

to say what they choose. As a result, libelled and defamed persons have little redress against newspaper tyranny. Away with all press-laws!

Although the right to a free press has only been gained by persistent struggles, by martyrdoms, and by invincible belief in an ideal, a melancholy spectacle of today is the indifference often shown by people from whom this hard-won right is removed. Morris Broughton, the editor of the *Cape Argus*, reported to the International Press Institute in 1954 that the tyrannical oppression of South African papers by the Union Government was viewed with less indignation in the Union than by people outside. The German tragedy might never have come about if it had not been for the apathy with

which Germans reacted to the destruction of the essential liberty of the press by the Nazis, and indifference of this kind is made all the easier by the complacent ignorance of history which goes with modern contempt of the past. Skilful operators with the right propaganda can re-chain the press today whenever they want. Last year in London a group of Communists suspended the national press of England for more than a week. Nobody cared very much, or rather not a thousandth of those cared who would have cared if the Communists had suspended racing or football. The blame is largely that of public stupidity, but also that of the most widely circulated newspapers for keeping the public so stupid.

Christopher Sykes

A LATTER-DAY TRINITY

THIS book* could not have appeared at a more suitable moment. Originally published in the United States in 1948, it is now at last made available to the British public, just when the Soviet Government itself has gone out of its way to underline the topicality of the subject. In the circumstances even a less well-written biographical study of Lenin, Trotsky, and Stalin would be bound to attract interest. Since Mr. Wolfe's book is also a work of scholarship (although lacking the usual critical apparatus, and in its style attuned to the taste of the average educated reader), the reviewer's task is for once made easy. Mr. Wolfe's qualifications as a historian have indeed been challenged by a colleague in a recent issue of the *American Slavic and East European Review*, but those who have read his spirited rejoinder to Mr. Marc Szeftel will not feel unduly worried by the admitted presence of a few minor inaccuracies; while for the general public this biographical triad is almost the ideal introduction to a topic whose fascination seems as unending as the political challenge that goes with it.

To avoid possible misunderstandings: this is not another history of the Russian Revolution, but a historical study of the men and movements leading up to it. It does indeed most regrettably stop short in 1914, on the eve of the First World War, and we shall have to await Mr. Wolfe's projected second volume to see what he makes of the subsequent careers of his

protagonists. This drawback is, however, partly compensated for by a masterly introductory chapter which not only sketches in the background, but in some respects carries the story down to our day. It is characteristic of the author's insight into the essentials of the problem presented by Russia's constant oscillation between the European and the Asian elements in its make-up that he singles out that aspect of the dialectic which is currently causing so much concern to Mr. Khrushchev and his colleagues:

And even within the soul of Stalinism will appear the same schizoid inner war: between the Stalin of the twenties and early thirties who imported foreign technicians and machines, and worshipped foreign technique, and defined "the style" of Leninism as "the harmonious union of Russian swing or sweep with American practicality in getting things done," and the Stalin of the forties who fears and denigrates everything foreign and purges people in every field for contact with, admiration for, or "slavish submission to" the West.

These words almost qualify Mr. Wolfe for membership of the now fashionable school of post-Stalin optimists, but his general treatment of the subject is less complaisant to the illusions of our liberals. In any case his main theme is neither ancient Muscovy nor the present U.S.S.R., but the dissolution of the Petrine régime and the growth of the revolutionary movement in the late 19th and early 20th century. Here he clearly challenges comparison with Mr. Isaac Deutscher's work, especially in his

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analysis of Trotsky's personality and influence. Since Mr. Deutscher has not yet given us his volume on Lenin, while Mr. Wolfe's method commits him to a simultaneous account of Lenin's, Trotsky's, and Stalin's activities during their formative years, the comparison is not quite fair, but it is inevitable that it should be made. Aside from differences of style and manner—Mr. Wolfe is breezier than Mr. Deutscher, as befits an American—the contrast turns on differing views of the revolution. Mr. Wolfe is a democratic socialist, while Mr. Deutscher would probably not resent being described as an orthodox Leninist.

That having been said, it remains to be added that Mr. Wolfe's dislike of Bolshevism does not blind him to Lenin's greatness as a tactician, while his obvious admiration for Trotsky does not lead him to denigrate Stalin. He is indeed eminently fair and yet passionate in his judgments, a rare and attractive combination. And since his vivid biographical sketches are embedded in an historical account based on lengthy study of the original sources, he has little to fear from the specialists. The burden of scholarship is carried lightly, but here is no amateur historian writing for consumers of biographical romances. Indeed the virtual absence of notes and references gives the book a deceptively

"popular" appearance. Some readers will regret this; few will suppose that it results from choice.

Apart from being both scholarly and eminently readable, what chiefly distinguishes this synthesis of history and biography is the author's familiarity with the outlook of the men (and women) who prepared the upheaval of 1917. Mr. Wolfe writes from the inside, which is something different from being in possession of inside information. At the same time his commitment to American democracy supplies a critical standard by which to judge the thoughts and acts of the revolutionaries—and of their opponents. This kind of balance is only possible for one who himself holds those democratic-socialist convictions which were among the chief casualties of the post-1917 upheaval. Although the present volume stops in 1914, it is clear that Mr. Wolfe views the Revolution essentially as a tragedy, and its protagonists as men fated to disappoint the illusions of their followers. Though often critical, he is seldom censorious, and his capacity for imaginative sympathy, coupled with his easy mastery of the sources, not only carries the reader along but helps him to relive the experiences of those pre-1914 revolutionaries who had so shrewd an understanding of their environment, and yet so little knowledge of the forces they were about to let loose.

G. L. Arnold

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