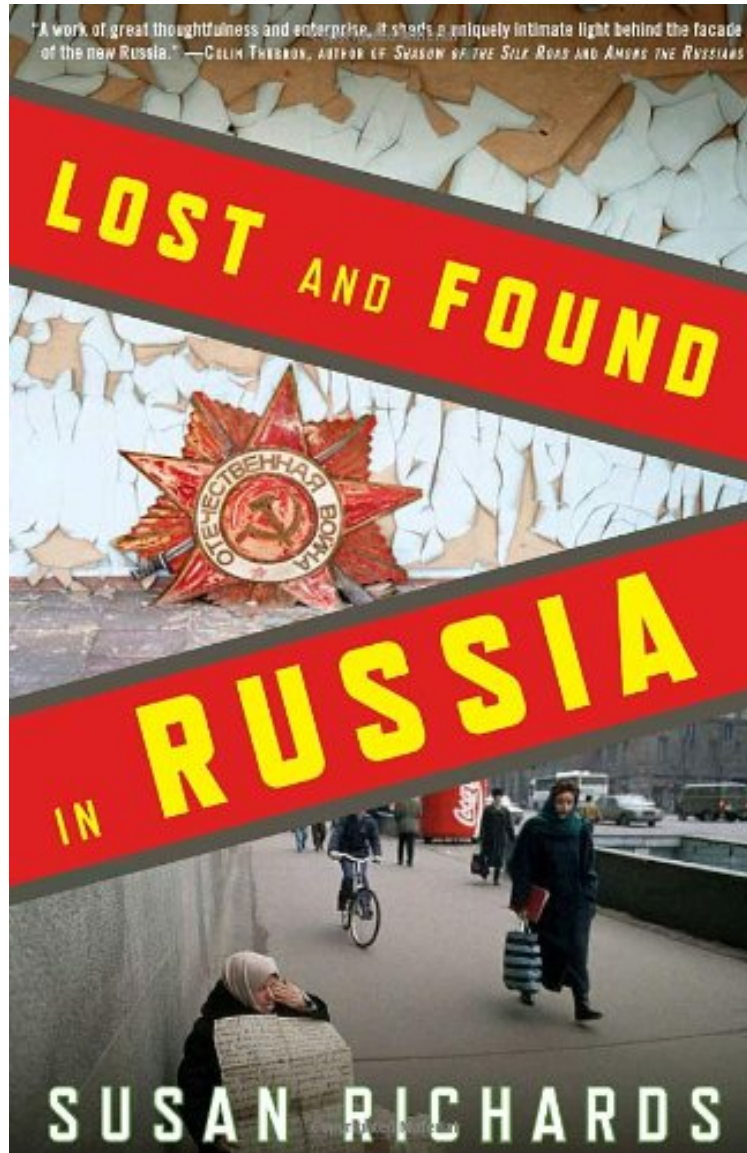


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Lost and Found in Russia: Lives in the Post-Soviet Landscape

Susan Richards

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Susan Richards : Lost and Found in Russia: Lives in the Post-Soviet Landscape before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Lost and Found in Russia: Lives in the Post-Soviet Landscape:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Accurate, Thoughtful, Humanizing
By A. Bastanza
I was a guest teacher in Leningrad/St. Petersburg during the transition from Gorbachev to Yeltsin and during Yeltsin's first few years as President and I have returned to visit friends on several occasions. I find the descriptions to be "spot on". Most

of my friends and colleagues would fit, in some way, into this book. There was fear, palatable fear. Not so much of the government, but of the daily struggles of life. At one point, many people could not afford to feed their pet dogs, so they turned them out into the streets. They formed packs and fended for themselves. Walking to the Metro in the morning, I always tried to avoid an area where the dogs were grifting. None ever bothered me, but paranoia was present. When the old Ruble was replaced with the New Ruble, the lines to exchange old for new currency were huge and there was a looming deadline. Replace it, or it was worthless. Some of my friends were savvy enough to wire money to themselves. They would clean out the mattresses, take the old money and send it. They then received the wire in new currency. You get my point. All rules were off. The Militia (police) stopped cars not for traffic violations, but for bribes. In this book, some of the people you meet sought a more isolated life away from the large cities. I hope you see why they did it. It may have been for religious reasons, but so many other reasons were possible as well. People in the West saw Russians "struggling for freedom". Russians were busy figuring out the new set of rules, still under construction, that they could live by. I recommend this book and find it to be an excellent read. One reviewer's concern about UFO's, etc., I find to be frivolous. Siberia is the size of the U.S. We have this UFO fascination in some parts of the U.S. as well. When you are concerned about when and where food is available, whether your factory or office will be open tomorrow, or whether you or someone else will own the flat you live in next month, UFO's don't seem so far fetched. I hope no one lives through this era in the future. But if you wish a glimpse of it, this is the book for you. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Better than footnotes

By Paul Richards

Stories that come from the grass roots have an appeal for the insights they give into the whole story or big picture of a place or event in history. Susan Richards book combines a review of the bigger picture with real stories of people she met and lived with during visits over the years. Following these people and their travels and ups and downs is a fascinating way to understand what happened when communism collapsed and the free market descended upon the largest country on earth. I especially appreciated the stories about the religious enclaves that formed of people seeking refuge from the gangsters and politicians who ravaged the country during those years. The spiritual dimension of the change from Soviet to post Soviet life tells a very interesting story and one which ideologues of the world only obscure with their preconceived ideas of how we should all live. Utopian societies have always provided a way of understanding an era and a place, including the mainstreams from which the utopians fled. The image of people leaving cities to go to the countryside in search of food is a terrifying one and one that may be in all our futures, free market or not. Thanks to Susan Richards for a fine read. (And we are not related, in spite of the name.)

Paul Richards

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A book I would read, then put down for a week or so.

By D. Maxine Pitts

This book was hard for me to get into, even though I have been to Russia four times. Parts of it were extremely interesting, and easy to capture my interest. Other parts took longer, but eventually were able to bring me in. It helps if you understand the Russian psyche. I made a dear friend in Russia, who has since passed away, but even she had that "Oh, Woe is me" attitude of doom about to fall on them. The British author even makes it easier to see why Putin is trying to bring Russia back to a world power---not that I agree with the way he is going about it. I think the Russians made their big mistake when they ousted Gorbechev because he wanted to go about it slower. They went with Yeltsin, and their whole economy collapsed.

After the fall of communism, Russia was in a state of shock. The sudden and dramatic change left many people adrift and uncertain—but also full of a tentative but tenacious hope. Returning again and again to the provincial hinterlands of this rapidly evolving country from 1992 to 2008, Susan Richards struck up some extraordinary friendships with people in the middle of this historical drama. Anna, a questing journalist, struggles to express her passionate spirituality within the rules of the new society. Natasha, a restless spirit, has relocated from Siberia in a bid to escape the demands of her upper-class family and her own mysterious demons. Tatiana and Misha, whose business empire has blossomed from the ashes of the Soviet Union, seem, despite their luxury, uneasy in this new world. Richards watches them grow and change, their fortunes rise and fall, their hopes soar and crash. Through their stories and her own experiences, Susan Richards demonstrates how in Russia, the past and the present cannot be separated. She meets scientists convinced of the existence of UFOs and mind-control warfare. She visits a cult based on working the land and a tiny civilization founded on the practices of traditional Russian Orthodoxy. Gangsters, dreamers, artists, healers, all are wondering in their own ways, "Who are we now if we're not communist? What does it mean to be Russian?" This remarkable history of contemporary Russia holds a mirror up to a forgotten people. *Lost and Found in Russia* is a magical and unforgettable portrait of a society in transition.

From Publishers Weekly

Part travelogue, part contemporary history, Richards's new work explores postcommunist Russia from the point of view of the Russian people directly affected by one of the 20th century's most defining sociopolitical events, the collapse of the U.S.S.R. Recounting her travels in Russia from 1992 to 2008, Richards, who wrote the PEN/Time-Life Award-winning *Epics of Everyday Life*, focuses on the country's forgotten provinces and the lives of her friends--the monastic, poetic journalist Anna; the manic, wandering couple Natasha and Igor; entrepreneurial Misha and his serene beauty of a wife, Tatiana. As a writer Richards wears her heart on her sleeve, and

her story is full of empathy, frustration, and admiration as she observes her friends going through the roller-coaster of emotions, from hope to despair. And while glimpses into the lives of Russia's common folk are interesting, the real gems Richards uncovers are about the parts of the Russian society and mindset that remained hidden from Western eyes for nearly a century. Whether she is discovering a town said to be frequented by UFOs, exploring Russia's development of parapsychological weapons, or visiting a lab where "communication with the divine" is studied, Richards is constantly exposing a mystical and religious side of Russia that flies in the face of Western rationalism.

(Dec.) (c) Copyright PWxyz, LLC. All rights reserved. From Booklist What does it mean to be Russian after the fall of communism? This is the essential question Richards pursues in her long-gestating follow-up to *Epics of Everyday Life* (1990). From 1992 to 2008, Richards made numerous forays into the Russian hinterlands and now provides a fascinating glimpse into provincial towns previously closed to foreigners. Sweeping political and societal change, from the chaos of the Yeltsin years to the autocracy of the Putin regime, are viewed through the eyes of the ordinary Russians Richards befriends in her travels. There's Anna, the idealistic journalist; restless Igor and mercurial Natasha; Misha, the shrewd entrepreneur, and Tatiana, his beatific wife. While Richards adroitly captures the despair and optimism of a people struggling to define the meaning of freedom, as a guide she's slightly scattershot, losing sight of her primary subjects while flitting from one tangent (faith healers) to another (fringe cults). She's at her best when chronicling the progress and setbacks of her friends, people once unknowable to Westerners but now shown to share the same ever-present uncertainty about the future. --Patty Wetli "It's travel as jaw-dropping performance." —Ben Dickinson, *Elle* "Part travelogue, part contemporary history...the real gems Richards uncovers are about the parts of the Russian society and mindset that remained hidden from Western eyes for nearly a century." —Publishers Weekly "Richards' genial snapshots (of 'Old Believers' in southern Siberia, and alien sightings at a secret uranium mine) hint at the multifaceted nature of Russian life but her cumulative impressions suggest a country in turmoil, with old and new traditions in headlong collision." —Financial Times "For a rich portrait of the new Russia, grab this off the shelf and skip all those biographies of Vladimir Putin." —Thomas de Waal, *Sunday Times (UK)* "Lost and Found in Russia is beautifully written, with arresting images on almost every page. I loved the men lying stiffly on their wooden bunks in the train like toppled statues. It is a travelogue as rich and compelling as a novel and, quite rightly, without a happy ending." —Lesley Chamberlain, *The Independent (UK)* "There is a human optimism that shines out of these hard lives and this loving account of them - an optimism that defies the rational." —Angus McQueen, *The Guardian*, Book of the Week "A patiently crafted glimpse "through a crack in the wardrobe" of the devastation wrought on Russian society during the turbulent post-Communist '90s." —Kirkus "Brave, moving and extraordinary. Travelling far beyond the usual travellers' routes, and often at considerable danger and in great discomfort, Richards has uncovered a world that few of us can begin to imagine." —Miranda Seymour, *The Tablet's Books of the Year 2009* "Once again, Susan Richards gives a rare and wonderful evocation of ordinary lives in Russia. People fall in love, fall ill, make money, lose money; some are nobly defeated, some shamelessly successful. Each one tells us more about the lethal tides of recent Russian history than years of newspaper reports." —Philip Marsden, author of *The Spirit Wrestlers and The Bronski House*