

From the Editor:

*Slavic Review* publishes letters to the editor with educational or research merit. Where the letter concerns a publication in *Slavic Review*, the author of the publication will be offered an opportunity to respond. Space limitations dictate that comment regarding a book review should be restricted to one paragraph; comment on an article should not exceed 750 to 1,000 words. The editor encourages writers to refrain from ad hominem discourse.

D.P.K.

To the Editor:

I write concerning the review of David Hoffmann's *Peasant Metropolis: Social Identities in Moscow, 1929–1941* (Winter 1995). I would not otherwise write but for the nature of one of the criticisms. Hoffmann is faulted for failing to use more extensively various *svodki* on popular mood produced by government institutions. This insistence on *svodki* as the benchmark of popular attitudes misses much of the value of Hoffmann's book and represents a commonly held attitude that this source can serve as the silver bullet to solve all our questions about Soviet history. I found one of the best features of Hoffmann's book to be his portrayal of how people actually lived and experienced the Stalinist system. He creatively resorts to many forms of documentation usually eschewed by historians of twentieth-century Russia: interviews, folk songs, factory archives, and newspapers. He did so, I suspect, not because he conducted his research "astride the old and the new Soviet history," but because he sought to reintroduce Soviet citizens' own subjective experience to a history sorely lacking precisely that feature. And, despite our much-celebrated access to these materials, *svodki* cannot do precisely this. While *svodki* contain much useful material, they nevertheless remain documents generated as part of a larger surveillance project. To rely on *svodki* for our understanding of popular attitudes is ultimately to rely on the GPU-OGPU-NKVD for our source selection. Hoffmann's attempt to supplement the regime's own view of society with other source materials is thus a welcome step forward in our field.

PETER HOLQUIST  
Cornell University

To the Editor:

The review of David Hoffmann's *Peasant Metropolis* (Winter 1995) is detailed and no doubt considered, but it might help to inform readers by providing them with a clear statement of the author's thesis. Hoffmann argues that workers adapted to new environments and negotiated with the Communist Party by a combination of old and new devices. Much as workers carried *zemliachestva*, *arteli*, and kinship networks into cities and their workplaces in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, so, under Soviet power, did they take advantage of very similar institutions, which provided order and security to a group that most writers at the time and historians ever since have described as disorderly. In this manner, Hoffmann explicitly challenges the image of urban Russia during the first Five-Year Plan as "chaotic" and "elemental," arguing instead that workers combined "labor" and "peasant" cultures with facility. In addition, workers could draw on the superficially pro-labor rhetoric of the new leadership to insist on dignified treatment and better conditions, thereby reversing the otherwise unidirectional flow of commands and deflecting the escalating demands of their employers.

YANNI KOTSONIS  
New York University

To the Editor:

I was disappointed by Andrea Graziosi's review (Winter 1995) of David L. Hoffmann, *Peasant Metropolis*. The book is an important contribution to the field because it offers an exhaustively researched, detailed, and sophisticated account of the experiences of

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