

RUSSIA'S ROAD FROM PEACE TO WAR: SOVIET FOREIGN RELATIONS, 1917–1941. By *Louis Fischer*. New York, Evanston, and London: Harper & Row, 1969. vii, 499 pp. \$12.50.

AN INTRODUCTION TO SOVIET FOREIGN POLICY. By *Richard F. Rosser*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1969. viii, 391 pp. \$8.50, cloth. \$4.95, paper.

For years Western scholars exercised a good deal of caution in presenting a comprehensive analysis of Soviet foreign policy. With such notable exceptions as Max Beloff and Louis Fischer, they were wary of exposing themselves to the pitfalls of writing about a subject that was highly demanding and complex even under optimal circumstances, but especially difficult when there was no access to archives and sources were limited mainly to Soviet official documents—edited, revised, and re-revised as they were.

This timidity has been overcome in recent years. One immediately thinks, for example, of the remarkable contributions of men like E. H. Carr, George Kennan, and Adam Ulam. They were assisted in their task not only by a somewhat greater availability of Soviet sources but also by numerous monographs on individual, narrower aspects of the topic. Both books under review represent a valuable addition to the literature, though, to be sure, at different levels and with a different readership in mind.

Rosser's work is exactly what its title says. Aware of the problem of sources and of the intricacy of differentiating between propagandistic agitation, ideological theorems, and the realistic pursuit of Soviet goals, the author proceeds methodically to acquaint his readers (undergraduate students, one may assume) with the principal moves of the Soviet policy-makers in the international arena, explaining their motivations and effectiveness. His discussion incorporates relevant matters of interest, such as geopolitics, the balance of power, and the Russian heritage, as well as Communist ideology. He points out the inconsistencies and contradictions in the actual conduct of Soviet foreign policy and how they have caused not only much bewilderment for Western analysts but also a dilemma for the holders of power in Moscow in reconciling facts with ideology. His study covers the entire period of the Soviet government's existence and all areas of the world in which it has been involved. Written with a sense of detachment, well balanced and organized, and in full command of relevant literature, it accomplishes Rosser's intent of providing a solid textbook.

Louis Fischer's book may be viewed as the culmination of years of effort to understand the manifold ingredients of Soviet behavior. In attempting to interpret this behavior as a mixture of internal and external exigencies, of ideological commitments and hard realities, and of the Soviet leaders' own strictures (a confusing combination of "scientific socialism" and sheer opportunism), he succeeds in producing an integrated picture. Some scholars, less audacious in the delicate task of evaluating evidence, will find objections to his interpretations, even though they are based on a painstaking but incomplete search for primary sources. For instance, his study of British archives in connection with the intervention in the Civil War leads him to present England as the chief villain of the affair, while French documents and the role of France are neglected and underestimated; thus the result is somewhat unbalanced. Or one may question his interpretation that Stalin's policy in the post-Munich year, which led to the Nazi-Soviet Pact, was precipitated by the British decision in March 1939 to give a guarantee to Poland (p. 310). He

also expresses the view that "Stalin provoked the aggression" (p. 456) against Russia by his own designs on Finland and Bulgaria, but this assumption appears inconsistent with Fischer's finding that Hitler had already decided on the last day of July 1940 that "Russia must be disposed of. Spring 1941" (p. 427). Some of his conclusions come more from intuitive judgment than from a thorough examination of documents, and one wishes that he had relied on original archives of the German Foreign Office rather than their selective translations published by the Department of State.

Fischer is at his best in the analysis of Soviet foreign policy in the period he witnessed in Russia in the 1920s when he had access to documents that probably no other Western author was permitted to see and also to such key statesmen as Chicherin. His vignette profiles of leading figures in the global political struggle between the USSR and the "imperialist" world make most refreshing reading. His interviews with principal actors in the drama add to the authenticity of his writing, and his style is, as one would expect, superb. The book may be controversial in some aspects, but it is that quality, combined with a sense of objectivity, that makes it thought-provoking and exciting reading for persons who are already well advanced in their knowledge of the complex story of Soviet foreign policy.

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SOVIET-AMERICAN RIVALRY IN THE MIDDLE EAST. Edited by J. C. Hurewitz. New York, Washington, and London: Frederick A. Praeger, 1969. vi, 250 pp. \$7.00.

The dramatic events that occurred in the Middle East in May and June 1967 have been received in the West with mixed emotions. Although encouraged by the reluctance of the superpowers to pursue an open collision course, observers found little to reassure them in the inability of the United States and the Soviet Union to influence the actions of their respective clients. Even more disquieting has been Moscow's subsequent determination to back the intransigence of its radical friends in Cairo, Damascus, and Baghdad.

This volume is based on sixteen papers by prominent specialists in Soviet and Middle Eastern affairs which were presented at a conference held at Columbia University in December 1968. Organized by Professor J. C. Hurewitz (under the auspices of the Academy of Political Science), the conference proposed "to outline the scope of Soviet-American rivalry in the Middle East, to set forth the problems the two nations face in their rivalry, to measure its impact upon the region, and to assess the results of alternative policies that these two powers may pursue in the decade ahead" (p. v). The book is divided into four parts dealing with the topics "Struggle for Military Supremacy," "Economic Competition in the 1970s," "Cultural Contest," and "Quest for Stability."

Space limitations make it impossible to analyze the various papers. Suffice it to say that most contributions are lucidly written and display penetrating insights into the topics discussed. By way of a general observation, it might be noted that the problem of United States and Soviet interests in the Middle East (i.e., what they really are as contrasted to what the superpowers perceive them to be) should have been examined in the light of the benefits that Washington and Moscow are actually deriving from their involvement in the area. This approach is sometimes dismissed as indulgence in a purely academic exercise. But to argue in this vein is to miss