problems in the study of popular culture as they relate to Russia. Characterizing these cultural productions as frankly commercial and "middlebrow," they consider such questions as the changing nature of the audience over time and the effects of improving technology. They conclude that popular culture, in all its forms, assisted city-dwellers in coping with urban life and adjusting to change. Other scholars might take issue with their judgments, but all scholars will be intrigued by the possibilities for further study raised both by their arguments and by the texts themselves. For instance, the intermingling of traditional and modern elements in these pieces is fascinating, and among other things makes one wonder why certain traditional features of the culture persisted while others did not. The bastardizing of Russian classics by popular writers calls into question the assumption that most people did not read Tolstoi and Chekhov; perhaps not, but they may have encountered their works in a form more accessible to "middlebrow" readers. One hopes that Entertaining Tsarist Russia will encourage other scholars to follow the trail blazed by Richard Stites and now taken up by von Geldern and McReynolds; further study of Russian popular culture can be expected to produce illuminating insights into the nature of Russian society.

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They like the way they look: on 137 pages of photographs, drawn largely from the collection of Mikhail Zolotarev, a self-assured group of the leading pre-revolution Moscow merchants confidently and boldly posed for the photographer. They are accompanied by pictures of their families, homes, dachas, horses, factories, libraries, and museums.

Merchant Moscow's purpose is to resurrect the glory days of this group of accomplished entrepreneurs who were largely forgotten and ignored during the Soviet era by historians on both sides of the Great Divide. Zolotarev has made it his personal project to collect photographs on the merchants of Moscow and now has over 30,000. He exhibited 600 in Moscow in 1991 and that exhibition inspired this book.

A major impulse behind this publication was to make known that which had been hidden for decades. Similar exhibitions in Moscow have begun to reveal the historical record secreted away for so many years and, clearly, there is more to come. As a resident of a Moscow-area village where the Morozov family owned textile mills, Zolotarev wanted to set the record straight not only about his native town, but also about a major development in the history of Russia — the emergence of successful entrepreneurs. He also wanted to correct an historic wrong, the Soviet distortion of the Russian past. He and his collaborators have done honor to their subjects. This volume, how-ever, is not a balanced account of the
rise and fall of the Moscow merchanty (the fall coming, of course, in the revolution of 1917) but a paean to its accomplishments.

The contributors have produced sympathetic and attractive portraits of the leading representatives of the Moscow merchanty. The authors are saying what the Moscow merchants would have said about themselves if they had had the chance. Each of fourteen contributors has done so in the form of a short essay to accompany each of the fourteen groupings of photographs and reflects in words what the photographers captured on film. Five of the contributors are from the Institute of History in Moscow; Zolotarev, the collector of the archive, is a chemist by profession. The rest of the authors are from universities in the U.S., with the exception of Karen Pennar, who writes for Business Week. The presence of several Moscow historians among the authors offers another successful example of the rapidity with which scholars from Russia have combined with colleagues abroad to produce successful books on the history of Russia.

One of the interpretive themes offered by the contributors is the notion that groups of people such as the Moscow merchants seek to "define" themselves in terms of "place, space, and identity." The Moscow merchants are said to have done so in a cultural and political environment hostile to business. Beards, bonnets, buildings and the like all bespeak an attempt by the Moscow merchants to create a grand "image," both to gratify themselves and to show a confident face to the world around them. A merchant who wears a trimmed beard, therefore, is announcing to the world that he is a Muscovite and Russian patriot and proud of it, but that he is ready to do business not only in Russia but in Western Europe. These excursions into semiotics are the least satisfying features of the book because they are the most speculative. They are the most jargon-laden and ascribe attributes to historical persons for which solid proof is elusive.

A number of authors, accordingly, strain to establish the significance of their subjects, and this problem also affects the captions. The editors, for example, want their readers to understand that the windows shown in the photograph of the Bary dacha are open "to accommodate the Russian obsession with fresh country air." The vodka merchant V. P. Smirnov is not just having his picture taken but by that very act is offering a "challenge" to the "notion of a group with an inferiority complex." Readers therefore must be prepared to enjoy what might qualify as collective leg-pulling or resolve to indulge these flights of "experimental" history-writing — as the dust-jacket labels it.

Core essays in the book deal with the origins, development and aspirations of the leading Moscow merchants. The bulk of them came from Old Believer peasant stock. Beginning in the second half of the nineteenth and into the early twentieth century they made a lot of money in banking, textiles, railroads, trading, insurance, vodka distilling, confections. As they grew wealthy, they bought and built dachas, traveled, became philanthropists, built theaters, museums, hospitals, collected paintings and books, and took on responsibilities for their city as members of business associations and governing institutions. They married off their daughters and sons into other wealthy business families to preserve and extend their fortunes. Many of their sons then chose not to pursue business careers and made their