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Troubled and Stifled

THE NEW MAN IN SOVIET PSYCHOLOGY. By Raymond A. Bauer. 229 pp. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press. \$4.

By GREGORY ZILBOORG

A BOOK about the Soviets is nowadays expected to be a passionate denunciation of, or a just as passionate apology for, that which is the Soviet Union, for or of the Soviet Union. Raymond A. Bauer seems to be free of animus or adoration. What is more, he seems to have gained this freedom without having to control forcibly his animosity or fondness for his admiration. He is free because he seems to be a quiet student who sat down and read long and carefully into the Soviet ideological and psychological literature, and then set down his conclusions just as quietly and simply. All this makes the book almost devoid of inaccuracies, and free of that silly juxtaposition of what we do and think in a democracy as compared with what people do and think under an authoritarian regime.

I read this book carefully, and I was unable to find such catchwords as "totalitarian," "dictatorship," "autocracy," written and pronounced with that self-righteous venom which is so in vogue today. The picture of groping and troubled scientific minds who are stifled without being aware of it is grim enough by itself, and it speaks for itself. Mr. Bauer has done full justice to this picture, and the reader will learn a great deal about Soviet mentality in general and the vicissitudes of Marxism-Leninism-Stalinism in various dresses styled by Trotsky, cut and dried by Bukharin, dry-cleaned and brushed by Lenin, and finally fashioned by Stalin.

IT is striking and a little nauseating to read quotations from the great Czarist psychiatrist Bechterev, as he tries to fit his old reflexology into Hegelian dialectics in order to float with the Marxian stream. It is most interesting to follow the evolu-

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tion of Soviet psychological orientations, from mechanistic materialism denying the very existence of consciousness as a factor in human behavior to the present-day Soviet affirmation of consciousness as one of the supreme factors of human behavior—all, of course, in the name of both Marx and materialism.

This psycho-philosophical tightrope walking has produced a number of baffling effects, from an almost quietistic conception of man as a passive tool of history and culture, an almost hopeless victim of a sort of Calvinistic-Marxian predestination, to a picture of an almost voluntaristic, self-conscious individual who is responsible for his behavior.

The cornerstone of the whole psychology of the Soviet Union today seems to be a fantasy of a purposive, individual will relentlessly striving toward social salvation by voluntarily submitting to the will of the socialized ideal of a classless life of noble toil. This is the New Man and the New Psychology. Neither seems to be too new, really.

HOW non-isolated the allegedly isolated Soviet psychology is comes out clearly in Mr. Bauer's judicious exposition. The Soviets began with American behaviorism and went through a momentary return to Wundt. They are now ending up strange bedfellows of a number of "bourgeois" psychologists who accept consciousness as a "higher organization of matter," reject the unconscious emotional sources of human behavior, and at once burden the individual with the responsibility for his behavior and stifle him within the confines of his culture, of which he is at the same time the creator and the victim.

Because this is a good book, one wishes that errors in the psychological, neologistic jargon had not been overlooked by the editors. One might wish further to see a somewhat more complete synthesis of the Soviet literature. But then a reviewer's wishes are never those of the author's—and Mr. Bauer is to be commended on a direct, intelligent and measured work.