

example, July 1941 (page 197) should be June 1941: the 15th Conference of the CPSU (page 461) should read the 18th.

Much confusion arises from the curious structure of this work: events are not treated chronologically but by subjects: and within most of the subjects the author works backward from the Soviet period. Then there are some anomalies in its structure such as the inclusion of the "Soviet revolution in industry" in the chapter on "the West", whereas "the Land" has a chapter to itself.

Nevertheless, Sumner's *Survey* contains many valuable sections, notably on the 1861 serf reform (pages 140-142) and on peasant revolts (pages 161-170).

The author's untimely death will be deeply regretted by all who hope to see the development in this country of a serious study of Russia's past.

R. W. DAVIES.

Other works by B. H. Sumner: *RUSSIA AND THE BALKANS, 1870-1880* (Oxford University Press, 30s.); *TSARISM AND IMPERIALISM IN THE FAR EAST AND THE MIDDLE EAST, 1880-1914* (Oxford University Press, 2s. 6d.); *PETER THE GREAT AND THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE* (Basil Blackwell, 6s.). The latter is reviewed in *ANGLO-SOVIET JOURNAL*, Vol. XI, No. 2, Summer 1950.

## FOLKLORE IN THE SOVIET UNION

*THE Russian Translation Project of the American Council of Learned Societies* has chosen wisely in adding to its series of scholarly Russian books a well-produced English (or perhaps we should say American) version of Academician Y. M. Sokolov's standard work on Russian folklore.\* For indeed Yuri Sokolov and his scarcely less famous collaborating brother B. M. Sokolov (some of whose work has been incorporated into this volume) are, in their combination in folklore of enthusiasm and exact scholarship with pioneering effectiveness, very much like a twentieth-century counterpart of the German brothers Grimm. *Russian Folklore* was published shortly before the great war as a course to be used alike in places of higher education and by the educated general reader: and it has excellently served this purpose in Russia. Not only does it aim comprehensively at including everything relevant to its subject taken in the widest and fullest sense, but also at providing the necessary bibliographical aid to the scholar. It covers first the origin

and history of the study of its theme, then (naturally the great bulk of the work) Russian folklore before the October Revolution, and thirdly a much shorter account of post-revolutionary Russian folklore. A sketch of folklore in the Soviet nationalities is added, and there are indexes of authors cited and of folklore artistic performers (but unhappily no index of subjects).

It is a pity that so long has elapsed between the appearance of the original Russian book and this painstaking translation: for much has been happening in the USSR in the field of folklore, both in scholarship and in practice. Moreover, the book suffers from the apparent inability of its promoters to obtain the necessary advice for a needed revision from Soviet sources. For instance, a good deal of the theoretical part of the original work assumes the neo-Marr theories of language and closely links its views on folklore origins with the now discredited *New Doctrine of Marr about Language*. But a revised work which could have taken count of what may roughly be termed the Stalinist view of language and literature would have been far more useful in a translation which aims to present accurately the best that is now being thought on such matters in Russia today. In short, a good deal in this English version is now out of date as regards the theoretical portions, though the more fundamental and interesting parts, which treat of actual folklore in its history and practice, remain of first-rate importance.

Again, it is to be regretted that practically all the excellent Russian bibliographical material of the original—conveniently placed at the end of each chapter and in footnotes—is given only in English, so that the student who really tried to use this indispensable aid would have to guess from the translation at the Russian titles before he could do anything. One wonders of what use this bibliographic material is to those who cannot read Russian: yet those who can will also be unable to use it, in the absence of at least a transliterated Russian version of the items.

Yuri Sokolov's book is indeed a fine example of Soviet scholarship. It somehow manages to bring its vast subject into intimate and vital relation with the Russian people, while providing an always strictly scholarly basis and treatment. It has too (though the translator lacks the gifts to bring this out always effectively) considerable literary quality. The chapter, for instance, on the ballad-poetry technically known as *Byliny* is quite the best and most readable short account of its subject that the reviewer has seen: and it is pleasing to find that, even in a work which covers so vast a field in one volume, the Englishman Richard James, who first caused a few of these popular Russian

\***RUSSIAN FOLKLORE.** By Academician Y. M. Sokolov. Translated by Catherine Ruth Smith. (Macmillan Co., New York, 1950, \$10 or £3 15s.)

poems to be copied in the early seventeenth century, receives due if brief treatment.

It is clearly not possible in this brief review to enter into any technical criticism of this really comprehensive volume. Inevitably the specialist in this or that field of folklore will think that something he considers important has been left out or too lightly handled. Proverbs alone, for example, have a vast literature of their own. But the British folklorist, who till now has only had as a quarry for his material for the study of the Russian proverb the section on proverbs in the Folklore Society's *Proverb Literature*,\* will be grateful for the important added material which Professor Sokolov has provided (if he can guess the exact Russian titles from this translation or get access to the original). Again, some will think that too little has been made of Western work in folklore. But others will be amazed at how much has been included or touched upon in a volume which does not claim to do more than provide university courses for all parts of the field. Affinities with the Russian *Chastushki*, or popular short rhyming songs, might have been sought in the Old Norse *Visur*, and so on. But the truth is that the amount of accurate and yet widespread treatment of every conceivable aspect of folklore which has been got into one large volume is quite amazing. No folklorist—whatever his special interest—can fail to find something he has been looking for in this book.

As is to be expected in a work of Soviet scholarship, the study and practice of folklore and its living arts is made to appear vividly as an aspect of the great Russian renaissance in cultural life which is now taking place: and the enthusiasm for the future of his study and belief in its power to contribute vitally to the popular good which the author feels, is often communicated by his book. After stressing the great need for research workers in folklore ("research-personnel in folkloristics", as the translator has it), Academician Sokolov ends with what must indeed seem a well-justified claim that "a broad and honourable way of service to the people" has been opened to Soviet folklorists.

C. L. WRENN.

\*PROVERB LITERATURE OR BIBLIOGRAPHY OF WORKS RELATING TO PROVERBS, ed. Bonser. London (William Glazier Ltd., 1930). items 2920-3082.

## THE SOVIET WAY WITH BACKWARD AREAS

ON any showing that pays attention to real facts, the thirty years of Soviet development in Central Asia make an amazing story, full of fascination for economist, industrialist, sociologist and ad-

ministrators alike. It is also a story that is likely to be seen by the men of the future, when they look back on it, as of cardinal importance to the course of world events in our time.

To begin with, we had better get our minds straight on the question of scale and significance. Today all tidings about the USSR are heard by the people of Britain in a stereotyped frame of reference which assumes that nothing good or even interesting can exist beyond the "iron curtain". Any Englishman who refuses to have his social perceptions distorted to fit this principle at once excommunicates himself from 95 per cent of his fellow countrymen. A detached observer might find it silly that so many of us should put out our own eyes and then reproach the Russians for our blindness, and might find it a point of psychological interest that we should choose so odd a form of self-mutilation. The facts of Soviet development, however, are not altered because we elect to misperceive them.

In this respect there has been great deterioration among the British people in recent years. Formerly, even hostile observers took it for granted that it was sensible to be interested in what was going on in the Soviet world. One of them, E. S. Bates, writing in 1940 on Soviet Asia, remarked that the quantity and quality of cotton produced in the Central Asian republics had improved between the two world wars to an extent "which renders these improvements one of the major facts in world industry during that period". And cotton is only one item in a long catalogue of similar improvements.

The *Economist*, which I quote as another consistently anti-Soviet witness, had the following comments to make in its issue of December 5, 1942, about the growth of industry and its consequences: "In the course of 1942 the centre of gravity of the USSR's economic life has shifted to Asia; and 1942 may rank in the USSR's history as the year of the great industrial ascendancy of its Asiatic republics. Asia is putting a new impress upon all sectors of Soviet life. In the army, soldiers of West Siberian and South Asiatic nationality have become most prominent. Tadiik and Uzbek detachments have been fighting in Stalingrad under the Siberian General Rodimtsev . . . Asia is rescuing Europe; and the influx of fresh blood has added new strength to the country in its struggle and suffering."

The tremendous tale hinted at in these two extracts is what W. P. and Zelda K. Coates are concerned to set out at length in their book.\* Nobody in Britain or the USA, except the already converted, will believe a word they say: the fashionable

\*SOVIETS IN CENTRAL ASIA. By W. P. and Zelda K. Coates. (Lawrence & Wishart, 25s.)