

THE SOVIET SYNDROME. By *Alain Besançon*. Foreword by *Raymond Aron*. Translated by *Patricia Ranum*. New York and London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978 [Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1976]. xviii, 103 pp. \$8.95.

This is an impassioned essay. A French historian of Russia who takes his sources seriously, Besançon applies logic to what he examines, seeks order and structure in what he studies, and confronts the Soviet experience with a yes-or-no approach that allows neither ambiguities nor evolution nor unintended consequences. What results is an alarmist plea to take Leninist ideology at face value: "The nature of the Soviet regime has not changed . . . since November 7, 1917." It cannot change, "it can only disappear or perpetuate itself." Reforms and détente are nothing but cleverly pre-planned alternations between "war communism" and "NEP." If the Soviet Union has temporarily given up exporting revolution, it is only "because it is making preparations to do successfully just that, and it needs a delay to be certain of ultimate success." In fact, the USSR cannot give up exporting revolution any more than it can give up ideology, for to do so would mean relinquishing power. As for the tension between state and revolution, the state is simply a position to fall back on whenever world communism is in trouble. Besançon rules out any ritualization of beliefs: "As long as the ideology has not been expressly repudiated, the general orientation of Soviet foreign policy will be offensive."

According to Besançon, it turns out that Stalin's methods were attributable not so much to his personality as to the system; that the reason the USSR produces so many tanks and guns is "because the country is rationally incapable of producing anything else"; and that using Western concepts like regime, society, and economy is to fall into the trap of considering the Soviet Union to be a state like any other. In the end, the whole thing is "a hallucination, a mirage, a phantasmagoria." Besançon will have to forgive those of us to whom all this sounds like a rehash of things we used to hear in a simpler age.

I know Alain Besançon to be a better historian than this book would lead a reader to believe. If he wants his thesis (which I consider thoroughly wrong-headed) to be taken seriously, he owes it to himself and his argument to make a better case for it.

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THE AMERICAN IMAGE OF RUSSIA, 1917-1977. Edited by *Benson L. Grayson*. New York: Frederick Ungar, 1978. xii, 388 pp. Illus. \$14.50.

Benson Lee Grayson's anthology presents statements about Russia by fifty-two distinguished Americans, among them, intellectuals, writers, journalists, public figures, and government officials (including presidents and secretaries of state). A balanced essay by Mr. Grayson precedes the collection, and helpful biographical and contextual notes preface the different statements. Averaging about six pages in length, the carefully edited selections are chronologically arranged as follows: nearly half covers the years from 1917 to 1941, the next ten run from 1944 to 1953, sixteen cover the years from Stalin's death in 1953 to the late 1960s, and a few represent the 1970s. Illustrations, photographs, and an index accompany the text.

The richness of the anthology lies in the varied statements about Russia. The range of opinions extends from Communists John Reed and Earl Browder, on the one hand, to extreme anti-Communists Eugene Lyons and Joseph McCarthy, on the other. Some (including Langston Hughes and Corliss Lamont), although critical of the Soviet system, find interesting reasons to praise it. Inevitably, the reader will reflect upon the continuity and counterpoint in American perceptions of Russia. Although

their visits there were thirty years apart, John Dos Passos and Eleanor Roosevelt report similar feelings of relief upon departing. Max Eastman judges Stalinism to be worse than fascism, but Norman Thomas finds communism to be "far superior" to fascism. Hubert Humphrey, speaking in 1967 in Fulton, Missouri—the site of Winston Churchill's dour "iron curtain" speech twenty-one years earlier—views the future of American-Soviet relations optimistically.

The book's deficiencies should be noted. First, since the United States is diverse and the period covered is long, the book fails to mirror every facet and phase of American opinion. Second, the anthology does not treat narrow topics in detail: the broad nature of détente is portrayed, but the fine points of SALT are not. Third, one might wish for an introduction that attempts a sophisticated analysis of American views concerning the Soviet Union, such as William Welch's *American Images of Soviet Foreign Policy* or Daniel Yergin's *The Shattered Peace*. Instead, Grayson merely charts the basic trends in the USSR and the corresponding shifts in American perceptions of the Soviet Union and thrusts the task of analysis upon the reader. In this respect, the present anthology may be useful as a supplementary text in academic courses on U.S.-Soviet relations.

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FIVE IMAGES OF THE SOVIET FUTURE: A CRITICAL REVIEW AND SYNTHESIS. By *George W. Breslauer*. Policy Papers in International Affairs, no. 4. Berkeley: Institute of International Studies, University of California, Berkeley, 1978. vi, 78 pp. \$2.50, paper.

During the last dozen years, Western analysts of the Soviet scene have expended considerable energy identifying and examining what they consider to be the basic characteristics of the contemporary Soviet sociopolitical system and forecasting the paths which that system may follow. In this book, George W. Breslauer, associate professor of political science at the University of California, Berkeley, constructs an analytic framework in which to examine a number of current scholarly assessments of the Soviet present and future. He points out what he considers unanswered or ignored questions that these assessments raise. He concludes that the prospects for stability and durability of the system seem fairly high in the absence of prolonged and serious multiple crises that the leadership would be unable to contain or resolve.

Breslauer correctly suggests that predictions about the Soviet future must be based on a sound evaluation of the Soviet present. Thus, predictions of the Solzhenitsyn or Sakharov variety—based on the path each writer would like the Soviet system to take—are not very useful, for each spends precious little time analyzing the current situation or indicating how the system is likely to progress from what exists to what each prefers. Similarly, although Breslauer has chosen to include such authors as Amalrik and Yanov, who have a vision of the future and describe current trends so that they will almost necessarily lead to that future, their views are not very helpful in contributing to our understanding of the likely evolution of the system.

In addition to Amalrik and Yanov, Breslauer reviews the recent writings of a number of prominent scholars, including Brzezinski, Connor, Hough, Bialer, Lowenthal, and Roy Medvedev (he treats some more thoroughly than others). He subjects each writer's contributions to a scrutiny of such factors as the nature of interest group activity and the extent to which groups have been polarized within both the ruling elite and the larger society; the capability of the ruling elites to manage difficulties and crises (economic decline and consumer expectations, nationality aspirations, and so forth); the relationship of the elites to the masses and the extent to which the