

BOOK REVIEWS

Mandelbaum, Michael, ed. *The Rise of Nations in the Soviet Union. American Foreign Policy and the Disintegration of the USSR*. New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1991.

This timely little book includes essays on Russian-Soviet nationality policy by Sergei Maksudov and William Taubman, on the implications for the West generally of the disintegration of the Soviet empire by Alexander J. Motyl, on nationalism in the "Soviet South," that is, Transcaucasia, by Ronald Grigor Suny, and on the effect developments in the Soviet "Nationality Front" will have on US foreign and security policy, by Jeremy R. Azrael.

The papers were delivered at a symposium on Soviet Nationalities and American Foreign Policy held in New York City, October 1990. Appendices, in which the ethnic composition of the (then) 15 Soviet republics is delineated, and the symposium participants are named, and an index, are included.

Nationality issues, above all inter-ethnic conflict, recently have surged to the forefront among the many cross-currents that have buffeted the USSR over the last few years. The territory that made up the USSR until September 1991 included 125 distinct nationalities (53 of whom have designated "homelands"), a myriad of artificially-created borders and up to 76 clearly defined territorial-ethnic points of dispute. Political and economic disintegration in that vast region may satisfy the ambitions of a great many people in the West, but could leave the world facing a multitude of crises that will make the situation in Yugoslavia look like a garden party. The value of these essays lie not in their currency or in their prophesy, but rather in their consolidation of background material and thinking on the subject.

In his introduction, Michael Mandelbaum points out that Gorbachev had not foreseen inter-ethnic crises when he began to formulate his policies of *perestroika* and *glasnost*, and that the nationality issue per se had not been a point of contention between the USSR and the US. Since the late 1980s, however, republic-centre relations, nationality issues, and inter-ethnic conflict have become as important as economic issues insofar as East-West relations are concerned. Moreover, they have generated a new topic for the publishing and conferencing industries to exploit.

These essays are useful because their authors tend to step back from the issues so as to place them in a larger context. They raise some contentious matters, however. One of these is the tendency, of which most of us are guilty, to show alarm at signs of Russian nationalism but to see mostly goodness and light when nationalism emerges among other Soviet peoples. In fact, most "nationalisms" are expressed at the expense of some other people's "nationalism." The question of "homelands" is a tricky one for the same reason. Indeed, if the 53 Soviet homelands become the basis of new administrative structures separately from the USSR, some 60 million current Soviet citizens

may regard themselves as stateless. The question of diasporas complicates the issue of East-West relations, precisely because some Soviet peoples have large diasporas and many have none.

Interestingly, the prognosis dimension of the papers, especially by Suny and Azrael, have been proven sound by subsequent events. Most of the measures recommended by Motyl as the basis of Western policies, in "an ideal world," are reasonable (if somewhat overtaken by events), but the suggestion that a second Nuremberg be established is not. Who would decide whom to try? Who would do the arresting in the USSR? Are Gorbachev and Yeltsin now cleansed of all iniquities perpetrated by the party of which they were active members for more than 20 years? Furthermore, to attribute some special "moral authority" to the "West" in connection with such a task strikes me as preposterous.

At any rate, American policymakers could still benefit by this quick and generally good read.

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Golan, Galia. *Soviet Policies in the Middle East From World War Two to Gorbachev*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

A Pax Americana is now being established in the Middle East in the wake of the US victory in the Gulf War and American primacy as an intermediary in Arab-Israeli diplomacy. This component of the "new world order" has aroused fear of regional American hegemony on the part of Iraq, Iran and more peripheral states such as Libya and Algeria as they yearn for the time when Soviet power was available as a counterbalance. With the Soviet Union moribund, and its influence in the Middle East largely dissipated, an era of tense superpower rivalry has come to an end; Galia Golan's book on the evolution of strategic competition since World War Two therefore provides a most timely epitaph.

Dr. Golan is a noted Israeli Sovietologist who has published numerous cogent volumes in her main field of expertise, Soviet policy toward the Middle East. In the past, her focus was primarily on the Soviet role in the Arab-Israeli conflict and on Soviet interaction with the Palestine Liberation Organization but, in this work, she broadens her coverage considerably to deal with all aspects of Soviet behavior in the region over almost half a century. The result is the best book available on the subject, emphasizing careful analysis of events rather than mere description and providing copious evidence rather