

Lands” campaign; a biological research station nine hundred miles from Moscow, which became a haven for scientists studying genetics and evolution in defiance of Lysenkoism; a cruise ship taking select Soviet citizens to visit western Europe; and museum galleries in Moscow and Leningrad where visitors made sense of their first sight of Pablo Picasso’s art.

Smith’s work demonstrates the value of narrative history as a genre; focusing in on one year enables her to elucidate the complex interactions that comprise historical change. She teases out the ways in which party leaders and citizens responded to one another’s words and actions and traces the interplay between developments within the Soviet Union and abroad (particularly Poland and Hungary). Just as valuably, Smith’s biographical portraits reveal how historical actors grappled with ethical and emotional dilemmas, providing a sense of how it feels to live through turbulent times.

This wonderful book will fascinate anybody concerned with postwar Soviet society, the difficulties of democratization, or how individuals experience history.

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***The Olympic Games, the Soviet Sports Bureaucracy, and the Cold War: Red Sport, Red Tape.*** By Jenifer Parks. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2017. xxvi, 205 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Photographs. \$95.00, hard bound.  
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A welcome addition to the recent scholarship on the late Soviet period, Jenifer Parks’ book provides a thoroughly-researched account of the Soviet Sports Bureaucracy and the Olympic Games. Parks begins the story in 1952, when the Soviet Union entered the Olympic Movement, and takes it up to the 1980 Moscow Games. Parks uses the organization of the 1980 Olympiad as a means to examine some of the paradoxes of late socialism. The international nature of the Olympic Movement—as this book amply demonstrates—offers fresh insights into Cold War relations.

The Soviet attempt to democratize the Olympics is a central theme in the early part of the book, apparent in the first chapter’s discussion of *massovost’* (mass participation in sports) and *masterstvo* (sporting mastery). These key elements caused varying degrees of tension in Soviet sports and physical culture. When dealing with the Olympics, *massovost’* was usually favored, with Soviet sporting officials focusing on broader inclusion for the people’s democracies. In this way, as Parks shows, Soviet Olympic interests could be aligned to the Olympic rhetoric of peace. All was not rosy, however, and as one might expect, discussion of performance-enhancing drugs appears early in the narrative. Sports doping was an international problem by the 1952 Games, and Soviet scientists were already involved in developing methods to enhance performance.

Parks provides thorough examination of the sports bureaucracy, reimagined after Nikita Khrushchev’s decentralization initiatives in 1959. The emphasis on *massovost’* increased at this point, and was accompanied by an urge for more acceptance of personal responsibility on the part of bureaucrats, including those in the sports bureaucracy. A good balance is struck between assessing domestic changes within the Soviet sports bureaucracy, and how these affected relations with the International Olympic Committee (IOC). Importantly, discussions with international delegations highlighted the need for competence in foreign languages, sporting knowledge, and diplomatic skills. Parks links this nicely to broader themes of the Khrushchev period, including moral education and contact with foreigners. Gender, another key aspect of

Soviet attempts to democratize the Olympics, is also discussed in chapter two, where Parks shows how Soviet sports leaders took the IOC to task for its “discriminatory attitude” (51) against women.

The importance of winning the Olympic Games for Moscow was high on the agenda at an early stage, and actively pursued for the 1976 Games. The bureaucratic wrangling behind this first failed bid is covered well in Chapter 3, as is the successful 1980 bid. Of particular interest is the monumental effort invested in securing the 1980 Games, which included expected assurances of the necessary infrastructure but also a lot of behind-the-scenes diplomatic efforts between the Soviet Sports Committee, the International Olympic Committee (IOC), and the international federation representatives. This sets the scene for two engaging chapters that deal with the Moscow Olympiad.

The Moscow Olympic Organizing Committee (Orgcom) was concerned with the huge challenges ahead of it, and as Parks lists these, its concern seemed more than justified. Yet, as this chapter convincingly shows, hosting the Games also represented a huge opportunity, and this was not just related to international status or prestige. The immense organizational effort necessitated a new approach that dispensed with much of the bureaucracy that could slow down decision-making within the Soviet system.

Parks ably analyzes how the Orgcom tackled the myriad problems that confronted it. She acknowledges, however, that the hallmarks of the Brezhnev period, including increased spending on the military, drew funding away from sports and other sectors. This undermined the Soviet commitment to peace, which was dealt a severe blow after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, a move that showed how much had changed in international relations since the Soviet Union initially won the Moscow Olympic bid. As Parks argues, cultural diplomacy could only go so far, and the effort to stage the Moscow Olympics illustrated the best and worst of late socialism.

Archival research in Moscow, the United States, and Switzerland underpins this rich assessment of Soviet Olympic history. While neither the athletes nor the public reception of the Olympic Games are widely analyzed, this focused study of the middle layer of the Soviet system will find keen readers amongst those interested in Olympic history, international relations, and the late socialist period.

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***Alexander Serov and the Birth of the Russian Modern.*** By Paul du Quenoy. Bethesda, MD: Academica Press, 2016. xi, 380 pp. Bibliography. \$74.95, hard bound. doi: 10.1017/slr.2018.62

A research topic may come from unexpected places and sources, as happened with Paul du Quenoy. His encounter with the grandson of Valentin Serov, a legendary Russian realist painter whose father Aleksandr Serov was a critic and composer, resulted in this 380-page biography of Aleksandr Serov. Divided into five chapters, with an introduction and bibliography, the volume traces Serov’s life in the context of the mid-nineteenth century Russian music scene between Mikhail Glinka and Aleksandr Dragomyzhskii on the one hand, and the Mighty Five on the other, and between Slavophilism and Westernization. Quenoy draws on a wide range of sources and discourses, such as Russian love-disdain towards Italian opera, the surge of Wagnerism that swept over Russia in later decades, the involvement of major literary figures in fostering Russian opera, and in the imperial politics dominating every facet of culture including musical theater.