

her travels and awakens him from his sleep of moral complacency. And an hilarious process it is, too.

The triumphant comedy of *Travels with My Aunt* comes from the perception of Mr. Greene's that the world and one's moral view of it fit together rather awkwardly. One achieves virtue pretty much as Euclid defined a straight line in a universe that has turned out to be thoroughly non-Euclidean. It has always been Mr. Greene's enterprise to look at virtue not in a church but in the whorehouse; his saints are scarcely aware of their mission, and they struggle with their own passions as diligently as with those of the world. And they are wonderfully comic because Mr. Greene insists that virtue, insofar as man can achieve it, costs everything, one's self in fact; so that a moral victory is first of all the loss of complacency and illusion. Grace, true to all that has been said about it, is joyful.

ELIZABETH JANE HOWARD (Mrs. Kingsley Amis) writes a very crisp novel indeed. What's in disguise in *Something in Disguise* is the form of the novel. Not until the last few pages are we aware that we have been reading a masterful detective story, and this is a commendable refurbishing of a worn and thin convention. The English detective novel is at its weakest when it plays the mere game of fooling us, and thus falls into the silly business of concocting false clues. Miss Howard disguises the very fact that she is writing a detective novel. We seem to be reading a British *Bonjour Tristesse* that has been woven into a novel of manners and misalliances. The plot vigorously takes unexpected leaps, yet none of them prepares us for the deft twist at the end.

It is unfair, however, to speak of this novel as merely a detective novel; it is much more accomplished, and involves the reader in a wider and deeper view of English manners than is normally offered in a thriller. Miss Howard's art is natively English; Miss Murdoch's philosophical view of mankind, and Mr. Greene's Christian meditation, might plausibly have been written outside England. *Something in Disguise*, with its cat, its ugly and uncomfortable house, its ability to make a sinister thing of cooking and beds, is of the English English, a particularity of inimitable essence. Only the English really know how to be gruesome. □

RECONSIDERATIONS

The Great Terror: Stalin's Purge of the Thirties

By Robert Conquest

Macmillan, 633 pp., \$9.95

Power and Policy in the USSR

By Robert Conquest

Harper Torchbooks, 484 pp., \$2.95

THE CONTRIBUTION OF ROBERT CONQUEST

GERHART NIEMEYER

Robert Conquest's *The Great Terror*, published thirty years after the climax of Stalin's mass murders, conclusively defines for us what many wishfully desire to bury in oblivion: the political disorder endemic to Communism. The events Conquest details, as he reminds us, "among all those of the past generation affect the world most directly today. The wounds left by Nazism . . . are deep and painful. But . . . while the Hitler regime is over twenty years dead, that created by Stalin, and those founded on his model, survive. . . . The whole world, indeed, still lives under Stalin's shadow."

THE MATERIAL IS, OF COURSE, familiar, but with new insights. The 1934 Kirov assassination, later shown to have been ordered by Stalin himself, served as both the starting and the focal point of a series of purges coming in four distinct waves: wave after wave rising to murderous climax for four years, to culminate in a total deficit of seven million people in the Party and its affiliated organizations by the end of the Thirties. Conquest shows that the purges created the entire apparatus of power that exists today, that all of the present Soviet leaders are direct beneficiaries or, in many cases, accomplices, of Stalin's liquidation of their comrades.

Conquest also flashes back to point out that Communist terror originated as early as August 1918; that in the early Twenties other revolutionary parties were violently suppressed and intra-Party dissension was handled through expulsions, denunciations, character assassinations and murder; that there had been four great show trials before (Shakty 1928, the Industrial Party 1930, the

Mensheviks 1931, the Metro-Vic-Engineers 1933); that collectivization was accomplished in 1929-30 only through mass terrorization resulting in at least five and a half million dead. Nor did the Thirties end the matter. Purges, trials, the official fabrication of wide-flung networks of conspiracies continued through the "Leningrad Case" (1948), the "Doctors' Plot" (1953), the trial of Lavrenti Beria (1954) and the denunciation of the "Anti-Party Group" (1957-58).

IF CONQUEST WERE NOT also a poet, he might have given us what is nowadays called a "concise history" of a soul-chilling period, soon forgotten. But his great sensitivity to the things of the mind makes him dwell particularly on the astonishing phenomenon of the "confessions" of the accused in the three trials. In a chapter of extraordinary perspicacity he gives us one of the main keys to the entire study, identifying the features of the regime which the purges instituted or made manifest. In my own mind, these features fall into the following categories:

a) *The Rubashov mentality* (after the central figure of Arthur Koestler's *Darkness at Noon*): An unlimited devotion to the Party—transcending reason, the sense of truth, self-preservation and any other interest. It was expressed well by Pyatakov who, when expelled from the Party in 1926, made his humble submission repudiating his own ideas and saying that the Party, in his eyes, was a "miracle" that not only represented but mastered history, making "the impossible possible," and that without the Party "there could be no life for him." The phenomenon of self-accusation in the Party thus antedated Stalin's purges. His purges, relying on "voluntary and conscious submission" (in his own words), on confession as the sole evidence, would not have been possible except on the basis of an ideological elevation of the Party to quasi-divine rank.

b) *The destruction of the moral order*: "The reality of Stalin's activities was often disbelieved because they seemed to be unbelievable," says Conquest. "His whole style consisted in doing what previously had been thought morally or physically inconceivable." The source of such actions, however, was not atavistic cruelty, although that also rose up as soon as it was officially permitted and encouraged, but rather

deliberate and elaborate logic. When the Italian Communist Serrati was viciously slandered by the Party, Zinoviev explained the underlying motive to the protesting Mme. Balabanoff: "We have fought and slandered him because of his great merits. It would not have been possible to alienate the masses from him without resorting to these means." Thus "necessity," as conceived by the Party, took the place of moral criteria of right action. Victims agreed with the victors among the Communist leadership in replacing the moral order with the requirements of revolutionary strategy. The destruction of the moral order has spread as far as Communist loyalties, as can be seen by Bertold Brecht's notorious remark, at the time of the first purge trial: "The more innocent they are, the more they deserve to die."

c) *The destruction of the order of truth*: Besides the cold-bloodedness of the will to murder and inflict untold suffering on the population, the worst feature of the purges was the web of lies, the "total falsehood of the reasons given for the accusations." From the outset, the prosecution wove an imaginary plot of associations linking several persons' political dissent to common crimes and treasons, connecting all of the various accused with each other, linking them to both Trotsky and Hitler (even the Jews among the Bolsheviks, such as Zinoviev and Yakir). By means of mere hints and sheer conjecture, a fantastically complex story was created which went from elaboration to elaboration throughout the Stalin period and served the rulers of the mid-Fifties for the same purpose. For the whole of the Communist-ruled world, a gigantic Second Reality was fabricated by means of public fiction. An occasional protest was invariably met with the retort: "This is not a problem of truth, but a struggle for power." Thus the requirements of power came to be accepted by all Party members as a proper substitute for those of truth.

d) *The paradoxical reliance on justice and democracy* (the terror using the empty shell of substance it had destroyed): Each case of political disagreement was turned into a case of judicial indictment in which politics was mixed with crime and treason, the mixture invariably established in public court. Terror became an "institutionalized necessity," the accepted and "legal" way by which power struggles were carried to their conclusion. The perverted

RANDOM NOTES

■ Sick of all the rhetoric about the urban crisis? John Lindsay got you down? ("C'est un sot à vingt-quatre carats," Monsieur Pompidou is reported to have mused recently.) Then you'll want to try what promises to be one of this year's most important, not to mention controversial, books: *The Unheavenly City* (Little, Brown, \$6.95) by Harvard's unabashedly conservative urbanologist, Edward Banfield. Banfield systematically demolishes ancient liberal myths and "counterfeit problems," offering hard-headed and logical alternatives to real problems (many of which have been totally ignored by men of the Lindsay breed). . . . And speaking of urban crises: aficionados of New York's *Village Voice* can read about that journal's urban messiah in Joe Flaherty's *Managing Mailer* (Coward-McCann, May), the story of Norman Mailer's recent venture. . . . Richard Harris, a staff writer for the *New Yorker*, has penned *Justice*, a particularly nasty little book about all the bad guys in Nixon's Justice Department (Dutton, \$6.95).

■ Just out: Jeremy Larnier's *Nobody Knows: Reflections on the McCarthy Campaign of 1968* (Macmillan, \$4.95). It is not so much the story of the Impossible Dream as it is the story of a pompous, lazy snob, who loved the company of stooges and sycophants, and who wrote bad poetry. . . . Harold Levine has done a joemcginniss on the Eisenhower Administration: *Smoke-Filled Rooms* (Prentice-Hall, April, \$5.95). Matthew Hodgart, a British professor who happened to be at

reliance on the façades of justice and democracy reveals that the Communist regime either has not developed its own legal and political forms or else cannot help being ashamed of them.

e) *The abolition of any limit to politics*: The Party figured as its own end, forbidding all men to have other ends beside it. "No one had previously created a state, on a solid and stable basis, entirely hostile to the natural movements of the economy and to the aspirations of the people," writes Conquest. I would add: Nor has anyone done that now, for the Communists have not achieved that internal "zone of peace" that is normally created by government, and their combative and irreconcilable political purposes fill the entire range of human relations removing all restrictions even from international conflicts. Krylenko expressed this

Cornell during the dark days of 1969, has written an amusing attack on the SDS Yahoos, *A New Voyage to the Country of the Houyhnhms: Being the Fifth Part of the Travels into Several Remote Parts of the World by Lemuel Gulliver* (Putnam, April, \$2.95). In the "Fifth Book" the Houyhnhms (liberal university professors) find themselves enslaved by the modern Yahoos, who have added vulgarity, drugs and sexual depravity to their list of odious vices. . . . And from the Yahoo camp, two important books: Peter Buckman's *The Limits of Protest* (Bobbs-Merrill, \$5.95), a leftist how-to-do-it book; and Howard Zinn's *The Politics of History* (Beacon, \$10, May), a trendy analysis of New Left history by one of its leading practitioners. . . . From the sublime to the ridiculous: See Irving Shulman's *Jackie* (Trident, April, \$6.50)—about Mrs. Onassis. . . . And Mark Lane's *Arcadia* about the travails of a Florida fruit picker (Holt, \$6.95, May). . . . *If I Forget Thee, O Jerusalem: American Jews and the State of Israel* will be out with much fanfare in April (Morrow, \$12.95).

■ *Solon*, a new conservative journal from Britain, edited by T. E. Uteley, with contributions from such eminent Tories as Julian Amery, Norman Gash and J. Enoch Powell has just published its second issue. (For information, write Garden House, Sunningdale, Berkshire, England.) . . . The final volume of Leonard Woolf's autobiography, *The Journey Not the Arrival Matters*, (Harcourt, \$5.95), will be out later this month. Woolf, who died last year, was the grand old man of British Fabianism, and the husband of the late Virginia Woolf.

absence of any limit to politics when he said: "We must finish once and for all with the neutrality of chess. We must condemn once and for all the formula 'chess for the sake of chess.' . . ."

DOES ALL THIS amount to no more than a dark and sinister chapter of a bygone generation, nothing more than a skeleton in the Communist family closet? Conquest's earlier study, *Power and Policy in the USSR*, should be recalled. Beginning with Stalin's last years, it covers the period of de-Stalinization. When Stalin, who had ruled entirely by means of a personal apparatus, had gone, there emerged a number of *diadochi*, because there were a number of power machines each of which might possibly help one of the surviving leaders to attain supremacy: the Party, the government, the economic managers,

the big city machines, the police and the army. The struggle between the various aspirants took the form of dissension over policies such as "liberalization" (first propounded by Beria, of all people!), consumer goods v. producer goods or the opening of the virgin lands. Defeat of any one of the *diadochi* over any one of these issues was followed by the invention of a network of criminal associations leading to his removal, denunciation and trial, the only novelty being the small number and percentage of executions.

The Party, it seems, cannot operate effectively without coming to a very narrow point of leadership (a very small group or single person), but it has no peaceful, institutional way of arriving at this kind of unity or at policy decisions.

"The lesson of our whole period" (1945-1960), writes Conquest, "is that the leading figure in a 'collective leadership' is in constant danger unless he crushes his enemies. . . . The opposite is also true: 'Collective leadership' is the resultant of a number of conflicting forces. A balance can only be kept by constant maneuver."

POLITICAL FORMS always stem from past events and history; no country can jump over its own shadow and neither can a Party that has set itself up as a country's occupying regime. Conquest's studies have made it definitively clear that nothing in its own history lends itself readily to a possible endeavor of the Party to achieve the order of obligations, publicly accepted ideas, and institutions that characterize a government.

It is true, says Conquest, that "the cycle cannot go on indefinitely amid circumstances which ensure that the regime must evolve or perish," and he does not exclude an "evolution toward democracy." That, however, was written before Czechoslovakia, the sentencing of Daniel and Sinyavsky, and the ostracism of Solzhenitzyn. For the sake of ourselves, all of whom live "under Stalin's shadow," one would like to be optimistic about the evolution of Communism. For the sake of truth, however, one feels he should sit down next to Solzhenitzyn—Jeremiah with his streaming tears—and with him lament his tormented Russia: "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes." □

Public Works: A Dangerous Trade
By Robert Moses

McGraw-Hill, 952 pp., \$14.50

THE MAN IN CHARGE

J. BERNARD BURNHAM

In January of 1935, Secretary of the Interior Ickes, acting on orders from President Roosevelt, undertook the job of deposing Robert Moses as a member of the Triborough Bridge Authority. The hatchet man confessed to his diary that he was operating in unknown waters. "I don't know Moses. From all accounts he is a highly disagreeable and unpleasant person who is also tremendously efficient." By March, sadder and wiser, Ickes had found out just how unpleasant and efficient his in-



tended victim could be. Years later Ickes observed, "If I had known as much about Moses at the beginning as I knew at the time of our surrender, I might have been able to save both my chief and myself some of the damage." As it turned out, Moses became Chair-

man of the Authority in 1936, a position he did not relinquish until 1968.

The full history of this remarkably successful defiance of Presidential power is related and documented with obvious pride in *Public Works: A Dangerous Trade*. The tale is told via press releases, lawyers' briefs, public and private letters, and official orders, all held together with a minimum of running comment. Such is the expository method used throughout this remarkable book, the tale of a thousand and one battles over parks, museums, monuments, Lincoln Center, assorted housing projects, two World's Fairs, the development of St. Lawrence and Niagara power, parkways, tunnels, bridges, Jones Beach, bomb shelters and bank failures.

These chronicles are marked by a minimum of theorizing. The stress is on how parks, bridges and fairs get built—not on the mechanical details of construction, but on how the obstacles posed by politicians, lawyers, bankers and the press are overcome. Written in a style that combines wit with erudition, the result is fascinating and immensely rewarding reading. Would that our nation's graduate schools produced a few more Ph.Ds in political science with the inclinations and energy of Robert Moses (Columbia, 1914).

I was careful to qualify "more" in the previous paragraph with "a few." There is considerable evidence (much of it found in his own book) that even one Robert Moses was too much for dozens of other responsible and presumably intelligent public officials. Two Robert Moses in one government would probably lead to a civil war. But there is a second and more important reason for the qualifier.

THE STRENGTH OF MOSES, as his book illustrates time and again, was his ability to translate a plan into reality, on time and within budget. But the man who can do this is not necessarily the same man who should set the goals to be accomplished. Moses' opposition to the consolidation of New York City's transportation system is instructive. Under this plan, the Triborough Bridge and Tunnel Authority, the single most important Moses fiefdom, became subordinate to a higher, non-Moses controlled authority. It was charged that any consolidation program broke faith with bondholders and imperiled the ability of the Authority to raise new

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