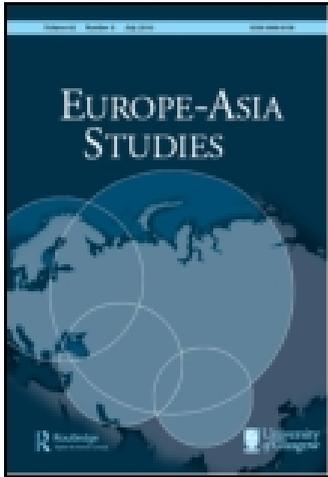


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Communism on Tomorrow Street. Mass Housing and Everyday Life after Stalin

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and the rivalry for influence between Russia, Turkey, Iran, and the West. Both obstacles present an overall grim picture.

German ends her discussion by restating that ‘conceptualisation of the South Caucasus as anything more than a geographic entity is undermined by the fact that all three states are looking outwards, away from the region for security’ rather than towards each other (p. 168). All three states do little to tackle problems that hinder cooperation. In short, the vision of a ‘united Caucasus’ remains an aspiration rather than a reality (p. 169). German’s book is a welcome addition to the field and is highly recommended to scholars and students who are interested in the history and politics of the South Caucasus.

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Steven E. Harris, *Communism on Tomorrow Street. Mass Housing and Everyday Life after Stalin*. Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press & Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013, xx + 394pp., £31.00/\$60.00 h/b.

STEVEN E. HARRIS’S BOOK EXAMINES THE IMPACT OF THE KHRUSHCHEV-ERA housing programme on Soviet society. Over seven chapters, Harris examines the construction programme from myriad perspectives: of welfare reformers, urban planners, local government politicians, architects and designers, and, of course the individuals who lived in (or, more frequently, waited for) the government’s new apartments.

Harris’s narrative is divided into three parts. In Part 1, he illustrates the intellectual and practical factors that influenced the design of *khreshchevki*. He sees the origins of the Khrushchev-era separate apartment in pan-European debates about living standards and, in particular, attempts to calculate the minimum amount of space required for sanitary living. After the communal housing experiments of the 1920s were sidelined in the 1930s in favour of separate apartments, the groundwork for the Khrushchev-era separate apartment was laid. However, in a Soviet climate of housing shortage, Western reformers’ sanitary minimum became an absolute maximum, with any space above this level apt to be redistributed to other families. As a result, Khrushchev-era designers were forced to build smaller apartments to ensure that space that could not be redistributed, despite the inconvenience and disappointment this caused.

In Part 2, Harris looks at how the decision to launch the housing programme impacted on Soviet society. Chapter 3, which focuses on housing distribution in Leningrad, shows how entitlement to housing became politicised. Despite elite attempts to make housing distribution more transparent by systematising entitlement criteria, these were resisted by public and local politicians alike. Native *Leningradtsy* and experienced workers, who were not favoured by distribution criteria, were seen to be more worthy of housing than those who had been rehabilitated, or members of exiled nationalities. In this way, the housing programme exposed the hierarchies on which Soviet citizenship continued to be based, despite the centre’s attempts to create a more egalitarian system. Chapter 4 examines two attempts to encourage construction outside the main programme: workers’ construction and co-operatives. The former programme granted workers housing on the basis of their own contribution to its construction, and was thus in tune with the egalitarian, voluntaristic rhetoric that is often associated with the Khrushchev era. Harris shows how this form of construction was usurped by the creation of housing co-operatives, which allowed professionals and intellectuals to jump the queue for a separate apartment. He argues that this latter form of construction reversed the gains of workers’ construction, and illustrated the continued importance of class to Soviet life.

The final section of the book focuses on the impact of the housing programme on the everyday life of Soviet citizens. Chapter 5 analyses the ways in which individuals adapted to life within the separate apartment. In official rhetoric, the separate apartment was seen as a more humane, cultured, and

modern way of living. However, apartments were often unfinished, facilities absent, and apt to be distributed to others. Harris focuses on a number of ways that individuals responded to these realities, including squatting: an illegal development that illustrated the extent to which individuals felt they were entitled to housing—and Party and security organs' reluctance to risk conflict with the public. Chapter 6 looks at the provision of furniture within apartments. While experts saw design as a means for creating a new kind of life, ongoing problems with production and distribution meant that furniture was frequently inadequate for small apartments, or simply unavailable. Chapter 7 shows how individuals used the open atmosphere of the period to argue with experts about how apartments should be organised and to apportion blame about their poor quality, lack of facilities, or even the aesthetic unsuitability of 'modernist' furniture for Soviet life. They thus illustrated that individuals felt that they had a right to comfort (as *they* understood it), and that experts had a duty to provide it.

Harris's book contributes significantly to our picture of Soviet society after Stalin. Building on other recent scholarship he shows readers how the mass-housing campaign set into motion both new and old forms of social organisation, ranging from construction co-operatives and house committees to squatting. At the same time, Harris shows how Khrushchev's campaign generated a sense of entitlement within the Soviet citizenry, and the ways in which citizens' understanding of these hierarchies of entitlement reinforced social divisions. Despite the rhetoric of universal provision, certain groups felt that their biographies allowed them to jump the queue—and local officials often agreed with them. By focusing on the housing programme at the local level, Harris is able to show how officials sometimes circumvented Party dictates based on their own understanding of the social good.

Harris's book thus allows for a more nuanced understanding of Soviet society than the traditional division of 'rulers' and 'ruled': there were divisions amongst officials, just as there were divisions within society. What comes across most vividly in the book are the cases where local officials ignored or manipulated orders from above, experts argued amongst themselves, and citizens bickered with both. Indeed, the extent to which ordinary citizens—whether on waiting lists, living in *novostroiki*, or buying new furniture—were prepared to challenge the authority of cultural arbiters suggests that the traditional intelligentsia mission of social transformation was being challenged from an increasingly self-confident and vocal population.

While mentioning Brezhnev only fleetingly (he does not make it into the index), Harris allows us to make links with what we might call the 'socialist seventies' to the extent that housing became part of a shared communist way of life which measured welfare not so much by Communist consciousness, but by provision of housing and consumer goods. Harris's book thus represents a well-written and important addition to scholarly knowledge of the Khrushchev era, which suggests that the Soviet separate apartment should be seen as both a symbol and as a driver of changing social expectations after Stalin's death.

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SIMON HUXTABLE © 2014

Anton A. Fedyashin, *Liberals under Autocracy. Modernization and Civil Society in Russia, 1866–1904*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2012, x + 282pp., £22.95/\$26.95 p/b.

IN RECENT YEARS A FLURRY OF WORKS ANALYSING LIBERALISM AND CIVIL society in pre-revolutionary Russia have been published in English. Perhaps this trend can be attributed to a search on the part of scholars for lessons to be learned by contemporary Russia's beleaguered liberals from their nineteenth century forebears who similarly struggled under an autocratic regime. In the book under review Anton Fedyashin studies liberalism in Russia as articulated by the 'thick journal' (p. 71), the *Herald of Europe* (*Vestnik Evropy*), from its inception in 1866 until the end of its heyday in 1904 (although it remained in circulation until closed by the Bolsheviks in March 1918). The book's main argument is that the *Herald* constituted a central component of Tsarist-era civil society and advanced a