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In Confidence

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What makes this book particularly fascinating is that Volkogonov had to shatter his own mental icon of Lenin to write it. Brought up on the hagiographical lies that constituted Soviet history, Volkogonov, in post-Soviet Russia, had to deal honestly, even painfully, with the damning evidence he unearthed. He explains, "None of us—the present author included—could begin to imagine that the father of domestic Russian terrorism, merciless and totalitarian, was Lenin." Volkogonov's conversion was complete, however: he routinely describes Lenin as "totalitarian" in his policies and proclivities, a moral cynic who betrayed the Russian people.

Despite its value as a reference book, and quite in contrast to the one-sided praise Volkogonov has received from other reviewers (for example, Peter Rodman in *National Review*), I cannot recommend this book for the general reader. I hold to the old-fashioned view that books are meant to be read, and this one is nearly unreadable.

Organizationally, it is a mess. It is more a collection of essays than an integrated work. It jumps around enough chronologically and thematically to make one's head spin. One could say it is a breathtaking narrative, but not in a positive sense. As just one of many possible examples, a discussion of Lenin's creation of the Politburo as the primary instrument of Bolshevik control is gratuitously interrupted by a lengthy paragraph about Lenin's personal hatred for the Mensheviks, followed by an overview of the Politburo up to Krushchev's era, and then by a

description of Soviet grain purchases in the 1970s.

There are other serious problems. Despite apparently severe editing by the translator, there are many redundant passages, non sequiturs, and verbose passages that detract from the focus of the entire work, which is, after all, supposed to be about Lenin. Volkogonov's writing, at least in translation, lacked the beauty, coherence, and wit of a Richard Pipes or Adam Ulam.

Overall, one would more profitably and enjoyably spend time reading these authors' treatments of Lenin and his crimes, either Pipes's *Russia under the Bolshevik Regime* or Ulam's classic from the late 1960s, *The Bolsheviks*. Volkogonov's contributions are that he has made public whatever nuggets the Russian archives provided and confirmed Western beliefs about Lenin. However, for now, the best histories of the Soviet Union and its leaders continue to be written by Western scholars.

NICHOLAS DUJMOVIĆ
Washington, D.C.

Dobrynin, Anatoly Fyodorovich. *In Confidence*. New York: Times Books, 1995. 672pp. \$30

In Confidence is Dobrynin's memoirs of his years of service in the Soviet diplomatic corps, the majority of which (1962 to 1985) were spent as Soviet ambassador to the United States. He takes great pains to convince the reader that his philosophy was based upon a sincere attempt to learn as much as possible about the United States and its culture, and that, with this knowledge, he would transmit to his

superiors in Moscow what he believed was factual and reliable information, along with advice upon which he hoped they would base Soviet foreign policy. Such sensitivity often earns disparagement rather than acclaim among one's own people (everyone knows about "going native").

A primary goal of Dobrynin in this book is to shed light on his role in the grand policies of, and the internal diplomacy conducted between, the United States and the Soviet Union, from the Kennedy administration to that of Ronald Reagan. Dobrynin writes well and manages to cover a great deal of history and experience without boring the reader. Those who remember analyzing the order of precedence atop Lenin's tomb in Moscow to advise the U.S. government of critical Soviet government power shifts will revel in the wealth of information that Dobrynin provides.

He believes his greatest diplomatic achievement (possibly for history as well) was his successful efforts at opening a diplomatic back-channel for the Soviets and Americans during the Cuban missile crisis in 1962. In fact, he claims the honor of helping to resolve the crisis. Both President John Kennedy and Attorney General Robert Kennedy at first believed Dobrynin to be a bold-faced liar. Within days, however, he was able to win some measure of trust and worked through Robert Kennedy to form the compromise between the United States and the Soviets. It makes interesting reading from the Soviet point of view.

An amusing part of the book is Dobrynin's terse characterizations of

the Americans with whom he dealt. He found Robert Kennedy quick-tempered and often rude and difficult to deal with, especially in foreign affairs. The former American ambassador to the Soviet Union, Llewellyn Thompson, was a pleasant person, a competent professional who spoke Russian well. However, most interesting are Dobrynin's relationships with Henry Kissinger and Richard Nixon. Dobrynin is at his best detailing how he worked so hard to convince both sides (American and Soviet) to accept difficult bargaining positions on real issues.

Although this is an important book, written by a key player in the Cold War, naturally the warning *caveat emptor* applies. Yet it offers insights into not only Soviet political power struggles but America's, as well. If a criterion for the worth of a book is the time spent reading it versus what you learn from it, then this book is well worth the effort. Dobrynin has certainly been a "good fellow" to provide us with such a rich diet.

PAUL J. SANBORN
Havertown, Pennsylvania

Weiner, Tim; Johnston, David; and Lewis, Neil A. *Betrayal: The Story of Aldrich Ames, an American Spy*. Random House, 1995. 297pp. \$25

The strange story of Aldrich "Rick" Ames, the CIA operations officer who spied for the Russians, continues to attract analysis and attempted explanations. This book is the latest in a series of such offerings, representing the efforts of three Washington-based *New York Times* journalists. Their work is a competent piece