

ALEXANDER GUMBERG AND SOVIET AMERICAN RELATIONS, 1917–1933. By *James K. Libbey*. Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1977. xii, 229 pp. \$13.50.

This latest addition to the growing list of monographs on Soviet-American relations between 1917 and 1933 is based upon apparently exhaustive research in the papers of Alexander S. Gumberg, who has long been identified as a key figure on the American side in the ultimately successful struggle for formal diplomatic relations. Moreover, since Gumberg was closely associated with the well-known group of colorful Americans in Russia during 1917–18, and also with Americans prominent in business and politics during 1921–33, Libbey has consulted other private papers for further information on the role played by Gumberg. It may be confidently stated that the author has done an excellent piece of work in establishing Gumberg's importance as an unofficial agent in the effort to normalize Soviet-American relations, especially during the time of the Harding, Coolidge, and Hoover administrations. In the process, Libbey suggests that the actual establishment of formal diplomatic relations after the advent of the Roosevelt administration in 1933 was much more anticlimactic than has been generally supposed.

Alexander Gumberg was born in Russia in 1887 and emigrated to the United States in 1902. The author successfully shows that, although Gumberg had one Bolshevik brother and another who rose high in the Soviet industrial bureaucracy, he himself had become thoroughly Americanized when he returned to his native country in 1917 for business reasons, and so remained. While conceding that a year in the Russia of Kerensky, and then of Lenin, convinced Gumberg that he had a mission to explain the new Russia to the United States (in the interest of establishing normal relations between the two countries), the author contends in convincing fashion that his subject never for one moment supposed that a Bolshevik revolution was appropriate in his adopted land. The fact that John Reed denounced Gumberg as a counterrevolutionary seems to be decisive on this point, as does the fact that Gumberg earned the confidence of so many important figures in the world of high finance and Republican politics in the United States during the 1920s. He even managed to persuade Herbert Hoover of the importance of Soviet-American trade. His trips to Soviet Russia between 1921 and 1933 were few and of brief duration. Finally, before his death in 1939, the troubles of his two brothers and of others during Stalin's Great Purge seem to have aroused in him some doubts about the regime in whose interests he had labored so long and so diligently.

Like most books of its genre, this one accepts uncritically the idea that there was no justification at all for the initial refusal of the Allied Powers to recognize Lenin's Bolshevik regime, for the subsequent Allied intervention in Russia, and for the continued American refusal to establish diplomatic relations with the Kremlin for about a decade after all the other Great Powers had done so. Moreover, the author does not even speculate on the underlying motives of the Soviet government in its various approaches to the United States between 1917 and 1933. Only after we know more of what Moscow thought of Gumberg and his work will we have a fully rounded picture of his career.

C. JAY SMITH
Florida State University