

THE BOLSHEVIK SEIZURE OF POWER. By *S. P. Melgunov*. Edited and abridged by *Sergei G. Pushkarev* in collaboration with *Boris S. Pushkarev*. Translated by *James S. Beaver*. Santa Barbara: American Bibliographical Center-Clio Press, 1972. xxiv, 260 pp. \$15.00, cloth. \$5.50, paper.

Trained as an historian in prerevolutionary Russia, Sergei Melgunov (1880–1956) wrote a number of important works on the history of the Russian Orthodox Church, the Old Believers, and problems in Russian political and social history. After the 1905 revolution he became a leader in the nonradical People's Socialist Party. An ardent foe of the Bolsheviks in 1917 and during the Civil War, he continued his efforts to expose the Communists, after his emigration from Soviet Russia in 1923, in such works as *Krasnyi terror v Rossii, 1918–1923*; *Zolotoi nemetskii kliuch k bol'shevistskoi revoliutsii*; and *Kak bol'sheviki zakhvatili vlast'*, published in English as *The Bolshevik Seizure of Power*.

The book under review is based on study of contemporary newspapers, documents, and memoirs, as well as the author's own experiences. Central to Melgunov's view of the Revolution is the belief that the Bolsheviks, liberally subsidized by the Germans, were able to seize power in 1917 largely because of the failure of their rivals to take the threat of Bolshevism seriously and to provide adequate protection for the government. Because of this orientation, although his book contains much useful information about the disorganization and confusion within the ranks of the Bolsheviks' opponents, many problems absolutely crucial to an understanding of the Bolsheviks' success are not touched on at all. One learns very little, for example, about the aspirations and behavior of Petrograd workers, soldiers, and sailors who supported transfer of power to the soviets in the fall of 1917 or about the relation between the revolution from below and the actions of government, moderate socialist, or even Bolshevik leaders at this time. Kerensky appears near hysteria, alternately lulled by overconfidence and paralyzed by depression; the moderate socialists are pictured as meddling self-deceived idealists, while the Bolsheviks are simply "fantasts of the politics of violence." Explanatory notes by the editor are of only limited help in clarifying these issues; thus the Second Congress of Soviets, which endorsed and legitimized the overthrow of the Provisional Government, is summarily dismissed by Professor Pushkarev as a "crowd dominated by Bolshevik cheer-leaders."

Of particular value to the nonspecialist, close to half of Melgunov's study is devoted to the initial struggle against the Bolshevik regime between October 26 and mid-November, a period which has received relatively little attention in most Western accounts of the October Revolution. Regrettably, an equally important portion of the original work, a substantial detailed analysis of the Bolshevik seizure of power in Moscow, has been omitted.

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THE DAMNED INHERITANCE: THE SOVIET UNION AND THE MANCHURIAN CRISES, 1924–1935. By *George Alexander Lensen*. Tallahassee: Diplomatic Press, 1974. xiv, 533 pp. \$19.80.

Few issues in the annals of modern diplomacy have generated as much conflict as Manchuria's Chinese Eastern Railroad. The tangled story of the Soviet Union's

involvement in that crisis-ridden and accident-prone enterprise from the dawn of the Bolshevik Revolution to the finale of its "voluntary" sale to Manchukuo-Japan in 1935 is reconstructed here with commendable accuracy and completeness. Despite the difficult nature of the topic, the author has managed to produce a thoroughly researched, well-balanced, fair, and comprehensive record of the labyrinthine political intrigues surrounding the railroad's operations during this period as a treasured prize of rival national and imperial ambitions. Professor Lensen has dug diligently into Soviet, Japanese, British, and French documents and files and consulted a mass of secondary material and has assembled the pieces into an epic chronicle of the CER's twentieth-century career in the role of source, catalyst, and magnet of grave international tensions in the Far Eastern vortex. If judged in the light of criteria applicable to historical archeology, namely, how solid, inclusive, and microscopic the factual survey and account looks and sounds, the treatise can hardly be faulted. In other respects, however, a number of important defects flaw the quality of the work.

To begin with, the narrative suffers from a bad case of bloat. Details pile up in reckless abandon, forcing the reader to fight his way through a thicket of minutiae, where judicious paring would have resulted in a neater, trimmer, clearer, and in every sense superior script. This is especially true of the section retracing the tortuous course of the negotiations leading up to the sale of the CER, in which every thrust and parry is recalled with loving care and one gets bogged down in a morass of charges, declarations, offers, and counterproposals adopted purely for the sake of bargaining and lacking any intrinsic purpose, and which might have been readily summed up in a couple of pages rather than spun out seemingly forever.

Next, trapped in a maze of contradictory Chinese, Japanese, and Russian claims concerning the events affecting the CER, and granted access to British diplomatic and consular archives, Lensen has tried to feature the writers of these on-the-spot dispatches as a sort of Greek chorus impartially observing the action, explaining the plot's progress to the home audience, and dispassionately evaluating the motives of the principal members of the cast. Astute as these commentaries often are, they cannot serve to replace wholesale the need for independent critical assessment of the evidence by the author himself. Yet this is precisely what does occur. In the process, what is conveniently forgotten is that not everyone shares this faith in the wisdom and omniscience of British conduct of foreign affairs between the two wars and, indeed, that England's representatives abroad may have had a private ax to grind in reporting on their experiences. Armed with a great deal more information, enjoying in retrospect a broader view of the total picture, Lensen might have been expected to formulate his own conclusions instead of relying so heavily on the judgment of others. On that score, he sorely disappoints.

This brings me to the last point, which follows from what has just been said, to the effect that as a general proposition the book amounts primarily to an exercise in description, exposition, and recitation, and, by those standards, does the job superbly. Its crucial weakness lies in its consistent failure to analyze the empirical data, suggest new interpretations, develop an original thesis, or really do anything more than confirm, beyond any reasonable doubt, the long-held suspicion that China blundered into the 1929 confrontation with the USSR, that the Soviet Union did not seek war with either China or Japan at this stage of the game, that Japan on occasion toyed with the idea of waging a pre-emptive war against the USSR, only then to change its mind and direct its restless energies

elsewhere. It is good to have all this safely nailed down on paper, but whether or not the modest returns warrant an effort of such magnitude must, at least in my opinion, remain open to question.

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THE SURROGATE PROLETARIAT: MOSLEM WOMEN AND REVOLUTIONARY STRATEGIES IN SOVIET CENTRAL ASIA, 1919-1929.

By *Gregory J. Massell*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974. xxxvi, 448 pp. \$18.50.

Relying heavily on a full range of documentary, contemporary, and recollective literature in Russian, and well grounded in the recent products of sociopolitical theorizing in the West, Professor Massell has written a masterful historical and analytical account of Soviet efforts during the 1920s to develop a productive strategy for social change in Central Asia. The concept of directed, or planned, social change looms large in this study, and Massell's handling of it in the context of Soviet-Central Asian relations is highly instructive for the answers it provides to two key questions posed by the author in the introduction: how and to what extent can engineered social change be imposed on a society (particularly a "traditional" one) through the deliberate use of political power; and, conversely, how and to what extent can a traditional society resist and obstruct engineered revolution from above and outside.

Basically this is a study of the modernization of a traditional society, with an added, complicating dimension: modernization in Central Asia was not self-imposed by native leaders but was the result of outside (Soviet Russian) vision and planning. Introducing drastic and far-reaching change into a traditional society is never an easy task. Massell's inquiry shows that in Central Asia an already difficult situation became nearly impossible when change was the product of alien Soviet assault on the traditional way of life. The native reaction, extensively presented here, was understandably indifferent at best and hostile and violent at worst, and it led to the realization among many Bolshevik cadres that they were confronting, in Massell's words, "a milieu that turned out to be far more elusive to direct manipulation than Russian society, and far less comprehensible in terms of Marxist-Leninist ideology" (p. 38).

The "failure" of Central Asians to respond positively to Marxist-Leninist perceptions of social and political norms forced the Bolsheviks to search for different "access-routes to Central Asia's societies" in an effort to "subvert established native solidarities" (pp. xxii-xxiii) and bring about the desired social and political transformation. As the basic thesis of his study, Massell argues persuasively that the search for "access-routes" led the Soviets to adopt the theoretically unorthodox approach of exploiting the sexual tensions within Central Asia's Islamic society in the absence of real or substantial class tensions—that is, to exploit the disadvantaged status of the women in the absence of any real working class. Thus they created a "surrogate proletariat where no proletariat in the real Marxist sense existed" (p. xxiii). That Muslim women came to be viewed as a surrogate proletariat in Soviet eyes becomes abundantly clear as Massell delves into the process by which the regime sought to modernize Central Asia, and