All Shook Up: The Shifting Soviet Response to Catastrophes, 1917–1991. By Nigel Raab. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2017. xiv, 290 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Photographs. Figures. $39.95, hard bound.
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Societies, like people, often reveal their character in times of extreme stress and crisis. Large-scale natural and man-made disasters are thus times when the social, political, and cultural fault lines of a society manifest themselves most clearly. This well-researched study uses large-scale disasters in the Soviet Union to examine Soviet society, politics, and culture from 1917–91. As seen through the prism of disaster, the author concludes that disasters were times of extreme improvisation in both governmental and social responses. Contrary to ideas about Soviet planning, Soviet bureaucrats had no clear plan for dealing with disasters.

An initial chapter provides a conceptual framework for understanding disasters, briefly citing the broader literature on the sociology of risk and on the political, cultural, and social meanings of disasters. In it Raab lays out critical themes, such as the way disasters change conceptions of time (slowing it down and often freezing it in the moment that the explosion or temblor hits), which directly challenged the famous Bolshevik obsession with accelerating the movement of time into a progressive future. Touching on the question of whether or not there was a "civil society" in the Soviet Union, the book discusses volunteer labor and how it fit into conceptions of Soviet society as a place that limited opportunities for non-state directed and sanctioned activities. The chapter on conceptualizing disasters also discusses the different words in Russian for what the English language calls a "disaster" (*avariia*, *stikhiinoe bedstvie*, *katastrofa*). Depending on the Russian word, the disaster might be something that was primarily a natural occurrence (*stikhiinoe bedstvie*), or something primarily manmade (*avariia*), such as Chernobyl, which implied a human agent (and thus a culpable and punishable party). It would have been interesting to see this discussion extended more consistently throughout the case studies in the rest of the book, and also applied to the English language. For example, the author uses the term "catastrophe" in the book title but more frequently the word "disaster" in the body of the book.

The rest of the book presents case studies that include the 1927 Crimean Peninsula earthquake, the 1948 earthquake in Ashgabat, the Tashkent earthquake in 1966, the Chernobyl explosion in 1986, the Armenian earthquake in 1988, and a chapter that discusses the treatment of disasters in popular culture and media. The case studies cover a broad range of Soviet time periods and also touch on numerous points outside of the metropoles of Moscow and St. Petersburg. Not surprisingly, the state response to the 1927 earthquake was far less organized and permitted far more volunteer efforts than the earthquake of 1948, which occurred following two decades of consolidation of the Stalinist state and its hostility to all forms of non-state activity. Interestingly, the response to Tashkent in 1966, which involved a combination of relatively well-organized and decisive state responses but also enthusiastic volunteer efforts, challenges the now outdated notion that the Brezhnev era was one of stagnation, when in fact the earthquake response illustrates a high-level of dynamism, both in the state and public responses to the emergency. By contrast, the response to Chernobyl and the 1988 Armenia earthquake was chaotic, feckless, and thoroughly mendacious.

A strength of this book is that the author goes beyond the typical and by now obvious point: that disasters challenged the Soviet faith in dominating and controlling nature. According to this argument, disasters did more than make life miserable for victims; they also undermined the ideological underpinnings of the political system. But Raab also notes that disasters introduced an element of improvisation and

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public participation into public life. In the process, they challenged the idea that the Soviet Union was averse to all forms of public participation that it could not strictly control or plan.

One of the unanswered questions in this study is the extent to which the improvised public responses to these disasters actually shaped and changed the Soviet system after the disasters had occurred. As the author notes, the improvised response had "its limits" (7) but just what these limits were is not always clear. Moreover, at least as presented in each of the case studies, there seemed to be little learning from one disaster to another in a way that would take lessons learned and apply it to the next case. The conclusion suggests that Soviet volunteering in the wake of the disasters rarely "built a lasting sense of community" (213). Ultimately, Soviet bureaucracies seemed incapable of communicating their experiences to other agencies and their successors. This point underscores the communication challenge in a system that limited rather than encouraged information exchange. "Somehow the authoritarian state was unwilling to admit that it could learn from previous mistakes . . ." (120). For this reviewer, at least, the system's inability to learn from past experiences and pass that knowledge on is one of the book's most interesting findings.

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Russia and Its Northeast Asian Neighbors: China, Japan, and Korea, 1858–1945. Ed. Kimitaka Matsuzato. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2017. xxi, 200 pp. Notes. Index. Tables. Maps. $85.00, hard cover.
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In recent years the Far East, with its eventful history at the crossroads between empires, has attracted the attention of researchers from around the globe as a venue to study processes of exchange, adaptation, and reciprocal influences, but also as differentiation beyond mere geographical borders. The book under review strives to contribute to this research in a number of ways. First, it focuses on interrelationships between Russia and its Asian neighbors. In particular it strives "to place Russia and the Soviet Union in a legitimate place in Northeast Asian History" and thus to fill a "historiographical blank" (vii). Its contributors are interested particularly in transnational, as opposed to international, relations. Second, it aims to make Japanese research on this world region more visible and accessible to western academics. Therefore, the majority of the contributors are Japanese. It is the explicit aim of the editors to overcome academic fragmentation between east and west, as well as between different branches of area studies.

The contributions stretch from the second half of the nineteenth century to the first half of the twentieth, when the Japanese Empire collapsed after the Second World War. Some articles look at state actors and institutions (see, for example, Shinichi Fumoto, Iaroslav Shulatov), as well as "common" people on the ground (see, for example, Catherine Ladds, Andreas Renner, Michiko Ikuta). The book touches upon a diverse range of topics, like treaties, the media, the economy, borders and border control, and migration.

The book can be divided into roughly four parts. The first addresses Japanese and Chinese reactions to Russia's expansion into the Far East. The first article by Shinichi Fumoto studies the importance of Russia in Japan's Korean policy in the second half of the nineteenth century. In his article, Susumu Tsukase also deals with the impact of Russia's strategy of expansion in the region. He demonstrates how

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