Book Reviews

Joy Womack, as told to by Elizabeth Shockman. *Behind the Red Velvet Curtain: An American Ballerina in Russia*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2025. 284 pp., notes and illustrations. $27.95 hardcover.

The Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow, Russia, has long been associated with some of the greatest ballet performances in the world and is home to one of the oldest ballet companies, tracing its roots to the reign of Catherine the Great. In the post-Stalinist period, it became widely known and celebrated across Europe and in the United States, touring and bringing its brilliant productions to Western audiences. It has also, however, been a source of scandal in recent years. In 2013, its young handsome ballet director, Sergei Filin, was severely injured in a sulfuric acid attack perpetrated by one of his own dancers. Several years later, a former Bolshoi ballerina launches accusations of a "pay to play" system in the company whereby female dancers were expected to sleep with theatre administrators if they wanted the plum roles. There have also been claims of state interference in the theatre's choice and execution of performances.

Joy Womack was in Russia, training and performing with the Bolshoi company, when the above scandals occurred, so one might imagine that her book, *Behind the Red Velvet Curtain: An American Ballerina in Russia*, would peel back that curtain and shed some light on the inner workings of this esteemed and elite organization. It does, but not as much as one might imagine. The "Author's Note" defines the book as a memoir, and it is certainly more a memoir than a critical look at the Bolshoi company. Readers should not expect to learn much about the ballet company; this book offers little about the history of the Bolshoi or its complicated relationship with the Russian/Soviet government over its many years of operation. The memoir is based on interviews conducted by Elizabeth Shockman over period of ten years (2012-2014) and follows Womack's life from her youth and early passion for ballet through the Russian invasion of Ukraine and her reluctant recognition that she could no longer call Russia home.

Womack was raised in a religious family that, for a time, belonged to what most people would call a cult and this upbringing gave her a faith that helped her through some challenging times, but also left her with some significant baggage about perfection and perseverance. Still, Womack's tale is no rags-to-riches story; though she describes her large family of nine as "the actual Beverly Hills Hillbillies," she recalls that her Santa Monica neighbors were doctors, lawyers, and celebrities. Her mother had a medical degree from Harvard and her grandmother lived on the Upper East Side in New York and owned a Picasso. Her parents were competitive and pushed their children to strive for excellence. Hard work was the norm.

Joy left her family to join a preprofessional ballet school in Washington, D.C., when she was only thirteen and was accepted in the Moscow State Academy of Choreography (affiliated with the Bolshoi) two years later. Womack had significant obstacles and challenges. Her dormitory living quarters were less than ideal (unsanitary bathrooms, tight quarters, and unappetizing food) and she did not speak Russian. Womack worked hard, but she was not without

connections. By her second year in Russia, her life improved considerably as she enjoyed a level of privilege that her classmates did not. Taken in by a friend of her grandmother's, an American businesswoman in Moscow, Womack now lived in a luxurious apartment a few blocks away from the Bolshoi with her own bedroom. She took private lessons on the side and eventually married a fellow Russian dancer (against her parents' wishes) when she realized it is her only way to fulfill her dream of joining the company. When her American benefactor decided to leave Russia, she set Womack up with a new apartment.

Womack's career in Russia was also affected by internal politics, however. In her second year at the Bolshoi, a teacher tells her that she was only hired because they thought as an American, she could bring in sponsors and generate money; until then, she would never get cast in the big roles. A later meeting with Filin seemed to indicate the same expectation. Womack subsequently revealed these conversations to a journalist, claiming that she did not realize that her name would be attached. The Bolshoi did not care, and Womack was fired. But she lands on her feet, and get a position with the Kremlin Palace Ballet Theatre, and it is this relationship that helps her achieve citizenship in 2021.

For the ballet enthusiast, there are many descriptions of practice and training, classes with world-class teachers, and the painful injuries that result when bodies are pushed to their limits. There is also the all-too-familiar story of a ballerina who resorts to food deprivation and purging to stay thin. Womack suffers from both anorexia and bulimia for most of the period covered. She continues to dance through broken bones and extreme pain, and her determination to shine and impress her teachers is admirable, if often self-destructive. Womack also highlights the lack of support for the arts in the United States compared to other countries. During a brief stint in Boston, she struggled to survive, with no experience in obtaining housing and, oddly, no help from her family. Her dormitory in Moscow may have been filthy, but at least she had a roof over her head and food to eat. Womack questions why authoritarian countries are better at supporting the arts without, however, acknowledging that support usually comes with strings attached. (p. 245)

The book has its shortcomings, however. The references to ballet poses and movements (Battements frappes! Ronds de jambe en l'air!) are distracting to those uninitiated in the vocabulary of this art, and a glossary of ballet terms would have been useful if this book was intended to be read by a broad audience. Shockman, who we must assume ultimately wrote the book, has an appalling tendency to use similes in her prose, many of which are awkward or make little to no sense: "The city center at night was lit up like a Faberge egg"; everything she had learned was "strung together likes beads in an intricate necklace"; ballet dancers greet Womack's teacher "like Olympians paying homage to the potentate who had led them to their current mountaintop of fame and talent." An instructor's t-shirts hang off her shoulders "like windsocks" and watching some of the best dancers was "less like seeing Louis XIV prance to a minuet and more like observing a well-drilled squad of elite marines jumping in midair from one helicopter to another." For a journalist who has written for Reuters, the BBC, and *The Moscow Times*, one expects better.

Finally, one wishes that Womack had spent more time describing the politics and personal relations of the Bolshoi. Though Womack and Shockman did not intend to narrate/write a research-based book (a la Christina Ezrahi's *Swans of the*

Kremlin), one feels certain that they could have offered more insights. Womack was on the inside, yet she reveals little about that rarified world, focusing mostly on the rigors of training and her personal struggles, including those with her parents. She spends a whole section of the book discussing her relationship with her boyfriend/husband, a story that was neither particularly unique nor interesting. In many ways, *Behind the Red Velvet Curtain* feels incredibly self-indulgent; but perhaps that is what memoirs are, after all. At least there is only one mention of "the Russian Soul."

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Meredith L. Roman, *The Black Panthers and the Soviets: A Comparative History of Human Rights Movements*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2025. ix, 218 pp. Hardcover.

In February 1966, the Moscow trial of writers Andrei Sinyavsky and Yuli Daniel for "anti-Soviet agitation" galvanized a human rights movement among intellectuals in the Soviet Union. Across the world, police brutality spurred Huey Newton and Bobby Seale to found the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense in Oakland, California in October 1966. The next year, in July 1967, Yuri Andropov established the Fifth Directorate of the KGB to neutralize individuals engaged in "ideological sabotage (*diversiia*)" (3). Around a month later, FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover launched a new operation under Division Five's domestic counterintelligence program (Cointelpro) to neutralize Black nationalist groups. Both Soviet human rights activists and Black Panthers assigned great importance to disseminating knowledge about laws to empower themselves and hold government authorities accountable. While US journalists lionized Soviets they called "dissidents," Soviet journalists valorized the Black Panthers.

These are among the striking parallels and coincidences Meredith Roman reveals in her important and stimulating book, *The Black Panthers and the Soviets*. A professor of History at SUNY Brockport, Roman earlier wrote *Opposing Jim Crow: African Americans and the Soviet Indictment of U.S. Racism, 1928-1937* (2012). Her new book builds on articles published in *Cold War History* in 2018 and in the *Journal of Contemporary History* in 2024.

The main purpose and value of the comparative perspective Roman develops is to challenge a self-righteous American exceptionalism that has often been affirmed by discourse about human rights violations in the Soviet Union. In 1977, for example, a US journalist agreed with Soviet dissident and physicist Valentin Turchin that dissidents were not jailed in the United States and that the absence of state violence against dissenters was a major difference between the United States and the USSR, thereby ignoring the jailing and killing of African American activists, particularly members of the Black Panther Party (BPP). As Roman explains, "Cold War politics reified white supremacist notions of human rights and political repression that elided the arrest and 'jailing' of African American dissidents" (1).

One of the strengths of Roman's work is that she fully recognizes the significant differences between the Black Panthers and Soviet human rights activists. For example, she acknowledges that the BPP "operated in a vastly wider field of permissible discourse and action" (2). At the same time, however, the vilification of the Black Panthers by the freer press in the United States was more successful than the denunciations of rights defenders in the state-controlled Soviet press. As Roman shows, US journalists, often influenced by the FBI, depicted the Panthers as crazy traitors and blamed lawless, uncontrollable Black bodies for the violence inflicted on them. Unfortunately, some Soviet activists agreed with the dominant US narrative that Black activists "were deserving of repression because they engaged in lawless, criminal behavior" (127).

Although Roman shows impressive command of vast scholarship on movements and governments in both countries, there are some omissions or gaps. For example, while she argues that "the role of Vietnam veterans in the BPP has been understated" (10), her bibliography does not include books on African Americans and the Vietnam War by James E. Westheider or the broader study of the relations between Black freedom struggles and the US military by Kimberley L. Phillips. In another instance, Roman notes and appears to endorse the Panthers' "condemnation of Soviet leaders as imperialist oppressors" (129), yet studies of Soviet policies toward imperialism in Africa by scholars such as Sergey Mazov, Natalia Telepneva, and Piero Gleijeses are missing from her bibliography.

One can also quibble with the way Roman appears to assume that "the Cold War" was a shared reality in both countries. For example, she writes that "the Cold War consensus in the Soviet Union and United States prioritized exposing the hidden truth behind the lies that the US and Soviet enemy disseminated," while "the more imperative task of the Cold War" for Soviet rights defenders and Black Panthers was to expose the lies of their own countries (35). Yet Soviet journalists and leaders actually rightly understood that "the Cold War" was from its first deployment in 1947 an American propaganda construct that centered on false or grossly exaggerated images of a Soviet enemy. Soviet cartoonists often ridiculed "the Cold War" (*kholodnaia voina*), which they commonly depicted as a ghoulish snowman, and writers often put scare quotes around "the Cold War."

Such quibbles should not obscure the excellence of *The Black Panthers and the Soviets*. Roman's writing is vigorous, direct, and bold. Her analysis is careful and sophisticated. This concise study is an important addition to scholarship on the global human rights revolution, which, as Roman rightly notes, has neglected the contributions of African Americans. The book can be assigned in both undergraduate and graduate courses. It will be of interest to many scholars of the United States, the Soviet Union, and Russian-American relations.

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Peter Kolchin, *Emancipation: The Abolition and Aftermath of American Slavery and Russian Serfdom.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 2024. – xiv, 547 p.

In the thirty-seven years since the publication of Peter Kolchin's *Unfree Labor: American Slavery and Russian Serfdom* (1987), the book has become a classic of comparative history.[1] By the time *Emancipation* appeared, the terms of the comparison had changed. The enormous literature of recent decades has substantially revised our understanding of both systems of unfree labor; the questions historians ask of their sources and the categories they employ have changed as well. Kolchin himself notes that even the language has changed. Explaining why he does not consistently replace *slaves* with *enslaved people*, he points to a comparative problem that would then arise with Russian serfs, since English offers no natural equivalent such as *enserfed people*.[2] This small terminological problem encapsulates one of the book's larger tasks: to find a contemporary language in which two experiences of unfreedom and emancipation can be compared without turning the categories of one into a universal norm.

Whereas *Unfree Labor* primarily compared two systems of unfree labor, *Emancipation* examines their destruction and its consequences. The book's structure itself indicates how broadly Kolchin understands his subject. Part I, "Process," begins with the preparation, process, and terms of emancipation, followed by chapters titled "What Kind of Freedom?," "The Struggle Continues: Land, Labor, and Liberty," and "The Politics of Freedom." Part II, "Consequences," turns to free labor, everyday life, and finally the problem announced in the title of the last chapter, "Change and Continuity, Hope and Disillusionment." Emancipation here is not an event with a fixed date but a process through which the meaning of freedom itself was worked out.

This approach is familiar from Eric Foner's work on Reconstruction.[3] The Russian comparison, however, allows Kolchin to take a further analytical step. Personal freedom, mobility, family autonomy, land, economic independence, and political citizenship emerge as distinct dimensions of freedom that could be combined in very different ways. A Russian peasant acquired personal freedom and land without becoming a political citizen; an American freedman could acquire citizenship and the vote without receiving land. Comparison thus reveals the historical contingency of the particular combination of rights and opportunities that emerged through Reconstruction and the Great Reforms.

The Russian material also brings the radicalism of the American experience into sharper relief. The connection between emancipation and citizenship, readily comprehensible within the history of Reconstruction, no longer appears to be a natural extension of freedom once Russia is placed alongside it. The destruction of legal bondage did not in itself lead to the transformation of former bondspeople into equal members of the political community. The attempt to do precisely that in the United States therefore appears as a distinctive and extraordinarily far-

[1] Peter Kolchin, *Unfree Labor: American Slavery and Russian Serfdom* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1987).

[2] Peter Kolchin, *Emancipation: The Abolition and Aftermath of American Slavery and Russian Serfdom* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2024), esp. Preface.

[3] Eric Foner, *Nothing but Freedom: Emancipation and Its Legacy* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1983); Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863–1877* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988).

reaching historical experiment. Conversely, the American case changes our view of Russia: the allocation of land to emancipated peasants emerges as a substantial gain, although it was combined with redemption payments, communal restrictions, and the absence of political citizenship. Each case becomes a means of making the other analytically unfamiliar.

At times this defamiliarization allows Kolchin to identify differences that cannot readily be reduced to a comparison of legal institutions. One of his most illuminating observations concerns the social geography of domination. The American South was in many respects a slaveholders' world: the ruling class was locally rooted and continually present in economic and social life. The Russian village remained primarily a peasant world, in which the landowner, especially a large one, was often physically and socially distant from his serfs and governed through intermediaries.[4] This distinction also helps explain the different consequences of emancipation. In the South, emancipation disrupted an order in which former masters constituted the locally dominant social group; in Russia it transformed legal and economic relations within a rural world that had already remained demographically and culturally peasant. Here the comparative method moves beyond law to illuminate differences in the everyday structure of power.

Another major advantage of Kolchin's comparative method is that comparison provides a historical scale for assessing the radicalism of reform. Emancipation can be judged against contemporary standards of equality, or against the expectations of the freedpeople themselves and the projects of reformers. Comparison adds another perspective: what was actually accomplished in another society of the same period, and what remained beyond the limits of the politically possible.

The same institution can therefore acquire a different meaning when the comparative frame changes. The Russian peasant land settlement can be assessed in terms of inadequate allotments, redemption payments, and its failure to meet peasant expectations. The American case, however, reminds us that the alternative was not necessarily a more equitable distribution of land: most former slaves in the American South received no land at all. This does not make the Russian settlement just, but it allows us to assess its radicalism more precisely in historical context. Segregated schooling for African Americans likewise obviously falls short of later standards of equality. Yet the historically available alternative to integration could be the exclusion of Black children from public education. Comparison changes the counterfactual against which the historian measures what occurred, and thus helps distinguish the limitations of a reform from its historical insignificance.[5]

This procedure runs throughout the book. Russia and the American South remain the two principal cases, but Kolchin continually broadens the comparative field, turning to Haiti, the British colonies, Cuba, Prussia, and other experiences of the abolition of slavery or serfdom. These comparisons vary in scale and function, and they prevent the two central cases from becoming a closed binary. The broader field reveals which features of Russian or American emancipation were common in the nineteenth century and which were historically unusual. The epilogue brings this method together, but the comparative scale is constructed throughout the book.

[4]Kolchin, *Emancipation*, 158–59; Kolchin, *Unfree Labor*, xii, 52–53.

[5] Kolchin, *Emancipation*, 66–71, esp. 68–70.

The comparative perspective also points toward another question, adjacent to Kolchin's main concern. Russia and the United States were compared not only by historians: contemporaries of emancipation themselves watched developments in the other country and used such comparisons in political debate. This subject appears only episodically in the book. A particularly telling example is Thaddeus Stevens, who invoked the Russian reform in the mistaken belief that the emancipated peasants had received land from the state and used this supposed Russian precedent in the American debate over land redistribution.[6] What matters here is more than the factual misunderstanding. The very image of the Russian experience enlarged the range of imaginable solutions available to an American politician. Alongside the comparison of two historical processes, another history thus comes into view: the circulation of comparisons between the two societies and their use as political arguments. This history only touches on Kolchin's project, but it suggests another sense in which Russia and the United States belonged to a shared history of emancipation.

The concept of *choice*, to which Kolchin repeatedly returns, connects these comparative observations to the book's central concern. Freedom is measured not only by income or property, but also by an expanded range of possible action. The right to leave a former master, seek another employer, form a family without his permission, or move elsewhere could substantially alter a person's position even when material conditions remained harsh. The possibility of exiting relations of dependence altered the balance between worker and employer because the former master's power over the person was no longer unconditional.

This is especially clear in Kolchin's discussion of mobility. For freedpeople, freedom of movement became both a right of a free person and a crucial means of bargaining with employers: the ability to leave gave practical substance to free labor. Kolchin explicitly calls mobility the freedpeople's "ultimate bargaining weapon" and links geographic mobility to their pursuit of freedom itself.[7] In Russia, emancipation also greatly expanded mobility, but the commune, the passport system, and the connection between the land allotment and place of residence continued to restrict it. Comparison makes it possible to see freedom of movement both as a mark of emancipation and as a material mechanism that turned legal freedom into the capacity to shape one's own life.

This leads to one of the book's central arguments about the relationship between change and continuity. The persistence of poverty and social inequality, as well as the emergence of new mechanisms of exploitation, does not by itself tell us how much had changed. Kolchin resists both a triumphalist history of emancipation and an interpretation in which continuing oppression renders freedom fictitious. *Change* and *continuity* appear as simultaneous processes. Older forms of power disappeared while others survived or emerged anew.

Seen in this light, the question "Which emancipation was more radical?" is too general. The answer changes depending on whether the measure is political participation, access to land, economic autonomy, or some other dimension of freedom. The more useful questions are therefore: radical in what respect, for whom, and relative to which historically available alternatives?

The same perspective helps Kolchin explain *dashed expectations*, one of the major themes of the final chapters. Disillusionment was especially intense where

[6] Kolchin, *Emancipation*, 69, 411n58; Foner, *Nothing but Freedom*, 8.
[7] Kolchin, *Emancipation*, 204, 232–33.

emancipation had generated the most far-reaching expectations. Former slaves and serfs encountered the limits of promised freedom; former masters experienced the loss of accustomed power. Reformers, for their part, confronted societies that failed to develop according to their assumptions about how free people should behave. The subsequent reaction therefore cannot serve as simple evidence that the original transformation had been insignificant. The intensity of the struggle to reverse the results of emancipation itself indicates how seriously those results had affected the old order.[8]

Here lies one of the book's productive paradoxes. The broader the possibilities opened by emancipation, the more visible the gap between expectation and outcome could become. Profound change could therefore generate equally profound disappointment, while subsequent retreat did not return society to its original condition. The history of emancipation becomes at once a history of expanding freedom and of struggle over the new boundaries imposed upon it.

Against this background, one question about the book's comparative construction concerns geography. Kolchin is right to stress the absence in Russia of an equivalent to the American sectional divide: there was no territorially organized "free North" capable of turning opposition to serfdom into a conflict between regional political blocs over control of the state. Yet the absence of sectionalism did not mean the absence of profound spatial differentiation. Serfdom was distributed extremely unevenly across the empire; the North, the black-earth center, and the western borderlands differed in patterns of landholding and legal regimes, while the Baltic provinces, Poland, and Finland followed different chronologies of reform.

The deeper contrast, therefore, may lie between two ways of politically organizing spatial difference. In the United States it became sectionalized, forming the basis of party competition, conflict over the federation, and eventually secession. In the Russian Empire, heterogeneity was more often imperially administered, through legal pluralism and differentiated rule. Kolchin notes many regional distinctions, including the differences between the North and the black-earth zone and the earlier reforms in the Baltic provinces, but empire as a mechanism for organizing this diversity rarely becomes an analytical framework in its own right. This is particularly noticeable beside the consistency with which he differentiates the American South, from the Upper and Lower South to the cotton regions and sugar-producing Louisiana.

This observation extends rather than challenges the book's comparative logic. Precisely because Kolchin's comparisons so productively unsettle the apparent naturalness of national trajectories, they invite the same procedure to be applied to the spatial construction of the Russian case. *Emancipation* convincingly demonstrates why comparative history remains necessary even when each of the histories being compared already possesses an enormous historiography of its own. It changes the questions we ask of each national case.

Kolchin's comparative method historicizes the very measure of change. A reform may be deeply limited in relation to the hopes of its participants and at the same time radical in relation to the alternatives available to contemporaries; subsequent defeat may coexist with an irreversible transformation of the structure of possibilities. This is perhaps the book's central achievement: comparison turns

[8] Kolchin, *Emancipation*, 367, 372–74.

freedom from a predetermined standard of judgment into a historical problem whose content had to be worked out anew in each post-emancipation society.

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Nina Bogdan, *Before We Disappear into Oblivion: San Francisco's Russian Diaspora from Revolution to Cold War,* Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2025, xiii. 404 pp. Index. $34.95, Paper.

In this book, historian Nina Bogdan examines multiple trends within the Russian-speaking community of San Francisco from 1917 into the 1970s: "The primary focus of this book is on the internal dynamics of the inter-war San Francisco Russian community and the negotiation of their identity within a distinctive American urban environment that included a diverse Russian population" (11). Russians had lived in the city since the nineteenth century, but this volume does not focus on earlier developments. Group population numbered from 6,000 to 10,000 at different points in the interwar period—much smaller than the émigré communities in Paris and Berlin (11, 19). The author develops insightful analytical arguments through discussions of a wide variety of people and places.

This volume presents stories of many community participants, some briefly, some in detail. Readers meet multiple rectors of the Holy Trinity Orthodox Cathedral, including Father Vladimir Sakovich (151). Archbishop John (Maximovitch) arrived with a group from Shanghai in the early 1950s (266-283). Nadia Shapiro, entered in 1922 from Harbin with 500 fellow Russian young people, supported by the American Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA). She worked as a journalist in the city for many years and wrote articles reflecting on various aspects of émigré life (44-45). Victor Arnautoff served as an imperial and White Army officer but later emerged as an outspoken communist (65). Other stories emerge through discussion of dozens of social, cultural, artistic, business, publishing, and religious associations. The book includes an extensive list of organizations formed after World War II, with names of leaders (310-312).

Bogdan presents these characters as they inhabit significant places in the Russian world of San Francisco; she describes the shifting functions and imagined meanings of these spaces. Fort Ross, the 19th-century outpost of the Russian American Company, in Sonoma County, northwest of the city (37, 140-141), served as a pilgrimage destination with evolving significance. The Holy Trinity Cathedral, founded in the 19th century, was rebuilt in 1909 (37). Later the Holy Virgin Parish was organized in 1927 (153), affiliated with the bishops of Sremski-Karlovci (Serbia) and Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia (ROCOR)(187). The William Westerfeld House was the first building purchased by the émigré community for a variety of social and cultural purposes (3). The city included two distinct multi-ethnic neighborhoods with large Russian populations: Fillmore and Potrero Hill (16). Significant attention is paid to the Russian Center building on Sutter Street, the location of the Museum of Russian Culture (4).

Vivid and engaging descriptions of these people and places enable the reader to visualize key dynamics in the book. The author demonstrates clearly that there has not been one unified Russian community in the city; she explores relationships between Orthodox Christian Russians, members of non-Orthodox "Spiritual Christian" communities, and Russian-speaking Jewish residents (16-17). The chapters highlight distinct experiences of groups arriving in distinct waves: before 1917, during the interwar period, and after 1945. Readers learn more about the experiences of groups arriving from different places, such as Harbin and Shanghai. Significant attention is paid to the views of generations: grandparents, parents, and children faced shifting challenges as they encountered evolving realities. All these groups adapted to life in the United States with contrasting views on assimilation and preserving Russian cultural identity. Like other immigrants, these Russians often lived dual lives—one with family and close friends, and one with the outer American world (177). Many faced stress and trauma related to career, family, and social transitions; the author provides a long, detailed list of community members who committed suicide (110-117). Many had experienced combat in World War I and/or the Russian civil war. Russians wrestled with their own personal challenges, which were multiplied due to the views of others in the country. The author documents the wide variety of discrimination against immigrants, based on assumptions of a hierarchy of ethnic groups. Some viewed Russians as "invaders" (6). Arguments on "race" and "whiteness" shaped evaluations of Russian immigrants in the US (13). For many years San Francisco's port provided the main entry point for Asian immigrants—this reality often shaped how all newcomers to the area were viewed (12). Changing immigration laws restricted the numbers of Russians allowed to enter (22). All these realities contributed to a wide spectrum of political views held in the community, with preferences for monarchy, Republican or Democratic parties, or communism.

The book follows a chronological approach with sections on a variety of topics. The author grew up in the San Francisco Russian community; she includes interviews of several members, as well as evaluations of many primary source documents from multiple archives and newspapers, and scholarly secondary works (25). Nadia Shapiro's articles and letters illustrate a range of issues. The author carefully explores an abundance of evidence with careful analysis to describe the losses, hopes, tensions, conflicts, and paradoxes of Russians establishing new lives in a new city. This is an outstanding book which should be read by all with interests in the Russian diaspora, immigration in the United States, or intercultural connections. Instructors in undergraduate world, US, and Russian history courses should consider the adoption of this excellent book due to the clarity of the writing and the presentation of multiple issues for classroom discussions. Readers will gain deeper appreciation of multifaceted realities of immigrant lives and identities.

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