

the influence of Peking in Hanoi, confirming the belief of those who argue that the United States wisely fights in Vietnam to contain the revolutionary expansionism of Communist China.

In any event, this book has no value to the historian. Its version of Soviet military tactics used on the Karelian isthmus in 1939–40, for example, is flatly contradicted by the classic study of the British scholar John Erickson, *The Soviet High Command*. The author(s) further allege that “Stalin had never gone out of his way to take other people’s advice into account, but this was especially true after the war” (p. 361). More trustworthy is the word of party literature that in 1948–53 there was a permanent commission of the Politburo for handling questions of foreign policy. Although the claim is made, “We have been sincere and unsparing in our efforts to assist Vietnam” (p. 485), the USSR in fact virtually cut off its aid to Hanoi during the 1962–64 period. Mr. Crankshaw, aside from trumpeting the dubious “insights” offered by this corrupted text, might at least have correctly dated the Third Partition of Poland—1795 not 1863.

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THE SOVIET POLITY: GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS IN THE U.S.S.R.

By *John S. Reshetar, Jr.* New York and Toronto: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1971
ix, 412 pp. \$4.50, paper.

The Soviet Polity is an exploration of Soviet politics from an approach that emphasizes “institutional structures, functional analysis, the nature of the Soviet leadership, the principal components of Soviet political life, and the definition of the major problems confronting the Soviet polity” (p. v). The author has set himself an impressive task, and the result is a well-conceived and thorough investigation of Soviet politics. First among Professor Reshetar’s achievements is his lucidity. He is able to follow the tortuous route of administrative developments and illuminate both the fundamental continuity and the innovating change. His treatment of the secret police, for example, is a model of balance and clarity, showing how this structure maintains its cohesiveness through reorganization after reorganization. A second strength of this study is the author’s skill in providing the historical context for each structure or function he discusses. Thus the Soviet political system is seen to rest on a much older tradition than the fifty-odd years so often taken for granted. Such areas as ethnic heritage, law, and administration are examined in the light of their distinctively Soviet elements and also in the context of Russian tradition. Similarly, the author’s discussion of the structure and organization of the Communist Party and the governmental hierarchy is clear and precise. As a third strength, I would put forth Reshetar’s analysis of problems recognized generally as important but rarely analyzed satisfactorily. The distinctions he draws are original and persuasive, such as the ones he makes between mass and elite political culture (he devotes a chapter to each), between the socialism and communism of the Marxist tradition on the one hand and non-Marxist forms of socialism on the other, and between the ideological core and the pragmatic periphery of the perceptions of Soviet leaders.

In a study as broad as this, there are bound to be some areas that receive less emphasis than others. This reviewer finds, for example, that the chronological method of explanation tends to promote a sense of determinism that masks the political process. For example, the author says: “Lavrentii Beria, a deputy premier,

was made head of a reunified secret police organization, as interior minister, and also controlled an internal security army. This collective leadership was to lose one member in late June, 1953, when Beria was arrested and subsequently executed" (p. 124). Of course, we do not really know what happened, but a more pronounced stress on conflict and decision-making might reveal some of the workings of these succession crises. Further, as is illustrated in the treatment of the mass auxiliary organizations, there is often an emphasis on what is intended by official policy, rather than on the evasions and obstructions of those who are meant to be controlled by it. The Komsomol "embraces youth from 14 through 28 years of age" (p. 173). True, officially it does, but in fact the Komsomol by no means penetrates the urban working youth as thoroughly as it does the student population, and rural Komsomol members make up only 34 percent of the organization. Or, in the discussion of administration, Reshetar enables us to see clearly the jurisdiction of each agency but not what happens when a problem—for example, one concerning environmental disturbance—requires the interaction of several agencies and crosses jurisdictional lines.

But these criticisms are largely a matter of emphasis. A study as impressive, broad, and thorough as this one is offers countless insights—including, at the end, a discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of several analytic models. The author has also provided an excellent annotated bibliography. In sum, the book is a welcome and lucid combination of the historical context and the Soviet present.

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INTEREST GROUPS IN SOVIET POLITICS. Edited by *H. Gordon Skilling* and *Franklyn Griffiths*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, for the Centre for Russian and East European Studies, University of Toronto, 1971. ix, 433 pp. \$12.50.

This volume is an outgrowth of political scientists' disenchantment with traditional models of Soviet politics. To characterize the Soviet system as totalitarian, or to focus exclusively on the struggle for power among the political elite, leaves out major political actors. The book is concerned with the political role of these middle-level actors, the major occupational groups in Soviet society. The editors see these groups not as transmission belts or control mechanisms, but rather as forces making political demands, bargaining, and otherwise influencing the policy-making process.

Skilling, the major force behind the book, acknowledges that Russian traditions, as well as Communist theory and practice, have been hostile to the idea of independent interest groups and have set strict limits on their activity. He also recognizes that many critics feel that the powerful institutional limitations on freedom of expression and association have "hampered the articulation of group interests and made research on the subject difficult, if not impossible," and that the essential conditions of pluralism—"some degree of group integration and means of mutual communication and some degree of autonomy"—have been largely absent (p. 410). But in Skilling's view, interest groups have come to assume a major role in the years since Stalin's death (particularly under Khrushchev), and though group conflict is not the central or predominant feature of Soviet politics, groups have become "an important element, the neglect of which makes the picture of Soviet politics incomplete and distorted" (p. 413).