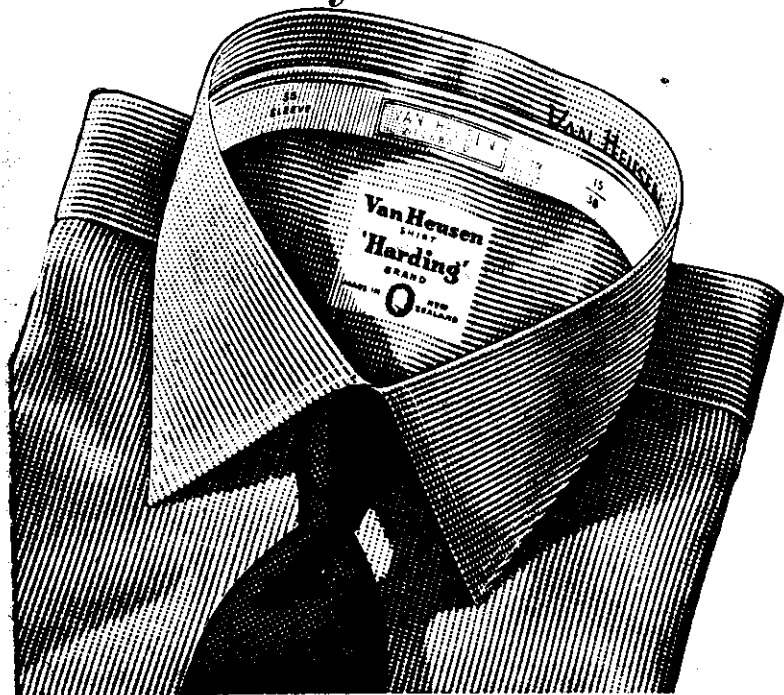


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BOOKS

The Soviet Enigma

VISA TO MOSCOW, by Michel Gordey; Victor Gollancz. English price, 21/-; THE TIME OF THE ASSASSINS, by Godfrey Blunden; Jonathan Cape. English price, 15/-.

(Reviewed by David Hall)

A FRENCH journalist who speaks Russian fluently, Michel Gordey in 1950 managed to spend two months travelling in Russia. He found it quite possible to walk about on his own in Moscow: no one would talk to a foreigner anyway. But in the hands of Intourist ("anti-tourist") most of his requests to see particular activities and institutions were politely and systematically frustrated. This was partly due to the "widespread fear of taking an unauthorised step which paralyses every other consideration" in the "massive but timid bureaucracy" of the Soviet Union, partly to a pathological love of secrecy for its own sake. How much Gordey saw and heard in spite of obstruction and official prearrangement of visits will amaze the reader. This book rings true and does its best to be fair to both sides in the "irresolvable debate."



Gordey finds the Soviet people firmly behind their Government. Although their living standards are low, they are rising; average standards of appreciation of the arts seem high. Whatever its ineptitude in its foreign propaganda—and Gordey thinks it has the worst public relations service in the world—on the home front Soviet propaganda is entirely successful, building up a picture of hostile decadent capitalist powers surrounding an innocent and peace-loving Russia. Even the educated Russian with actual knowledge of the West is happy to swallow the official line, just as he naively accepts certain obscure Russians as the "onlie beggetters" of almost every invention in the modern world.

Godfrey Blunden's strong and gripping story deals with conditions in Khar'kov during its occupation by German troops in 1942, a sordid account of atrocity and counter-atrocity, weighted in favour of the Russians gallantly struggling to expel the invader, with an ironically macabre ending. It is a good novel, and its theme helps to explain the genuine dread of a new war which Gordey found everywhere in Russia.

A PHILOSOPHER'S MIND

HUME'S INTENTIONS, by J. A. Passmore; Cambridge University Press. English price, 18/-.

WHEN Professor Passmore's *Ralph Cudworth* appeared, after his appointment to the Chair of Philosophy in the University of Otago, it became clear that this country had acquired a historian of philosophy of considerable distinction. That book has effected something of a revolution in our understanding of Cudworth; and now Professor Passmore has given us this new one on Hume.

Hume's *Intentions* is not an easy book; and indeed there would be little justification today for writing an easy book on

Hume, so many having already been written. What Professor Passmore has attempted is to find the strand in Hume's mental make-up that is as it were the key to all the rest, and he finds it in his desire to put our knowledge of human nature on a thoroughly scientific footing, with an associated conviction that all other knowledge must rest upon this. This conviction, in Professor Passmore's view, was a mistake—there is no one part of knowledge which can thus be taken as a foundation for all the rest; and Hume's error here prevented him from being in fact the scientific psychologist that he wished to be and thought of himself as being. Professor Passmore examines various comparatively well-known features of Hume's thought, and attempts to show how they all bear out this contention. For example, Hume's reduction of our belief that X is the cause of Y to a mere irrational habit of expecting Y whenever we encounter X, induced in us by past associations, reflects his tendency to regard "the heart of the matter" as something psychological, whatever "the matter" might be; but his detailed psychological explanation of the genesis of this supposed habit is shown to be extremely lame.

Professor Passmore makes out his case very persuasively; but he himself has taught some of us to be very sceptical of claims to explain historical processes by a single "key idea," and I suspect that one could present an equally convincing picture of a rather different Hume from this one. Indeed, precisely that was done not long ago by Professor Kemp-Smith of Edinburgh, who makes the driving force behind Hume's philosophy a moral one—the provision of an appropriate intellectual background for an urbane and tolerant attitude to life. It is significant that Hume's ethical writings, which for Professor Kemp-Smith are all-important, are not touched upon in *Hume's Intentions* at all. But it is good to have Professor Passmore's Hume, too, and pleasant to reflect that so much of him was concocted in Dunedin.

—A. N. Prior

THE PAST RECOVERED

GODS, GRAVES AND SCHOLARS, by C. W. Ceram, translated by E. B. Garside; Victor Gollancz and Sidgwick and Jackson. English price, 21/-.

AN enormous winged lion is dug out of the earth near the Tigris. Appalled and delighted the local bedouins celebrate the occasion with burst of rifle fire. The lion, says their sheik, is the work not of men but of the infidel giants, it is "one of the idols which Noah . . . cursed before the flood."

The bedouin was expressing very adequately the shock of contact with the

S. T. BARNETT, Under-Secretary of Justice and Controller-General of Prisons (whose portrait appears below) is to be heard in ZB Book Review on May 17 discussing "Who Lie in Gaol," by Joan Henry.



Sociological and medical themes occupy the session. Heinz Leipman's "Case History: The Story of a Drug Addict," is to be reviewed by Stuart Perry; Dr. H. B. Turbott will discuss "The White Plague," by

Rene Dubos, and "Living with Cancer," by Edna Kaehele; and Richard Williams-Thompson's "Progress or the Pashas" will be reviewed by John Moffett

N.Z. LISTENER, MAY 8, 1953.