

## On the Stone Span of Eternity

**"The Bridge on the Drina,"** by Ivo Andric; translated by Lovett F. Edwards (Macmillan. 314 pp. \$3.50), an historical novel about the Slavic peoples, is the first publication in English by a contemporary Yugoslav author. Egon Hostovsky is a Czechoslovak writer, now living in this country, whose novels have included "The Midnight Patient" and "The Charity Ball."

By Egon Hostovsky

I VO ANDRIC's novel may well be the first sample of Serbo-Croatian literature accessible to American readers. And even to those familiar with contemporary Yugoslav fiction in translation, Andric's saga of "The Bridge on the Drina" should bring a pleasant surprise. It is undoubtedly a great work by a great writer, revealing in many respects more intensity and depth than do the novels and short stories of Miroslav Krleza, the most-translated Yugoslav author in the period between the two wars.

The bridge on the Drina is the stone span erected in Bosnia early in the sixteenth century at the expense of a Bosnian-born Turkish vizier. The story of the three-and-a-half-centuries-old bridge is one of land and man, of wars and barbaric incursions, of national freedom and serfdom; idyllic years alternate with years of famine; it teems with people and episodes rendered unforgettable by the vitality with which a most unusual narrator and poet has infused them. The chronicle is reminiscent of Tolstoy's monumental style, and,



—Yugoslav Information Center.  
Ivo Andric—reminiscent of Tolstoy.

at the same time, of the lyric tone of Turgenev.

In the author's conception, the ancient bridge is a piece of eternity, forged by human hands and baptized with the bold dreams of men. It has outlasted generations, invasions, wars, and peace. Everything around it was continually changing, rotting, dying, being reborn; but the bridge has stood immutable, the witness of values and efforts that do not pass. "Its life, though mortal in itself, resembled eternity for its end could not be perceived."

In this panoramic drama of the

bridge over the Drina, Ivo Andric has written the saga of his native Bosnia, the legendary country where the fate of the Balkans and of Europe has so often been decided. The memorable characters, the revival of folk legends and ballads, and the grand epic frescoes painted with captivating skill in this book bring to mind Henri Pourrat's poetic chronicle of Auvergne, "Gaspard des Montagnes." And as an ideological counterpoise, Andric's "Bridge" evokes Thornton Wilder's "Bridge of San Luis Rey."

Ivo Andric is a former Yugoslav diplomat who now devotes himself only to writing. He holds the highest literary prizes of his country and is chairman of the Association of Yugoslav Writers. Few authors representative of the literatures of the smaller Slavic nations have found such excellent translators into English as has Andric in Lovett F. Edwards.

## Thaw in the Winter of Tyranny

**"Bitter Harvest,"** edited by Edmund Stillman (Praeger. 320 pp. \$5), is a collection of post-Stalin "revisionist" writings from countries within the Soviet sphere. A foreign correspondent for The New York Times and the author of "American in Russia," Harrison Salisbury is now in Moscow.

By Harrison Salisbury

TO THOUGHTFUL men and women around the world nothing in recent years has matched the drama of the "thaw" in critical, literary, and philosophical thinking behind what it has become a habit to call "the iron curtain." It is the fruit of this movement that has touched all of the nations east of the Elbe, to one extent or another, that Mr. Stillman calls "Bitter Harvest." The bitterness derives, of course, from the fact that the thaw only too often has been followed by a quick and killing frost.

However, it would be wrong to think that the powerful currents in the Communist countries which gave rise to the movement symbolized in Hungary by the "Petofi circle," in Poland by the still vigorous literary renaissance, in the Soviet Union by the stories of Dudintzev, Granin, and a host of others, and in China by the brief blooming of the 100 flowers has been extinguished. As soon

imagine that the Volga or the Yangtze has been changed in the direction of its flow to the sea.

True, some members of the Petofi circle paid with their lives for the courage of their poetical dissent. True, there have been some heavy-handed efforts to set the clock back in Moscow. And in China the flowers long since have been trampled underfoot with the rise of the new communes. But no one who reads the literary output of the Communist lands is unaware of the fact that the fresh winds are still blowing, although, like the breezes of March, they are only too apt to change radically in direction and temperature.

Mr. Stillman's service is that he has gathered a broad spectrum of the writings of the thaw—poetry, philosophy, short stories, fragments of novels, essays—into one book. This makes available to the American reader for the first time such brilliant satirical contributions as S. Kirsanov's "We Need Useful Hearts," Alexander Yashin's devastating commentary on Soviet officialdom, "The Levers," the Polish writer Adam Schaff's indictment of "Socialism" as practised by the Soviet Union, and, from Yugoslavia, Milovan Djilas's critique on the class struggle.

At first glance the contributions seem almost too diverse to be included in one anthology. But each in its way is a perceptive analysis of life under

Communism as seen by a particular writer. And there is more in common in these pictures than there is diversity, as the reader very quickly realizes.

Several of the stories are by Poland's angry young man, Marek Hlasko. Included also is a philosophical article by the young Polish dissident Communist Kolakowski, as well as a revelatory glimpse into the life of a scientist in a Communist country during the Stalin days by the famous Polish physicist Leopold Infeld. There are in addition many contributions by brilliant Hungarian writers.

The collection is worthy of study if only because of the witness it bears to the depth and breadth of the critical and philosophical independence which endures within the Communist world despite the years of official harassment—sometimes even because of the intensive effort to compel adherence to a party line.

I have one reservation: the collection would have been greatly enhanced in value had Mr. Stillman made more of an effort to present the writers in perspective and to offer in something more than the most cursory form the background of the various contributions and the critical connection, for example, of the Petofi movement in Hungary with the Polish renaissance, and of the stirrings in the satellite countries with the upheavals within the Soviet Union. Nor is an adequate effort made to relate the phenomenon of Boris Pasternak, with its roots and motivations in previous generations and literary traditions, to the upsurge within the younger Communist generation.

**OPERATION BUDAPEST:** With this new novel, Igor Sentjurg has joined the increasing number of writers attracted by the theme of darkness at noon. In "Prayer for an Assassin," translated by Cornelia Schaeffer (Doubleday, \$3.95), an astutely intertwined espionage story set in post-revolutionary Budapest, Mark Vargas is sent by an underground group operating outside Hungary into Budapest to assassinate a powerful and atrociously cruel chief of the Communist secret police. Among those who aid him in his mission are beautiful Ilka, Mark's former mistress; sixteen-year-old Franz, his trusting admirer, and a childhood friend, Dr. Jan Cordas, an apolitical opportunist. Ilka is unmasked as an agent of the Security Police, Franz meets death heroically trying to help Mark, and Dr. Cordas grants him medical help and refuge when Mark is wounded by the police.

The psychological high point of the novel is the dramatic relationship between the old-time friends: Vargas

believes in the sacred nature of his political task, while Cordas is devoid of all belief. The book makes absorbing reading on the whole; some of the characters are vividly delineated, and many situations are veracious.

Yet one has the feeling of having encountered these characters in other novels, and of having experienced the dreary atmosphere of the Communist world in the same way before, complete with its demons and saints. Sentjurg's "Assassin" evokes Graham Greene's "Confidential Agent," as well as the works of Koestler and Orwell. Many of the scenes here are more sharply etched in construction, style, and psychological deduction than the author's models, but the impression remains that this story is a perfected copy.

The American edition of "Prayer for an Assassin" does not mention from which language the novel has been translated. The omission may have been intended to enhance the reader's impression that the author is intimately familiar, by origin and experience, with the environment and events he relates. Yet this novel is not by a Hungarian. The author is a Yugoslav, whose political affiliation with Djilas forced him to seek asylum in Germany, where he still lives and where he has published two successful novels. In this account of violent motives and happenings in a police state, Sentjurg may have wished to express more than a thrilling spy story, as did Graham Greene in his early entertainments. But the "more" eludes the reader.

Twenty years ago in Spain the civil war was the literary and philosophic inspiration of scores of writers. Witness Bernanos and Hemingway. It is a somewhat anguishing thought that the recent Hungarian revolution—in many respects more ominous to the free world than were the events in Spain—may have furnished the impulse for nothing more than political whodunits. For it would be tantamount to our accepting the tragedies of individuals and nations as merely sensational spectacles watched through opera glasses with only a passing tremor. —E. H.

## Post-Hitler Lives

**"Mark of Shame,"** by Willi Heinrich; translated by Sigrid Rock (Farrar, Straus & Cudahy. 316 pp. \$4.50), written by one of Germany's most popular novelists, tells of his country's past deeds and present guilt. Saturday Review's critic, Victor Lange, is chairman of Princeton University's Department of Germanic Languages.

By Victor Lange

IT IS not always the most elegant or perceptive novels that give us the truly bitter taste of political and moral upheaval. Pride, defeat, collapse, and shame have twice in our lifetime shaped the imagination of German writers; disaster and humili-

## Electroencephalograph—Hyperventilation

By M. B. Thornton

THE nurse was gone and the door was closed. "Lie still," you said, "don't move—" stretched flat on my back, all my life, all I am, my head strung with wires,—with the juice turned on, you watched me take it,—writhe without moving—watched me crack—I wasn't supposed to be human (what you were doing was natural?)

"Breathe," you said, "breathe—" How excited you grew! "Breathe! breathe!" you were shouting "But I am passing out," I said. "Well pass out!" and not I, but you, were screaming— But I didn't, did I? I wouldn't, would I? And how angry you became. I knew you, didn't I, sitting there on your stool? And you knew I knew you, didn't you, Doctor? In a rage you left the room, and I with my life, such as it still was, again reached the street.

Your report read all was Negative, that nothing was wrong, though you did add I 'panicked,' but then I am no Christ or I should not have been there. I am only alive.