

does not inquire into the function for them of the ideas they held, or investigate what they thought their roles would be in the new society they would create out of the existing order. Conversely, Nicholas I is regarded as having prosecuted arbitrarily and perversely members of his army and bureaucracy who devoted a good part of their energies to talk of reforming the state in a radical or revolutionary manner.

In that unquestioned view of Nicholas, however, the author is as fashionable as in his use of the all-embracing ubiquitous American word "background." He contends that the members of the circle were bound together by their "gentry background." Was this some common experience in their past upon which they drew? What of their function in the social order? Did they share that? Did their function affect their view of a future state and society? Do the rigors of Evans's discipline discourage such questions? His discipline permits him, however, to conclude with another assumption, that of inevitability. In speaking of the circle he says, "Their failure was inevitable." Is that the objective verdict of history, or is it the judgment of an historian from the viewpoint of the success and failure of events as opposed to a search for their meaning?

FREDERICK I. KAPLAN  
*Michigan State University*

ST. PETERSBURG AND MOSCOW: TSARIST AND SOVIET FOREIGN POLICY, 1814–1974. By *Barbara Jelavich*. Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1974. xvi, 480 pp. \$12.50, cloth. \$4.95, paper.

Although this reviewer must confess to having himself written survey history on more than one occasion, he must also admit that in his opinion history of this nature, and particularly diplomatic history, can sometimes be a questionable exercise. So intricate is the actual web of international events—so fluid, so complex, and so intimately related to the shifting situations of the day and the week rather than the year or the decade are the true motives of diplomatic decision-taking—that to try to summarize briefly the interactions of governments over long periods of time means to inflict upon the subject matter a measure of oversimplification and generalization so great that it places in question the very usefulness of the exercise. What historian, confronted with the results of such an effort in a field which he himself has studied in detail, has not been impelled to this conclusion?

Particularly is this true when the focus of the exercise approaches, chronologically, the present age. Whether this is because we are more sensitive to oversimplification when it applies to recent developments about which our understanding is more sophisticated, or because recent events are indeed more complex and more swiftly moving and thus less susceptible to sweeping summary, is a question that need not be answered here. Suffice it to note that the task of grasping and holding in mind the entirety of the significant international events of even a single recent decade probably surpasses the capacity of even the best human memory. When, therefore, the recital of these episodes, along with those of many other decades as well, is spread out for the reader on a large number of printed pages, the mind boggles at the demands thus raised for memory and analysis, and sometimes finds it difficult to follow the narrative as a whole.

This does not mean that survey history has no value. It is useful for reference purposes. Administered in small doses, it can be useful for teaching. Usually, of course, the history of the external relations of a country is included in general

histories that treat of domestic and foreign developments alike; and it can be argued that this, given the intimate interflexion of the two, is usually the preferable method of treatment. But there may also be times when the treatment of external relations alone can have its uses, particularly for purposes of the comparison of policies from statesman to statesman and from generation to generation; and it is here that the volume under review, a history of Russian/Soviet foreign policy from 1814 to 1964, must find its value.

This volume represents, in reality, not one book but two. Out of the total of 457 pages the first 288 are a scarcely re-edited reprinting of Mrs. Jelavich's earlier work, *A Century of Russian Foreign Policy, 1814–1914* (1964). The remainder, dealing with the Soviet period down through the 1960s (and thus presumably serving as justification for the somewhat uninformative title), is new.

Of these two companion pieces the earlier one, covering the last hundred years of tsarist policy, is unquestionably the better. The history is sounder, the writing more confident and authoritative, the analysis more compelling. The author is naturally at her best in the treatment of the relations of nineteenth-century Russia with the Balkans and the Near East—a subject to which she, partly alone and partly in company with her husband, Charles Jelavich, has given extensive and valuable attention in earlier works. It may be argued that this particular area receives an inordinate measure of space in the volume under reference, as compared with the treatment of Russia's relations with other regions; but surely it is useful to have the highly complex history of this particular relationship so patiently and authoritatively recounted; and for this alone one must be grateful to the author.

The second portion of the volume under review, dealing with the Soviet period, may have its uses for textbook purposes; but it cannot be said to add much to the existing record of the external relations of the Soviet regime. Mrs. Jelavich has complicated her own task here by taking it upon herself to try to summarize not just the history of Soviet diplomacy over those fifty years but also the entire general background of international events against which that diplomacy operated. The result was a compression of material which almost assured oversimplification; and one wonders why this coverage of general background was thought necessary. Did the reader—and particularly a reader serious enough to take up a book on Soviet foreign policy—really need to be told, for example, that in April 1945, “Roosevelt died and was replaced by Harry S. Truman”; that the war ended on May 8; that in June 1947, Secretary Marshall announced American readiness to help Europe; and so forth?

Possibly as a result of the same compression, this second portion of the book is marred not just by a number of omissions (how, for example, can one explain the Polish question of the World War II period without any reference to the terrible deportations of 1939–40?) but by a certain laconic, almost weary, inadequacy of language at many points. To identify Molotov simply as one who was “reportedly close to Stalin”; to reduce the complicated Soviet-German negotiations of the summer of 1939 to the statement that “Hitler got in touch with Stalin”; to describe the “phoney war” as a “long lull in the action in the west”; to describe Stalin as a “controversial figure,” who “appears to have been a tough, realistic and determined statesman”; to say of the Vienna meeting that “Khrushchev appeared to have left with a generally negative impression of Kennedy, who for his part felt that the Soviet leader was indeed a man to be feared”—to use such phrases

(and there are many more that could have been cited) is not so much to offend against the truth as to be insufficient to it. If all this, as one must assume, is the price of trying to say too much in too small a space, then Mrs. Jelavich, a fine historian when working with a sharper focus in a more manageable field, would have done better to forgo the effort and to let the earlier account of Russia's nineteenth-century diplomacy—fortified as it is by her other valuable researches—stand on its own merits.

GEORGE F. KENNAN

*Institute for Advanced Russian Studies, Washington, D.C.*

RUSSIE-URSS, 1870-1970. By *Michel Laran*. Collection "Un siècle d'histoire." Paris: Masson et Cie, 1973. 336 pp. + 15 pp. maps. 50 F., paper.

This is part of the Masson series of semipopular surveys in French, dealing with various countries in the century from 1870 to 1970. Professor Laran is affiliated with the Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales and the University of Paris. The book contains a great deal of information on all aspects of Russia, and much of it is balanced and reliable. There are useful source selections and biographical sketches. The end-of-chapter bibliographies list not only French works but also many in English and Russian (though not in German).

Unfortunately, there are many weaknesses. One is the author's occasional tendency to assume more knowledge on his readers' part than seems warranted for a work that is aimed at so broad an audience as this one obviously is. For instance, Laran covers Katyn by saying merely that "relations between the USSR and the London Polish government had been suspended after the discovery of the mass graves of Katyn in April 1943," and leaves it unspecified who did what to whom, or why it was important. Similarly, some readers will have to turn elsewhere to find out why and in what sense Sholokhov's *Quiet Don* was received "with suspicion," or what happened between the USSR and Hungary in the "events of October-November 1956."

A more serious flaw from the standpoint of the nonspecialist is Laran's penchant for simple explanations, without caveats, of matters that remain highly debatable for many, if not most, historians. His versions of the Kornilov affair, or Stalin and the "Military Revolutionary Center" of October 1917, or Stalin's intentions in signing the pact with Hitler, to cite a few examples, are presented with the same air of certitude as is the most routine and indisputable fact.

Although many developments are recounted with admirable clarity—the Great Purge is one—some aspects of the story are inadequate. For example, the book's slighting of the Comintern and related Soviet activities abroad in the 1920s and 1930s will make it hard for some readers to understand why the Western powers did not rush to ally themselves with Stalin against Hitler. Among the twenty-odd other topics I felt were misleadingly treated are the pre-1917 judicial system, the role of foreigners in pre-1917 Russian industry, the Stolypin reforms, Stalin's nationality policy, the roles of the Czechs and of the Allied intervention in the Civil War, the use of forced labor in the 1930s, the initial Soviet response to Hitler's invasion, and the Vlasov movement. Personal opinions do, of course, differ on such topics, but many of them are the subjects of scholarly works which Laran seems not to have incorporated in his survey. This impression is reinforced by some surprising omissions from the bibliographic listings.