

technical equipment (with the exception of TV) are all there; the period is conveniently short, compact, and includes war as well as peace; the documents are available; and old men who took part in the creation of the grand illusion are still alive and talkative.

Of the two volumes under review, one covers a specific subject—films—and the other a specific period—the war. The study of Nazi cinema is by a film maker: Erwin Leiser has made a number of distinguished documentaries on the Third Reich, and the book is a by-product of one of these films, which in fact dealt with the same theme. Some 1,150 feature films were made under Dr. Goebbels's auspices, but probably fewer than 200 of them were straight political propaganda. It is on the latter films that Mr. Leiser concentrates. This is a film maker's rather than a historian's book, and it is very good in its way. It presents us with some fascinating technical information and relates this information to the main propaganda themes of the time.

Professor Jay Baird has chosen propaganda as the theme of his book. The chapters dealing with propaganda surrounding the war in the east are the most dramatic and detailed. Professor Baird shows the role Stalingrad played in wartime propaganda: how Goebbels, after Stalingrad, began more and more to rely on irrational themes, and how Nazi propaganda gradually turned away from reality and retreated into myth—this is a subsidiary theme of the book, which is well argued and illustrated. The theater of annihilation was being acted out, and Goebbels knew it.

Professor Baird also convincingly demonstrates the kinks of German anti-Soviet propaganda, which the minister of propaganda was unable to iron out. Goebbels could not reconcile Hitler's position that the "Bolshevik system was archaic, bankrupt and decadent" with the "objective organizational and military performance of the Soviet Union and the Red Army during the war." Hitler presented Goebbels with other insoluble problems during the war: first his dreadful public optimism, and later, when his strategy became unstuck, his refusal to take responsibility.

Professor Baird's study is very good on these problems, and his subsidiary theme, the steady retreat from reality by Nazi propaganda, is well presented. There are some inelegancies of style (for example, propaganda follow-up to the death of Horst Wessel and other, similar hooligans, is described by Professor Baird as a "myth to lend a new meaning to what otherwise would have been a banal and thoroughly routine death of often rather degenerate human material"), but then the study of Nazi propaganda has a brutalizing effect on style.

It is the main theme of the volume—the development of Nazi propaganda during the war as a function of Nazi ideology—that may have to be reconsidered. To relate Nazi propaganda to a broader background in only this way does not seem to be very promising. Propaganda was an essential political tool for the Nazis, but its uses and importance varied widely in the thirties and during the war. Has the time come for another general history of the subject? If so, Professor Baird is ideally equipped for the task.

Z. A. B. ZEMAN  
*Lancaster University*

HITLER'S DECISION TO INVADE RUSSIA, 1941. By *Robert Cecil*. Introduction by *Noble Frankland* and *Christopher Dowling*. The Politics and Strategy of the Second World War series. London: Davis-Poynter, 1975. 192 pp. £4.50.

Few decisions have had greater repercussions than Adolf Hitler's decision to attack the Soviet Union. At the height of his power, and in the face of Stalin's efforts to avert war by appeasing Germany, Hitler launched his forces into a campaign in which they were eventually clawed to pieces.

The author has reviewed the existing literature on National Socialist Germany and the war in order to present Hitler's fateful decision in the contexts of the general conflict between Teuton and Slav and the specific evolution of Hitler's policies. There is a perceptive view of Hitler's troubled choices in the summer of 1940, his preference for a move eastward, and the evolution of military, economic, and political plans for the attack. Cecil has traced the major elements in this series of decisions, distinguishing between the more and the less trustworthy clues in the evidence on Hitler's views.

Especially impressive is the author's analysis of the relationship between Hitler and his military advisers. The evidence that Hitler knew of the planned Italian attack on Greece beforehand, and that the postponement of the attack on Russia until June 22 was largely independent of the Balkan operation is read correctly, as are Hitler's subsequent references to these events as excuses for failure. The account of the role of Molotov's visit is also convincing, as is the emphasis on the Fuehrer's desire that Japan move south, not west.

On some points, however, the author's interpretation is questionable. Cecil relies heavily on Andreas Hillgruber's *Hitlers Strategie* (Frankfurt/Main, 1968), and, like Hillgruber, he has missed Hitler's July 31, 1940 discussion of a guaranty to Rumania. He has also failed to note that German attempts to bring the Soviet Union and Japan together were made in response to Soviet requests, not on German initiative. The stress on German military weakness and Soviet military strength in 1941 misses the critical point that it was the hold Stalin retained on the *domestic front* which proved decisive; on the military front the Germans won greater victories in six months of 1941 than in three years of World War I. Similarly, while Cecil correctly recognizes Hitler's disinterest in the Mediterranean (Hitler viewed this area as Italy's sphere, where German commitment should be minimal), he fails to appreciate fully that Hitler's preoccupation with Russia resulted from the Fuehrer's desire for territorial conquests there. In Hitler's eyes, the Bolshevik Revolution was a stroke of good fortune for Germany because it enfeebled the government which controlled land he hoped to seize. Cecil fails to recognize that Hitler, had he not hoped to enslave or exterminate the local population, would never have attacked Russia in the first place.

But such criticisms should not obscure the merits of a very useful book. The author provides the most cogent brief analysis of German strategy in the first two years of World War II currently available. He covers important events and complex problems with a sure touch and a clear comprehension of the literature. Unfortunately, both the author and the editors were asleep when the only map in the book was inserted.

GERHARD L. WEINBERG

*University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill*

AMERICAN OPINION AND THE RUSSIAN ALLIANCE, 1939-1945. By *Ralph B. Levering*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1976. xvi, 262 pp. Illus. \$17.95.

This is a story which has often been told, but which repays retelling, especially at the present time. Our wartime alliance with the Soviet Union has been written about from every conceivable point of view. Above all, the concern of most writers has centered on its sudden demise following the end of the war. Was it something which was inevitable? Was it the Soviet Union's or America's fault? Were the American people naïve in expecting that the United States and the USSR could continue to collaborate when no longer faced by a common enemy? Was our government, and in particular FDR, naïve in holding out such great expectations for a joint endeavor on behalf of