

in the history of technology. Some may find this approach somewhat dry and detached, especially as compared to detailed studies of smaller scope that can offer a richer, more densely textured engagement with the interplay of technological and social change. This is a familiar trade-off however, between historical scope and detail, and Smil offers a solid justification for his approach and much insight in his analysis. Even those for whom this approach is a departure from their usual reading habits will find much to interest them here.

Readers of this journal may particularly like to know whether Smil's book engages with world history. Smil notes in his introduction that he chose to focus primarily on Europe and North America, and many of his conclusions about the spread or consequences of techniques and artifacts apply primarily to those areas. This book would not be of much help for anyone wanting to understand the interactions of technology and society in Asia, Australia, the Pacific Islands, Africa, or Latin America in any detail. Yet, for all of that, this book is not entirely Euro- or North America-centric either. Certainly, other parts of the world do come into the story when it is appropriate (often in the later twentieth century), including Japan, China, Mexico, Venezuela, and India. Indeed, since the proliferation of technologies is one of his key themes, the geographical shift of technological centers is an important element throughout the book. The familiar story of the gradual move of the international steel industry from the United States to Japan is a good example. Smil may not be writing world history, but he does examine the global implications of technological change, and if he focuses mostly on Europe and North America, he does not assume that their histories are necessarily representative of the rest of the world. So, although I would hesitate to call it world history, Smil's book certainly does have something to offer those interested in getting a global perspective.

Smil's history will be of interest to anyone looking for insight into the complex sociotechnical history of the twentieth century. While historians familiar with technology history will know many of the stories Smil explores, his synthesis stimulates thinking about the big picture in ways that more focused studies can not do. For other scholars, Smil's book offers a helpful view of the interplay of technology and social change during a dynamic era. Smil's work shows one way that technological stories can be integrated into the larger social and political history of the twentieth century; the story he tells makes a powerful case for why it is imperative that we do so.

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Politics and the People in Revolutionary Russia: A Provincial History.
By SARAH BADCOCK. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,
2007. 260 pp. \$104.00 (cloth).

The most notable recent trend in the historiography of the Russian Revolution has been a new focus on provincial histories of that event. Young scholars in particular have been eager to break out of the capital cities to see what the revolution looked like on the ground. Sarah Badcock's book is a fine contribution to this literature. She examines two important Russian provinces (Kazan and Nizhegorod) over the course of the fateful year of 1917, describing how local people understood the messages being sent their way by Petrograd politicians and how they responded to their new political circumstances. Her conclusion is that provincial Russians heard the revolutionary messages clearly but did not respond to them in the ways that political elites either expected or desired.

The latter part of this formulation has been clear ever since 1917. Revolutionary leaders themselves were painfully aware that Russia's newly minted citizens resisted the efforts of officials to protect property, to ensure quiet obedience to the new regime, and to requisition goods for the use of the army and urban centers. They (and generations of historians since) assumed that the problem was one of benighted ignorance. As earlier studies have shown, and Badcock confirms, the efforts of both the provisional government and the network of soviets focused early in the year on educational programs. When those programs failed to create citizens "conscious" of the need to obey their self-proclaimed leaders in Petrograd, state officials turned toward a policy of coercion, a policy that they had neither the resources nor the heart to successfully implement.

The key contribution of Badcock and her cohort has been to demolish the model of the ignorant and obtuse peasant upon which the policies of Petrograd politicians and the works of most later historians depended. In a series of clearly argued chapters, Badcock demonstrates point by point that provincial Russians, in town and country alike, were fully "conscious" political actors. As she puts it, "[o]rdinary people made rational and informed choices about their best interests in 1917, and they engaged in political life consciously and pragmatically" (p. 5). After a useful introduction that sets the context of the revolution as a whole and the particular Volga river provinces she studies, she addresses how provincial Russians heard about and conceptualized the February Revolution in chapter 2. She concludes that despite the best efforts of political parties at the center, the narrative of revolu-

tion was appropriated and understood in a variety of different ways in the countryside. Lower-class Russians were particularly responsive to narratives that highlighted the suffering of the "victims of the revolution" and that explained unpleasant developments by blaming suspect groups associated with the old regime. These responses reflected both deep cultural templates present in Russian Orthodoxy and rather more recent political dissatisfaction with the tsarist government. Chapter 3 examines party politics in 1917 with a case study of the Socialist Revolutionary (SR) Party, the party with the largest electoral support both in the region and nationwide throughout the revolutionary year. Badcock describes the failure of the SRs to take advantage of their electoral success well here. The SRs failed not just because the Bolsheviks were more ruthless, but because of the general weakness of party politics during the revolution. Party networks and party identification were thin in Kazan and Nizhegorod provinces in 1917, so the statement of party preference at various points during the year was not a reliable guide to support for particular programs, parties, or individuals. Again this was not the result of peasant democratic inexperience, but of the correct realization by provincial Russians that local politics mattered far more than central party-based politics did in this time period.

Badcock then moves in chapters 4–6 to describe some of the key dynamics of the local political scene. Chapter 4 describes further why even local elections only weakly corresponded to the political process. Local leaders faced enormous problems in 1917. They were presented with unpopular demands by central authorities and were also held accountable by their far more tangible and ultimately far more dangerous constituents. This essential conflict led to a shortage of political leaders, as many individuals recognized the untenable situation local officials faced (lots of responsibility and little authority) and declined to participate fully in official structures. This thinning of political choice meant that party belonging meant less and less and indeed that the elections themselves became less meaningful. Growing voter indifference was therefore quite understandable. Chapter 5 deals in depth with the question of political education and cultural "enlightenment" projects. Here Badcock shows the major effort of campaigners to educate the Russian populace and to explain the gains and goals of the revolution. Local Russians heard the narrative and understood the narrative. The reason they did not respond gleefully to the enlightenment program was not "the language used" but "the content of their messages" (p. 144). Chapter 6 is the only chapter to deal with specific social groups: soldiers and their wives (*soldatki*). Badcock's reluctance to use old class categories to differentiate the provincial populace throughout

the book is both refreshing and salutary. Still, there were social groups in Russia and 1917, and Badcock's decision to focus in her book on soldiers and *soldatki* is a neat way both to acknowledge the importance of traditional social dynamics and to demonstrate that wartime society was quite different from what had come before. Both of these groups were remarkably large (50,000 soldiers in the Kazan garrison alone, not counting deserters, invalids, or men on leave) and remarkably disruptive. Badcock, like virtually all observers, notes the increasingly violent tenor of Russian social and political life over the course of 1917, and she attributes much of this change to these militarized men and indeed to their wives as well, who provided an "unusual example of female participation in revolutionary politics" (p. 180).

Badcock's final two chapters offer the clearest proof of her position. Chapter 7 looks at the dynamic of land politics in 1917, and chapter 8 examines the impact of the provisioning crisis. In each of these excellent chapters, she demonstrates that local citizens and local officials knew of central policy on these crucial issues, understood central policy to be antithetical to their own interests, and consciously rejected them. Officials who stood in the way of land redistribution (a process of rather small scale, as less than 5 percent of arable land in these provinces was held by nonpeasants by 1916) were not only politically suspect but personally endangered. To an even greater extent, local officials were held to account by their constituents regarding provisions. Badcock points out that the politics on this issue depended almost entirely on whether the region in question was a net importer or exporter of grain. This varied district by district in these two provinces, and it illustrates again that political responses were not due to a "peasant mentality," since peasants in deficit regions were more than willing to deal with a provisioning committee pledged to give them grain than peasants in surplus regions were to deal with officials dedicated to taking their grain away. This literally gut-level political issue was, in Badcock's estimation, the final nail in the coffin of the provisional government, not so much because it reduced legitimacy for that faraway cabinet but because it led to a loss of control over the countryside even by local officials.

Badcock illustrates the points above clearly and with a great deal of evidence from local archives, the local press, and a wide variety of secondary sources. If I have a quibble with the book, it relates to issues that might be of particular interest to readers of this journal. Badcock is reluctant to suggest broad conclusions from her case studies: "These chapters are intended to highlight the confusion and imprecision of power relations and social interactions in 1917 rather than to offer conclusive answers and clear models" (p. 238). This is, in my opinion,

too modest a conclusion. As the summary above suggests, Badcock has interesting things to say about revolutionary periods more generally. Perhaps even more pertinently, she extensively discusses the way that citizens and local politicians are forced to react to the new conjunctures of power that are present when democratizing reforms are launched in conditions of state failure. She explains very clearly why elections, political parties, local councils, and other key democratic institutions do not fulfill either democratic objectives or meet the needs of broad political communities when political and social life is in drastic turmoil. These are important points, ones of interest well beyond the field of historians of the Russian revolution. I hope that readers interested in these or similar themes will examine this work closely.

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A Companion to Contemporary Britain: 1939–2000. Edited by PAUL ADDISON and HARRIET JONES. Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishing, 2007. 600 pp. \$47.95 (paper).

The “companion” genre of historical reference book seems a little informal, historiographically; on my office shelves, I have several versions. There is the near-dictionary, written in miniscule type to provide the answer to “who or what is this,” and weighing in at bowling ball size; the stream-of-consciousness essay collection, which assumes a wide-ranging knowledge on the part of the reader that seems unwarranted, since anyone who understood the historical background to the essays wouldn’t need a companion to begin with; and the encyclopedia-in-all-but-name, which seems to have been retitled because “companions” probably get a wider-ranging buyership beyond libraries.

That being said, should historians one day come to the conclusion that there is a need to define precisely what a “companion” to history is, they could do far worse than to use Basil Blackwell’s multivolume series on the history of Britain as a guide. This volume is edited by Paul Addison, an eminent scholar on Churchill and the war, and Harriet Jones, a former director at the University of London’s Institute of Historical Research specializing in contemporary history. Its contributors are some of the best scholars available on their subjects of interest—Pat Thane on demography, Bill Osgerby on youth culture, Christopher Harvie on the four nations of Britain and the issue of their devolution, to name a few.

The subjects chosen are a generous outlay of historiographically rich fields taken from the history of Britain in the twentieth century—class, the controversial concept of the “decline” of Britain, northern Ireland, postimperial immigration into Britain, the relationship between Britain and Europe. But there are also subjects that one might be more likely to find discussed regularly in their newspapers as opposed to the latest version of the academic journals to which they subscribe. Thus, on the one hand, the late Arthur Marwick’s witty chapter on class challenges editor Addison’s review of one of his books by arguing that the perception of class in Britain has changed dramatically since the war, but that the perception still exists on the part of the public, and therefore is still relevant. Perhaps so. Yet when reading about “class” in Britain in the press today, one might be likelier to wonder about where the working classes have gotten off to—when the reader can then find Robert Taylor’s description of the working classes’ rise to prominence and affluence in British politics, culture, and society with the Labour government of 1945, and their constituents’ collapse into individualism during the Thatcher-Major years from 1979 to 1997. This combination of pitching responses to both other academics and the informed general reader—particularly the world history reader—is a good way of defining what a “companion” ought to do.

Surprisingly, while there are lots of references to politicians, there is no chapter on politics and government—to that Labour government of 1945, for example, one of the most monumental in British history. Any world history reader, however, could find innumerable summaries of the governments of the era since 1945. This companion’s value comes in discussing subjects not so readily available in an academic context.

Personally, I use a companion mostly as background for writing a lecture. I look for a fast and easily digestible overview of a subject that I can trust for the moment to provide me with the latest research on a subject and to provide me with other sources on which I can do research in future years to expand upon and remain fresh. With that in mind, few of these chapters end in more than twenty pages including endnotes, and most of them are liberal in referencing secondary sources in the text. Occasionally, they also provide names of useful primary sources that the world history reader might not be familiar with, such as Wendy Webster’s introduction of the Parekh Report on the reimagining of Britain in multiethnic terms, or Nicholas Deakin’s reference to the third Beveridge Report produced during World War II, which described a future society predicated on the success of “voluntary aid” for one’s fellow man. This companion makes it easy to survey