

the material underlying the volume. But in any case, without documentation, one has little basis to judge the completeness, accuracy, or quality of the history.

3. The most important failing in this writer's judgment is that the volume presents a mass of information with little analysis. True, many (this writer included) find accounts of naval battles of great interest. But what are we to make of these victories and defeats? What impact did all of this have on the broader history of the Russian state, or the future development of the Russian navy? Questions such as these are addressed only superficially, and because of it the book is of little value other than as an introductory survey.

These shortcomings are intensified and made brutally evident in the final chapters. Mitchell's description of the Soviet navy since the Second World War is very poor. His account of modern Soviet maritime capabilities is naïve, exaggerated, and indiscriminate. The sharp disputes within the Soviet Union over the proper role of seapower and the optimal configuration of naval forces are barely treated, and then only in the most simplistic fashion. Factors as disparate as the quality of food on Soviet ships, Soviet antisubmarine capabilities, and the size of the Soviet Mediterranean squadron are treated almost evenhandedly. The author seems compelled to mention every element touching on Soviet naval capabilities—from China's navy to Soviet fishing fleets. In brief, in pursuing the history of the Soviet navy after World War II, Mitchell attempts to cover far too much, in too limited a space, and without adequate preparation.

One hates to close on such a low note, because the book is an interesting one, fun to read, and a comprehensive introduction to the subject. As serious history, however, it must be considered a failure.

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THE SHORT VICTORIOUS WAR: THE RUSSO-JAPANESE CONFLICT, 1904–5. By *David Walder*. London: Hutchinson, 1973. New York: Harper & Row, 1974. 321 pp. \$10.00.

As the first of the great twentieth-century wars, and as an event in the history of both belligerents, the Russo-Japanese War fully deserves the attention it has received from successive authors. However, the best description of this war remains the British *Official History, Naval and Military, of the Russo-Japanese War* (Committee of Imperial Defence, vols. 1–111, London, 1910–20). This work made good use of the very full reports sent in by British attachés with the Russian and Japanese forces. Its defects are its limitation to purely military and naval topics, and its too uncritical use of unreliable published accounts by Russian eyewitnesses. The diplomatic aspects have since been illuminated by academic research, but scholars have not yet been very helpful in clarifying other features of the war; this reviewer in a previous book has repeated, as fact, the story that when the Japanese attacked the Russians' Port Arthur squadron the officers of the latter were attending a party, while a distinguished British historian recently turned the battle of Tsushima upside down by mistranslating *minonostsy* as "minelayers" instead of "torpedo boats."

David Walder, a British journalist and member of Parliament, has written what is probably the best of the popular accounts so far. His book is readable, and he avoids several of the traps into which previous writers have fallen. How-

ever, handicapped by his dependence on French and English-language sources, he rarely tries to reach beyond the legends and stereotypes for the truth, even though he sometimes seems aware that many of the firsthand accounts which he uses have to be taken with caution. Thus he fails to emphasize the crucial importance of the long-observed fact that because Japan could not replace her losses, big victories like Mukden only brought her closer to defeat. Also, there are several instances where the author demonstrates a certain unfamiliarity with Russian history, as when he observes that the numerous officers of German origin serving Nicholas confirm that the tsar did not dislike Germans. Some readers may be irritated by the inclusion of titillating irrelevancies such as the details of Alexander II's assassination, but at least the author has resisted the temptation to drag in Rasputin. As for the description of Nicholas II's "fondness for dogs" as an "accomplishment," this seems excessive, even from a member of the Conservative Party.

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DIPLOMAT OF IMPERIAL RUSSIA, 1903–1917: MEMOIRS. By *Nicolas De Basily*. Hoover Institution Publications, 125. Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1973. x, 201 pp. + 6 pp. black and white photographs. \$6.00.

This is a well-written volume dealing with major political and social events during a critical period of Russian history. There is an admirable chapter in which the author lucidly describes some of the principal personalities of the Russian upper class and nobility of St. Petersburg. His personal reminiscences of Italian and Russian opera singers, and the superb Russian ballet and theater, as well as several passages devoted to the nascent French aircraft industry, contribute positively to his literary efforts.

The author has devoted part of his memoirs to a brief description of the four Dumas and their major leaders. Though he has not included much new information, he has pointed out the relevant contributions of the Dumas and the personalities of their leaders. There is a penetrating description of the fateful days of July 1914 in which European civilization as De Basily knew it was moving perilously toward a tragic abyss.

Through the skillful pen of the author the reader is able to relive vividly those last days of the Russian monarchy. What emerges is a poignant description of the tragic yet noble and placid Nicholas Romanov, whose political demise closely resembled a Greek tragedy. It was apparent to De Basily, who personally witnessed Nicholas's final hours as Russian monarch, and to the members of the tsar's entourage that the military and political cataclysm which Russia was experiencing was inexorable, and the tsar's abdication inevitable. De Basily was requested by General Alekseev to draw up the act of abdication. The original draft provided for the tsar's abdication in favor of his son, but the official manifesto provided for his abdication in favor of his brother, the Grand Duke Michael. In the tsar's own words, his son's hemophilic condition persuaded him to abdicate in favor of his brother. With the abdication of the grand duke on March 16, 1917, the Romanov dynasty was officially terminated.

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