

Reviews in Brief

Historical Surveys

BASIL DMYTRYSHYN: *USSR: A Concise History*. New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1965.

MR. DMYTRYSHYN'S volume is a useful addition to a growing list of textbooks on modern Russia. After an introductory chapter on the geography of the country and the major developments since the French Revolution of 1789, the author begins the main part of his narrative with the collapse of the monarchy in February 1917. In a mere three hundred pages, he manages to present a lucid, concise and well-organized account of the most significant trends in Soviet history up to the 1960's. There is no attempt to reinterpret or to offer new information. As Mr. Dmytryshyn acknowledges in the preface, his aim has been to summarize the findings of scholars working in specialized areas. Although there are occasional slips, such as the suggestion that the Menshevik leader Martov joined forces with Lenin in July 1917, it is evident that the author read widely and carefully in preparation for this book. The bibliographies at the end of each chapter are up-to-date and will be of help to the student interested in examining any particular question in greater depth than is possible in a textbook.

A singular feature of *USSR: A Concise History*, is that forty per cent of it consists of appendices.

Among other items, there are ten pages of "Biographical Notes on Important Soviet Officials," unabridged versions of the Soviet Constitution and the Communist Party Statute adopted in 1961, Khrushchev's destalinization speech of 1956, and, finally, some sixty pages on "Soviet Views of the Sino-Soviet Dispute." The idea of exposing students in an introductory course to primary sources is certainly a good one, but unfortunately the overwhelming bulk of the selections deals with the very recent past. Thus there is very little material, for instance, on the 1917-1939 period, which in many ways is far more engrossing than the last twenty-five years. At the very least, a more extensive coverage of the first two decades of Soviet rule would have given this section of the volume a better balance than it now has—an important consideration for any work intended to be used primarily as a textbook. Still, Mr. Dmytryshyn has made a start in the right direction, and one should be grateful for that.

MALCOLM E. CARROLL: *Soviet Communism and Western Opinion 1919-1921*. (Edited by Frederick B. M. Hollyday.) Chapel Hill, Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1965.

UNFORTUNATELY, a disappointing book. To begin with, its title is misleading inasmuch as Mr.

Carroll does not deal essentially with Western opinion on Soviet communism during the 1919-1921 period, but rather with diplomatic relations between Western states and Russia, with internal developments in Russia, Germany, France, Great Britain and the United States, and with the various military conflicts in which Russia was engaged during those two years. The ostensible theme of the book result of this misguided and obviously overambitious undertaking is that the reader is overwhelmed by an array of details which do not add up to a very meaningful historical account. In any case, most of the subjects on which the author touches have been adequately and often excellently treated in other studies on which Carroll leans heavily.

Secondly, the writing is rather wooden, frequently awkward, and at times not even correct. Two examples will suffice: "Karl Radek developed the thesis that coexistence was the policy of the Soviet government in the *Manchester Guardian* (January 8, 1920)" (p. 29). "Persuaded that the White Russian cause was irretrievably lost and anxious to avoid unnecessary bloodshed, the British tried to restrain him [Wrangel] from aggressive action, the British High Commissioner in Constantinople warning, June 3, that an offensive would result in the loss of British interest in the fate of his army" (p. 82). Slipshod writing might be overlooked in a volume

that otherwise makes a significant contribution to scholarship. But in this case the author's difficulty with the English language is yet another obstacle for the prospective reader.

Abraham Ascher

The Land and Its People

GEORGE B. CRESSEY: *Soviet Potentials: A Geographic Appraisal*. Syracuse, New York, Syracuse University Press, 1962.

THE SCHOLAR who proposes to answer one of the perennial questions concerning competition between the Soviet Union and the West frequently finds himself in a rather awkward position. On the one hand, he must be loyal to the methods and standards of his discipline; on the other, the very posing of the question of competition places a value judgment upon the results of his research which constantly intrudes.

Thus, Professor George B. Cressey, Maxwell Professor of Geography at Syracuse University, attempts to answer the question, "Does the USSR have the environmental potentials with which to become the world's greatest state?" (The dust jacket simply states that this book "provides up-to-date background on our opponent in the struggle for world leadership.") When we find, then, that the northern tundra and certain desert areas in the USSR offer possibilities for only a pitiful kind of human existence, are we to consider this "fortunate" or "unfortunate"? Professor Cressey himself takes the most generous, although somewhat contradictory, path out of this dilemma by considering unfortunate what his original question implies to be fortunate.

Soviet Potentials is most valuable as a source of geographic informa-

tion about the Soviet Union for persons previously unacquainted with the area. The volume contains enlightening discussions of the specific characteristics of the continentality of the Soviet climate, and of the demographic, geographic, geologic, and economic features of the country. The assessment which emerges is that of a nation both blessed and condemned by nature. Although the Soviet Union derives much of its strength from its size, its very dimensions form an obstacle to efficient administration. While its resources in minerals are perhaps the greatest in the world, a considerable portion of that reserve is inaccessible. The great spaces which protect the Soviet Union from invasion multiply the problems of internal transportation. The fertility of the Ukraine is concentrated in the most vulnerable section of the nation and offers a temptation to invaders. The magnificent river and canal system is enormously limited in its usefulness by long periods of frigid weather. The multinational character of the USSR simultaneously increases the appeal of the state for its admirers and raises questions of ethnic divisions and irredentism across international borders. The occupation of Mackinder's strategic heartland coincidentally means entrapment within a land mass without access to oceans.

All these conflicting factors are carefully weighed by the author in his assessment of Soviet potentials. His conclusion is, "The United States of America enjoys assets of climate, soil, resources and location which seem to outweigh those of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. If the two people have equal technical ability, patriotism, and determination, the United States should keep in the lead. The only way in which the Soviet Union can overtake America is by more sacrifice and harder work than the latter cares to invest."

Prof. Cressey's survey is marred by a number of minor but bothersome defects. Many observations are either trite or quite inexact in

meaning. At the beginning, we learn that "in all the world there is no other country quite like the Soviet Union." Further on, we read that "Soviet planning finds its basis in the supposed logic of dialectical materialism." And in yet another spot, we are told that "just as all roads led to Rome, so many roads and railways center on the [Soviet] capital." The discussions of economic growth and international relations are already rather outdated in view of the author's failure to mention either the recent slowdown in Soviet industrial growth or the Sino-Soviet conflict. And, finally, though the book makes no claim to original scholarship, it is disturbing to find publications of US Congressional Committees cited for basic geographic data more frequently than either Western or Soviet primary sources.

Loren R. Graham

Turmoil in Africa

MICHAEL LOFCHIE: *Zanzibar: Background to Revolution*. Princeton, N.J., Princeton Univ. Press, 1965.

THE PRO-COMMUNIST aura surrounding the Zanzibar revolution of January 1964 and its aftermath tended, for many, to obscure the underlying causes of the explosion itself. The pro-Soviet, pro-Chinese, and even pro-Cuban leanings of some of the actors in the drama were represented by some commentators as the most significant aspect of the upheaval, and even as evidence of Communist authorship of the revolution. Others, on the other hand, saw the roots of the revolt as lying in a purely local history of social unrest and racial violence and felt that Communist attributions were irrelevant to the real issues. Nor was this just a difference of opinion between