

also have triggered social behaviors that mitigated size dominance. Big cats respond to the changing rhythms of their environment with subtle grace. Antón and Turner restore life to the extinct big cats, and in so doing move us to save the living big cats from extinction.

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An Epoch Past

Essays of a Soviet Scientist. VITALIĬ I. GOL'DANSKIĬ. AIP Press, Woodbury, NY, 1997. xvi, 303 pp., illus. \$32.95. ISBN 1-56396-454-6. Masters of Modern Physics.

VitaliĬ Gol'danskiĬ's astonishing range of work in chemical, particle, and nuclear physics has put him at the epicenter of scientific and political events in the former Soviet Union for more than half a century. He has known many of the scientific luminaries of the period and has been an active participant in the events of the epoch during which the former Soviet Union first developed nuclear weapons, started to develop nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, then went through a still not completely understood metamorphosis from world superpower to a collection of independent states.

This collection of his essays reproduces his opinions and impressions of people, places, and events during this most contentious and crucial period. We are given a selection of brief but telling interviews he gave and essays he wrote on a variety of occasions—to commemorate an anniversary, to reminisce about a colleague, or to address an issue of public interest. Flashing through the pages are essays on such scientists as physicist L. D. Landau, chemist (and Gol'danskiĬ's father-in-law) N. N. Semenov, physicist and astrophysicist V. L. Ginzburg, chemist A. N. Frumkin, chemical physicist A. I. Shal'nikov, chemist and physicist Ya. B. Zel'dovich, and physicist and statesman Andrei D. Sakharov. Included are a description of a challenge to a duel issued as a practical joke on a colleague ("S.R.," not otherwise identified); a report of repartee between Semenov and prominent playwright Korneichuk, the former advising the latter that he was "no Shakespeare," the latter responding that the former was "no Newton"; and a congratulatory poem to Zel'dovich advising him not to "stick your nose in the air." These glimpses

only hint at the richness of the personal lives and the deep relationships, both friendly and adversarial, that were part of everyday life among the scientific elite of the Soviet Union.

About two thirds of the book is devoted to reflections on public issues. The urgency of disarmament is highlighted, in keeping with Gol'danskiĬ's long involvement with Pugwash conferences and the nuclear disarmament movement. Other essays on the importance of supporting basic research, on culture ("high" and "low"—in the cinema, for example), and on the changing relationship of the Soviet Union and its successor states with the rest of the world touch on wide-ranging issues with wit and insight. In three late pieces (among them a much-noted "Letter to the General Secretary") that conclude the book Gol'danskiĬ takes a stand against the rising tide of anti-Semitism and "ethnic turmoil" unleashed in the former Soviet state by the very *perestroika* that led to the destruction of the communist system.

The book is in a sense reminiscent of Chekov's *The Cherry Orchard*. The world depicted was once so real and is now irretrievably gone. This collection gives evidence that the author could give us memoirs "with the spaces filled in," in which the people he knew and the events in which he participated would be more richly and fully described. Let us hope he takes the time to do so.

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Other Books Received

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