THE SOVIET SYNDROME. By *Alain Besançon.* Foreword by *Raymond Aron.* Translated by *Patricia Ranum.* New York and London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978 [Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1976]. xviii, 103 pp. $8.95.

This is an impassioned essay. A French historian of Russia who takes his sources seriously, Besançon applies logic to what he examines, seeks order and structure in what he studies, and confronts the Soviet experience with a yes-or-no approach that allows neither ambiguities nor evolution nor unintended consequences. What results is an alarmist plea to take Leninist ideology at face value: "The nature of the Soviet regime has not changed . . . since November 7, 1917." It cannot change, "it can only disappear or perpetuate itself." Reforms and détente are nothing but cleverly preplanned alternations between "war communism" and "NEP." If the Soviet Union has temporarily given up exporting revolution, it is only "because it is making preparations to do successfully just that, and it needs a delay to be certain of ultimate success." In fact, the USSR cannot give up exporting revolution any more than it can give up ideology, for to do so would mean relinquishing power. As for the tension between state and revolution, the state is simply a position to fall back on whenever world communism is in trouble. Besançon rules out any ritualization of beliefs: "As long as the ideology has not been expressly repudiated, the general orientation of Soviet foreign policy will be offensive."

According to Besançon, it turns out that Stalin's methods were attributable not so much to his personality as to the system; that the reason the USSR produces so many tanks and guns is "because the country is rationally incapable of producing anything else"; and that using Western concepts like regime, society, and economy is to fall into the trap of considering the Soviet Union to be a state like any other. In the end, the whole thing is "a hallucination, a mirage, a phantasmagoria." Besançon will have to forgive those of us to whom all this sounds like a rehash of things we used to hear in a simpler age.

I know Alain Besançon to be a better historian than this book would lead a reader to believe. If he wants his thesis (which I consider thoroughly wrong-headed) to be taken seriously, he owes it to himself and his argument to make a better case for it.

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THE AMERICAN IMAGE OF RUSSIA, 1917–1977. Edited by *Benson L. Grayson.* New York: Frederick Ungar, 1978. xii, 388 pp. Illus. $14.50.

Benson Lee Grayson's anthology presents statements about Russia by fifty-two distinguished Americans, among them, intellectuals, writers, journalists, public figures, and government officials (including presidents and secretaries of state). A balanced essay by Mr. Grayson precedes the collection, and helpful biographical and contextual notes preface the different statements. Averaging about six pages in length, the carefully edited selections are chronologically arranged as follows: nearly half covers the years from 1917 to 1941, the next ten run from 1944 to 1953, sixteen cover the years from Stalin's death in 1953 to the late 1960s, and a few represent the 1970s. Illustrations, photographs, and an index accompany the text.

The richness of the anthology lies in the varied statements about Russia. The range of opinions extends from Communists John Reed and Earl Browder, on the one hand, to extreme anti-Communists Eugene Lyons and Joseph McCarthy, on the other. Some (including Langston Hughes and Corliss Lamont), although critical of the Soviet system, find interesting reasons to praise it. Inevitably, the reader will reflect upon the continuity and counterpoint in American perceptions of Russia. Although