

**THE RUSSIAN DAGGER: COLD WAR IN THE DAYS OF THE CZARS.**

By *Virginia Cowles*. New York and Evanston: Harper & Row, 1969. 351 pp. \$7.95.

The story of Russian intrigue and violence in the Balkans, 1840–1914, is a familiar one. Virginia Cowles has expanded this account with a novel thesis concerning the close connection that existed between expansionary Balkan policies and domestic revolution in imperial Russia. The author maintains that “the two movements, subversion at home and subversion abroad, not only stimulated but fed one another” in a revolutionary sense.

The Balkan or Russian specialist will find little new information in this volume other than a delightful collection of vignettes on Romanov family life, Balkan intrigues, and selected revolutionary terrorists. Students will be attracted by fascinating descriptions of an awe-inspiring Nicholas I, senseless butchery at Plevna, unbearable pressures on Nicholas II in the critical hours before World War I, and almost unbelievable domestic treachery and foreign intervention in Bulgaria and Serbia.

The author's thesis is deceptive. The book is slanted heavily toward Balkan matters. Memoir accounts, standard monographs, and some new material from British Foreign Office archives adequately document foreign affairs. The Russian revolutionary movement receives only superficial analysis. Cowles demonstrates little basic understanding of the aims, programs, and composition of the various revolutionary groups.

Obviously, Cowles intended her book for the general reader. Here she is at her literary best. The volume reads like a novel in places and deals intimately with the human side of historical characters. Yet popular history should be accurate history. I fear the general reader will come away with a somewhat distorted picture of nineteenth-century Russia and its policies. Oversimplifications, such as the “love of conspiracy” in the Russian character and the “Slav race . . . [being] inefficient in daily administration,” typify the author's disdain and condescension toward things Russian. The enemies of Russia—Prince Alexander Battenberg of Bulgaria, Stambulov, and Prince Alexander Obrenovich of Serbia—usually receive very sympathetic treatment. A book which must tell its readers that Serbia is now part of Yugoslavia should contain maps. Cowles includes none, but she does incorporate an interesting collection of prints and photographs. The plethora of detail makes it difficult to sustain the general reader's attention throughout the volume.

In summary, this work has limited value for the specialist. It gives the general reader an adequate though occasionally distorted and unbalanced view of Russian relations with southeastern Europe during the sixty years prior to World War I.

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**“THE OKHRANA”: THE RUSSIAN DEPARTMENT OF POLICE.** By *Edward Ellis Smith* and *Rudolf Lednicky*. Stanford: Hoover Institution, 1967. 280 pp. \$10.00.

This volume is essentially a bibliography (containing 843 entries) of published materials and manuscripts in the Hoover Institution library relating to the activities of the Okhrana, the secret political police of the Russian Empire. On reading the annotations that describe the contents and indicate the conclusions of each listed

item, this reviewer found many of the subjects discussed to be startlingly pertinent to the recent concern of the press and other media with such topics as "invasion of privacy," allegations of the use of agents provocateurs to infiltrate organizations of the political opposition, and the purported tendency of those in power to ascribe all overtly expressed discontent to the work of "subversive" agents. No historian or student of organizations of political surveillance should overlook this volume.

Although the Okhrana may not have possessed all the technical instruments now available to agencies in this field, one feels that such instruments would not have affected the basic methods the Okhrana used to keep the imperial government informed on the course of political dissent or to thwart the plans of the dissidents. And it would also seem that anyone writing about present-day organizations of this kind could sharpen his understanding of the often fragmentary information about their work by studying the materials about the Okhrana. Indeed, since there seems to be no comparable detailed body of literature about contemporary political police bodies, any aspiring Clausewitz must inevitably distill his philosophy of surveillance from the works listed here, particularly since the most extensive section of the volume is the one headed "operational methodology."

The other major sections deal with general background matters, organization, and personnel. A glossary of Russian terms in the field, a list of periodicals and serials consulted, and an index are also included. A short introduction by Mr. Smith provides a summary of the history of the Okhrana as well as some of his conclusions about the reasons for its ultimate failure, but it is rather by diligent study of the information to which he and Mr. Lednicky have provided so broad a guide that fuller conclusions about the effectiveness of such an organization may be reached.

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PETER YAKOVLEVICH CHAADAYEV: PHILOSOPHICAL LETTERS & APOLOGY OF A MADMAN. Translated, with an introduction, by *Mary-Barbara Zeldin*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1970. xv, 203 pp. \$7.50.

With her translation of Chaadaev's eight *Philosophical Letters* and his *Apology of a Madman*, Professor Zeldin has enriched humanistic studies, as well as Russian studies, in this country. With a taste for high style and a flair for color and imagery, she has produced what is in my estimation one of the most successful and literate translations of the works of an important Russian thinker into English.

One can judge Professor Zeldin's accomplishments only in comparison with the other recent rendition of Chaadaev's works by Raymond T. McNally, *The Major Works of Peter Chaadaev* (Notre Dame, 1969). Without slight to McNally, who has long since established his reputation as an authority on Chaadaev and whose own translation of these essays is admirable, I must admit a decided preference for Zeldin's work. Zeldin's version is more literate, in better keeping with English idiom and form, and in several instances more faithful to the original. Yet one must honor McNally's criticism of Zeldin's book in the *Russian Review* (January 1971, pp. 82-83) on matters of bibliography and editorial comment. It is true that Zeldin has failed to include in her bibliography several important recent works on Chaadaev and that her introductory remarks contain several flaws readily apparent