

ers" to the policy of expulsions, as de Zayas does, is to miss the point, which is that in the end they were impotent to prevent it.

They were just as powerless to determine the way in which the expulsions were carried out. This proved to be an obscene travesty of the "orderly and humane" instruction of Potsdam. There may be argument about the principle of readjustment of frontiers, and even of the transfer of populations. There can be none about what was done to the eastern Germans, which constitutes one of the great crimes of the century and one of the "last secrets." Something like 15 million people were expelled from their homes with the greatest brutality. More than 2 million died in the process.

Many Germans fled before the advancing Red Army. Maybe they were the sensible ones. Whereas the American and British troops in Western Europe and western Germany behaved well by the admittedly not high standards of occupying armies, the behavior of the Russians was such as Europe had

not seen for centuries. Solzhenitsyn's *Prussian Nights* gives a taste of it. There was pillage; there was slaughter. Every woman of rapable age was raped, usually many times.

The inevitable flight in panic was followed by "wild expulsions" in 1945. But even the later, ostensibly supervised expulsions were carried out in horrible fashion, the victims crammed onto cattle trucks for interminable railway journeys. There had been spontaneous massacres here and there, but most of those who died were victims of disease and starvation. Most of them were women and children. De Zayas tells this dreadful story in a factual and on the whole sober way. It is well that this great crime should have been recorded.

But there is more to be said than that about his rather curious book. He tells the story from the German point of view, which is all to the good since the German case has, not surprisingly, gone unheard outside Germany in the postwar years. (Not so before the war: In the course of pleading the case of the

Sudeten Germans, de Zayas quotes from a somewhat foolish article in support of them by Arnold Toynbee. It is implied that Toynbee's was a lone voice. As de Zayas should know, in England in 1938, beyond a small, politically aware circle, both enlightened opinion and broader public opinion favored the German side, as was also the case in France. That was the whole point about Munich.)

NOR DOES HE MERELY take the German side. Consciously or unconsciously, de Zayas, who is an American lawyer, advances the conservative, nationalist, revisionist point of view. This prejudice shows up in various ways, small and large: in the arguments he advances, in the choice of illustrations and their captions, even in his terminology. Take a small example: We all know that in today's confused world, from South America to Ulster to the Middle East, one man's guerrilla is another man's murderer. It is startling all the same to read a casual reference to the assassination of Reinhard Heydrich in May 1942 "by Czech terrorists." (Emphasis added.) Well, well. And I had always thought of them as brave resistance fighters, and of Heydrich as a monster.

It is in dealing with Czechoslovakia that de Zayas's one-sidedness (I will not say tendentiousness) is most glaring. He quite rightly thinks the expulsions criminal. He also, and also rightly, does not think that they were justified by the greater crimes of National Socialism: There can be no collective crime, guilt, or punishment. It is another matter to pretend that there were not two sides to the confrontation of German and Slav, to ignore, or to distort, the historical background. Getting the history right does not mean condoning the crimes: To understand the historic oppression of the Irish is not to excuse the present outrages committed in the name of Irish republicanism. An example of how de Zayas can be misleading: "The Czechs," he writes, "... had in fact enjoyed a liberal degree of autonomy throughout their history..." Imagine a writer—to continue the comparison—claiming that the Irish had "enjoyed a liberal degree of autonomy throughout their history." In fact, in the two centuries after the Czechs were crushed at the Battle of the White Mountain in 1620, they enjoyed about as much liberal autonomy as the Irish after the Battle of the Boyne. All emergent nations, the Czechs included, start by rewriting his-

BIRTHDAY CARD

TIMOTHY DEKIN

The family in the car, singing for hours,
Four voices in one voice, years flashing by,
Lives other than your own becoming yours,
The destination merely an excuse
For the warm pressure from a shoulder, thigh;
Guarded affection gone, and open sky:
This is the memory your son keeps of you.

Soon he will know what makes a family last,
Those other times: anger churning to foam
That drained back in apology as fast;
Love working hard concealing what it cost,
Pretending it's already safe at home—
Reaching beyond yourself so you'd become
That self which all along they loved the most.

Soon he will marry, then may he disclaim
That household of confusion; never find
His children lost except in harmless games,
Nor brood about how he might get away;
Of what he's missing, all he's left behind,
But give himself to them, and aging, find
They honor him, as he does you today.

TIMOTHY DEKIN was a Stegner Writing Fellow at Stanford. He has published a chapbook of his poems, *Occasional Uncles*.

tory. That does not mean that it subsequently requires re-writing.

And as de Zayas is capricious in dealing with the past, so he is disingenuous, at least, in dealing with the present and the future. Of course, historians should try to tell the truth without concern for the consequences. But there is no point in pretending that history books do not sometimes have consequences, that they never point a message. De Zayas must know by now that his book has been a great hit with Herr Axel Springer's right-wing revisionists, and not only with the right-wing revisionists, for copies of the British and German editions of this book are to be found in the embassies of the Bundesrepublik throughout Eastern Europe.

To come to my point: De Zayas and Springer think that the expulsion of the 15 million Germans was a great crime. So do I. They regard the Oder-Neisse frontier as an open question. I regard it as closed. Perhaps I am unjust to de Zayas, but his last chapter is strikingly ambiguous. He rightly says that "we cannot undo the damage inflicted at Potsdam," and that "the majority of German expellees realize, of course, that they shall never be able to go back to the lands where they were born." But he adds that "the German expellees have not abandoned the hope of one day recovering at least part of their lost homeland." Does this not conflict sharply with Brandt's recognition of the Oder-Neisse frontier (of which de Zayas ominously comments that he "did not possess the legal competence to make final determinations in these areas")?

I am far from wishing to seem cynical or brutal, but though the eastern territories were certainly once German they are now certainly Polish and Czech. It is paradoxical for de Zayas to admit that Silesia and Pomerania had been inhabited by Slavs before the Germans but to deny implicitly that they have now become Polish again. Macaulay's sensible rule about the ownership of land applies (he was writing of Ireland): whether "injustice had or had not been committed was immaterial. . . . Just or unjust [it] had taken place so long ago, that to reverse it would be to unfix the foundations of society." The last great migration of peoples in Europe was certainly terribly unjust. We can hope that it really was the last. But we should not encourage hopes that it will be reversed. If we want to do something about crimes against humanity there are quite enough going on at the moment where protest might even avert their course. □

THEATER

OKLAHOMA! Music by Richard Rodgers. Book and lyrics by Oscar Hammerstein. Directed by William Hammerstein.

A bright golden haze

STEPHEN HARVEY

AS IS CUSTOMARY WHEN a show business figure of rare stature dies, the passing of Richard Rodgers was marked by an array of solemn, respectful eulogies summing up his prodigal accomplishments during a six-decade-long career in the musical theater. Yet pragmatic man that, by all accounts, he was, Rodgers would doubtless have been most gratified by the tribute paid by all the anonymous theatergoers who have been patiently queuing up at the box office of the Palace Theater ever since the revival of *Oklahoma!* opened there in mid-December. It was almost preternaturally apt that precisely this show should have been chosen for resuscitation at such a moment; after all, following twenty years of enrapturing the elite with a series of shows written in collaboration with that urbane smarty Lorenz Hart, it was with *Oklahoma!* that Rodgers first joined forces with that cockeyed optimist Oscar Hammerstein in 1943, and thenceforth shared with Irving Berlin the rank of the nation's unofficial composer-laureate.

Under the circumstances (even while watching this carefully mounted production burst into life) it's hard right now to see *Oklahoma!* as an individual entity. On the night I caught up with it early in January, most of the audience seemed to be basking in a haze of retrospective gratitude from the moment they took their seats. Certainly, everyone involved with this *Oklahoma!* revival has done his painstaking best to make sure

he won't let all those memories down, and no wonder, considering the lineage of the craftsmen behind the scenes. The present director is William Hammerstein, son of Oscar, while Agnes De Mille's dances have been recreated by De Mille's long-time protégée, Gemze De Lappe, the dancing Laurey in the original London production; and the 1980 musical conductor, Jay Blackton, is the same man who lifted the baton at the show's première the first time around. In fact, any newcomer to Rodgers and Hammerstein in the audience who might somehow be expecting to see a newfangled, streamlined musical could find this determined fidelity something of a mixed blessing. Clocking in at nearly three hours, this revival contains every note of the original score, including two songs so obscure that they were omitted from the film version and have never been recorded before, not to mention every mossy gag propping up the subplot, whose value as comic relief now seems purely theoretical.

However, for musical comedy pedants like me, no other approach could have passed muster. If it's worth re-doing, then it might as well be done exactly as originally intended—after all, does the Met tamper with the boring bits in *Tannhäuser*? Yet while the show may be changeless, our perspective is not, and, ironically, for all the elements which seemed so fresh and daring when Curly first strode manfully on stage thirty-seven years ago, what really shines through *Oklahoma!* is its expert synthesis of the hallowed fundamentals of the Broadway musical which date back at least to the days of Jerome Kern's intimate Princess Theater musicals of the 1910s. *Oklahoma!*'s allegedly trailblazing properties were always a rather oversold commodity anyway: Rodgers and Hart's *Pal Joey* (with an assist from John O'Hara) peopled the stage with characters of considerably more complex dimensions than most of the folks you meet up with on Hammerstein's prairie, and its songs were no more or less integrated into the plot than are *Oklahoma!*'s. For that matter, way back in 1936, the earlier team's *On Your Toes* had as its centerpiece a full-fledged mini-ballet ("Slaughter on Tenth Avenue," choreographed by George Balanchine), with-

STEPHEN HARVEY is INQUIRY's film reviewer. He is coordinator of the film study program, Museum of Modern Art, New York City.