

were those who established their own personality cults, namely Tito and Mao.)

But after Stalin's death on March 5, 1953, Ulam argues, "it became of great importance for the Kremlin to revive communism as a meaningful creed for its own citizens." For the next 30 years, the Soviet Union's powerful nuclear arsenal, its space program, and its international standing all seemed testimony to a viable ideology. Behind the "Potemkin" posturing, though, the Soviet economy stagnated. By the time Gorbachev obtained power, the Soviet Union could no longer afford to prop up communist regimes in Eastern Europe, much less sustain new expansion in places such as Afghanistan. As a last resort, Gorbachev attempted *perestroika* and *glasnost*, but these involved, Ulam says, "the virtual demolition of the entire edifice" of communist ideology. Once communist regimes had to justify themselves on economic rather than ideological grounds, the handwriting was on the wall.

Ulam has written one of the finer books—and possibly one of the last—in a once-flourishing genre, Kremlinology. With Soviet archives formerly closed to them, Kremlinologists practiced the arcane art by focusing on the top leadership and oversimplifying the complex remainder of society. With the archives now open, Soviet and Russian scholarship could well become as fragmented as the country (or countries) it studies.

THE DISPOSSESSED: America's Underclasses from the Civil War to the Present. By Jacqueline Jones. Basic. 399 pp. \$25

For the past 30 years, when the media or the government reported on poverty, says Jones, a Brandeis historian, they "created the false impression that all black people were poor and that all white people were middle class.... Middle-class Americans in general and policy-makers in particular [have] persisted in defining the nature of social distress in racial terms."

Jones examines the history of poverty in America to dispel the popular misperception of the poor as largely the product of a black "culture of poverty," immune to government remediation. In fact, she argues, poor whites and

blacks have often suffered a common lot. After the Civil War, the changing world market for cotton and other southern products drove the South's white yeoman farmers from their land and closed off opportunities for the 3.5 million newly freed slaves. Both wound up with the same narrow choices—tenant farming or wage-labor in the South's mines, farms, and sawmills—and subject to the same economic forces. By and large, Jones maintains, both reacted the same way. Black tenant farmers were commonly stigmatized as "shiftless" because they pulled up stakes and moved from place to place. Yet the 1910 census showed that 42 percent of white tenants and 29 percent of black tenants had moved within the previous year: Far from reflecting a "roving" instinct, Jones says, this was a product of the farmers' ceaseless effort, against all odds, to better themselves.

Unfortunately, Jones's attempt to extend her argument about racist stereotyping and neglect of the poor today is less persuasive. "Postindustrial America," she maintains, "remains colonial Virginia writ large." How else, Jones asks, can one explain the fact that while 21 million of today's poor are white and only nine million black, the specter of a small black "underclass" dominates popular thinking on poverty? A good question. But Jones's dogmatic insistence that the poor are all alike—all merely victims of larger economic and cultural forces—prevents her from attempting a real answer. She may point out that *in absolute numbers* the majority now characterized as poor are "not black, Northern, or urban," but this fact does not so much refute her social critics as miss their point. What excites alarm today is the other poverty, the existence of an urban "underclass" that seems, unlike the rest of the poor, bound to transmit poverty from generation to generation.

Science & Technology

FROM PARALYSIS TO FATIGUE: A History of Psychosomatic Illness in the Modern Era. By Edward Shorter. Free Press. 419 pp. \$24.95

Even medical doctors often cannot tell whether a strange bodily symptom is caused by organic