

The eleven essays that follow investigate the evolution of Soviet air power from its feeble prerevolutionary origins through the perilous years of World War II to its present position of impressive strength, vitality, and leadership. In addition to treating the growth of the Soviet air services historically, a number of essays are devoted to topical subjects. These include the development of the naval air arm, civil aviation, the strategic air force, civil defense, lessons of World War II, strategic missile forces, cosmic research, and patterns of Soviet aircraft development.

The longest and in many ways most impressive work is John T. Greenwood's essay, which is devoted to the role of the air forces in the Great Patriotic War. Writing about a period of Soviet aviation history which has received more attention than any other—both in the West and in the USSR—Greenwood manages to present a great deal that is new and compelling. He describes, in an easily understandable narrative, the evolution of Soviet fighter forces from their early crushing defeat to final overwhelming victory. He painstakingly analyzes the elaboration of Soviet wartime strategy and (most refreshingly) tactics, pointing out that serious technical and tactical weaknesses continued to plague Soviet air forces throughout the war. Greenwood's essay makes it clear how decisive sheer numbers were in defeating "gold-plated" equipment and airmen with superior training. He provides a well-balanced picture derived from both Soviet and German sources.

Unlike most of the more technical works on the Soviet air forces, these essays do a good job of linking politics and leaders to both technical and organizational development. This is particularly well done in Kenneth Whiting's concluding essay dealing with the postwar period. Unlike some "softer" histories, this volume has a firm technical side as well.

In spite of its strong positive qualities, however, the book is certainly not without its problems. If the purpose of the entire effort was to provide historical depth and perspective to the phenomenon of Soviet air power, the essays covering the pre-World War II era are disappointing, since they are little more than good summaries, whose authors appear not to have taken full advantage of the available Soviet sources and generally fail to provide either important new data or fresh analytic insights. But the summaries do provoke a fundamental question: How could today's modern and formidable Soviet air forces have emerged from such weak and unfavorable beginnings? The essays that follow do a highly creditable job of providing answers.

The book also contains a few factual errors. For example, Greenwood places the city of Kursk in the Ukraine and credits Rudolph Rossler's mythical "contacts in the German High Command" with supplying vital information for the Soviet Stavka. But these and other errors that are less glaring do not detract significantly from the importance of this book. The absence of source notes is a more fundamental fault.

Whatever its weaknesses, this is a good and important book which displays balance and crispness and offers carefully drawn conclusions. Annotated bibliographies provide discerning evaluations of much of the most important literature. The extraordinary wealth of photographs is a welcome bonus.

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SOVIET-AMERICAN RIVALRY. By *Thomas B. Larson*. New York and Toronto: W. W. Norton and George J. McLeod, 1978. xii, 308 pp. \$13.95.

Thomas Larson, a veteran State Department official and the author of two previous books on the USSR, has written an excellent study of the complex relationships between Moscow and Washington. *Soviet-American Rivalry* is not merely an examination of bilateral relations between the two superpowers, but a sophisticated inves-

tigation of their interactions in the economic, ideological, military, political, and diplomatic arenas. Only their competition in the realm of science and technology is ignored.

In the economic sphere, the rivalry involves not only the abilities of the two sides to produce the goods and services of modern industrial life, but also their competition to provide models of economic development for the rest of the world. Here and elsewhere, as the author readily admits, the incongruent nature of the two systems makes honest, meaningful comparisons difficult. Nonetheless, Larson is able to draw a concise picture of the strengths and weaknesses of the American and Soviet economies and of their relative appeal as models for other countries. In presenting economic comparisons, the author is quick to puncture the inflated claims of both sides and to expose the dubious blessings of some economic victories—such as production of the most automobiles. He also explodes a number of myths about U.S.-Soviet trade, especially the fallacious notions that increased trade will necessarily improve political relations or give one side more leverage over the other.

The discussion of political and ideological rivalry involves a similar exercise in demythologization. Larson demonstrates how the propagandists on each side (one group using the totalitarianism versus free world model, and the other using the imperialism versus anti-imperialism model) have fundamentally distorted the nature of both their own and the opposition's political system. He also shows that, in their approach to other nations, both Washington and Moscow have been more concerned with securing loyal supporters in the international arena than with fostering the spread of either liberal democracy or socialism.

Nonspecialists will find the section on military rivalry especially valuable. After cataloging the many categories of military competition, Larson concludes that the Soviet Union has virtually closed the formerly wide gap between itself and the United States in strategic arms, and that a similar trend has begun—but is far from complete—for globally mobile forces.

Larson's conclusions are sobering. He argues that the United States is still ahead of the USSR in almost every aspect of their rivalry, but that long-term growth trends which favor the Soviet Union will result in general equality between the two powers by the end of the century. He also predicts that, although communism probably will not make any gains among industrially developed countries, the continued growth of nationalistic, command economy regimes in the Third World will represent losses for America, if not clear-cut gains for the USSR.

In comparing the achievements and failures of the two superpowers, an enterprise in which bias and tendentiousness usually abound, the author has achieved a remarkable degree of objectivity. The result is neither an apologia for liberal capitalism, nor a conservative argument for greater armaments and a more aggressive foreign policy. Larson's stimulating interpretations and assessments will interest all readers, including specialists. In addition, the information on a wide range of topics contained in his book will be useful to students, businessmen, and political leaders alike.

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COMMUNISM AND COMMUNIST SYSTEMS. By *Robert G. Wesson*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1978. xii, 227 pp. \$7.95, paper.

A comparative study of communism must grapple with the thesis, cogently propounded some years ago by John Kautsky, that "Communist systems are not distinguished from non-Communist ones by any particular characteristics," nor "as Communist phenomena, do they have any particular characteristics in common, except the symbol of Communism." In Kautsky's view, Communist regimes do not constitute a