affairs largely on its own. By contrast, depressed Bryansk, with its outdated defense plants and unlucky location near Chernobyl, furthermore lacking strong and creative executive leadership, saw more utility in seeking to change only the “pocketbook” of Russian federalism, by securing increased funding and administrative support from the federal center in its bilateral treaty. Vologda, located somewhere between these two extremes in terms of both its economic health and executive competence, instead chose as its bargaining strategy to focus on getting the center to “assure the implementation of its federal promises,” hoping to decrease gradually its dependence on the center (pp. 108-109).

In her concluding chapter, Pascal argues that despite Putin’s energetic attempts to reform the “hodgepodge” of different legal and fiscal arrangements created during Yeltsin’s period of treaty-making mania, “Russia’s institutional structure offers few alternatives to bilateralism for intergovernmental negotiations and reform,” and that as such, Putin should not expect his centralizing reforms to “alter the status quo” of Russian federalism without the devotion of “vital political and economic resources” to accomplishing this task (p. 160). The fact that the Putin administration has just signed renewed bilateral agreements with Tatarstan and Bashkortostan suggests that Pascal’s conclusion is correct. Drawing on a useful comparison of Russia’s asymmetrical federal system with that of Spain and Canada, Pascal urges that we not a priori assume that a reliance on bilateralism and the asymmetry it engenders is necessarily a negative thing for Russia. For while she does acknowledge that asymmetrical federations require “constant negotiation to balance regional diversity and national unity” (p. 180), such systems also provide the best way to “maintain the Rikerian bargain in multiethnic, diverse federations” (p. 182).

One of the strengths of Pascal’s study is her focus on the bilateral negotiations between some of the lesser-known regions and the center – we have several accounts of the process leading to Tatarstan’s treaty in February 1994, but very few detailed accounts of how this dynamic played out in other, non-ethnic regions. In this sense, Pascal’s book is a welcome contribution to our understanding of the “on the ground” dynamics of federation building in Russia (particularly interesting is her observation that two of the three regions turn to outside “consultants” to help fashion their strategies and proposals in bargaining with the center – one significant resource certainly not available during the Soviet era!). Her modest, but intelligent conclusions about both the cases she studies and the overall functioning of the Russia federation also seem appropriate and, as noted above, appear to be borne out by subsequent events. Pascal’s in-depth fieldwork and her lucid recounting of the paths that led these three regions to three very different treaties make for informative and rewarding reading.

Kate Graney


The Russian people are enduring an economic transformation that has brought many of them great material hardship and introduced significant anxiety into their lives as well.
As most students of Russian society know, Russians employ a wide variety of coping strategies to help them survive in their new environment, many of which were first developed in the Soviet period and have been adapted to new conditions.

*Not by Bread Alone* is an ethnographic study that goes beyond the maneuvers people use to satisfy their material needs, to explore how engaging in those maneuvers becomes a source of social support, too, as well as how social contacts enhance one’s ability to satisfy material needs. Specifically, it studies a group of pensioners who participate in a soup kitchen in Moscow and the many ways in which they rely on each other and the soup kitchen staff. These include not only receiving the meals on offer, but exchanging favors (especially those related to one’s access to expensive or just hard-to-acquire goods and services), sharing food (most notably that grown in dacha gardens), and avoiding the social isolation that can be so dangerous to the elderly (by, for example, checking up on those who have missed meals).

Along the way there are excellent discussions of the role of rural ideals in contemporary urban Russia, of how pervasive bureaucratization continues to disrupt daily life, and of how “social transactions” can shade into corruption. In one particularly telling passage, the author relates the pride a family feels in a daughter who passed her mathematics exams by using a friend’s answers; this was viewed as “testament to her intellectual resourcefulness” and ability to mobilize social assets rather than as cheating. After all, information of any type “is not a private resource . . . but a socializing force that brings people together. In a sense, possessing information obliges one to share it with others” (pp. 72-74). It is worth noting that while most episodes highlight the hospitality and generosity long associated with the Russian character, some portray a graspingness, a sense of entitlement — including the expectation of “gifts” — that can be the unattractive flip side of certain norms.

However interesting its insights, though, the book is not without its problems. There are numerous methodological issues that could be raised, and to her credit, are raised by the author herself. Some get to the very nature of ethnographic research (what, in the end, do we “know” beyond the ethnographer’s own experience?), including the problems associated with the researcher’s own participation in the activities being chronicled. Caldwell tries to deal with this by claiming to be an “observant participant” (p. 21) instead of the more conventional “participant observer,” but she never actually explains the distinction, let alone the advantage of the former.

The nature of her participation remains unclear as well. The soup kitchen was operated by a Moscow church whose religious affiliation is not identified, and Caldwell’s level of involvement in church activities more generally is never clarified. This is not to say that at some level of involvement she becomes an unreliable narrator, but the nature of her role in the soup kitchen community remains uncertain. The relationship of the soup kitchen to public agencies is also confusing. Government bodies seem to be able to control a great deal that goes on in what looks at first like a private operation, and some of us would like to know more about that, especially in the context of recent Kremlin efforts to “manage” civil society.

The book raises other questions as well that it might have addressed more fully. How typical of the Russian, or at least Moscow, population are the pensioners in their strategies? Do members of other at-risk groups, such as single mothers, employ similar sur-