

- SOVIET INTELLIGENCE AND SECURITY SERVICES, 1964–70: A SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY OF SOVIET PUBLICATIONS, WITH SOME ADDITIONAL TITLES FROM OTHER SOURCES. By *U.S. Senate, Committee on the Judiciary, 92nd Congress, 1st Session*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1972. v, 289 pp. \$1.25.
- THE USES OF TERROR: THE SOVIET SECRET POLICE, 1917–1970. By *Boris Levytsky*. Translated by *H. A. Piehler*. New York: Coward, McCann & Geoghegan, 1972. 349 pp. \$7.95.
- A HISTORY OF THE RUSSIAN SECRET SERVICE. By *Richard Deacon*. London: Frederick Muller Ltd., 1972. viii, 568 pp. £5.80.
- THE SOVIET POLICE SYSTEM. Edited by *Robert Conquest*. New York: Praeger Publishers, 1968. 103 pp. \$5.00.
- THE EXECUTIONERS: THE STORY OF SMERSH. By *Ronald Seth*. New York: Hawthorn Books, [1968]. 199 pp. \$5.95.
- NIGHTS ARE LONGEST THERE: A MEMOIR OF THE SOVIET SECURITY SERVICES. By *A. I. Romanov*. Translated by *Gerald Brooke*. Boston and Toronto: Little, Brown, 1972. 256 pp. \$7.95.
- A CHILDHOOD IN PRISON. By *Pyotr Yakir*. Edited with an introduction by *Robert Conquest*. New York: Coward, McCann & Geoghegan, 1973. 155 pp. \$5.95.
- COMMISSAR: THE LIFE AND DEATH OF LAVRENTY PAVLOVICH BERIA. By *Thaddeus Wittlin*. New York: Macmillan, 1972. xxxiv, 566 pp. \$12.95.
- POLITICAL TERROR IN COMMUNIST SYSTEMS. By *Alexander Dallin* and *George W. Breslauer*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1970. xiii, 172 pp. \$5.95.

Despite its fundamental and universally recognized importance, the secret police continues to be the neglected stepchild of Soviet studies. When Simon Wolin and I edited a book on the subject in 1957 (*The Soviet Secret Police*), it was our hope that by providing a concise factual survey that was based on tested information from all available sources the way could be opened for studies of the subject in greater depth and breadth. That hope has not been realized. As far as the scholarly community in this country is concerned, the study of the secret police still seems to be regarded as somehow discreditable, marginal, or unfeasible. To judge by the titles of doctoral dissertations completed in recent years, strikingly few young scholars are turning their attention to this area. In the almost twenty years that have passed since the completion of Ernest V. Hollis's pioneering dissertation ("Development of the Soviet Police System, 1917–1946," Columbia University, 1955), only one fresh approach to the subject has been made by an American Ph.D. candidate (Lennard Gerson, "Dzerzhinsky and the Origins of the Soviet Secret Police," George Washington University, 1972).

The situation is little better with regard to studies by established scholars. In the past three years the *Bulletin on Current Research in Soviet and Eastern*

*European Law* has recorded no new titles in this field. No papers on any aspect of the subject were submitted to the March 1972 meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies in Dallas, though a panel on "Police and the Judicial System as Sources of Stability and Instability in Russia and Eastern Europe" was included in the program. Granted that there are formidable obstacles to studying the history and operations of the secret police; granted, too, that the politics of U.S.-Soviet scholarly exchange militate strongly against the choice of a dissertation topic in this area, since the Soviet authorities would be certain to reject any application for archival research on a topic bearing even indirectly on the secret police; the fact remains that a major institution in the Soviet political system is receiving grossly inadequate attention from the U.S. academic community.

The dearth of American studies of the secret police is all the more regrettable in view of the fact that the Soviets, during the decade and a half since the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU, have published an extensive literature on the subject—documents, memoirs, biographies, articles, obituaries, and thinly fictionalized accounts (see my article, "Recent Soviet Books on the History of the Secret Police," *Slavic Review*, March 1965, pp. 90–98). This material, still largely unused by American scholars, casts new light on such central problems as the origin and early development of the Cheka, the role of the secret police in the establishment of totalitarian controls in the Stalinist era, and its operations against nationalist and other guerrilla forces during and after the Second World War.

Understandably the U.S. government takes a different view of research priorities from that of the academic community. A recently published bibliography prepared for the Senate Committee on the Judiciary testifies to the diligence with which government analysts cover this field. The bibliography is far more than a mere listing of titles; it includes concise analytical comments on many works, and thereby facilitates research on a multitude of fascinating and important topics.

Three general histories of the secret police have been published in recent years, two by English writers, the third by a Ukrainian émigré scholar working in West Germany. Ronald Hingley's fast-moving history of the subject (*The Russian Secret Police*, 1970) has been well characterized by Robert H. McNeal in this journal as a "brisk and well-organized summation of a wide body of secondary material in Russian and other languages" (*Slavic Review*, March 1972, pp. 152–53).

Of comparable scope but with greater claim to originality is the work of Boris Levytsky. The first edition of the book, *Vom roten Terror zur sozialistischen Gesetzlichkeit: Der sowjetische Sicherheitsdienst*, published in West Germany in 1961, did not find an English-language publisher, though translations into French, Italian, and Polish (an émigré edition published in Paris) followed. The present work is a translation and updating of the second German edition, *Die Rote Inquisition* (1967), which brings the story down to 1970. A notable feature of Levytsky's book is the extensive use he makes of émigré publications, which provide detailed information on such matters as the struggle by the secret police against nationalist guerrillas in the Ukraine and elsewhere in the period after 1945. Offsetting the book's strengths, however, are some serious weaknesses. For example, Levytsky accepts the view that Stalin played an all-powerful role in shaping and controlling the secret police down to his death in 1953, a view which cannot be reconciled with much of the detailed evidence before 1953 and which makes it extremely difficult to account for the continuity in secret police methods and aims after Stalin's death.

The book's documentation is erratic—full at times, sketchy or nonexistent at others—and the author shows a disconcerting willingness to accept rumor as proven fact, for example, the unsubstantiated charge that the CIA masterminded the murder of Congolese ex-Premier Patrice Lumumba. Another weakness is Levytsky's neglect of the vitally important foreign policy aspects of the secret police's operations, especially espionage.

It is precisely this area which constitutes the focus of Richard Deacon's wide-ranging book, so that his treatment of the subject and that of Levytsky to some extent complement each other. Deacon's sources range from standard Soviet publications to the usual "well-placed informant who must remain anonymous," and he makes liberal, and at times uncritical, use of the press. Like Hingley, Deacon begins his account in remote pre-Soviet times, finding the origin of the attitudes which, in his view, underlie the centuries-long history of the Russian secret police in the period of the Mongol Yoke. Like Levytsky, Deacon tends to stumble when he tries to analyze the high-level political connections of top secret police officials—for example, he assumes that Vladimir Semichastny (KGB chief from 1961 to 1967) was a protégé of Khrushchev's.

Not formally a history of the police but rather a systematic survey of its development, organization, and functions, the volume edited by Robert Conquest is an attempt to provide in concise form the basic data needed for an understanding of the police's role in Soviet history and the functioning of the Soviet political system. The book's principal value lies in its documentation, unfortunately somewhat marred by the editor's tendency to disregard the work of other scholars in the field, such as Boris I. Nicolaevsky, none of whose key writings on the subject are included in the book's bibliography. The historical survey suffers from the effects of excessive compression; one shudders, for example, at the violence done to the complexities of history by a sentence such as, "Dzerzhinsky, and after him Menzhinsky, ruled supreme [in the secret police] from 1917 to 1934" (p. 21).

Personal experience in the shadowy world of espionage and counterespionage provides the basis for Ronald Seth's study of the Soviet security services in World War II, centering on the counterespionage agency known as "Smersh" (a contraction of "*Smeri' shpionam*," or "Death to Spies"). Since Seth tends to equate Smersh with the secret police itself, his book includes a much broader treatment of the subject than might be inferred from its title. Despite its regrettable lack of documentation, the book has considerable value, since the author is knowledgeable and apparently enjoyed good contacts in Western counterespionage circles.

Not available to Seth when he wrote his study of Smersh was the firsthand account of service in that organization by a former Smersh officer who writes under the pseudonym "A. I. Romanov." Intermingled with a string of mildly racy personal anecdotes (the author portrays himself as a gay blade with a roving eye and an irresistible attraction for women), Romanov provides a useful account of the training, assignment, and operations of a junior-level Smersh officer. One's confidence in his veracity is enhanced not only by the general matter-of-factness of his tone but also by the internal consistency of his account. On occasion (for example, in his characterization of V. S. Abakumov, chief of Smersh and a key security police official in the period of late Stalinism) Romanov presents evidence sharply at variance with that offered by other writers, such as Levytsky—a situation which throws into sharp relief the confusion and uncertainty which characterize this field of study.

Romanov presents a picture of the rather debonair life of a security police officer. The dark underside of that world has never been more graphically portrayed than in Pyotr Yakir's moving account of his coming-of-age in the jungle of Stalin-era concentration camps. Laconic, terse, and matter-of-fact, Yakir's book is a classic which should be read by everyone concerned with modern Russian and Soviet history and politics.

The first full-length biography of Lavrentii P. Beria, Soviet secret police chief from 1938 to 1953 (the longest tenure by far of any person in that office), has been written by Thaddeus Wittlin, a Polish-born writer who earlier published an absorbing account of his imprisonment in Soviet concentration camps during World War II (*Reluctant Traveler in Russia*, 1952). Wittlin has diligently combed the available evidence on Beria's career, and the value of his book is enhanced by rare photographs and a generous selection of relevant Soviet documents. Seriously impairing the book's value, however, is the author's tendency to erect an elaborate semifictional superstructure on the sometimes slender basis of available factual evidence. For example, a brief passage in Khrushchev's "Secret Speech," together with a commentary on the passage by Robert Conquest (neither of which is identified as a source), provides the basis for a lengthy description of Stalin haranguing a plenum of the Central Committee in October 1952, replete with colorful details which only an eyewitness could provide. Motives are freely imputed to historical figures on the basis of the slenderest evidence or none at all, though little attempt has been made to analyze the factual evidence for clues lying below the surface. Beria's life and career still lack adequate treatment, as do those of his predecessors and successors from the time of Dzerzhinsky to the present.

Without waiting for the study of the secret police itself to be placed on a sound and generally accepted basis, Alexander Dallin and George W. Breslauer in their book have tried to view its operations in the context of comparative Communist studies, itself a new and still exploratory field. I have elsewhere noted their useful contribution to the bibliography of a complex and important subject but called attention to the persistence of basic unanswered questions and unresolved inconsistencies in their treatment of the subject ("Aspects of Political Terror," *Studies in Comparative Communism*, Winter 1972, pp. 428-33).

The bleak picture of the general paucity of recent scholarly studies of the secret police is somewhat mitigated when one includes articles on the subject in collective volumes. A noteworthy entry in this category is Frederick C. Barghoorn's essay on the secret police as one of the "interest groups" in contemporary Soviet society ("The Security Police," in H. Gordon Skilling and Franklyn Griffiths, eds., *Interest Groups in Soviet Politics*, 1971). Somewhat careless in its handling of historical fact, Barghoorn's essay scores heavily in an area in which few Western scholars will wish to compete, that of firsthand experience of Soviet secret police interrogation techniques.

On balance, then, the statement which Simon Wolin and I made in 1957 still holds true: "The time has come, therefore, to undertake a full and objective study of the secret police and its role in the Soviet system."

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