

of Miss Berberova's categorical judgments is, for example, her blaming Tsvetaeva for not having achieved "maturity" and being guilty of "escapism"; she does not, however, define these ambiguous and gratuitous terms. The limitation of space prevents my quoting other instances of the same order.

In general, Miss Berberova's love for high-sounding generalities cramps her style. There is something irritating, almost screeching in her self-consciousness, intellectual snobbery, and pseudophilosophical digressions in which commonplace conclusions are presented as supreme wisdom. This is a pity, for Miss Berberova has talent and is intelligent, and when she turns from showing off and quibbling to expository descriptions, she can produce impressive and moving pages, such as those on Khodasevich's illness and death or the poetic retelling of the story of Tobias and the angel. This is not surprising, since she had already been singled out in the thirties by émigré critics (including this reviewer) as one of the most promising writers of the young generation abroad. Her novels *The First and the Last* (Paris, 1930) and *Without Sunset* (1938), her stories *Billancourt Holidays* (1928–38) and *The Easing of Fate* (Paris, 1948), as well as her other fiction published after 1950 in the United States in *Novyi Zhurnal*, show a craft which unites emotional intensity with verbal control, and expressiveness with precision.

Two things, however, weaken *The Italics Are Mine*. She speaks here about dozens of people and hardly finds a kind word for any of them, and she profusely labels people as "very stupid" or "dumb (not middling stupid, but exceptionally so)" (the last epithet is about Bunin's wife). She displays so much hostility, is so bent on attacking and accusing her contemporaries or making innuendos and offensive hints, that the reader is left with a bad taste in his mouth. He has the impression that she is not only gossiping but also settling personal accounts with individuals. This passion for literary revenge makes her commit factual mistakes (such as her treatment of Zamiatin or the false information on Boris Bozhnev, a minor but good poet who, she writes, had died in 1940 after a mental illness, and a number of other errors too long to be listed in a short review).

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UNTIMELY THOUGHTS: ESSAYS ON REVOLUTION, CULTURE AND THE BOLSHEVIKS, 1917–1918. By *Maxim Gorky*. Translated, with an introduction and notes, by *Herman Ermolaev*. New York: Paul S. Eriksson, 1968. xviii, 302 pp. \$6.95.

Gorky's articles in *Novaia zhizn'* are known by repute to every student of modern Russian history and literature; yet not many people have actually read more than a few paragraphs from the grand total. Professor Ermolaev has had the good idea of collecting into a book all Gorky's contributions to this short-lived periodical. The title comes from Gorky's own incomplete edition of 1918.

These articles are generally considered as eloquent anti-Bolshevik propaganda. If they had been only that they might have achieved greater results, but Gorky was concerned less with the realities of practical politics than with the will-o'-the-wisp of saving Russia and Russian culture. For him the real enemy was the Russian mob with its traditional disposition toward violence and vandalism, and his complaint was that all political parties, particularly the Bolsheviks, were

guilty of irresponsible appeals to its baser instincts. It was this suprapolitical attitude of Gorky's that explains his decision to back the Bolsheviks only a few weeks after they had suppressed *Novaia zhizn'*. He was able to disregard this deep personal rebuff, because he had come to feel that the Bolsheviks, for all their faults, were now the only party capable of saving Russia from chaos. It was certainly disingenuous of him to claim later that his opposition to the Bolsheviks was inspired *only* by a distrust of the peasantry; but it is also too much to claim, with Ermolaev, the lack of any "evidence that he retracted his condemnation of the Bolshevik methods of government" as proof of his continuing reservations (p. xiii). First, such a retraction would have been much too specific to be convenient (the generalities saved face all round); second, his ostentatious cooperation with the Soviet rulers from 1928 onward was proof enough of his change of heart.

It is not quite clear why the articles have been translated for this edition; students of Russian history and literature would prefer the original Russian, and it is unlikely that these articles will interest anyone else. Gorky's political ideas were naïve, and his journalistic writings are ponderous; in English translation these faults are inevitably spotlighted: "But when a man who is down raises his head and quietly slithers up behind you with the insidious intention of hitting you in the back of the head, then it is necessary to talk about him in that tone which his Jesuitic schemes deserve" (p. 163).

The book is prefaced by a useful introduction covering Gorky's relations with the Bolsheviks from the Revolution until his death. There are copious notes, mostly aimed at nonspecialist readers, and a competent index.

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A DICTIONARY OF IRREGULAR RUSSIAN VERB FORMS. By D. B. Powers. New York, London, Sydney, and Toronto: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1968. xiv, 353 pp. \$12.95.

RUSSIAN: BOOK ONE. By Joseph C. Doherty, Roberta Lander Markus, and Cynthia Lamoureux. Boston: D. C. Heath, [1968]. xiii, 303 pp. \$6.50.
RUSSIAN: BOOK TWO. Boston: D. C. Heath, [1970]. xiii, 382 pp.

Anyone with even a rudimentary knowledge of Russian grammar has to be surprised to discover that there are enough irregular verbs in Russian to fill a dictionary. A quick examination of the dictionary clears up the mystery. It contains such "irregular" verbs as *pisat'*, *khodit'*, *liubit'*, and *nesti*. In other words, any verbal paradigm in which the stem undergoes some kind of a change is considered irregular (except for *-ovat'* and *-nut'* verbs, which do not lose *-nu-* in the past tense). Such a conception of grammatical irregularity is of course monstrous. However, the dictionary is not intended for linguists but for those users of Russian who lose much time "in futile search in standard dictionaries for the infinitive and/or meaning of an irregular finite form" (p. v). If such people exist, they undoubtedly need all the help they can get, and for them this book will come in handy.

The dictionary lists the first- and second-person singular forms (and for *-ch* infinitives the third-person plural, which contributes nothing, since the first-per-