

the purely military advantages of having a strong navy. As seen from Moscow (and not only Moscow), the history of local conflicts involving American interests—such as interventions in Suez, Lebanon, the Dominican Republic, and Vietnam—has demonstrated the vital importance of controlling the high seas. The humiliating Soviet withdrawal from Cuba in 1962 was predetermined by the weakness of their naval power, and probably gave impetus to the subsequent expansionist program.

The author fully recognizes the immense political effect of the Soviet presence in seas that had never seen the Red flag. In the Eastern Mediterranean it has already inhibited Israel and reduced the role of the U.S. Sixth Fleet in the Middle East conflict. The presence of Soviet naval units in the Indian Ocean and the Persian Gulf will doubtless influence political developments in many Arab sheikdoms, once the scheduled withdrawal of the British forces from the points east of Suez is completed. With the Soviet flag following trade, we may witness considerable changes in international trade patterns in some of the Latin American countries. And whether the Suez Canal is reopened or not, South Africa's strategic importance is bound to increase. These and many related questions are well treated in *Russian Sea Power*, and raise in turn many new ones.

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A CENTURY OF RUSSIAN AGRICULTURE: FROM ALEXANDER II TO KHRUSHCHEV. By *Lazar Volin*. Russian Research Center Studies, 63. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970. vi, 644 pp. \$18.50.

The untimely death of Lazar Volin in December 1966 doubly saddened those of us fortunate enough to know him. Not only had we lost an outstanding mentor and colleague, but we feared we would never read his major work on Russian agriculture which we had so long and eagerly awaited. Thanks to the efforts of Harry Walters and others, these fears proved groundless. The resulting volume, a detailed interpretive survey of Russian agriculture from the mid-nineteenth century through 1966, will be indispensable for both specialists and general readers interested in the Soviet area. Although the treatment is generally nontechnical, even the more specialized student of Soviet agriculture will find Volin's interpretations of specific policies and practices interesting and thought-provoking.

The book is divided chronologically into three main sections: the reign of Alexander II through the October Revolution, "war communism" through the Stalin era, and the Khrushchev era and beyond. Within these historical sections are numerous topical chapters and subsections with substantial economic and, to a lesser extent, political analysis. Volin has relied primarily on information from published Soviet and pre-Soviet sources. Quantitative data are presented in a readily assimilable form. (There are approximately one hundred tables.) Volin's frequent comparisons with Western data and agricultural practices are very illuminating, as are his references to his own varied experiences in the Soviet Union. Fortunately for the general reader the writing style is lively, and complex technical questions are handled in a clear, comprehensible manner.

Volin manages to present his interpretations in a judicious yet extremely forceful way. His use of historical evidence is infused with a tough, critical spirit. Although the occasional resort to historical analogies between the tsarist and Soviet periods can be disconcerting, he usually gets considerable mileage from historical

data. His discussion of the *mir*, for example, is highly suggestive. Far from dying out toward the end of the century, as contemporary Marxists were arguing, the *mir* was actually flourishing, Volin asserts. This and the related issue of peasant stratification, or the lack of it, cast further doubt on the validity of the contemporary social-democratic and later Soviet conventional wisdom.

The treatment of the collectivization process is fairly orthodox, except perhaps for the high estimate of the number of victims of dekulakization (5,500,000, p. 221). The discussion of the policy is extremely poignant, however, and provides the occasion for Volin to enunciate a major underlying assumption of his critique of Soviet agriculture: the importance of the farmer's personal qualities to the success of any agricultural system. Dekulakization thus robbed the USSR of its most valuable farm input factor (p. 237). Blind collectivism and the stifling of local initiative were and continue to be the main reasons for the mediocre performance of Soviet agriculture. Not only was Stalin not "really necessary," he was a disaster for the social and economic system. This theme runs throughout the book.

The topical chapters (on Khrushchev, capital investment, incentives and procurements, mechanization, sovkhozes) are generally excellent and contain a wealth of information and sensitive commentary that will be of particular interest to more specialized readers. The skiminess of the treatment of the post-Khrushchev era is certainly understandable, but it does render the intensive treatment of institutions such as the kolkhoz wage system somewhat obsolete. Also, the repetition of background information—an inevitable tendency with the topical format—occasionally reaches annoying proportions. Some cutting would probably have been useful. The only important gap in the book is in the treatment of political and administrative questions. Volin's customary talent for condensation seems to have failed him here, particularly in chapter 21, where the brevity of treatment promotes confusion and some inaccuracy.

These minor criticisms in no way detract from the magnitude of Volin's contribution. He has left us a true magnum opus—the product of a combination of prudent scholarship and strong personal engagement. It is not a combination that is often successfully achieved. That Volin has done so is a fitting monument to his lifework.

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AN EVALUATION OF THE SOVIET PROFIT REFORMS: WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO AGRICULTURE. By *David W. Conklin*. New York, Washington, London: Praeger Publishers, 1970. xiii, 192 pp. \$15.00.

By the late sixties the time had come "to talk of many things" in regard to the Soviet economy, and this book—an offshoot of an MIT doctoral dissertation—does so in very small compass. There are brief sections on Soviet chemical fertilizer and chemical machine-building industries, on irrigation and drainage, and on farm machinery. This part of the book, though very compressed, contains concrete material of some interest, but its findings on the whole are not surprising. There is a sketchy discussion of alternative grand systems of organizing and managing a modern economy, and some equally brief theoretical excursions into such rather technical questions as pricing, industrial concentration and competition, and profit-maximizing criteria. Alas, the nonspecialist will not get much from these sections,