

who came before. Stalin's marginalia show that he saw himself as a serious intellectual and critic whose job it was to distill theory for the masses. His notes also show him seeking theoretical supports for his political stances: "politics generally trumped all other considerations in Stalin's reading of literature" (188). "He was a Bolshevik first and an intellectual second. In theory he stood for truth and intellectual rigor. In practice his beliefs were politically driven dogma" (208). Again, it is possible to make too much of Stalin's distinctiveness. A good argument can be made that to some extent he shared this trait with his Bolshevik rivals from the intelligentsia who were also politicians, if less competent ones, who like politicians everywhere, also shifted theory to fit their ambitions.

The story that Stalin exhorted his Politburo lieutenants that they should read 300–400 pages per day in addition to their work may be apocryphal, but books were important to Stalin. They "drew Stalin to the revolution and reading remained essential to his autonomy as a political actor" (210). Stalin's Kremlin rooms and his dacha were packed with more than 20,000 books, and judging by his marginalia and slit pages, he read hundreds of them. After his death, most of the books were dispersed to various libraries. Some of them vanished. Soviet Premier Nikolai Ryzhkov claimed to have seen Stalin's heavily notated copy of Niccolo Machivelli's *The Prince*, which an archive official told this reviewer had been stolen from the archives, like so much else as the Soviet Union collapsed. Some 400 of Stalin's books that bear his hand-written marginalia ended up in Party archives available to researchers today, and it is these that Geoffrey Roberts analyzed in this excellent book.

In a chapter entitled "Bah Humbug!" Roberts shows what we can learn from Stalin's marginalia such as "Ha ha!" or "Nonsense!" plus a number of colorful expressions not printable here. Although Stalin's notations do not contain any bombshells about the dictator's inner plans or thoughts about collectivization, terror, or other major and monstrous initiatives, they do tell us much about his thinking and suggest that he could be surprisingly balanced and even-handed. He expressed what he saw as pluses and minuses about Ivan the Terrible, the US, Fedor Dostoevskii, and even Trotskii, who "was an enemy but he was a capable person . . . who also has positive qualities" (181).

Roberts' book is not only a study of Stalin's library. Written in a lively and attractive style, it provides substantial and judicious background material about Stalin's career and his known interventions in film, literature, and foreign policy that will be new to Stalin specialists and interesting for non-specialists, advanced undergraduates, and for the general public.

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Revisiting the Revolution: The Unmaking of Russia's Official History of 1917. By Larry Holmes. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2021. xix, 195 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Photographs. £22.00, paper.
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In this final contribution to the field, published shortly before his death in 2022, Larry Holmes again demonstrates the meticulous archival research skills which defined his previous work. A leading expert on Stalinism, particularly from the regional perspective, Holmes has done as much as anybody to illuminate the provincial history of the revolution in a series of important books and articles on topics including education, the experience of the Second World War and local governance.

As he explains in the preface, this book marks a coming full circle for Holmes, who began his career with a doctoral thesis in the early 1970s on ideological party history, then developed an interest in social history of the Stalin era (like many of his generation), which later evolved into a regional history focus on Viatka province (known as Kirov Oblast from 1934), which lies about 550 miles northeast of Moscow. A theme which has run through much of his work is the relationship between center and periphery and like his study of education under Stalin, this book examines how people on the ground accommodated and negotiated official Soviet decrees and regulations emanating from Moscow within their distinctive and complex local environment shaped by both personal rivalries and practical limits such as under-funding and staffing.

The book focuses on the contentious discussion in Moscow and in the province of Viatka, over maintaining professional standards of historical scholarship while expressing political partisanship in the interpretation of 1917 which was played out in Istpart. This organisation, the Commission for the Collection, Study and Publication of Materials on the October Revolution and History of the Communist Party, was created by Sovnarkom in 1920 and by 1924 there were over 50 regional branches. The book does not attempt a comprehensive history of the establishment and functioning of Istpart (on which literature already exists) but instead offers a close analysis of the heterogeneous books and articles it sponsored in an initial period of pluralism and the changes the way its historians approached descriptions of the Bolshevik Party's activity in 1917.

Drawing upon (among other things) the 298 folders of Viatka's Ispart Section held in the Regional Archive of Kirov Oblast and Moscow's Ispart archive at RGASPI (Russian State Archive of Social-Political History), Holmes outlines the tense, complex relationship between the Moscow and Viatka Ispart sections. They disagreed over how best to write a historically factual yet also politically useful history of 1917. Viatka had its own "local historical narrative" to tell which did not complement the center's preferred version of events. For example, Istpart's work to commemorate the anniversaries of the 1905 and 1917 revolutions did not go smoothly in Viatka. Central Istpart intended that commemorations would follow the Communist Party's legitimizing narrative on how the revolution of 1917 developed in St. Petersburg and Moscow. Local Istpart sections were instructed to emphasize the activity of the Bolshevik Party, but in Viatka Social Democrats were moderate and weak in terms of influence, playing only a minor role in events, so its commemoration had to include the activities of other political parties that worked closely with the Bolsheviks, such as the Mensheviks and SRs, in order to offer credible content relevant to the province. At this stage the central Istpart was not able to curtail the local Istparts presenting "a heterogeneous mix of accounts" (53). Yet Holmes identifies an important turning point at the 1927 Istpart Conference that concluded that it must "in the future coordinate all of its research work with the party's current political struggle and use our revolutionary past for the revolutionary present" (109). By the end of the 1920s, due to the utility of "revising the revolution" to serve in the intra-party struggle after Lenin's death, careerist Istpart scholars began to echo the distorted "master narrative" that presented Stalin as a significant force in the October Revolution and after 1917 as Lenin's closest comrade (thus rightful successor), while undermining his political rivals by arguing they had not supported Lenin's plans faithfully.

The book sits within the broader debate on transition from the relative freedom of the first decade of Soviet power to the demise of pluralism in the Stalin period and suggests that the use of history as political propaganda was well underway before the onset of Stalin's revolution, thus presenting a level of continuity between the 1920s and 30s. In practical terms, this slim volume is mercifully concise at under 200 pages, including extensive footnotes, bibliography, glossary, and index. Yet the work is no synthesis and the argument is well-substantiated throughout. All in all, Holmes

leaves an exemplary blueprint for successful Soviet provincial history which emphasizes the distinctive nature of the provinces and their importance to understanding the nation as a whole.

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Places of Tenderness and Heat: The Queer Milieu of Fin-de-Siècle St. Petersburg.

By Olga Petri. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2022. xxii, 254 pp. Appendix. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Photographs. Figures. Maps. \$150.00, hard bound.

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Olga Petri's *Places of Tenderness and Heat* aims to be a ground-level exploration of St. Petersburg's queer milieu from 1879 until 1914. An examination of queer life as it negotiated the spaces of urban modernity, including how cruising and informal socialization in public and semi-public spaces helps form a kind of community among men—what she calls the “queer milieu”—is certainly long overdue: it has been 25 years since the publication of Iurii Piriutko/K. K. Rotikov's idiosyncratic *Drugoi Peterburg*. Judging by the footnotes, Petri has done an immense amount of archival research, seeking queer traces in the archives of police, municipal authorities, and bathhouses. She also cites secondary sources ranging from queer theory to historians of other urban centers.

The title of the volume comes from Mikhail Kuzmin's diary, in which he joked with Konstantin Somov about making a map and writing a poem “*voyage du pays du tendre au pays chaud*” (Kuzmin, June 15 1906, 173). The line captures two of the geographical locations of the queer milieu Petri herself focuses on: the place of tenderness is the Garden itself, where men congregated, socialized, and occasionally found potential lovers, while the *pays chaud*—the country of heat—was a joking reference to the bathhouses of St. Petersburg that provided both literal heat and a place for more intimate sexual encounters. It is significant that Kuzmin features prominently, both because Petri writes that her initial fascination with the project twenty years ago was inspired by Kuzmin's poetry (xi) and because Kuzmin's diaries also play a significant role in fleshing out her argument and providing a complement to the archival accounts of police and bureaucratic surveillance of queer Petersburg.

The book is divided into 5 chapters. Ch. 1 provides an overview and focuses on the Anichkov Bridge and a secret dossier about queer life in Petersburg. Ch. 2 focuses on policing and the role of street-level constables, including their pushback to a secret mayoral order to crack down on queer activity. Ch. 3 examines street life, including linear street grids, lighting, transportation, public urinals, and shopping malls. Ch. 4 focuses on the many bathhouses of the city and the failure of reforms by city authorities to reduce queer sex and prostitution. Finally, Ch. 5 focuses on the Tavricheskii Garden, where queer men gathered to socialize and make new acquaintances.

In the final chapter, Petri remarks that “it would be unwise to generalize from Mikhail Kuzmin's practice and experience of cruising in the Tavricheskii Garden” (159), but that is exactly what she does, using it as an “in-depth interview.” Petri's major claim here (asserted multiple times) is that cruising the Tavricheskii was starkly different from cruising in Toronto, London, or New York, because it was light-hearted and social, rather than a single-minded furtive pursuit of sex (162, 171, 173). Kuzmin's queer milieu shared much more than queer desire, including “a jargon, manners of dress, . . . even a sense of humor [sic]” (172). George Chauncey's *Gay New York*, to take just one of the western counter-examples Petri cites, includes extensive discussion of gay New Yorkers' jargon and dress as they changed over time, and his chapter on “The