

John Randolph and Eugene M. Avrutin (eds), *Russia in Motion: Cultures of Human Mobility since 1850*, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2012. 287 pages. \$ 49.50

Beginning in early August 2013, and continuing through the fall, police and security forces stormed dormitories, apartments, and tent camps known to house immigrant workers in Moscow, Saint Petersburg, and other cities of the Russian Federation. Market and street sweeps targeted men and women who originate from Central Asia and the North Caucasus, many of them labor migrants trying to make a living far away from their places of birth. Media campaigns fueled the hate campaigns that local politicians employed in part to garner support for upcoming elections and for protecting “national security,” especially in preparation for the G20 summit in Saint Petersburg in September. This recent crackdown on immigrant laborers, who provide major parts of the Russian population with cheap vegetables, fruits and other goods, or build residential and business complexes or hotels for visitors of the Olympic Games in Sochi, is but one of numerous attacks on immigrant life in post-Soviet Russia. A peculiarity of the intensified criminalization of laborers and other non-Russians (notably from the contested republics in the Caucasus) is that most of them are citizens of states that, before 1991, were part of the Soviet Union. Those who would once have been internal migrants and compatriots are now considered immigrants; their current citizenship precludes mobility to and within Russia, and access to legal protection. This is not to say that migration and mobility within the Soviet Union were unrestricted. Nonetheless, the historical ties, which are at the root of much of the labor migration to Moscow, Saint Petersburg, Irkutsk and elsewhere, are often, and conveniently, obliterated.

The volume under review makes an important, if unintended, contribution to assessing current social and political dynamics within the former Soviet Union. *Russia in Motion*, with its attention to the interplay between migration and mobility and a history of shifting borders and political agendas from imperial to post-Soviet times, makes a strong argument for studying the “new pressures and possibilities for human movement across Russian space” that emerged since the early 19th century (p. 4). Population growth resulting from demographic changes and territorial expansion, industrial forms of transportation such as the steamboat and the railroad, and industrialization and continued expansion facilitated movement between borderlands and metropolises, villages and cities, and European and Siberian and steppe regions.

Noting the confluence of these shifts, the volume is a welcome addition to a recently increasing body of scholarship on mobility and space. It stands out by attempting to bring this scholarship into proximity with themes and questions of migration studies, which look to synthesize the study of personal aspirations, modes of governance, and technological progress in order to explain social, cultural, and political trends. Perhaps more importantly, the book is one of still too few that attempt to problematize population movement in Russia / the USSR not solely from a macro perspective, as an effect of state violence and economic planning, but to consider the complex, often contradictory motivations and modes of moving from one place to another. Contributors include scholars trained and based in North America, Western Europe and the former Soviet Union, many of them in the early stages of their careers. This diversity is valuable, as it offers up-to-date research as well as perspectives shaped by various trajectories and interests.

The book is divided into three thematic sections, each including four chapters on tsarist, Soviet, and post-Soviet eras. “Governing mobility” attends to institutional attempts to manage migration, primarily in the service of state expansion and surveillance. Chapters of “Social horizons” explore how perceptions of distance and

the ability to overcome it intersect with technological, social, and cultural considerations, while papers under “Model mobility” note how concepts of space impacted historical trends in Russia and the Soviet Union. Each section opens with a short essay that suggests common themes across the following chapters.

The chapters assembled under “Social horizons” are at the center of the volume, literally and figuratively. Eileen Kane’s work on Odessa as a central hub for the hajj in late 19th / early 20th century, Anatolyi Remnev’s ruminations on contradicting interpretations of Russians colonists, Jeff Sahedeo’s study of the lives of citizens from the former Central Asian Soviet republic in Moscow and Leningrad, and Elena Tyuryukanova’s exploration of “staying put,” rather than getting on the road, as a survival strategy for current residents of Yaroslavl work like a lens on both understudied aspects of Russian / Soviet history and the rich field of migration and mobility studies.

Kane makes a forceful intervention into the study of Russian history more generally, emphasizing that the neglect of Islam as an important cultural force, and of the history of Muslims in particular, produces a significant gap in historiography, especially of social structures. Her study of both commercial and state agendas to streamline the organization of the Muslim pilgrimage destabilizes not only the image of Odessa as a Jewish city; it also suggests that not too long ago the diversity of peoples and religions within the Russian empire was considered a given rather than a threat. A similar shift of perception shines through in Sahedeo’s survey of non-Russian migrants’ memories of moving to Moscow and Saint Petersburg during Soviet times. While never fully and equally included in the networks of privilege, or able to maintain non-Russian national cultures, students and professionals from Armenia, Uzbekistan, or Chechnya who came to the European centers of the USSR experienced “a sense of tolerance that did not transfer into post-Soviet life” (p. 164). The forces and factors that facilitated these turns away from acknowledging Islamic culture and attemp-

ting to bring about a “friendship of the peoples” remain to be determined; otherwise raids such as those mentioned above will be unproductively presented as inevitable reactions against flows of immigration.

In the first section, Faith Hillis’ deep investigation of how the tsarist government first encouraged Jews to move to Kiev to help depolonize the city and later failed to stop Ukrainian populists from employing anti-Jewish propaganda adds a useful layer for understanding the history of anti-Semitism in the region. Chia Yin Hsu utilizes recent work on colonization and global cities to shed light on Russian colonization attempts in the Far East and to show how racial and ethnic hierarchies within and beyond Russian borders were constantly redefined.

The final section, “Model mobility,” ends with a thought-provoking chapter by Sarah Phillips on people with disabilities’ struggle for social justice in Ukraine. Her notes on the continuing impediments for people in wheelchairs to get from one place to another – because metro stations are inaccessible for anyone who cannot use an escalator, long-distance trains are too narrow for wheelchairs, and motorized public transport often precludes persons unable to walk on their own – confront the reader with important questions about mobility and its role in allowing for full citizenship, defined as the ability to participate in, and use, public spaces. The fairly young field of disability studies has championed the notion that “disabilities” result from social, structural, and environmental barriers, and not from individual impairments. Without drawing false analogies, Phillips’ analysis of the contrast between the growing emphasis on the need for flexibility and mobility as a precondition to participate fully in neoliberal, post-socialist societies and economies on one hand, and continuously reinforced borders for physical mobility on the other, points to a conundrum experienced by immigrants within and to the former Soviet Union, but also many other countries.

With *Russia in Motion*, Randolph and Avrutin avoid many of the traps of edited volumes, producing a cohesively edited volume that will be a great resource for scholars but also lends itself to classroom use. The two editors made the provocative choice to forego both summaries or a synthesis of all chapters, suggesting it is not “the place of this volume to do” so (p. 11). In other words, they allowed the volume to sketch the contours of what extensive studies of migration and mobility in the Russian and Soviet states might bring. The outstanding overview of existing literature, in multiple languages, in the *Introduction*, and the twelve book chapters suggests that there is much to do, but also plenty to build on.

Anika Walke