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## Russia's Failed Revolutions: From the Decembrists to the Dissidents

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are many different types of conflict in the Third World and that these conflicts cannot all be classified under one heading. They acknowledge that the phrase "low-intensity conflict" is an inappropriate one, since many Third World conflicts are actually highly intense, though fought in a limited geographical area.

The authors see two main obstacles to successful U.S. involvement in Third World conflicts: 1) lack of military forces dedicated to and trained for Third World contingencies, and 2) lack of public support in the wake of Vietnam for further U.S. military involvement in such conflicts. Their recommendation for a solution to the first problem is, sensibly enough, the earmarking of specific forces for Third World conflicts and training them to fight in the types of war that occur there. Concerning the second problem, the authors are less able to provide a solution. They feel that the United States should only become involved in conflicts that American public opinion would support. To this end, the United States should ensure that any conflict is not a protracted one and that it does not receive adverse coverage in the American media. How these two conditions can be met, however, is uncertain since both depend on the opponent rapidly being defeated and the media cooperating with government policy. As neither of these conditions can be guaranteed, the problem of public support does not appear to be one that can be resolved easily.

The main problem with the essays in this book is that the authors look at Third World conflicts only in terms of how the United States can protect its interests in them. For the United States this means preventing the U.S.S.R. from gaining influence, whereas for the local participants in such conflicts American and Soviet interests may be less important than their own interests. For example, a military dictatorship supported by the United States may be

less interested in halting Soviet influence than in maintaining itself in power, no matter how unpopular the dictatorship is internally. If U.S. support to an unpopular government leads the populace to favor Soviet-backed forces coming to power, then U.S. support to such a government would be counter-productive in halting the spread of Soviet influence.

More generally, the nature and the goals of the contending parties in a Third World conflict will affect how successful the United States will be in achieving its own goals through supporting one side or another. Supporting an unpopular dictatorship can severely hinder the achievement of U.S. goals no matter how large a military effort the United States makes, but even low-level American aid to popular groups (such as the Afghan rebels) could prove highly effective.

The nature and the interests of local participants are an important factor in determining how successful U.S. interests in Third World conflicts can be achieved. This factor deserved more attention in a discussion of U.S. policy toward such conflicts than it received in this book.

MARK N. KATZ

Ulam, Adam B. *Russia's Failed Revolutions: From the Decembrists to the Dissidents*. New York: Basic Books, 1981. 453pp.

To the student of Russian history, Adam B. Ulam requires no introduction. During his career as Professor of History and Political Science at Harvard University, Professor Ulam has written numerous studies that have established his reputation for serious scholarship. The very title of his latest work should arouse the curiosity of specialist and layman alike.

In *Russia's Failed Revolutions*, Professor Ulam addresses the following question: "What was it that at decisive

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moments frustrated or flawed the libertarian intentions of Russia's revolutionaries and reformers?" In the course of interpreting the evidence concerning the writings and activities of the Decembrists (1825), the Russian Populists (in the 1860s and the 1870s), the various participants in the revolutions of 1905 and 1917 as well as the present-day dissidents, the Harvard professor unveils a rich mosaic of institutional and personality factors which, in each period, provides a distinct setting for the operation of the prime suspect—Russian nationalism.

Shared by virtually every Russian, even Russian revolutionaries, was the conviction that only the firm rule of the autocrat could contain the centrifugal forces present in the vast territory "gathered" by previous tsars. They also credited the tsar for Russia's emergence, following the defeat of Napoleon, as the greatest military power in Europe.

It was precisely the firmness and power of the tsarist autocracy which forced Russia's revolutionaries to resort to extreme remedies. During the 19th century, revolutionary measures only exacerbated a regime's reaction. Such extremes allowed little room for reform. Professor Ulam correctly observes that both the social reform of the 1860s and the political reform of 1905 were initiated by the tsar in the wake of military defeat. Only when the autocrat's own failures undermined Russia's greatness, and thus his bond with the people, did the need for reform manifest itself. World War I destroyed the bond, but only after political assassinations, bureaucratic collapse, liberal and radical intrigues, Rasputin's antics, and the rumors about German sympathizers in high places had created substantial uncertainty about the regime's worth.

There are different perspectives from which one can evaluate Russia's revolutions. The historian, worker or peasant in the Soviet Union readily would acclaim the Bolshevik revolution a

success. Under the rule of the Communist Party, the Soviet Union has become a superpower. The national mystique formerly accorded the tsar now bolsters the Soviet leadership.

Professor Ulam believes that all of Russia's revolutions have failed precisely because Western concepts about "democracy, intellectual freedom, the rule of law, [and] socialism" still do not guide political and social activity in the U.S.S.R. Given his perspective, one can understand why he so carefully examines the reasons for the failure of the liberals who ruled in the Provisional Government. They attempted to incorporate these concepts!

The Provisional Government fell, according to the Harvard professor, because it failed "to exploit the period of nationalist enthusiasm which followed the [February] revolution." Nationalism might have been the brake which could have prevented Russia's slide from liberty to anarchy. Russia's anarchy cried out for the firm rule that V.I. Lenin was all too willing to provide.

Adam Ulam's study, *Russia's Failed Revolutions*, is both much richer and more subtle than this review has indicated. The many vignettes in the book not only demonstrate the author's mastery of the source material, but render his history immensely readable!

Finally, we must contemplate Professor Ulam's conclusion that "there is little that can be described as uniquely Russian about the country's pattern of political development in the last century and a half." Our acceptance or rejection of his optimistic conclusion provides the very foundation for our views about Soviet-American relations.

WALTER C. UHLER

Winton, John. *Sink the Haguro!* London: Seeley, Service, 1979. 182pp.

Naval operations in the Indian Ocean during World War II are considered by most historians to have been an unimpor-