

Lilge hardly touches upon these sociological factors. This results not only in a somewhat distorting truncation of the historical picture, but leads to what I consider a misjudgment of the present situation.

Mr. Lilge is very well aware of the extremely difficult situation which exists at present at the German universities, of the continued strength of traditionalism and nationalism. He states that academic life in Germany today is "a ghostly and unreal affair"; "the universities operate, it is true, but they cannot be said to educate in the sense that this hour of history demands." Despite such gloomy observations, he remains hopeful,

however, and his optimism is chiefly based on sensible and courageous statements of a few individual professors. If Mr. Lilge had taken sociological factors into account, he would have realized that such voices will remain voices crying in the wilderness as long as the social basis of the universities is unchanged. The impact of new ideas will remain limited and will evaporate because the exclusively middle class character of the universities has remained intact. To have remodeled the surface of education and not to have laid stronger and broader foundations, is one of the most tragic failures of our occupation policy in Germany.

Forces Hostile to Man

CAUSES OF CATASTROPHE. By L. Don Leet. New York: Whittlesey House. 1948. 232 pp. \$3.

Reviewed by GEORGE R. STEWART

AWARDED a publisher's prize, selected by two small but presumably discriminating book clubs, this volume is definitely pushed forward as an outstanding example of what our publishers and scientists can do at the essential work of presenting science to the intelligent public. High standards thus seem to be demanded of the reviewer; here should be a book to meet rigorous tests. Actually, however, although the book has many good qualities, I find it far from attaining any very high level.

First of all, the title misleadingly suggests that the book covers a great deal more than it really does. You will find here, for example, nothing about blizzards, tornadoes, droughts, or pestilences. To palliate this inaccuracy a descriptive qualification has been added on the title-page, although not on the spine, the half-title, or the copyright-page. We are thus somewhat inadequately told that the book is limited to four kinds of catastrophe, viz: earthquakes, volcanoes, tidal waves, and hurricanes.

Even as thus limited, however, the book shows illogicality and lack of proportion. Earthquakes, volcanoes, and tidal waves form a unified and often interrelated group. But hurricanes are atmospheric. And if hurricanes are admitted, how then can the other very closely related atmospheric causes of catastrophe be properly omitted? Moreover, the single chapter on hurricanes is so brief as to seem scarcely more than an afterthought, and nearly half of its space is devoted (the author is a resident of Massachusetts) to the two recent New England hurricanes.

Although I know nothing about the genesis of the book, I would guess that the author, a seismologist, first wrote an authoritative work upon his speciality, that is, earthquakes and their related phenomena. Later someone may have suggested that the book would have a wider appeal if it were slanted so as to take advantage of the natural human interest in catastrophe, broadened in scope a little, and presented under an all-inclusive title.

And here's another slug! Haven't scientific writers or their publishers ever heard of even the first of that school-boy trilogy—unity, coherence, and emphasis? This book, for instance, devotes six pages to explaining the international date line, and inserts pedantic instructions on how to pronounce Japanese place names.

The book then boils down to being an authoritative and moderately readable book on earthquakes, volcanoes, and tidal waves, especially as forces hostile to man, with an appendix on hurricanes. The author is seismologist in charge of the Harvard Seismograph Station. He considers both the past history of his subject and the most recent theories. He presents in vivid fashion some actual scenes of great catastrophes, such as that of the Japanese earthquake of September 1, 1923, and that of the destruction of St. Pierre by the eruption of Mt. Pelée on May 8, 1902.

To anyone wishing such a book, "Causes of Catastrophe" may be highly recommended. But the potential reader should not look forward to something wider in scope, or expect this volume to represent a fine flower of American scientific writing.

George R. Stewart, professor of English at the University of California, is author of "Storm," "Names on the Land," and "Fire."

19th-Century Thought

THE RUSSIAN IDEA. By Nicolas Berdyaev. New York: The Macmillan Co. 1948. 255 pp. \$2.75.

Reviewed by SIDNEY HARCARE

THIS is a serious work of potential merit, but its merits are obscured by a labored style and faulty construction. It is verbose and rambling; paragraphs, apparently organized on a free-association scheme, run on to eight pages. Understanding is made difficult not so much by the complexity of thought as by the opaqueness of expression. To be sure, Berdyaev has chosen an estimable theme, the reflection of the spirit of Russia in nineteenth-century thought. Intellectually the greatest of Russian ages, the nineteenth century has been neglected in the English language. Berdyaev has, however, missed the chance to fill the void.

His quest takes him to many of the great Russian figures of the nineteenth and early twentieth century: Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, Chernishevsky, Herzen, Belinsky, and Chaadaev. Their attitudes toward various facets of the Russian spirit, social justice, the problem of authority, the role of the individual, and the place of religion are considered. Throughout the analysis there appears the author's conception of the spirit of Russia. This spirit—or, as he puts it, "the thought of the Creator about Russia"—is religious rather than clerical, humanitarian rather than humanist, anthropocentric rather than property-centered. He points out that the Russian experience has, however, been discontinuous, with many a backslide and sideslip; but Russia will in time find its true path.

Contemporary Russia is, he believes, an expression of one facet of the Russian spirit, the striving for social justice. In time there will grow out of the present Russia a synthesis, the New Jerusalem, in which the good of Communist Russia will be found without the bad.

Berdyaev says of himself:

In many respects, some of them very serious, I have remained and I remain a lonely figure; I represent the extreme left in the Russian religious philosophy of the time of the Renaissance, but I have not lost and I do not wish to lose my links with the Orthodox Church.

His is a very exclusive club these days; his approach, that of a lay religious philosopher, influenced by Hegel, Nietzsche, and the Slavophiles, is rather precious not only for American thought but for non-Soviet Russian thinking as well.

Seeing Things

OUTSIDE GUNTHER

IN HOLLYWOOD it would cause no surprise. I mean the course followed by Arthur Schwartz in purchasing the title "Inside U.S.A."* and then producing a revue which has no more connection with John Gunther's book than the Mayflower Hotel in Washington has with the original *Mayflower*.

Unless they appear in the society columns, titles are not taken too seriously on the West Coast. Those belonging to books or plays can be dealt with lightly. They are paid for—through the nose. Then, if catchy in a Kinsey way, they are sometimes slapped on a brand-new plot. Or, if lacking that appeal, discarded, regardless of their cost or prestige, so that "The Admirable Crichton" bobs up as "Male and Female." Although Broadway may not be more literary, it is usually much more frugal.

No one can deny that "Inside U.S.A." is a good title. It is easy to pronounce and hard to forget. It defines its subject in short and snappy terms, and arouses its definite expectations. Even translators would not have difficulties with it. Certainly no Frenchman, if asked to turn it into his liquid and lovely language, could do to it what the Parisian adapter did to Colley Cibber's "Love's Last Shift" when he translated it as "La Dernière Chemise de l'Amour."

But, excellent as "Inside U.S.A." is as a title for Mr. Gunther's report, when borrowed for Mr. Schwartz's revue it is not without its disadvantages. At least it is not for the hundreds of thousands who have read, looked through, lifted, or heard about Mr. Gunther's book. At the New Century his volume must be forgotten entirely. That takes time. Not as much time, however, as getting rid of the theatrical hopes raised by such a title.

No one expected "Inside U.S.A." to be—God forbid!—a dramatization of Mr. Gunther's opus. Yet what I did expect, and what I'll bet Mr. Schwartz at the outset expected too, is that behind the footlights "Inside U.S.A." would be a tour of the country con-

ducted in terms of sharply satiric sketches.

It starts off as if it meant to be just that. But soon thereafter the journey upon which it embarks turns out to be so hit or miss an affair that not even a lecture manager would have booked it that way. Pittsburgh, Miami Beach, Churchill Downs, Chillicothe, Rhode Island, San Francisco, Massachusetts, Indiana, Wisconsin, New Orleans, Manhattan, Wyoming, Chicago, and Albuquerque are all on the itinerary. At any rate they are all there by name, though often only that. In general, any other resemblance between the place visited and the sketch in which it is mentioned is purely coincidental. That is, unless you are willing to concede Rhode Island's sole claim to fame is Estelle Loring to whom Jack Haley sings "Rhode Island Is Famous for You." Or that there is nothing funny about Massachusetts except the mermaids not to be found there.

To point out that "Inside U.S.A." is outside Gunther, and fails signally as a state-by-state, city-by-city satire of this country, is not to say that it does not hold its own rewards. As a revue—a straight revue—it is well above the average and has much to offer. Only an ingrate or a sufferer from acidosis of the esprit could deny that. It is glossy in its feel, professional in its touch, and, save for so dull a number as the one built around the Kentucky Derby, has that shiny, sateened look of Broadway in one of its more opulent moods. Although as written most of its sketches may not be inspired, as played some of them seem to be so. Why not? Like all true comedians, Beatrice Lillie and Jack Haley are magicians, too.

It is a little late in the day to say that Beatrice Lillie is a genius. Reiteration, however, can be as serviceable in the cause of truth as Goebbels knew it to be in the interest of lies. Among the underprivileged of the earth are those who have not seen her.

Every revue and every musical in which Miss Lillie appears always suffers from one fault. She must rest sometimes. She cannot appear in every number. And every number in which she does not appear is bound to seem either an interruption or a let-down, if not both. No comedienne has ever been trimmer or, in appearance at any rate, more immaculate than she



—Ed Carswell-Graphic House.

"In 'Inside U.S.A.' Beatrice Lillie and Jack Haley crowd the United States right off the map."

is. She is incapable of being disguised. No costume can deprive her of her style. Wearing an evening gown, or even when dressed as an Indian or a mermaid, she has the tailored look.

With one lifted finger or one raised eyebrow she can do more damage than a policeman with his nightstick. She fights dignity with its own weapons, and routs it. A Kelvinator could not be cooler; a fox terrier more alert. No caricaturist, bent over his drafting board, can mock pretentiousness with fewer or surer lines. The truth is that in her own person, so ladylike hence so incongruous, she is a perfect caricature come to life.

IN "Inside U.S.A." is Miss Lillie asked to do several things reminiscent of what she has done before? I find this a cause for rejoicing, not complaining. The adage may protest against too much of a good thing, but the proof of its wisdom is that it raises no objections to overexposure to the best. And Miss Lillie is the best; the undisputed, the matchless best, and the deftest of female zanies.

Miss Lillie gravely stomping time as a choral leader in "Peettsburgh;" Miss Lillie as a Chillicothe moviegoer who dreams that in old Vienna she is the inspiration of Chopin, Liszt, and Tchaikovsky; Miss Lillie perched high on a rock as a mermaid and describing herself as a "sea-cow named desire"; Miss Lillie spoofing the chorus boys as a queen of the Mardi Gras; Miss Lillie as a Hopi squaw refusing, with Big-Chief Haley, to take the United States back from the Americans; above all, Miss Lillie as a leading lady's gloomy maid, prophesying a flop on an opening night, in Moss Hart's hilarious "Just Off Broadway"

*INSIDE U.S.A., a new musical revue. Lyrics and music by Howard Dietz and Arthur Schwartz. Sketches by Arnold Auerbach, Moss Hart, and Arnold B. Horwitt. Dances staged by Helen Tamiris. Sketches directed by Robert H. Gordon. Production designed by Lemuel Ayers. Costumes by Eleanor Goldsmith and Castillo. Orchestrations by Robert Russell Bennett. Presented by Mr. Schwartz. With a cast including Beatrice Lillie, Jack Haley, Valerie Bettis, Herb Shriner, etc. At the New Century.