One of the strengths of this book is in the analysis of Khalhingol. The author provides a realistic and unadorned picture of this event based on a number of reliable sources, such as the works of General Petr Grigorenko and writer Konstantin Simonov. In this chapter, Mezhiritsky emphasizes Zhukov's harshness as one of the features of his character. According to General Grigorenko, during this event Zhukov sent new commanders to the military units and battalions. They were ordered to get there before dawn on their own without the assistance of a guide. Those who succeeded took over their duties and entered the battle, those who failed were court-martialed (p. 36).

Chitaiia Marshala Zhukova has a subheaded, “a Documentary Novella about Comrade Stalin.” Indeed, Mezhiritsky devotes considerable attention to Stalin in the book. One might think that this subject is totally exhausted; volumes have been written about this tyrant. Nevertheless, Mezhiritsky manages to come up with a number of creative and controversial assessments of Stalin, his contemporaries and this period. For instance, Mezhiritsky indicates how skillfully Stalin had carried out the purges in the army beginning with Lakir, whom Stalin feared most of all, since he was beloved by the rank and file. Common soldiers looked upon him as a father figure, therefore he was arrested quietly. Then the NKVD arrested other military commanders and extracted admissions of guilt using torture (p. 33). Stalin was particularly eager to get rid of the commanders supported by Trotsky: Bliukher, Uborevich and Tukhachevskii. The author points out that these men were not angels, having participated in the suppression of the anti-Bolshevik rebellions in Russia. However, Mezhiritsky is able to admit that these military commanders did wrong only after lengthy hesitation and without genuine disapproval of these men. In the author’s view, it is difficult to assess the events which took place in the heat of the Civil War in Russia. Menzhiritsky stresses the fact that Trotsky’s protégés were talented military commanders, while Stalin’s were good for nothing (ibid). It is hard to agree with the viewpoint that the atrocities committed by the above-mentioned victims of Stalin’s purges during and after the Civil War can in any way be justified or overlooked by the pressure or hardship of the Civil War period. If one takes such a stand, many other crimes and abuses committed in the history of humanity could warrant a reassessment.

A review of this documentary novella would be incomplete without a mention of the various useful diagrams and photos throughout. This book can be recommended to a broad audience, from scholars and military experts to those who have a layman’s interest in the history of World War II.

Yury Polsky


In this book Viacheslav (Slava) Fetisov talks about his life and career. Hockey fans throughout the world know him: Viacheslav played for the leading Soviet club CSKA (Red Army) and for the Soviet national team since the age of 18. Fetisov was an
Olympic champion twice and world champion eight times. Experts, journalists, and ordinary fans called him a “legend” and the “best defenseman” from the earliest stage of his career. Fetisov’s contribution was an important factor in the numerous Soviet victories in World Hockey Championships and the Olympic games between 1978 and 1988. In this book, Viacheslav furnishes a thoughtful and incisive account of these events, including not only an analysis of the Soviet triumphs, but also the impact on Soviet ice hockey of its loss to the US team in the 1980 Winter Olympic Games. Although Fetisov had accomplished more than most athletes could dream of during his career in the Soviet Union, Viacheslav still would feel unsatisfied unless he could test his talents in the best professional hockey league in the world: the NHL.

During Gorbachev’s rule, after a long and harsh struggle with sports officialdom, Fetisov and some of his fellow athletes gained permission to join the NHL. However, the transition was not easy. Soviet sports officials were not eager to part with athletes of Fetisov’s caliber. For example, Viktor Tikhonov, a long-time coach of the Soviet national team, certainly did not want his team to be weakened by Fetisov’s departure. Viacheslav had to endure a humiliating interview with the Soviet Minister of Defense in order to be eligible for retirement from his home club CSKA and employment with a NHL club (pp. 58-59). It took a lot of effort on Viacheslav’s part to leave the Soviet Union. On the other hand, the reception in North America, where Fetisov began to play for the New Jersey Devils, was not particularly encouraging; there were natural barriers, such as mastery of a foreign language and adjustment to a new culture. It was difficult to make fundamental changes and adjustments to a new life in a new country at the age of 30, the age at which Fetisov was finally able to join the NHL. Also, veteran NHL players did not look forward to becoming teammates with a player from the Soviet Union. They had learned to dislike Soviet hockey players since 1972, when competition between the NHL and Soviet teams started on a regular basis (p. 78).

Nevertheless, Fetisov does not regret that he came to North America. He achieved remarkable success; he won the Stanley Cup twice as a player with the Detroit Red Wings. In the 1994-95 season the Devils traded Fetisov to the Wings. The second Stanley Cup triumph came after this book was published, so it is not mentioned. Fetisov stresses that in North America he enjoys freedom that he was deprived of in the former Soviet Union. Viacheslav has the money that allows him “to lead a decent life. I am not dependent on anybody. It is not necessary that they allocate a dacha to me, or grant me a permission to buy a vehicle” (p. 203). In the old Soviet Union even leading athletes were under authorities’ tight scrutiny and surveillance all the time. Fetisov provides a unique insight into the lifestyle of Soviet superstars and shows how miserable life was even for Soviet elite athletes (pp. 205-30).

Fetisov also talks about his roots, parents and family. He hails from an ordinary Soviet family without privileges. Viacheslav’s childhood and youth period were similar to that of many of his contemporaries. However, his innate talent and perseverance allowed Slava to work his way up and become an outstanding athlete. Fetisov provides an exciting account of his romantic involvement with his spouse, Lada, and their relationship. The author also points out that Lada helped him write this book; Fetisov emphasizes the fact that Lada “is my co-author” (p. 5). Viacheslav thanks experienced journalist and personal friend Vitalii Melik-Karamov for assistance in preparing the