

## BOOK SUPPLEMENT

## WORLD AFFAIRS

THE SPIRIT OF POST-WAR RUSSIA: SOVIET IDEOLOGY 1917-1946. By Rudolf Schlesinger. (Dennis Dobson; 8s. 6d.)

THE SOVIET UNION. By 'Sarmazius'. (The Sword of the Spirit; 1s.)

The main title of the book is somewhat misleading, its sub-title only less so. The opening words of the author's preface say that it 'deals with Soviet attitudes to general issues of Soviet life'; but even this hardly does justice to the historical and factual elements in the book. The publisher claims for it that 'here, in fact, are the answers to those many questions which we have been asking about the U.S.S.R.'. Whether this be true or not depends of course on what questions the individual reader asks; and there is no certain answer to the question, 'Are these answers reliable?' But the book is well-documented, Dr Schlesinger is very well informed, and to this reviewer the book carries a considerable measure of conviction (allowance being made for the author's skill in putting the most favourable interpretation on awkward facts). It is certainly of absorbing interest to read, and free from the difficulties presented by that 'special jargon' of Soviet 'ideology' which Dr Schlesinger deliberately avoids. (The index is lamentable, and there is a comic misprint in footnote 138 on page 145).

But in considering the religious question, at any rate, Dr Schlesinger does not bother himself about accuracy in what no doubt he regards as *nuances*: 'This [Roman Catholic] Church has its own political programme embodied in the papal encyclicals, which every Catholic is bound to believe infallible'. On the other hand, in face of the record and of the carelessness and irresponsibility of much of our speech and writing, we Catholics cannot reasonably complain if Christianity be misunderstood and misrepresented.

The 'Sarmatian' pamphlet is not a very good addition to the International Problems series. It says nothing new or in a new way, and its effect on the reader—unless he dismisses it as just one more bit of 'anti' propaganda—is likely to be increased dislike, with no desire to try to understand. Dr Schlesinger at least helps us to see 'how the other fellow's mind works'.  
D.D.A.

AUSTRIAN REQUIEM. By Kurt von Schuschnigg, Chancellor of Austria. (Gollancz; 9s. 0d.)

This remarkable book by the ex-Chancellor of Austria consists of two parts, the one a reasoned explanation and defence of Austrian policy during his chancellorship, the other a diary of his experiences during the crisis of 1938 and his subsequent imprisonment by the Nazis. The first part is sandwiched between two sections of the diary

which take us, at the beginning of the book, to the end of the Chancellor's imprisonment in Vienna, and at the end, complete the story by recounting the experiences of the author in concentration camps until his rescue by the Americans in 1945.

The two parts of the book are therefore quite different in character. The diary is a most moving document, revealing the deep religious faith and humility of the author, and the hideous cruelty of the power which he defied and was vanquished by. We should by now be sufficiently aware of the degradation of the human character which the Nazi régime imposed upon its servants, but it is as well to see it again in action against an eminent statesman who had been rash enough to oppose the designs of Hitler. Prison and concentration camp, torture and disregard of elementary decency, are here illuminated again.

The description of Schuschnigg's policy from the death of Dollfuss to the Anschluss is also of great interest. Among other matters, we learn that the Italian Government had, apparently, a secret means of access to the confidential files of our own Foreign Office. The point which emerges most strongly, however, is the impossible economic state of Austria as she was reconstituted by the Treaties of 1919. The Allied statesmen who destroyed the unity of the Hapsburg dominions created, by the destruction of that unity, a confusion of races and territories and economic external unity. It is clear that, short of a new European war, this unity is most likely to be achieved by the subjection of the entire basin of the Danube, from Linz to the Black Sea, to Soviet Russia. Those who rejoice in Russian domination will prefer this new status to the old hegemony of the Hapsburgs; the rest of the world will regret it.

Had the Weimar régime persisted in Germany; had Chancellor Brüning been strong-willed enough to crush the Nazis in the early 1930s, all this need never have happened. As it was, Dollfuss and Schuschnigg found themselves in a position where Austria was economically dependent upon Germany, but a Germany ruled by Hitler. Within Austria they had to contend with violently hostile groups, and their attempts to do so command sympathy, even if some of their efforts were short-sighted and even illiberal. The publishers of this book have sought almost hysterically to dissociate themselves from the policies of the two Austrian Chancellors, but the ordinary reader will find it only too easy to sympathise with those who attempted, with courage, dignity and patriotism, the impossible task of governing the Austria of the Succession States.

PAUL FOSTER, O.P.

STRAIGHT ON. *Journey to Belsen and the Road Home.* By Robert Collis and Han Hogerzeil. (Methuen; 10s. 6d.)

The authors of this book were members of a medical team sent to Belsen after the liberation of the concentration camp. Dr Collis is an Irish children's physician. Miss Hogerzeil was a law student at