

Daniels does not avoid certain conventional pitfalls. It is not surprising that he fails to do justice to the Left SR's—no one else does justice to these unfortunate people, who apparently are doomed to go down in history as the accomplices of the Bolsheviks because of a convergence over the war which obscured for the moment the deep-seated cleavage over the peasantry; this moment may be stretched into eternity through the propensity of historians to perpetuate one another's lack of knowledge. It is surprising, however, to see the author repeat the venerable untruth that the SR's had an absolute majority in the Constituent Assembly, whereas in reality the Ukrainian SR's were a wholly separate party at feud with the PSR.

Otherwise Daniels writes sound as well as entertaining history—if one can speak of entertainment in connection with an event which once raised hopes so high and ended in such grief. The tone of the book is sober and even somber, in keeping with the subject. There are illustrations and charts; there is a bibliography with annotations, an index, and a map of Petersburg; particularly useful is a chronology of events, clear and well chosen. In every respect the book deserves a wider than college audience: it is recommended also for the general reader and especially for secondary school teachers.

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THE SOVIET ACHIEVEMENT. By *J. P. Nettl*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1968. 288 pp. \$6.95.

Mr. Nettl describes his book as "neither a history of the Soviet Union nor an original piece of research on any particular aspect, [but rather] a broad and highly selective interpretation" (p. 7). The guiding purpose of the book is to offer a sympathetic but critical review of the achievements of fifty years of Communist leadership in the Soviet Union. The author apparently feels that Western scholars have too often been narrow and unsympathetic in their judgments of the major Soviet policies and achievements, and he would like to shift the balance. He has written a lively essay, richly illustrated with historical photographs, posters, paintings, and cartoons. It provides a sympathetic portrayal of the objectives of the early Bolsheviks and of their progressive translation into a new order of society, giving special attention to industrialization, educational and general cultural advancement, and the building of a new concept and sense of nationhood.

One cannot dispute the author's high purpose or deny that Soviet history, and Soviet achievements, have often been distorted by unreasonably hostile foreign interpreters. But the subject has also been the victim of uncritical apology abroad, and has known little else in the Soviet Union. It remains immensely difficult to strike a scholarly course between the Scylla of Cold War polemics and the Charybdis of apology. And while Nettl plainly tries for such a course, his craft sometimes lacks an adequate scholarly rudder to keep it from drifting in the latter direction.

The problem is evident from the start, in the brief opening chapter which attempts to provide a background to the events of 1917. Almost half of a modest thirty pages is devoted solely to the history of Bolshevism, and even the Bolsheviks' political rivals receive short shrift. The Russian liberal tradition is epitomized as "hesitant middle-class intellectuals oriented towards a Western model," while the Populists receive a less pejorative, though hardly more informative description as the group that "aimed at the liberation of the Russian peasant by various means . . ." (p. 21). A number of thoughtful and well-stated comments about Russian political

and social development do not save this chapter from being a weak and distorted survey even of the pre-1917 revolutionary movement, not to mention the larger political and social scene of that era.

In subsequent chapters Nettl points out many instances in which he feels that Western scholarship has been too narrow and harsh in its judgments of the actions and motives of the Bolshevik leaders and has shown too little appreciation of the limitations, the problems, and the "imperatives" of the environment in which these leaders lived and acted. He has many insights to contribute, and his book ought to provide stimulating reading both for specialists and for general readers. But too often he ignores important scholarship in Soviet history, or dismisses it casually. Thus he writes on the vital question of the origin of the party dictatorship in Bolshevik policy that it "sprang not primarily from doctrinal predisposition, but from a revolutionary situation. . . ." Leonard Schapiro's fine study, *The Origin of the Communist Autocracy* (1955), with its well-documented thesis to the contrary, is not even mentioned, or included in the bibliographical essay, though the reader is warned in the bibliography against Schapiro's "strong prejudice," a caveat apparently unnecessary in the case of John Reed or Sukhanov.

There are many similar cases in which the author offers opinions that contradict respected scholarly studies without acknowledgment or explanation. The presentation of the 1920s greatly overstates the scope of freedom that survived to the end of the decade outside the spheres of politics and economics, ignoring the fact that the press, scholarship, belletristic literature, and many other activities had less freedom than in the last years before 1917, an error that leads to overdrawing the contrast between the positions of Lenin and Stalin on the political control of culture. And there are other questionable points of fact and interpretation: the doubtful, or at least ambiguous, assertion that Lenin and Trotsky had not allowed the interests of the international revolutionary movement to be subordinated to the interests of the USSR; the understatement of the scope and seriousness of the defection of the nationalities during World War II (a position contradicted by a subsequent reference to Stalin's bitter postwar hostility toward the Ukrainians); a misleading contrast of the attitudes of Roosevelt and Churchill toward Stalin and Soviet policy (contradicted by Churchill's own written presentation of his views); the faulty presentation of Stalin's motives for Sovietizing Eastern Europe; and the inaccurate statement that Stalin did not intend to Sovietize Finland.

Though the reasons offered are very different, Nettl's version of Soviet history has about it all of the optimistic inevitability that pervades the official historiography. Thus the Bolsheviks were the only group capable of providing decisive leadership in 1917; the program of industrialization and forced collectivization was "necessary" (as was Stalin) to achieve the transition from backward agrarian to modern industrial society; Sovietization of Eastern Europe was an imperative of Russian diplomatic tradition and security needs; and so forth. As in Hegel and Marx, history has a happy conclusion, for at the present time "politics and social life are finally in balance, in harmony even." Where others worry about the unprecedented politicization of life and institutions by the party, he sees the party in orderly retreat from its former total domination, its progressive tasks accomplished. On balance, Nettl is a much more reliable guide to what the Bolshevik Revolution has changed than to the motives of its various leaders in making those changes.

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