

organization, planning and management of the war by the politicians and generals, and the impact of the war on British values and economic life.

Bourne provides the reader with a valuable overview of a society at war, but he does more. This book should prompt many teachers and scholars to rethink some of their traditional positions on World War I. Bourne states, rightly I think, that World War I "is still overwhelmingly seen as pointless, mismanaged and futile." It seemed "at best a mistake, the result of bungling and miscalculation by 'small men in great places.'" It is these impressions, at least in the context of the British experience, that he attempts to counter, and, in general, he is successful.

To Bourne, the reasons for Britain's entry into the war are more sane (preserve the empire, the source of Britain's power); her generals (especially Haig) more competent; and her strategy more reasonable than conventional wisdom allows. Throughout the book Bourne reassesses, reevaluates, and revises with confidence and good sense. He punctuates his generalizations with arresting anecdotal details that provide glimpses of the personalities behind the decisions. Yet, as successful as Bourne is in prompting us to rethink the history of 1914-1918, his is not an attempt to create the impression that World War I was just an earlier version of the "Good War." He admires the soldiers who "gave their lives . . . their posterity . . . their peace of mind . . . their youth," but he never tries to present the war as other than what it was: a tragic cataclysm that slaughtered thousands and changed the face of Britain forever.

This book, in sum, is an excellent choice for those, especially teachers, seeking a brief, comprehensive treatment of Britain at war. In appropriate courses, students too would find the book interesting and informative. It is illustrated and includes a number of useful maps. There is no bibliography *per se*, but the first footnote of each chapter contains a list of suggested readings.

Webster University

Michael Salevouris

Alan Wood. *Stalin and Stalinism.* London and New York: Routledge, 1990. Pp. xvii, 68. Paper, \$8.95.

Edward Acton, *Rethinking the Russian Revolution.* London and New York: Edward Arnold, 1990. Pp. 229. Cloth, \$49.50; paper, \$13.95.

Written by two English scholars—Edward Acton is a Lecturer in Russian History at the University of Manchester and Alan Wood is his counterpart at the University of Lancaster—both works are intended for undergraduate students. While the two books share a common audience, they are very different.

Acton's work is an extended historiographical essay that focuses exclusively upon several key problems surrounding the events of 1917. Its purpose is to synthesize for undergraduate students the major traditional historical interpretations, both western and Soviet, of the Russian Revolution; more specifically, it addresses the pivotal questions of how and why the Russian Revolution erupted in February, 1917, why it took the course it did and ultimately, in October, 1917, resulted in the victory of V.I. Lenin and the Bolsheviks. In addition, the Acton book aims to show undergraduate students how historical interpretations rely upon primary source material and how interpretations evolve over time, given the availability of new evidence and new ways and methods of interpreting old evidence. Moreover, Acton presents a clear and detailed treatment of three traditional and established historical perspectives on the Russian Revolution, i.e., the liberal, the Soviet (or Marxist), and the "libertarian," as well as the more recent revisionist approach. The latter represents a shift away from traditional emphases upon political factors, "great men" or elites, and deterministic viewpoints to an emphasis upon the social dynamics of the Russian Revolution. Recent revisionist studies concentrate, accordingly, on the masses and view the Russian Revolution as a "revolution from below." Overall Acton's summaries and analyses of the respective viewpoints on the Revolution are balanced, concise, and up-to-date, although some very recent Soviet and western work is, understandably, not included. The book is well done, but it does presuppose a knowledge of the events of 1917 and some

understanding of historical methodology. *Rethinking the Russian Revolution*, therefore, may be suitable only for senior history majors enrolled in an advanced seminar. The book is not suitable for the non-specialist, nor is it likely to have much value or appeal in an introductory survey course.

Alan Wood's *Stalin and Stalinism* is a fine complementary volume to Acton's historiographical essay, for its focus is on the single most significant consequence of the 1917 revolution--Joseph Stalin and his impact on the U.S.S.R. Wood's purpose is not to survey western and Soviet historiography on Stalinism (surely the central problem of Soviet history) but to offer undergraduate students a short biographical sketch of Stalin that covers the entire span of his career, with emphasis upon the nearly thirty years (from 1924 through 1953) during which he led the Communist Party and thoroughly and violently transformed the party, the state, the economy, and the nation. This small book is clearly written, well organized, and includes all the essentials necessary for a quick survey of Stalin and his place in Soviet history. As one volume in a series of pamphlets, the book is of necessity superficial; it simply does not provide enough detail or depth on any of the central issues of the Stalin era. It is a good but very sketchy outline of more than fifty years of turmoil, revolution, terror, war, civil war, and personal intrigue. Given its brevity, it is difficult to imagine that it will (as it is intended) "stimulate critical thought." It may be a useful guide or outline for undergraduate students or even secondary students (e.g., it includes a glossary of terms and a chronology), but it does not have nearly enough humanity, drama, or complexity to engage or provoke.

Fitchburg State College

Pasquale E. Micciche

Keith Eubank. *The Origins of World War II*. Arlington Heights, IL: Harlan Davidson, Inc., 1990. Second edition. Pp. xi, 182. Paper, \$9.95.

A substantial amount of scholarship on the origins of World War II has been published in the two decades since the first edition of this work appeared. Aside from some minor modifications, however, this study retains the same organization and interpretation as the 1969 edition.

Keith Eubank has published several works in twentieth-century diplomatic history and is thoroughly familiar with the variety of interpretations about the origins of the Second World War. His Heath series anthology on the subject is known to a generation of college students. In this volume, Eubank seeks "to explain the origins of the world war that began in 1939 and ended with 30,000,000 people dead and unbelievable devastation over much of the world."

The period from the Treaty of Versailles to Hitler's rise to power is briefly surveyed, the bulk of the volume being devoted to the six years preceding the war's commencement. Eubank reminds the reader that the Treaty of Versailles was hardly as severe as that of Brest-Litovsk, imposed by Germany upon Russia. Indeed, as a result of the First World War and the various treaty arrangements following it, Germany was in an ideal position to exploit a power vacuum created in eastern Europe. Moreover the diplomacy of the allies in the twenties was ineffective, a grave mistake being committed by evacuating the Rhineland. "Had the occupation forces remained there until 1935, as the Versailles treaty had planned, the Nazi threat might have been averted." The "spirit of Locarno" and the Kellogg-Briand Pact merely provided an illusion of peace.

The depression facilitated Hitler's triumph in Germany and set the stage for German expansion on the continent. Eubank argues that Hitler was an opportunist, not a systematic planner. He intended to acquire German "*lebensraum*" through a series of short wars and did not envision a conflict of the magnitude he finally precipitated. Eubank discusses Hitler's destruction of the Versailles restrictions governing German rearmament, and the inability of western statesmen to deter him from his expansionist goals. He was "a man unlike anyone they had ever had to deal with."

It is in this context that Eubank treats appeasement, a policy derived from the British experience of the First World War, and based on the assumption that that conflict had been avoidable and that Britain shared responsibility for it with Germany. When Hitler achieved power, the appeasers were thoroughly entrenched and considered Communist Russia to be a greater threat than