference to the region's economic development. It is a harsh reality that—in the face of western sanctions—Russia now needs China's economic support, but Russia is but one of China's many suitors. Understandably, perhaps, the view from Washington is also paramount in the analysis; but here the authors' struggle to provide a rationale for the amount of the book that is given over to the US, let alone provide a reason for the US to re-engage with Russia in its Far East. In my view, less emphasis should have been given to the US angle and far more should have been said about the role of Russia-Japan relations in shaping the region, independent of its membership in the G7.

Even as someone who has studied this region for almost 40 years, I learned a great deal from reading this book. The Russian elements benefit from very detailed research that provides numerous new insights. I became frustrated more than once, however, by the desire to set the lens too wide and indulge in discussions of Russia-China relations or US-Russia relations. I was also frustrated by the failure to really unpack the regions of Russia's Far East. Most of the analysis was really only relevant to three southern provinces of Khabarovsk, Primor'ye and Sakhalin. Finally, because of the way that it is written, there is no clear central narrative or proposition about the factors that have shaped and will continue to shape the region. The scenarios at the end are more an afterthought. The title talks of new dynamics, I would maintain that there is as much continuity as change and that many of the dynamics are not new. However, for those with an interest in Russia's Far East and in Russia's role in the Asia Pacific and beyond, this is essential reading and I commend the authors on producing a fine volume.

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***Staying at Home: Identities, Memories and Social Networks of Kazakhstani Germans.*** By Rita Sanders. New York: Berghahn Books, 2016. xiv, 256 pp. Appendix. Bibliography. Index. Figures. Tables. Maps. \$110.00, hard bound.  
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During the Soviet period, the USSR's two-million strong population of ethnic Germans was a little-known *natsional'nost'* (nationality/ethnicity). Initially recruited to the desirable Volga Region of Russia by Catherine the Great in the 18<sup>th</sup> century for demographic and expansionist aims, later Alexander I continued the policy and German-speakers settled on the Black Sea Coast. Some fled east to escape poverty, war, or religious persecution; others were attracted by the privileged economic benefits offered. In the following century German life flourished, as the settlers maintained their language, established newspapers, schools, churches, and other elements of civil society.