

of populism, "one of the most interesting chapters in the history of nineteenth-century social thought."

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RED OCTOBER: THE BOLSHEVIK REVOLUTION OF 1917. By *Robert V. Daniels*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1967. xiv, 271 pp. \$6.95.

Professor Daniels has set out to separate myth from reality in the October Revolution, and all who value truth will be indebted to him. Instead of the inexorable march of the masses toward inevitable victory, we see confusion on every hand, even in the Bolshevik organization, and a welter of humanity as little willing to defend the Provisional Government as to install the Bolsheviks in power. Instead of the leadership of Lenin eventuating in the execution of a faultless plan, we see a furious little man absorbed in berating Kamenev and Zinoviev as the decisive hours of Russian history are slipping by, secluded from his own party as well as from the police, and frustrated in his attempt to goad his reluctant followers into upsetting the government before the Second Soviet Congress in order to secure the exclusive power that is his true objective. From this impasse he is rescued by the bumbling countermeasures of the Provisional Government, which give Bolshevik preparations the defensive coloration needed to bring their supporters into action. In the last analysis the Soviet regime is born as a result of chance developments and the fact that the Bolsheviks are less disorganized than their enemies.

One need not accept Daniels's thesis in its entirety to admire the way in which he has advanced it. Too often in American scholarship the footnotes seem to choke the narration. But not in this instance—Daniels has chosen the essay form, unencumbered by citations or tedious explanations. As a result, his story moves straight down the line, as interesting as it is authoritative, and sprinkled with formulations that attest to depth of understanding as well as to literary grace. A certain price is exacted, however, for the admirable continuity: even the expert on occasion will curse Daniels for having no footnotes at all, and the reader may be abandoned (as on page 118) to find his way with little help from the author amid the maze of committees, commissions, organs, and agencies.

The reviewer cannot agree with Daniels that the October Revolution was a "wild gamble" taken in the face of "incredible odds." It is not accurate to say that the overwhelming majority of the peasants and the army in the field were against the Bolsheviks; it would be better to say merely that they were not with them, remembering that neither were they with the Provisional Government. Nor is it correct to say that all agreed that a Leninist coup would end in speedy collapse and a military dictatorship, although that was certainly the prevailing view. One of the most extreme conservatives, Purishkevich, suspected that the Bolsheviks might get stronger, not weaker, the longer they stayed in power; and at the other end of the political spectrum Chernov, who had not underestimated Lenin even in April of 1917, feared in November that his rural constituency was endangered by a regime which did indeed become the greatest executioner of peasants in history. It was the almighty influence of the war that opened the way to Bolshevism by splitting up and paralyzing the potential opposition—peasant, party, and army. The earlier pages of the book bear witness to the crushing weight of the war, but toward the end its significance is played down (pp. 215, 224) in line with the author's emphasis upon the element of chance.

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