

Technology and Defense

U. S. A. and the Soviet Myth, by Lev E. Dobriansky, *Old Greenwich, Connecticut: The Devin-Adair Company, 1971. 274 pp. \$6.50.*

HERE Professor Dobriansky rigorously re-examines several fundamental themes deeply rooted in the conventional notions concerning American-Soviet relations. The broadest and least explicit of the questions he raises is one that was seriously debated twenty years ago, but is now smugly assumed to have been resolved. This question, posed most simply in the title of a book by Mr. James Burnham, is "Containment or Liberation?" Can the United States survive by working, in conjunction with other countries, to keep Russian expansion in check until the Soviet Union ceases to have aggressive ambitions or changes occur within the USSR so that these ambitions can no longer be implemented? Professor Dobriansky criticizes the current policy of containment and argues that the liberation of non-Russian nations within the Soviet Union would be the only change substantial enough to end Russia's historically persistent colonial expansion.

Professor Dobriansky analyzes the concept of the nation-state and finds that the USSR cannot rationally be considered one. An understanding of this point is tragically lacking in Americans, yet it is vital that the citizens and the officials of this country comprehend it thoroughly. A state is a political entity, with legal sovereignty and

a single legitimate government. A nation, in contrast, is a cultural and historical entity which is analytically distinct from the idea of a state. A nation is composed of a single people united by common traditions, customs, history, language, institutions, values and purposes. The relatively recent rise of nationalism brought about the union of these two different concepts into a nation-state ideal—a yearning by each nation to be self-governing and responsible only unto itself. This movement, best exemplified in Woodrow Wilson's doctrine at Versailles, remains a powerful force throughout the world.

The author, after careful study, has found that the USSR is not only not a nation-state but is rather the antithesis, that is to say an empire which suppresses the desire for autonomy held by the captive nations within and without its boundaries. The *Russians* are indeed a nation, but statistically they constitute only about half the population of the Soviet Union. The other half is composed of non-Russian nations, led by the Ukraine, which are historically distinct both from Russia and from each other. Their long-standing and intense desire for autonomy is the Soviet Union's greatest weakness and the free world's greatest potential strength. The Ukraine is thus not a Russian Texas but another Czechoslovakia longing for its freedom. This fact must first be understood generally and then integrated into American foreign policy.

Professor Dobriansky pursues his point a step farther by reopening another oft-debated controversy, though this time with less profit. Is the communist ideology or traditional Russian imperialism the decisive motivating factor in the Kremlin? The author adopts the latter interpretation, and it must be admitted that he uses it to construct a powerful explanatory framework with many insights. The techniques used by the Kremlin, such as the "building of paper bridges of understanding" through diplomacy, propaganda and treaties, are traditional. Most of the areas marked for

expansion follow the colonial patterns of tsarist times. Many of the appeals and policies are repetitions of Russian history prior to Lenin. Similarly, Dr. Dobriansky is quite correct when he points to the glaring contradictions between Marx's theories and Russian activities. Unfortunately, though, this does not clarify all that needs explanation.

People in all countries, of all classes, backgrounds and degrees of intelligence and ability read Marx and sincerely consider themselves Marxists. The effective bulk of these people identify themselves with and actively aid the foreign policy goals of the USSR. Despite all its fallacies and contradictions, the Communist Party line, originating from the Kremlin, has a globally credible link to Karl Marx. If the secondary communist leaders can accept this connection as legitimate, must we assume that they have been completely duped? Are we to suppose that years of party indoctrination in Marxist-Leninist teachings have had no effect on the current leadership in the Kremlin? Does not the history of all totalitarian movements show that they captivate the utopian, idealistic impulses before they pursue the perverse policies which destroy their claims to humanitarian principles and purposes?

It should be expected that any group of communist leaders, sincere or otherwise, will make many concessions to the culture and history of the country they rule. If the country has a messianic tradition, as Russia has, all the better. If the Ukraine and Turkestan are available for the taking, why should the communist leaders hesitate simply because a former tsar also wanted to annex them? Global expansion has to begin somewhere, so why not start with what is most convenient—historically, strategically and logistically? And since when, it might be asked, has Cuba been within the ambit of traditional Russian imperial interests? If man is to be remade according to Marx's ideal, why can't a totalitarian regime be rationalized until the bourgeoisie have been liquidated in every country?

A full understanding of Soviet policy does indeed require a thorough grounding in Russian history with all its techniques, tactics and strategies for brutally expanding and maintaining its traditional empire; this is vitally necessary and all too often ignored. Equally important, however, is a fundamental comprehension of original Marxist theory, also of its very warped Russian variety and its probable impact on the thinking and actions of both the Russian leadership and self-proclaimed communists everywhere.

Despite this criticism, and it is a serious one, I must conclude that this is a very important and valuable book. A knowledge, too, of the concrete, contemporary aspirations of the non-Russian peoples within the Soviet Union is indispensable to any serious study of international affairs. Dr. Dobriansky has collected the facts and marshalled sound arguments, insightful illustrations and persuasive rhetoric. The discussion of the captive nations, of "confetti diplomacy" and of East-West trade highlight the practical implications of this knowledge and are presented in the author's uniquely attractive style.

Reviewed by ROBERT A. SCHADLER