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Recent Books: Soviet

Regrettably the *Handbook* has neither index nor bibliography

THE SOVIET HIGH COMMAND: A Military-Political History, 1918-41. By John Erickson. (New York: St. Martin's Press. 1952. 889 pp. \$15.)

When he submitted his manuscript for publication, the author of this book could not know that approaching events would give it a unique timeliness. One of his principal themes is the basic and continuing conflict between the Soviet armed services and the power complex centering on the state security service. This struggle first developed in the days of Trotsky. It reached dramatic intensity when Marshal Tukhachevskiy fell. Since the second World War the rise and fall of military personalities has revealed discontent in the armed services. Now the treason of Lieutenant Colonel Oleg Penkovskiy has thrown an embarrassing light on the struggle between these forces. Erickson's book permits intelligence officers to study the background and development of this conflict.

The author, who did his research while a Fellow of St. Anthony's College, Oxford, discusses the history of the Soviet army between the outbreak of the Revolution and the German invasion of 1941. This is not a history of Soviet military institutions, but rather a discussion of the impact on the Soviet armed forces of internal politics, international developments, and leading Soviet personalities. Two lengthy chapters are devoted to the military purges of 1937, their immediate causes, and their complex effects on Soviet and world affairs. Indeed, the theme of the purges, their origins, and their effect on Soviet military policy are a major element of the book. Although he cannot fully explain the military holocaust (no one can in the present state of our knowledge), Erickson performs a useful service in summarizing the events of 1937-1938, stripping away some of the more improbable interpretations of events, and placing the purge in the perspective of its time. This perspective helps us to understand the developments of the Penkovskiy affair.

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