

Book Reviews

American Research on Russia. Harold H. Fisher, Ed. Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1959. xiv + 240 pp. \$5.

How often one hears Americans complain, "Oh, but we know so little about Russia!" *American Research on Russia* tells how much we really *do* know about Russia, if people would only take the trouble to read even a small fraction of the studies referred to in this new survey. The book should be of interest to laymen as well as to experts.

American Research on Russia is a collection of 12 essays resulting from surveys conducted under the auspices of the Joint Committee on Slavic Studies of the American Council of Learned Societies and the Social Science Research Council; these surveys were widely discussed at the 10th anniversary conference of the Russian Research Center of Harvard University in January 1958. Far from being an anthology, the book is a most thorough guide to scholarly works on Russia which have been published in English during the last few decades, particularly since World War II. In addition to providing a general survey of the growth of Russian studies in the United States, the essays discuss the research in such diverse fields as history, economics, political science, philosophy and religion, social relations, science, geography, literature, linguistics, music, architecture, and the minor arts. Without attempting to prejudge the quality of individual research efforts, referred to individually or discussed in group topics, the essays attempt to assess the position of the community of American scholars in regard to an "integrated outlook in a study of Russian society." The verdict: a great deal has been done; much more needs to be done.

The survey shows that our research effort is represented by a community of some 550 scholars, approximately 450

major book and study titles, and an uncounted number of articles, monographs, reports, and so forth. Activities of the United States Government, as well as all "popular writing" on the U.S.S.R., are omitted from consideration in the essays.

Research, particularly during the last 15 years, has had a tendency to focus more and more attention on the examination of contemporary problems. The volume of research, and especially its quality, attests to the ability of the American academic community to withstand the pressures of America's shifting attitude toward communism and the U.S.S.R. The book makes a plea for more continued effort by appealing for wider public acceptance of, and acquaintance with, research on Russia carried out for the sake of scholarship and knowledge rather than for immediate utilitarian ends of a political or strategic nature. The broader understanding of "detached scholarship" is viewed as essential for bridging the gap that, unfortunately, continues to exist between "popular knowledge" of the Soviet Union and the wealth of scholarly research on Russia and world communism. This defense of the ivory tower is made with an eye toward the increasing role the government is expected to play in this area of research and in the hope of expanding the "pipeline" of private financial support.

Despite the tribute to "area-oriented interdisciplinary research," the very structure of the book, as well as most of the studies reviewed therein, mirrors quite accurately the true state of American studies on the Soviet Union, showing traditional discipline-oriented research to be the dominant activity. The departmental pattern of employment in colleges and universities and the discipline-oriented education of most Russian area specialists is responsible, in large measure, for this pattern. The majority of researchers teach their respective traditional disciplines, and only a

few enjoy the luxury of research and teaching in Russian and Soviet areas exclusively.

Judging by the volume of research output, we find that historical research (with some 170 major titles) is the oldest and best established discipline. Postwar research advanced Soviet studies, particularly in political science (with some 70 major titles), social relations (about 70), and economics (about 50). As may be expected in these disciplines, there are many major studies, and some of them overlap onto closely related topics. By comparison, the score card for other fields is distressingly unfavorable, with far fewer titles of major scholarly works (for all other fields covered by the survey there are less than 100 titles). After the big four mentioned above come philosophy and religion, literature and music. There are very few studies in geography, the fine arts, or even linguistics. Titles are listed for only five major books on science in Russia. Most of these, and a supplement of two dozen or so articles, deal largely with ideological and political interference with Soviet scientific research. There is only one major study dealing with the institutional aspects of scientific research in the U.S.S.R. There are no major studies on the history of science. There are no major studies on engineering and technology. American science and Russian area studies will benefit mutually if more physical scientists and engineers can be attracted to study the Russian language, culture, and society, and to apply their scientific knowledge to area research. Soviet science and technology have remained terra incognita much too long.

NICHOLAS DEWITT

Harvard University and National Academy of Sciences-National Research Council

The Coconut Palm. K. P. V. Menon and K. M. Pandalai. Indian Central Coconut Committee, Ernakulam, South India, 1957. xvi + 384 pp. Illus. \$11.95.

This monograph on the coconut palm is a well-documented and well-illustrated publication concerned with all aspects of the plant. Essentially it is a compilation from the literature published since the 1938 monograph, *The Coconut* (by J. S. Patel). The authors of this new