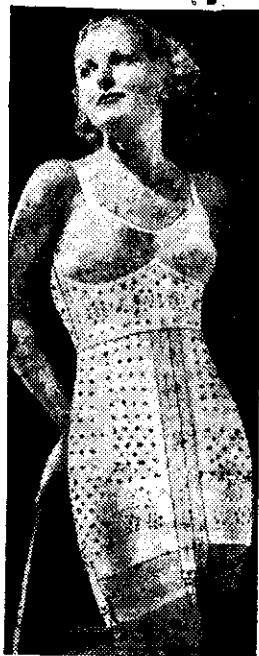


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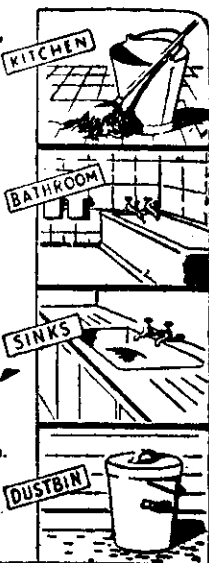


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BOOK REVIEWS

(continued from previous page)

interest to the whole world. India needs sympathy and understanding and practical help, and she should be encouraged to look for these primarily among the nations of the Commonwealth.

—A.M.

ON THE MOVE

UNDER STRANGE SKIES. By Christina Soltan. Published for The Melville Press by George Allen and Unwin Ltd., London.

THIS is the story of Christina Soltan's journey from Berlin to Liverpool via Krakow, Moscow, Harbin, Tokio, Singapore and Capetown, a journey which began in 1938 and ended in 1942. It begins with a comfortably-circumstanced music student in Berlin being woken early by the crash of glass as two German policemen wreck the shop of a Jewish tailor. It ends four years later, when the same music student, no longer comfortably circumstanced and herself a victim of Nazi aggression rather than an onlooker, steams into Liverpool Harbour on her way to join the Polish forces. (We are not told whether she was successful in this—our guess is that she contented herself with marrying her Michal.)

This is an exciting and moving story told by a young woman who was trained as a pianist and not as an author. It has been said that each of us has in his own life the material for one novel, but Miss Soltan has been further handicapped by the fact that in a mere four years of living she has amassed material enough for a baker's dozen. The task of confining this wealth of material into a mere 480 pages is one that would tax the ability of an experienced craftsman. Moreover the author finds herself in this travel-autobiography obliged to deploy her talents in two genres at the same

time—she must now be the detached onlooker, considering dispassionately the surge of history that deposits her now here, now one wave farther on, and she must also take time out to tell her own love-story. Miss Soltan has certainly not a great deal of time to think about love, and in any case she is not a Negley Parson, who can dismiss an amour in parenthesis without halting for a second the march of history. The bare vowel "I" is extremely hard to handle, particularly in emotional contexts, and though the authoress manages her close-ups and fade-outs with restraint, the reader is not so fully identified with his heroine that he can accept them without a squirm. Miss Soltan is more successful in dealing with her less personal experiences of people and events, and when she is deeply moved by the larger issues her prose forgets the carefully assumed literary touch and shines forth in unadorned simplicity. Her love for her native Poland is the main emotional theme of the book.

But *Under Strange Skies* has the supreme merit of an odyssey—it moves. Something is always happening, there are new scenes, new characters, some just extras, many unforgettable portraits. Apart from the early chapters dealing with Nazi Germany the ground covered is almost virgin, and, now that the Iron Curtain has descended on Poland, some of it is likely to remain so as far as western readers are concerned. The chapters on Japan, both before and after Pearl Harbour, make enthralling reading, though they would seem fantastic and improbable to anyone who has not lived to see them receive the hallmark of history. It is inevitable that a strong flavour of melodrama should impregnate the works of anyone who attempts to write modern history from a personal viewpoint, and if readers find the pace and emotional tempo too hot for their liking they must blame History.

—M.B.

"DUPLICATS" ON TOUR Broadcasts from the ZB Stations

ONE afternoon in June last year, three singers gathered round a piano in an Auckland suburban home. One hadn't sung for some years, another had never sung at all, and the pianist had had no experience arranging for voices. Their stock-in-trade was enthusiasm. As rehearsals progressed co-ordination came and an item was recorded and sent to an NZBS programme officer. Since then the "Duplicats," as they call themselves, have been heard occasionally during the last few months by Auckland radio listeners. The Duplicats make a point of singing nothing that is not at least 15 years old. They hold that most of the popular songs of to-day are of the slow, sentimental type, while those of 20 years ago were fast and amusing; and it is their aim to entertain amusingly.

The leading parts are sung by Esme Stephens, who started with Theo Walters' 12B Band at the opening of the new 12B studios. She was with Artie Shaw when his US Navy Band visited Auckland, and has also appeared with Freddie Gore, Len Hawkins, Ted Healey, Dorsey Cameron, Art Rosoman and Bobby Leach.

Esme Stephens is supported vocally by Ena Allen, who started with Red Beecham's Band, and left it to join Johnnie Madden. Then she broadcast for some time with Ossie Cheeseman from 1YA. Dale Alderton, the third singer, is one of Auckland's best trombonists and has played the lead trombone with several bands. The ideas, arrangements and piano accompaniments are supplied by Johnnie Thomson, who also writes the continuity spoken by Alderton (with occasional interruptions from the two girls). Before the war, Thomson led bands at two of Auckland's night clubs; and when he returned from service with the Air Force he joined Art Rosoman.

For those interested in close harmony, here is the Duplicats' playing schedule: 12B, Monday, January 24, at 6.45 p.m.; Wednesday, January 26, at 7.0 p.m.; Friday, January 28, at 3.0 p.m. and 6.45 p.m. Station 22B: Monday, January 31, at 8.30 p.m.; Tuesday, February 1, at 6.45 p.m.; Wednesday, February 2, at 8.30 p.m.; Thursday, February 3, at 3.0 p.m. Station 32B: Friday, February 4, at 3.0 p.m. and 8.30 p.m.; Saturday, February 5, at 8.45 p.m., and Monday, February 7, at 8.30 p.m. Station 42B: Wednesday, February 9, at 8.30 p.m.; Thursday, February 10, at 6.45 p.m., and Friday, February 11, at 3.0 p.m. and 7.30 p.m.

(See photograph on page 24)