

Queen of the Slavs

RUSSIA AND HER COLONIES. By Walter Kolarz. New York: Frederick A. Praeger. 335 pp. \$6.

By BERTRAM D. WOLFE

IN the modern world of nation-states ("one nation, one state"), three great countries entered the twentieth century as predominantly multi-national lands: the Austro-Hungarian, the Turkish, and the Russian empires. The Austro-Hungarian monarchy was blown to pieces in the First World War. The Turkish empire, long declining, is now reviving as a modern nation-state. But the structure and problems of a multi-national empire remain in full force in Russia to this day. The first serious, comprehensive study of these problems and the Czarist and Stalinist "solutions" of them is Walter Kolarz's "Russia and Her Colonies."

As Mr. Kolarz shows, neither the problems nor the "solutions" originated with Stalin. He was heir to a double heritage: the heir to an empire dominated by Great Russians, which has been expanding steadily for three centuries at the average rate of sixty-five square miles a day; and the inheritor of a revolutionary state which was set up to be the "power center of the World Revolution." Mr. Kolarz quite properly limits himself to the inherited empire, and excludes the newly subjugated "People's Democracies."

In the old Czarist empire about fifty percent of the population was Great Russian. If the Ukrainians and the White Russians are added, that gives a "greater Russian" or "Slavic nation" of approximately eighty percent. The remaining minority peoples are largely Mohammedans of Turkic culture, Georgian and Armenian Christians, Finns, Balts, and other peoples. For the purposes of disintegrating the Czar's regime, Lenin proclaimed for all these peoples the "right of self-determination to the point of separation." Both Lenin and Stalin wrote the most furious polemics against federalism in all its forms, and against "cultural autonomy" as a kind of treason. It was "self-determination" or nothing.

But once the Bolsheviks took power they purged first the national independence leaders and then the advocates of federalism and autonomy. Next they purged the local native Bolsheviks whom they had used to

purge the others. As the new total state took shape, it introduced a highly centralized government, a single centralized party, a centrally regulated economy, a centralized political police and penal code, and centrally issued directives on what might be sung, painted, said, thought, and felt in all the national areas and tongues. All this made a shambles of the original "Lenin-Stalin" policy.

Yet, for shorter or longer periods, some beneficent remnants of the earlier policy lingered on and Mr. Kolarz takes due account of them as he goes area by area around the vast periphery of the Soviet empire.

Moreover, there were a few regions, on the borders of Finland, Iran, Afghanistan, China, where purely artificial "autonomous national regions" and "republics" were set up for the purpose of disintegrating the neighbor country which had some of the same national group among its population. Another complication which Mr. Kolarz untangles expertly is the penchant of the Soviet rulers for minimizing differences between the three Slavic "nations" to make them appear as one "Russian nation," while splitting up all the Moslem Turkic peoples into innumerable splinter "nations."

All this makes for a complicated story, but one which Mr. Kolarz has told, on the whole, with great clarity and skill. The only weakness in the book is the assumption that the history of russification has gone so far under the last czars and under the greatest russifier, Joseph Stalin, that it can never be reversed. One would have said the same thing in 1900 of the oldest of the multi-national empires, that of the Hapsburgs.

But history has no last words on these matters except to remind us again and again of the everlasting determination of people to be themselves. All that democrats can do at this juncture is to reaffirm the right of each oppressed people to self-determination. How they will exercise that right when they are free to exercise it, whether in a freer federation or a loose alliance or complete independence, will largely depend on the circumstances of that time and how generous the dominant Great Russians may have shown themselves in between.

At any rate, Mr. Kolarz makes a mistake to suppose that he can count the votes or anticipate the verdict of history now. With this one reservation (which concerns only the last chapter), Mr. Kolarz's book can be warmly recommended to the specialist as a reference work, and to the general reader as the first clear guide

Our Late Ally

THE RUSSIANS IN FOCUS. By Harold J. Berman. Boston: Little, Brown & Co. 209 pp. \$3.

By SIDNEY HARCAVE

HAROLD J. BERMAN here offers a survey of the people and institutions of Soviet Russia with the aim of providing "a basic minimum that any educated American should know in order to form judgments about the Soviet way of life." A professor at the Harvard Law School, Mr. Berman is a specialist in Soviet law, whose competence for the task is fortified by his extensive research among representative Soviet civilians and soldiers and by his use of the voluminous materials collected by Harvard's Russian Research Center.

Professor Berman has selected twelve topics, which he treats in a series of vignettes and brief analyses: the peasant, the soldier, the worker, the family, the Communist Party, religion, education, medical care, economic planning, law, the press, and the system of coercion. The principal sources used, Soviet publications and the testimonies of former citizens of Russia, do not necessarily provide the whole truth concerning those subjects, but together they make possible a closer approximation than does either source considered separately. The Soviet law, for example, states that a person may be sentenced by administrative action to a term of no more than five years in a labor camp; yet abundant evidence from displaced persons proves that the period is in fact often doubled and occasionally tripled by various devices which preserve the fiction of the law but subvert its meaning.

His study leads Professor Berman to conclude that the Soviet system is far from being as monolithic and centralized as its rulers strive to make it. To follow the state's much vaunted plan, the lower-level executors must often ignore its spirit in order to fulfill its letter. That fact is illustrated by cases such as that of the manager of a candy factory. Working toward the completion and distribution of his yearly quota and finding that no arrangement had been made to provide the wire from which to make the necessary nails for his packing cases, the manager purchased it illegally from the Academy of Sciences, which, in turn, had acquired

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it illegally from the Moscow subway. The choice of action allowed him, in the immutable Soviet scheme, was a difficult one. He understood that, if he respected the limits of his legal authority, he would not meet his quota and would therefore be punished. On the other hand, if he ignored the law, he had two chances—if his illegal act should go undetected, he would meet his quota and receive commendation; if it should not, he would be punished.

The manager's plight is typical of that of most Soviet persons in responsible positions. Their efforts keep the state's plan in operation, but not always in the predetermined manner. Thus, suggests Professor Berman, the entire society operates. The plan is not sustained by directive force alone, nor yet by sincere cooperation and loyalty. Satisfaction, persuasion, and coercion are its three pillars. As to whether or not those pillars are strong enough to sustain it indefinitely, the author does not attempt a conclusion.

Short as this book is, there is compressed within its covers a rich abundance of new and important data. Some readers may feel that to provide an adequate minimum of basic information to support "judgments on the Soviet way of life," it should have presented more material on the ideology of Communism and the nature of totalitarianism and that at least some attention should have been given to the background of the Soviet system and to the Soviet foreign policy, which has always been one of the important points in the determination of the domestic "focus." Even so, "The Russians in Focus" must be recognized as a scholarly, lucid, and objective work, an admirable introduction to the people of a country which insists on being misunderstood.

On the Looks of It

THE FACE OF RUSSIA: When Sir David Kelly was the British ambassador to Moscow in 1949-51, Lady Marie Nöle Kelly and her son traveled over a good part of European Russia, from Leningrad on the Gulf of Finland to Astrakhan on the Caspian Sea. In the course of her travels Lady Kelly took the 123 excellent black-and-white photographs she has assembled, with intelligent and informative captions, under the unassuming title, "Picture Book of Russia" (British Book Centre, \$3.50). The results are limited, of course, by censorship, so that we find little of modern Russia besides oblique glimpses of a few Moscow streets, the Kremlin from the embassy roof, the

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THE CONTINUITY OF THE MENACE



"The Cossack Carrying off the Bride of Civilization—Liberty," by Thomas Nast.



"Two Young Giants, Ivan and Uncle Sam Reaching Over the Pacific, 1873."