

four years in Stalin's Russia (1933–37) instructed him in the realities of totalitarianism, as he confronted the Lysenkoists, who worked from the specious theory that genes were directly influenced by environment. Muller finally received a professorship at Indiana University in 1944 and the Nobel Prize two years later—tardy recognitions of his groundbreaking research. Carlson's chronicle is an even-handed, thorough biography, although the science receives more attention than the man.

RED STAR IN ORBIT

by James E. Oberg
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272 pp. \$12.95



Valentina Tereshkova, first woman cosmonaut.
From *Red Star in Orbit* by James E. Oberg.

A launch pad catastrophe, a secret cosmonaut town, a nearly fatal spacewalk, a woman in space—the history of the Soviet space program has all the elements of a good science fiction thriller. Only a few outsiders, however, have been able to reconstruct it, even partially. Oberg, a computer analyst at NASA and one of the West's leading space "detectives," sifts through the records—misleading *Tass* and *Pravda* news releases, official Soviet biographies, airbrushed cosmonaut photos, and the spadework of other Western observers—to present the most authoritative account to date. Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev forced technicians in the early years to bolster his politics and propaganda with immediate, sensational launches. Though this policy brought triumphs (e.g., the world's first manned space flight, in 1961, by Yuri Gagarin), it caused frequent disasters. The explosion of a balky rocket booster in 1960 killed many of the Soviet Union's finest space technicians. Since Khrushchev's ouster in 1964, a more rational, less hurried, approach has developed. Results have been dramatic, including record stints in Salyut space stations. At the center of Soviet success lies the story of Sergey Korolev, a survivor of Stalin's "gulag" camps and Khrushchev's chief rocket designer. While his ships made history, Korolev himself was kept under virtual "house arrest" until his death in 1966.