

have here put on through the author's skill the immediacy and the vividness of human personality.

The facts are familiar; Miss Mitchell, in her retelling, has given them an additional emphasis and meaning. And through her story runs the theme of the tremendous moral issues involved, issues which, denied, distorted, overwhelmed as they have been at times, still have the final word—that if we would have liberty we must have charity; that it is through the denial of individual human dignity and moral freedom that men and nations fall.

As to the book's form, blank verse with lyrical interludes, I must confess that despite my admiration for its author's ability "Make New Banners" does not persuade me from my feeling that novels in verse labor under the almost unsurmountable difficulty of being neither one thing nor the other, of having neither the sturdy sandals of prose nor the wings of poetry. Only occasionally can such a book, as, notably, Stephen Vincent Benét's "John Brown's Body," combine the swift narrative pace of the novel with the emotional intensity of the lyric. Nevertheless, Miss Mitchell has done an admirable job.

—SARA HENDERSON HAY.

DISCIPLINED FANTASISTS: Elder Olson's "The Scarecrow Christ" (Noonday Press, \$3) cuts beneath surface sanctimony and soft responses; the author is not only acutely penetrating but painfully revealing. His is not an evenly balanced volume by any means. The first two sections are obviously early experiments—"Thing of Sorrow," a volume from which the poems in the first part are taken, appeared as early as 1934. But the third section is full of unusual concepts matched by appropriately powerful images. It is a highly personal idiom which Mr. Olson employs, alternately melodious, colloquially casual, and darkly menacing. Such poems as "The Mirror Men," "Childe Roland, Etc.," "Able, Baker, Charlie, et al.," "Ice-Age" and "The Four Black Bogmen" (one of the most calmly horrifying of modern ballads) combine the macabre and the melodramatic. "Plot Improbable, Character Unsympathetic" pushes the grotesque narrative to the pitch of madness. On the other hand "The Fountain," "The Midnight Meditation," and "Winter Nightfall," to name three of the most completely integrated, are grave, quiet, and moving documents. Elder Olson may not be one of the most important poets of the day, but he is one of the more disciplined and distinctive fantasists.

—LOUIS UNTERMAYER.

RUSSIA

A Nation's Essence in Blueprint

"The Moscow Kremlin," by Arthur Voyce (University of California Press. 147 pp. 111 plates. \$10), is an analysis of the history, architecture, and art treasures of a group of buildings that epitomize the spirit of Russia. Here it is reviewed by Sibyl Moholy-Nagy, of Pratt Institute architecture department.

By Sibyl Moholy-Nagy

"INSIDE Russia" books have become a standard fixture of the literary scene. We have been served the opinions of diplomats, journalists, paint manufacturers, and housewives. But no one, except Arthur Voyce, had the idea to do the obvious: examine the architectural evidence of Russia as an exposition of her past. In 1948 Professor Voyce published a history of Russian architecture which still is the best American source on the subject. Now, in "The Moscow Kremlin: Its History, Architecture, and Art Treasures," he puts under the magnifying glass of analytical study a group of buildings that "is to Russia what the Acropolis was to Athens and the Capitolinum to Rome." It was within an area of sixty-five and one-half acres on an island, formed by the rivers Moskva and Neglinnaia, that the Russian state was born in the middle of the sixteenth century, when Ivan the Terrible assumed the title of Czar of All Russians.

The history of Russia was written in three architectural chapters: the "wooden Kremlin," founded after the ancient southern capital of Kiev had been abandoned to the Mongols in the thirteenth century; the "Italian Kremlin" of the Renaissance; and the "modern Kremlin" started by Catherine the Great in the eighteenth century. The first period is identified with the crafty princes of Muscovy, who submitted to the external rule of the Tatar invaders while consolidating their internal power over adjoining principalities. In 1367 they built the first stone wall around the Kremlin, symbolizing and enforcing through it the new principle of centralized government. The only building from that early period still standing today is the Church of the Savior in the Forest from 1330, a small

frugal brick-and-stucco cube with primitive onion cupola and characteristically medieval fenestration.

The second or Italian period of the Kremlin starts with the death of Tamerlane in 1405 and the final expulsion of the Golden Horde. Ivan III embarked on a rampage of territorial acquisition, successful enough to allow him a marriage with the daughter of the last Byzantine Emperor. In 1474 he sent a mission to Venice to hire architects and engineers, and in 1478 the architect Fieravanti from Bologna built the Cathedral of the Assumption. The central dome, carried on four heavy piers, and the overall decoration of the interior, are typical Venetian Byzantine; the recessed arches of the single entrance and the external arched between pier buttresses are Lombard, and the undulating tent roof below five gilded onion cupolas are pure Orient. For fifty years walls with Scaliger battlements, towers with machicolated bastions and slender minaret spires, palaces—half Bramante and half Seraglio, part Pitti and part Fontainebleau—sprang up in the old Kremlin enclosure. Interiors were groined and ribbed over low piers, like Assisi, or barrel-vaulted and stiffened with iron tie rods like the Alhambra, and every inch of wall surface was covered with gold stucco and frescoes in barbaric splendor. When not in a sadistic delirium, Ivan

Lost Country

By Oliver Jenkins

IT IS always luminous summer there.
Light fills the streets. The cobbles gleam.
The days turn in a golden stream.

A scent of sweetgrass stripes the air.
A shower of song falls from a tree.
The sky's blue runs into the sea.

Morning glints from roof and gable.
Flowers and flags bloom everywhere.
And a band plays in a green square . . .

But it is only a retouched dream,
(Even though marked on map and timetable),

A faraway place in a private fable.

the Terrible contemplated marrying Elizabeth of England "to provide for himself an asylum in England if his dynasty fell," and introduced Western learning and literature. He also created a highly prolific center of Russian artisanship in the workshops for jewelry, armor, weaving, pottery, and furniture, established in the Oruzhnicia Palace.

FOR seventy-five years, while Peter the Great and his successors "opened a window to the West" in St. Petersburg and continued the territorial expansion, so successfully started by the Ivans, Moscow declined. Then Catherine II, shrewdly playing on Russian national sentiment to overcome her own handicap as a foreigner, revived the ancient glory of the Kremlin. She erected the severely classical Senate building with an imitation Pantheon dedicated to Russian heroes as central figures. The nineteenth century, true to form, added the fake Renaissance-fake Russian Grand Kremlin Palace, impressive only by its enormous size of more than half a million square feet and the vulgar lavishness of its materials.

This genesis of Kremlin buildings, presented in excellent illustrations and brief descriptions, would be no more than a brief discourse in Eclecticism, no different from what took place in Spain, Scandinavia, or Austria during the same centuries. The significance lies in the author's laconic report of historical facts that created these buildings. The most obvious one is the dictatorial and arbitrary character of the Moscovite Government from its very beginning. Ivan III, "the great gatherer of Russian land," was not only a ruthless destroyer of rival princedoms, he anticipated Henry VIII by declaring the Russian church independent of the Greek orthodox patriarch in 1446. After the fall of Constantinople the monks of Pskov Monastery were ordered to concoct an imperial genealogy, showing the descent of the Rurik dynasty from Caesar Augustus through his brother Prus, who was sent to the river Vistula to found a new Rome. Ivan the Terrible needed divine sanction for the regime of terror, instituted by the Oprichina, a secret government council. He summoned all painters of icons, or religious images, to the Kremlin where they underwent indoctrination in the propaganda uses of their art. The Iconostasis, or reredos, in the Uspenskii cathedral "illustrates two basic themes: Church and State. The religious theme stresses the idea of the Universal Church; while the State theme dwells on the importance of

the unification of all Russian states under Moscow."

A chronicler of the seventeenth century observes that in the famous illuminated manuscripts, produced in the monasteries, "Russian czars, princes, and patriarchs are painted in a somewhat stilted and dry manner, with sameness and lack of realism, as though the artist was afraid of his subject, fearful that he might offend and so incur the disfavor of the great personage by painting a human being" and Nicholas I, builder of the Grand Kremlin Palace, wanted to express in this vast project the official formula of "Orthodoxy, Authority, and Nationalism."

Adjoining the Kremlin lies the Red Square, justly incorporated in this volume as part of the Kremlin's history. It will come as a shock to linguistic symbolists that its name is based on a semantic peculiarity of the Russian language. The word "krasnoe" means the color red but also beautiful and goodly. On this square justice was dispensed by the czars; offenders were "hanged, broken on the wheel, impaled, beaten to death, buried alive, burnt in iron cages, or choked with molten lead." And here stand the two most characteristic monuments of ancient and modern Russia: the Church of St. Basil's and Lenin's tomb. St. Basil, built in 1555, was an attempt to abandon Byzantine-Italian influences and return to indigenous wood construction and decoration.

The Lenin Mausoleum, erected in 1930 by Shchusev, "is restraint in design, the general silhouette being suggestive of an ancient burial mound of a tribal chief." These are a few of the historical facts, presented by Voyce without commentary. The West, this history of the Kremlin seems to indicate, is fighting as a "new doctrine" a form of state dictatorship and territorial expansion as old as the wooden stockade buried under the circling wall of the Kremlin. The "world conspiracy," symbolized by the Red Square, the ancient fortress, and the new Mausoleum, emerges rather as its exact opposite; a tribal stratocracy, avid and able to absorb foreign values and to adulterate them for home consumption. "Architecture," it has been said long ago, "is the visual conscience of a people."

Within the Vortex

"The Russian Revolution," by N. N. Sukhanov (translated by Joel Carmichael. Oxford University Press. 668 pp. \$10), is the first English translation of an important account of the 1917 cataclysm by a man who played an important part in it. Our reviewer, Max Eastman, is the author of "Marx and Lenin, The Science of Revolution."

By Max Eastman

N. N. SUKHANOV'S "The Russian Revolution" is a fascinating and informing book which should have been translated into English long ago. I have read it, or large parts of it, three different times: once in Moscow in 1923-1924 when it was first published and I was learning Russian; again in the early Thirties in New York when I was making the film-history "Czar to Lenin"; and now once more in Joel Carmichael's just-published translation. The translation is superlatively good, and Mr. Carmichael has abridged, annotated, and introduced the book with expert judgment and understanding.

It is, by the way, an interesting refutation of those who try to believe that "things were just as bad" under Lenin and Trotsky as under Stalin that this book was selling freely and popularly when I left Russia in 1924. For Sukhanov calls Lenin a dictator and anarchist, scoffs at Trotsky's high-handedness, and describes Stalin as "a sort of gray blur, dimly looming up now and then and not leaving any trace." It never occurred to the author, or to anybody in those days, that remaining a gray blur might be an essential talent in one destined to drive through all plans, parleys, institutions, and ideologies toward personal power.

Sukhanov was a dominant influence in the Workers and Soldiers Soviet of Petrograd before Lenin, Trotsky, Martov, and the other big leaders arrived. "In that first period," says Trotsky, who quotes him frequently in his "History of the Russian Revolution," "the inspirer of the Executive Committee was not its president,

