

named Vladivostok (Ruler of the East). There a memorial was inscribed with the words of Nicholas I, "Where once the Russian flag has been unfurled, it must never be lowered." And since that time, it never has been permanently lowered in the East. Russian influence was then extended to Northern Manchuria, for a time to Korea, to Port Arthur, Sinkiang, and Outer Mongolia. That expansionism produced hostile combinations of Great Powers and in 1904 led to war with Japan. The creation of the Soviet regime in 1917 resulted in the eclipse of Russian power in the Far East for a generation, but Russian influence in Manchuria, Sinkiang, and Outer Mongolia did not disappear. Moreover, from 1923 to 1927, Russian Communist influence in the Kuomintang was high. In 1927 the Kuomintang broke with its Communist allies, and Russian power in China declined to the point of near extinction. When Japan attacked Manchuria in 1931, the Soviet Government sought, above all, avoidance of involvement in the conflict and it appeared, at the time, that Russian power in the Far East was no longer of any moment.

There is, Dallin believes, pattern and design in the unfolding of Russian policy in Asia. Although he avoids geopolitical terminology except to refer to Russia's "geopolitical program," much of his thinking is reminiscent of that of Mackinder, Haushofer, and Spykman. As Dallin explains it, Central Asia has been a power vacuum, surrounded by Russia, Japan, and India. Expansionist Russia, abhorring a vacuum, pressed into that region, acquiring power and possession chiefly at the expense of stagnant China. Japan, in contrast to China, was a rival rather than a victim of Russia. Russo-Japanese rivalry, however, was overshadowed by the less spectacular but more basic conflict between Russia and Britain, ruler of India and mistress of the sea. To the extent that the United States has assumed naval supremacy, she has inherited Britain's role of No. 1 enemy to Russia.

Dallin implies that Russia since 1860 has sought to control what Mackinder called the Heartland of the world, the area lying between the Himalayas and the Arctic, the Volga and the Yangtze. By 1917, he believes, Russia had nearly fulfilled her "geopolitical program." In that period the only bar to Russian aggrandizement was a superior combination of hostile powers employing as a deterrent either the threat of force or, when threats failed, force itself. He thinks that the lesson

(Continued on page 33)

Fiction. Most of us have known the Orient as the playground and treasure house of white imperialists revealed through the stories of Kipling, Somerset Maugham, and many another writer. There can be no better illustration of the shattering change in the relations between the East and the West than Robert Shaplen's "A Corner of the World." In five moving and brilliant short stories he reveals the moral predicament of the bewildered Americans who today are cast among people who neither need nor want them. In Robert Lowry's stories, "The Wolf that Fed Us," Rome is the scene of the erotic adventures of American soldiers on furlough, where famished Italian girls fed the sexual hunger of the boys from the USA. It is a book to end all books on war and sex. If the reader wishes to bask in a glittering and shallow world, not alien to sex, we recommend Diana Forbes-Robertson's "A Cat and a King."

Against Musky Backgrounds

A CORNER OF THE WORLD. By Robert Shaplen. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 246 pp. \$2.75.

By JOHN WOODBURN

AS A VERY small boy I held, in common with a good many of my contemporaries, the fascinating belief that China lay directly, if distantly, beneath my sneakers. Years later when I went to the Orient and found it at last, and literally, beneath my feet, I was scarcely better prepared for the experience than the little boy who had once seriously considered getting there by digging. It seems to me that there is no place in the world that the American appears to less advantage than in the Far East; nowhere does he seem more adolescent and outlandish, more *nouveau*, than in the presence of a people and a culture which place him

in such brilliant contrast. I suppose that those of us who have gone there either to convert or exploit may feel less disturbed or intrusive, but since I was there in the service of neither God nor Mammon, I was often acutely conscious of being where I didn't belong and wasn't especially wanted.

Since it is not my intention to present myself as an Orientalist, I should say that these remarks were generated by reading Robert Shaplen's "A Corner of the World." These five excellent, eloquent short stories are laid against the musky backgrounds of Shanghai, Calcutta, Manila, Saigon, and Macao—yeasty corners of the Orient which the author has explored over the last five years in his capacity of correspondent—and together they present a vivid document on the American in the Far East. Although they have been inter-connected by brief, italicized, autobiographical paragraphs such as Ernest Hemingway first used in his "In Our Time," they achieve a more valid unity in their common theme. In each of these stories Mr. Shaplen discloses the human rubble which has been washed up by the roily wake of the war, and each story reiterates the moral predicament of Western man.

In "Young Man with a Future" a discharged American sergeant disintegrates swiftly in the atmosphere of feverish eroticism and political violence of postwar Shanghai. He was an honest young man, a well-intentioned, hazy liberal, but there had been so little in his life to prepare him for the experiences which assailed him that finally there was nothing left to him but panicked flight from a nightmare which he could not understand. In Calcutta, in "A Wind Is Rising," an American



—Arni.

Robert Shaplen—"cour-
rage and incisiveness."

correspondent is caught up, almost compulsively, in the bitter communal riots and dies before he can clarify his feeling of moral responsibility. Max-Robert, the romantic young French journalist in Saigon, is betrayed by the very honesty and idealism which had made him admirable in France. Perhaps the bitterest story, and to me the best, is that of Colonel Delaney, the go-getter who got in on the ground floor of the import business in Manila while he was still on terminal leave. If Sergeant McKenzie in Shanghai and Archer Grayson in Calcutta are tragic symbols of the American caught up in the complexities and chaos of the postwar East, the sordid fate of Colonel Delaney has been of his own contrivance. And if Mr. Shaplen in this story has occasionally allowed his indignation to silence his compassion, that was perfectly all right with me. "The Colonel on the Ground Floor" is a stinging portrait of avarice and arrogance. It is also, I am sad to say, a portrait of an American who, by a thousand names, is well and bitterly known to thousands of people who live west of San Francisco or, for that matter, wherever the uniform and the business suit have brought democracy and American know-how to an unenlightened people.

It is in the final, title story that Mr. Shaplen enunciates most passionately his insistent thesis. In Macao a German refugee says to Lieutenant Gordon: "Yet, if I may be permitted, if you will pardon my saying it, your American soldier has much yet to

learn about the world, about this part of the world in particular." Richter had fled first from Nazi Germany, and finally from all Europe, and here in Macao, in this distant, steamy corner of the world it had begun to seem that he might live in peace. Yet when a striking native is beaten by a company guard Dr. Richter, knowing completely what will happen, unhesitatingly tends him. Not until Richter's cynical assassination does Lieutenant Gordon believe that such things can happen. Could it be that, after all, there was no place, no corner of the world, for the Dr. Richters, for men who would not hesitate, at such cost, to make a moral choice?

This story is the most profoundly felt, the most impassioned of the five. And perhaps for this reason it is not, as a piece of writing, the most successful. The character of Richter tends at times to become slightly blurred by the symbolism, and when Lieutenant Gordon, frustrated by the bland hypocrisy of the authorities, refuses the invitation of the British skipper to dine in his cabin, saying: "Tell him no . . . tell him thanks, but I've got to stay below," it seems an oversimplified, even melodramatic ending to a story which was meant to say so much.

There can be no quarrel, however, with Mr. Shaplen's considerable talent as a story-teller, or the courage and incisiveness of his comment. He has said some important things, and said them very well, at a time when they are much needed in this or any corner of the world.

Ambition . . .

WHISPER MY NAME. By Burke Davis. New York: Rinehart & Co. 282 pp. \$2.75.

By BUCKLIN MOON

THE story of the Jew who denies his heritage, whether for material gain or to escape the pressures of prejudice, is a theme not new to American letters. That Burke Davis, in "Whisper My Name," has managed to write a novel of freshness, and a first novel at that, is a tribute to his ability as a writer; yet no small part of the book's success, to this reader at least, lies in the fact that this theme is only incidental in the larger story of a small Southern town. Indeed, Daniel Gordon's Jewishness is more stated than shown, and the reaction of the town to it, as such, actually adds no complications to his life. By this I mean merely that had Gordon been a Yankee—damned or otherwise—the chances are that the results would have been pretty much the same.

And this, paradoxically enough, is both the strength and weakness of the novel. As a story of an ambitious stranger in a provincial Carolina town—a man willing to go to any ends in order to attain financial status, even to the extent of denying his background, marrying the *right* woman, and betraying the woman who really made possible his rapid advancement—"Whisper My Name" is a good notch above the average novel.

Mr. Davis knows his background and his people, as well he should, having been brought up among them, but more than that he has a keen sense of the sweep of the years and the minute changes they bring; he knows the feel of a town after midnight and the inner secret life of its nearly deserted streets; and his sympathies never slop over at the edges.

And yet, though there is always a sense of tragedy in the background, some relentless biological reaction which is not only going to bring down havoc upon the head of Daniel Gordon but also on those who loved and tried to protect him, when it comes it seems less a tragedy in the terms of the book's intentions than an inherent weakness in Daniel Gordon himself. Even the irony that the town had all along known of his racial origin does not quite erase an uneasiness in the reader's mind because somehow along the way it has dissipated itself. One wishes that the emphasis of the publisher's blurb had been different, or better, that the au-



"Tell me frankly, General, should I start saving used fats?"