The years Pereleshin spent in the service of the Church have yielded sketches that are on the whole more substantial than those dealing with literary matters. The most interesting is an essay on Bishop John (Maksimovich) in which Pereleshin struggles with his highly ambivalent feelings about the man who was later canonized by the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad. Acknowledging the bishop's extraordinary asceticism and noting the occasions when he exhibited amazing flashes of spiritual insight and grace, Pereleshin has nevertheless chosen to focus on aspects of his personality that irritated or repelled him. This includes, in particular, what he considers Bishop John's narrowmindedness, lack of tact, and fanatical adherence to Church ritual.

Other noteworthy pieces include a lively account of a visit to a remote village of Cossack expatriates and the tragic story of the death of Archimandrite Nafanail of the Beijing Mission, the facts surrounding which Pereleshin had helped to suppress. The other sketches are of less significance, but one must note Pereleshin's persistent tendency to emphasize the human failings of the individuals with whom he comes into contact. To the extent that this concerns clergymen, the editor may be correct when he suggests (in his introduction) that Pereleshin is "taking revenge" on the Church for the way it interfered with his ambitions as a poet. But then a highly jaundiced attitude is characteristic of Pereleshin's literary reminiscences as well, so it may be more correct to say that we are dealing with the memoirs of a man embittered by life because of the failure to attain the recognition that he felt was due him.

With the exception of an unexpectedly large number of misprints in the Russian text, the book under review exhibits great scholarly virtues, including a lucid introduction, copious notes, an excellent bibliography, and helpful indices. But it seems fair to add that not all the sketches included in this edition are really worthy of such meticulous attention.

Alexis Klimoff


Gorodetsky's book is another response to the revisionist assertion that Stalin was planning to attack Germany and that Hitler's attack on the Soviet Union was a justifiable preemptive attack. To prove the contrary, Gorodetsky focuses on the diplomacy between Germany, the USSR, and Britain after the signing of the Nazi–Soviet Nonaggression Pact of August 1939. He shows Britain figured prominently in both German and Soviet decision making. Hitler's eventual conclusion that Britain only held on alone against Nazi aggression in hopes of Soviet intervention influenced his decision to invade the USSR. At the same time Stalin feared that the British would come to a separate peace with Nazi Germany and ally with Hitler to attack Russia, or failing that, would seek to provoke a war between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union to forestall a German invasion of the British Isles. In fact the British never considered a separate peace or alliance with Hitler, nor did they ever attempt to pit Russia against Germany. British diplomacy muddied the waters at first, however, by assum-
ing the Nazis and Soviets were about to conclude an alliance in 1940, and so the British did plan an air attack on Russia’s Baku oil fields if that eventuality came to pass. This approach was dropped in 1941 when it became clear that Hitler and Stalin were at odds.

Gorodetsky goes to great lengths to make the point that there is no straight line from Mein Kampf to Operation Barbarossa (the German attack on the USSR). On the contrary Gorodetsky shows that the decision to invade Russia was not ideological – there was no talk of getting all the Jews until after the decision to invade had been made – but was based on practical needs arising from the geopolitical situation Hitler found himself in in the aftermath of the invasion of Poland. Although Hitler and Stalin had a nonaggression pact, spheres of influence in Southeastern Europe had gone undefined and this was crucial to both parties. Hitler wanted security for his access to and control over Romanian oil, and Stalin wanted to control the straits leading into the Black Sea to secure Russia’s southern flank against a potential British invasion.

Mussolini destabilized the situation in the Balkans by invading Greece in October 1939 which led directly to British intervention with ground troops in support of the Greeks. Stalin suspected the British had a grand scheme for controlling the Balkans and the Straits to gain an advantage against the USSR. Stalin reacted by invading and annexing Bessarabia and Northern Bukhovina in July 1940 and subsequently insisting on naval bases in the mouth of the Danube for “defensive purposes.” Hitler then saw this as a threat to “his” Romanian oil. Gorodetsky says Hitler decided to attack Russia once and for all in early 1941 after failing to come to terms with Stalin over control of Bulgaria and the Danube delta, not earlier when he had the armed forces begin tentative planning in December 1940.

Throughout this period, and even earlier, Gorodetsky maintains, “Soviet foreign policy was marked by a gradual but consistent retreat from hostility to the capitalist regimes towards peaceful coexistence based on mutual expediency.” (p. 1) He believes Stalin’s foreign policy was not ideological, but followed the pattern of Imperial Russia. In 1940 it was specifically aimed at domination of the Balkans and control of the Straits. Crediting Hitler with the same pragmatism, he also thinks that if an agreement over the Balkans and Danube had been reached, then there would have been no invasion of Russia by Germany.

The latter part of the book focuses on Stalin’s denial of Hitler’s intention to attack the USSR. Stalin convinced himself that Hitler would not attack without first giving an ultimatum such as insisting that the USSR join the Axis or offer economic concessions. In addition, the idea that Hitler would not attack Russia until Britain had been defeated was stressed at the highest levels. Until late May 1941, Soviet intelligence chief Golikov tailored information for Stalin, to conform to Stalin’s expectations of German and British behavior.

Gorodetsky has a whole chapter on Churchill’s warning to Stalin. The warning proved to be ineffective as a result not only of Stalin’s suspicions, but also of the watered down version actually delivered to Stalin because of differences between Churchill and the Foreign Office. In contrast to Churchill, the Foreign Office was not convinced that Hitler actually planned to attack Russia, but thought that the military buildup was part of a war of nerves. Simultaneously, the Germans had a double agent