Demobilized Veterans in Late Stalinist Leningrad: Soldiers to Civilians. By Robert
Dale. New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015. xvi, 266 pp. Notes. Bibliography.
Index. Glossary. Illustrations. Tables. $112.00, hard bound.

Robert Dale's book is a valuable addition to the re-examination of Soviet demobilization
after WWII and its broader importance to Soviet society's difficult and, perhaps, unfin-
ished "transition" from war to peace. Taking veterans in Leningrad as his case study,
Dale asks how successfully they were reintegrated into civilian society and turned into
ordinary citizens. The book's six chapters provide convincing evidence that most "able-
bodied" veterans overcame significant obstacles to eventually reintegrate very success-
fully and became "ordinary" citizens in the thoroughly unordinary society of post-war
Leningrad. This balanced answer negates the extremes of Soviet propaganda, which
cast veterans into an entitled post-war generation of victors loyal to the regime who re-
built the Soviet Union, and the recent "brutalization" trend in western literature, which
argues that veterans' wartime traumas hindered their civilian reintegration. Though
balance is valuable, the crux of Dale's contribution is the new evidence he musters to
support his argument, which adds color to the mechanisms of veteran reintegration
and transition, but also interrogates the very criteria used to evaluate these processes.
In doing so, Dale's work tells us not only more about who veterans were, but the humili-
ating injustices of the society to which they returned and the workings of the Stalinist
regime which solidified them—a process began, at least in the western literature, by
Mark Edele's *Soviet Veterans of the Second World War* (2008).

By focusing on the immediate post-war period marked by enduring wartime dev-
astation, food and housing shortage, Dale tells the story of veterans before that title
gave them real entitlements and privileged status as a group, whose development
Edele traces over fifty years. A condensed analytical timeframe in a short monograph
has its advantages. Dale successfully interrogates a central claim of Soviet post-war
propaganda, long accepted by many historians, that veterans enjoyed significant up-
ward mobility in employment, to reveal that for many veterans the quality and speed
of this employment and, generally, of the mobility itself was low and debilitatingly
slow. Dale thus looks behind the impressive statistics of veteran employment used
as proof of their successful reintegration to question this criterion of "success" and,
importantly, tell a human story in a closed society beyond the numbers.

A condensed analytical timeframe also has its disadvantages. Dale's narrative
of stunted social mobility is less useful when applied to the mass influx of veterans
into the party during and after the war. Veterans who stood in lines for days for or
petitioned for years for the entitlements they were promised were naturally resent-
ful of the party-state bureaucrats who denied them. Many veterans believed these
bureaucrats sat out the war in the rear to enrichen themselves while they risked their
lives at the front. Complicating matters was that by "May 1945 more than 3 million
soldiers—one-fourth of the entire army was in the party, with more following after
the war" (162), so that that increasingly it was veterans who "found work in precisely
those administrative positions, such as district housing . . . which their former com-
rades found so disagreeable" (88). Dale notes this polarization, reminding us that the
social fabric sown by shared wartime experience among veterans mattered little in
the battle for survival in the post-war scarcity of Leningrad (56).

This polarization was only possible because of the varied options for social mo-
bility that party membership opened for millions of veterans. Dale makes an impor-
tant intervention to reveal that many who left the party after the war were veterans
disillusioned with the unrealized promises of material and social advancements of
membership (162). Even those who remained were often chided by fellow members

for their ignorance of Marxism-Leninism and their role in the broader degeneration of party standards after the war (165–66). But among these millions, many did enjoy upward mobility sufficient to eventually form the innumerable and enduring leadership groups in party-state structures bound primarily by wartime experience and veteran status. This long-term process is much more important to explaining the impact of demobilization on Soviet society and its post-war development than membership regression among veterans. Analyzing this upward mobility, which often involved climbing on the heads of other veterans and civilians to get up the ladder, may reveal exciting evidence of the social hierarchies with which Dale is concerned and, more broadly, the un-egalitarian DNA of Stalinist social mobility.

This book may spur historians into such adventures and the dark space of Soviet society's "transition" from war to peace, a term which by virtue of such works as Dale's, seems less useful to describe this space.

FILIP SLAVESKI
Deakin University

Soviet Space Mythologies: Public Images, Private Memories, and the Making of a Cultural Identity. By Slava Gerovitch. Pittsburgh: The University of Pittsburgh Press, 2015. xviii, 232 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. $27.95, paper.
doi: 10.1017/slr.2017.55

In *Soviet Space Mythologies* Slava Gerovitch examines the tensions underpinning the key myths of the Soviet space age. These dynamics have less to do with the regime's ideological demands or the political imperatives of the Cold War than with the vagaries of memory and the peculiarities of the sources that shaped and documented those memories. Focusing on the cosmonauts and engineers who were the human forces behind and representatives of a program shrouded in secrecy, the book engages the ironies of the identity crises that defined and still inform the cultural memory of the glory days of the manned spaceflight program: Were cosmonauts daring explorers, skillfully navigating the dangers of traveling in outer space, or were they merely human cogs in the automated system of their space craft? Was the space program's primary purpose military or to explore new environments? Could the regime's penchant for secrecy be reconciled with the imperative to celebrate Soviet technological prowess and the potential of the "New Soviet Man"?

Gerovitch presents a convincing case for answering the first two questions with "both" and the third with "yes." The first cohort of cosmonauts were pilots of considerable skill who expected to "fly" their craft. Working with designers who saw automation as the ultimate safeguard against human fallibility, the cosmonauts continued to lobby for more control over essential mission operations, even as engineers pursued more technological solutions and opted for redundant automation. Challenging roles as heroes and celebrities awaited returning cosmonauts. As public representatives of the "New Soviet Man," their skill and bravery seemed essential to mission success and the construction of communism. Yet at the same time official policy dictated that they deny much of the inherent risk of spaceflight, including the fact that equipment sometimes failed and very real dangers developed as a result. For their part, the chief designers labored in anonymity until Sergei Korolev's death in 1966, relentlessly pressing forward, sometimes with contradictory agendas.

Gerovitch asserts that the rocket designers resented the flux and disorganization of the Thaw, preferring the order, discipline and wise management of the Stalin era, which they regarded as a "golden age" of Soviet rocketry (28). The fragmented and constantly evolving administrative structure of the space program pitted government