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be required reading for anyone seriously interested in North African history.

*Dr. Sullivan is Director of Near East Support Services and author of Thomas-Robert Bugeaud: France and Algeria, 1784-1849 (Hamden, CT: The Shoe String Press, 1983).*

## SYRIA

**The Ba'ath and Syria: From the French Mandate to the Era of Hafiz al-Asad**, by Robert W. Olson. Princeton, NJ: The Kingston Press, Inc., 1982. xx + 188 pages. Map. Notes to p. 211. Bibl. to p. 224. Index to p. 235. \$19.00.

*Reviewed by Nikolaos van Dam*

In the preface to his book, Dr. Olson proposes to provide students and those interested in the Middle East in general with what he calls an "intermediate essay" on Syria which combines the approaches of both general survey books and specialized political science monographs.

The first seven chapters (pp. 1-120), dealing with the ideology and history of the Ba'ath party in Syria till 1970, as well as with the role played by members of heterodox Islamic minorities like 'Alawīs, Druzes and Ismā'īlīs, were published earlier in *Oriente Moderno* in 1978 and 1979. Unfortunately, the relevant text of the journal articles was not updated in light of later published studies on Syria, which are, however, used in the last two chapters of the book or mentioned in the bibliography. Parts of these last two chapters appeared in the same articles in *Oriente Moderno* as well.

Those who have read the main works on Syria by Patrick Seale, Itamar Rabinovich, Tabitha Petran, Malcolm Kerr and Raymond Hinnebusch might just as well omit reading the first seven chapters of Olson's book, because they are almost exclusively based on these studies, do not have the same level of quality, and contain little or nothing new. Those who are not familiar with the above-

mentioned works should know that Olson's book, which is almost exclusively based on secondary sources, contains mistakes, numerous inaccuracies, and some interpretations which are not well founded. Various parts of the book consist of paraphrased, abridged or slightly altered quotations from other (in some cases not yet published) works on Syria, which are sometimes disguised in such a manner that they might give the impression they are the original work of Dr. Olson himself. Chapter 4, "Traditional Syria before the Ba'ath: The Social Structure," does not only (as Dr. Olson indicates) "rely heavily," with permission (p. 216), on a paper presented by Raymond Hinnebusch to a congress in 1975 (and published in different form in 1979 by the American University in Cairo under the title "Party and Peasant in Syria"), but is almost literally copied from it (notably the text of pp. 41-58 in the book).

In his conclusion (pp. 178-88), Dr. Olson suggests a possible relationship between the speed of the modernization and development process in Syria, and the rise to prominence in the Syrian Ba'ath regimes of members of sectarian minorities originating in the underdeveloped countryside. This interesting suggestion deserves further study.

The book contains a number of details which would be appropriate in specialized monographs, but not in the "intermediate essay" Dr. Olson proposes to present. His purpose would have been better served had he sometimes presented the excerpted material at a higher level of abstraction. If Dr. Olson's book were a scientifically accurate, though not very original, review or treatise of other academic works on Syria (in fact, the newly published parts of the last two chapters contain various original ideas), his study would be useful for those interested students who cannot consult the major original works themselves. Unfortunately, however, Dr. Olson has not succeeded in his self-defined task.

*Dr. Nikolaos van Dam, Chargé d'Affaires of the Netherlands in Tripoli, Libya, is the author of The Struggle for Power in Syria:*

Sectarianism, Regionalism and Tribalism in Politics, 1961–1980.

## MODERN HISTORY AND POLITICS

**Afghanistan and the Soviet Union**, by Henry S. Bradsher. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1983. Duke Press Policy Studies. viii + 255 pages. Map. Notes to p. 296. Bibl. to p. 311. Index to p. 324. \$32.50 cloth. \$12.75 paper.

*Reviewed by David Nalle*

It is all over for Afghanistan as an independent country—at least for this cycle of that land's turbulent history. This fact emerges clearly from the evidence and testimony which Henry Bradsher has collected so meticulously in *Afghanistan and the Soviet Union*.

In the lead-in to the first chapter, "Country of Conflict," Bradsher makes the point that "[a]t a crossroads of ethnic migrations, marauding armies, and modern empires, this area has a more continuous history of fighting invasions than any other part of the world" (p. 9). But, by the last chapter, "Soviet Afghanistan," he has convinced us that this invasion will not be turned back. Resistance, Bradsher says, may go on in one form or another, but in this epoch, Afghanistan has become an irrevocable part of the Russian empire.

This is a book of enduring value. It is contemporary history, starting only with the aftermath of World War II, and must, therefore, be to some extent superficial. On the other hand, it is painstakingly documented by reference to interviews with individuals and to speeches, newspaper accounts and radio broadcasts, a variety of non-serial publications and diplomatic correspondence, as well as to a rich array of books. It represents a prodigious amount of research into contemporary sources, a task facilitated by a year's

fellowship at the Woodrow Wilson Center. The result is the history of the gradual Soviet takeover of Afghanistan, caught, as it were, in amber. Future books and authors may want to dissect the trapped subject and probe more deeply into what made it behave the way it did, but a great mass of evidence, especially from the later years, is assembled here for our perusal and education.

Bradsher does himself engage in analysis of the facts and opinions he has aggregated, much of it fresh and useful. His introduction, for example, is an excellent summary of the realities of Afghanistan's situation. It is cautious where hard facts are not available, but dispassionate and logical in reaching conclusions that are hard to gainsay. One of the strengths of the book is, indeed, Bradsher's sensitive but tempered approach to a set of facts, the stark record of Soviet behavior in Afghanistan, that could engender outrage and unscholarly passion.

Chapter 7 contains a clear and useful exposition, in part from a Soviet perspective, of "The Correlation of Forces." Bradsher defines the term in its Soviet connotation. He discusses how the Soviets understand the correlation of forces to have changed and what the change has meant. In effect, he says, the road to Afghanistan was paved by the series of Soviet military initiatives in the 1970s which went unchecked by the West. Without trying to set forth what the United States should have done to check the Soviets in Angola, South Yemen, or the Horn of Africa, he presents a persuasive analysis of the Soviet perception of the likelihood of a Western response to new initiatives. "The cumulative effect of the earlier adventures was to have lowered the Soviet threshold of sensitivity to foreign reactions by the time the Soviet Union sent the Soviet army into [Afghanistan]" (p. 147).

One of the most valuable ingredients of the book is Bradsher's discussion of the Soviet takeover of Afghanistan in the light of earlier Soviet dealings with other countries on its periphery. The parallels and differences are both instructive. Finland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia were countries in which the