

depots, barracks, and communication centers—thereby crippling the West's ability to mobilize and coordinate forces. Air attacks would be supplemented by the use of parachute-dropped and helicopter-carried forces in NATO rear areas to block reinforcements.

As disturbing as these suggestions are, Betts overlooks a more obvious scenario: a simultaneous Warsaw Pact attack through neutral Austria toward Munich and NATO's rear area. The number of available troops in Hungary and Czechoslovakia includes seven Soviet motorized divisions, at least four Soviet tank divisions, and Hungarian and Czech forces of equal or greater number. If Austria is overrun, NATO forces—scarcely adequate to cover the frontier from Lübeck south to the Austrian border—would be required to defend an additional 200 miles of frontier stretching along the southern flank of NATO forces facing east toward Czechoslovakia and northeast toward East Germany.

Both books foresee few changes that could reduce vulnerability to surprise. Regarding the operational level, Betts recommends increasing flexibility and decreasing response time through pre-prepared firing positions and terrain modifications. Knorr is more general in calling for better command and control capabilities, lower level decision-making in emergencies, and the deployment of ready and mobile forces capable of rushing speedily to any breach.

With respect to preconceptions, Betts is decidedly pessimistic: we are dealing with an "intellectual or cultural phenomenon that transcends

differences in structure and process." Knorr argues that the West must establish institutional practices that continually challenge potent preconceptions. Even though the process may "degenerate into uninspired and uninspiring practice," he believes that some mistakes can be diminished if not altogether avoided.

Knorr also observes that military assessments are prepared "for the most part with reference to the defender's strategic plans, not the attacker's." Such assessments, he says, need to focus on the intentions and plans for surprise of potential attackers, as well as on the defender's vulnerabilities. In the same vein, Betts advocates more ambitious assessment of "the doctrinal implications of Soviet military literature and exercises"; he believes that once the range of plausible innovation is detected and articulated "the potential vulnerabilities in Western posture would emerge with more clarity."

These recommendations are obviously a step in the right direction. A principal preconception of our time continues to be the belief that the Soviets adhere to our doctrine of nuclear deterrence. Richard Pipes's famous essay "Why the Soviet Union Thinks It Could Fight and Win a Nuclear War"* generally met with hysterical derision and so will most suggestions that the Soviets do not share our strategic assumptions. The risk of strategic surprise will be reduced only when we recognize that preconceptions can both blind and paralyze. □

**Commentary*, July 1977.

THE ISLAMIC THREAT TO THE SOVIET STATE
Alexandre Bennigsen and Marie Broxup / St. Martin's Press / \$27.50

Daniel Pipes

Quiet for the past six decades, the forty-five million Muslims living in the Soviet Union are likely soon to become a critical actor in world politics; in brief, this is the argument forcefully presented by two respected scholars, Alexandre Bennigsen and Marie Broxup. The impli-

Daniel Pipes, lecturer on history at Harvard University, is author most recently of In the Path of God: Islam and Political Power (Basic Books).

cations of their book are explosive.

They begin with a look at the history of Russian and Muslim relations. Russian subjugation of Muslim territories began in 1552; by 1900, Moscow ruled Muslims living in the Volga region, Crimea, the Caucasus, and Central Asia. The methods and goals of Russian rule resembled those of the British in India or the French in Algeria, the chief difference being that "Russian methods were certainly harsher and more

brutal than those employed by any other European colonial power."

The revolution of 1917 offered an opportunity to break with this legacy of repression; indeed, a few Muslim leaders saw the Bolsheviks as liberators and joined them with enthusiasm. After only six years, however, it became clear that the new Russian leaders intended to control the Muslims even more tightly than did their predecessors. Although the Communists replaced colonies with "republics" that appeared independent, what they had in fact done was to modernize the language of imperialism. Further, they interfered in the cultural and religious practices of Muslims, something the imperial regime had not done. More than ever, power was centered in Moscow.

Since the 1940s, the Soviet goal has been the "drawing together" of Muslims into Soviet culture, and the eventual "merging" of the two. This was to be achieved through intermarriage between Slavs and Muslims, the replacement of Muslim

languages (chiefly Turkic and Iranian) by Russian, and the abandonment of traditional customs in favor of Soviet ones.

In the view of Bennigsen and Broxup, the government has failed to attain any of these goals. After 66 years, "the hoped-for biological

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symbiosis between the [Muslim] and [Russian] communities, the substitution of local languages by Russian and replacement of the local popular culture by the Soviet (i.e., Russian) model have become unattainable dreams." In every respect, Soviet efforts have been frustrated by Islam, the all-encompassing religion that to this day "permeates the psychology, the character, and the behaviour of Soviet Muslims."

So long as Soviet Muslims remain politically quiescent, these failures are tolerable. The authors argue, however, that a crisis is in the making, that the Muslims are becoming a major threat to the status quo. Several problems are especially acute:

•*Demographics.* Muslims constituted a mere 11.5 percent of the Soviet population in 1926. Today, the figure is 16.8 percent, a figure that is to increase to 22 to 25 percent by the year 2000. This has bestowed a new importance on the Muslims. They already make up 23.5 percent of the total male population eligible for the draft (going up to 29 percent by 2000), and so are a critical factor in military calculations. The same applies to the economy; Muslims today provide nearly all the new sources of manpower available to the labor force. Their work ethic and habits have therefore become the focus of considerable attention.

•*Afghanistan and Iran.* "Though the change is as yet hardly noticeable," the authors write, "a turning point in the history of Soviet Islam

came in 1978, with two major external events." The invasion of Afghanistan by Soviet troops pitted Muslims against Russians for the first time in decades; and the presence of Soviet Muslims in Afghanistan gave them an unprecedented opportunity to make contact with foreign Muslims.

The effect of Iran's Islamic Revolution on Soviet Muslims was perhaps even greater: the spectacle of Iranian "success in humiliating United States 'imperialism' must raise their own hopes that its rival and counterpart, Soviet 'imperialism,' will also be defeated one day." As a result of developments in Afghanistan and Iran, "the Iron Curtain between Muslim brethren residing on either side of the border is crumbling."

•*Sufi Brotherhoods* (clandestine mystical associations of Muslims). "Since the victory of the Bolsheviks up to the present day, the only serious, organized resistance encountered by the Soviets in the Muslim territories has come from the Sufi *tariqa* [brotherhood]." In the authors' assessment, these have "certainly saved Islam in the USSR." The appeal of brotherhoods appears to be increasing and their power seems to be growing.

Together, these factors give Soviet Muslims reason to feel confident. "They know that the future belongs to them—unless a major catastrophe occurs. The spiritual world of the Muslim Turkic elite in the Soviet Union, by contrast to that of the Russian intellectual elite, is marked by a sense of optimism—probably the

only community of the USSR to feel this way."

Confidence heightens aspirations. The Muslims want "independence, full sovereignty and liberation from Russian control. . . . How could it be otherwise? They know that Southern Yemen, Libya, Uganda and Angola are sovereign states while glorious Bukhara is not." The authors believe that time is on the Muslims' side and suggest that "the most reasonable solution would be to follow Solzhenitsyn's advice and grant the Muslim borderlands the right to secede 'before it is too late,' thus reducing

the USSR to the size of Moscow Tsardom at the time of Basil III [who ruled from 1505 to 1533]."

There is of course not the slightest chance that the last great colonial empire will ever be voluntarily dismantled. Bennigsen and Broxup provide the evidence to show that the price for this inflexibility could be monumental: political upheaval, economic dislocation, and military weakness, threatening the integrity of the Soviet state and leading to fundamental changes in the position of the Soviet Union in international politics. □

LOST IN THE COSMOS: THE LAST SELF-HELP BOOK
Walker Percy / Farrar, Straus and Giroux / \$14.95

Mark Royden Winchell

One of the essays in Bill Buckley's *A Hymnal* tells of the embarrassment Buckley felt when he was cajoled into playing the harpsichord on the "Dinah Shore Show" (he was promoting a book at the time). Deriving some small consolation from the fact that no one he knew watched daytime television, Buckley prepared—a couple of weeks later—to meet a distinguished novelist and philosopher whom he regards as his hero. That moment came when Buckley emerged from his plane on a small airstrip east of New Orleans: "a tall lanky man in Levi's" approached, shot out his hand, and said, "I'm Walker Percy, Mr. Buckley. I feel I know you. Just saw you on the Dinah Shore show."

The quirky eclecticism which makes Walker Percy Bill Buckley's hero and an expert on daytime TV is evident in his latest work, *Lost in the Cosmos: The Last Self-Help Book*. Masquerading as a pop-culture parody, this grab-bag of philosophical meditation, fabulistic narrative, and social commentary addresses a problem cosmological in the ancient sense of the term—the need to understand the cosmos and one's place in it. Paradoxically, what makes this task difficult is also what makes it possible—the fact that man is conscious of himself as a self.

To a large degree, Percy contends,

Mark Royden Winchell teaches English at the University of Southern Mississippi. His book on William Buckley will appear next spring.

the malaise of our time results from the belief that such palliatives as scientism, politics, religiosity, and sex will enable us to transcend the loneliness which self-consciousness begets. Indeed, for many Americans religion is no longer their opiate, but opiates their religion. As a case in point, the author cites a rock star's testimonial to his chauffeur: "Don't let anybody kid you—nothing, not sex, not music, not adulation, can compare with the rush of intravenous Dilaudid." Notes Percy: "There are only these contraindications: expense, crime, illness, death."

As might be inferred from the foregoing, one of the delights of this book is Percy's gift for rendering the New Age ethos in all its strident banality. (An example of this is "The Last Donahue Show," a colloquium featuring a cruising homosexual, an adulterous businessman, a pregnant fourteen-year-old, and "a well-known talk-show therapist, or in media jargon: a psych jock.") Nevertheless, the political Right ought not to assume that it has an ally in Percy. Although it makes no policy recommendations (e.g., nuclear freeze), *Lost in the Cosmos* is less than kind in its treatment of the military-scientific-industrial complex.

In one memorable vignette, a Nobel laureate lies in his Washington hotel room and masturbates into a bottle while watching a closed-circuit screening of *Behind the Green Door*. In a subsequent phone conversation, he and a general discuss a pre-emptive chemical warfare strike

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