

part, not from analysis of the organizational framework or policy, but through portrayal of the impact of the system upon the round of daily life. This approach leaves some gaps, but they are bridged by Mr. Schwartz's own series of short, connective articles. At the same time, the approach makes for vivid writing; it enables the reader to acquire a more immediate sense of Soviet life than would a formal description of political and social organization. Some of the articles are not only excellent summaries but cover topics unfamiliar even to many specialists on the Soviet system. This is especially the case with Eugene Rabinowitch's "Soviet Science—A Survey" and Cecil Parrott's "The Soviet Concert Hall."

It is not surprising that essays by such a diverse group of writers contain some contradictory implications. For example, William O. Douglas presents a penetrating demolition of the myth that the Communists are "nine feet tall," but writes that "Russian travelers on official business almost always speak the local language." In "Soviet Schools: Myths and Fallacies," on the other hand, Zeno B. Katterle describes how "the director of Leningrad's School 153 . . . assured us that after taking it for five years the students *could not speak English*." My experience certainly leads me to agree with Mr. Katterle rather than with the Justice. A few years ago on a plane from Kiev to Vienna I met a prominent Soviet electrical engineer going to a Middle Eastern country to supervise installation of an electric power grid. He tried to practice his few words of English with me, but soon recognized that it was more sensible to fall back on Russian. I asked him whether he spoke Arabic or French, the second language of the country where he was to work. "Oh, no," he said, "we have interpreters."

A more important difference is that between psychologist Urie Bronfenbrenner, who writes, "I was surprised by the strength and pervasiveness of what appeared to be genuine pride and faith in their system," and David Burg (a former Soviet university student), who believes that 40 per cent of his classmates held consciously dissenting views while half were apolitical. According to Burg, "for the young intelligentsia, Khrushchev is one of those people to whom Stalin offered one of half-a-million jobs—a residue from the previous era. He really doesn't communicate to the intellectuals, I think, except for the endless jokes about him—obscene and

otherwise." On such an intricate subject as intellectuals' attitudes, however, it is just as well to have varied opinions.

"The Many Faces of Communism" cannot settle all questions about the USSR, but it stimulates the reader to keep on looking for the answers.

## Atavistic Shadows

**"The Taproot of Soviet Society," by Nicholas Vakar** (Harper, 181 pp. \$4.75), *finds the clue to modern Russian behavior not in Marxism but in the enduring peasant culture. Sidney Heitman, assistant professor of history at Colorado State University, is a contributor to the recently published symposium "Revisionism: Essays in the History of Marxist Ideas."*

By SIDNEY HEITMAN

**T**HIS latest quest for the wellsprings of Soviet behavior belongs to the "new wine in old bottles" school of thought. Its aim is to show that Soviet Communism owes far less to Marxism or Leninism than it does to the ancient and resilient peasant culture of old Russia, which not only survived the Bolshevik Revolution, but ultimately engulfed it, relegating its original Marxian ideals largely to external forms and ritual symbols.

The Soviet system, he holds, was shaped not by one, but by two revolutions under the Communists. The first, in 1917, was genuinely Marxian in content, but it inevitably foundered in a predominantly peasant country that had changed little since the Ivans and that had successfully resisted determined efforts in the past to uproot an ageless way of life. The Bolsheviks were swallowed up "like a bottle of red ink trying to stain the sea." Beginning in the late 1920s, a second revolution led by Stalin supplanted the idealists in the Party with a new ruling class recruited from the villages, who proceeded to forge the new order in the timeless mold of rural life.

Ostensibly in the name of Communism, great cities were built, the land was tamed, and modern "culture" was introduced. But the methods that were employed to remake society were traditionally Russian. "The new Soviet man, who . . . rose to command a great nation was new only in his occupation of palaces; he was ancient in breed and custom." "The Russian peasant who first acquiesced in the Bolshevik Revolution and then took it over was . . . a cultural survival, in part from the Middle Ages, in part from a primi-

tivism not much changed since the dawn of human society." Centuries of brutalizing struggle against the tyranny of nature and man had produced a correspondingly brutal and tyrannical human type. Once in power, he gave lip-service to Marx as easily as he had formerly to God; but he infused the new system with the crude cultural values and patterns of human relationships bred in the primeval village and "made over Soviet politics in his own primitive image." For all the external changes and their official Marxian rationalizations, "when the Stalinist revolution was complete . . . a kind of seventeenth-century Muscovite society was re-established in Russia—in rather more thoroughgoing and stable form than it had existed four hundred years before." Thus many of the distinctive Soviet characteristics that have baffled other observers, who vainly seek their origins in the teachings of Marx, Lenin, or even Stalin, become logical and clear once their roots are properly traced back to the native soil of peasant Russia.

This is, of course, an oversimplification of the author's thesis, which he ably develops and illustrates with considerable evidence. Still, it is a safe prediction that this book will generate as much controversy as it aims to resolve. To those who agree that something as elusive as "national character" can be meaningfully defined, and who regard it as an independent variable of history, it will illuminate many heretofore dark corners of the Soviet mind. Others, however, will undoubtedly question these implicit premises, as well as some of Vakar's sweeping generalizations regarding both old and new Russia and his use of psychological projective techniques to explain the one in terms of the other.

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# In and Out of This World

By ALICE DALGLIESH

**I**N THIS new Space Age our young people, sitting before the little stage of television, journey outside the earth with the first astronauts. They see history happen. Until recently the subject has been confined by schools to a somewhat straight line—the known to the unknown—and in neat compartments. Now interest in it may well start, at a fairly early age, with, “How did the world begin?”—or with questions about the universe. Blind children, so I read in an article by Edith Asbury in the *New York Times*, are having the solar system explained to them by touch, the sun and the planets being raised discs, their orbits thin wires. As one little blind girl exclaimed, “Mother! There’s so much going on outside the world!”

And so much *in* the world! What questions will come with satellite television? Children will continue to be interested in their immediate environment, but will we still be able to devote a whole book to a single small situation or concept? There must be room for looking back into time, at other countries, and forward into space. Our problem will be to answer the questions that arise. This means reading and observation for parents, for teachers, for all who live or work with children. How, otherwise, can we deal with their questions?

Young people will take care of a good deal of this themselves. They read, they look and listen, and they think. It interests me that some children still in the elementary grades read reviews in these pages. I have had letters from a group of sixth-graders in Colorado, one of which states: “All of the reviews we have read of children’s books have been by adults, so we are trying to write reviews of our own for other children. In doing this we have noticed that everyone had a different opinion of the book we’re reviewing.” A valuable point to discover! Also a girl in Rochester, N.Y., writing from her home, not from school, disagrees with last month’s review of “A Wrinkle in Time,” by Madeleine L’Engle. (The letter was sent to William Lipkind, who wrote last month’s essay, but the review was mine, the separation of the two parts of the review pages being accidentally omitted.) The letter follows:

My name is Hillel Karp. I am in the sixth grade and I think I know a good book when I read one.

I am referring to your review of “A Wrinkle in Time.” You say in it, “It will be interesting to know what young people think of it.” So following is what I think of it.

It’s something different from other science fiction books. Here is a combination of science fiction and fantasy. I think the fantasy is wonderful! All in all I think it is a tremendous book. You seemed undecided about it. I hope this will change your opinion.

In reply, I would repeat that it is a most interesting book. Other reviewers and I have wondered if young people, especially science fiction fans, would accept the combination of space fiction and fantasy, allegory, mysticism. Some of us may have lost our way in the various meanings, while you, Hillel, follow the line of fantasy and enjoy it thoroughly from that angle. You haven’t changed my opinion, but I am glad to know that young people read it with enjoyment—which I did, but not without questions.

**G**OING back to history, there is no doubt that we shall have to rethink many situations. With the world seen early in its entirety, will schools be able to give a whole year’s study to state histories, as some do? One state at least has two state histories (grades four and seven). Two years’ work based on a state viewpoint? With all the world waiting?

While history, with historical fiction, is one of the strongest categories in trade books, individual books may be weak. Younger children have suffered, in many books, from the reconstructed childhoods that were never lived, absurd dialogue that never was spoken, and equally absurd simplifications which are half-truths or less. I read somewhere that “half-truths are ‘necessary’ for children.” Are they?

Here is a quotation from a historical narrative of the United States which

has had a long life and is in many ways a useful book for children. When George Washington was appointed commander of the Continental Army “he stood up. ‘I will do my best to drive the Redcoats out,’ he said.” This is a tremendous simplification, also a distortion in that Washington mentioned no specific enemy, only the cause for which the country was making its stand. It would have been better to paraphrase entirely if his speech was difficult. Quotation marks should be used with the respect due them both in historical narrative and historical fiction.

**H**ERE’S an actual evasion of truth: In some trade and text books, Ferdinand, second son of Columbus and his biographer, is never mentioned. Why? So that the book will not be omitted from school reading on the grounds that Ferdinand was illegitimate? Genevieve Foster, whose “World” books have presented a wide view of history for almost twenty-five years, is at present at work on “The World of Columbus and Sons,” in which Ferdinand has his rightful place, as he already has in Samuel Eliot Morison’s books about Columbus.

At times the number of pages is the villain. A skilful writer can, however, present truth even in short space. William Shirer did a good job in “The Rise and Fall of Hitler” (Random House). This book is an eyewitness narrative that will be read as an “original source” for some years to come, as will his adult book “The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich.”

Some adults, I have found, are a little nervous about “equating for young people” the facts given by Shirer in his historical accounts with the supposition that they might have to fight for Germany. Young people also read newspapers, and adults are not the keepers of a collective teen-age conscience.

Good historical fact or fiction can have a remarkably long life. Looking through any of the standard library lists, one notices this high rate of survival. Hendrik Willem van Loon’s “Story of Mankind” is forty-two years old. The originality of approach that won it recognition keeps its place on lists, even though its author is not here to revise it.

However, because of the number of books published now, their lifetime is likely to be shorter. More than ever, books must have originality and clarity of presentation to endure. They must keep up with the speed of present-day events and technology. Historical fiction, to live, must have universal appeal, which stems from characterization and a skilful use of universal situations, based on universal emotion.

