

THE ORIGINS OF THE CRIMEAN ALLIANCE. By *Ann Pottinger Saab*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1977. xii, 223 pp. \$17.50.

The origin of the Crimean War has long been a fascinating topic in diplomatic history. Scholars have attempted to explain how the Great Powers—Russia, France, Great Britain, and the Ottoman Empire—were drawn into a major conflict in which the immediate issues in dispute were not clear, and when no government, with the exception of the Ottoman regime, wished to fight. The problem of how this could have happened is analyzed in Ann Pottinger Saab's excellent monograph. The narrative covers the two years from the arrival of the Menshikov mission in February 1852 to France's and Britain's entry into war with Russia in March 1854; particular attention is given, as the author explains, to "the process by which the British government, initially reluctant to become involved in the Eastern crisis, became the Ottoman Empire's military ally." Consequently, the focus is on those events at Constantinople which "enmeshed the British in a war they wanted to win but did not wish to fight" (p. ix).

A great strength of this account is the sympathetic attention given to the Ottoman position. The author has used Ottoman archives and Turkish historical literature, and the Ottoman capital is the center of the narrative. The book commences with a discussion of the Menshikov mission and an analysis of its goals, particularly the demand for the recognition of what, in practice, would have been a Russian protectorate over the Orthodox subjects of the sultan. Acceptance of this condition was correctly regarded as a "death sentence" by the Ottoman government. British influence in Constantinople, especially in relation to the Tanzimat reforms and the reaction of the various elements of Ottoman society to them, is also fully discussed.

In the chapters tracing the steps toward war, this reviewer found particularly interesting the explanation of the activities of Stratford Canning, the British ambassador, and Constantine Musurus, the Ottoman representative in London, whose overly optimistic "descriptions of British readiness to help" (p. 72) contributed to the Ottoman willingness to go to war. The analysis of the background of the battle of Sinope and the effect that disastrous defeat had in drawing the Western powers into war is also extremely effective.

The book is based on a thorough study of the literature on the Crimean War published in the major European languages and in Modern and Ottoman Turkish. French, British, Austrian, and Ottoman archives are similarly used. Although the emphasis is on British and Ottoman policy, the positions of the other powers are also discussed. The account is a good companion to the recent work by Paul Schroeder, *Austria, Britain, and the Crimean War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1972), which emphasizes Habsburg policy.

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GESCHICHTE DER RUSSISCHEN LITERATUR. 3rd ed., 2 vols. By *Adolf Stender-Petersen*. Munich: C. H. Beck, 1978 [Munich: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1957]. Vol. 1: xvi, 440 pp. Vol. 2: 623 pp. DM 48.

The appearance of an unchanged third edition of a work which was translated (under the late author's supervision) over twenty years ago (in 1957) would seem to indicate its intrinsic value. Certainly no one scholar could write a history of Russian literature from its beginnings to the Symbolist period, and keep his treatment equally strong, alert, and profound throughout. Stender-Petersen, an expert in the medieval period, is remarkably knowledgeable in the eighteenth century as well. His treatment of nineteenth-century literature is sound and informative, but generally eclectic in a con-

ventional way. It is here that Symbolist, Formalist, and Structuralist criticism has opened vistas which do not appear in Stender-Petersen's book. Even in this portion of the book, however, there are many observations and formulations that are exemplary in their conciseness and precision; for example, his definition of the keynote (*Grundton*) of Pushkin's lyric poetry as "a serene and wise paganism, rooted in rationalist and classicist premises" (vol. 1, p. 111), or his description of Dostoevsky's "contrary" (*konträre*) method as one that involves "a tendency to confuse and to undermine, a dualism in plot design and character delineation, all of which made him one of the most captious (*verfänglich*) ironists of world literature" (vol. 2, p. 299). All in all, this may still be the best history of Russian literature available in any language (it is superior to Mirsky's classic work in everything but style and readability). Nevertheless, it will not do as a single source of information; too much has happened in the field since 1957. The bibliography (not updated from the second edition, where it was spotty) is quite inadequate.

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THE FORMAL METHOD IN LITERARY SCHOLARSHIP: A CRITICAL INTRODUCTION TO SOCIOLOGICAL POETICS. By P. N. Medvedev and M. M. Bakhtin. Translated by Albert J. Wehrle. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978 [Leningrad: "Priboi," 1928]. xxvi, 191 pp.

The treatise under review has long been recognized as the most sustained and serious critique of Russian Formalism from an ostensibly Marxist perspective. First published in 1928 under the name of P. N. Medvedev, it has of late been attributed in large part to no less a figure than the distinguished literary scholar and theorist M. M. Bakhtin. This alleged dual authorship may account for the incisiveness and philosophical sophistication of *The Formal Method*—qualities which are not readily apparent in Medvedev's eclectic essays on Blok or his rather pedestrian volume *V laboratorii pisatel'ia* (1960).

The book opens with a knowledgeable and fair-minded account of the Formalist trend in West European studies of literature and art, and then embarks on a systematic survey of the salient concepts and tenets of Russian Formalism. Throughout, the stance is consistently—indeed relentlessly—critical, yet it is far from dismissive. The authors are prepared to meet the Formalists on their own ground: "Every young science—and Marxist literary scholarship is very young—should value a good opponent much more highly than a bad ally." The "good opponent" is credited with having sharply focused on important problems of literary theory which Marxist criticism, left to its own devices, was not yet ready to tackle. The confrontation often proves illuminating. *The Formal Method* shrewdly diagnoses some of the major drawbacks of Opoiaz poetics—its naïve empiricism, "one-sided orientation toward Futurism," and tendency toward aesthetic isolationism, especially apparent in the Formalist writings about prose fiction. On occasion, the Medvedev-Bakhtin strictures appear to me less than fair. I would be inclined to query their harping on the allegedly "subjectivist" implications of Victor Shklovskii's theory of "disautomatization" of perception effected by art, as well as their proclivity for assessing the Formalist doctrine in terms of its early, and avowedly immature, phase. Perhaps a more serious flaw in this otherwise impressive and cogent study is the relative thinness of the positive program it adumbrates. The concept of "sociological poetics" is strenuously postulated but not seriously implemented. If all cultural or "ideological" phenomena are ultimately "social" in nature, the ritualistic invocation of that adjective with relation to imaginative literature can hardly provide a clue to the specificity of literary art—