

recapture a sense of the British past. However, their emphases differ sharply, with Reay most comfortable with the world of Hogarth and Marsden with Ritchie.

Catawba College

Charlie McAllister

R.W. Davies. *Soviet Economic Development from Lenin to Khrushchev.* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998. Pp. 82. Cloth, \$39.95; ISBN 0-521-62260-3. Paper, \$11.95; ISBN 0-521-62742-7.

Raymond Pearson. *The Rise and Fall of the Soviet Empire.* New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998. Pp. 138. Cloth, \$55.00; ISBN 0-312-17405-5. Paper, \$19.95; ISBN 0-312-17407-1.

Each of these books is part of a series written to provide succinct and readable overviews of specialized topics "for students and their teachers." Between them, they provide a comprehensive picture of some very important elements of Soviet policy.

The process of industrialization in Russia, Davies tells us, was in some ways not so very different from that of Western Europe and the United States. Peculiarities were introduced by the fact that Russia had a huge peasant population well into the twentieth century, that wars and revolution distorted economic change, and that it suffered huge population losses during the world wars, the revolution, and collectivization. A large role for government in the industrialization process was introduced to overcome such disadvantages, even under the Tsars. The Soviet Union's ability to negotiate the first stages of industrialization despite worldwide depression, and to engineer its own continued growth and expansion through 1965, provided a politically important demonstration of successful economic transformation to the less developed world. The conclusion argues that this success also influenced western economic thought in important ways. In the first half of the book, the author succinctly discusses the characteristics of three different economic systems that followed one another in Russia, each with its own significant role for the state: the late Tsarist economy, War Communism (1918-1920), and the New Economic Policy (1921-1929). The text is in some ways quite basic; little prior knowledge of Russian history or of economics is assumed, and the policies of War Communism, for example, are compactly explained. On the other hand, the text provides a sophisticated summary of extant research, introducing the reader to the major historical debates. Telling and thought-provoking examples help to place economic issues clearly in their political and social context. The second half of the book is dedicated to an examination of the "administrative economy" until 1965. The high rates of Soviet economic growth are carefully examined for their impact on living standards and for developing structural problems. As the Soviet economy matured, and new social and political conditions developed, high defense expenditure, insufficient growth in agriculture, and the need for greater

internal technological innovation led to greater economic and political strain. The text thoughtfully provides maps, basic charts, a glossary, and chronology.

Raymond Pearson's *Rise and Fall of the Soviet Empire* is a consideration of the relationship between domestic Soviet politics and the countries of Eastern Europe from 1945-1991. The strict focus on the East European part of the Empire allows for quite a full treatment. Cuba forms no part of the overview, for example, except for a page and a half about the Missile Crisis. Even the inner Soviet Empire of the republics is a relatively unimportant element in the discussion until the 1991 disintegration of the USSR. The defining moments in the imperial relationship described here are, therefore, in Belgrade, Budapest, Prague, Gdansk, and Berlin. The narrative provides a clear and readable summary, with historical context clearly explained. The apposite comparison is a particular strength of the text. There is relatively little emphasis on the many historical debates that surround this controversial material.

The narrative emphasizes the anachronistic nature of the Empire, which was forming just as most European Empires were dissolving. The East European Empire, Pearson makes clear, was not only a successor to the smaller Soviet Empire of the pre-war period, but in a very real sense also the product of the Nazi *NeuOrdnung* that preceded it. The changing conditions of its existence (embodied in such events as the Hungarian uprising of 1956) required serious rethinking of the policy and institutional connections between Moscow and Eastern Europe approximately every dozen years. The persistence of the Empire is attributed not only to military power, but to the general improvement of economic conditions, flexible Soviet policies, and Western interventions, such as financial subvention in the 1970s. Eventual collapse came about not only because of internal economic decline but also because the USSR failed to realize the power of nationalist sentiments in Eastern Europe or in its own republics. The final chapter, entitled "The Last Empire?", is a useful reflection on the nature of empires as well as the fate of the USSR; it is careful to emphasize the benefits as well as the tribulations experienced by the subjects of the Soviet imperium.

Each of these books forms an excellent reading for classroom discussion. The Davies book is shorter and somewhat more challenging, given most students' preparation in economics. Nevertheless, it provides a brief and sophisticated summary of a difficult but very necessary subject that is directed specifically at a student audience. Pearson's overview is more in the nature of an interpretive survey of the English-language bibliography. It will be, however, an exceedingly useful classroom tool.

Colgate University

Carol B. Stevens