

trying through sheer force of imagination to make a transition to a new world. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, Kenya's most eminent novelist of that generation, has contributed a touching foreword to the book in which he tells of meeting La Guma in Sweden when they were hopeful young exiles, taking on the world. La Guma's wife Blanche has also contributed a short foreword evoking that heady time.

In the 1960s and particularly in 1975, La Guma set out to find out how much of that new world was already a-brewing in the USSR. In 1975 he travelled through Soviet Central Asia, particularly interested to find out how ethnic minorities were faring under socialism. As a colored South African (the term given to and used by the country's "mixed-race" population), La Guma was acutely aware that one of the central tasks of a new South Africa, should it ever come, would be to decide the fate of the categories of racial and ethnic divides. Trekking "in the footsteps of Alexander" (83) through Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kirghizstan, and Siberia, La Guma was most interested in the relationships between these far-flung peripheries and Moscow. Based on numerous conversations, meals, tours, and encounters, he concluded that the Soviet policy of decentralization had much to offer to those in search of models that one day could be used to replace apartheid in South Africa.

Hope and optimism permeate the pages of *A Soviet Journey*. Today, we "know" the fate of the Soviet experiment. But La Guma saw man everywhere successfully overcoming nature and conquering the challenges of industrial and agricultural production. He saw people of different cultures learning to live together. He witnessed a fierce pride in the accomplishments of Soviet culture and society. As a lifelong communist he might well have been looking through rose-colored glasses; but in the USSR he did not see replicas of South Africa's tarpaper shacks, hordes of hungry children, or the indiscriminate use of police dogs and bullets. Instead he met friendly, proud people who insisted on showing him their achievements and on feeding him favored delicacies, which to his increasing dismay, usually turned out to be boiled sheep's head. But there was also very good ice cream on offer! One feels La Guma's delight as he wandered into street bookstalls and found worn copies of his own novels translated into local languages.

For students of the Soviet Union and transnational communism in the Cold War era, La Guma's lively tale provides a valuable perspective on less-travelled Soviet byways, and the ways that officials and ordinary people alike presented themselves and their communities to an honored and enthusiastic African comrade.

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Magaziny "Berezka": Paradoksy potrebleniia v pozdnem SSSR. By Anna Ivanova.

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Illustrations. Plates. Photographs. RUB 379, hard bound.

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In the fall of 1979, as a young and ambitious disc jockey in charge of the student disco club at Dnipropetrovsk University's dorm, I had a very bad incident before the official opening of my dance party. I realized that our Soviet audio equipment was broken a few days before the very important Komsomol ideological commission's visit to check the "ideological reliability and technological efficiency" of our discotheque. My friend, our electric engineer, who had a special business assignment in Moscow, went immediately to a *Beriozka* store there, and using his connections and extra money, he bought the Japanese audio equipment in this shop, and the next day

brought it to our club. We thus replaced our broken Soviet technology with a “capitalist machine” from a Moscow *Beriozka*, and prepared a wonderful dance party, which was evaluated by Komsomol apparatchiks as an “ideological and technological success” and awarded with a special prize. I still remember how this state-run retail store, which sold foreign goods that were generally unavailable in regular Soviet shops, not only saved my reputation, but also contributed to the promotion of my Komsomol career.

That is why I was pleasantly surprised to discover the meticulously researched and well-written study by Anna Ivanova devoted to a history of the so-called “dollar shop” *Beriozka* (little birch-tree), which became the most important feature of the entire system of everyday (including cultural) consumption during late socialism in the USSR. This chain of *Beriozka* shops was created in 1964 to allow Soviet citizens who lived and worked abroad to use foreign currency or its equivalents (certificates and checks of Soviet financial institutions such as *Vneshneposyltorg*) inside the Soviet Union. Eventually, these shops provided foreign manufactured goods not only for the fortunate Soviet visitors to foreign countries, but also for those Soviet citizens (like my engineer friend) who could buy *Vneshneposyltorg* checks on black market.

Unfortunately, despite the recent growth of new literature about the history of cultural consumption in the Soviet Union, a history of the *Beriozka* phenomenon was still missing as a serious topic of historical research. Ivanova’s book, which is based on her Ph.D. dissertation of 2012, will change the entire historiographic perception of the role of *Beriozkas* during late socialism. Using various archival documents, personal interviews, and contemporary periodicals, Ivanova in her history of *Beriozkas* tries to analyze the “problematic relations between economics and morality in Soviet society, through various interconnected ideological problems of relations to the West, consumption and social stratification” (11). All these problems became obvious in the functioning of *Beriozka* shops, initially opened by the Soviet state for “the extraction of extra currency profits” (15). Ivanova explores the evolution of *Beriozka* shops through three chronological periods: the transition from the Khrushchev Thaw to the Brezhnev era, Brezhnev’s “stagnation,” and Gorbachev’s “perestroika.”

In Chapter 1, Ivanova studies the reasons for the opening of *Beriozka* shops in 1964; how various Soviet “trade checks” and certificates were introduced as substitutes for hard currency; what kind of Soviet laws and financial documents during the 1960s–1980s regulated these shops; and the reasons for closing these stores at the end of the 1980s. Chapter 2 is devoted to analyzing the major consumers of these shops: the Soviet diplomats, journalists, and specialists who worked in the countries of Asia and Africa; actors and sportsmen who travelled abroad; and those Soviet citizens who had been receiving hard currency transfers from friends and relatives abroad. Chapter 3 is about the range of these *Beriozka* stores: how these shops differed from the traditional Soviet trade system, who selected goods for these stores and how, and how important for the Soviet hierarchy of consumption were the various manufactured goods sold there, including cars, stereo audio systems, and perfumes. In Chapter 4, Ivanova describes various illegal practices of trade emerging around the *Beriozka* shops, and their connections to legal Soviet markets and the “black market.” In Chapter 5, the best one in this book, she explores the role of hard currency trade in the everyday life of Soviet citizens, analyzing moral evaluations of this trade and the public perception of *Beriozka* shops in the mass media, especially during perestroika.

Ivanova uses the story of *Beriozka* shops to illustrate “the gradual dissolution” of the Soviet economic system, which was replaced by a new market economy and system of values during the 1980s (229–30). Ivanova’s book reminds us again that all so-called post-Soviet market practices and entrepreneurship were rooted in the Brezhnev

era of the late 1960s and 1970s, and the chain of *Beriozka* shops became instrumental in developing these new business practices for future post-Soviet capitalism.

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The Art of the Bribe: Corruption Under Stalin, 1943–1953. By James Heinzen. The Yale-Hoover Series on Authoritarian Regimes. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016. ix, 406 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Illustrations. Photographs. \$65.00, hard bound.

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What was the bribe in the post-WWII Soviet Union, and what can the practice of bribery tell us about society and power during the last decade of Iosif Stalin's rule? To answer these questions, James Heinzen exhaustively worked through the enormous Soviet archival collections of the Procuracy General's office, the Ministry of Justice, the Supreme Court, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the OBKhSS, and the Communist Party. What emerges from this fascinating scholarly journey is a social and cultural history of Soviet bribery. Both the subject under investigation (bribery) and the historical period (late Stalinism) represent underexplored areas in the historiography.

Heinzen examines bribery from the point of view of both guilty participants and prosecutors. His major focus is on the givers, however, including the scope of social involvement in bribery, people's perception of the bribe, and the extent to which they considered bribery acceptable. By examining a wide range of bribery types and situations when people felt it necessary to offer bribes to officials, as well as the regime's ineffective efforts to fight bribery, Heinzen presents a rich depiction of everyday life and the moral universe of the post-war Soviet Union.

Heinzen proves that in many cases bribery was a rational response, both by individuals and those officials who worked in the police, procuracy, judiciary, and party and state organizations to the injustices of the legal system, as well as a way to correct social inequalities. Within the context of massive post-war disruption, bribes helped people to solve problems with housing, migration, work, and food shortages. Bribes served as a substitute for *blat*—personal connections or power positions. Bribery was a crucial and widely-spread practice, “a flexible tool for maneuvering inside a disorganized economy, and rigid bureaucratic system” (279). This research humanizes bribery, as well as Soviet bureaucrats, and documents why people in many cases were reluctant to report the crime. In drawing a vivid picture of personal initiative in building networks of connections and pursuing goals, Heinzen challenges the stereotypical view of Soviet society as passive. He also documents a transition in state policy, in comparison with the Great Terror when police sentenced people en masse on political grounds. After the war, it operated on the principal of individual crimes or crimes committed by small groups, each with their own motives and methods. The number of people accused of political crimes drastically dropped, and the number of sentences for economic crimes rocketed. The state suppressed bribery, but at the same time, by perpetuating socio-economic, political, and legal systems that reproduced material hardship, social injustice, and harsh unjustified punishment, it promoted bribery.

Bribery was not unknown to the subjects of the tsars and the Soviet population in the 1920s and 1930s. However, the author believes that the post-war period was pivotal in the evolution of corruption. He writes that “a critical turning point in the development of the patterns of bribery that typified the later Soviet era was World War II and