

A HISTORY OF THE RUSSIAN-AMERICAN COMPANY. By *P. A. Tikhmenev*.  
Translated and edited by *Richard A. Pierce* and *Alton S. Donnelly*. Seattle and  
London: University of Washington Press, 1978. xiv, 522 pp. Illus. \$35.00.

In 1857, a young Russian naval lieutenant named P. A. Tikhmenev was hired by the Russian-American Company to write its history. The company's monopoly in Alaska was under attack and the directors hoped, in vain, that a sympathetic account would help them win a renewal of the company's charter in 1863. Tikhmenev labored diligently in the company's archives, and, in 1861–63, he published two large volumes, which combined a detailed history and a compilation of documents long acknowledged as a major source for the study of Russian activities in Alaska. Tikhmenev's narrative, in this excellent new translation, will be of particular interest to specialists in both Russian and American history, as will be his documentary appendixes, which will be published separately by Limestone Press of Kingston, Ontario.

Although Tikhmenev had a pedant's love of endless detail, certain recurring themes hold his book together. Originating in the 1780s, the Russian-American Company was modeled after the great state-sponsored trading companies of the early modern period. It sought to profit from its monopoly over the Alaskan fur trade while also promoting general Russian interests. The company's pursuit of profit required exploration, the establishment of fortified settlements, and trade with the natives. The company and its trappers gradually pacified and then Christianized the Indians, a theme dear to Tikhmenev's heart. Yet the number of Russians involved was always small—less than eight hundred Russians in Alaska in 1860 plus a population of seventeen hundred Creoles. The small number of settlers was related to the tremendous difficulties the company had in providing its people with food and supplies, which generally came from Siberia or St. Petersburg at enormous risk and expense. Finally, the author proudly examines the company's substantial role in Russian settlement along the Amur River and on Sakhalin Island.

The great virtue of Tikhmenev's book is its mass of data, much of which was subsequently destroyed. This attribute is skillfully enhanced by the editors, who have provided meticulous annotation and citation of relevant works published since the original Russian edition. They also note Tikhmenev's faults: his pedestrian style, his rambling organization, and failure to stir up procompany feeling. A related flaw is the casual use of statistics, which makes this a frustrating work from the point of view of business history. More systematic attention to financial questions might well have helped Tikhmenev's case. The company's profits clearly declined with time, while the costs of spreading "civilization" in the form of religion and education apparently rose substantially.

JOHN P. MCKAY

*University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign*

OBALENIE CARATU. By *Ludwik Bazyłow*. Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1976. 484 pp. Illus. 80 zł.

This is a book on the background of the February Revolution by a Polish historian, professor at the University of Warsaw and author of six other monographs on the history of Russia in the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries. The study covers the events from the beginning of 1915 to March 3, 1917 (O.S.). It is based on a great deal of primary and secondary documentation, provided not only by Soviet but also by French archives, and on a vast bibliography of Soviet, Russian émigré, West European, American, and Polish books and articles. This amazingly rich material has been analyzed by Bazyłow as objectively as possible, within the

framework of his political views, and he makes many fair remarks concerning non-Communist authors. Certain items, however, have been omitted, such as Trotsky's *Istoriia russkoi revoliutsii* (3 vols., Berlin, 1931–33), Zeman's edition of documents, *Germany and the Revolution in Russia, 1915–1918* (New York, 1958), S. Mel'gunov's *Zolotoi nemetskii kluch k bol'shevistskoi revoliutsii* (Paris, 1940), and others.

Throughout the book, Bazylov raises pertinent questions about historical detail and answers them perceptively. Frequently, however, this is done in an involuted way, by means of a conversational character, thus making for a rather wordy formulation. Raising questions about minute details and then surrounding them with lengthy discussions is characteristic of Bazylov's method. He especially relishes biographical details, and his sketches of personalities, Protopopov's for example (pp. 147–51), are both substantive and vivid. On the other hand, he is a "Marxian" historian, and the reader feels the constant tension between his preference for studying personalities as such and his general deterministic approach. It is amazing, however, how much liberty of expression and objectivity Bazylov was able to achieve in spite of this tension. Clear exposition helps him a great deal in this respect, as does the successful method of stating people's opinions in their own words. This demands abundant documentation, most of it in the original Russian, and also enhances the informative value of the book. It is also important to stress Bazylov's care for factual precision, his common sense in tracing motivations, and his independence regarding the numerous clichés one finds so often in the literature concerning this period. As a result, the author shows the utmost objectivity in his analysis of the Sukhomlinov case (pp. 53–60, where he clears him of any major wrongdoing). He minimizes the importance of the ministerial changes in June–July 1915, calling them "a slight shift within the same conservative milieu" (pp. 51–52). He states that "Rasputin has not played a great, perhaps not even any, part in Russian history, but has played an enormous part in the history of the Russian court" (p. 219). And, above all, after a detailed study of the separate peace "legend" (pp. 295–316), he rejects this accusation as being without merit (as do S. Mel'gunov, *Legenda o separatnom mire* [Paris, 1957] and V. Diakin, *Russkaia burzhuaziia v gody Pervoi mirovoi voiny, 1914–1917* [Leningrad, 1967]). One must disagree, however, with Bazylov's appraisal of the June–July 1915 events: under the circumstances, a "slight" shift, as everyone knows, had significant consequences as far as relations with the Duma and public opinion are concerned. As to Rasputin's role, considering the Russian political system and the circumstances of World War I, did not the Russian court play an enormous role in Russian history at that time? Moreover, in a critical situation, even an *incidental* case, such as Rasputin's "medical" role at court, could become a major historical factor ("the straw that broke the camel's back").

Bazylov's study is an interesting and fruitful factual and interpretive endeavor, whatever his conclusions, which, in any case, could not obviously differ from the official line of Soviet historiography. As the title of the book announces, Bazylov's thesis is that the "overthrow of tsarism" (not "collapse"! ) was the result of a purposeful action. Whose action? That of the workers led by the Bolsheviks! The tenth chapter of the book, "The Last Month" (pp. 334–71), along with the final pages (pp. 439–46), is devoted primarily to the demonstration of this thesis.

The thesis, as we know, has little evidence to support it, while the evidence to the contrary is impressive. There are two problems involved. One is that of the Bolshevik leadership. For Bazylov it is axiomatic, but it is not so self-evident for most students of the events which led immediately to the Revolution. Four things have been pointed out: (1) The election to the first Petrograd Soviet produced only a minority of Bolsheviks. Obviously, the Mensheviks and the Socialist Revolutionaries (the right-wing S.R.'s) had more influence among the workers and the soldiers in the first days of the Revolution. (2) Toward the end of February, the crowds pro-

tested antiwar posters on the streets of Petrograd (see V. Zenzinov, "Fevral'skie dni," *Novyi zhurnal*, vol. 34 [New York, 1953], pp. 200–203, among others). (3) After returning to Russia in April 1917, Lenin had to restore the antiwar slogans among his party (see V. Katkov, *Russia in 1917* [New York, 1967], p. 261). (4) In February 1917, the Petrograd Bolshevik group suffered from steady repressions and "because of that it could not completely master the mass movement which achieved an unusually broad character" (see *Istoriia rabochikh Leningrada*, vol. 1 [Leningrad, 1972], p. 521 and A. Shliapnikov, *Nakanune 1917 goda* [Moscow, 1920]). The second problem is that of "overthrow" versus "collapse." Here one must point out that, in spite of his commitment to the idea of overthrow, Bazylow himself has formulated a certain caveat on page 445: "looking for elements of directed planning in every detail really is without purpose." But the question has a broader dimension. The Revolution certainly had "far-reaching backward causes," but was it inevitable? There is a tendency, a natural human tendency, to consider *retrospectively* all major historical events as "inevitable," but there is more than *one* possible line of development in the historical process. Only *one* of these lines comes to fruition, because of favorable, but often adventitious, events. This, however, does not mean that, with even slightly different circumstances, another line could not have come to the fore! Fateful conditions accumulated in war-stricken Russia from the summer of 1915 onward, and they greatly aggravated the "far-reaching backward causes," setting the stage for the *possibility*—but not the inevitability—of a revolution. Evidence of the growth of a revolutionary movement among the masses during the months preceding February 1917 is artificial at best; on the whole, the country—including peasants, students, the army, and even the workers—was quiet. A very sharp crisis existed within the educated society and in the government. And the country at large, especially the army, was economically and psychologically exhausted from the war. These two factors combined to produce the Revolution. As far as the Bolshevik leadership is concerned, prior to February 1917, it does not seem to have directed the workers' movement, which was primarily aimed at resolving economic problems, and it certainly did not direct the soldiers' mutiny in February 1917 which triggered the Revolution. It is true that these soldiers rose against the war and that the Bolsheviks were also against the war, but there seems to have been no decisive organizational connection. The soldiers' mutiny was a spontaneous response to other stimuli. Under the special circumstances which existed, this lonely unplanned incident led to the rapid *collapse* of a centuries-old system.

One can learn very much from Bazylow's distinguished study, even if one rejects, as one should, his conclusions. With all its limitations, it is a notable contribution to our knowledge of this important period.

MARC SZEFTTEL

*University of Washington (Emeritus)*

CIVIL WAR IN SOUTH RUSSIA, 1919–1920: THE DEFEAT OF THE WHITES. By *Peter Kenez*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977. xviii, 348 pp. Illus. Maps. \$17.50.

The title of this book is misleading. Its geographical and chronological limitations are indicated, as is the focus on the White side of the struggle, but the reader is not prepared to see military operations and the Allied intervention discussed only in the briefest of surveys. Kenez's book is, therefore, not a real history of the civil war, but rather an examination of the political and social causes behind the defeat of the Whites. Although the decision to leave treatment of intervention to George A. Brinkley may only be welcome, Kenez's synopsis is a bit too brief. For example, the Franco-British agreement of December 1918, dividing stricken Russia into spheres of influence, should not be thrown at the reader. A few sentences of explanation