

RUSSKO-GERMANSKIE DIPLOMATICHESKIE OTNOSHENIIA, 1905–1911 GG. (OT PORTSMUTSKOGO MIRA DO POTSDAMSKOGO SOGLASHENIIA). By *I. I. Astaf'ev*. Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Moskovskogo universiteta, 1972. 305 pp. 1.38 rubles.

At a time when the writing of diplomatic history has happily transcended the traditional fixation upon the *Primat der Aussenpolitik* and the nearly exclusive reliance on diplomatic documents, the work under review sounds almost like an echo from the past. Despite the availability of masses of documents at Bonn, Merseburg, and Potsdam, Astafiev has made no use of them, not even of those in East German custody. Important contributors to Russo-German relations such as Schiemann, Delbrück, von Bernhardt, and the "Alldeutsche Verband," on the German side, and von Schwanebach and Guchkov on the Russian, have been ignored. Although Astafiev has drawn upon the papers of AVPR, TsGVIA, and TsGAOR, these archives have not been used to explore fully the complex relations between domestic and foreign affairs.

From these pages emerges therefore a rather old-fashioned, one-dimensional picture of Russo-German relations in the decade before the war. It adds little to what we already knew before the Fritz Fischer school opened the subject anew. If there is anything novel in this work, it is to be sought in the refreshingly dispassionate approach to the subject. Astafiev, though not averse to the use of traditional catch phrases of Soviet historical literature, has drawn a convincing picture of the effort of Russian statesmen, between 1905 and 1911, to steer a course of conscious vacillation between Berlin and the future Entente partners. In a summary sentence, which with the change of the first word could also easily serve as a Soviet defense of Stalin's prewar actions, Astafiev judges tsarist Russia's policies in almost flattering terms: "Tsarism tried to preserve a balance of power in the complex international situation of the period and, not tilting toward one of the emerging imperialist groups, tried to play for time for the strengthening of the domestic condition of the state and the strengthening of its army, so as to have the possibility of independent action in defense of its interests in an emerging imperialist conflict."

Although one may properly question the author's claim that this sensible policy was only made impossible in 1911 by Germany's failure to give Russia ironclad guarantees against Austrian expansionism in the Balkans, the general thesis that despite English and French pressure Russia tried to maintain an opening to Germany and that this effort was vitiated by Germany's fixation on *Weltpolitik* cannot easily be faulted, even if it is not new.

A recent work by one of Fischer's pupils, Barbara Vogel's *Deutsche Russlands-politik: Das Scheitern der deutschen Weltpolitik unter Bülow, 1900–1906* (Düsseldorf, 1973), while it only partly covers Astafiev's chronological division, delves deeply into those domestic considerations—so slighted by Astafiev, particularly on the German side—which were driving factors of foreign policy.

Leninist pronouncements are mercifully few, and the work features a bibliography and a register of persons. An index proves, as usual, too much to expect.

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