

side the Soviet Union. A third chapter gives a balanced and sympathetic account of the work of the Marxist historian M. N. Pokrovskii (1868-1932), whose views had been rejected as unsound during Stalin's ascendancy.

The remainder of the book deals with 'The crisis of bourgeois historical science in the period of imperialism'. It is arranged in a series of chapters covering everything from the history of the ancient east to such auxiliary disciplines as palaeography and numismatics. The general picture is of a generation of historians who either adopt reactionary and anti-historical political positions—agnosticism, cyclical theories, modernisation of the past—or lose themselves in antiquarian detail without any attempt at synthesis. But there is no denigration of the positive contributions made by these scholars, even by those among them who later became the bitterest enemies of the young Soviet state, and there is no name-calling. And one point which emerges again and again is that even the most 'official' of historians were forced by their interest in social and economic history to ask many of the same questions as their Marxist colleagues, even though they often gave unsatisfactory answers, or no answer at all. A good example is provided by K. N. Uspenskii (1874-1917), whose approach to medieval history is admirably analysed by Z. V. Udaltsova on pages 515-526.

Detailed criticism of most of the chapters exceeds the present reviewer's competence. In those on the history of the ancient world and on Byzantine history there is a certain one-sidedness due to a too narrow definition of history. Thus, although M. V. Rostovtsev's early work, before he left Russia, gets several pages, B. V. Farmakovskii, who did more than any man of his generation to develop the study of the history of the Greek cities of the Black Sea coast, is awkwardly tucked away in a scrappy chapter on archaeology. And N. P. Kondakov, a scholar worthy to stand beside Vasil'evskii and Uspenskii, is hardly mentioned in the otherwise excellent chapter on Byzantine history, presumably because his main field, and the starting-point of his often wide-ranging studies, was the history of Byzantine art.

Russian scholarship in general, and Russian historiography in particular, was unjustly neglected in a generation dominated by German intellectual leadership. The specialist in any field will find in the rich bibliographical notes to this book references to work after work which still retains its value. Again and again he will find Russian scholars of the beginning of the century anticipating views later defended successfully by historians writing in English, French or German, and making constructively critical appreciations of the

work of their western contemporaries. Whether he will be able to obtain the works referred to is another question. A sample check in the British Museum library, which is relatively rich in pre-1917 Russian books, showed that rather more than half of the books sought were unobtainable.

There are forty-five pages of bibliography and a full index of authors.

ROBERT BROWNING.

## SCI-FIC WITH A DIFFERENCE

**Russian Science Fiction.** Ed. Robert Magidoff, trs. Doris Johnson. (Allen and Unwin. 272pp. 25/-.)

I FOUND this a most disappointing volume. The keynote was boredom due to the complete absence of what a former editor of mine called 'compulsive writing'.

I do not read science fiction for the science; I read it for the fiction. That is why many publishers do not advertise their science fiction publications as such; they appear in the general fiction list. There they succeed or fail dependant on the author's writing.

The editor in his introduction states his difficulties in obtaining original contributions. He explains that short stories appear in publications not readily available outside the USSR: 'the compiler is thus left largely to the mercies of chance and of the Soviet bureaucrats who decide what may, and what may not, be exported from the USSR.' I commend him to Jacques Berger's excellent collection of Soviet science fiction published by Feltrinelli Editore, *Fanta Scienza Russa*. He seems to have overcome successfully the limitations that worried Magidoff.

There are stories in this collection by, of course, Ivan Yefremov and by Vladimir Dudintsev. Of historic interest is the text of K. Tsiolkovsky's 'On the Moon'. I do not see why this should have been included here. It is already available.

But this book does indicate that the distinction between science fiction and science does not seem to be very sharp in the USSR. Recently there appeared in the publication *Zvesda* in Leningrad a science fiction story by G. S. Altov and Valentina Zhuravleva (one of whose stories appears in the Magidoff volume).

One of their short stories was picked up by the French press and treated as science fact. *Le Figaro* in particular gave it as front-page news, and caused the American *Time* magazine to start for the first time a science fiction column (see *Time*, April 3, 1964, p. 28), but this may be counted as 'western stupidity'.

It does stress, however, the differentness of Soviet science fiction.

MAURICE GOLDSMITH.

## SIBERIAN SURVEY

**Siberia: Its Conquest and Development.**  
Yuri Semyonov. (Hollis and Carter. 414pp.  
with maps. 42/-.)

**THIS** interesting book is a translation of the German version published in Berlin in 1954. The author, now a lecturer in the Slavonic Institute of the University of Uppsala, left Russia at the Revolution after travelling widely in eastern regions.

The book, the result of much careful scholarship, is a straightforward chronological account, from the Mongol invasion of Europe in the twelfth century to the treaty between the Soviet Union and China in 1950. Adopting an easy conversational style, the author takes the reader through the eventful history of these 700 years, giving a wealth of names and events in Siberian history, casting brief glances at the Russian rulers and their policies and at the geography of Siberia.

The exploration of that vast territory was virtually completed by the middle of the seventeenth century. Using first the indefatigable Cossacks—generally dismounted and frequently pushing their way through unknown lands along the rivers by boat—merchant adventurers with royal approval and later with more official control financed exploration and subjugated the many native peoples. For centuries the incentive was wealth from furs; other resources were ignored. A constant succession of governors and officials supervised and mulcted the provinces but generally encouraged settlement. The impression that Siberia in the nineteenth century was colonised by deportees, a view held even in Russia, was quite false. By the end of the century no more than five per cent of the people were political prisoners. After a period of neglect, between 1800 and 1850 the new incentive for development came from the widespread discovery of gold and, incidentally, of a wealth of other resources, not fully exploited until after the revolution. The last chapters of the book are concerned with the incorporation in the Russian Empire of the Aleutian Islands and Alaska and the establishment of fortified trading ports along the American coast as far south as California. This phase of history terminated with the sale of Alaska to the USA in 1867—in part an attempt to cement relationships between Russia and the States against Britain. The book then goes on to record the troubled relations with Japan and China and the construction and consequences of the Trans-Siberian Railway.

In the course of the story interesting points emerge. Many know of the activities of Willoughby and Chancellor in Russia in the sixteenth century, but fewer that Samuel Bentham, brother of Jeremy, built

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