

ever, handicapped by his dependence on French and English-language sources, he rarely tries to reach beyond the legends and stereotypes for the truth, even though he sometimes seems aware that many of the firsthand accounts which he uses have to be taken with caution. Thus he fails to emphasize the crucial importance of the long-observed fact that because Japan could not replace her losses, big victories like Mukden only brought her closer to defeat. Also, there are several instances where the author demonstrates a certain unfamiliarity with Russian history, as when he observes that the numerous officers of German origin serving Nicholas confirm that the tsar did not dislike Germans. Some readers may be irritated by the inclusion of titillating irrelevancies such as the details of Alexander II's assassination, but at least the author has resisted the temptation to drag in Rasputin. As for the description of Nicholas II's "fondness for dogs" as an "accomplishment," this seems excessive, even from a member of the Conservative Party.

J. N. WESTWOOD  
*Bristol*

DIPLOMAT OF IMPERIAL RUSSIA, 1903–1917: MEMOIRS. By *Nicolas De Basily*. Hoover Institution Publications, 125. Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1973. x, 201 pp. + 6 pp. black and white photographs. \$6.00.

This is a well-written volume dealing with major political and social events during a critical period of Russian history. There is an admirable chapter in which the author lucidly describes some of the principal personalities of the Russian upper class and nobility of St. Petersburg. His personal reminiscences of Italian and Russian opera singers, and the superb Russian ballet and theater, as well as several passages devoted to the nascent French aircraft industry, contribute positively to his literary efforts.

The author has devoted part of his memoirs to a brief description of the four Dumas and their major leaders. Though he has not included much new information, he has pointed out the relevant contributions of the Dumas and the personalities of their leaders. There is a penetrating description of the fateful days of July 1914 in which European civilization as De Basily knew it was moving perilously toward a tragic abyss.

Through the skillful pen of the author the reader is able to relive vividly those last days of the Russian monarchy. What emerges is a poignant description of the tragic yet noble and placid Nicholas Romanov, whose political demise closely resembled a Greek tragedy. It was apparent to De Basily, who personally witnessed Nicholas's final hours as Russian monarch, and to the members of the tsar's entourage that the military and political cataclysm which Russia was experiencing was inexorable, and the tsar's abdication inevitable. De Basily was requested by General Alekseev to draw up the act of abdication. The original draft provided for the tsar's abdication in favor of his son, but the official manifesto provided for his abdication in favor of his brother, the Grand Duke Michael. In the tsar's own words, his son's hemophilic condition persuaded him to abdicate in favor of his brother. With the abdication of the grand duke on March 16, 1917, the Romanov dynasty was officially terminated.

HENRY S. ROBINSON  
*Morgan State College*