

THE BOLSHEVIK SEIZURE OF POWER. By *S. P. Melgunov*. Edited and abridged by *Sergei G. Pushkarev* in collaboration with *Boris S. Pushkarev*. Translated by *James S. Beaver*. Santa Barbara: American Bibliographical Center-Clio Press, 1972. xxiv, 260 pp. \$15.00, cloth. \$5.50, paper.

Trained as an historian in prerevolutionary Russia, Sergei Melgunov (1880–1956) wrote a number of important works on the history of the Russian Orthodox Church, the Old Believers, and problems in Russian political and social history. After the 1905 revolution he became a leader in the nonradical People's Socialist Party. An ardent foe of the Bolsheviks in 1917 and during the Civil War, he continued his efforts to expose the Communists, after his emigration from Soviet Russia in 1923, in such works as *Krasnyi terror v Rossii, 1918–1923*; *Zolotoi nemetskii kliuch k bol'shevistskoi revoliutsii*; and *Kak bol'sheviki zakhvatili vlast'*, published in English as *The Bolshevik Seizure of Power*.

The book under review is based on study of contemporary newspapers, documents, and memoirs, as well as the author's own experiences. Central to Melgunov's view of the Revolution is the belief that the Bolsheviks, liberally subsidized by the Germans, were able to seize power in 1917 largely because of the failure of their rivals to take the threat of Bolshevism seriously and to provide adequate protection for the government. Because of this orientation, although his book contains much useful information about the disorganization and confusion within the ranks of the Bolsheviks' opponents, many problems absolutely crucial to an understanding of the Bolsheviks' success are not touched on at all. One learns very little, for example, about the aspirations and behavior of Petrograd workers, soldiers, and sailors who supported transfer of power to the soviets in the fall of 1917 or about the relation between the revolution from below and the actions of government, moderate socialist, or even Bolshevik leaders at this time. Kerensky appears near hysteria, alternately lulled by overconfidence and paralyzed by depression; the moderate socialists are pictured as meddling self-deceived idealists, while the Bolsheviks are simply "fantasts of the politics of violence." Explanatory notes by the editor are of only limited help in clarifying these issues; thus the Second Congress of Soviets, which endorsed and legitimized the overthrow of the Provisional Government, is summarily dismissed by Professor Pushkarev as a "crowd dominated by Bolshevik cheer-leaders."

Of particular value to the nonspecialist, close to half of Melgunov's study is devoted to the initial struggle against the Bolshevik regime between October 26 and mid-November, a period which has received relatively little attention in most Western accounts of the October Revolution. Regrettably, an equally important portion of the original work, a substantial detailed analysis of the Bolshevik seizure of power in Moscow, has been omitted.

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THE DAMNED INHERITANCE: THE SOVIET UNION AND THE MANCHURIAN CRISES, 1924–1935. By *George Alexander Lensen*. Tallahassee: Diplomatic Press, 1974. xiv, 533 pp. \$19.80.

Few issues in the annals of modern diplomacy have generated as much conflict as Manchuria's Chinese Eastern Railroad. The tangled story of the Soviet Union's