PRESENTED TO THE INDIAN INSTITUTE OF ADVANCED STUDY, SIMLA

BY

RECENT SOVIET WRITING ON SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA

(Below are reviews of publications received during the period June to the end of October, 1963. For reasons of space only a portion of the total number can be noticed, but care has been taken to make the selection representative of what has come to hand. This article is contributed by the Central Asian Research Centre in association with the Soviet Affairs Study Group of St. Antony's College, Oxford.)

The tension between Moscow and Peking has not yet been communicated to the literature with which this series is concerned. Books on South and Central Asia published well into 1963 were still asserting the moral unity of the communist bloc, still using the metaphor of the Camp—the *Lager*—in which the socialist peoples of the world are pictured as banded together in solid opposition to the profane. It would be unwise to take it for granted that the coming batch of publications now with the printer will discard the imagery of the One Fold. But should that happen and a deliberate offensive be mounted on a new ideological front against the Chinese, there is little or no reason to expect that the anti-Western tone of Soviet writing on Asia will be softened as a result.

I. The Borderlands

Afghanistan

ADMIRATION (including in this case an assumption that it is mutual) is the pivot on which Soviet writing about Afghanistan has latterly revolved. As one of the first countries of the East to make a bid for freedom, Afghanistan, according to the accepted version, attracted not only the instant political recognition but the moral regard of the young Soviet Republic. That early partnership was fruitful, and today the Soviet-Afghan relationship can be held up as the model *par excellence* of peaceful co-existence and of practical co-operation between a socialist and a non-socialist state.

This, almost word for word, is the text taken by Yu. M. Golovin in *The Soviet Union and Afghanistan* (Sovetskiy Soyuz i Afghanistan. Oriental Literature Publishing House, Moscow, 1962, pp. 102, 4,500 copies). The author gives a detailed account of the economic and technical benefits set at the disposal of the smaller nation by her great neighbour during the forty years which have run from the Treaty of 1921. It is something of a puzzle to know what even from the Soviet standpoint this earnest and objective survey gains by being interrupted in the third chapter by ten pages (pp. 68-78) purporting to prove on the evidence of quotations from *Pravda* and *Izvestia* that American "aid" is aimed at cold, calculated slavery. Only in a fairy tale could the Americans be so wicked as these juvenile pages make out—or the Russians so pure of heart.

India

Two of the books on India received in this period are to be welcomed if only as an addition to the familiar repertoire. Both are intended as recreational reading for stay-at-homes, are discursive in manner and conversational in style. But in the taste they leave, they have nothing in common.

On the Highways of India and Nepal by D. V. Ter-Avanesyan (Po dorogam Indii i Nepala. "Vysshaya Shkola" State Publishing House, Moscow, 1962, pp. 357, 8,000 copies) is a travelogue compiled from the tour-diaries which the author, as Agricultural Adviser to the Soviet Embassy in Delhi, kept in the course of his duties from 1956 to 1959. His journeys were performed by car in the company of his driver Baba Singh of Jullundur who, as we are told in an engagingly old-fashioned preface, knew his people and the customs of his country and imparted what he knew. With this small outfit, and mapping each itinerary so as to pass through the local Agricultural Research Centres and Botanical Institutes, the author left few corners of the land unvisited. No diplomat can have spent so little of his time at headquarters. During these excursions he simply jotted down what he saw or could pick up, and his charm is that he takes India as he finds it. There is much about mosque and temple, but nothing that is scornfully said. It is the Indian standpoint that matters in these pages, he seems to be saying, and not ours. "They do not exterminate vermin here," he records in a typical sentence, "and Indians cannot understand our dread of rats and mice and our squeamish attitude to them." With politics the narrative has no concern, and international affairs are so out of focus that Katmandu can be sandwiched without apology between Lucknow and Benares in one and the same chapter of this entertaining journal.

The second of these popular panoramas is L. Shaposhnikova's *South India* (Po Yuzhnoy Indii. U.S.S.R. Academy of Sciences, Moscow, 1962, pp. 247, 15,000 copies). The author tell us how, equipped with a knowledge of Hindustani, she spent one year on her own in the country, not bothering with blast-furnaces and dams but following what seemed to her more useful clews. These led her to Hyderabad, Aurangabad, Bombay, Madras, Trivandrum, Cape Comorin and many other places; and, more importantly, to a host of human encounters. A series of graphic vignettes is the result. "Hyderabad Past and Present" is among the best of these, where "the Navabs, Rajas, and Jagirdars clutch at the pitiful débris of the old life even as they take their exit, knowing that nothing will save them now in a city which belongs to the good-time owners of the shiny motorcars." There is, too, a skilful enough portrait of a celebrated Swami. But such moments are unhappily outnumbered by others in which Shaposhnikova is no more than the priggish and not infrequently bumptious interlocutor: "What do I believe in?" "I believe in Science. I believe in Communism"—and then follows the homily on these, while India recedes.

Shaposhnikova, for all her scientific training, does not know when a

thing is proved. She thinks that the British "dismembered" the sub-continent as their parting disservice to India (p. 14); that communal hatred was the creation of the colonizers (p. 37); that India's religious trends have been wholly bad (pp. 37-41). And she is convinced that only "a Russian woman from USSR" would have been accorded the facilities and courtesies which were extended to her "even by total strangers" throughout her stay. (Preface; pp. 95, 220.)

Imperialism and the Economic Self-dependence of India by V. I. Pavlov (Imperializm i economicheskaya samostoyatel'nost' Indii. U.S.S.R Academy of Sciences, Moscow, 1962, pp. 230, 1,700 copies) is a densely written exposition of the thesis that "the struggle for freedom does not end with the winning of political independence". While the going was good, imperialism captured not merely the territorial but the economic key-positions, and still has to be dislodged from the latter:

"The colonial and semi-colonial countries, having been turned into producers of the most diverse varieties of raw material, did not, taken individually, possess a productive basis in keeping with their natural requirements. Thus India, supplying the entire capitalist world with manganese and mica, obtained oil and ores of non-ferrous metals in insignificant quantities. Cuba, the world's sugar producer, was obliged to import her other food products."

Consequently, says the author, it is now for the national bourgeoisie of India and of the other peace-loving nations of Asia and Africa to "mitigate the contradiction" between their political and their economic status in the international arena. "The patriotic sections of that bourgeoisie reckon the broadening of economic and more particularly foreign trade ties with the Socialist countries—and primarily with the Soviet Union—to be the essential condition of achieving this."

South Asia

A massive work of reference entitled *The Peoples of Central Asia and Kazakhstan*, belonging to the global series *Peoples of the World*, was among the more important publications discussed last time (July-October 1963). A further uniform volume in this same series is now to hand: viz., *The Peoples of South Asia* (Narody Yuzhnoy Azii. U.S.S.R. Academy of Sciences, Moscow, 1963, pp. 964, 3,500 copies). South Asia in the context means India, Pakistan, Nepal, Ceylon; with the Andamans and the Maldive Islands as a fringe to the tapestry. But the first two of these occupy all but one hundred pages, so that to all intents and purposes the area intended is the former Indian sub-continent.

The task to which a strong team of experts under the overall direction of A. M. D'yakov, N. R. Guseva, M. G. Levin and N. N. Cheboksarov has been harnessed is "to reveal the ethnographic features of each of the different peoples in the countries surveyed, to outline the history, economic life and culture of each, and to show the contribution made by each to the common national development of the given country". In other words, the social organization, the traditional callings of the countryside and town, the art, architecture, religions and languages of the millions inhabiting the

sub-continent, are to be described; and by the same token none need expect to find anything about politics, or the modern machinery of government, or heavy industry, in these informative but academic pages. Of over three hundred illustrations only three suggest the engineering or industrial achievement of today.

The anatomy of this encyclopædic work deserves mention: "each major people of India and Pakistan is assigned a separate chapter, while the lesser peoples of the two countries are pooled on the basis of their linguistic or geographic affiliations. Cultural characteristics which have become more or less common to all the peoples described, as also the historical processes to which they have been subjected collectively during the long centuries of their growth, have been isolated, and marshalled in an Introductory Section (of two hundred pages)."

That brave men lived before Agamemnon was never the motto of the U.S.S.R. Academy of Sciences, and it is here complained in a Preface that the literature dating from the British period in the relevant fields is so sadly inadequate that it has been barely possible in the brief space of time which has since elapsed "to build up a really comprehensive body of knowledge". This notion of "contemporary science" (sovremennaya nauka) as somehow taking over in the liberated territories and addressing itself to the confusions and even idiocies implicit in the rule of the Philistines is dear to the official Soviet mind. But it is hardly borne out either by the twenty-odd pages of bibliography which so enhance the usefulness of this book or, as it will appear, by the text itself. Both in their different ways salute the past. In turning nearly one thousand pages a reviewer can perhaps be pardoned for pausing where he feels most at home. The chapter on Languages is excellently done and in every paragraph proclaims its debt to the old, and for the most part British, authorities. Even some mistakes of the latter are perpetuated. One instance must do. In the account of how Urdu and Hindi began, *Khari Boli*, which means the standing or standard speech, is translated by the Russian words *Chistyy Yazyk* (pure language). D'yakov—for the chapter is his—has been loyal, too loyal, to Platts. The 'r' in *Khari* is not trilled (in which case the meaning would be "pure") but cerebral, and conventionally written in the Roman script with a dot under it. Phonetically and in visual shape the two letters are entirely distinct; and since a whole theory hinges on that distinction it would have been worth while getting the thing right. The matter is not controversial even: D'yakov had only to consult the original authors who coined this literary term—Sadal Misr in *Nasiketopakhyan* and Lallu Lal in *Prem Sagar*.

On the credit side it must be said that the sweep of this book is majestic, the production elegant. The amount of sheer patient industry that has gone into it is amazing, and as a storehouse of information the volume will clearly be able to hold its own among the others in this notable series.

II. The Soviet Muslim Republics

Azerbaydzhan

In 1920 the U.S. Senate requested President Wilson to send a battleship to Baku with enough marines to protect American interests in that part

of the world. Let no European smile: our own ignorance of Azerbaydzhan, in 1963, is almost total. Placed at the intersection of so many economic, political, and cultural thoroughfares, Azerbaydzhan from the days of Cyrus till these has been the scene of international rivalries, and like most victims of oppression has frequently been in the news, but not (so to speak) for her own sake. Her own entity, as opposed to her relationship with more powerful States, has usually not concerned, or else has eluded, the historian. The standard encyclopædias tell one next to nothing. Russian sources are, of course, ampler but even they have yet to be properly tapped.

In *Azerbaydzhan through the Eyes of Travellers* (Puteshestvenniki ob Azerbaydzhane. Azerbaydzhan S.S.R. Academy of Sciences, Baku, 1961, Vol. 1, pp. 499, 1,500 copies) Z. I. Yampol'skiy has assembled the impressions that have been committed to writing down the centuries by a succession of observant people from foreign lands: religious men, adventurers, traders, diplomats, soldiers, the wife of a Russian officer. A few out of the thirty who take the stage, speak their pieces and withdraw are familiar; some are half recollected; but most are strange. The company includes Iohannan and Tomas, sixth-century Syrian Christians; Wilhelm Rubruk, thirteenth-century Flanders monk; Marco Polo; Nikitin, the fifteenth-century Russian trader; Barbaro and Contorini; Jenkinson and the other sixteenth-century Englishmen; Tikhonov and various Russian diplomats in the seventeenth century; and Varvara Ivanovna Bakunina (1773-1840). In this motley pageant there is much to entertain, and the specialist will, thanks to Yampol'skiy, be in a position to decide how much there is to instruct. It will turn out to be a fair amount, one would think. Take the last of the Travellers in this assembly. She accompanied her husband, a Colonel of Dragoons, to Azerbaydzhan in 1796 and witnessed the capture of Derbend. Her account of this event, Yampol'skiy points out, differs materially from the official version. She writes, too, at first hand of the campaign as a whole; of Shaykh Ali, the Khan of Derbend; of his appeals to the Empress for help against Aga Mohammad Khan; of his imprisonment by the Russians and subsequent escape to the mountains.

This is Volume I. Nobody who has read it could fail to look forward to Volume II.

Tadzhikistan

At the foot of the Pamirs (U Podnozhiya Pamira. Published by "Soviet Writer", Moscow, 1963, pp. 240, 15,000 copies) is a selection of seven popular essays on modern Tadzhikistan by as many of her own men of letters, translated from the Tadzhik. In the opening essay Mirza Tursun-Zade, poet laureate and holder of the Lenin prize, acts as compère to the other authors, both introducing them and giving them their cue. "In these days of the springtime of Communism . . . we think with thankfulness of our Native Land and of the Party to which the Soviet peoples are indebted for their happiness."

In a sharply contrasting category is *Sources for the History of Ura-Tyube* (Materialy po istorii Ura-Tyube. Oriental Literature Publishing

House, Moscow, 1963, pp. 136, 1,150 copies) compiled and translated by A. Mukhtarov under the editorship of Professor A. A. Semenov and O. D. Chekhovich. This is for the professional scholar. Bulky collections of documents of historical importance are in the keeping of the Tadzhikistan Academy of Sciences which have never been studied, let alone published.

Part of a set of manuscripts acquired in 1954 from one of the descendants of the Ishans of the former Ura-Tyube Vilayet (corresponding to the northern portion of modern Tadzhikistan) is now made accessible to the student. Forty-seven documents which date from the beginning of the seventeenth century up to 1866, i.e. the year when the town of Ura-Tyube was annexed to Russia, and consist of decrees, letters patent, missives, and warrants of appointment issued by the rulers of Bukhara, Kokand and Ura-Tyube itself are described, illustrated in facsimile, and literally translated. This material has been prepared for publication with the utmost care and competence. Another hundred documents belonging to the same set will, it is promised, come out later.

Uzbekistan

In Soviet writing there is never any knowing what will be contained between the covers of a book entitled "Source material for the history of so-and-so." In *Source Material for the History of Uzbekistan* (Materialy po istorii Uzbekistana. Uzbek S.S.R. Academy of Sciences, Tashkent, 1963, pp. 142, 650 copies) a dozen or more articles by different hands, some of them clearly accomplished, are devoted to such heterogeneous subjects as: The Uzbek Metallurgical Works; A biography of the first Uzbek General, Sabir Rahimov; The Trade-Union movement in Turkestan; Glazed pottery of Tunket; School construction, 1918-1920; The history of artillery in Central Asia; More about the burial of Timur. It deserves to be said that the last but one amounts to a fascinating and well-illustrated monograph on the use of cannon from the earliest times until the arrival of the Russians; and that the last is an authoritative addendum to Barthold's essay in 1915, "About the burial of Timur".

Kazakhstan

The Soviet historian of Central Asia is to be read attentively when he bases his conclusions on the testimony of archives going back to an Imperial past. It is not merely that he relies on unpublished records to which we in the West have no access, but that he now and then exhibits in their selection and use an unaccustomed detachment. It is as though he accepts the balance struck between two equal and opposite judgments: the conquest was bad in so far as it was Tsarist; good in so far as it was Russian.

This, at all events, is the dominant mood of T. Tazhibayev's serious, measured, orderly but surely rather exhausting account of *Education and Schools in Kazakhstan during the second half of the XIX Century* (Prosveshchiye i shkoly Kazakhstana vo vtoroy polovine XIX veka. Kazakh State Publishing House, Alma-Ata, 1962, pp. 508, 11,250 copies). The many thousands who, to gauge by the size of the edition, were expected to buy a copy of this formidable volume will certainly have had to persevere

to get through it. Few of them will have been primed with the results of recent research at the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes thanks to which the elusive essence of the Tsarist attitude towards the Muslim peoples of Russia has been distilled. They will therefore have had to spot the landmarks for themselves, and make what sense they could of the inconsistencies, of the dithering, even, and on occasion of the unabashed *volte-face* in the administration's approach to Kazakhstan.

Tazhibayev will not have helped them much with background of this sort. He is less concerned with explaining motives than with reporting behaviour. His business as he sees it is "to slur over no part of the reactionary content of Government policy, to conceal nothing of what was done by separate institutions or by individuals in the educational domain . . . but at the same time to endeavour to prove that that very Government, those numerous establishments, those individuals so many of whom toiled honourably in their field, *objectively* promoted the development of education and class-room training in Kazakhstan". Not further delayed by preliminaries, he plunges straight into the story as revealed—many facets of it for the first time—by the official papers pigeonholed in Alma-Ata, Tashkent, Leningrad, Moscow, Kazan', Ufa and Omsk.

It was too much to hope that this same degree of sober judgment might be exercised when it came to bringing the educational story up to date. *The Development of the Soviet School in Kazakhstan* (Istoriya razvitiya sovetskoy shkoly v Kazakhstane. Kazakh State Publishing House, Alma-Ata, 1962, pp. 367, 3,600 copies) by A. I. Sembayev is a tightly packed factual narrative which must have taken months, and possibly years, to compile. But it is interrupted every so often, and seemingly to very little point, by the most strident propaganda. The facts are seldom allowed to speak for themselves. So businesslike a section, for instance, as that which deals with the training of teachers is marred by oratorical effects: "Teachers—Nikita Sergeyevich Khrushchev has called them the nearest helpmates of the Party in bringing up the New Person to the glorious revolutionary traditions, in rearing him in the lofty spirit of Communist consciousness." Again and again, lest we forget it, we have to be reminded that "in consequence of the victory of the Great October socialist revolution, and of the brotherly assistance of the great Russian people, Kazakhstan in the briefest lapse of time was transformed from a backward colonial outpost of Tsarism into one of the go-ahead Soviet republics", and that a new type of school emerged from this process.

Every quarter seems to yield a book or two which names and arraigns individual bourgeois mutilators of history. The procedure employed was explained in the July-October contribution to the present series. This time the book that bears on the matter is *Against the Bourgeois Falsification of the History of Kazakhstan* (Protiv burzhuaznoy fal'sifikatsii istorii Kazakhstana. Kazakh State Publishing House, Alma-Ata, 1963, pp. 112, 4,100 copies) by A. Tursunbayev. The accused here handcuffed together are Richard Pipes, Madame Carrère d'Encausse and that habitual offender, Baymirza Hayit. Here is the charge: "These 'connoisseurs' of the life

of the peoples of the Soviet Union heaped slander upon the socialist order. . . . The sole and single purpose of their so-called 'studies' is to distort the actual character of the Soviet nationalities policy and to prevent the Borderland countries from learning the truth about the (Muslim) Republics."

The case for the prosecution as it unfolds does not keep at all closely to the charge: there are, indeed, no quotations from the pages of those named. On the other hand, evidence is led on the sovereignty of Kazakhstan in the course of which the following startling sentence occurs: "The sovereignty of the Kazakh Socialist Soviet Republic finds its concrete expression in the fact that she enters into direct relations with foreign states, concludes agreements with them, and exchanges diplomatic and consular representatives." The echo is of Article 18-a, as added to the Constitution of the U.S.S.R. on February 1, 1944, where however the exact wording is that "Each Union Republic *has the right* [italics ours] to enter . . . and to conclude . . . and to exchange . . ." Tursunbayev gives, and can only have intended to give, the reader to understand that the activities enumerated are nowadays taking place: the Austin Princess (so to speak) bowls along to Buckingham Palace. "Sachez que vous êtes rois et plus des rois."

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