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Feeding the Bear: American Aid to the Soviet Union, 1941-1945

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coding machine, neither he nor his experts were ever able to confirm this. As a result, the size of his staff was cut to the bone in a vain attempt to eliminate the possibility of intelligence leaks. Consequently, the "Ultra secret" was never really in danger of being uncovered. Also, the British development of centimetric radar and the high-frequency direction finder was never seriously suspected until it was far too late for effective countermeasures to be devised.

Showell also argues that the U-Boats of World War II were only technically improved versions of their First World War predecessors. He maintains that the type XXI U-boat was technologically feasible long before the outbreak of the war. Germany's total failure to invest in long-term U-boat research and development was the prime cause of her defeat in the Battle of the Atlantic.

In addition, the author also gives us several brief insights into Dönitz's character and personality. Perhaps the most important is his argument that Dönitz never believed, even before the outbreak of war, that Germany could defeat England in a major conflict. If his thesis is accepted, then we are indeed in desperate need of an authoritative biography of Dönitz, because those that are currently available are clearly in need of major revisions.

Given its many radical observations and conclusions, it is unfortunate that the book is not footnoted. It is, for the most part, remarkably error-free, con-

vincingly argued, well written and researched. (One rare example of an error which can be found in this book is the author's misidentification of the German heavy cruiser *Admiral Hipper* as a battle-cruiser on page 123.)

This book is profusely illustrated with both maps and photographs. The latter have been carefully selected, and are well captioned. The former provide information on U-boat operations at various key stages of their attempt to sever England's trans-Atlantic lifeline. For some reason, Showell believed that the majority of his readers would not read the entire book. Consequently, he often repeats the main points of his arguments in different chapters. However, despite this, the book should be read thoroughly. It is an important contribution to our understanding of the Battle of the Atlantic, and is clearly one of the most important works that has been published on the U-boat war in several years. It is wholeheartedly recommended.

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van Tuyl, Hubert P. *Feeding the Bear: American Aid to the Soviet Union, 1941-1945*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1989. 200pp. \$37.95

Mr. van Tuyl addresses himself to a single issue: how important was the American lend-lease program to Soviet victory in the Second World War? He sensibly recognizes the difficulties

in attempting to answer such a question. Contemporary documents and accounts are suspect, for the Allies had a stake in overstating—and the Russians, by contrast, in understating—the significance of foreign contribution to the war effort. The Russians did so for patriotic reasons, and to pressure the Allies to make even greater contributions. American politicians and military men, on the other hand, needed to show that the vast public sums expended to benefit the Soviet allies in fact made a difference.

The historian of the lend-lease program faces further difficulties. The Soviets were so secretive during the war that they did not allow their American allies to make an objective evaluation of the performance of the weapons they were contributing. Van Tuyll cites an amusing example: The Americans, reasonably enough, wanted maps showing the location of Soviet airfields. The Russians responded by saying that (a) there were so many airfields that planes could easily find them without maps; (b) the country was flat, so any field could be used; and (c) there *were* no maps. Therefore, the donors even at the time could only guess how much their material aid had mattered. Undoubtedly Russian preoccupation with secrecy hurt their ability to wage war. Until recently, Soviet historians did everything within their power to minimize the significance of American aid. But perhaps now the situation will change. Not only will Soviet historians approach the issue

more objectively, but the authorities may open Soviet archives to foreign researchers. Van Tuyll did his work before the recent era of openness.

Possibly the greatest difficulty that the historian faces in attempting to answer van Tuyll's question is conceptual: how can one separate one factor out of many? How can one compare the role of American machinery, food, and clothing with Soviet heroism, determination, and military skill? In fact the author is posing a counterfactual question: how would the Red Army have done without American help?

Given these difficulties, Mr. van Tuyll has done an excellent job. His research is impressive (his notes are almost as long as the text itself). He obviously has a good understanding of military issues and the ability to explain both how American equipment was used and how it affected performance of the soldiers. But most importantly, the author is a man with common sense who is able to put competing claims in context. He is determined not to overemphasize the role of lend-lease, not to give too much credit to the Americans as if somehow to counterbalance the claim of Soviet historians who have obviously given too little credit.

His conclusions are judicious: the Red Army would have withstood the German assault alone. After all, at the time of the greatest danger, in 1941, foreign help was not yet available. On the other hand, it seems likely that the greater successes, the almost uninterrupted series of Red Army offensives

that began in 1943, could not have been carried out as successfully without American help. Van Tuyl agrees with all other observers that trucks, which increased the mobility of the army and were something that the Russians were not in a position to produce in quantity, were the most significant form of help. In addition, communication equipment, radar, and other items of technology made a difference in the performance of the Soviet troops. He rejects the argument of those who say that lend-lease, by speeding up Russian advance, enabled the Soviet Union to occupy Eastern Europe. He rightly points out that if the war had lasted longer more Allied soldiers would have died and that therefore American aid to the Soviet Union during World War II was a good investment: it saved American lives.

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that the country seeks to exert direct influence on the power of Europe. This was the course chosen by Castlereagh, by those who supported France after war began in 1914, and by those who after 1945 saw Britain's frontier to be on the Rhine. Generally, today, it is the choice of those who see Britain's future in Brussels. In military terms, the continental commitment has meant soldiers on European soil. The Atlantic orientation has meant looking outward over the sea, a maritime and imperial strategy which recognizes the islands' dependence for food and materials on the far-flung Commonwealth and the Western Hemisphere. In military terms, Atlantic orientation has meant protecting the sea lanes and establishing naval blockades. The adherent of one orientation chooses land power; the other, sea power.

The blockade in the First World War was based on a sea power alliance. This Avner Offer traces to a specialization of world food production that in the nineteenth century bound the granaries and grazing lands of the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand to the conscious British decision to import food and to let its own agriculture run down. The British overcame this vulnerability in time of war by stressing the ties of empire. There were two strategic consequences of their Atlantic orientation. One was the necessity to make sure the alliance which delivered the food stayed firm. Offer argues that the notion of a common front against a Yellow Peril in the

Offer, Avner. *The First World War: An Agrarian Interpretation*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989. 449pp.

Howard, Michael. *The Continental Commitment: The Dilemma of British Defence Policy in the Era of the Two World Wars*. London: Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Ashfield Press, 1989. (originally published London: Smith, 1972). 176pp.

British strategy can choose either a continental commitment or an Atlantic orientation. The former has meant