

These episodes and others like them such as de Gaulle's shout of "Long Live Free Quebec!" during the course of his Canadian visit in the same critical summer of 1967 obviously do not arouse Carmoy's admiration, but in a practical sense the author realizes that they had a limited effect on the actual course of events. De Gaulle's truly disturbing influence, something morally tarnishing for France, has been largely in European affairs. His dismantling of NATO and his confused scheme for a "Europe from the Atlantic to the Urals" could simply create a situation building up the hegemony of the Soviet Union or perhaps enabling Western Germany to steal a march on everybody. Meanwhile, the French nuclear deterrent has turned out to be no deterrent at all. France is actually falling behind in the race. In the business of the Common Market de Gaulle has sometimes tried to use the organization for the dubious purpose of procuring French domination; or else on behalf of an antiquated national vanity he has occasionally tried to prevent the organization from realizing the kind of ideal that would make Western Europe the equal of the Soviet Union and at the same time a truly viable and rational community of peoples.

Reviewed by BRENTON H. SMITH

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### *Prelude to Catastrophe*

**Russia 1917: The February Revolution**, by George Katkov, *New York: Harper & Row, 1967. xxvii + 470 pp. \$8.50.*

THIS IS PROBABLY the most important book yet written about the Russian Revolution. It has been widely reviewed, but the re-

viewers have missed the major thesis of the book which is of special interest not only because of its originality but also because of its bearing on the events of our own time and country. Hence, another review to bring out this significance seems justified.

Although Katkov, Lecturer in Soviet Institutions at Oxford University, claims to have broken new ground only in dealing with German intervention in Russian internal affairs, he has in fact shattered many standard paradigms of Russian history. His main concern is with the erosion of the prestige and authority of the Tsarist government by the continuous propaganda of the liberal factions within the Duma which led eventually to the collapse of the monarchy and to revolutionary chaos. This to be sure was neither intended nor anticipated by the liberals: what they wanted was a constitutional monarchy with ministers responsible not to the Tsar but to the Duma, and to obtain this end they sought in every possible way to discredit the imperial government. The leaders of the Progressive Bloc in the Duma and in the so-called Voluntary Organizations (the Union of Zemstovs, the Union of Municipalities, and the Central War Industry Committee) took advantage of the early reverses of the Russian armies in the First World War to promote the idea that the court and the ministers were incapable of winning the war and that a "government of public confidence" responsible to the Duma was necessary for victory. Thereafter the Russian liberals used each successive real or imagined crisis of the war further to discredit the Tsar and his ministers to the extent that—as was hoped—he would be forced to make political concessions. After the military reverses of 1914-15 stories of high treason began to spread, and the army commanders used this as an excuse for proceeding with the trial and execution of the probably innocent Colonel Myasoedov, which in turn led to the removal and impeachment of the Minister of War, Sukhomlinov. These events and the shortage of arms at the front gave plausi-

bility to the rumors of treason. The myth of a "Black Bloc" in high government and court circles organized around the Empress provided "the *Leitmotiv* for the propaganda campaigns which were launched and sustained by the liberals from the September congresses of 1915 to the February revolution of 1917." In the press an unrestrained barrage of denunciation was directed against every statesman or politician who was prepared to serve in the government. Katkov tells us that

this propaganda assumed an almost hysterical character as time went on; slanderous, irresponsible accusations were flung by the liberals in the face of anyone who refused to support their cause. . . . The articles which affected public opinion most were not those quoting specific instances of shortcomings and abuses by officials, but those which in thinly disguised Aesopian language attacked the existing system as a whole.

The theme of treason in high places began to be "proclaimed openly from the Duma tribune to which articulate Russian public opinion looked for information and political guidance." Thus a sinister rumor was hardened into a general conviction. Wild tales about Rasputin's influence at court also played a part in undermining the prestige of the Tsar and faith in the government. The roots of Russian patriotism lay in the mystique of the monarchy and in belief in the divinely-inspired wisdom of the monarch; these roots were weakened and then destroyed by the propaganda onslaught. The liberals, says Katkov, succeeded in convincing the educated classes that

they were being betrayed by those at the top and cheated of the victory that would have been theirs, had the liberals taken over the business of government. This propaganda affected the middle ranks of the civil service and of the military administration, who grew more and more critical of their own hierarchy. . . . As this propaganda fil-

tered through to the illiterate lower strata of the population and the army, it lost much of its political content, leaving only a sediment of mistrust and a suspicion that "the gentry" had some kind of understanding with the Germans.

Academic voices joined the chorus of the liberal politicians and journalists. Professor P. B. Struve wrote to Lord Milner urging him to intervene with the Tsar in favor of the liberals' demands. Later, however, he was to acknowledge the folly of his action, saying,

. . . the Duma orators did not realize what was happening outside the Duma in the minds of the anti-state elements and in the people's soul. The overwhelming majority of Russian intellectuals did not understand the people's psychology and did not grasp the tragic importance of the moment. They thought they had a duty to carry on the struggle with the government in the name of patriotism. But now it is of course clear to everybody that the only reasonable course of action from a historical point of view would have been the greatest reticence.

The myth of a pro-German "Black Bloc" led to a series of political witch-hunts against persons suspected of German sympathies. As a matter of principle, observes Katkov, the liberals might have been expected to denounce this harassment of the innocent, but, as he tells us, they never raised their voices in protest "except in the case of the Moscow pogrom of May, 1915, which provided them with a convenient stick to beat the government." When it began to appear that victory might be achieved without constitutional reforms and the liberal propaganda contradicted by events, thus exposing its authors to public ridicule, the agitation was redoubled. In February, 1917, the liberals succeeded "for the second time during the war in persuading the majority of the council of ministers

that the government would be unable to continue successfully with the prosecution of the war if political concessions were refused." Meanwhile, the patriotic middle classes had largely succumbed to the liberal propaganda and had come to believe that the Tsarist government would lose the war or would conclude a separate and shameful peace. Thus they joined in the assault on the autocracy.

It may be asked, of course, how the leaders of the Duma, who had access to so much information, could have believed in their own myth of a defeatist conspiracy. Katkov gives this answer:

As it became increasingly clear that the attempt of the Progressive Bloc of the Duma and of their allies, the Voluntary Organizations, to seize power by persuading the Tsar to surrender his prerogative to appoint ministers was about to fail, the exasperation of liberal circles assumed a hysterical character. It was a question of giving up a political struggle which had been going on for almost a generation . . . or else . . . giving support to a violent *coup d'état*. The first alternative was rendered the more difficult because anyone advocating it was immediately denounced as a time-server and a traitor to the cause of progress. The second alternative needed a moral justification difficult to find for a mere struggle for power, which in any case appeared unpatriotic in wartime. The story of treason in high places, with sinister hints at the participation of the Empress . . . provided this justification and lent a patriotic lustre to what in fact was a struggle for power in home politics. This is why, instead of attacking the real shortcomings of the government, liberal circles concentrated on rumor-mongering. Such articles as V. Maklakov's "Mad Chauffeur" and Mil'yukov's broadside on 1 November 1916 in the State Duma achieved this end to an extent which the authors possibly did not expect.

The repeated assertions by the Voluntary Organizations that they would have supplied the armies much better had they not been impeded by Tsarist ministers and bureaucrats, gradually weakened the loyalties of generals and officers. The silence and passivity of both senior and junior officers after knowledge of A. I. Guchkov's plot against Nicholas II further compromised their loyalty and made them ineffectual in February 1917 when firmness was needed to restore order in the capital. By that time the morale of most officers of the Petrograd garrison had been eroded by the propaganda and rumor-mongering. Even those generals, such as Khabalov and Belyaev, who remained faithful suffered from a paralysis of will, through fear of encountering overt resistance from their subordinates. The key roles played by Alekseev and Ruzsky in forcing the abdication, thus sealing the fate of Russia, testify to the effectiveness of the liberal propaganda. At a time when, according to Nikolay Sukhanov, a single disciplined division could have restored order in Petrograd, no one had the will to act.

Because Katkov refuses to place all blame for the catastrophe on Nicholas II, some have labeled him a monarchist. It is true that his estimate of Nicholas differs sharply from that of the liberal emigrés, who to justify their own conduct found it necessary to condemn the Emperor. The Tsar's actions and decisions, however injudicious some of them may have been, were determined by his high standard of personal morality. He would not, says Katkov, official position" of his personal fear or anger, "nor, probably, [by] other passions." He showed great restraint in the face of personal attacks against him and "never stooped to use his power to undermine the social, and, in the case of Guchkov, official position" of his personal enemies. If he was obstinate in refusing the demands for constitutional reform, it was because he felt he would have the moral responsibility for having surrendered his power to a government whose decisions he

could no longer control; besides "he distrusted profoundly the abilities, intelligence and political integrity of the people who were said to 'enjoy public confidence.'" Katkov's own verdict on the Emperor appears to be that his too rigid and self-conscious altruism was one source of the tragedy.

Saintliness, when not intentional or self-conscious, may produce miracles, saintliness resulting from a conscious pursuit of purity of heart leads to personal and in this case social disaster.

The Bolsheviks interpreted the events of February as a trick of the police to get them into the streets and made no move until the total collapse of authority had become obvious. Thus, for all their subsequent crimes, they cannot take credit for having provoked the revolutionary situation from which they emerged as the ultimate and only beneficiaries. It is liberal politicians who must answer to history. Throughout 1916, as Katkov tells us, they had rebuffed all of Nicholas' efforts at reconciliation. "The Kadet Party remained unmoved. . . . They denounced Stuermer's advances as treacherous, and considered Protopopov's acceptance of office a betrayal of principle." The Provisional Government could not control the whirlwind its leaders had helped to set loose. It had neither a convincing claim to legitimacy nor could it match the fanaticism and ruthlessness of the Bolsheviks. The only symbol of government familiar to the Russian masses was the monarchy; without it Prince Lvov and his colleagues could not hope to consolidate a new democratic order.

In view of all this Katkov's emphasis on the German intervention seems misplaced, for that intervention would have been fruitless except for the situation created by the liberal politicians and their propaganda. But what gives Katkov's work a special urgency for American readers are the parallels to be drawn from it to the current situation. For some years an intense campaign of propaganda, also characterized by extreme mythomania, has been mounted

against our government, its Executive, and its organizations of defense. Some of this propaganda emanates from some of our most prestigious universities, from some of the powerful information media, and even from some quarters within the bureaucracy itself, and it increases daily in violence and virulence.

Reviewed by PAUL CRAIG ROBERTS

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### *Bracher's Third Reich*

**The German Dictatorship: The Origins, Structure and Effects of National Socialism**, by Karl Dietrich Bracher; translated from the German by Jean Steinberg, *New York and Washington: Praeger Publishers, 1970. xv + 553 pp. \$13.95.*

A BOOK that is obviously the result of much research, that offers a concise, highly readable, and well-organized account of a complex political episode, and at the same time not only obscures basic causes and effects but actually throws up road blocks against understanding the dynamics of twentieth century European politics, represents no mean intellectual achievement. Yet this is precisely what the young Bonn historian Karl D. Bracher has managed to produce. *The German Dictatorship* may well replace William L. Shirer's *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich* as the standard superficial account of National Socialism.

A summary of the factual contents, which include comprehensive treatments of the ideological antecedents of National Socialism, the founding of the NSDAP and its road to power, the multiplex process of *Gleichschaltung*, the road to war, and the excesses of wartime totalitarianism—as well