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A History of Russia Nicholas Riasanovsky; *The Romanovs: Autocrats of All the Russias* W. Bruce Lincoln; *Twentieth Century Russia* Donald W. Treadgold; *A History of Soviet Russia* M. K. Dziewanowski; *The Life of Lenin* Louis Fischer; *Three Who Made a Revolution* Bertram D. Wolfe; *Lenin Lives!: The Lenin Cult in Soviet Russia* Nina Tumarkin; *Stalin As Revolutionary, 1879-1929* Robert C. Tucker; *Gulag Archipelago 1918-1956* Alexander Solzhenitsyn; *Let History Judge* Roy Medvedev

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Book Reviews

NICHOLAS RIASANOVSKY. *A History of Russia*. 2d ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 1984. xx; 695 pp. \$39.95 hardback. \$24.95 paperback.

W. BRUCE LINCOLN. *The Romanovs: Autocrats of All the Russias*. New York: Doubleday, 1983. 864 pp. \$14.95.

DONALD W. TREADGOLD. *Twentieth Century Russia*. 5th ed. Boston: Houghton-Mifflin Co., 1981. xiii; 555 pp. \$22.50.

M. K. DZIEWANOWSKI. *A History of Soviet Russia*. 2d ed. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1985. x; 406 pp. \$23.95.

LOUIS FISCHER. *The Life of Lenin*. New York: Harper & Row, 1964. viii; 703 pp. Out of Print.

BERTRAM D. WOLFE. *Three Who Made a Revolution*. New York: Stein & Day, 1984. 676 pp. \$24.95 hardback. \$12.95 paperback.

NINA TUMARKIN. *Lenin Lives!: The Lenin Cult in Soviet Russia*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983. xiii; 315 pp. \$20.00.

ROBERT C. TUCKER. *Stalin As Revolutionary, 1879-1929: A Study in History and Personality*. New York: Norton and Co., 1973. xx; 519 pp. \$12.95 hardback. \$10.95 paperback.

ALEXANDER SOLZHENITSYN. *Gulag Archipelago 1918-1956: An Experiment in Literary Investigation*. 3 vols. Translated by Thomas P. Whitney. New York: Harper & Row, 1974-75. \$14.95.

ROY MEDVEDEV. *Let History Judge: The Origins and Consequences of Stalinism*. Edited by David Joravsky and George Haupt. Translated by Colleen Taylor. New York: Random, 1973. xxxiv; 566; xviii pp. \$12.50.

Reviewed by Rodney D. Bohac, assistant professor of history at Brigham Young University.

Recent developments in Soviet-American relations have heightened popular interest in Russian and Soviet history. Those curious about this topic find it difficult to decide which of the recently published histories will be valuable. Observant readers will quickly recognize that many of these publications single out violent and grotesque aspects of Russian history or simply gossip about the personal lives of the tsars. There are, however, well-written studies of the Russian and Soviet society that provide a more balanced view of the Russian past.

One of the best introductions to the history of prerevolutionary Russia is a textbook, Nicholas Riasanovsky's *A History of Russia*, which scholars have used in their classrooms for over twenty years. The textbook's popularity stems from its clear, concise style, judicious blend of interpretation and narrative, and insightful treatment of numerous spheres of Russian history.

Unlike many popular histories, Riasanovsky's work confronts historical issues. The author describes the differing positions of historians on important issues, analyzes the strengths of their arguments, and offers his own conclusions. The textbook never addresses any issue without providing the narrative detail that gives meaning to abstract analysis. When discussing the fourteenth-century unification of central Russia under Moscow's leadership, for instance, Riasanovsky does not simply list the factors responsible for Moscow's success; he also describes the actual methods employed to acquire new territory.

The book treats not only political history but also investigates cultural, economic, and diplomatic history. In *A History of Russia*, one learns about the origins of the unique style of early Russian church architecture and the factors that led to Russia's victory over Napoleon. The book, however, fails to discuss the family and community life of Russia's social classes and instead concentrates on the legal status of these groups.

The treatment of a wide diversity of topics sometimes leads to a frustratingly limited amount of information on some subjects and to a few paragraphs in which every sentence introduces a new name. Specialists may also contest some of Riasanovsky's interpretations. He exaggerates, for instance, the vitality of democratic institutions in ancient Novgorod and the Byzantine influence on the development of Russian autocracy. The sections on Marxism, the Russian Revolution, and the early Soviet period, furthermore, do not incorporate the contributions of recent research.

These minor deficiencies do not detract from the book's value as an introduction to the field and as a reference. The narrative, furthermore, is supplemented by thirty maps, as well as appendices charting the genealogy of the ruling families. A lengthy bibliography aids the reader in pursuing subjects of special interest.

A second work, written for a more general audience, also provides a balanced and entertaining introduction to Russian history. Written by historian Bruce Lincoln, *The Romanovs: Autocrats of All the Russias* examines the royal family that ruled the Russian Empire from 1613 to the fall of the autocracy in 1917. The prologue also briefly recounts significant events from the history of previous dynasties.

Lincoln's book devotes at least a third of its pages to the personal lives of the tsars and their families, but it also examines their political activities. *The Romanovs*, for instance, describes the marriage and love affairs of Catherine the Great, as do many popular histories. Lincoln, however, does not simply accept the stories and pass them on to the reader; he assesses their authenticity and analyzes the incidents' impact on Russian history. He then proceeds to discuss Catherine's foreign and domestic policies and cultural life under her rule. Several pages are devoted to the life and accomplishments of the eighteenth-century intellectual Mikhail Lomonosov.

The last fifth of the book focuses on the drama and tragedy of the reign of the last Romanovs, Nicholas II and his wife Alexandra. Lincoln draws heavily on the royal couple's letters and diaries to depict their aspirations, fears, and weaknesses; and again he does not resort to sensationalism. His analysis indicates the limits of using the evil influence of the monk Rasputin to explain the collapse of the monarchy. The book, instead, relates the broader political and socio-economic problems that led to the February Revolution. In this section, as elsewhere, Lincoln blends personal biography with analysis of broader political and social trends.

Well-written books with broad coverage are more difficult to find for the Soviet period. The standard textbook is Donald W. Treadgold's *Twentieth Century Russia*. Treadgold's amazingly detailed account emphasizes the growth of governmental and party institutions, the treatment of ethnic minorities and the development of foreign policy. The concentration on detail, however, also makes it difficult for the novice in Soviet history to follow the broad trends of historical development. In addition, Treadgold often focuses disproportionately on the actions of the political leadership, neglecting the contributions and influences of workers, peasants, and lower-level bureaucrats.

A more recent textbook, M. K. Dziewanowski's *A History of Soviet Russia*, perhaps better conveys the general outlines of Soviet history, while also incorporating new findings concerning the history of the Soviet society and the Communist party. Dziewanowski, for instance, notes the popularity of some of Stalin's views among party members and other segments of the population when he explains Stalin's victory over Trotsky. The text also describes the increasing social mobility of the sons of workers and peasants during the industrialization drive and purges of the 1930s. Dziewanowski treats most aspects of Soviet history and includes bibliographies at the end of each chapter, referring readers to more specialized studies.

Biographies serve as another vehicle for gaining insight into the development of the Soviet state. Lenin is treated in numerous works including the acclaimed classics of Louis Fischer (*The Life of Lenin*) and Bertram Wolfe (*Three Who Made a Revolution*). A fascinating recent work, Nina Tumarkin's *Lenin Lives!: The Lenin Cult in Soviet Russia*, analyzes the element of myth in Lenin's biography and investigates the decision to embalm Lenin's body. Treating these and other topics, the book tells us much about the early political development of the Communist party. Biographies of Stalin also dominate historical works concerning the Soviet period. A recent portrait of Stalin written by Robert C. Tucker (*Stalin As Revolutionary, 1879-1929*) excels in its portrayal of Stalin's personality.

For a description of the 1930s many readers turn to Alexander Solzhenitsyn's *Gulag Archipelago*, a marvelous experiment in literary history. Valuable insights can also be garnered from Roy Medvedev's *Let History Judge*. Medvedev, a Soviet dissident, challenges the views of Solzhenitsyn by shifting blame for the excesses of the Soviet regime from Lenin to Stalin.

These biographies, as well as the other textbooks, provide balanced and readable introductions to Russian and Soviet history and insight into contemporary Soviet policies.