

THE GREAT FRIENDSHIP: SOVIET HISTORIANS ON THE NON-RUSSIAN NATIONALITIES. By *Lowell Tillet*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1969. x, 468 pp. \$12.50.

Soviet research and writing on the non-Russian nationalities of the Soviet Union have not been given enough attention in this country. There are a few good books on the non-Russian peoples in the Soviet Union, but hardly any university or college offers work in the history and culture of these peoples. This book is one of the better ones and it is an important one.

Since the late 1940s a major task of the Soviet historian has been to promote the Communist Party's new nationality policy to the point of disregarding empirical evidence when necessary. The author notes that the Soviet historian is expected to strengthen the official nationality policy by accommodating "historical interpretation to the exigencies of nationality policy." This has required the creation of the myth that friendly relations among the peoples making up the Soviet Union existed "in all historic epochs," and the historian is obliged to stress the role of the Russian people "as cultural leader, military defender, and political genius." The myth contradicts earlier Soviet interpretations. Those non-Russian leaders and resistance movements who opposed Russian colonialism and who were previously labeled progressive are now, Tillet says, considered retrogressive or part progressive and part retrogressive. Russian annexations of non-Russian peoples that were once seen as "absolute evil" (outright conquests) or as the "lesser evil" (the idea that the non-Russian nationalities, confronted by imminent foreign conquest, chose a Russian protectorate) are now termed "voluntary annexations." The author observes that former Russian military actions against the non-Russian nationalities, however brutal, are looked upon as defensive actions to aid local populations against foreign enemies such as Iran, Poland, Turkey, and England.

The Soviet historians resisted the new historical line but lost out in the uneven struggle with party spokesmen. The dialogue was accompanied by bitter polemics, purges of professional historians, and the repudiation of their earlier works. The rebuttal of those who did not conform was quick and decisive. There was a brief period in 1956, however, when the "new scholarly climate" and comparative freedom prevailed, enabling a few daring historians to publish more objective history about the tsarist aggressions and the violence between Russians and non-Russians. This was not tolerated for long, and as a result of a vigorous effort the implementation of the official nationality line resulted in an outpouring of an unprecedented quantity of published material.

The author discusses the beginning of the "friendship myth," the Soviet nationality policy during the Second World War, the reconstruction of Soviet historical science, the controversies precipitated by Bekmakhanov, Nechkina, and Bagirov, and post-Stalinist historiographic tendencies in the Soviet Union. The most thoroughly treated is the highly publicized Shamil controversy about which the author had written earlier in a well-received article. He also treats several "side issues" with which the Soviet historians were concurrently involved. In this connection he tells how the contemporary Soviet historian interprets the early historical ties between the Soviet peoples and between them and the Russians, and the Russian cultural impact on the non-Russian peoples.

By way of criticism it should be remarked that the study is based exclusively on materials written in Russian. Consequently, the author leaves out of the discussion the history of the non-Russian peoples as written by the peoples

themselves in their own languages. It is probable that this source of information would give a different slant to the interpretation of various aspects of the history of the non-Russian peoples. Perhaps something could have been said about certain other features of Soviet nationality policy; for example, it appears that while the Russians have been assigned a superior historical role in relation to non-Russian nationalities, the latter have been given a similar role in relation to their foreign neighbors. The Soviet explanation of the origins of Soviet peoples and their cultural heritage and the problem of ethnogenesis are essential to an understanding of the nationality policy. Finally, it seems to this reviewer that a discussion of only the negative side of Soviet historiography distorts the picture of the overall quality of Soviet historical scholarship on the non-Russian peoples. A voluminous amount of documentary material and some very good monographs have been published. The multivolume surveys of histories of many non-Russian peoples include not only slants and twists to conform to preconceived theoretical and ideological formulas but also a great quantity of new material presented in a more or less objective fashion.

Tillett thinks that the historiographical controversies in the Soviet Union have subsided in recent years even though the "ideological fires" which they ignited have not yet been completely extinguished. He is uncertain whether the emphasis on "the friendship of Soviet peoples in the past" will contribute to the reduction of nationalist tensions among the various Soviet peoples. The new approach to history, he says, has enabled Soviet historians to standardize the interpretation of various periods of history and to provide for "a more orderly synthesis of the history of Soviet peoples." But is this the main purpose of historical scholarship?

The author has given us a superior study of some major trends in Soviet historical writing, and the value of his book is further enhanced by an extensive bibliography (the proceedings of conferences, historical syntheses, monographs, articles). It is hoped that he will continue to provide us with periodic assessments of Soviet historiography on the non-Russian peoples.

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RELIGION IN THE U.S.S.R. Edited by *Robert Conquest*. New York and Washington: Praeger Publishers, 1968. 135 pp. \$5.00.

DESCENT INTO DARKNESS: THE DESTRUCTION OF THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH IN RUSSIA, 1917-1923. By *James J. Zatko*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1965. ix, 232 pp. \$6.95.

NIKOLAI: PORTRAIT OF A DILEMMA. By *William C. Fletcher*. New York: Macmillan, 1968. ix, 230 pp. \$6.95.

RELIGIOUS FERMENT IN RUSSIA: PROTESTANT OPPOSITION TO SOVIET RELIGIOUS POLICY. By *Michael Bourdeaux*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1968. xi, 255 pp. \$8.95.

DOCUMENTS OF MOSCOW 1966 ALL-UNION CONFERENCE OF EVANGELICAL CHRISTIAN-BAPTISTS. Moscow, 1968. 104 pp. 25 kopeks.

The purpose of the book edited by Robert Conquest apparently is to demonstrate once more what has been known for the past fifty years—the irreconcilable hostility