

Her History Unwraps the Riddle

***"Russia at the Dawn of the Modern Age,"* by George Vernadsky** (Yale University Press. 347 pp. \$7.50), and ***"Soviet Conduct in World Affairs,"* compiled by Alexander Dallin** (Columbia University Press. 318 pp. \$4.50), find in the past clues to the complexities of the Kremlin. *New York Times* reporter Harrison E. Salisbury is the author of the soon-to-be-published *"Moscow—And Beyond."*

By Harrison E. Salisbury

ONE OF the most satisfying pleasures to be found in Russian history is the constant illumination which it sheds upon the Russian present. Too often in this hasty age we are inclined to leap to the conclusion that history in Russia began on November 7, 1917, and that since that day the great land of the Slavs has become a nation made new, a state transformed, a society of men of a new order.

But, obviously, this is nonsense—a product in part of Communist propaganda and in part of our own ignorance. The moment one begins to read a careful, scholarly history of Russia, such as the great work which Professor Vernadsky has in progress, the superficiality of so many of our current concepts about Russia becomes apparent.

"Russia at the Dawn of the Modern Age" is Volume IV of the major re-examination of Russian history which Professor Vernadsky has undertaken. It deals for the most part with the foundation for the creation of the modern Russian state which was laid by the predecessors of Ivan the Terrible, Ivan III, and Vasili III.

This is the period in which Russia was shaking off and confirming her independence of the terrible Mongols. It coincides with the Renaissance and Reformation in Western Europe, and these cataclysmic events had rather greater repercussions in Russia than most of us are aware of.

And, of course, there are echoes aplenty of methods of rule and psychology of government which have persisted in the Russian state down to the present day. The tactic, for instance, of the removal and transfer of popula-

tions, so widely used by Stalin was a familiar device in the Muscovite state nearly 400 years earlier.

When Stalin took over the Baltic states on the eve of World War II he removed thousands of residents to Siberia and replaced them with Russians. When the Moscow state overwhelmed Novgorod late in the fifteenth century, Ivan III deported more than 9,000 Novgorod residents to the East and sent in an equal number of Moscow boyars to take their place. His successor, Vasili III, did the same thing when he took over Pskov a few years later. In all, 6,500 Pskov households were displaced and Muscovites were put in their stead.

The replacement of possibly disloyal populations with reliable citizens is not a procedure unique to ancient Muscovy

or twentieth-century Soviet Russia. But it is one of the countless strands of traditional conduct and behavior which give to Russia its national style.

As Professor Samuel L. Sharp points out in one of the many cogent articles incorporated by Professor Dallin in his anthology on Soviet conduct, the West has become so preoccupied in recent years with tedious study of the Marxian dialectic that we have almost overlooked a whole body of knowledge which gives us a much clearer understanding of Kremlin policy.

"Baffled by the Soviet phenomenon," writes Professor Sharp, "millions in the Western world have found a negative consolation of sorts in the famous statement by Winston Churchill that Russian policy is 'a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma.' But how many have bothered to read the qualifying words which followed? Having disclaimed ability to forecast Soviet actions, Churchill adds: 'But perhaps there is a key. That key is Russian national interest.'"

It is Professor Sharp's thesis that much more light will be cast upon
(Continued on page 38)



Your Literary I. Q.

Conducted by John T. Winterich

POETICAL PUPS

Many a dog has been celebrated in verse. Robert A. Charles of Missoula, Montana, asks you to name the major British poets who kenneled the dogs in the following quotations—and the poems too. Answers on page 39.

1. Sir Leoline, the Baron rich,
Hath a toothless mastiff bitch.
2. Of smale houndes hadde she that she fedde
With rosted flessch or milk and wastelbred.
3. "Oh it is I, my mistress dear,
Your little dog, who still lives near."
4. A spaniel, Beau, that fares like you,
Well-fed, and at his ease.
5. Cry "Havoc," and let slip the dogs of war.
6. The wakeful bloodhound rose, and shook his hide,
But his sagacious eye an inmate owns.
7. I am His Highness' dog at Kew;
Pray tell me, sir, whose dog are you?
8. The dachshund, Geist, their little friend.
9. The tither was a ploughman's collie,
A rhyming, ranting, raving billie,
Wha for his friend an' comrade had him,
And in his freaks had Luath ca'd him.
10. Now the Peke, although people may say what they please,
Is no British Dog, but a Heathen Chinese.

BOOK OF THE WEEK

High Noon for Human Courage

"The Big It," by A. B. Guthrie, Jr. (Houghton Mifflin. 177 pp. \$3.50), is a collection of stories which recreate the life of the American West. William Eastlake is a New Mexican rancher besides being the author of the novel *"The Bronc People."*

By William Eastlake

ONE OF the finest collections of short stories in recent years is A. B. Guthrie, Jr.'s *"The Big It."* This excellent book is not an assortment of "Western" stories, as the publishers have implied, for Guthrie is no more a "Western" writer than Melville was an Eastern writer or Hemingway a Spanish writer. True, the West provides the locale, but what a difference between these tales and those of Zane Grey and the host of TV scriptwriters! Guthrie's stories illustrate that good writing is universal, transcending the limitations of a particular place.

The stories can be divided into two groups: those of courage, physical and moral, and those of fierce humor. "Old Mother Hubbard," "First Principal," "Bargain," "Mountain Medicine," and "Last Snake" all display aspects of human courage. In them Guthrie presents the sensitive man, kind, understanding, tolerant, confronted by the raw shock of brutality. But Guthrie's men are not made of straw; he makes his brutality convincing; his people are familiar, men we have known, those who love war and the spurt of blood. Maniacs? Guthrie doesn't think so. They are our neighbors, peppered all over the earth.

But Guthrie's gentle characters are closer to us. Innocent, almost naive, yet they are allowed by the author to cope, to survive, even to triumph. It takes an artist like Guthrie to depict them realistically. Very few writers will consider naked good and evil; they prefer to explore the shadings and shadows because they have been taken in by the cliché that good and evil do not exist in stark form. But Guthrie sees in black and white clarity. In his stories he tells where and how good and evil are to be found.

Many men of good will in this world come to the point where they are

faced with evil in human form, when they cannot hide behind their stacks of books, their do-good philosophy, or their religion. They are out on a limb, all alone with nothing except courage, moral courage most times—and this is the highest form. Yet, in these stories when the situation calls for physical courage, the last resort of the desperate man, Guthrie artfully depicts characters equal to the occasion.

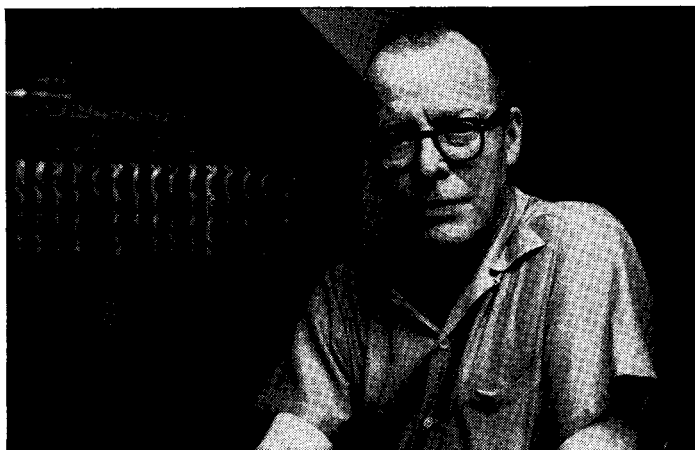
In contrast, we have the wild humor of Guthrie's other stories: "The Keeper of the Key," "The Moon Dance Skunk," "The Therefore Hog," and "The Big

It." The first tale is the author at his best: here he depicts the destruction of life's rigid pattern. The basis of his humor is the triumph of the irrational, the illogical, the whimsical, whether the protagonist is a man, as in "The Keeper of the Key," or an animal, as in "The Big It." Guthrie uses a scalpel but the emotional impact he achieves is that of a sledge hammer, yet his humor is akin to Mark Twain's.

It is a sad commentary on our time that some of the finest stories in this book were rejected by our magazines. One of them, "Ebbie," was relegated to *Southwestern Review*, an excellent publication of limited circulation. To quote Guthrie: "I suffered over some of these and found small, if any, market for them."

However, it is not too late. Read this valuable book.

(Fiction Reviews continued on page 32)



The Author Comments on the Review

IT'S TRUE that many of the stories in "The Big It" never found a market in magazines. Granted the possibility that they just weren't good enough, it still remains that the sun of the article stands at high noon. Write a how-to or a how-come piece, an article on "I Made Love to a Gorilla" or "The Lesson of a Drippy Nose" and you've got the editor's attention. This trail, blazed by the *Reader's Digest*, is thick with followers. The result: scant space for fiction.

In following the course of these stories from one magazine to another some revealing editorial comments came my way. A "quality" magazine rejected "Ebbie," saying that the magazine's formula would not provide space both for it and the two happy stories essential to a balanced mood. Another editor wrote that the hero of "Bargain" could not be a poisoner, no matter what the provocation. Presumably a six-shooter would have met the moral standard. One story, which had been banging around for eight or nine years, found a taker only after I had sent in the collection for publication as a book. The story was the same but I had changed the title from "Prize Fight" to "Independence Day." The new title seemed to me to illuminate the text more fully. The editors, who had seen the piece before, obviously agreed.

Are editors just guessing, or don't people read short stories? Have we lost, as readers, the imagination that fiction calls upon us to exercise? One group thinks we haven't, thinks editors are wrong. They plan to re-establish the old *Story* magazine. The outcome will be interesting and may well ring a change.

—A. B. GUTHRIE.