

History. He who will read the trio of first-rate volumes reviewed below is likely to find in them not only hours of instruction and entertainment about unfamiliar periods and places, but excellent examples of three different types of present-day historical writing. Karen Larsen's "History of Norway" is a factual, scrupulously objective account of six centuries of Scandinavian life and culture, organized along traditional lines and eminently reliable. It may well remain a standard reference work for years to come. Thomas Jefferson Wertenbaker's "Father Knickerbocker Rebels," an account of New York City during the American Revolution, is another work of careful scholarship, written deftly and sometimes brilliantly. In "The City and the Tsars," Harold Lamb writes with a novelist's pen, capturing all the color and drama of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Russia and its rulers.

A Scandinavian Riddle

A HISTORY OF NORWAY. By Karen Larsen. Princeton: Princeton University Press. 1948. 591 pp. \$6.

Reviewed by ERIK SJÖGREN

SINCE Queen Margaret ruled over Norway, Denmark, and Sweden in the fourteenth century, the three countries have never formed a union. That Scandinavia is not today politically united may be due in part to pressure from the outside, but in the past it was torn with internal struggle for centuries on end with Denmark and Sweden fighting for dominance.

Norway never took a real part in this strife; the reasons are an historical riddle, and thus Karen Larsen's new volume on Norwegian history has an intrinsic interest in its very subject matter. This proud country allowed its political fate and existence to depend first on Denmark and later on Sweden for the 500 years following 1380; its literature came to be written in Danish and its old culture was all but obliterated.

Yet, at an earlier time, Norwegian Vikings had been sailing the Atlantic as though it were their own home fjord, colonizing from the Faroes to Greenland, and giving rise meanwhile to one of the world's great literatures. In modern times, Ibsen is only one among a host of outstanding writers, and that the Norwegians' reputation of being outspokenly and militantly patriotic is not due to words alone was eloquently proved just recently.

Miss Larsen offers no direct and ready explanation of the paradoxical course of Norwegian history. Her aim seems instead to have been to set down the facts, offer the information, and allow her readers to make their own interpretations. For at least this reader no other fact among the presented evidence seems as formidable as that of the country's topography, described in the first chapter. The

Vikings were extraordinary seafarers, but when the time came when the supply of new land and easy prey was exhausted, they let their fleet deteriorate, and with it their glory. In the home country the population was scattered along an enormous coastline and up a few river valleys; if Norway were to be united as a nation its communities must be connected by land, but the mountains were too high and the Norwegians no road engineers like the Romans or the Incas. To resort to Toynbeeian terminology, their response to the challenge was at the time inadequate, and their country made subject to Danish rule.

The method Miss Larsen uses is strictly objective, and has presumably necessitated the traditional presentation in separate sections within each chapter of political history and socio-economic and artistic developments. Had the author chosen to integrate the material, the manner in

which it were done, whatever its kind, would have committed her to some form of interpretation. The apparent lifelessness of some of the historical figures, mentioned in abundance, is a less fortunate result of the objective method.

It has, however, given handsome results in the latter section, which deals with the very complicated circumstances of the declaration of independence in 1814, Denmark having suffered the fate of Napoleon's allies, the subsequent union with Sweden, and its peaceful dissolution in 1905. Because of the author's fairness in stating controversial issues one is ready to accept her claim that the Norwegians have achieved real political maturity in the short period of their new independence, in itself a remarkable feat, and one may remember as one example in its support the impeccable way in which Norwegian law dealt with the arch-traitor of the war, Vidkun Quisling, and which contrasted favorably with some other war-criminal trials.

Miss Larsen, herself a professor of history at Saint Olaf College, comes from a well-known Norwegian pioneer family, and the pride she takes in Norwegian achievements must reflect an attitude towards the "old country" common among many Norwegian-Americans; it gives her style a special and likable flavor.

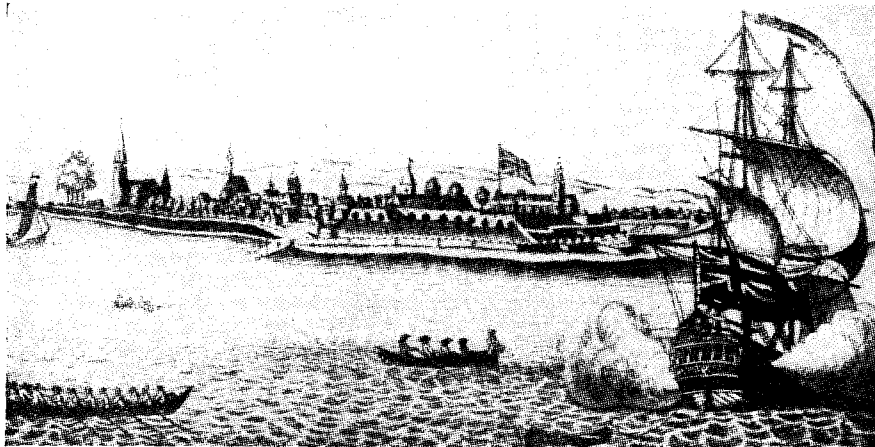
The American-Scandinavian Foundation has sponsored the publication of the handsome volume, first in a new series on the history and literature of the Scandinavian countries, and thus promises to continue its long and valuable service.

Erik Sjögren, who teaches English at New York University, came to the United States from Sweden in 1946. He is author of "Iron Gates."



W. Morganstjerne, Norwegian Ambassador to the U.S., Karen Larsen, and Henry Goddard Leach, president-emeritus, American-Scandinavian Foundation—"Miss Larsen offers no ready explanation."

Fratricide in the Port of New York



— From "Father Knickerbocker Rebels."

Southwest View of Fort George, 1778.

FATHER KNICKERBOCKER REBELS. By Thomas Jefferson Wertenbaker. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1948. 308 pp. \$4.50.

Reviewed by JOHN A. KROUT

HAD you been in the little port of New York on the afternoon of June 25, 1775, you might have joined the cheering throngs welcoming George Washington on his way to Cambridge to take command of the American Army. Later in the day you could have watched another crowd at the foot of Broad Street ready to receive Governor Tryon, whom the British ministry had just sent back to his post in the province. If you had been confused by such a sequence of events, your feelings would have been shared by many of the 30,000 New Yorkers who were trying to decide whether the Continental Congress or the representatives of the British Government deserved their loyalty and support. Sentiment was divided, as it was in many other sections of English America; and the irresolute and fearful were numerous. Little time was given them to make sure of their convictions, for their town soon became the center of conflict between the British and American forces. Its significant location, at the gateway to the Hudson-Lake Champlain route to Canada, could hardly escape even the novice in military strategy; while its spacious harbor afforded a tempting base for naval operations either to the north or south.

For a few months in 1776 New York was the military capital of America, its streets filled with "the marching of soldiers, the sound of drums, the rattle of munition carts." Life was exciting; but taverns and coffee-houses were made gloomy by stories of impending

invasion. Then came the Howe brothers, Sir William and Lord Richard. By September their British and Hessian troops, supported by a well-provisioned fleet, had driven the American forces from all of Manhattan Island and the neighboring countryside. The port of New York remained in British hands until war's close.

Professor Wertenbaker takes his stand among the residents of New York during these years of military occupation, when hatred and cruelty and corruption left disfiguring scars on a community already made miserable by fratricidal strife. His eye catches the ignoble and the heroic, the knave and the martyr, the fool and the wise man; and he understands them not as an historian looking back from the twentieth century, but as a chronicler living in the eighteenth century. His report reveals no more sympathy for the patriots than for the loyalists; yet its impartial tone is never dull. Theatre parties, gala dances, and boisterous celebrations are set against a background of suffering in the jails and on the prison ships, where dispirited, emaciated prisoners of war literally waited for death in durance vile. Corruption, cruelty, and inefficiency throw an ugly shadow over the entire record of the administration of civil and military affairs, so long as Sir Henry Clinton fills the position of General-in-Chief. The host of commissaries, deputy commissaries, barrack-masters, quartermasters, deputy quartermasters, probably were guilty of the frauds with which they were charged, but much of the evidence against them comes from disgruntled Tories who had been disappointed in their expectation of favors.

The time is now opportune, Mr. Wertenbaker remarks, for telling the story of loyalist New York, since many

documentary sources have recently been made available. The papers of Sir Guy Carleton, in the library of Colonial Williamsburg, the Minutes of the Associated Loyalists, the Gage Papers, and the Sir Henry Clinton Papers, in the Clements Library at the University of Michigan, furnish a fresh commentary on the way in which the military government tried to cope with high prices, hoarding, profiteering, and speculation. The rascality of illegal traders, the shrewd cunning of place-seekers, the stubborn officiousness of petty administrators, the distress of displaced persons are told with a wealth of illustrative detail. In the end, the pleas for the restitution of civil government provide the unifying theme. Mr. Wertenbaker makes the record entertaining as well as instructive; and he deserves high praise for his refusal to force an analogy between military occupation then and now.

Muscovy Complement

THE CITY AND THE TSAR. By Harold Lamb. New York: Doubleday & Co. 1948. 368 pp. \$4.50.

Reviewed by GARRETT MATTINGLY

IN "The March of Muscovy" Harold Lamb described how the petty trading post of Moscow ruled by tight-fisted princes who thrived as Tartar tax collectors grew to be the "Third Rome," seat of the Czars of All the Russias; while the Russian people pushed eastward until all the great Eurasian plain as far as the Pacific looked to Moscow as its capital. That unplanned march of the Muscovites was a response to the pull of the empty East. Meanwhile Moscow was subjected to another pull from the civilized West. It is the vaguely felt, imperfectly understood, but constantly stronger attraction of Western Europe as it acted on the Czars, and through them on the Russian ruling class, which is the chief subject of Lamb's present book. The central figure of the first book was Ivan the Terrible; in this one it is Peter the Great, and dynastic history of the Czars is continued from Alexis Romanoff (1645-1676) to the death of Elizabeth in 1761, but the real subject matter of both books is not the personalities of rulers but the major lines of force which have shaped Russian history. The books overlap chronologically and thematically; this one is a complement rather than a continuation of the first.

For color and drama and epic movement one can trust Harold Lamb. He has the story-teller's gift; he knows how to seize the vivid visual detail