

ments advanced by the authors in its favor unfortunately get in the way of what is actually the most compelling part of the book, the "rocket to the moon" of its title. Here the authors are on firmer ground, and they present an engrossing picture of what it takes to get to the moon, a good physical description of the moon itself, and an analysis of what exploration of the moon can mean from both the military and scientific standpoints. This part of the book is so good, in fact, that one is inclined to wish the authors had stuck to this subject and left the political diatribes to another occasion.

ALMOST two years ago, several months in advance of the launching of the first Sputnik, the Rand Corp., a nonprofit organization that does long-range research for the Air Force, issued its now-famous "Casebook on Soviet Astronautics," which accurately predicted Russian capability to put an artificial satellite into orbit in the very near future. Large portions of the Casebook are now available in "Behind the Sputniks" (Public Affairs Press, \$6). Edited by F. J. Krieger, one of the country's top authorities on Soviet space capability, and editor of the original Casebook, this volume offers, almost entirely in the words of Soviet scientists and engineers, a thoroughgoing analysis of such subjects as satellites, flight to the moon, interplanetary travel, nuclear-powered aircraft, and the technical problems of rocketry from the Russian point of view. It will intrigue any reader anxious to learn why the Russians may be ahead of us in the race for space.

"Soviet Space Science," by Ari Shternfeld (Basic Books, \$6), is a good companion volume for Carsbie Adams's "Space Flight," except that in this instance the author is a Russian, rather than an American. An excellent survey of the science of astronautics, covering much the same ground, it is of particular interest because it is written from the Russian point of view, and provides an inkling as to Soviet thinking in this area. Those hoping to find the true story of how the Russians managed to beat us into space, however, will find that the author carefully avoids any detailed accounts of Soviet progress and instead draws primarily on foreign (and particularly American) research and experiments in documenting this careful and lucidly written study. Translated by the Air Force Technical Documents Liaison Office, the book contains a foreword and epilogue by Willy Ley and a good collection of photographs and drawings, again drawn primarily from foreign sources.

PERSONALITIES

As Teen-ager She Toppled a Tsar

"The Memoirs of Princess Dashkov," translated and edited by Kyril Fitzlyon (Taplinger. 322 pp. \$6.50), acquaint us with a magnetic Russian who was an intimate of Catherine II and the target of attentions from Voltaire, Diderot, Rousseau, not to say Benjamin Franklin. Ivar Spector, of the Far Eastern and Russian Institute at the University of Washington, wrote "An Introduction to Russian History and Culture."

By Ivar Spector

THE HISTORY of "The Memoirs of Princess Dashkov" is almost as remarkable as the vicissitudes of their author during the reigns of Peter III, Catherine II, and Paul I of Russia. Written in her later years (1804-1806) entirely from memory, one copy was spirited out of Russia by a young Irish friend, Catherine Wilmot, a second was burned at the border by Martha Wilmot to escape detection and confiscation, and a third, incomplete version was eventually published as Volume 21 of the so-called "Vorontsov Archives." Originally written in French, the Memoirs are now published for the second time in English, this being the first complete and unexpurgated edition, minus the "doctoring" of Martha Wilmot, who persuaded the princess to write them, and who edited the first English edition in 1840.

Princess Catherine Dashkov (1743-1810), a member of the influential Vorontsov family, played a significant role in the *coup d'état* of June 28, 1762, which removed Peter III and placed his wife, as Catherine II, on the throne of Russia. The Memoirs provide one of the three most reliable, first-hand accounts of this episode which, rightly or wrongly, spread the fame of Princess Dashkov throughout Europe as the "woman of nineteen who changed the government of the Empire." Strictly speaking, they serve as a companion volume to "The Memoirs of Catherine the Great," which appeared recently in a new English edition, edited by Dominique Maroger.

The princess was an extraordinary person in her own right. She was a member of the Free Economic Society, Russia's foremost learned body, an ardent bibliophile, writer, and translator of passages from David Hume. The empress in 1783 appointed her director of the Academy of Sciences and the first president of the Russian Academy, an institution the princess herself recommended to Catherine II for the study of the Russian language. In this capacity she commissioned and helped to prepare the first Russian etymological dictionary. It is clear that she was in full sympathy with Catherine's prediction that Russian "would one day become the universal language."

Widowed at twenty, and preoccupied during much of her life with civic affairs, the princess nevertheless traveled widely in Western Europe, with

Blue Boy on Skates (Twilight)

By M. L. Rosenthal

LITTLE circle
big circle
here comes a little animal on tiny wheels

the metal on the stone
does the singing

Look at the ghost girls whispering on the stoops

I spin and spin
until I feel them stare
and then I whirr away through the summer air

the metal does the ringing
on the stone

They think I live on bees and poison ivy.

a purpose in view—the education of her son, who received a master's degree from the University of Edinburgh before he was seventeen. Because of her magnetic personality, her well-known intimacy with Catherine II, or a combination of both, she was the center of attraction wherever she went. Everyone of consequence, it seemed, including Voltaire, Diderot, Rousseau, David Garrick, and the redoubtable Horace Walpole wanted to meet her. Benjamin Franklin arranged her membership in the celebrated Philosophic Society of Philadelphia. The Memoirs, therefore, constitute a veritable "Who's Who" of the élite of European society and culture in the latter part of the eighteenth century. No ordinary tourist, her observations were penetrating and forthright.

In spite of her exposure to the ideas of the French Encyclopedists, there was a strain of Slavophilism in Princess Dashkov. This found expression in her attacks on the Westernizing policy of Peter the Great, whom she regarded as "great" in the West, but not in Russia. "Foreign writers," she contended, "out of ignorance or disregard of truth, have proclaimed him the creator of a great empire, which in fact had played a more important role before his time than during his reign."

Among her contributions, Princess Dashkov has provided a graphic record, not merely of court intrigues, but of court etiquette and Russian customs, as well as of the ritual and observances of the Russian Orthodox Church in the latter part of the eighteenth century. The Memoirs likewise depict the catastrophic fall from favor of Catherine's entourage, including the princess herself, with the accession of Paul I.

Although Princess Dashkov made a practice of commenting on the events of her time, at home and abroad, it is significant that the Memoirs include no reference whatsoever to the Pugachev Revolt (1773-1775), which brought her idol, Catherine the Great, to the verge of abdication. Her own aversion to any threat to the existing political and social order was evinced by her defense of serfdom to Diderot and her hostility toward her brother's protégé, Alexander Radishchev, who sounded a "tocsin to revolution."

To enable the average reader to find his way out of the maze of unfamiliar names and complex family relationships, in which these entertaining Memoirs abound, the editor has provided a useful Index and Biographical Table of References, as well as two genealogical tables of the Vorontsov and Dashkov families, and a biographical sketch of the inimitable princess herself.

New Light Shed on a Dark Genius

"The Curse of the Misbegotten: A Tale of the House of O'Neill," by Croswell Bowen, with the assistance of Shane O'Neill (McGraw-Hill. 384 pp. \$5), illuminates the scars that continued to pain the celebrated playwright. SR's critic, Joseph Wood Krutch, edited "Nine Plays by Eugene O'Neill" and wrote, among other books, "Representative American Dramas" and "The American Drama Since 1918." For several years he was drama critic of The Nation.

By Joseph Wood Krutch

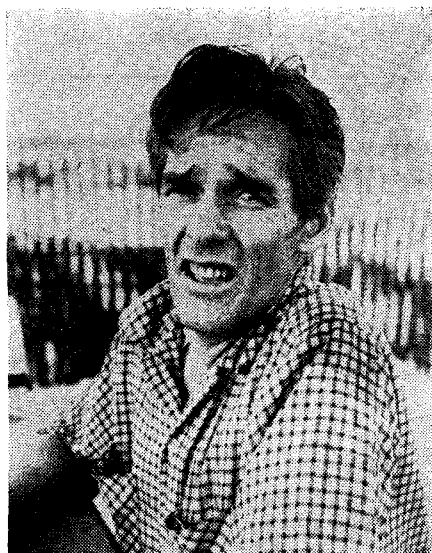
THE FIRST (and most important) thing to be said about this work is that it contains far more precisely detailed biographical facts about O'Neill than have ever been made public before. Its author is a former reporter, who had long admired the playwright barely this side of idolatry and the book is essentially a reporter's book—painstakingly put together from material gathered by many interviews with many different persons, as well as from whatever documentary sources were available.

That his informants sometimes contradicted one another is no more than is to be expected, and it may be confidently assumed that in the many books about O'Neill still to come there will be sharp, probably acrimonious,

disagreements. Though Mr. Bowen himself seems admirably objective, many of his informants were not. Moreover, O'Neill led so many successive lives that his story is bound to be told repeatedly from the point of view of different circles of intimates. But that does not change the fact that here is a great deal of primary material gathered just in the nick of time and now securely part of the record.

If the title of this work seems as melodramatic as the play title it echoes, both have the same justification since the history of the playwright's family is hardly less tragically violent than the dramas he wrote. His father was irresponsible, his mother became a drug addict, and his brother died a hopeless alcoholic. At the age of twenty-nine O'Neill himself—though already married, divorced, and a father—was still living on an allowance of one dollar a day from his own father. Two more marriages and two more children (both of whom he saw rarely) were still to come. His second son, Eugene, Jr., committed suicide; his eldest—though still living—is, according to Mr. Bowen, wrecked in health after a wild youth as an alcoholic and drug addict. Only the daughter, Oona, seems to lead a normal life, despite the marriage of which her father violently disapproved.

That the playwright himself was, among so many other things, long adolescently romantic is obvious enough. Years after he had "settled down" he continued to romanticize the lower depths he had for years inhabited, and he persistently exhibited the romantic escapist's delusion, which is that now, at last, the thing long sought has been found: the new wife is the woman whom he will love forever, the new residence (and he had many) the place where he will live contentedly for the rest of his life. But what was the deeper cause of this, as well as of the deep agony out of which the plays themselves were written? Conventionally enough but perhaps truly also, Mr. Bowen (who first met O'Neill in 1946) finds the answer in the sense of insecurity and of "not belonging" created by the unhappy atmosphere in which he grew up. And if that is the true explanation then it applies *a fortiori* to the tragedy of his two sons; for if O'Neill had a bad father it must be



—From the book jacket.

Shane O'Neill—Their "curse" a many-chaptered case history of broken homes.