

the gaudy machines; and I have seen and smelt the tallow candles which illuminate the whole decoration to the astonishment and admiration of the ignorant audience.”

Churchill’s enduring appeal, to biographers and readers alike, lies in his character. He outshone his contemporaries with astonishing energy, the discipline required to write book after book, and the power to survive repeated disasters, some self-inflicted and some beyond his control. Always the fighter, writer, and man of action.

Jenkins’s mastery of his subject is shown by the way he compares Churchill to Lloyd George. Both men were at the center of things at the commencement of World War I, Lloyd George as prime minister and Churchill as a member of his team. Jenkins deems them the two British politicians of genius (using the word in the sense of exceptional and original powers transcending purely rational measurement) in the first half of the 20th century. In drawing out the comparison, Jenkins says that Lloyd George was “undoubtedly stronger in a number of significant qualities than was Churchill, and one, and perhaps the most remarkable, of his strengths was that he could long exercise an almost effortless authority over Churchill.” Churchill, partly for old times’ sake and partly to safeguard his flank (there was talk of bringing back Lloyd George to act as the wartime prime minister), toyed with the idea of making his old boss the ambassador to Washington or minister of agriculture. Neither job came off.

If Churchill had died in the middle 1930s, he would be of little interest to today’s biographers. It was World War II that made him. It put him in touch with Roosevelt and Stalin. Churchill described President Roosevelt as the greatest American friend Britain ever found. Did Churchill consider FDR a personal friend? In a puzzling lapse, Churchill did not attend Roosevelt’s funeral. After considering a number of possible explanations, Jenkins writes: “It is more probable that the emotional link between Churchill and Roosevelt was never as close as was commonly thought. It was more a partnership of circumstances and convenience than a friendship of individuals, each of whom . . . was a star of a brightness which needed its own unimpeded orbit.” FDR’s views on Churchill, like FDR’s views on many

things, are still under study by the experts. Stalin’s views on Churchill will remain a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma.

Jenkins, as part of the winding down, brings Gladstone on stage. Having written the Gladstone biography and now having concluded the Churchill biography, Jenkins opines that Gladstone was undoubtedly the greatest prime minister of the 19th century, and Churchill undoubtedly the greatest of the 20th century. “When I started writing this book I thought that Gladstone was, by a narrow margin, the greater man, certainly the more remarkable specimen of humanity. In the course of writing it I have changed my mind. I now put Churchill, with all his idiosyncrasies, his indulgences, his occasional childishness, but also his genius, his tenacity and his persistent ability, right or wrong, successful or unsuccessful, to be larger than life, as the greatest human being ever to occupy 10 Downing Street.”

—JACOB A. STEIN

COMMUNISM:

A History.

By Richard Pipes. Modern Library.

175 pp. \$19.95

This concise volume offers a sobering, superbly informed, and tragically disquieting analysis of communism. Pipes, a Harvard University historian, tells a story of lofty ideals betrayed by sordid, indeed criminal, practices. For him, this fanatical attempt at large-scale social engineering has, in the end, no redeeming features.

The best chapters deal with Pipes’s specialty, Sovietism. Lenin, he believes, arguably had a greater impact on 20th-century politics than any other public figure in the world. Pipes convincingly demonstrates that Lenin’s revolutionary passion flowed, not from a desire to transcend injustice, but from an obsessive rejection of liberal modernity, pluralism, and political freedom.

The original Marxian vision might have produced the sort of evolutionary socialism that developed in Western social democracies. But the philosophy carried with it a dictatorial potential, which Lenin, with his essentially antidemocratic, neo-

Jacobin mindset, exercised fully. Stalin's extremism, Pipes argues, was the logical outgrowth of Lenin's reign of terror. This assertion may understate the radical novelty of Stalin's totalitarian regime, with its unparalleled efforts to destroy enemies (real and imagined), civil society, and human creativity.

Pipes maintains that Soviet communism supplied many of the ideas that animated fascism. The similarities are indeed striking. Both doctrines despised pluralism and civic individualism. Bolsheviks detested private property, peasants, social democrats, and liberal intellectuals; Nazis hated Jews, plutocrats, Marxists, and liberals. In fact, as Pipes shows, Stalin's rabid hatred of the moderate German Social Democrats made possible Hitler's rise to power in 1933.

Though he explores the economic elements of Marxist doctrine, Pipes spends little time on its philosophical origins. He does not mention, for instance, Hegel's cult of history and the dialectical method as crucial components of Marx's secular political religion. Without dialectics, one cannot understand the Marxian dream of a classless society to be achieved via revolutionary cataclysms. I emphasize this point because, unlike Pipes, I think communism was first and foremost about ideas. Marxists, Leninists, and Maoists wanted power, of course, but they also wanted to translate their utopian worldview into a new order where the forces of good (Labor) would oppose and finally defeat those of evil (Capital).

I also expected a deeper treatment of communism's appeal to intellectuals and industrial workers, East and West alike. Pipes mentions that Stalin used antifascism to attract support but does not dwell on the seductive power of communism's professed ideals. Once again, communism was not only about terror, but also, as François Furet showed in his great book *The Passing of an Illusion* (1999), about dreams, expectations, messianic fervor, and, for many, deep disillusionment. Pipes does not tell us enough about the role of disenchanted Marxists in the dissolution of Leninist myths and finally in the destruction of

communism. Despite such omissions, the book provides an unsparing and timely account of the rise and fall of communist utopian radicalism in the 20th century.

—VLADIMIR TISMANEANU

SPECIAL PROVIDENCE:
American Foreign Policy and How It Changed the World.

By Walter Russell Mead. Knopf. 374 pp. \$30

Mead, a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations, believes that history matters, and that those who shape today's American foreign policy must understand the decisions of their predecessors. Only by studying the past, he writes, can we recognize what has made the United States "the most powerful country in the history of the world."

In the book's intellectual core, Mead sets forth a typology of four "basic ways of looking at foreign policy" that, he argues, have informed the nation's foreign affairs debates since the founding. "Hamiltonians" seek to link the national government with business and to integrate the country into the world economy. "Wilsonians" believe in upholding the rule of law and in spreading democratic values throughout the world, while "Jeffersonians" are less concerned with democratizing others than with preserving democracy at home. Finally, "Jacksonians" seek above all to maintain the country's physical security and economic well-being.

Often engaging, *Special Providence* is filled with details that will be new to many readers. Mead is incisive, for example, on the "special relationship" between Great Britain and the United States, and luminous in discussing the "missionary tradition" that has long informed America's engagement with the world. And who can quarrel with the notion that policymakers and citizens alike would benefit from knowing more about the American past? Mead's typology, though, may not offer much of a shortcut to understanding a messy world that cannot readily be reduced to a handful of discrete categories.

More fundamentally, *is* the past still prologue? When terrorists are willing to use commercial airliners to kill thousands of civilians, when opening a letter can send hundreds rac-