

Books Encountered

Writers' France: A Regional Panorama. By JOHN ARDAGH. Hamish Hamilton, £18.00.

Delightful holiday reading for Francophile bookworms: a survey of ten great regions with notes on French (and a few other) authors associated with them. Ardagh has travelled the roads and read the books. His photographer Mayotte Magnus is a bit unatmospheric; but the text is sharp, evocative, and surprisingly tart.

How Old Are You? Age Consciousness in American Culture. By HOWARD P. CHUDACOFF. Princeton University Press, \$19.95, £12.50.

The author, Professor of History at Brown University, argues learnedly and wittily that age grading has pervaded US society for 100 years, but concludes that tinkering with or removing it could "create thorny problems". He quotes Maurice Chevalier on being old: "It's not bad when you consider the alternative."

Small Craft Advisories: Critical Articles 1984-1988. By ROBERT CRAFT. Thames and Hudson, £12.95.

The conductor and Stravinsky collaborator has a pen to match his baton. The pieces collected here include many from *The New York Review of Books*, and cover music (tough on *Amadeus*), poetry (discerning on Auden), painting (crisp on Lord Clark), books (indulgent on Paul Scott), and ballet (charming on Lopokova, Lady Keynes).

Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age. By MODRIS EKSTEINS. Bantam Press, £14.95.

The Professor of History at Scarborough College, University of Toronto, a German specialist, offers a vividly readable essay in a newish genre, politico-literary-artistic-sociological-historical. The subtitle is too limited: this brilliant book carries modernism as far as the *Führerbunker* in 1945.

The Faber Book of Fevers and Frets. Edited by D. J. ENRIGHT. Faber, £12.99.

"Exercise is bunk. If you are healthy, you don't need it: if you are sick, you shouldn't take it." Just one of innumerable gems in this dazzling anthology of quacks, malingerers, nut cases, new diseases, nasty ones, nauseating remedies, and scabrous anecdotes. The quote is "attributed" to Henry Ford; but I wonder.

Questions of Broadcasting. By STUART HOOD and GARRET O'LEARY. Methuen, £14.99.

Some accountant must have wanted the extra four pence per book. In fact it's a sort of radio programme, with tape-recorded inserts on, first, the history of UK broadcasting, and then concerns about the future. Those interested will know the first; and no one knows the second. But the witnesses are worthwhile.

The Awakening of the Soviet Union. By GEOFFREY HOSKING. Heinemann, £13.95.

Probably the best and certainly the most concisely packed of recent kindred studies, based on the 1988 Reith Lectures. Professor Hosking makes the key point that the Central Committee plenum of September 1989 disappointed the USSR's nations because the federation it envisaged was to be centrally imposed, not jointly formed.

The End of Nature. By BILL MCKIBBEN. Viking, £12.99.

Another accountants' price: but a stunning book, substantiating with eloquence and scholarship the sense we already have that on earth there's no more wilderness and only the wildlife we permit. The word "explorer" is archaic; "getting away from it all" at best means a vacation in some National Park; Saki's "Mapped life" is here.

Guerrillas in Uniform: Churchill's Private Armies in the Middle East and the War Against Japan 1940-1945. By ERIC MORRIS. Hutchinson, £16.95.

Exhilarating but professional and judicious account of such quasi-privateers as Vladimir Peniakoff ("Popski"), Robert Laycock, Paddy Mayne, David Stirling, Orde Wingate, *et al.* The author teaches at Sandhurst, and dispels some myths about the role of the special forces then; but he sees their value now and their valour always.

Dust in a Dark Continent. By ROBIN PAGE. The Claridge Press, £16.95.

Page was sacked from the UK Civil Service for writing articles on social security abuse—a breach of the Official Secrets Act. He's just as frank and personal about Africa: the house which commissioned the book rejected it as "too political"—no doubt meaning refreshingly heterodox in not always praising black régimes and *vice versa*. A chatty, rambling read.

Poems 1955-1959 and An Essay in Autobiography. By BORIS PASTERNAK. Collins Harvill, £6.95.

Timely reissue of two excellent translations, by Michael and Manya Harari respectively, first published in 1959 and 1960. The poems are also printed in the original Russian. The book should obviously be read with . . .

Boris Pasternak: The Tragic Years 1930-1960. By EVGENY PASTERNAK. Collins Harvill, £15.00.

Pasternak's son here tells from inside what earlier came from news reports: opposition in the 1930s, support for Akhmatova, and the fury and furore over *Dr Zhivago*. Michael Duncan's translation of the prose reads fluently; the poems, translated by Ann Pasternak Slater and Craig Raine, are a further delight.

The State of the Language: 1990 Edition. Edited by CHRISTOPHER RICKS and LEONARD MICHAELS. Faber, £17.50.

Huge, disorderly, stimulating ragbag of essays, some funny, some hurt, some pedantic, some infuriating, divided into "Englises", Politics, Money, Art, practice, and prescription. The liveliest article is on the lingo of *Variety*, which has left far more traces than you would think: *vamp*, *payoff*, *hick*, *whodunit* . . .

Sons of the Moon: A Journey in the Andes. By HENRY SHUKMAN. Weidenfeld & Nicolson, £12.95.

Slim, distilled, perceptive, curiously cool account of travels in the Altiplano of the Bolivian Andes, where this bright young scholar and musicologist found remnants of the ancient Aymara people, survivors from pre-Columbian, pre-Inca ages. But the trouble with travel books is the traveller's loneliness.

Shakespeare's Roman Worlds. By VIVIAN THOMAS. Routledge, £30.00.

Wonderfully vivid and convincing account of how vivid and convincing was Shakespeare's Rome—a real political stage, with complex, conflicting personalities, solid movements, and moral convictions about "service to the state, constancy, fortitude, valour, friendship, love of family, and respect for the gods".

Love's Executioner and other Tales of Psychotherapy. By IRVIN D. YALOM. Bloomsbury, £14.95.

Heavily disguised accounts of ten analyses, not all successful, with dialogue often fictional. Dr Yalom says only patients will recognise themselves: but even that seems near the knuckle—a case of Sacks-and-violence, as it were. So, though deeply engrossed, one feels one's enjoyment was for all the wrong reasons.

R.M.

INTERVIEW

Can Colonial Revolt Dismantle the Empire?

MARJU LAURISTIN with GEORGE URBAN on the Baltic Defection



GEORGE URBAN: *Empires have colonies and colonies have colonial populations with colonial wounds and colonial inhibitions. So runs the conventional wisdom. Do you, as an Estonian Deputy of the Supreme Soviet, feel that you represent a nation that has been colonised in the sense in which Tanganyika was a colony under British rule or Indo-China under French?*

MARJU LAURISTIN: The simple answer would be to say yes, but that would not do justice to the implications of your question. The Estonian people do not have “a colonial mentality”. They do not feel themselves to be inferior to the metropolitan power, nor do they feel that they ought to ape the culture or the manners of Russia. Yet they have been over-run and colonised. Their status is that of an occupied land which has in no way recognised the legitimacy or permanence of occupation.

The Estonians have a deep attachment to their country which political and economic colonisation has done nothing to destroy. Their numerical preponderance may have been

reduced as a result of aggressive Russian immigration, but not their will to keep their national identity intact. Those of us who are Deputies in the People’s Congress or the Supreme Soviet conceive our role to be that of fighters for our nation; we are soldiers in the front line protecting our interests *vis-à-vis* the Soviet colonial system.

—*What about the comparison with the old-fashioned colonies of the maritime powers? I would have thought the principal difference was this—that the British, for example, did not foist their social system on the Indians or Burmese but ruled through the existing and accepted local hierarchies. Soviet colonialism, on the other hand, is totalitarian and therefore far more destructive of national life and traditions.*

MARJU LAURISTIN: That is so, but there’s another factor that makes us into “uncolonial colonies”. Already under the Czars, it was a well-recognised feature of the Russian Empire that some of the territories on the peripheries were more highly developed than the heartland of Russia. Today, this is even more true. Twenty years of independence between the two World Wars saw our country make extraordinary leaps in industry, commerce, and culture. Our Estonian infrastructure was on a par with some of the Scandinavian countries and our living standards were not far behind. Today, although all these standards have fallen way behind those of Scandinavia, they are still very much ahead

PROFESSOR MARJU LAURISTIN, Estonian Deputy of the Supreme Soviet and of the People’s Congress of the USSR, is a leader of the Estonian People’s Front and a member of the Estonian Communist Party. She also belongs to the “Inter-regional Group” founded by Boris Yeltsin, Andrei Sakharov, Yuri Afanasyev and Gavril Popov.

Born in 1940 in Tallinn, she trained as a sociologist and is now Professor of Journalism and chairs the Department of Journalism at Tartu University. In the 1970s she was one of the founders of the first Soviet Institute of Sociology (such organisations had previously been banned: sociology was deemed to be a non-subject since all social problems could be solved by Marxism-Leninism). However, it was forcibly closed down as anti-Soviet.

Her father, Johannes Lauristin, an old-time Party member, spent sixteen years in jail for taking part in an attempted Communist coup in Estonia in 1924; in 1940 he

was instrumental in the brutal Communist take-over in that country following the Mototov-Ribbentrop Pact. His daughter, on 15 December last year, helped to launch the Estonian Social-Democratic-Independence Party, whose programme includes independence for Estonia. This interview took place in October 1989.

George Urban’s contributions to ENCOUNTER include conversations with Hugh Trevor-Roper (December 1989), Milovan Djilas (September/October and November 1988), Vladimir Bukovsky (November 1987, January 1988), Alain Besançon (May and June 1987), Galina Vishnevskaya (December 1986, January 1987), Max M. Kampelman (February 1985), Alexander Zinoviev (April 1984), Jeane Kirkpatrick (November 1983), Eugene V. Rostow (April 1983), and Daniel Bell (February 1983). “Can the Soviet System Survive Reform?”, a collection of these conversations, was published in May 1989 by Pinter Publishers in London and New York.