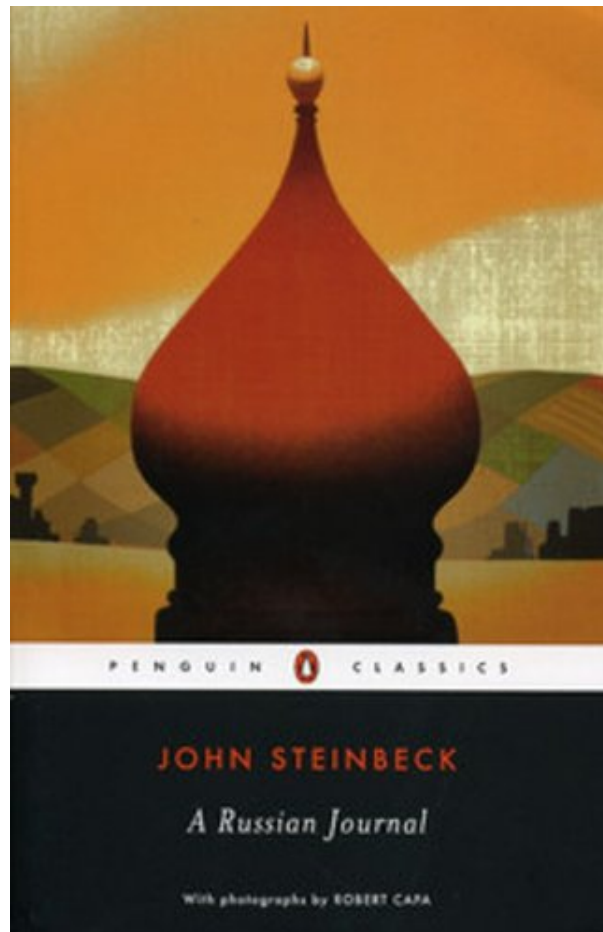
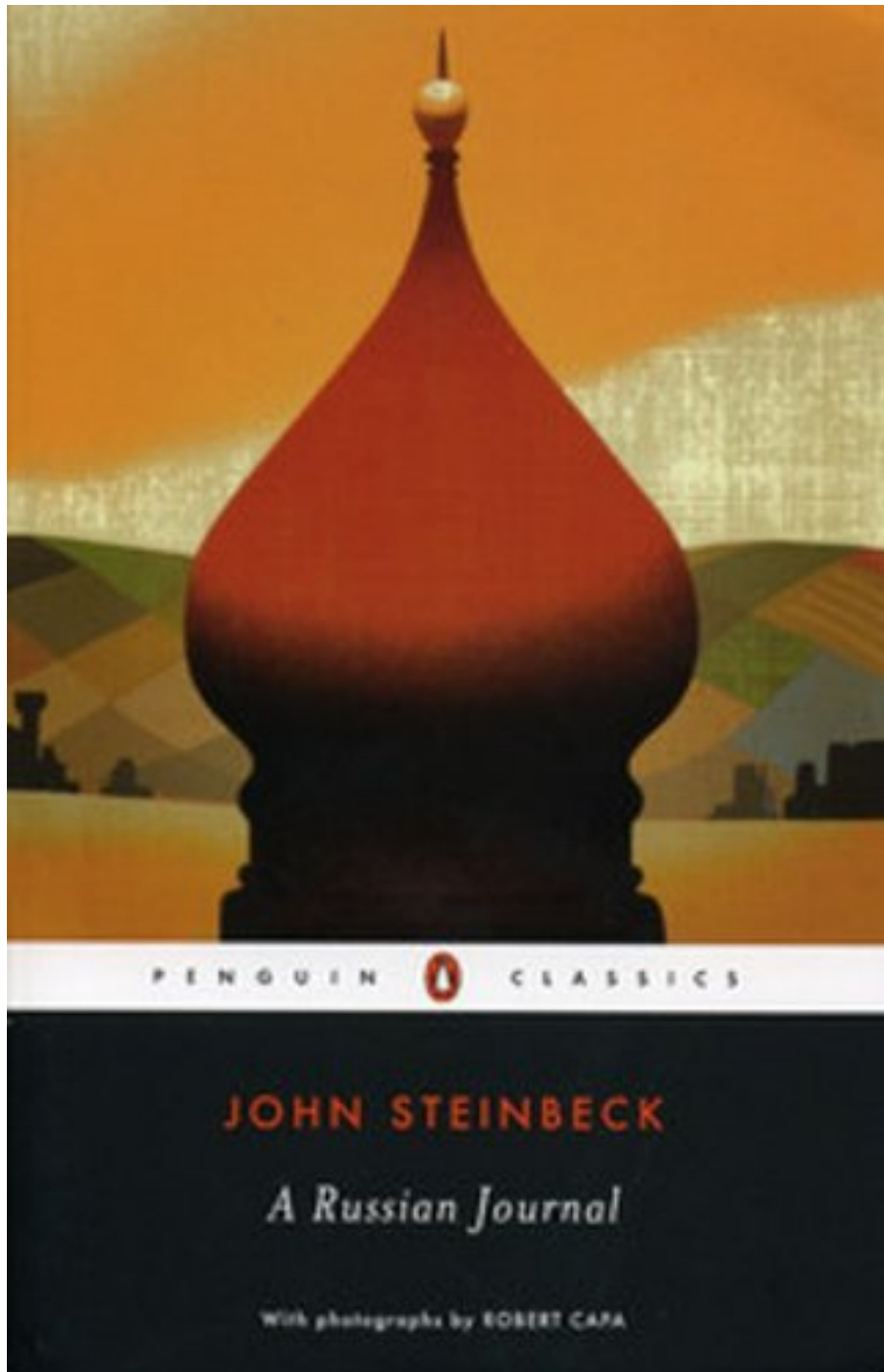


A RUSSIAN JOURNAL (CLASSIC, 20TH-CENTURY, PENGUIN) BY JOHN STEINBECK



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24 of 25 people found the following review helpful.

A story about both Russia and about two journalists

By Adam Rust

I read this book after returning home from a two week trip in Southwestern Russia. Steinbeck and Capa took their journey in 1948. They travel from Moscow to Volgograd and Rostov before turning back in Georgia. Much of the tension in this book springs from the rapidly cooling relationship between leaders of Russia and the United States at that point in time.

Their aim is not political. They seek to understand the hearts of the Soviet people. One of the amusing elements of this book is their regular conflict with the Soviet censors, who refuse to believe that they do not have political motives. Steinbeck intersperses the commentary on Russia with the nuts and bolts of their daily travels. The method mirrors the approach of his 1940 collaboration in the Gulf of California, "The Log from the Sea of Cortez." Steinbeck likes to write about the universal character of people and this trip to Russia or his previous trip in Mexico both speak to that interest. His conclusion is that Russians are like people anywhere else - they are proud of their homes and their families and are sincere in their efforts to build their nascent country. Steinbeck also goes to pains to elicit the hope among the Russian people for peace.

Many of the things that catch their eye remain constant to now. One interesting change is the perspective of the Russian people about the direction of their country. In Steinbeck's recollection, the people recognize that they are sacrificing for the good of their country. In 1948, the Russians expect that they will eventually gain from their hard work. Now they seem to have less faith.

This book is a great chance to learn about the personality of the world famous Robert Capa. During his travels with the Hungarian photojournalist, Steinbeck gets pretty pesky about Capa's personal habits. It seems that Capa likes long baths, other people's books, and morning silence. Steinbeck and Capa share rooms during their trip. I really enjoyed the secondary theme that develops on Capa's behavior.

Everyone should read this book, not just people who want to know about Russia.

23 of 24 people found the following review helpful.

Great book, but buy in hardback - photo quality in the 1999 edition is poor

By Gary Johnson

This is a great book, but you should buy a hardback edition instead of the paperback. I am a frequent visitor to Russia and I enjoyed the opportunity to compare and contrast Russia today with postwar Russia under Stalin. Unfortunately, Robert Capa's photos in the 1999 paperback are small and muddy. I could not even recognize places that I have visited many times. This book was a collaborative effort, but the 1999 printing seriously short changes Capa's contribution.

I don't know if the images are better in the 2001 paperback or the Kindle version, but after reading the 1999 edition I got a copy of the 1948 hardback via Amazon. I recommend that you do the same if you want to fully enjoy this excellent work.

15 of 15 people found the following review helpful.

Post-war Russia through very talented eyes

By Michael Casey

This wonderfully written book takes you through post-war Soviet Union, to farms and cities devastated by war but struggling to return to normalcy. Robert Capa not only adds wonderful photos but his role in this story is both funny and illuminating for any Capa fans. Written in the late 1940s, the story provides us with a very human side of the Russian people. The openness and friendliness of everyone they meet contrasts with the paranoia and hatred so present in the US at that time.

I read this as both a photographer and one who was recently in Russia and the insight provided was very enjoyable and educating. Capa's mannerisms and method of photography allowed his subjects to open up and feel comfortable in his lens -- not an easy thing since so many of the people had lost family and suffered terribly. Steinbeck's writing is honest, funny and his skills as a non-partisan reporter really shine in this work.

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