

Life in the Soviets Is Presented in Group of Plays

SEVEN SOVIET PLAYS  
With introductions by H. W. L. Dana. (Macmillan; \$4.)

It seems appropriate that this collection of plays was called "Seven Soviet Plays" and not "Seven Russian Plays." They are all of recent composition and all except two are about the recent war. Taking those circumstances into account, it is easy to understand their violent characteristic propaganda. However, none of them is apt to be included in the great last body of Russian literature. The six which deal with the present are entirely concerned with extolling the present regime and they do it to the detriment of dramatic art. The one, a blank verse play on the life of Field Marshal Kutuzov, is pretty much in the class of cabinet drama. It is one of those things in which the people on the stage get reports of action which has taken place elsewhere.

The best one of the group is Leonid Leonov's "The Orchards of Polovchansk"—a play of the inter-war years. It is larded with the usual exaltation of the government but its characters have depth and are not just stereotypes. The action concerns the life of a government official. Seven sons, all beamingly working for the state, are due to come home. They either tell of their joyous lives or allow others to tell their felicity for them. A counter theme comes up in the form of a lover of the mother who, in the past, was not a good patriot. He turns up and serves for a while as a butt of jests, then is disposed of by the waiting police. To the non-Russian reader it is pretty naive, and Leonov's gift of imparting character in spite of propagandizing is hard-worked throughout it.

Four about the war. The other plays are so much alike that, even immediately after reading them, I found myself running them mentally together. They are all about the war and are highly melodramatic. In one, the employees of a collective farm burn the precious wheat to help the Germans, though the manager's wife is killed in carrying out the deed. In another, the peasants refuse the German offer of security in return for submitting to the old landlord, who appears as a German officer. The wife of the chairman of the Executive Committee is bayoneted for upholding this resistance. In a third, the engineer of a great power dam blows up the dam to save it from the Germans. He and his assistant are blown up with it. In a fourth, the defenders of a beleaguered town hold on in the face of overwhelming odds until, against hope, they are relieved. The mother of the commander is hanged and his sweetheart is beaten by the Germans for refusing to give information. In all the plays the lively melodramatic action is halted frequently to allow the characters to make orations. We have had the same kind of drama in war times ourselves, but we also have a word that we apply to it. We call it ham.

As a note by the editor of the volume says, these words have been enthusiastically received. It is improbable that the Russian critics use a comparable term in describing them. Marshal Kutuzov.

The play on the life of Marshal Kutuzov, by Vladimir Solovoy, was written in 1939. It puts into the marshal's mouth an approbation of the attitude toward fascism which then prevailed in the Soviet Union. Having been reported in the Soviet soldier warns the czar against further embroilment in Europe's war against the tyrant. It is not for Russians, he says, to spill their blood defending Britain. In other words, Mr. Solovoy tells us that the marshal was an isolated hero.

The other play, "The Front," by Alexander Korneichuk, is aimed purely at the point that the recent war could not be offered by the former heroes of the party—the old "civil war" generals. It gives us such a general and shows him making a sorry mess of things because he does not understand mechanized fighting. He is presently replaced by a younger man who comes in with the customary oration. Of interest to American readers may be the reference to his own conduct in the war in this play. One character says that he has been in America. "Was it lousy?" asks the other. The first responds that he was sent to work in the Ford plant and goes on for several lines about the slave conditions obtaining there. He ends with no relation to the story and is presumably the author's free contribution to the "better understanding" which is so strongly urged between the nations.

As I said, it is easy to understand the production of chauvinistic drama in time of war, but it is a mistake, however, to rate these plays as serious literature.

Parachute to Berlin

By Lowell Bennett. (The Vanguard Press; \$2.50.)

Reviewed by ROBERT BRUSKIN.

The author of this work, a war correspondent, parachuted from a wrecked bomber over Germany early in the war. He was captured, tried to escape three times, was sentenced to death as a spy, but wound up in a prisoner-of-war camp after an unparalleled opportunity to witness the effects of area bombing on civilians.

Excellent writing. It is one of the few books affirming the view of wartime Germany and its citizens before the Allies landed on the continent. Mr. Bennett claims that the area, bombing of German cities hardened morale of civilians and was a needless waste.

Merchant Ships, 1944

Compiled, drawn and edited by E. Talbot Booth, R. D. R. N. V. R. (Macmillan; \$19.)

This new edition of the standard reference work on the world's merchant fleets carries its usual mine of information. It offers all available details on boats recently built and sunk, surveys the merchant fleets of all countries and gives 1,520 line drawings of funnels for recognition. In addition, there are 900 photographs and 2,400 line drawings of ships and 840 drawings of house flags. The work is, in short, an encyclopedia on its subject. Its public will know its worth.

This One Will Keep You On the Edge Of Your Chair

THE PAVILION  
By Hilda Lawrence. (Simon & Schuster; \$2.)

One of the penalties of being a professional reviewer is that you seldom get to read anything for fun. The famous "relaxing with a good love story or whodunit" is simply not for you. There stands, on your table, the latest three-volume biography of a forgotten hero of the Mexican War, and it is the book of the day and you must do it. When you are through, you will not relax with anything printed. You will call your dog and go for a long tramp in the woods, wondering why your parents thought literacy was such a hardship.

But, at this time of year, three-volume biographies are usually somewhat scarce on the market, as are also interpretations of the history of philosophy in the 17th century and reports on the economics of the Irish famine. Making hay while the sun shone, I consequently took me home a thriller.

I report that I had a good time with "The Pavilion." I don't know, of course, how the habitual reader of thrillers will respond to its creepiness, but a comparative novice at such tales, I crept. Not as I have crept at certain classics, at "The Masque of the Red Death," say, or "The Upper Berth" or H. G. Wells' immortal "The Red Room," which scared me to death, though I read it outdoors on a sunny summer afternoon with the neighbors playing croquet just across the hedge. But still I crept. Even so, I am proud to report, I guessed the criminal. The old criminal sense was not completely anesthetized, though rendered groggy.

"The Pavilion" is one of those things where an innocent young woman comes into a gloomy old house full of sinister characters and marked by a tendency toward violent fatal accidents. In this case, the young woman has been summoned by a strangely worded letter from the master of the house, her elderly aunt. He does not say so, but, believe it or not, he implies that something dirty is afoot. He needs her. She comes—and lo, he is already dead. Soft-footed, padding relatives with fat white faces fill up the place. They regale the young woman with accounts of how two other young women came to sudden death from living around there. But she is all full of zeal to solve the mystery and so she stays. And solves it, too. Only I solved it first, as I said above. Precisely on page 177, I knew which of the paddy relatives it was. My tribute to Hilda Lawrence lies entirely in the circumstance that, in spite of this, I still read on. I wanted to know. In short, I was interested. I didn't relax with her good book; I took it on the edge of my chair. So, if that be praise, I praise it.

Lost Continent?

By Noel F. Busch. (Harper; \$2.50.)

Reviewed by RENA LEVANDER.

Noel F. Busch styles his third book "an informal Baedeker to the modern badlands." It is based on a rapid survey of Yugoslavia, Germany, Austria, Luxembourg, Belgium, the Netherlands, France and the United Kingdom in the summer of 1945.

Mr. Busch, an editor on Life magazine, writes in a breezy, often flippant, self-confident style. He definitely has the Reader's Digest approach, as outlined recently by the New Yorker magazine. He has lively descriptive powers when he sticks to the straight and factual; rather than spoil a good story, however, if he doesn't have the facts, he traffics in half truths or partially qualified statements prefaced by: "According to the rumor mentioned above, what truly occurred was..." It is said, in purpose or otherwise, and so on. Unfortunately, he has a predilection for gossiping about personalities, and slips easily into a digressive, rambling technique. Of course, if it tickles you to know that Ambassador Francis Biddle gave a party before Warsaw, which required "flights of cargo planes bringing tulips from Holland, roses from France and fish eggs from their submarine refrigerators," or that the American Ambassador to Italy, Alexander Kirk, actively dislikes cut flowers, but on the other hand, he does sneak away from a party by ducking gradually under a grand piano near the door.

Mr. Busch suffers from acute oversimplification and is given to making rather glaring generalizations: "Under normal conditions, a foreign well-organized country, a foreign correspondent who wants to find out what makes the wheels go around can do so in a perfectly correct manner. He merely asks the people who know and they gladly tell him."

Finally, Mr. Busch defines civilization as a matter of communication, considers Russia and the atom among factors to be reckoned with, and concludes that the primary necessity in helping this lost continent of Europe is complete freedom of information.

Mr. Bellah has chosen to follow the Purple Heart for a comrade who has been hurt in noncombat duty and is depressed by his inglorious status. But except for these casual spontaneous expressions of fellowship the soldiers are shown as living pretty much in the bitter present. Their talk balances between sarcastic comment and witless good humor, all heavily colored with sex. Three of them, in the day which

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Papa Went to Congress

By Kenneth Horan. (Doubleday; Doran; \$2.)

Kenneth Horan's father, James Ingham, was elected by the Republican party in Michigan to serve in Congress in the first administration of President Cleveland. He brought his family to Washington for his term and domiciled them in the house of Capt. Bob Evans, next door to the British Embassy. Representative Ingham was concerned with getting rural free delivery for the farmers. Mrs. Ingham was concerned about getting into Washington social life. The Congressman failed in his object, the lady succeeded in hers. The present little book is the daughter's attempt to bring to life the quaint doings of the Washington of the period, both on the Hill and in the saloons. It is based not on actual memoirs, as Mrs. Horan explains in a foreword, she was not born until a decade later, but is drawn from a book of "Impressions" which Mrs. Ingham kept to the end that she might report her Washington experiences to the Ladies' Culture Club when she went back home to Michigan.

As far as I am concerned the work is as flat as failure as the Congressman's effort to get R.F.D. It is obviously meant to be in the Clarence Day vein but it stops with the intention. It is so effortlessly quaint that it smothers itself. Local readers whose memories run a far back may, however, be amused by some of the references.

Then Mrs. Hunter got an idea in the bathtub. Why not establish an institute of arts and letters somewhere in the country? It was patriotic because they'd grow food; it was philanthropic because they'd entertain refugees. If there were profits they'd go to the Red Cross. And, above all, it would put them on the map intellectually in Boston. That was Mrs. Appleyard's heroine of Louise Andrews Kent's previous books, who found them in the place in the tiny Vermont village of Roland Hill, where they surrounded themselves with cellists, violinists, painters, writers, teachers and refugees, including the beautiful but neglected Lady Finchfallow, and a French cook, Therese.

Many readers will find the book an absorbing, light story. Others will probably feel that Mrs. Kent sometimes tries too hard to be amusing and that many of her characters are rather sketchily drawn.

The paper stringency made it necessary to condense every report, to print entries in double columns and to employ many abbreviations. Nevertheless, although details are omitted, information is increased.

An eight-page review of "Four Years of Art" covering the period from July, 1941, to June, 1945, may seem a trifle strange. But the editor's objective has always been to keep the annual complete in its documentary role. Any one wanting a succinct picture of the progress of art in the United States for nearly half a century, could get it by reading the introductory reviews in all the volumes.

Prices of paintings sold at auction during four seasons in three New York auctions occupy 70 pages and several extensive indexes increase the book's value.

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Shortly after his first book came out he went to Switzerland to live and stayed there 10 years. A picture of his Swiss home by the lake stands beside the deepest chair, but he will not live there again for soon he will be an American citizen. He will return to a Swiss house with a swimming pool. When he realized he was becoming Hollywood-minded he came to New York. He intends to make it his home.

When he was a boy he wanted to be a musician, perhaps a painter. Instead the First World War made him a restless young man, unsure of what he liked most. He was a



Ruth Seid, a Red Cross public relations worker in Cleveland, was awarded the first prize of \$10,000 in the Harper Prize Novel Contest for her first novel "Wasteland," which was written under the pen name, Jo Sinclair. Here she receives the check from Ted Robinson, Cleveland Plain Dealer literary critic, as Romana Herdman of Harper (left) looks on. Her book, to be released for publication on February 13, relates the problems, adjustments and maladjustments of an immigrant family in the United States.

Country Mouse

By Louise Andrews Kent. (Houghton, Mifflin; \$2.50.)

Reviewed by MARTHA LEWIS.

Mrs. Carmody and Mrs. Hunter tried hard but couldn't quite make the grade in Beacon Hill society. They were as literary as any one in Boston. Mrs. Carmody insisted, for didn't she have three shelves of autographed books she hadn't even read? They were musical, for they went to the symphony to hear "those awful things that make your ears ache." They took up everything—setti point and antiques and badminton. They played a good game of contract and bought tickets to everything.

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KENNETH HORAN, Author of "Papa Went to Congress."

Book Reviews in Brief

HISTORY. Nationalism and After, by Edward Hallett Carr (Macmillan). A survey of the rise of nationalism and a statement of the requisites for internationalism. A small volume by the professor of international politics at the University College of Wales.

THE SENATE AND THE VERSAILLES MANDATE SYSTEM, by Rayford W. Logan. (Minorities Publishers.) A study of the conduct of the Senate toward the Versailles mandate system, suggesting that unwillingness to extend democracy to dark-skinned people was the basis of senatorial opposition.

THE SPIRIT OF ENGLISH HISTORY, by A. L. Rowse. (Oxford University Press.) An examination of English history in terms of the forces which have shaped it—climate, geographical position, character of people.

ONE THOUSAND WORDS AND PHRASES, by Ernest Wandenberg. (Essential Books.) A handy Spanish instruction book.

THE OLD FARMER'S 1946 ALMANAC, by Robert B. Thomas. (Yankee, Inc.; 15c.) A well-liked pamphlet, now in its 154th year of publication.

CROSS SECTION 1945, edited by Edna Seaver. (Fischer; \$3.50.) Stories, novelettes and poems written by American authors this year. Rather mediocre.

TALES FOR MALES, selected by Ed Fitzgerald. (Cadillac; \$2.) Twenty-nine stories allegedly having special interest for men.

EVENING IN SPRING, by August Derleth. (Stanton and Lee; \$1.49.) Love story about high school boy and girl. Sweetish.

TOMORROW'S ANOTHER DAY, by W. R. Burnett. (Knopf.) Story of gamblers and characters of the half world of an American city.

MY FELICIA, by Paul Driscoll. (Macmillan.) Story of New England industrial city and immigrant girl being loved by rich man's son.

COUNTRY LIFE, by J. I. Rodale. (Devine-Adair.) A book of directions on farming and gardening with common pests.

COUNTRY FLAVOR, by Haydn S. Pearson. (Whitely House.) A book of short sketches on the various pleasures of country life, charmingly illustrated by photographs.

Best Sellers

- NATION-WIDE—  
(According to Publishers' Weekly.)
- FICTION.
- 1st—The Blue Tower, Thomas B. Costain.
  - 2d—The Blue Tower, James Ramsey Ullman.
  - 3d—Cavalryman, Sinclair Lewis.
  - 4th—Forever Amber, Kathleen Winsor.
  - 5th—The Peacock Sheds His Tail, Alice Tisdale Hobart.
- NONFICTION.
- 1st—Up Front, Bill Mauldin.
  - 2d—The Egg and I, Betty MacDonald.
  - 3d—Brave Men, Ernie Pyle.
  - 4th—Fighting Valley, Louis Bromfield.
  - 5th—Gen. Marshall's Report.
- IN WASHINGTON—
- FICTION.
- 1st—The River Road, Frances Park-Donk.
  - 2d—The Key, General. Daphne Du Maurier.
  - 3d—The Perilous Flight, Neil H. Swanson.
  - 4th—The Chambliss, Revisited, Evelyn Waugh.
  - 5th—The Chambliss, James Street.
- NONFICTION.
- 1st—The Egg and I, Betty MacDonald.
  - 2d—Levely Is the Lee, Robert Gilchrist.
  - 3d—Soldier of Democracy, Kenneth S. Davis.
  - 4th—Gen. Marshall's Report, George C. Marshall.
  - 5th—The Strangers, George F. Willison.

The American Art Annual, Volume XXXVI

Edited by Florence N. Levy. (The American Federation of Arts, Washington, D. C.; \$12.)

Reviewed by FLORENCE S. BERRYMAN.

The American Art Annual has just been published in its 36th volume, its first appearance in four years because of war conditions. Such is the value of this unique reference book, however, that a publication fund was established a year ago, through the interest of Mrs. Flora Whitney, list and president of the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York City, making it possible for the American Federation of Arts to resume publication of the annual.

The American Art Annual was founded in 1908 by Florence N. Levy, editor of the present volume. (The annual had other editors between 1919 and 1941.) For nearly half a century, it has embodied the factual record of art in the United States more completely than any other publication. Actually, there is nothing comparable. The Nation's growth in art is indicated by the fact that Volume I listed 450 museums, societies, art schools and private art classes. The present volume has a total of 2,113 such entries in the United States and in addition, lists 91 in Canada and 545 in 20 countries of Latin America. Information on the last-mentioned was prepared for the annual by staff members of the Archives of Hispanic Culture, Library of Congress, the Inter-American Office, National Gallery of Art, and the Division of Intellectual Cooperation of the Pan American Union.

The U. S. A. School Section was obviously compiled with great care. A new method of tabulating courses offered makes it a simple matter to ascertain where any specific type of instruction is available, in nearly 700 places where art may be studied.

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New Books

Treasure Hunter, Lt. Harry E. Reiser. (Doubleday; \$2.50.)

Guide to Model Aircraft, David C. Cooke. (Doubleday; \$2.50.)

The Shapes, Mark Van Doren. (Knopf; \$2.50.)

The Shapes That Creep, Marguerite Bonner. (Knopf; \$2.50.)

Major, January 14.

Robin Hood, J. Walker McSpadden.

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Among the Authors

Providence Kept Watch Over Remarque And Brought Him Luck All During War

By Carolyn Coggins

Usually Erich Remarque rests a head or two between completing one book and beginning the next. When his "Arch of Triumph" comes out next week it will be his first novel in five years, and this time he is already working on another.

All over the world, of course, he is known for his "All Quiet on the Western Front," and that book must have registered pretty well in heaven as well, because its author was watched over by fate in such a way back in 1939 as to suggest God had His eye on the gentleman. In the summer of that year he was one of several thousand people in France who thought it might be a good idea to be somewhere else. The logical place was the United States, especially since he had a little girl in his care whose parents were here. Phoebe's connection to the Riviera were off so that friends could not even call neighbors. Knowing this, he thought he must make an effort, he hopelessly put through a call to the Paris steamship office. He was connected in less than 10 minutes, but the means to get those tickets, he happily put through an effort to the Paris steamship office. He was connected in less than 10 minutes, but the means to get those tickets, he happily put through an effort to the Paris steamship office.

He did not think of it as a war story. The first publisher in Germany who saw it said it was good, but that there is no "business" in it. Its eventual "business" in Germany alone was about 1,500,000 copies, and perhaps 5,000,000 or 6,000,000 copies in around 30 other countries where it had already been printed. Its great success made Remarque self-conscious, so that he believes he overwrote in the next book.

His Formula for Good Writing. "You either do that after a big success or else your head is turned so that you are sloppy," he explained. "A bad book doesn't matter," he continued, "because an author who only wrote good books would be a freak. The idea is to write better books as often as possible and to edit one's writing with care, to not be a sloppy writer."

He spends as much or more time with Americans than with his own countrymen, believing that only in that way can he come to know the United States. He thinks there are many more good writers here than in Europe. Here people have to know what they are writing about. In Europe too they begin to write the minute they are through studying or else write in an atmosphere of safe thinking, in either case without experience, even though equipped with intelligence and writing facility. But in the United States if you write about a banker, for instance, the character is sufficiently like bankers to remind the reader of some banker he knows. Not so in Europe. There the banker may turn out to just be a sort of fellow writing, the writer's picture of a teller, a story and not real at all.

Speaking of German writers, Remarque laughed heartily over the eminent playwright Gerhart Hauptmann, whom he greatly admires. "He has been celebrating his birthday for 40 years, you know," he told me.

Birthdays to Order. It seems that many champagne parties were given for Hauptmann when he was 50 at week-long productions of his plays in various places. By the time every one had honored him with their congratulations he had another birthday, and then another, and so it has gone on for all the years since. He is now in his 80s.

Asked Mr. Remarque if he wasn't glad to be a person coming here at the beginning of the year who had expressed his views so early that the whole world knew where he stood. He agreed that the circumstance was fortunate.

"The Arch of Triumph" was expected to be a fall book. When the Book-of-the-Month Club wanted it for February distribution, the novel was delayed until the third week in January. Its sale will probably be well over a half million its first week out, and that only the beginning.

Remarque is "all quiet" himself. He is a husky man with well-modeled features, blue eyes and a soft voice. I found him easy company, a relaxed and knowing conversationalist. I also think he makes excellent coffee.

My True Love, by Darwin L. Teltel. (Appleton Century; \$2.75.) A veteran comes home to find changes. He has a time.

High Bonnet, by Irdwal Jones. (Prentice Hall; \$2.50.) Hilarious adventures of a famous French chef.

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