

REVIEW AND COMMENT

Walter Duranty's novel of the U.S.S.R.—*Catherine and Potemkin*—*Bourbonism and Anti-Semitism*

WITHIN the U.S.S.R. itself novels based on the revolution and civil war periods have appeared frequently. Some, like Ostrovski's *Making of a Hero*, have found their way to this country. Others are still waiting to be discovered by American publishers. But English or American novels on the Soviet Union are rare. In this country both Myra Page and Maurice Hindus have tried their hand at it. And now comes Walter Duranty, the best known of foreign correspondents in the Soviet Union, with *One Life, One Kopeck*,* which deals with certain aspects of Russian life, from the last days of the Romanovs to the early stages of the civil war.

Mr. Duranty has chosen as his hero a young peasant, as solid and earthbound as the soil from which he springs. At fifteen, Ivan acquires his first taste of the difference between himself and those in authority. The brothel to which his young master takes him is raided by the police. In an effort to save the young count, Ivan strikes a policeman. The affair is hushed up in deference to his master's social standing, but czarist justice must run its course, and Ivan is sentenced to penal servitude in Siberia.

There he learns his second lesson. Somewhere in the penal camp he finds a copy of a "terrible and wonderful book . . . a book to make common ordinary ignorant men think, and wonder why. A damnable, dangerous book, a devastating revolutionary book. . . . You read it again and again, and suddenly begin to see there is fire and flame in it, like Rabelais and the Bible, and you walk up and down and think about it and wonder—did Marx really know? And was he right? And if so, why are things like this? . . . Man's whole life on earth is a question, but Marx is a dangerous answer."

But if it is Marx who is to guide Ivan's thought, it is the stranger Druzak (the name can be roughly translated as friend) whom Ivan meets in the Siberian taiga, who puts him on the direct road to revolutionary action. Ivan now goes through a long period of training. First he must enlist as a soldier that he may learn the art of warfare in order to lead the workers in other battles to come. After he has mastered military technique, Ivan is sent to work in a munitions plant that he may learn the lot of the workers, share their problems, and speak a common language. The words of Marx rapidly become to him a living reality. And so Ivan becomes a Bolshevik, in close touch with the peasantry, the industrial proletariat, and the army, and capable of leading them all.

And then Ivan begins to apply what he has laboriously learned. The revolution has been declared, and on the heels of it follow civil

war and intervention. Ivan becomes a commander in the Red Army, an organizer of the battle-weary peasants who have returned to their farms, a teacher of the principles of collectivism. It is an active life, a life of building a better world.

But Mr. Duranty has done more than write a gripping tale that moves swiftly and surely to an inevitable climax. He has proved that he is more than a dispassionate observer of Soviet events. There can be no doubt that he has fully understood the steel and temper of the revolution, and finds in it a great message for the rest of humanity. And therein lies the significance of the book. For what Mr. Duranty has written cannot be judged by classroom standards of fiction. What emerges is, in essence, a political tract. His Ivan stands as the prototype of a Communist leader—and there are many thousands of Ivans in the Soviet Union. He has drawn heavily upon the archives of the history of the revolution for the background of the book, and he has presented his material in such a way as to leave no doubt in the reader's mind as to the author's evaluation of these world-shaking events.

DOROTHY A. HALPERN.

Great Catherine Again

CATHERINE AND POTEMKIN: AN IMPERIAL ROMANCE, by Jerome Dreifuss. Covici-Friede. \$3.

OBVIOUSLY Jerome Dreifuss had a grand time getting this story told, and there's no earthly reason why not. We all enjoy reading love letters like "My soul, my dear, my priceless one, my dove. I have a slight diarrhea, but otherwise I am well. Catherine." And it's fun to read about Russian nobles picking one another's pockets at state affairs; or how Catherine the Great used to put all her lovers through a test with a shrewish old lady-in-waiting called Protasov before taking them on herself; or how Potemkin took Catherine on a trip down the Dnieper to show her his accomplishments in the Crimea, and stage sets were all she saw—beautiful cities that were dismantled a few days later, houses that were just fronts, and dancers on the river banks who were kept one jump ahead

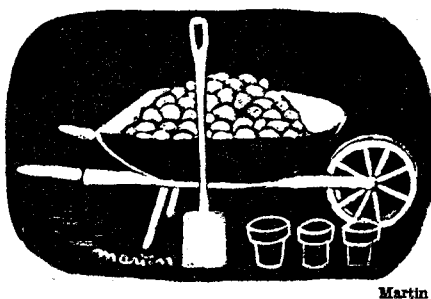
of the entourage so that the half-blind empress would think that the exquisite performers were just another group of happy subjects. We can read about the more humorous aspects of all the Gargantuan sham that was imperial Russia, and we can be amused by it. Perhaps we can even gloat a bit as we think of the end to which it all came.

Dreifuss based his book on the Catherine-Potemkin correspondence only recently discovered in the imperial archives and released by the U.S.S.R. The letters were bought by the United Press for newspaper circulation but were never used. The story, of course, was no secret. Even at the end of the eighteenth century everyone in Russia knew of the goings-on between Catherine the Great and the army officer who ran the country in her name.

Potemkin began his career when he entered Catherine's stable. He was one of the first among her thirteen or more official studs (not including the interlopers), and to him she gave more and listened more than to any of the rest. He was a power-mad hypochondriac who sat staring at a blank wall for days before going into action, whose personal mannerisms were obnoxious even to the rapacious band of cut-throats who infested St. Petersburg at the time. He was a huge, one-eyed egomaniac, just smart enough to beat his slow-witted contemporaries. He did not have the demagogue's hypnotic and spellbinding talents, but he was able to extend into the political and military fields the satisfaction he gave Catherine physically. The autocrat of all the Russias was an oversexed woman—the path to power was obvious. And so we have the "imperial romance."

Potemkin came to Catherine, made himself, by the sheer force of his vulgar being, the most satisfying, flattering, and attentive lover she ever had. In return he got palaces costing untold millions of rubles, important ministerial and military positions, revenge on his enemies, and even permission to wage a personal war against the Turks. His military exploits cost Russia over six hundred and fifty thousand men, and an untold number of rubles.

Now it seems to me that the only possible excuse for devoting an entire book to such an affair would be to cast some light on matters which it influenced, but only rarely does Dreifuss even attempt this. The reader feels that he has spent a great deal of time going through something that is interesting only in a parenthetical sense. These spicy anecdotes are fine, and the author has every right to have his little jokes about the aged empress and her nice young men, but he has ripped them from their rich context, has presented them offstage in the dull, narrow confines of the momentary *loci* when they would have had so much more meaning in the tremendous amphitheater in which they actually took place. The whole work is a historical "aside" which could and



Martin

* ONE LIFE, ONE KOPECK, by Walter Duranty. Simon & Schuster. \$2.50.



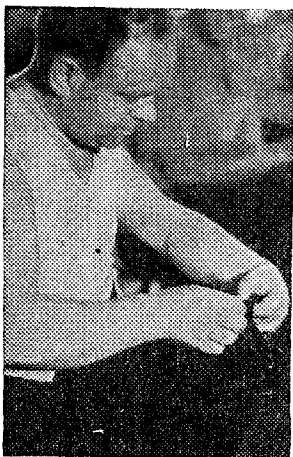
To be Better Dressed this Fall Better Test Howard Clothes

● At no time have we ever designed and developed clothes of such smartness . . . of such luxurious comfort . . . and of such outstanding value . . . as in the new Fall and Winter Clothes, which we present for your inspection and selection. We invite you to prove this to your own satisfaction. The new Howard styles will fascinate you . . . not merely in general line and design, but in the fit and finish of every Howard garment. And the price . . . that's important . . . remains the same . . . within reach of every man. Remember, too, we can fit men of every size and proportion up to 52 stout.

*You May
Charge It
the
Howard
Way!*

* This is a particularly good time to open a Howard perfected 10 Payment Account. It enables you to purchase your New Fall Clothes with a small outlay of money. You pay the one and only Howard cash price, plus a dollar service fee. It means buying your wardrobe with economy!

made by the highest skilled
UNION TAILORS



...right in the Howard giant daylight tailor plants. Here skill of the hand of the master craftsman supplements the accuracy of modern machines . . . to maintain the high Howard standard of precision workmanship . . . to assure quality . . . to give Howard customers the greatest clothes value that money can buy.

*Just One Price to Every Buyer
Howard's Price is Never Higher*

HOWARD SUITS
Topcoats, Tuxedos
and Full Dress . .

\$22⁵⁰
ALL ONE PRICE
NO CHARGE for ALTERATIONS

HOWARD
FOR GENTLEMEN OF GOOD TASTE
CLOTHES

NEW YORK CITY

801 BROADWAY . N.W. Cor. 11th St.
1268 BROADWAY . Bet. 32d & 33d Sts.
1635 BROADWAY Cor. 50th St.
145 E. 42nd ST. . Bet. Lex & 3d Aves.
500 SEVENTH AVE. . N.W. Cor. 37th St.
972 THIRD AVE. . N.W. Cor. 58th St.
149 E. 125th ST. . . Near Third Ave.
101 W. 125th ST. . . Near Lenox Ave.
2821 THIRD AVE. Near 148th St.
254 E. FORD M RD. . Nr. Valentine Ave.
17 CORTLANDT ST. . Bet. B'way & Church
100 DELANCEY ST. . N.E. Cor. Ludlow St.

BROOKLYN

75 FLATBUSH AVE. . 1 blk. fr. Atlantic Ave. Sub. Sta.
671 BROADWAY . . Cor. Man. Ave.
350 FULTON ST. . . Cor. Pearl St.
55-45 MYRTLE AV. . Cor. Putnam Ave. (Ridgewood, Qns.)
1558 PITKIN AVE. Bet. Herzl and Douglass Sts.
1772 PITKIN AVE. . Cor. Watkins St.
JAMAICA, L. I.
165-18 JAMAICA AVENUE
● All Stores Open Every Evening ●

Mail Orders . . . 160 Jay Street, Brooklyn, N. Y.

JERSEY CITY, N. J.,
320 Central Ave.
NEWARK, N. J. 82 Market St.
PHILADELPHIA, PA.,
1215 Market St.
1511 Chestnut St.
SYRACUSE, N. Y.,
352 So. Salina St.

BOSTON, MASS. 43 Tremont St.
605 Washington St.
WORCESTER, MASS. . . 104 Front St.
PROVIDENCE, R. I.,
200 Weybosset St.
PITTSBURGH, PA. . . . 233 Fifth Ave.
CHICAGO, ILL. 220 So. State St.

should have been incorporated into the central action.

Dreifuss probably had not the slightest intention of writing an outline of history of the late eighteenth-century Europe or even of Russia; he simply wanted to dramatize an amusing and important love affair. But I submit that presented this way the story of Catherine and Potemkin is, after all, no more important than any juicy marital embroglio the author might have picked at random.

RICHARD H. ROVERE.

Southerntown

CASTE AND CLASS IN A SOUTHERN TOWN,
by John Dollard. Yale University Press.
\$3.50.

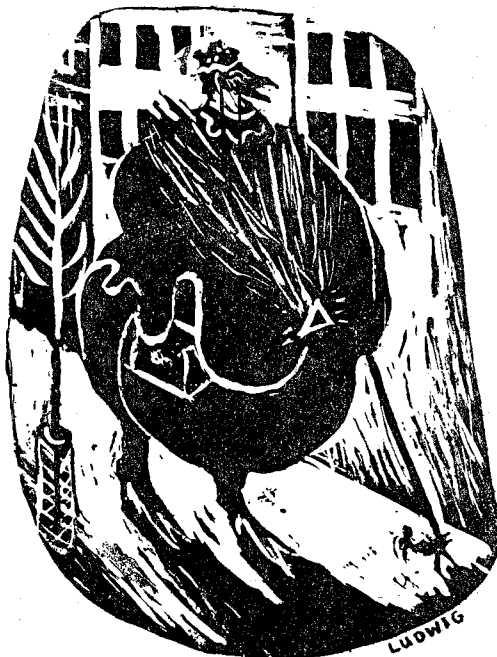
IMEDIATELY upon publication, this book drew murderous fire from the Southern Agrarians, whose avowed aim is to restore in the South, as nearly as possible, the conditions of the slave era. Writing in the current issue of the frankly pro-fascist *American Review*, one of these "neo-Confederates," Donald Davidson, denounces Dr. Dollard's work as "ominous, obscene, foul, fantastic, insulting, revolting, wicked, and defamatory."

Like the Lynds' *Middletown*, Dr. Dollard's *Southerntown* is not identified; it is an unnamed Black Belt city of seventy-five thousand people, 70 percent of whom are Negroes. Stepping from the train, Dr. Dollard noted at once that *Southerntown* is bisected by railroad tracks, on one side of which live the whites, while the Negroes are segregated on the other. In the course of his research, Dr. Dollard observed how racial bisection cuts sharply in two all phases of the city's life. The northerner of untainted democratic ideals will experience, through the pages of this book, much of the shock and pain of first contact with the South, will feel, vicariously at least, the stunning impact of unbridled and legalized Jim-Crowism.

Dr. Dollard's description of the present is frequently footnoted with references to the slave past. This typographical arrangement is in itself a shrewd—though unformulated—commentary. *Southerntown* today bears the stamp of history legibly upon it; nowhere else in America is the past so visible and so potent. Marx's observation, that "the legacy of the dead generations weighs like an Alp upon the brain of the living," has no more just application than to the modern South. Each of the discriminatory practices which Dr. Dollard records—every Jim-Crow barrier, every deliberate derogation—perpetuates some section of the slave code, some inviolable rule of the slave plantation.

Dr. Dollard is a thoughtful and conscientious researcher and a gifted writer, and he gives us many an unforgettable picture of Jim-Crowism in action, and much valuable—and readable—statistical material on land and home ownership, wages and standards of living, birth and death rates, infant mortality, education, civil rights, lynching.

The book has, however, three major defects. First, it measures all *Southerntown* with a



Helen Ludwig

Freudian yardstick. Accepting Freud's fundamental concept of an essentially unalterable human psychology, Dr. Dollard finds: that cruelty against the Negro people is rooted in childhood frustrations; that the white man's Oedipus complex gives rise to the cry of rape and the lynchings which follow; that "lower-class Negroes have a strong masochistic tendency and really do get positive satisfaction from being exploited." According to Dr. Dollard, further, the "furnish" system—whereby Negroes are bound as peons to the plantations—has produced in the croppers a father complex toward the white landlords. Here are his words: "... the Negro often sees 'the furnish' symbolically as a parental gift. . . . This parent-child symbol between the castes is one of the strongest barriers which a real economic democracy would have to face." Strange, then, that at Elaine, Ark., in 1919, and at Camp Hill and Reeltown, Ala., in 1931 and 1932, an uncounted number of Negro croppers should have given their lives in furious struggle against the "furnish" system—and this without benefit of prior psychoanalytic treatment! It is because of Dr. Dollard's Freudian bias that his scalpel, which dissects southern society cleanly, never cuts very deep.

Another imperfection is that Dr. Dollard apparently conceives of segregation as static and secure. Yet precisely the most important aspect of the Jim-Crow barrier today is that, for the first time since the Reconstruction period, it is under concerted fire. Dr. Dollard fails to mention even such a major engagement against Negro oppression as the Scottsboro battle. Now, it is essential to observe and record the present, and to explain that present in terms of the past; but it is equally vital to note the dynamic processes of flux and change whereby the present gives way to the future. It is possible that no such struggles have occurred in Dr. Dollard's chosen research site; in that case, however, *Southerntown* fails in some degree to typify the South today.

The third, and perhaps the most serious of the book's shortcomings, is that it is "impartial" to the point of moral suicide. When Dr. Dollard urges us not to "deplore" lynchings, but merely to "understand them," when he says of segregation that he is "not criticizing these customs, but rather attempting to see how they function," when he argues that "a strong feeling for the underdog is out of place in a researcher," he is dangerously close to a region of intellectual twilight in which all differences between social justice and social injustice, all distinctions between progress and reaction, become blurred and dim, and eventually disappear. That Dr. Dollard's polite and apologetic sparring with a deadly enemy has so enraged the Southern Agrarians proves only that these reactionaries will not admit their special mode of exploitation to be even open to remark.

Thus, in what is otherwise a penetrating chapter on "Defensive Beliefs of the White Caste"—the rationalizations which excuse Negro oppression—Dr. Dollard discusses the chauvinistic charge that Negroes have a disagreeable odor. Anyone who has devoted energy to the fight against Jim-Crowism knows how often this argument is a last line of defense for the entire segregation system; it is supposed to prove that, after all, there is an innate and inescapable difference between white and Negro. Dr. Dollard regrets that on this subject he dare express no opinion. And why? Because during his residence in the South he was afflicted with hay fever! And so this intensely dangerous slander may, for all of Dr. Dollard, continue in circulation until some other researcher, equally impartial but without hay fever, shall have studied *Southerntown* and presented conclusions buttressed, no doubt, by imposing tables of statistics.

In an early chapter, Dr. Dollard assures us that he is aware of his "abolitionist tradition," and is determined, in the interests of impartial research, to free himself of its influence. From impartiality of this stripe, one turns with greater respect to the passionate and hot-blooded partisanship of the abolitionist Garrison, who, in the first number of his *Liberator* more than a century ago, cried out that upon this Negro question no man should "wish to think, or speak, or write with moderation."

ELIZABETH LAWSON.

Anti-Semitism and Democracy

HOW TO COMBAT ANTI-SEMITISM IN AMERICA, A SYMPOSIUM. *Six Prize-Winning Essays in the Contest Conducted by "Opinion."* Jewish Opinion Publishing Corp. \$1.

In the whole of North America, where there are millionaires whose riches can hardly be expressed in our miserable marks, gulden, or francs, there is not a single Jew among these millionaires, and the Rothschilds are regular beggars compared with these Americans. And even here in England, Rothschild is a man of modest means compared, for instance, with the Duke of Westminster. . . . Added to this, anti-Semitism falsifies the whole position of affairs. It does not even know the Jews it howls down. Otherwise it would know that here in England, and