

among local elites. However, this development could also be seen as a triumph of the socialist economic system, which, perhaps unintentionally, did manage to provide its citizens with ample welfare. Even today, thirty years after its collapse, this is exactly what former Soviet citizens remember nostalgically. Thus, adding the social dimension to Mitrokhin's account could have perhaps allowed us to see Soviet economic policies and their impact on everyday life in a more comprehensive way.

That said, this book does an excellent job giving a broad overview of late Soviet economic policies pertaining both to stagnation and reforming, and capturing the constant conflict of various interest groups as a major factor of economic policy. Its insights regarding the functioning of the Soviet decision-making process and the rich details about the decision-makers themselves make it an invaluable resource for scholars of the Soviet Union.

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Cigarettes and Soviets: Smoking in the USSR. By Tricia Starks. Ithaca: Northern Illinois University Press, an imprint of Cornell University Press, 2022. ix, 302 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Illustrations. Plates. Photographs. \$44.95, hard bound.
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In the global twentieth century, few things have revealed the tension between capital accumulation and public health interests so clearly and uncompromisingly as smoking. The stories of how transnational tobacco companies misinformed the public about the risks of smoking cigarettes to increase their profits is (almost) general knowledge. Less known is the story told by Tricia Starks in her new book, *Cigarettes and Soviets: Smoking in the USSR*. A broad overview of the history of cigarettes in the Soviet Union from 1917 through its dissolution, *Cigarettes and Soviets* provides a treasure trove of information on how tobacco was produced and consumed by Soviet men and women, what role it played in Soviet economic development, and how nicotine addiction became a public health concern.

The early anti-tobacco initiatives in the Soviet Union were particularly fascinating. Nikolai Semashko, the Commissar for Public Health from 1918–30 and the architect of the Soviet system of public health care (“Semashko system”), headed an unprecedented nation-wide campaign to eliminate smoking that included the first publicly funded cessation clinics. Prior to scientific evidence linking tobacco use to multiple health conditions, Soviet public health practitioners saw it not only as a threat to individual health, but also (or even primarily) as a socially and politically irresponsible behavior incompatible with the new socialist society. The needs to rebuild the economy after the Russian Civil War, however, slowed anti-tobacco initiatives, and then the launch of the First Five-Year Plan in 1928 that prioritized rapid industrialization over everything else de facto suspended it until the late 1960s.

The differences between tobacco consumption in socialism and capitalism is, in general, one of the most interesting questions raised by Starks in her book. Throughout her work, she shows how the number of smokers grew in the Soviet Union despite the lack of marketing, low quality of tobacco, and constant shortages. In the US, the tobacco industry is recognized as the force behind the tobacco epidemic, with its deliberate efforts to market their products, conceal the risks of smoking, and prevent anti-tobacco legislation. The Soviet tobacco industry, however, had very limited opportunity for marketing and promoting their products, and little interest in doing so due to the planned economy and lack of competition. The results, however, were

strikingly comparable, with both countries having large numbers of people developing a nicotine addiction and suffering from smoking-related diseases. While Starks emphasizes the special role of cultural and social factors leading to the rise of smoking rates in the USSR, it is not always clear how these factors differed from those in the US. The association between smoking and masculinity that she mentions was never specific to the Soviet Union; nor was the role of wars in a rapid increase in smoking rates unique to it. In the end, it remains unclear whether it was different factors leading to the same trends in tobacco consumption on both sides of the Iron Curtain or some common aspect of global modernity at play.

Cigarettes and Soviets characterizes the history of tobacco production in the USSR as a constant struggle to satisfy demand and maintain tobacco quality. Curiously, however, Soviet officials did not reintroduce anti-tobacco initiatives as a possible solution to these shortages. As Starks shows, tobacco cessation and control efforts were almost non-existent until the late 1960s when they reappeared under pressure from a public that started demanding limiting the use of tobacco and second-hand smoke exposure. Despite a lack of opposition from the industry, these efforts were not particularly effective. Smoking rates continued to be high until the very end of the USSR; reaching their maximum in post-Soviet Russia of the early 1990s, with its exceptionally high poverty levels. And here is one more possible parallel. The book ends with an optimistic conclusion, claiming that tobacco is not a part of Russia's "scentscape" anymore. However, the cigarette epidemic is not over either in Russia or the US. Despite a significant decrease in the number of people smoking cigarettes, smoking remains the leading cause of preventable death in the US, especially among marginalized and socioeconomically disadvantaged Americans who continue to smoke cigarettes at higher than average rates. It is worse seeing if smoking in Russia follows the same pattern, becoming a health equity issue.

Cigarettes and Soviets utilizes an exceptional wealth of archival and primary sources as well as visual materials. With a broad perspective addressing the use and abuse of tobacco in the "Soviet century," it will be of definite interest to scholars and students of Russian history, public health in the twentieth century, and addiction research.

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A Woman's Empire: Russian Women and Imperial Expansion in Asia.

By Katya Hokanson. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2023. x, 344 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Illustrations. Maps. \$80.00, hard bound or e-book.

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Russia's imperial expansion peaked in the late nineteenth century and was accompanied by a variety of texts that imagined the peoples inhabiting the nation's "peripheries." These works typically vindicate the nation's "civilizing" mission by depicting the Indigenous and local peoples as backward, barbarous "others," and thus in need of Russian intervention. While scholars have examined the imperial gaze in works by Russia's canonical male writers, little, if any, attention has been given to the writings of women authors and travelers who catalogued the southern and eastern borderlands. Katya Hokanson's compelling new book fills this significant lacuna through careful and convincing analysis of source texts largely forgotten or overlooked by scholars. *A Woman's Empire* illustrates how gender and colonial difference intertwine in ways that complicate our reading of the imperial project and thus challenge the notion of empire as a masculinist endeavor.