
BACKGROUND BOOKS

THE SOVIET UNION

As economic and cultural exchanges between the United States and the Soviet Union increase, more Americans are turning to books for help in penetrating the enigma that is everyday Russia. Enjoying the widest readership are three recent popular accounts by U.S. journalists who worked in Moscow: Robert Kaiser's ambitious, somewhat disjointed **Russia: The People and the Power** (Atheneum, 1976, cloth; Pocket Books, 1976, paper); Jerrold and Leona Schechter's intimate **An American Family in Moscow** (Little, Brown, 1975), with contributions by the Schechter children who attended Soviet schools; and Hedrick Smith's fat, anecdotal **The Russians** (Quadrangle, 1976, cloth; Ballantine, 1977, paper).

"Are they becoming more like us?" Smith asks. Not really, is his answer. Most Western scholars agree. Despite the two countries' apparent similarities (size, economic growth, technological advance), the Russians live in a political culture difficult for Americans to grasp.

This reading list, which focuses on the domestic aspects of the Soviet period, is necessarily limited. It starts with history—general accounts, studies of the bloody formative years and of the Stalin regime—and goes on to books about contemporary Soviet politics, the legal system, social structure, ideology, and science in Russia today.

The U.S.S.R. was born in revolution, and for a serious but eminently readable account of the Revolution's origin, the upheaval and civil war, and the careers of Lenin, Trotsky, and other founders of the system in the early years, **The Bolsheviks: The Intellectual and Political History of the Triumph of**

Communism in Russia by Adam B. Ulam (Macmillan, 1965) is a good place to start. The classic study by Barrington Moore, Jr., **Soviet Politics—The Dilemma of Power: The Role of Ideas in Social Change**, first published in 1950 and newly reprinted (White Plains: International Arts and Sciences Press, 1976), provides a political and social chronicle from the Revolution to the late 1940s.

Alec Nove's **An Economic History of the U.S.S.R.** (London: Allen Lane, 1969, cloth; Penguin, 1972, paper) presents in lay language an analysis of Soviet economic policies and practices from 1917 to the present, with emphasis on the forced collectivization of agriculture and the development of heavy industry under the first Five-Year Plan (1928–33).

For the years up to 1930 the encyclopedic **A History of Soviet Russia** by Edward Hallett Carr (London; Macmillan, 1950–71) serves as the basic reference. More manageable works that shed light on the central phenomenon of Stalin's rise to power in the late 1920s include: Moshe Lewin's **Lenin's Last Struggle** (Pantheon, 1968), which shows how the Revolution's unresolved problems, especially the latent opposition of the peasantry, plagued the Moscow leadership; Stephen F. Cohen's **Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution: A Political Biography, 1888–1938** (Knopf, 1973), in which Cohen argues that the more moderate policies advocated by Nikolai Bukharin (who briefly emerged as an alternative to Stalin) were politically feasible and as logical an extension of Leninist thinking as Stalin's despotic policies; and Roger W. Pethyridge's **The Social Prelude to Stalinism** (St. Martin's, 1974), an analysis of the "social ingredients"

that, the author believes, contributed as strongly to Stalin's rise as did his vaunted mastery of political skills.

Despite Stalin's enormous impact on Soviet history, much about the man remains shrouded in mystery. A recent biography, **Stalin As Revolutionary, 1879-1929: A Study in History and Personality** by Robert C. Tucker (Norton, 1973), is the first of three projected volumes of psycho-history probing the relationship between Stalin's personality and his political behavior.

Less concerned with explaining Stalin than with understanding his role in history is Soviet dissident historian Roy Medvedev. In **Let History Judge: The Origins and Consequences of Stalinism** (Vintage, 1973) Medvedev recounts, in detail that stuns the reader, the terror and purges of the 1930s. This and other accounts of the ferocities that marked the Stalin era—most notably, sections of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's chilling **The Gulag Archipelago, 1918-1956** (Harper & Row, 1974, cloth; 1975, paper)—suggest a leadership divorced from society. Yet interviews with persons displaced from the Soviet Union as a result of World War II revealed broad prewar support for the Stalin regime and approval of its policies, as Alex Inkeles and Raymond Bauer show in **The Soviet Citizen: Daily Life in a Totalitarian Society** (Harvard, 1959). And a just-published study by Vera S. Dunham, **In Stalin's Time: Middleclass Values in Soviet Fiction** (Cambridge, 1976), uses what the author calls "the perishable output of safe writers" of popular fiction to document what she terms the "Big Deal" between the managerial class and the regime.

The nearly 24 years since Stalin's death have brought significant changes in Soviet politics and society. The basic book on the practice of government in the Soviet Union remains the late Merle Fainsod's **How Russia Is Ruled** (Har-

vard, 1963, rev. ed.). Fainsod's description of the Communist Party organization and the management of the country's social and economic life is now being updated by Duke political scientist Jerry F. Hough for 1978 publication.

Meanwhile, readers interested in the pressures on policy-makers may turn to the somewhat specialized but highly readable **Interest Groups in Soviet Politics** edited by H. G. Skilling and Franklyn Griffiths (Princeton, 1971), in which the roles of such contending "establishment" groups as the military, economic managers, and jurists are thoroughly examined.

Other worthy books on recent Soviet politics include a collection of essays by Zbigniew Brzezinski, **Dilemmas of Change in Soviet Politics** (Columbia, 1969) and the two volumes of memoirs, **Khrushchev Remembers** (Little, Brown, 1970, cloth; Bantam, 1971, paper) and **Khrushchev Remembers: The Last Testament** (Little, Brown, 1974, cloth; Bantam, 1976, paper), dictated by one of Stalin's successors in the Kremlin, Nikita S. Khrushchev.

Of late there has been a trend in Western scholarship away from Kremlinology toward a sociological approach. No more sophisticated work for the general reader exists in this category than Wright Miller's deceptively simple **Russians as a People** (Dutton, 1961). An important new addition is **Class and Society in Soviet Russia** by Mervyn Matthews (Walker, 1973), in which official Soviet socio-economic and demographic data are used to describe the class structure (workers, peasants, intelligentsia) and such matters as migration to the cities from the backward countryside, self-perpetuation of the elite, competition for higher education, and the discrepancies between adolescent expectations and real job opportunities.

The survival of religious life and of "national" or ethnic aspirations are dis-

cussed in **Religion and Atheism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe** edited by Bohdan R. Bociurkiw and John Strong (Univ. of Toronto, 1975) and in **Ethnic Minorities in the Soviet Union** edited by Erich Goldhagen (Praeger, 1968)—notably in John Armstrong's long essay, "The Ethnic Scene in the Soviet Union: The View of the Dictatorship."

The activities of a variety of persons who stand outside the one-party political process in Russia are exhaustively covered in **Dissent in the U.S.S.R.: Politics, Ideology, and People** edited by Rudolf L. Tökés (Johns Hopkins, 1975).

Perhaps because the absence of legality was so pervasive under Stalin, the evolution of the Soviet legal system since his death holds special interest. In **Justice in the U.S.S.R.: An Interpretation of Soviet Law** (Harvard, 1963, rev. ed. cloth; 1974, paper) Harold Berman describes post-Stalin reforms and advances his own thesis about the "parental" or educative role of Soviet legal institutions. In a more popular vein, George Feifer's **Justice in Moscow** (London: Bodley Head, 1964) provides an eyewitness report of a series of Moscow criminal trials. On the strength of the trials he attended, Feifer concludes that, though rough and informal

by American standards, ordinary Soviet criminal justice is not unfair.

Crime persists in Russia as elsewhere. How Soviet experts explain this problem and what they are trying to do about it is the subject of Walter D. Connor's **Deviance in Soviet Society: Crime, Delinquency, and Alcoholism** (Columbia, 1972).

What of tomorrow? The future of Soviet society, many of its own spokesmen assert, will depend upon the achievements in one particular field—science. To many Westerners as well, the long-uneasy relationship between Soviet ideology and Soviet science appears crucial. Soviet gerontologist Zhores Medvedev (twin brother to historian Roy) tells us in **The Medvedev Papers** (London: Macmillan, 1971) about the frustrations resulting from bureaucratic interference. These and other tensions are explored by Loren Graham in **Science and Philosophy in the Soviet Union** (Knopf, 1972). But Graham argues that despite exceptions (the Lysenko genetics controversy being the best-known in the West) the interaction between Marxist philosophy and scientific research has been creative and provides an increasingly sound take-off point for basic long-range scientific inquiry.

EDITOR'S NOTE. *Susan Gross Solomon and Peter H. Solomon, Jr., both Soviet studies specialists and associate professors in the Department of Political Economy at the University of Toronto, and S. Frederick Starr, executive secretary of the Kennan Institute for Advanced Russian Studies at the Wilson Center, cooperated in the selection of the books above and provided comment on a number of the titles.*