

## THE RUSSIAN DILEMMA: A POLITICAL AND GEOPOLITICAL VIEW.

By *Robert G. Wesson*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1974. xi, 228 pp. \$12.50.

Although the author claims his purpose is "to relate Russia's development more closely to the geographic situation" than presumably others have, his geographical theme is barely stated (and crudely at that) when he abandons it for the cliché of "dual Russia" caught between East and West, Europe and Asia, Westernizers and Slavophiles, and so forth. For Wesson, then, Russian history is little more than a blend of authoritarianism and messianism. Rushing through five hundred years in sixty-odd pages, he concentrates on the Soviet period. Yet everywhere the treatment is superficial, tedious, and crammed with questionable judgments. Perhaps the worst examples of muddled thinking appear at the outset. We are told on page 12 that "hugeness legitimated the political order," only to be reminded on page 15 that "the good of the state was for many almost a religious value." Taken separately such statements are meaningless. Together they are illogical and contradictory. In order to buttress these views, Wesson interlards the narrative with quotations, most of them painfully familiar and taken out of context, from leading intellectuals who in fact had little to do with the way the country was run up to 1917. In the postrevolutionary section Wesson has little to say about social structure, economic growth, or even the changing nature of the party. His use of the secondary literature is arbitrary and haphazard. The level of narrative often falls below that acceptable in a popular magazine article. After more than fifty years of substantial American scholarship on Russia and the Soviet Union, the general public deserves better than this. As for the specialist, the book possesses no merits at all.

ALFRED J. RIEBER  
*University of Pennsylvania*

## POLITICHESKAIA AGITATSIIA: NAUCHNYE OSNOVY I PRAKTIKA.

By *E. M. Kuznetsov*. Moscow: "Mysl'," 1974. 318 pp. 1.25 rubles.

This book is not a scholarly contribution, but rather a presentation of the authoritative Soviet view of a particular form of persuasive communication. Although repetitive and often familiar, the book reveals several interesting directions in the official doctrine.

In the first third, Kuznetsov summarizes, with abundant quotations from Lenin's works, the history of political agitation from 1882 to the present. However, Lenin and Brezhnev are the only Soviet rulers mentioned by name. It is in the next third of the book, entitled "Basic Content of Political Agitation," that Stalin's name appears, associated with the 1956 Central Committee resolution on the cult of personality, which is evaluated by Kuznetsov as a necessary corrective to Stalin's "serious errors . . . in the last period of life" (p. 172). Strong defense of the leader follows, emphasizing his role in rooting out anti-Leninist "currents," building socialism, defeating Nazism, and contributing to Marxist-Leninist theory. Khrushchev—never named—is judged negatively for his "subjectivism" and unfortunate administrative reforms, the results of which Kuznetsov sees as nurturing (possibly widespread) pessimistic conclusions regarding the future of socialism.

Both the role of the Communist Party, treated in the final third, and the target