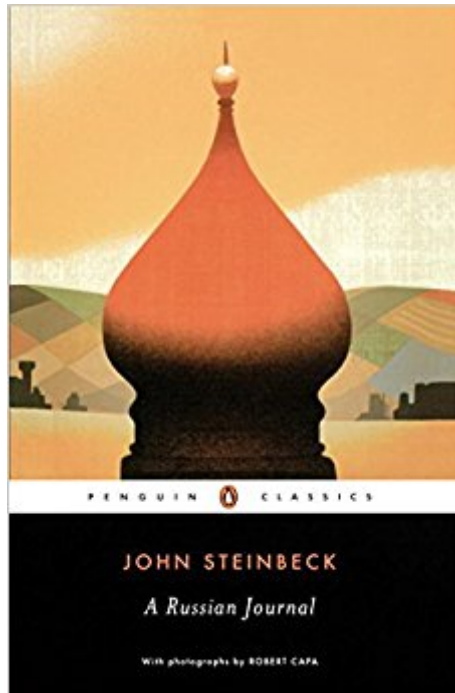




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A Russian Journal (Classic, 20th-Century, Penguin)



Synopsis

Steinbeck and Capa's account of their journey through Cold War Russia is a classic piece of reportage and travel writing. Just after the Iron Curtain fell on Eastern Europe, Pulitzer Prize-winning author John Steinbeck and acclaimed war photographer Robert Capa ventured into the Soviet Union to report for the New York Herald Tribune. This rare opportunity took the famous travelers not only to Moscow and Stalingrad – now Volgograd – but through the countryside of the Ukraine and the Caucasus. Hailed by the New York Times as "superb" when it first appeared in 1948, *A Russian Journal* is the distillation of their journey and remains a remarkable memoir and unique historical document. What they saw and movingly recorded in words and on film was what Steinbeck called "the great other side there – the private life of the Russian people." Unlike other Western reporting about Russia at the time, *A Russian Journal* is free of ideological obsessions. Rather, Steinbeck and Capa recorded the grim realities of factory workers, government clerks, and peasants, as they emerged from the rubble of World War II – represented here in Capa's stirring photographs alongside Steinbeck's masterful prose. Through it all, we are given intimate glimpses of two artists at the height of their powers, answering their need to document human struggle. This edition features an introduction by Steinbeck scholar Susan Shillinglaw. For more than seventy years, Penguin has been the leading publisher of classic literature in the English-speaking world. With more than 1,700 titles, Penguin Classics represents a global bookshelf of the best works throughout history and across genres and disciplines. Readers trust the series to provide authoritative texts enhanced by introductions and notes by distinguished scholars and contemporary authors, as well as up-to-date translations by award-winning translators.

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Customer Reviews

After the Iron Curtain was established following World War II, Steinbeck, along with photographer Bob Capa, ventured into the Soviet Union on behalf of the New York Herald Tribune. This 1948 volume collects the full run of his reports with numerous pictures. Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Steinbeck and Capa's account of their journey through Cold War Russia is a classic piece of reportage and travel writing. Just after the Iron Curtain fell on Eastern Europe, Pulitzer Prize -- winning author John Steinbeck and acclaimed war photographer Robert Capa ventured into the Soviet Union to report for the New York Herald Tribune. This rare opportunity took the famous travelers not only to Moscow and Stalingrad -- now Volgograd -- but through the countryside of the Ukraine and the Caucasus. Hailed by the New York Times as "superb" when it first appeared in 1948, *A Russian Journal* is the distillation of their journey and remains a remarkable memoir and unique historical document. What they saw and movingly recorded in words and on film was what Steinbeck called "the great other side there ... [the] private life of the Russian people". Unlike other Western reporting about Russia at the time, *A Russian Journal* is free of ideological obsessions. Rather, Steinbeck and Capa recorded the grim realities of factory workers, government clerks, and peasants, as they emerged from the rubble of World War II. Through it all, we are given intimate glimpses of two artists at the height of their powers, answering their need to document human struggle.

I read *A Russian Journal* upon returning home from a two-month stint of teaching in Moscow and was excited to dive into another Steinbeck. Not surprisingly, Steinbeck offers a truthful and compassionate portrayal of the human experience through eyes which seem to dissolve cultural barriers. Respectfully intruding into the lives of normal people during post World War II Soviet Union, Steinbeck, accompanied by Robert Capa, documents the thoughts, work ethics, and questions of those who the rest of 1940s America failed to understand. Forging ahead behind the iron curtain, Steinbeck retells tales of normal, family-oriented, hard-working people found in the midst of his travels through the countryside who in many ways were no different than the Americans who feared and often disdained them. Most remarkably to me, Steinbeck tells of a Moscow that is

relatively unchanged today. Incredibly, this slice of Russian culture has remained the same in many ways though it has experienced such a turbulent century. I would recommend *A Russian Journal* to anyone planning on visiting Russia soon (because it is still relevant) and also to anyone who enjoys Steinbeck. It is simple, heartfelt, and relatively unbiased in its attempts to portray normal life in another culture. Its style is easily comparable to *Travels With Charley*, although I believe because Steinbeck understands his own American culture so much more richly, he is able to portray connections and summations about what he experiences much more definitively in *Travels With Charley*. Regardless, *A Russian Journal* is certainly an interesting and enjoyable read.

Steinbeck is always Steinbeck! I bought the Kindle edition but was very disappointed with the resolution of the pictures and by that I mean the quality of the images of the pictures. It may sound strange to complain about "pictures" in a book written by Steinbeck but being Capa his travel companion and co-author I expected more. The journal is very descriptive and tries to portray the Soviet Union without any bias. I personally think that such thing as "un-biased" does not exist but at least Steinbeck was aware of that. On those days of the cold war, if you were not totally adverse to everything that was from the Soviet Union you were stigmatized as a pro-communist, in the best of the cases... I wish today a writer as talented as Steinbeck with comparable literary stature and as un-biased as he was, would write a: "*Middle Eastern Journal*"...

Sincere and honest, though a little naive, Steinbeck and photographer Capa tour the Soviet Union after WWII. The most interesting parts are about their visit to Georgia, specifically to Batumi on the Black Sea and the capital, Tiflis (Tbilisi). Through descriptions of overeating and overdrinking, we meet the good people of Russia, the bureaucracy, and the news people and foreign service people who live there. Steinbeck's writing makes the tour, including the waiting in airports, the drinking of endless cups of tea, and the incessant pouring of vodka come alive.

Fascinating story of the strength and faith of the Russian people after the second world war. And of course Steinbeck's writing is always so good. Interesting to see how our enemies of the cold war were just as afraid of us as we were of them. But the hopefulness of a people who lost so much was very inspiring.

I have been a John Steinbeck fan for many years and enjoy everything of his I've read. As much as I love his fiction, I love his nonfiction more. He can be cranky sometimes but more often than not,

his humor shines through as it does here, especially when he writes of Robert Capa. Reading this reminds me of *Travels with Charley* and *There Once was a War*, in all he tells the story as if he were sitting across the table from you, like a friend, sharing a good cup of coffee or a beer and a fantastic yarn about a place he'd been.

This is a wonderful book about people meeting people. The tone adeptly moves from sober reflections on the destruction of war to lighthearted and delightful anecdotes and observations of the varied Russian people. I recommend this book to anyone.

Steinbeck avoids his personal biases and writes a beautiful novel about post-World War II Soviet Union. Wonderful read.

At university course about Russia and "the Russian soul" we were advised to read this book. It's a journey that goes as far as the "censorship" allowed the writer and photographer, deep into the daily lives of simple people from Stalingrad, from Georgia and so on.

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