

BOOKS

THE ANDROPOV FILE

by **Martin Ebon**

(McGraw-Hill Book Co.; 284 pp.; \$16.95)

ANDROPOV—NEW CHALLENGE TO THE WEST

by **Arnold Beichman and Mikhail S. Bernstam**

(Stein and Day; 255 pp.; \$16.95)

ANDROPOV

by **Zhores Medvedev**

(Basil Blackwell [Oxford, U.K.]; 227 pp.; £7.50)

YURI ANDROPOV: A SECRET PASSAGE INTO THE KREMLIN

by **Vladimir Solovyov and Elena Klepikova**

(Macmillan; 298 pp.; \$15.95)

Ralph Buultjens

In international relations, especially in times of tension, an understanding of the character and personality of world leaders is valuable. To the extent that individuals determine policy, such knowledge helps to evaluate motives, reactions, and responses. This is why we should know more of Yuri Vladimirovich Andropov, principal decision-maker for the largest military machine, the second largest economy, and the geographically largest nation in the world.

Of the five leaders of the Soviet Union since the Revolution, we know least about Andropov. Foreign experts and the Soviet people are equally ignorant of the substance and even the style of the man. Official biographies and chaste news releases point to almost fifty years of Party and government service, and some of these years, especially the early ones, appear deliberately obscured. Such antiseptic sources tell little about Andropov's parents, his education and early life, when and who he married (apparently he is now a widower), how many children he has (a son and a daughter are known, but are there more?), or how he views the world in which he is such an important figure.

Andropov is a remarkable man; he has overcome enormous obstacles to reach the pinnacle of power. While thousands of other Party functionaries fell in Stalin's purges, the young Andropov prospered. While close associates and mentors succumbed in the murderous intrigue that is Kremlin politics, he moved steadily upward in the Soviet hierarchy. No other chief of the secret police has advanced much beyond that rank, and several have met a nasty fate. Yet for

fifteen years, an unprecedented tenure, Andropov ran the KGB and then moved on to higher things. This alone makes him exceptional. Finally, he overcame the opposition of his predecessor: Brezhnev had clearly marked, first, Kirilenko and then Chernenko as his successor.

Physically fragile but mentally agile, Andropov at sixty-nine dominates a geriatric Soviet leadership. Unlike the robust and visibly potent men who led the Soviet Union before him, men who were monarchs of their system, Andropov has the air of a cool kingmaker functioning as king. Explaining this man is a challenge—one that has provoked a minor avalanche of Andropov books. Four of the better efforts have an unsurprising similarity of format. They all trace the career of Andropov in some detail and conjecture about his personality. They all discuss the Soviet system and the difficulties it faces. They all speculate on how Andropov's regime will handle these difficulties and try to extrapolate policy from his first months in office. And they all share the same, and perhaps inevitable, defects: The rush to publish produces a kind of literary breathlessness, and the obscurity of the subject induces the authors to substitute facts about the Soviet system and speculations about Andropov for substantive analysis. None has had any direct contact with the new leader, and so we have, at best, a kind of expertise at a distance.

This approach is, however, the only one currently available to students of Soviet affairs and of Andropov, and so it cannot be simply dismissed. In fact, within these limitations, each book makes its own distinc-

tive contribution. Some of the material will even help us to know the Soviet Union a little better.

Martin Ebon, a prolific writer on Communist affairs, gives us *The Andropov File*. He mixes a modest capsule of Russian history with the conventional Andropov story. Much of this is rather generalized, but Ebon does make a few effective points. Among them are comments on the Andropov technique of operation, a technique that appears to follow a consistent pattern of avoiding confrontation while using firm pressure, enforceable threats, and a splitting of opposition forces. What Ebon sees as a method for dealing with dissidents or recalcitrant Eastern Europeans is now becoming the leitmotif of Andropov's international diplomacy. Even within a structured system based on theories about objective laws of history, certain individuals do make a major impact, suggests Ebon. Whether Andropov will be one of those individuals is the topic of much, indeed too much, speculation.

This book contains valuable documentation, including texts of most of Andropov's major public speeches. Overall, however, Ebon's effort betrays signs of haste, a quick assembly of information within a limited perspective.

Andropov—New Challenge to the West is written by two scholars at the Hoover Institution at Stanford University, Arnold Beichman, a political scientist, and Mikhail Bernstam, who emigrated from the Soviet Union in 1976. Their Andropov is a ruthless, Marxist-Leninist ideologue whose attempts to make the system work are destined to fail. The end of Soviet communism, they indicate, is likely to be military rule by some latent Bonapartist within the Red Army. This is a pessimistic interpretation of the Russian future. Within it Andropov is projected as a creature born of the Soviet environment. For all his skill at manipulation and repression, he is essentially a transitional figure on the road to collapse.

In some of their research, particularly in demonstrating how the Andropov record is shaded to build the image of the new leader, Beichman and Bernstam provide useful data on the Soviet rearrangement of history. Overall, however, their work is infused with an anti-Soviet bias that diminishes its objectivity and its merit.

In contrast, Zhores Medvedev's *Andropov* is somewhat optimistic. A distinguished scientist, Medvedev was exiled from the Soviet Union in 1973 and has since made a major contribution by exposing the limitations and problems of Soviet science. He argues that, under Andropov, there has

been a change of style: "Current policy is probably better constructed, better implemented, more skilfully presented, but it is still the same conservative policy without any signs of liberal or democratic trends. However, the very fact that it is more flexible, more efficient, and more decisive may stimulate reforms, as soon as experience proves that the demand for better discipline is not enough to bring about lasting improvements." This may, Medvedev warns us, be an overly optimistic projection. Yet he is prepared to explore it.

Medvedev's focus, as Beichman and Bernstam's, is more on the context in which Andropov has flourished than on Andropov himself. Here Medvedev is at his best. The long arm of the KGB, the handling of dissidents, the shaping of a modern intelligence apparatus—all activities supervised by Andropov since 1967—are discussed with insight. Medvedev the victim knows his stuff. However, at another level Medvedev overloads his work with interesting anecdotes about the life-styles of Russian leaders—fascinating gossip, but again a substitute for information and analysis. Despite all his experience of Soviet society and leaders, Medvedev's subject eludes him.

Two Russian journalists, husband and wife, Vladimir Solovyov and Elena Klepikova, exiled in 1977, are the authors of *Yuri Andropov: A Secret Passage Into the Kremlin*. This Andropov is no ideologue; he just relishes power—a clever monster moving with serpentine deadliness toward his goal of supreme control. Along the way he destroys rivals, entraps their children, conceals malevolence and craft under a polite exterior. There are even hints that Andropov engineered Brezhnev's death—providing KGB bodyguards to monitor the ailing leader's every move, forcing the enfeebled Brezhnev into his last and literally killing public appearance in Moscow in freezing weather three days before his death in November, 1982.

This is colorful writing, but it is not political biography. The book is full of statements and quotations that are not verifiable—a blend of fact and reconstructions presented as fact. The dramatic pace is exciting, but the concept of Machiavellian evil is difficult to sustain.

Each of the four books has its own theme and its own vision of Andropov. Ebon presents the man within the larger idea of a personality who makes a difference in history. Beichman and Bernstam highlight their expectation of the death of Marxist society. Medvedev sees possibilities for reform and improvement, suggesting that Andropov

may stimulate change. Solovyov and Klepikova see a vast Soviet conspiracy of expansionist evil with Andropov at its center. All these overlapping images evoke an Orwellian thought: There may indeed be no "real" Andropov. Could it be that he is the brilliant end-product of totalitarian technocracy—bloodless of personality and bloody of record, a bionic political diamond, all facet and no core, acting and reacting without human resonance?

While the research and reasoning of our authors does not bring us much nearer to this elusive man, their separate perceptions merge on three shared judgments. First, Andropov is a formidable character of high intelligence and suave ruthlessness. He is, quite unlike earlier Soviet leaders, totally a product of urban society. He has extraordinary experience in security affairs. Compared to him, most world leaders are amateurs. Second, he is largely a self-made professional, perhaps the most informed and politically connected individual in the Soviet Union. These must surely provide the confidence and resources that will enable him to retain power for years to come—if his health allows. Third, there is little certainty about how he will use this power or whether it will give him the capacity to bend

the intractable system to his purposes.

None of the four books is a particularly sympathetic interpretation. It is perhaps too much to expect this, given Yuri Andropov's personal history. Yet it is possible that this dangerous and somewhat sinister figure has the intellect to realize the central truth of international politics today: The Soviet future is closely linked to the global future. One must pray that other world leaders will encourage him along this path. If not, let us at least hope that his proven shrewdness will restrain recklessness. Either way, we must be prepared to accept what may well be an unpalatable truth: Yuri Andropov is perhaps the best leader the Soviet Union has at this moment.

In time Andropov will find it necessary to revise his predecessor's worldview, as every Soviet leader has done in the past. This and other events in that nation profoundly affect us all, and so we have an obligation to study developments there. These four books make an uneven contribution to this end. However, their source and content do raise a significant question. So many of our perceptions of the Soviet Union are shaped by the writings and influence of political refugees. Is this emigré lens the best focus for examining that na-

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tion? Is there a danger that our image of an admittedly harsh system may be stereotyped by the frustrations and disappointments of a small group of hostile critics?

Finally, hovering over all circumstances and events is the element of chance. It is a humbling thought that so much of human destiny depends not on logic and grand design but on the renal and cardiac conditions of this aging Soviet leader. That these will probably determine a large part of our history and Andropov's place in it is the ultimate irony of our political age. *WV*

THE EGYPT OF NASSER AND SADAT: THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF TWO REGIMES

by **John Waterbury**

(Princeton University Press; 475 pp.; \$45.00/\$12.50)

Stanley Reed

Several recent articles in the Egyptian press urge that the freedom of the many American scholars doing research in Egypt be severely curtailed. The authors of these rather xenophobic pieces argue that the scholars are gathering sensitive information that would be used against Egypt should relations with the United States and Israel turn sour. This intriguing new book by a Princeton University professor who did field work in Egypt from 1971 to 1977 will probably add to the fear of security-minded Egyptians. A gifted writer, Waterbury has drawn upon exhaustive research and an exquisite appreciation of Cairo's political atmosphere to create an almost clairvoyant analysis of how contemporary Egypt functions. The reader will discover who the Egyptian elite are; how they approach important issues; and how, in several key instances, policy was actually made. Anyone with a serious interest in Egypt will find this book a unique and valuable resource.

Waterbury aims to set the record straight on the legacies of Gamal Abdel Nasser and his successor, Anwar el-Sadat. The two men have become the subject of a great deal of myth and controversy. Unlike many writers, Waterbury realizes that although both leaders won notoriety through international exploits, they can be evaluated properly only in terms of their impact on Egypt itself. Both men tinkered aggressively with the country's economy, political system, and social structure. Waterbury describes—even dissects—these experiments and attempts to assess the results.

One may measure the performance of

Egypt's revolutionary leaders by the goals they originally set for themselves. Waterbury tells us that Nasser and his cohorts aimed for no less than "the restoration of Egyptian power after an eclipse, some would argue, that had lasted millenia." That power "had to be founded on a new society in which the average Egyptian would have access to a decent standard of living, education and good health."

Whether Egypt has become powerful can be questioned. Egyptian leaders have certainly become most adept at exacting tribute from other powers. Waterbury, however, offers this scathing assessment of the "new society" at the time of Nasser's death in 1970:

"Instead of a new generation of educated, motivated Egyptians whose members would be an asset, the revolution sired a generation whose more fortunate members were poorly educated, misemployed, and unmotivated and whose less fortunate members would have a hard time discerning their lot from that of their fathers."

Thirty years after Nasser began the revolution, income distribution remains sharply skewed; there are still millions of landless peasants; and illiteracy and disease have been only marginally reduced. In addition, Waterbury observes ironically, "the bulk" of Egypt's 2.4 million bureaucrats, Nasser's living monument, "hovers on the brink of poverty if it has not fallen into the pit already."

Waterbury's intent is not so much to criticize as to perform autopsies on failed policies. He tries, as he says, to put us "in the shoes of Egypt's leaders" so that we can appreciate the plethora of concerns that may influence their action on a given policy issue. He also points out that "demographic reality" is a formidable obstacle to prosperity: Half the people are mired in an ancient peasant culture; a majority are illiterate; population density is already among the highest in the world and the population is increasing rapidly. Nevertheless, Waterbury finds inadequate the responses of the Egyptian authorities to certain problems. For instance, although production from the Nile Delta farmland was consistently Nasser's only significant domestic source of hard currency, he refused to make more than a minimal investment in improvements while pouring nearly 500 million Egyptian pounds into vast desert reclamation projects where model revolutionary communities might develop. Nearly all of these projects eventually proved failures. Likewise, both Nasser and Sadat refused to encourage birth control, and the size of the population, which has more than doubled from the 21 million

of 1952 to the 44 million of today and which could go as high as 70 million by the year 2000, need not have become such an overwhelming problem. Waterbury concludes that politics dominates economic and social policy in Egypt.

The centerpiece of Nasser's politicized economy was the public or state capitalist sector. Largely through nationalizations the regime took over most of the economy, including manufacturing, finance, and all communications media. This concentration of assets in state hands, Waterbury indicates, served several political purposes: Internationally, it enhanced Nasser's prestige by placing Egypt in the vanguard of "Arab socialism"; domestically, it deprived potential rivals of resources and, more important, created a constituency for the military regime. Dubbed "the state bourgeoisie" by Waterbury, the higher-ups of the public sector became a new dominant class, whose interest lay in expanding the state.

Nasser's political ambitions eventually wrecked his economic plans. While trying to shift the economy from agriculture to manufacturing, he launched his promised welfare state, compelling the fledgling public sector to hire tens of thousands of workers irrespective of production needs and to sell its output at cost or even at a loss. Such policies, combined with a cut-off of U.S. wheat shipments and a decline in Soviet aid, led to a prolonged foreign exchange crisis that curtailed economic expansion and made the late 1960s and early '70s the lean years they were for Egypt.

Nasser's poor performance forced his successor to tailor his policies to economics. Sadat's bold moves—the expulsion of Soviet advisors in 1972; the October, 1973, war; peace with Israel; and of course the more liberal "open-door" economic policy—were all aimed at repositioning Egypt to attract foreign aid and investment. Waterbury faults the many critics who blame Sadat for intensifying Egypt's external dependency and argues convincingly that "the seeds for the exuberant growth of Egypt's dependency linkages were planted in the sixties," that is, under Nasser.

He does criticize Sadat for spending on increased domestic consumption rather than on capital investment the bulk of the billions of dollars in new revenues and credits that he managed to locate. Sadat allowed hand-outs and price subsidies to increase to an absurd level, requiring financial resources equivalent to over 50 per cent of central government expenditures. He did nothing to reform the public sector. Waterbury also faults Egypt's creditors, including the United States, for "not insisting on a more efficient