

SOVIET WOMEN. By *William M. Mandel*. Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1975. viii, 350 pp. + 16 pp. photographs. \$3.50, paper.

With the current focus on the roles of women in the world, the mixed situation of Soviet women has lent itself to varying interpretations. This book, intended for a general audience, is an attempt to popularize the author's belief that Soviet women "are far ahead of American women" in rights, benefits, opportunities, and general treatment, and that the story of how they reached their "advantaged position" and exercise it today holds some lessons for women in our country.

This conclusion is not supported even by the author's own selection of materials. The most appealing quality of the book is Mandel's spirited advocacy of Soviet women on the very issues that limit their professional and political advancement to the highest levels. The author concedes that full equality still eludes them because of the nature of traditional Russian culture. Soviet cultural policies "were progressive as far as women were concerned, but were overwhelmed by the weight of established [male] chauvinism and rural custom."

It is difficult to explain away all shortcomings in terms of lingering attitudes and traditions. A judgment more balanced than Mandel's would have to fault Soviet leaders for the fact that, even today, the simplest tasks of everyday life involve obstacles that could long ago have been lessened by a political leadership truly concerned with easing the burdens of its women. Although many opportunities have indeed opened up for the professional advancement of Soviet women, the daily concerns of life—shopping, running a household, raising children—remain extraordinarily energy-consuming. Soviet power draws heavily on the dynamism of women and it has exploited their capacity and willingness to endure.

An innovative study would be required to explore the inner psychology of Soviet women, in order to learn why it is that, in spite of the double load of job and home, they seem to accept, by and large, the leadership's claim to have immeasurably improved their lot. Soviet women feel "comparatively little dissatisfaction" with their position relative to men, and Mandel concludes that there is not enough dissatisfaction, at this time, to generate a liberation movement aimed at equalizing the burden of work in the home.

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LITERATURE AND IDEOLOGY IN SOVIET EDUCATION. By *N. N. Shneidman*. Published for the Centre for Russian and East European Studies, University of Toronto. Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Books, D. C. Heath, 1973. xii, 209 pp. \$13.50.

Formal study of literature is part of the Soviet school curriculum beginning with the fourth grade of elementary school, and continuing uninterrupted until graduation. Thus, every graduate of a Soviet secondary school receives a total of seven years instruction in the subject. In the process, every pupil reads impressive amounts of Russian and also some Western writing—certainly much more than almost any American student. In addition, he is often required to memorize a great deal of poetry and, on occasion, prose. Nevertheless, American educators and parents, despairing over the ignorance of literature that is prevalent among their charges and offspring, should not be too quick to accept this evidence as yet another testimony to the superiority of the Soviet educational system. As one

Soviet teacher reports, "conversations with many pupils from different classes and schools [reveal] that pupils nowadays consider Russian literature one of the most boring subjects." The teacher's discovery is corroborated by much additional data, both direct and indirect. Reasons for this state of affairs are not based simply on overly traditional and unimaginative teaching. As N. N. Shneidman's book demonstrates, much, if not most, of the blame rests with the stubborn persistence with which Soviet educators—professional descendants, as it were, of Chekhov's "Man in the Case,"—attempt to utilize literature as a tool of political indoctrination, both in the direct meaning of the term and also in a broader sense, as a device for promoting the socialization of the young. In the process, boys and girls are taught to classify literary characters into positive heroes to be emulated and villains to be condemned, and are then tested on their ability to extract evidence of the decay of old Russia's aristocracy and the greed of her bourgeoisie from various literary masterpieces. All these are, of course, weighty matters, but hardly conducive to awakening in the young a feeling of fascination with the magic of verse or the allure of great prose.

N. N. Shneidman's very competent study traces the methods whereby literature is employed for politically didactic purposes in the Soviet educational network. The seventy pages of Mr. Shneidman's discussion are followed by nearly three times as many pages of appendixes. These include detailed descriptions of literature curricula at various levels, reading lists, samples of examinations, and suggested subjects for term papers. Those of us who care about literature must derive comfort from the fact that millions of young Soviet people still emerge from such trials with their love for good writing unimpaired, just as some of our own youngsters discover the existence of great novels, even though one would hardly detect this existence from their textbooks.

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POWSTANIE PAŃSTW NARODOWYCH W EUROPIE ŚRODKOWO-WSCHODNIEJ. By *Wiesław Balcerak*. Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1974. 503 pp. 56 zł., paper.

Born in 1934, Wiesław Balcerak is one of the most prolific of the post-Stalinist generation of young Polish historians. His previous book-length studies have dealt with interwar diplomatic history, but in the present book he demonstrates his versatility with a tightly-organized analysis of political history.

As its title indicates, the volume offers an examination of the establishment of the national states of East Central Europe at the close of, and as an outcome of, the First World War. The sweeping opening chapter traces the development of national liberation movements throughout the area, from the end of the revolutions of 1848 to the eve of World War I. Chapters two and three deal with the diplomatic competition between the opposing sides in that war, and their attempt either to neutralize or to win the national movements to their respective sides. In addition, these chapters treat the impact of the Russian Revolution on the entire matter. Chapters four through ten trace the political travails of the restored, enlarged, or truncated states of Poland, Austria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Rumania, Yugoslavia, and Bulgaria, from the closing weeks of World War I to the early or mid-1920s, when a suitable denouement—a point of relative stabilization (differing for each state)—was achieved. The three Baltic states, Albania, and Greece are