

passive. Yet he has not lost his bitter disappointment that the ideals of the '50s and '60s never were seriously pursued, much less achieved. His comments on politics always have been broad and uncomplicated; no one who has read recent history or who has watched our leaders gyrate on television can fail to recognize why Feiffer shows them as blatant hypocrites, opportunists, or self-deluding mediocrities. One must recognize that Feiffer does not have the material he once had to work with. What can compare with our delicious outrage at Johnson or Nixon? What can compare with the wonderful irony, portrayed by Feiffer, in the ambivalent relationships between fearful and ingratiating white liberals and angry but shrewdly manipulative black activists?

To some extent Feiffer is the victim of a generation gap. One cartoon refers to the difference between earlier "loneliness freaks" and more recent "group freaks." Feiffer was not completely comfortable with the '60s extremists, though he could etch them sharply and with appreciative humor; but I find his comments on youth in the '70s off the mark. His portrayal of sexual politics is forced, even though on the "correct" side of issues; and Bernard's continuing misogyny limits the depth of our empathy with women as compared to the victims of racism.

Yet who is to say in the end that Feiffer no longer is "right on"? Perhaps he reflects accurately the exhaustion of a generation concerned with "Truth, Justice and the American Way" but still having to confront a repetition of the same old problems: racism, hokum, war, the Bomb, complacency, triumphs of "communication" over substance.

If his cartoons are not as gut-grabbing as they once were, there are so many gems among the older cartoons that one cannot help being caught up, even during a casual browse: the cat-and-mouse allegory of liberalism and radicalism, the Nixon "stone-wall" cartoon, some of Bernard's encounters with "castrating females," the series on the "Radical Middle," the Dancer's touching resiliency, the bigoted Talking Heads. Anyone who lived among coffeehouse poscurs, who shared a nauseated fascination with makeover artists like Huey "the rat with women," who felt paralyzed by Eisenhower-era complacency, or who cared about which direction we were going in the '60s must read this book.

Reprising Feiffer's work is an adventure in bleak nostalgia, but well worth it for the revelations it provides about the cartoonist, his milieu, and his society. Above all, it is biting funny.

## LENINISM AND WESTERN SOCIALISM

by Roy Medvedev

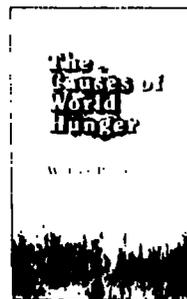
(New Left Books [London], distributed by Schocken Books; 256 pp.; \$19.50/\$8.50)

Myrna Chase

There is a certain fascination in reading Medvedev's work over the decade since he wrote *Let History Be the Judge!* and was expelled from the Communist party. He is not the heroic dissident facing prison, exile, or the asylum for his protest at home or abroad. His works, published only in the West, operate within an acceptable range of historical criticism; and on particular subjects, such as nuclear disarmament, he is an articulate and intelligent spokesman for his government's position to liberals and leftists. His works attract us, in part, because we wish to see how far he will go. Will his revelations end in a rethinking of his political commitments or will his readers reassess their own sympathies?

This latest volume, a response to Eurocommunism, manifests a genuine concern with the loss of momentum and vitality in the world Communist movement despite the growing number of Communists in the world. Medvedev sees this as a crisis stemming from the loss of solidity and unity and requiring the reexamination of some fundamental principles of Marxism-Leninism. Although there is no mention of Gramsci, the French Marxists, the Eastern European critics, the English socialists, or indeed of any of the ideologists who have worked to revitalize Marxism in the last generation, Medvedev knows they exist. It is, of course, significant that most of the intellectual vitality of Marxism is found outside the Communist movement Medvedev chooses to discuss. Soviet leaders don't rest easily with competing governments and critical Marxist ideologies. Medvedev sees himself as a reformer and has chosen the label "social democrat." If he has set himself the job of explaining Communist heterogeneity to the Soviet leaders—and, by implication, advocating greater flexibility—he has quite a task. If, on the other hand, he speaks to alienated Russians, there are other dissidents, whose disaffection is deeper, who have more influence upon them.

If, finally, this work has only a Western audience in mind, then it seems more a work of rationalization and explanation than of revelation. In the past Medvedev had little to say to true social democrats precisely because he was so unwilling to entertain the thought that Lenin and Leninism may well have been father to Stalin and Stalinism

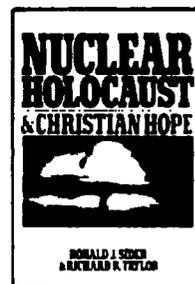


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## WV Forum: The Expert & the Layperson

### WHAT KINDS OF GUNS ARE THEY BUYING FOR YOUR BUTTER?

#### A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO DEFENSE, WEAPONRY, AND MILITARY SPENDING

by Shella Toblas, Peter Goudinoff, Stefan Leader, and Shelah Leader

(William Morrow & Co.: 428 pp.; \$15.95)

John B. Keeley:

I am one of those who resists viscerally a "beginner's guide" to anything, be it brain surgery, car repair, or making a million in thirty days. Thus, my initial reaction to this book was jaundiced. I am pleased to say that my instincts proved wrong. Of the many books that have attempted to make defense matters understandable to the layman, none has succeeded so well.

The authors undertook this project out of the conviction that Americans little realize "their personal level of ignorance about military subjects and...the consequences of that ignorance for the nation as a whole." The belief that Americans ought to understand the defense establishment, the better to be able to help shape our national security policies, is an act of faith that some might reject as naive. I do not. It well may be that the increasingly parlous state of our defense establishment is due in large measure to the lack of informed citizen participation in determining defense policies. This premise shapes the organization and sets the tone for the book.

*What Kinds of Guns* is much more than a compendium of modern weaponry. In the initial chapter the authors discuss the dynamics of defense in the fundamental terms of why nations arm themselves. They then proceed through a short history of weapons and warfare to a discussion of strategic (nuclear) weapons, the logic of deterrence, the complexity of the weapons requirements for fighting conventional wars, and a chapter on the strange and wondrous ways in which the defense establishment develops and procures weapons. The concluding chapters deal with the nature of arms control and with likely defense controversies of the 1980s.

What sets this book apart from, and above, so many similar efforts is its objectivity, its comprehensiveness, and its clarity.

Balanced discussions of defense issues have become a rarity. Much of what passes for balanced analysis masks a hidden cause. The authors have carefully avoided taking positions on controversial issues—and for this, I am certain, they will be criticized roundly by defense extremists of both the Right and the Left. The comprehensiveness of their analysis is not only in their coverage of the full range of weapons—from rifle to missile—but most especially in the manner in which they establish a logical context for the selection of this or that weapon. The clarity of exposition is remarkable. The discussion of the various schools of nuclear theology that guide nuclear strategies and the chapter on the arcane processes by which weapons are developed and produced are exceptional.

The authors pause now and then for what they term an "Aside." These serve to illuminate and expand upon issues under discussion. They are skillfully employed and much superior to conventional footnotes.

The book is largely free of errors of fact; the few I noted were insignificant. There are some arguable questions of fact that can be attributed to certain of the authors' sources. The authors have accepted without qualification the argument of certain defense critics that the military fixation on highly complex, exceptionally costly weapons ignores the operational advantages of simpler, less costly, and thus more easily supplied weapons. The argument, however, is much more complex and subtle than the authors realize.

The book is so good that it has the potential for misleading its readers into believing that weapons and the associated problems of weapons development and weapons procurement are the primary challenges of our defense policy. They are not. The more

and the perversions of democratic socialism that have been wrought in the Soviet Union. Here he tells us that disarray in the Communist world follows from the different historical experiences and political frameworks in which Western Communist parties must operate. His brief histories of how Lenin, the Bolsheviks, and the Soviet Union came to differ are mere explanations, not radical or even moderately radical critiques. Thus his apologia for the Leninist dogma of a dictatorship of the proletariat is fraught with difficulties for the democratic socialist, for the historical role of the proletariat has been played by a vanguard within the Party that controls the state. Medvedev does note along the way that Lenin underestimated the difficulty of governing and the duration of dictatorship. In a digression into the concept of "dictatorship," Medvedev claims that

Marx, Lenin, and Engels had a more classic sense of it than does the world today after Hitler, Franco, Salazar, and Somoza. Here he betrays his intellectual flaws in a flash: Such a "criticism," including the dictatorships he chooses as examples, avoids the issues that concern social democrats most.

In the middle of oft-repeated rationalizations, however, Medvedev finally says what we have been waiting to read through several of his histories. First he rationalizes: "Lenin's mistake was not that he actually vacillated, in the conditions of bitter civil war, before the inflexibility of the law... but by blurring distinctions between concepts of 'the state,' 'political power' and 'dictatorship,' he made it much easier for his successors to extend their extraordinary and unlimited power indefinitely." Then he judges: "Lenin's mistake was to keep on

strengthening, needlessly, the already clearly defined meaning of dictatorship."

Now we have only to wait for the day when Medvedev, in print, realizes that sincere social democrats may doubt Lenin's methods and concepts in themselves and that Western Communists may have valid reasons to call for a genuine reexamination of the underlying principles of Leninism, including its attitudes toward "bourgeois democracy," parliamentarianism, and the importance of general elections as well as its arrogant rejection of minority rights.

It is in the final section, "Communists and Social Democrats in the West," that Medvedev offers historical justification for the social democrats, makes a plea for Eurocommunism, and admits that the faults of the Soviets might be inherent in the Leninist legacy rather than in tactical mistakes.

fundamental problems of defense policy relate to the organization of the armed forces, the doctrinal premises for the employment of these forces in time of war, and questions related to the values, leadership, discipline, and training of our military personnel. The authors do not deny these challenges; they simply do not address them.

I hope the book is read widely. I hope that it will come to the attention of those in our government who are responsible for national security. Thanks and praise to the authors and their editors.

*John B. Keeley, Colonel, U.S. Army (ret.), is a national security commentator for a cable news network.*

*June Bingham:*

This is a worthy book and a needed one. The information it offers is well chosen and interesting; the presentation is well balanced. But alas its tone, to quote the late Wolcott Gibbs, is as irritating as a raspberry seed in a back tooth.

For one thing, the authors keep wagging their fingers at the reader: "Note that this was a choice made by the Pentagon. At the time we were perfectly capable of manufacturing much larger missiles. But by the mid-1960s the military believed that given the relatively high accuracy of the weapon, a smaller warhead could easily do the job. *Keep in mind* that you need..." (emphasis added).

For another thing, the authors keep trumpeting the obvious: "Many people, to be sure, feel very strongly about war and peace." For a third thing, they use clichés: "The all-jet Mya-4 Bison...caused American air defense planners to sit up and take notice." And fourth, their attempt at lightness usually fails: "For every hour of operation, high-tech weapons systems require many more hours of maintenance and repair by dozens of skilled technicians. You may think you have the same problem with your car, but it's no contest."

Not only irksome but confusing are the authors' "Asides." Typographically separated, some of them longer than a page,

they distract from the continuity of the text. They cannot safely be skipped because sometimes they contain definitions necessary to the understanding of what follows. Never before has this reader so appreciated the old-fashioned footnote.

Yet the text often is superb:

"If we ordinary citizens are to play any role in these debates, we must have a clear conceptual framework within which to assess these weapons and policy decisions. Otherwise...we shall be overwhelmed with competing minutiae.

"There are a number of challenging questions ordinary people can pose, even without extensive technical expertise. First and foremost, we have to assure ourselves that the experts' reading of the threat is reasonable and that their preferred military response is appropriate....Second, we must weigh military expansion and weapons modernization against other uses of our natural resources. National security, even as defined by the military, incorporates more than mere military preparedness; it includes a healthy economy, strong alliances, and the like. Third, we must bear in mind that advanced weapons...do not always provide security in direct proportion to their size, numbers, and cost....Moreover, as we analyze the military budget, we should consider the possibility that some proposed weapon systems are being promoted because they give advantage to one faction of the defense establishment over another, rather than because they benefit our national interest."

Every fair attempt to demystify defense is in the national interest. While many primers now exist on nuclear issues, few books are as comprehensive and ambitious as this one. It would be unfortunate if it were not widely read by high school seniors, college students, and the concerned laity of both sexes. For ultimately it is *their* votes that will determine how the American "defense community" goes about its awesome task of trying to achieve peace with justice, now and in the future.

*June Bingham, biographer of Reinhold Niebuhr and U Thant and contributor to national magazines, is a volunteer for the Committee for National Security, a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that promotes public education on security issues.*

Medvedev reevaluates the history of social democracy and Lenin's struggle with social democratic parties before, during, and after the Bolshevik Revolution. He laments that the polemical, intolerant qualities that may have been necessary in civil war continued into the era of the Communist International and the period of united front and popular front between the wars. The antagonism of the two movements made it possible for Hitler to come to power. The cold war was worsened by the division in the ranks between those who were simply not capitalists and those who were orthodox Marxists—that is, Soviet Communists. A union of Communists who are stronger and more democratic than in the past and Socialists who are more radically anticapitalist is, Medvedev concludes, the greatest hope for socialism in Europe.

Eurocommunism may take its place with the united front and the popular front as merely another historical epoch characterized by a particular political tactic. If it does, then surely Berlinguer or Marchais will personify the epoch for Communists. The cover of *Leninism and Western Socialism* has a group portrait of Mitterrand, Schmidt, and Berlinguer. Perhaps the publisher decided to appeal to the broader audience of social democrats. A photo of the Eurocommunists would evoke too many ironic comments as their Soviet brothers undermine them in their quest for cooperation. But within the Soviet Union, Medvedev's little book represents one intellectual's plea for this new tactic. How far Medvedev will go, and whether he will allow himself to outpace his government, has yet to be seen.

### **NATIONS BEFORE NATIONALISM** by John Armstrong

(University of North Carolina Press; xxxvi + 411 pp.; \$19.95)

*Tamara M. Green*

Professor Armstrong's stated aim is to trace "the interaction among class, ethnic and religious characteristics" that form the basis of group identity before the rise of the modern nation-state. Ranging over a number of cultures and societies, from third millennium B.C. Mesopotamia to seventeenth-century Europe, including Slavic, Germanic, and Turkic tribal structure as well as Armenians and Jews of the diaspora, and utilizing the research tools of modern social science, linguistics, and philosophy, Armstrong has tried to isolate