

**The World.** *With the world in crisis and Russia at the heart of it, a journey perilous through that country must not be taken lightly, as Louis Fischer indicates here in his review of Steinbeck's and Capa's "A Russian Journal."* . . . Out of the debate over Russia and the United Nations has come at least a widening belief in some form of world government as the only alternative to chaos. Crane Brinton's "From Many One" and Paul McGuire's "Experiment in World Order" represent a conservative, evolutionary view of the possibility of world government in the future. Although advocates of world government agree on the objective, they often differ on the means to be used. Contrasted with the position of Professor Brinton is the bolder stand of the World Federalist group, best represented in last year's "Peace or Anarchy" by Cord Meyer, Jr.

## Conducted USSR Tour

A RUSSIAN JOURNAL. By John Steinbeck. New York: The Viking Press. 1948. 220 pp. \$3.75.

Reviewed by LOUIS FISCHER

HAS ANYBODY the right to write a book? Is an author justified in turning out a book simply because he is sure his publisher will publish it? I am inclined to think that this volume should have been suppressed by Steinbeck. Or perhaps he should have surrendered all the excellent heavy paper to Capa's marvelous photographs (one would have liked three hundred instead of only seventy) and limited himself to a few lines of text for each picture. This book was conceived in cocktails and nurtured prenatally with a ghastly volume of vodka and wine and an indecent amount of food. I do not know what stimulated the actual writing but it certainly wasn't loyalty to the original intention of reporting on the "private life of the Russian people."

Under the influence of several green swisses served by Willy at the bar of the New Bedford hotel in New York, Steinbeck and Capa decided that too much had been printed about what the Soviet leaders were thinking and doing and too little about the "private life of the Russian people." "No one wrote about it," Steinbeck complained. Well, in all these 220 big pages there is not a single private conversation between the author and a plain, private Soviet citizen. On the rare occasions he went into a home it was always crowded with visitors who had come for a feast.

Of course, Steinbeck and Capa do not speak Russian so they had to talk through a Soviet government translator, and no Soviet citizen would speak freely in such circumstances. But the book contains no evidence that Steinbeck even tried, despite the

interpreter, to get a Soviet working-man or peasant or intellectual to express himself on the problems of private life in the Soviet Union. Most conversations recorded in the book were at public dinners or in groups and then the Russians all orated like *Pravda* editorials. So did officials and prominent authors he met individually. In cases where they spoke English, Steinbeck did not probe at all into matters like friendship, family relations between persons under a dictatorship, relations of persons to the dictatorship, relations of the artist to the state, freedom of speech, of movement, of conscience, etc. Usually they talked about the danger of war and then Steinbeck elicited nice Kremlin cliches.

Steinbeck writes that the American journalists resident in Moscow cannot travel outside the city without special permission, which is rarely if ever granted. Now some of these correspondents are consistently pro-Soviet. Did it occur to Steinbeck why he was allowed to travel through the country though they are not? They could, since they know Russian, establish direct contact with Russians and look into their hearts and minds and really study their private lives. Therefore, they are forbidden to move from Moscow or to maintain friendly contacts with Moscovites.

Steinbeck received permission to go about the country because the authorities knew he couldn't learn anything, surrounded as he was by translators, officials, and big-shot writers who knew what to tell him. This being the case, Steinbeck might have come back to New York and said, "I went to do a really important and revealing book, but I didn't get enough material, so I'll just write a few newspaper articles and pay back the publishers' advance, if any, from the royalties of my next novel."

"Surely it is superficial," Steinbeck admits in his last paragraph, "and how could it be otherwise?" Correct. "We know that this journal will not be satisfactory either to the ecclesiastical Left, nor to the *lumpen* Right. The first will say it is anti-Russian, and the second that it is pro-Russian." This statement reflects the grave error of many fellow-travellers who think that America is either Left or Right. As a matter of fact, neither the Communists nor the Fascists count for



—Capa photo from the book.

Stalingrad, a raving ruin—"... in groups the Russians all orated like *Pravda* editorials."

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much without dupes from the Center, which constitutes the political bulk of the nation. The Center in the United States has a healthy curiosity about the Russian people and, I think, a friendly attitude to it (but not to Stalin's dictatorship), and it would have been satisfied with something that was informative, that had facts, opinions, insights, interpretations. They are wanting in this book.

Steinbeck wished to be fair, and with the exception of very few lapses he is fair. My objection is not that the book is too pro-Russian or too anti-Russian. It just isn't Russian enough. I haven't taken the trouble to count the lines, but my guess is that more space is devoted to Steinbeck's intake of liquor and food and to his teasing of Capa than to any aspect of Soviet life. These personal angles highlight the great Steinbeck's "Russian Journal." I suspect that a Russian would be offended by the treatment his wonderful country received at the hands of this American celebrity. And the cynics who directed Steinbeck's tour will laugh. But they should cry. For this is the chaff Russia will get as long as those who could do better are denied access to the Soviet population.

Soviet citizens would be charmed to learn of Steinbeck's main conclusion: he discovered that people are people. **STEINBECK REVEALS RUSSIANS ARE HUMAN BEINGS.** That's the big story of the book. Terrific. But what goes on inside them he never attempted to ascertain.

"A Russian Journal" is not a portrait of the Russian people. It is merely a portrait of the American artist turned police reporter in a police state. The only thing added is the daily banquet.

**FRASER YOUNG'S  
LITERARY CRYPT: No. 256**

*A cryptogram is writing in cipher. Every letter is part of a code that remains constant throughout the puzzle. Answer No. 256 will be found in the next issue.*

GBK SPDWFCQ, RFK WBH PDT,

DL ZCDTQ. NPTQL CFLQWW

WBHQWW

*Answer to Literary Crypt No. 255*

*Knowledge of human nature is the beginning and end of political education.*

HENRY ADAMS.

## Sovereign Nation-States Transcended

EXPERIMENT IN WORLD ORDER.

By Paul McGuire. New York: William Morrow & Co. 1948. 412 pp. \$4.

FROM MANY ONE. By Crane Brinton. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. 1948. 126 pp. \$2.25.

Reviewed by JOHN A. KROUT

THESE volumes deserve a prominent place on the steadily lengthening shelf of books devoted to the problem of world government. Both authors are deeply concerned with the possibilities of political integration; and each approaches the subject with full appreciation of its difficulties—an appreciation derived from long study of the processes of history. When they present their ideas, however, the lines of similarity fade out.

Mr. McGuire is discursive and entertaining, rambling along many by-paths and then doubling back onto the main road at points which he has already passed. The reader often wishes that he had a map, so that he could determine just how the land lies and how far he has really progressed. In contrast, Mr. Brinton's argument is brief, incisive, and persuasive—so persuasive that the students at Pomona College, who heard him deliver the lectures which form the core of this book, must have been impressed by the manner as well as the matter of his discourse.

To Mr. McGuire, an Australian whose perception of the stakes of diplomacy was first sharpened in Southeast Asia and the Western Pacific, the United Nations is merely a "political gadget" with certain potential uses but with no prospects of ever unfolding into a world community. It is not an organic entity. Artificially created and mechanically operated, it has the unmistakable features of a piece of machinery. In sharp contrast stands the British System, slowly growing over the centuries into the British Commonwealth of Nations, the nearest that mankind has yet approached to world order. Its supranational character, resting upon an amazing variety of social groups and relationships, of religions and cultures, is the phenomenon which America should study; for it has clues to the type of social and economic unity that is now the one alternative to chaos.

Though Mr. McGuire discusses more than four centuries of British history with much wit and good sense, he offers few clues in that story which point the way toward the future. He does, however, have certain prescriptions which could probably have been written without a detailed examina-

tion of the evolution of the British System. We must, he believes, "shake off the notion that any State is in fact absolutely sovereign and independent." We must have a larger measure of cooperation between the British and American peoples, that they may work "for the growth of a great supranational economy and community." Such combined effort would require the creation of an "Open Society," with freer exchange of ideas, commodities, and people among all the world's communities. How this ideal is to be realized is not made clear. When Mr. McGuire is attacking the dragon of nationalism, he is clear-headed and precise; when he tries to state what will follow the death of that monster, he seems to be only hopeful and excited.

There is much of the laboratory method about Mr. Brinton's attempt "to set his own mind straight" on the perennial question of war or peace. Using the examples of the Roman Empire at its height and of medieval France moving toward national unity, he analyzes the process of political integration as a proper introduction to the problem of world government; and he is right in his insistence that the best method of promoting the cause of peace today is to study carefully "the ways in which governments able to keep peace within a given area

## Beyond the Mountains

By Edith Warner Johnson

SILENCE of the unmoving air—  
Silence of the brief, unwavering  
light—

Sunlight and moonlight in the valley,  
The strong, bold mountains a shield  
against the night.

Interlude of peace where no footstep  
falls,

Where no voice calls  
But the silence, silence as deep and  
wide as night.

Tremor beneath the feet  
Faint as a star shaken in its orbit,  
Tremor of the heart-beat.

When the assault breaks through the  
mountains,  
When the mountains fall,  
Where then will the treasure hide,  
Where will abide  
That ephemeral element for which  
mankind has died?

Where but in the spirit—  
The aura of its breath  
Ascending beyond the mountains,  
Beyond death.