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At first blush, Woodrow Wilson and Harry Truman might seem an odd pair to compare—the most highly educated of American presidents versus the last one not to go to college, the lofty moralist and idealist versus the earthy and often profane realist. Moreover, some might argue that a better fit for comparison would be Wilson and Franklin D. Roosevelt, who led the United States through the two world wars. Pierce ably shows that such objections are wrong. The burden of her argument is that both Wilson and Truman sought to reconcile ideas about America's mission to promote peace and freedom with the exigencies of world politics. As she states, "At the end of his term, Truman was an idealist who engaged in pragmatic geopolitics, a pragmatist determined to uphold and perpetuate Wilsonian ideals and a political liberal bent on conserving the best in American political traditions and American political thought" (p. 267). That could also serve as a characterization of Wilson.

Truman serves better than Roosevelt for comparison with Wilson for two reasons. First, despite the deficiencies in his education, Truman was much better read and deeper thinking than Roosevelt. Second, it really fell to Truman to take up where Wilson had left off. Roosevelt had bent all his energies to winning the war, and, except for his summit-level dealings with Churchill and Stalin, he largely left designs for a new international order and justification of an active American role in the world to others. Further, Pierce demonstrates how conscious Truman was of following in Wilson's footsteps, avoiding his mistakes, and fulfilling his vision.

This book falls short mainly in its treatment of Wilson. Not everyone can or should try to master all the material on as vast a subject as Wilson's politics and foreign policy, but Pierce fails to use some basic sources, such as Arthur Link's edition of *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson* and his five-volume biography of Wilson. Likewise, except for the works of Frederick Calhoun and Thomas J. Knock, she appears to have read none of the scholarship of Wilson of the last three decades. The main loss from this neglect is a failure to ground Wilson's foreign policy thought and actions in his political and personal circumstances. Her work is better on Truman, although some delving into the archives might have helped strengthen her treatment of his foreign policy. In the end, Truman "succeeded" where Wilson "failed" in great measure because of the difference in their circumstances and opportunities. It is a pity that Pierce does not give a better sense of these two men as historical actors.

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What Happened to the Soviet Union? How and Why American Sovietologists Were Caught by Surprise *by Christopher I. Xenakis. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2002. 248 pp. $64.95.*

The subtitle of this book captures its theme more accurately than does the main title. Christopher Xenakis, of Tidewater Community College, claims that

"the vast majority" of U.S. experts on the Soviet Union "failed to anticipate the possibility of significant innovation, or of virtually any kind of political, economic, or social change taking place in the USSR" and that "most American Sovietologists miss[ed] the sure signs of Soviet change that were evident during the 1970s and 1980s" (p. 1). He sets out to explain why "so many political scholars [were caught] by surprise" (p. 1). He is by no means alone in this endeavor. The collapse of the Soviet Union was followed by a spate of "gotcha" articles that castigated American experts for having failed to predict the breakup of the USSR. The authors of these postmortems differed in their explanations: Some argued that American political scientists had been remiss in using Western concepts to analyze the Soviet system, others argued that American experts had been too indulgent toward the Soviet Union, and still others insisted that American scholars had been led astray by their reflexive anti-Sovietism. Whatever the precise reasoning, nearly all the critics would agree with Xenakis's contention that "America's foremost political scientists and Soviet experts failed to anticipate even the possibility of significant social, political, and economic transformation occurring in the USSR" (p. x).

Xenakis believes the main reason that "so many scholars reject[ed] even the possibility of Soviet political, social, and economic change" is that they were driven by "virulent anticommunism" and were conditioned by the Cold War to take a "hostile and moralistic" view of the Soviet Union as a country that "could not and would not change" (p. 17). Elaborating on this indictment in a repetitive opening chapter, Xenakis outlines what in his view were "eighteen indicators of Soviet social, economic, and political transformation" that were "right before our eyes" in the 1970s and early 1980s (pp. 10–16). His next chapter focuses on the works of "three of the most influential American Sovietologists of the Cold War era:" George F. Kennan, Zbigniew Brzezinski, and Jerry Hough (p. 23). In four subsequent chapters, Xenakis considers how American experts (political scientists, historians, economists, sociologists, and even journalists) assessed what was going on in the Soviet Union during four periods under Leonid Brezhnev and his successors: 1974–1977, 1978–1981, 1982–1985, and 1986–1988. In a brief epilogue, he once again emphasizes his main allegation (an allegation that recurs over and over)—to wit, that American experts on the Soviet Union "seemed to expect the status quo in Moscow [and the Cold War] to continue forever" (p. 210). Xenakis contends that these "scholars may have been co-opted" to "mirror the Cold War consensus" and to "parrot the official government line" by the "possibility of acquiring lucrative research grants or winning the ear of an influential senator or presidential candidate" (pp. 215, 216).

The premise of Xenakis's book is questionable. It is not the task of political scientists to anticipate every chance event that occurs. The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 was a highly contingent phenomenon, and the notion that political scientists should have predicted in the 1970s or early 1980s that it would happen is a misrepresentation of the scholar's mission. Political scien-

tists are not fortune tellers. While some experts tried to gloss over this failure by asserting that "it was not the job of Sovietologists to make predictions" and that "the Soviet collapse was unforeseeable" (p. 209), Xenakis finds these claims "disingenuous" (p. 209), but, in fact, the statements he criticizes are entirely correct. No serious conception of the scholarly enterprise should include (much less give pride of place to) crystal ball gazing.

Xenakis's broader critique of American Sovietology is equally problematic. He denounces "the vast majority" of American experts for allegedly having "failed to anticipate . . . virtually any kind of political, economic, or social change." This allegation is ludicrous. The indicators of Soviet change that Xenakis briefly mentions in his introduction were all widely discussed in the Western literature in the late 1970s and 1980s. The experts may not have envisaged how bold Gorbachev would eventually prove to be, but Gorbachev himself did not anticipate that either. The notion that far-reaching political liberalization was a sure thing in 1985—and that the momentous changes of 1988–1991 were fully "foreseeable" in light of "clear and unassailable evidence" that existed as far back as the 1970s (p. 18)—is a retrospective fallacy. Everything may seem inevitable in retrospect, but the reality is far more complex. There was no ironclad guarantee in 1985 that Gorbachev would succeed Konstantin Chernenko as the leader of the Soviet Communist Party, and even when Gorbachev did take over there was no assurance that he would embark on radical political changes. He did not come to office with that intent, and it is not at all clear that he would have proceeded in that direction if his initial measures had proven successful in spurring economic and technological improvements.

The real question should be whether American experts did a reasonable job of understanding the Soviet system. The verdict on this score is decidedly positive, especially if one takes account of the paucity of reliable information during the Soviet era. Many experts came to understand the Soviet system well and were able to produce scholarly works that have stood the test of time. Archival evidence has greatly enriched and, in some cases, altered our understanding of the Soviet Union, but it has not fundamentally changed much of what we "knew" before. As with any academic discipline, some experts on the Soviet Union were better than others, and some scholarship was tendentious or of no lasting value. Contrary to Xenakis's broadsides, however, many analyses of the Soviet Union were both illuminating and accurate.

Xenakis's sweeping denunciations of American experts are especially unfortunate because an even-handed assessment of these experts' views would have made for interesting reading. A few worthwhile publications that survey the strengths and weaknesses of Sovietology have appeared over the past decade, but a good deal more work along these lines is needed. Unfortunately, Xenakis's book does not contribute to that end.

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