

Rex of a Precarious Nation

"Uneasy Lies the Head: The Autobiography of His Majesty King Hussein I of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan" (Bernard Geis, 306 pp. \$4.95), tells of the intrigues, attempted assassinations, and elbow grease that comprise the lot of the Middle Eastern monarch. Chief of the Washington Bureau of The Christian Science Monitor, William H. Stringer has traveled in Egypt, Israel, and what is now Jordan.

By WILLIAM H. STRINGER

FEW MONARCHS survive today without hard work. While Prince Souvanna Phouma can sally to Paris during his Laotian government's formative hours and while Prince Rainier runs a casino and a tax haven for corporations at Monaco, the Shah of Iran and King Hussein of Jordan have had to fight, and labor mightily, for the dubious privilege of managing precarious nations.

Hussein observed a basic lesson early, traveling with his not over-rich family to Lausanne. He writes in his autobiography: "I had seen enough of Europe, even at seventeen, to know that its playgrounds were filled with ex-kings, some of whom had lost their thrones because they did not understand the duties of a monarch." For him, kingship at eighteen meant facing vicious Arab intrigue almost at once, even assassination attempts. He was ruling a hardly-viable kingdom wedged between a hated Israel and a scheming Nasser.

Although sometimes disjointed history, the self-told story of this bantam ruler, this veritable Frank Merriwell, is a fast-moving narration, pithy with direct comment on President Nasser and faithless prime ministers, breathless with narrow escapes from poisoned sinus drops (of all things!) and palace bombings, warm with admiration for his stalwart grandfather (who was assassinated at his side), and romantic with a final chapter about a satisfying marriage to an English girl.

By all accounts, and not merely his own, King Hussein is a brave young man, possessing that courage of youth that doesn't count the dangers. Talk



—Wide World.

Hussein—"Go-Kart" races on Fridays.

about Richard Nixon and his "Six Crises"! When Hussein's chief of staff and army leaders conspired against him, he rode into the midst of a troop *melée* in Zerqa—and was acclaimed and embraced by troops who admired such a show of bravery. He overnight discharged Glubb Pasha, world-known builder of the Arab Legion (for refusing to advance Arab officers), though London's Ambassador twice routed him out of bed to protest this affront to British pride. He sent Nasser's attachés and ministers packing when they intrigued for his downfall. He survived a surprise attack by Syrian MIG fighters which sought to harry his slow-flying private plane into the ground.

King Hussein does not overstate his case by very much. One wishes, however, for more of his personal views on the emerging American influence in the Middle East, and for a larger account of his reliance on the Bedouins of his nation and his army, who for a time seemed his only reliable friends.

Jordan emerged from World War II with little sense of entity or nationalism. The war with Israel, which brought in new territory and a horde of Palestinian refugees, hardly pro-

duced a united kingdom. Hussein's proudest claim, no doubt, is that he represented new hope for Jordan, contributed to its growing nationalism and pride, and made plans for building a modern nation.

The United States currently is assisting Jordan by some \$37 million annually in economic assistance and direct payments into the Jordanian budget and by another \$20 million in development assistance and PL 480 foodstuffs. It is good to note that King Hussein is vigorously pro-West, in speech at the United Nations, in friendship to Washington, and in loud pronouncement against the neutralism of Egypt. Britain nowadays supplies only \$7 million or \$8 million annually, together with some Arab Legion pension funds, to its former protégé.

Hussein, however, learned to admire the British at Harrow and it was on the playing fields of Harrow and Sandhurst, if not Eton, that Jordan's youthful king found a sportsmanship and discipline which later served him well.

The State Department regards Hussein as a strong personality in the Arab world, a youngster who has grown up in the school of hard knocks. He himself has urged the Arab League to find sounder leadership, and the far-spreading "Arab nation" to combine "the best of its past and the best it can absorb from modern civilization." His declared enmity is against Communism and Zionism. He would be less able to play both sides of the street than is President Nasser—to accept aid from both Moscow and the West—because his small kingdom offers less opportunity for mischief to the Kremlin strategists.

Nasser's neutralist and expansionist aims are less of a menace to Jordan, now that Syria has at least temporarily swung away from Cairo's orbit, although Nasser still has popularity as an anti-colonial hero in some sections of Jordan. As for Israel, although Jordan adopts the standard Arab line, it has a very long frontier with the Zionists and an unusual record for border tranquillity. Hussein shows no sign, as did his grandfather, of being willing to face the reality of Israel; no ruler of a precarious Arab state would dare do this. But he wryly writes that when Jordan suffered an oil famine due to Syrian hostility, its fuel ultimately was flown in from Lebanon, over Israeli territory with Israel's permission.

Today, Jordan, bolstered by Washington, seems destined to last awhile. King Hussein, proud to have a son sometimes cooking his own breakfasts, indulging in "Go-Kart" races on Fridays, working steadily at Jordanian development programs, professes a new sense of contentment.

Groomed by Komsomol for Cosmos

"I Am Eagle!," by Gherman Titov, based on interviews in Russian with Wilfred Burchett and Anthony Purdy (Bobbs-Merrill. 212 pp. \$4.95), and **"Gherman Titov: First Man to Spend a Day in Space," as told to Pavel Barashev and Yuri Dokuchayev** (Crosscurrents. 111 pp. 50¢), tell how a scared boy in the Russian backwoods was transformed into an intrepid, Party-line Cosmonaut. John Newbauer is the editor of *Astronautics*.

By JOHN NEWBAUER

GHERMAN TITOV, the first man to spend a day in space, a man who can expect an entry in the encyclopedias, has let the public-relations corps carry his hat, for these two books tell his story in the wonder words of official journalese. With both the game oecomes: What is the truth? The books do not recommend themselves to you and me, but to the Sherlocks of the technical press, who will want to ponder their minor mysteries, e.g., whether Titov's spacecraft carried a heat shield of "steel," as the man says, or whether Titov used a word difficult to translate and it came out "steel," or whether the people supplying the

"background data" wanted to play games with intelligence experts poking around for tidbits of technically significant information and thus put in "steel."

These books, with their fake first-person narratives, will make a reader sensitive to style nervous. For example, in "I Am Eagle" we see Titov, who is a gymnast, viewing his Vostok spacecraft for the first time:

The Chief Constructor stopped so suddenly by the machine that I almost stumbled over him. He waved an arm proudly. "There she is, Titov—ready and waiting."

It is straight out of Buck Rogers. In "Gherman Titov: First Man to Spend a Day in Space" Titov reflects a moment just before he takes off in his Vostok:

The Komsomol did a great deal for me, giving some "correctives" for my over-expansive character—and did it for my own good.

Well, it is not really all that bad, on all the pages. If you cannot guess how a talented peasant born of good people in the Russian backwoods, just before Hitler marched into Austria, became a Pilot Cosmonaut and you do not know roughly what goes into the preparation for a space flight, you can get some of each from either of these books, at the perils mentioned.

Titov as a boy sleeps on a shelf, above his parent's bed, close to the roof in a cramped one-room cabin. He is a boy scared by a vision of a huge dark figure emerging from the forest during a winter storm, a figure that vanishes when his father leads him by the hand outside to look at it. He is a boy who all but freezes himself to death through sheer determination not to let go of a pack of precious food for his family in another storm. He becomes a lone, disciplined man.

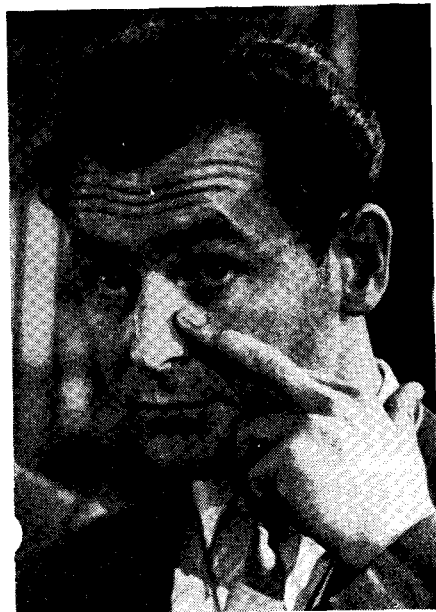
As an air cadet he does well, and lives a monastic life of brotherhood as leader and follower. Eventually, at an airmen's dance, he meets a woman who attracts him at once, but he does not recognize Tamara as anyone he knows, although his fellows kid him about her. She turns out to be the mess cook in his barracks, and he soon marries her.

Selected as a candidate Cosmonaut, Titov plunges into a new and strenuous regimen, but keeps the nature of his activity from his wife. Then, accepted for training, he prepares her "for my new line of work." Against her misgivings, he commits himself fully to the Russian space program. During the course of two years or so of his preparations, Tamara loses two children through mysterious defects. Both he and his wife undergo deep depressions.

Asked by a journalist what makes him so anxious to fly in the cosmos, Titov answers, "I suppose, because I love everything on earth so truly and deeply." He is the first man to experience sleep in orbit. Describing his flight, he pointedly remarks that he did not dream. As he says, in another context, "In our country feats are the very substance of life." Dreams apparently do not come through. Titov finally receives his "greatest honor," membership in the Party.

Such experienced but unplumbed psychological melodrama could go a long way to making space flight everything the funny papers envision.

In "Gherman Titov" the Cosmonaut tells us, "Publicity in the form to which the West is accustomed is foreign to us." I would say to Titov that these books, which bear his name, represent a too-familiar domestic phenomenon for us—in the lives of prize fighters, movie stars, and minor politicians. Men will not forget Cosmonaut Titov, but they will forget these books.



—Wide World.

Gherman Titov—"he did not dream."

FRASER YOUNG'S

LITERARY CRYPT NO. 990

A cryptogram is writing in cipher. Every letter is part of a code that remains constant throughout the puzzle. Answer No. 990 will be found in the next issue.

SCFEQFSNHL MDIH EB CHDN
ABCQH HKQHSJ RMHE BEH
FL RHNN AHG.

O. JRDFE.

Answer to Literary Crypt No. 989

All power corrupts; absolute power corrupts absolutely.

—LORD ACTON.