REVIEW ESSAY

Rethinking Cold War Culture: Gender, Domesticity, and Labor on the Global Home Front

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Kate Brown, *Plutopia: Nuclear Families, Atomic Cities, and the Great Soviet and American Plutonium Disasters.* Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2013. 416 pp. $27.95.

Greg Castillo, *Cold War on the Home Front: The Soft Power of Midcentury Design.* Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2010. 304 pp. $24.95.

Cybèle Locke, *Workers in the Margins: Union Radicals in Post-War New Zealand.* Wellington, New Zealand: Bridget Williams Books, 2012. 300 pp. $49.99.

Donald J. Raleigh, *Soviet Baby Boomers: An Oral History of Russia's Cold War Generation.* Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2012, 434 pp. $24.95.

Landon Storrs, *The Second Red Scare and the Unmaking of the New Deal Left*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2013. 423 pp. $39.50.

During their famous Kitchen Debate at the 1959 American National Exhibition in Moscow, US Vice President Richard Nixon and Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev argued over the relative merits of capitalism and communism, but they agreed on what success meant: nice furniture, big houses, and cool appliances. Both believed in the necessity of consumer citizenship in part because the mass production economies behind mass-produced domesticity meant lucrative contracts for both private corporations and state-owned enterprises. Like the defense corporations transforming Cold War fears into lucrative contracts, well-positioned individuals and firms in both countries understood that billions were at stake in the economy of domesticity. Much like the urbanization model that's driven the Chinese economy of the past twenty years, the mass housing projects of the United States and Soviet Union were vital to economic and

International Labor and Working-Class History
No. 87, Spring 2015, pp. 235–249

doi:10.1017/S0147547915000010

political stability during the second half of the twentieth century. Both Nixon and Khrushchev understood that the success of their governments depended upon contented middle classes. Economic growth strongly influenced public opinion about political leadership and, by extension, government legitimacy. Nothing was more important to economic growth than housing. Each man fantasized about a future of beautiful mothers working effortlessly with electric mixers to feed their Cold War kids.

In the United States, nice kitchens encapsulated the ways sexual politics delimited the economic revolutions of the New Deal for an entire generation of white ruling-class men. To see this, we need only turn to the breathtaking stories unearthed by Landon R. Y. Storrs in *The Second Red Scare and the Unmaking of the New Deal Left*, an essential book for scholars of the New Deal, historians of feminism, and anyone interested in the political repression of the American labor movement. Storrs' account is the most extensive treatment of the federal loyalty program ever published. Loyalty review boards evaluated more than five *million* federal workers during its peak between 1947 and 1956. During this period, 25,000 employees underwent full-field FBI investigations, 2,700 lost their jobs, and more than 12,000 resigned. Storrs qualifies these numbers by revisiting the stories of those she terms "left feminists" as they joined New Deal agencies alongside similarly inclined spouses, lovers, and friends. Combining evidence from national archives with personal papers, letters, and photographs, Storrs pulls close to prominent individuals who shaped New Deal programs according to ideals of social democracy, antiracism, and antisexism, such as Elizabeth Wickenden, Caroline Ware, Lucy Kramer, and Charlotte Tuttle, as well as Howard Westwood, Arthur "Tex" Goldschmidt, and Felix S. Cohen. She focuses especially on women intellectuals and workers in New Deal Washington, who by 1947 accounted for 24 percent of total federal employees and 45 percent of those in the capital. One of Storrs' most compelling arguments concerns how anticommunists gendered their attacks on socialism and liberalism to make both appear perverted, and they accomplished this by attacking women in government, shrilly labeled "the femocracy." Women were the focus of 18 percent of high-level federal loyalty program cases.

Those attacks first emerged from loyalty allegations directed at labor and consumer agencies during the 1930s and early 1940s. Conservatives charged that agencies such as the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) conspired with consumer advocacy groups led by the League of Women Shoppers (LWS) to intimidate businesses organizing against the 1935 National Labor Relations (Wagner) Act. With opposing interests looking for Supreme Court test cases, national attention soon turned to a left-leaning, pro-consumer company called Consumers' Research (CR), which, ironically, fired three white-collar employees for union organizing. The League offered to arbitrate, but the CR board refused. The League then held a mock trial and ruled against the CR management. The NLRB's ruling concurred. CR leaders F. J. Schlink and J. B. Matthews felt a "humiliating defeat" (55).

In an ideological flip, Schlink and Matthews coauthored an article in 1938 urging Congress to repeal the major New Deal programs and legislation. Matthews soon testified for the newly formed Special Committee to Investigate Un-American Activities, known as the Dies Committee, to argue that communism influenced the NLRB and the ruling on CR. He also charged the League with being a communist front. Committee chair Dies promptly hired Matthews as his chief investigator. In 1953, Matthews joined the staff of Joseph McCarthy. Storrs notes that Matthews' "vendetta" against agencies like the NLRB motivated his new work as a professional anti-communist (56). Many former leftists also assumed major positions in the anticommunist movement.

In 1940, conservatives formed another special House committee, the Smith Committee, which also claimed communists ran the NLRB. Poignantly, during hearings the committee repeatedly called women regional directors and review attorneys to testify for the NLRB—even though only three of the agencies' 22 directors were women, and only 11 of its 105 attorneys were women. Front-page national coverage depicted aggressive questioning by committee counsel Edmund Toland, who emphasized the sexuality and youth of those testifying. Conservative Clare Hoffman (R-Mich.) typified conservative strategy by exciting fears that women intellectuals were abnormal. While "those girls" are "good looking" and "intelligent appearing," he cautioned, less than 1 percent of them had "ever changed a diaper, hung a washing, or baked a loaf of bread" (63). Moreover, conservatives believed that women were particularly vulnerable to communism and worried such "pink ladies" would be disloyal (88). They highlighted professional women who didn't marry or kept their own surnames when they did. Gender conformity suggested one's loyalty to capitalism: "women's challenges to male supremacy" became "evidence of Communist inclinations" (89). Media tycoons running the Hearst and McCormick newspaper empires amplified fears by flooding print with narratives linking communism to divorce, rape, homosexuality, and miscegenation.

In 1947, President Truman authorized loyalty boards in part to neutralize Republican claims that Democrats were soft on communism. Anticommunists asserted "that communism—and the liberalism they viewed as a slippery slope to it—would erode men's control of women's sexuality and labor" (106). Thus, male defendants had to prove their heterosexuality and show that their wives were properly submissive. Labeling the New Deal "a womb-to-tomb welfare state," white male conservatives purged government of left feminists—and socialist-leaning liberals—by painting women intellectuals as bodies ripe for communist infection. Storrs' book goes beyond the existing literature by arguing that gendered attacks had direct consequences for social policy, constricting the range of social democratic policies liberals were willing to support.

Storrs presents the loyalty investigations of Mary Dublin Keyserling and Leon Keyserling as significant case studies. Dublin Keyserling helped campaign for the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, which established the first national

standards for the minimum wage, forty-hour work week, and overtime compensation. Leon Keyserling drafted the Wagner Act and the 1937 US Housing Act and became chairman of President Truman's Council of Economic Advisors in 1950. Dies Committee investigators, including Matthews, made them special targets. They charged Dublin Keyserling with eight disloyalty counts. Denying the charges, Storrs follows her as she erases personal and political connections to the Popular Front, cuts herself loose from old colleagues and even family members, professes her fealty to liberal capitalism, and emphasizes her patriotism. Despite a textbook response, the board took months to exonerate her and then reopened her case again in 1951, this time adding her husband as a target. In 1952, the Commerce Department loyalty board found Dublin Keyserling "ineligible for government employment" on loyalty grounds (140). Although she successfully appealed, her security clearance was restricted, hampering her ability to serve in her position, and she resigned with the incoming Eisenhower administration in 1953.

When the couple reappeared in the Johnson administration, Storrs argues, they were more conservative than before. Leon Keyserling advocated for higher military budgets and urged cooperation with big business. In the 1960s, he persuaded the AFL-CIO to support the Vietnam War. As early as 1951, he claimed in a letter to Truman that "the Communist danger is the central, overwhelming danger which our economy faces" (170). When he wrote those words, he was under investigation. Writ large, the Keyserlings' lives emblematized the experience of thousands. For Storrs, their case reveals the trajectory of Cold War liberalism. For one, the Keyserlings' representative contributions to what Storrs terms "left feminism" dispel the notion that "feminism was dormant between the suffrage victory in 1920 and the 1960s" (8). Further, Storrs reconstructs the interconnected contributions made by left-feminist civil servants, who steered the federal government to open new political and economic opportunities to millions of Americans, particularly to women and to people of color. At the same time, her meticulous research into the federal loyalty program, supplemented by four appendixes, unearths an entirely new archive in the history of anticommunism and antifeminism. Her portraits of loyalty defendants are haunting, in part, because of how many professionals buried their own history in fear and shame while trying to protect their careers and those they loved.

In her summary of how loyalty defendants responded to charges, Storrs relates how one defendant, Esther Brunauer, saw the experience as Soviet-like: "[T]he individual counts for nothing and the interest of the state is paramount," she claimed, adding, "[T]he system is built purely along Russian lines" (186). Her observation suffuses many aspects of the Cold War resemblance between the two countries. Greg Castillo's *Cold War on the Home Front: The Soft Power of Midcentury Design* presses the cultural similarities further in his comparative analysis of the ways both countries designed "domesticity as a weapon" (vii). In a book visually supplemented by lush pictures of model homes, kitchen interiors, and midcentury fashions, Castillo illustrates

how divided Berlin became the epicenter for American and Soviet cultural experiments with housewares, furniture, and living rooms.

For Castillo, US national exhibitions promoting postwar domesticity were a novel form of "soft power." From this vantage, the Marshall Plan was as much a colonization project as an economic program. Indeed, Dwight D. Eisenhower defended Marshall Plan cultural programs to the House of Representatives by emphasizing how displays of consumer culture promoted American capitalism through millennial abundance. He founded the US Information Agency (USIA) in 1953 to oversee the marketing of US soft power abroad, with show designers such as Peter G. Harden, who studied architecture at Yale, creating new techniques to promote "the American Way of Life." Marshall Plan soft power hinged on a concept of Atlanticism that narrated a common political and cultural civilization for the US and Europe called "the West." Touring Marshall Plan exhibits stylized this Atlantic community "through displays of household culture," particularly International style modernism "that was anything but typical" for the average American (xv). The design of larger residences and interior spaces would convey "democratic affluence" (xxiv).

Initially, the implied austerity of their neat and simple designs clashed with American desires for bigger spaces that would inspire mass consumption. State Department shows emphasized relative luxury, such as West Berlin's 1950 exhibit "America at Home," where Germans toured a prefab house and watched female students vacuum, make toast, and show off a range of "typical" appliances. Of the quarter-million Germans who attended, more than half came from the communist side.

Aesthetic opinions from West German and US experts soon converged: They mutually "regarded modernism as a semaphore for progress" (33). German 49, a successful 1949 Manhattan trade show selling German-made products, proved that the West German *Werkbund* designs could circulate as representative objects of the new Atlantic alliance. Contrary to any pretense of avant-garde sophistication, "modernist product design supported by authorities" reflected a "consensus regarding the esthetics of democratic reconstruction" (36). Design politics even rippled out from the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA)'s Department of Industrial Design in New York, when in 1951 design expert Edgar Kaufmann Jr. curated Marshall Plan exhibitions, such as "Industry and Craft Create New Home Furnishings in the USA." Kaufmann believed in the "enormous political significance" of "modern household objects" (40). Modernist design was the signature style of US power.

US national exhibitions were sophisticated and ambitious. In the 1952 show "We're Building a Better Life," organizers placed a German family inside an American-style home, hoping to trigger "desire for a higher standard of living" (61). At the center of the show was a single-family home with six thousand products, complete with actors depicting a nuclear family of domestic consumers. Castillo argues the vision was an ideological reply to Marx's *Capital*. "Exhibit planners radically redefined labor value as the amount of work needed to *purchase* an item," he writes, "rather than produce it" (67). More

than half a million Germans attended, including many youth, while critics decried the "social fiction" of the living standards on display (71).

The ideological stakes behind US and Soviet exhibitions points to the reasons why scholars of the Cold War and labor history should linger a moment with Castillo's text. His dueling accounts of competitive cultural design in Cold War Berlin testify to the intimacy and scale of the postwar battle for hearts and minds, not just in divided Germany, but throughout the "cooler" zones of the First, Second, and Third Worlds. In fact, his themes bring a European context to Thomas Frank's 1998 study *The Conquest of Cool*, in which Frank asserts that the project of hipness was as much a product of brand marketing as countercultural politics. Castillo, however, shows how the global projection of American cool required close collaboration between federal agencies and private corporations. Further, his original attention to the cultural production of Soviet soft power—including the confrontation between the East German *Bauakademie* for Interior Design and the Stalinist state—pushes readers into contemplating how socialist aesthetics tried—and failed—to overtake "the American century."

By the beginning of Eisenhower's second term, US anticommunists opposed to the State Department cut budgets for traveling exhibitions, and new tours such as 1956's "People's Capitalism" circulated only because of corporate donations. To Soviet chagrin, "People's Capitalism" drew huge crowds. Beneath a Buckminster Fuller geodesic dome at Pozan, Poland's 1957 trade fair, tens of thousands gawked at sewing machines, runway models, and Coca-Cola machines. Visitors toured a three-bedroom suburban home with an open demonstration kitchen stuffed with frozen foods and watched an actress preparing hot meals. That same year in Zagreb, Yugoslavia, "Supermarket USA" set up a self-service retail store showing visitors how to shop for products. Consumer capitalism, it seems, was not a self-evident system.

The 1959 American National Exhibition in Moscow was notable in part for its "Kitchen of the Future," which planners hoped "would combat Soviet technological triumphs with American consumer technology" (153). The 2.5 million citizens who attended expressed amazement at the living spaces of the average (white) American. The success of the prefab American model home there, dubbed "Splitnik," inspired the Soviets to normalize mortgages so Russians could finance their own multiple-bedroom homes. Given the competitive stakes, Castillo theorizes that the Kremlin only invited the exhibition because Soviet engineers needed to study cheap homes as mass-production models. Indeed, while the United States projected residential luxury for its own ideological reasons, Castillo persuasively argues that soft power "is only effective when parties on the receiving end are able to appropriate it for their own benefit" (160). For him, Khrushchev used the Kitchen Debate to renew "the lived experience of Soviet socialism" (162). In doing so, though, a "socialist mass-consumer" would propel the Soviet system into the future, and not offer an alternative to a consumer-driven economy (173). The legacy of this battle for soft power continues today, in an era of Apple stores and Alibaba.

Unlike contemporary China, Soviet ambitions to create a "socialist mass-consumer" struck against the stubborn reality of economic scarcity; it took until the late 1970s for running water, televisions, and refrigerators to become commonplace in East Berlin. By the time the communist economy faltered in the 1980s, it was too late for the Soviets to imagine an alternative idea of "communism." A 1989 Ministry of State Security report explained to Party officials that consumer products were now the "basic criterion" for comparing socialism to capitalism (201). Castillo suggests that the cultural victory of American capitalism, and by extension post-communist globalization, occurred in part because the Soviets conceded the future to the glory of kitchen appliances. Indeed, the many beautiful pictures illustrating Castillo's *Cold War on the Home Front* make abundantly clear how the Americans and Soviets intended for modernist design to seduce people at home and abroad. This suggestion challenges the standard political metanarrative about why the Cold War ended, in which hawkish US foreign policy, low oil prices, the Afghan insurgency, and Eastern European civil resistance play the starring roles. Though those factors are undeniable, Castillo's book reminds us that the competition between the two superpowers required them to make the respective rewards of capitalism and socialism both attractive and attainable: By the end, both systems promised that the dream of big private living spaces would have to become, well, concrete. In this sense, Castillo provides continuity between the project of Cold War domesticity and the consumer globalization that powered the global economy in the wake of the Soviet collapse in 1991, and which has done so much to propel the rise of the other big red power of the twentieth century—the Chinese Communist Party. It is also possible to read in Castillo's work a prehistory of the Greenspan-era housing bubble and the subsequent rise of commercial and residential urban real estate as the asset class par excellence for global investors, and even to see the Soviet economy of domesticity as a blueprint for China's decades-long investment in mass urbanization.

Castillo's work on consumer fantasies underscores, too, how both the Soviets and Americans embedded patriarchal assumptions about traditional gender roles into their deployments of soft power. As Storrs shows with the federal loyalty program, the United States offered middle-class women bigger kitchens even as it denied them economic equality and fought those seeking it in the name of anticommunism.

In Cybèle Locke's *Workers in the Margins: Union Radicals in Post-War New Zealand*, we find another example of a capitalist government repressing women fighting for equal wages and better living standards. Locke's work recounts the stories of women and Māori leaders in the New Zealand labor movement and in *Te Roopu Rawakore o Aotearoa*, the nation's movement for the unemployed. She retells their struggles with oral testimony and biographical details from persons who experienced it firsthand. Locke especially looks to the ways feminism and Māori nationalism influenced class politics and worker organizing, and explains the "major innovation" of her feminist labor history as the "integration of trade union and unemployed union histories" (16).

North American readers might be unfamiliar with the names and places in Locke's book, but they'll be immediately intrigued by the uncanny ways events in New Zealand mirrored—and sometimes anticipated—key struggles of the Cold War and globalization. She begins by describing the "working-class hierarchy" of New Zealand's unionized blue-collar labor, female clerical office workers, and the often migratory Māori and Pasifika workers (10). Locke traces the evolution and dismantling of New Zealand's once uniquely egalitarian welfare state, rooted in the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act of 1894, which recognized the right of workers to bargain collectively. New Zealand's peculiar arbitration system legislated mandatory conciliation between workers and employers and regulated wage and labor conditions with a guaranteed "award" system. By 1937 there were 499 unions across a range of industries.

This system wasn't immune to Cold War politics. During a pivotal 1951 wharf lockout, opportunistic leadership within the Federation of Labor (FoL), a state-sanctioned representative of national labor unions, led the charge *against* wharf side unions demanding higher wages. The FoL expelled militant unions from state recognition, in part through red-baiting and charges of Russian manipulation—a scenario with obvious parallels to the Red Scare politics then operating in the United States. The FoL held "Communist-dominated misleaders" responsible for the wage crisis and the government relocated workers into smaller, weaker unions (34).

The crisis coincided with the migration of more Māori into urban industrial jobs; by the 1960s they led 25 percent of all strikes. Despite state-enforced compulsory arbitration, segregating workers by gender and ethnicity remained the norm. At the same time, many Māori reinterpreted class struggle through their colonial cultural history, combining wage demands with protests to recover their ancestral lands. In addition, Māori workers created a "whare system" within the union sheds, meaning they worked in various unionized industries based on kinship ties and family relationships. As union leaders concentrated on forming smaller sheds into larger unions, the ethnic divisions and competing goals posed challenges and opportunities for organizers.

Locke's overview of mid-twentieth century Māori and radical labor histories sets the context for her subsequent exploration of feminist leadership in the private-sector trade unions and of how women reformed labor politics through the principles of the 1970s women's liberation movement. Such leaders helped secure the 1972 Equal Pay Act. Although women accounted for almost one-third of union membership by 1969, they were still underrepresented in leadership positions. It was then that feminist organizers like Joyce Hawe, an elected delegate at Progressive Manufacturing, altered the sexual politics of the labor movement by openly combating sexism within the arbitration process. Similarly, union leaders like Judith Attenberger and Hillary Jones ascended the male-dominated ranks. The Equal Pay Act led to more women entering traditionally higher-paying male-dominated industries, such as the meat-processing facilities of the freezing works. Viv Porzolt was one of the first to win a boning job, even as "opposition to women working on the slaughterboard remained

strong" (66). Sandra McCallum established the socialist Working Women's Alliance in 1974 to address childcare, high rents, prices, and wages. Sonja Davies started the New Zealand Working Women's Council in 1975. Many others joined her in designing the Working Women's Charter, adopted by both the FoL and Labour Party in 1980.

Despite these victories, the 1970s economic depression led to huge layoffs, including those of many women and Māori. In 1985, twenty-eight unemployed rights groups merged into *Te Roopu Rawakore o Aotearoa*, or *Te Roopu*. They argued that the unemployed were not "dole bludgers" (or those who sought welfare payments to avoid work), but rather victims of structural poverty (78). *Te Roopu* grew from regional networks associated with worker organizations and became notable for its female and Māori leadership. In fact, Māori culture influenced how the movement made decisions: A Māori unemployed union, *Te Whare Awhina*, advocated for the group's *hui* meeting style, which included music and song. The coalition respected differences by "ensuring policies across sectors were compatible, but also acknowledging that the autonomy of each individual center should be respected," culminating in a "bicultural structure" (103–4).

After a Labour Party victory in 1984, the coalition between *Te Roopu* and labor unions broke down. *Te Roopu* opposed the Labour party's neoliberal reforms while many unions clung to a traditional ally. The independence of the Māori sovereignty movement within the bicultural structure of *Te Roopu* also pressured the alliances. Jane Stevens, a fierce critic of inequality, helped give *Te Roopu*'s message widespread media attention. Shrugging off accusations that she was (what else?) a communist, Stevens demanded that Labour fund unemployment groups. Neoliberal strategists inside Labour instead abandoned the party's commitment to full employment. Stevens also saw the trade unions stuck in a "1951 mindset"—white males organizing on principles of working-class solidarity without taking racism and sexism seriously (122). In 1985 *Te Roopu* officially embraced Māori sovereignty, and in 1987 they opposed both political parties. Under pressure, trade unionists embraced women and Māori rights: When private and public unions formed the New Zealand Council of Trade Unions (CTU), Māori and women received special representation. Layoffs and mergers continued into the 1980s, however, which put small unions on the defensive, and Māori and other groups continued to fight for recognition.

Locke's innovations extend from her emphasis on New Zealand's "workers in the margins" while using techniques of the "old" and "new" labor history. Although she focuses on groups underrepresented in existing scholarship, her attention to the role of women and Māori in unions resembles traditional labor histories in many ways. As a result, scholars who view unions as the central actors of national labor movements will find ease in comparing Locke's history with, say, histories of the AFL or CIO in the twentieth century United States. This integrated approach allows her to successfully contest arguments made by sociologists and historians who claim unemployed workers lack the agency and resources to mobilize politically.

Despite Locke's novel methodology and hopeful tone, her conclusion contains a litany of political defeats endured by New Zealand's workers in the 1980s and 1990s. It can't be entirely coincidental that the political assault on unions and the betrayal of workers by the Labour Party mirrored similar "reforms" being implemented at the same time in the US and UK. Crucially, the austerity budgets authored by multiple neoliberal governments effectively bounded the utopian visions of postwar capitalism described in Castillo's *Cold War on the Home Front*, and did so almost in synchrony with the fall of the Berlin Wall. Utopian exhibits of the 1950s like "People's Capitalism," for example, evaporated like a mirage in the decade Soviet communism collapsed. In some ways, the experience of unionized and marginalized workers in New Zealand during the twilight of the Cold War is familiar already: Left of center political parties reversed victories for the welfare state and accelerated the freeze on middle-class wages that continues today. We know how this assault on wages encouraged, in turn, the rise of consumer debt that financed the global housing bubble. Yet read alongside the failure of the socialist promises found in Castillo's story of postwar Berlin, Locke's book reinforces how the rise of neoliberalism almost too neatly coincided with the disintegration of state socialisms. Neoliberal attacks on the welfare state and labor unions in New Zealand and elsewhere were made easier by the collapse of the Soviet Bloc. In hindsight, it appears the political power of workers within social democracy depended in part on the cultural, political, and economic strength of the Soviet Union and to a lesser extent on the socialist states of Eastern Europe.

It's with this lost Second World in mind that readers should peer through the looking glass at the generation of Russians who lived within the climax and fall of Soviet communism. For this they should step inside Donald J. Raleigh's *Soviet Baby Boomers: An Oral History of Russia's Cold War Generation*, one of the first Soviet histories employing oral history methodology. Raleigh argues his method suits Soviet history well, as "the boundaries between public and private life remained porous and the state sought to peer into every corner" (5)—a justification for oral history that might equally apply to scholars working on American Red Scares, such as Storrs. Through what Raleigh calls "composite narrative," *Soviet Baby Boomers* focuses on two cohorts born in 1949–1950 who attended primary school together, one from metropolitan Moscow and one from Saratov, a provincial city "closed" to outsiders until 1991. Raleigh's technique stitches the individual memories of these cohorts together to narrate the dramatic chapters of Soviet communism. In an observation resonant of Castillo's *Cold War on the Home Front*, Raleigh argues that the sustainability of the Soviet state hinged upon the rise and fall of living standards within the larger context of twentieth-century consumer utopias.

Boomers' lives differed greatly from those of their parents, who survived the Stalinist terror and the Great Patriotic War against Nazi Germany. During the Stalinist era, most Soviet citizens resided in overcrowded communal apartments. Housing stock expanded dramatically beginning in the 1950s, when more than 100 million people moved into new apartments (a demographic event with

parallels to Chinese urbanization four decades later). Raleigh notes that this "mass exodus into individual apartments provided ideal conditions for molding the post-Stalin *Homo Sovieticus*" (45). The exodus reflected the Party's attempt to domesticate communism and to counter the prefab suburban homes featured in US national exhibitions.

Whatever Khrushchev's intentions for the 1959 American National Exhibition in Moscow and the subsequent Kitchen Debate with Nixon, Raleigh argues that the show undermined "confidence in the Soviet system's ability to withstand the competition" (60). Tellingly, Leonid Terlitsky, who was nine years old at the time, remembers his enthusiastic mother bringing home catalogs from the exhibition with pictures of big American kitchens. Terlitsky's enthusiasm supports Raleigh's contention that US soft power colonized Soviet boomers, but the context is instructive. In the year of the exhibition, only a third of urban apartments in the USSR had running water or indoor plumbing. Less than 10 percent had personal bathtubs or showers. Only 2 percent had hot water.

With cold water a Cold War norm for Soviets then, it's easy to understand how Western pop music and fashions could inspire utopian feelings. Raleigh's boomers describe the attraction of blue jeans and rock music at the 1957 Moscow Youth Festival. Yet the intensity of their attachments to stereotypes and clichés is revealing. While Soviet boomers dismissed the exaggerations of anti-American Soviet propaganda, they uncritically accepted the idealized lifestyles of Western capitalism. Igor Litvin, for one, remembers seeing the US as "some kind of promised land" (159). Curiously, skepticism of Soviet propaganda prevented many from thinking critically about the United States. Ironically, the excellence of Soviet schools also helped boomers perceive incongruities in state messages.

Crucially, though, the sensations of pop music created cognitive dissonance between anti-Western Soviet rhetoric and the sonic pleasure of electric guitars. Thanks to tape recorders, banned music such as the Beatles circulated and became conflated with capitalist culture. One fan from Saratov gushed how the Beatles proved that "in the West, they don't live so badly after all and they sing well. This was a very significant moment" (140). Disseminating tapes became a twentieth-century variation of social media, helping this generation naturalize illicit information. Raleigh notes how 1960s guitar poetry "circulating on privately recorded tapes" constituted "the most widespread form of unofficial popular and perhaps even antigovernment culture at the time" (142). As with the VCRs and fax machines that followed, cassettes and recorders allowed self-produced media to share stories and express emotions distinct from state narratives.

Despite flagging growth, party officials amassed great fortunes. Brezhnev came to power with the slogan "stability in cadres," which in effect "entrenched a gerontocracy" (221). Educated professionals witnessed the recession of late socialism with creeping dissatisfaction about state corruption. In combination with economic stagnation, open corruption drained remaining respect for the

system. Corruption politicized austerity: When the price of state vodka rose as the bottle and lid design became cheaper, many felt personally offended by the political leadership.

Gorbachev's reforms, argues Raleigh, particularly *perestroika* and *glasnost*, expressed the zeitgeist of imploding socialism—a general desire to start over. Several boomers believed officials collapsed the state intentionally. Aleksandr Kutin felt "party activists at the top had deposited so much money abroad that they had to legalize their fortunes" (279). Vladimir Prudkin said the oligarch plundering of the 1990s was a "continuation of the stealing of the 1970s and 1980s" (330). For these boomers, *perestroika* was disaster capitalism.

The Soviet state's failure to meet the rising material expectations of its citizens opened ideological rifts for the boomers that, once activated, corroded their faith in the Soviet future. Although the state tried to build a floor under living standards, the opportunities for plunder by corrupt state networks only calcified hierarchies. The centrally planned economy concentrated wealth into a nexus of powerful elites without expertise or wisdom, and they precipitated collapse as they squandered resources. Even worse, the transition to capitalism was catastrophic. *Soviet Baby Boomers* distinctively reveals a history that comes from educated Russians who experienced these events firsthand and who narrate it unfiltered by censorship or political motives.

Both Locke and Raleigh's texts remind us that Western anticommunism and Red Scares—and now neoliberalism—mirror the repressive powers of elite Soviets. While Western capitalists and Soviet communists rhetorically charged each other with economic and political perfidy, they mutually attempted to win the Cold War using the same strategy: to win popular consent through utopian kitchens for the middle classes and to repress dissent when necessary. In a further commonality, Castillo's *Cold War on the Home Front* demonstrates how both sides promised an esthetically modern consumer lifestyle for all, while delivering it only to some. These similarities get pushed to rather startling extremes in Kate Brown's *Plutopia: Nuclear Families, Atomic Cities, and the Great Soviet and American Plutonium Disasters*.

Plutopia details the strange parallel fortunes of two Cold War cities built to process plutonium for nuclear weapons: Richland, Washington, and Ozersk, in the southern Urals. Brown describes Richland and Ozersk as affluent citadels of subsidized housing, good health care, job security, and safe streets. Yet her work makes the dystopian dimensions of the two cities quite plain: plant workers lived under constant military and medical surveillance, and plant managers repeatedly compromised safety standards to meet production quotas or to facilitate graft. In a rather stunning finding, Brown reports that the Richland plant and the Ozersk *each* issued double the radioactive waste of Chernobyl during their several decades of plutonium production. Perhaps the only thing more surprising than the scale of this ecological contamination is how little has previously been written about it.

If revealing the forgotten contamination of Cold War nuclear disasters was the book's sole purpose, it would certainly deserve a wide audience. Brown's

project, however, is even more ambitious. Her chapters travel between the two plants to tell intertwined stories of their militarized construction during and after the Second World War and how they became much more than plutonium factories. In order to attract workers, each tried to realize the fantasies staged in the Soviet and American national exhibitions depicted in Castillo's *Cold War on the Home Front*. Brown defines them as plutopias, sustained by "an ever-expanding economy delivering a continually increasing volume of consumer goods for an endlessly rising standard of living made possible by government subsidies for select workers" (335). Her definition makes clear how "plutopia" embodies the central contradictions of consumer politics, borrowed in part from Lizabeth Cohen, whose idea of postwar "consumer-citizens" animates Brown's analysis (148). At its heart, plutopia constituted a political bargain between the ruling classes and the middle classes at the expense of the working classes.

The wartime origins of the Hanford plant in Richland made it a time capsule of 1940s racial capitalism. In 1943, the US Army Corps of Engineers and the DuPont corporation chose the location near the Columbia River Basin because of its proximity to the Grand Coulee Dam, built with New Deal funds by "Soviet-style, state-sponsored development" (16). Local boosters seized on the dam and then the new plutonium plant as renewable sources of taxpayer-subsidized income. When recruiting company workers for the plant, DuPont argued they needed "good men," meaning those with white families, to live in three-bedroom houses. In an echo of Marshall Plan exhibitions, DuPont managers claimed that these new homes were the "American way." The mass-produced, assembly-line housing they pioneered in Richland would become the same model exported to Moscow almost fifteen years later, when Khrushchev and Nixon met in their kitchen. Like the actors miming happy families in Marshall Plan exhibitions, all the permanent residents of the new city, zoned by race, class, and occupation, were white.

While consumer culture explains the appeal of middle-class Richland, it doesn't explain Hanford's true value or purpose. The plant was a piggy bank for corporate contractors. In 1947 the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) contracted with General Electric (GE) to develop the site. In an early example of how the site worked, GE informed AEC officials in 1949 that they needed more money, in part to build the most expensive junior high school in American history. As Brown points out, "[S]hoddy accounting, cost overruns, and poor management were, for the corporation, great business" (129). When critics pointed out that GE's support for small government and free markets was hypocritical, the company repeatedly played the patriotism card.

Under ambitious deadlines to create atomic bombs, plant managers cut the cooling time for irradiated fuel slugs, exposing workers in chemical labs to dangerous radioactivity. The company dumped waste directly into the Columbia River, based on the hope that the river would diffuse harmful particles into the ocean. When DuPont scientists confirmed the opposite was true, the company ignored their findings. They instead offered a safety exposition featuring scantily clad female models, while radioactive isotopes spewed unfiltered

into the air and water. They continued even after Japan surrendered. They classified the results of their tests on workers. Both the dumping and the secrecy became standard operating procedure. Radioactive pollution was unexceptional; in the late 1940s, radioactive flakes lay all around the plant. Muskrats burrowing into a storage pond sent 16 million gallons of radioactive water into the Columbia. Brown follows the story of the Richland reactor into the 1970s and 1980s. It wasn't until then that safety violations finally led to whistleblowers who, in turn, were harassed, attacked, and spied on: One "likened the company's surveillance of his private life to the tactics of the KGB" (294). In 1989 the DOE closed the plant. The cleanup costs were estimated at $100 billion.

Brown's account of the corrupt collaborations between GE and the AEC rests on a substantial accumulation of evidence. In the context of the environmental and human sacrifices she details, one might then assume the plant's managers are the villains here. They are, but the most provocative argument Brown makes is about the nature of plutopia itself. Her most disturbing claim is that most workers and residents ultimately tolerated what happened in Richland because the city offered those consumer pleasures on display in the US national exhibitions then touring Europe. Those pleasures made it too easy to trust Richland's leaders, who told workers not to worry. True, their jobs and standard of living depended on believing those leaders—but it's also true they had options. They could have left, but they didn't.

The Soviet plutonium plant Maiak exceeded even Richland's horrors. There, workers faced a similar tradeoff. Like Richland, the site included fenced-off security zones. Workers couldn't leave without permission. "Workers put up with the restrictions and fear," Brown relates, "because they were locked in, but also because they were rewarded for their work with better rations" (110). In exchange for their work, workers provided for their families in ways impossible outside the zone. Yet many new workers would leave upon hearing stories of the mysterious "fungus" that made everyone sick. Their continual desertion required new rewards. By 1958, most of the city's homes boasted one room per person. Managers offered better pay and more amenities but realized that the "conditions of advanced socialism were creating citizens who were entirely unsocialist" (260). On the other hand, better-paid workers identified more with their bosses.

The Maiak plant contaminated everything in Ozersk. Many exposed workers fell sick instantly. Like the Americans, the Soviets used women in risky chemical engineering processes, and many began dying from cancer while still young. Worse disasters abounded. In 1957, an underground storage tank exploded into a mushroom cloud. Authorities ordered crews to decontaminate as fast as possible. Soldiers were discharged and prisoners released in exchange for work. Eyewitnesses saw scores dying in hospital rooms. Workers began to flee. Later, technicians measured residents in a nearby village and realized the children were radioactive. Many died from cancer in the next few decades.

The Soviets knew the Americans dumped into the Columbia River; they dumped into the Techa. From 1949 to 1951, 20 percent of the river was radioactive fluid, and it "created a radioactive landscape" (192). When scientists began studying nearby villages in 1951, they found people using the river water for bathing, drinking, and food production. Scientists recommended evacuating sixteen of the worst villages, but Party officials "balked" at the price (195). When they returned to the area in 1990, the readings were higher than Chernobyl. The current residents have the third-highest rates of leukemia in the world, after Nagasaki and Hiroshima. Suicides are not unusual. Brown discovered developmentally disabled children with radioactive traits that the villagers identify as "the radiant ones." Many "radiant children" there don't survive at all: there is a repository in Cheliabinsk where doctors collect "irradiated body parts," including "genetically malformed babies" (298).

The scale of the Hanford and Maiak plutonium disasters make clear that the bargain of "middle-class prosperity" in exchange for "high-risk affluence" was asymmetrical and predatory. Government officials and corporate managers had complete control of both Richland and Ozersk, but they didn't share their knowledge about biological risks. Brown is correct that residents traded "their civil and biological rights for consumer rights," but there is another argument implicit in her work and in all the texts under review here (5). While Cold War ruling classes constantly stirred fears about foreign threats and radical ideologies, those governments were in fact the primary enemies to their own peoples. The worst harms came from old men inside the system and especially those at the top. Pointedly, too, they attacked powerful women who tried to organize alternatives while also reserving the riskiest work for women at the bottom of their hierarchies. And they did so while fantasizing that their patriarchal economies were chivalrous and normal.

Cold War fears of foreign enemies obscured a similar strategy of Soviet and American leaders: to divide their middle-classes from their working-classes with three-bedroom homes and nice kitchens while they and their friends exploited state treasuries with insider contracts. The latter point is often lost. Those military contracts and costs overruns were—and remain—a slow version of accumulation by dispossession. All the lives broken by loyalty boards, by cowardly managers, by party leaders, and by radioactive rivers testify to the damage inflicted by Cold War governments stealing from their own people. Perhaps this is one of the true lessons of the Cold War: The regime one should fear most is one's own.