

The book starts with a vivid description of the life of a child on a large farm or estate in the Ukraine in the 1880's, progressing to the high school in a neighboring provincial town where the boys wore uniforms and the teachers frock coats, to a highly competitive examination for entrance to the one and only Civil Engineering Railroad Institute of the Empire in Saint Petersburg and the four-year course in that institute, with a trip to France and Germany during the last summer vacation.

Western Europe, and especially Germany, around 1900, with its highly developed state of engineering mechanics, was a different world from Russia. It made an indelible impression on the young man. During the 17 years between his graduation and the revolution Timoshenko became a full professor in Kiev and Petrograd, visited western Europe repeatedly, wrote a host of important papers and books, and toward the end was the recognized leader of engineering mechanics in Russia. He also managed to be discharged from his Kiev professorship by the Czarist government for holding views that were too liberal.

When the Bolsheviks took hold in 1917 Timoshenko fled, first south to Kiev, where during the short-lived independence of the Ukraine he became one of the founders of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences, then further south to the Crimea, to Istanbul, and to Zagreb, where he became a professor again. The story of these wanderings and of how he brought his family out of Kiev is truly hair-raising.

In 1922 he immigrated to the United States and began his second life; first for a short time with Mr. Akimoff, also a Russian refugee, in Philadelphia, then in the Westinghouse research laboratory in Pittsburgh for five years, then at the University of Michigan for nearly ten years, and finally at Stanford University. Between 1922 and 1962 he wrote a dozen books on all aspects of engineering mechanics, which now are in their third or fourth U.S. editions and which have been translated into half a dozen foreign languages each, so that his name as an author and scholar is known to nearly every mechanical and civil engineer in the entire world. During this period he also traveled to Europe almost every year, the visits becoming progressively longer until finally he retired there altogether in 1966.

The second half of the book describes

the author's life in this country with his pupils and the many foreign visitors he attracted, as well as his European trips, in great detail. He attended nearly all international and national meetings and met all persons of prominence in applied mechanics in this world; the descriptions and anecdotes of these encounters make interesting reading.

The book is not a "scientific" autobiography. General readers will find interest in Timoshenko's account of how, as a young man in Russia, he studied the books of and in many cases had close personal contact with the great creators of applied mechanics of the age: Rayleigh, Love, G. I. Taylor, Southwell, Mesnager, Föppl, Prandtl, and von Kármán; how he found original applications of the ideas and theories of those men to his own field; and how he spread the gospel through contacts with his pupils and through his printed books and papers.

Timoshenko was a brilliant teacher who brought out the fundamental aspects of his subject with great clarity and always applied them to practical situations, which made him popular with the engineers in his audience. As a linguist he was less accomplished; at the beginning of any lecture he was difficult to understand, even after many years in this country; however, after 15 minutes of his lecturing the audience forgot all about that and followed his clear exposition for its own sake in spite of grammar.

There is no question that Timoshenko did much for America. It is an equally obvious truth that America did much for Timoshenko, as it did for millions of other immigrants from all over the world. However, our autobiographer has never admitted as much to his associates and pupils, who, like myself, often have been pained by his casual statements in conversation. That pain is not diminished by reading those statements on the printed page, and one would have wished for a little less acid and a little more human kindness. However, the book was originally written in the Russian language and was intended for and published by the White Russian refugee colony in western Europe. The present translation is warmly recommended to all readers interested in applied mechanics or contemporary history.

J. P. DEN HARTOG

*Department of Mechanical Engineering,  
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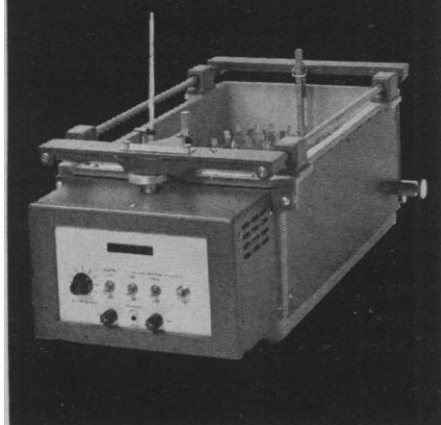
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(Continued on page 1154)

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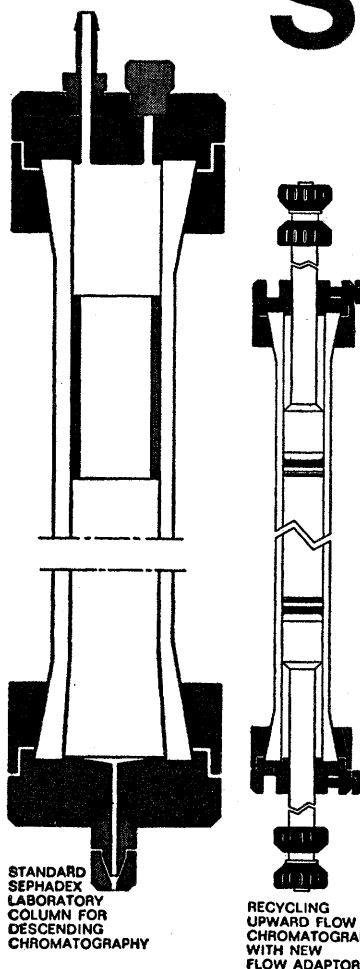
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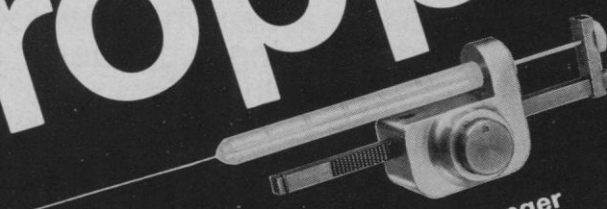
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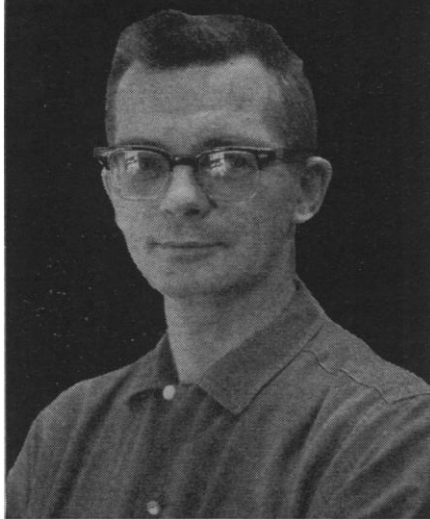
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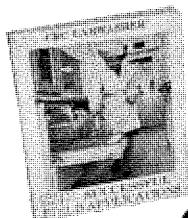
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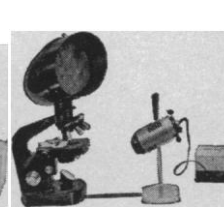
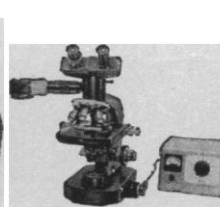
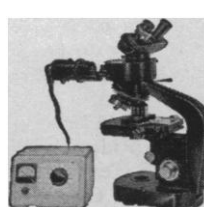
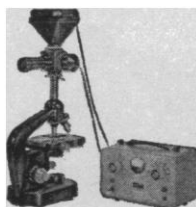


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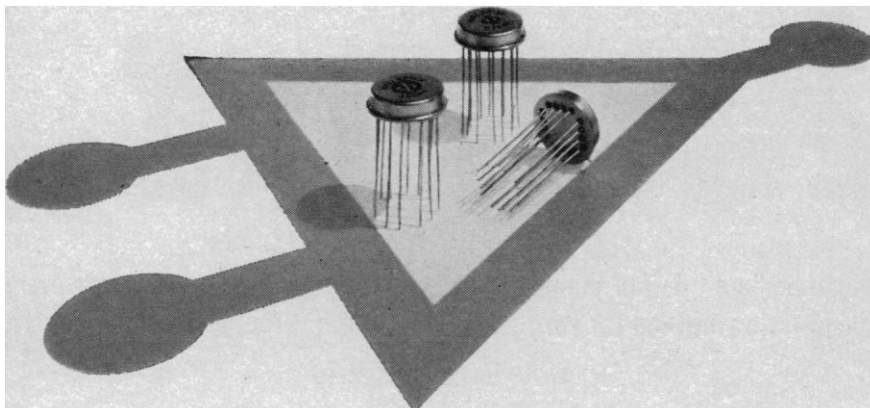
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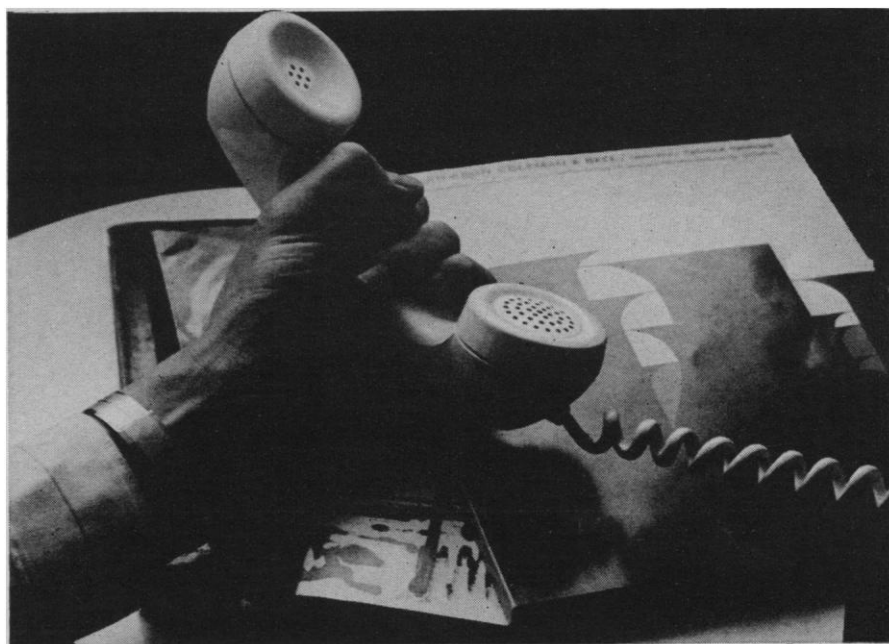
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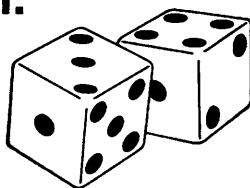


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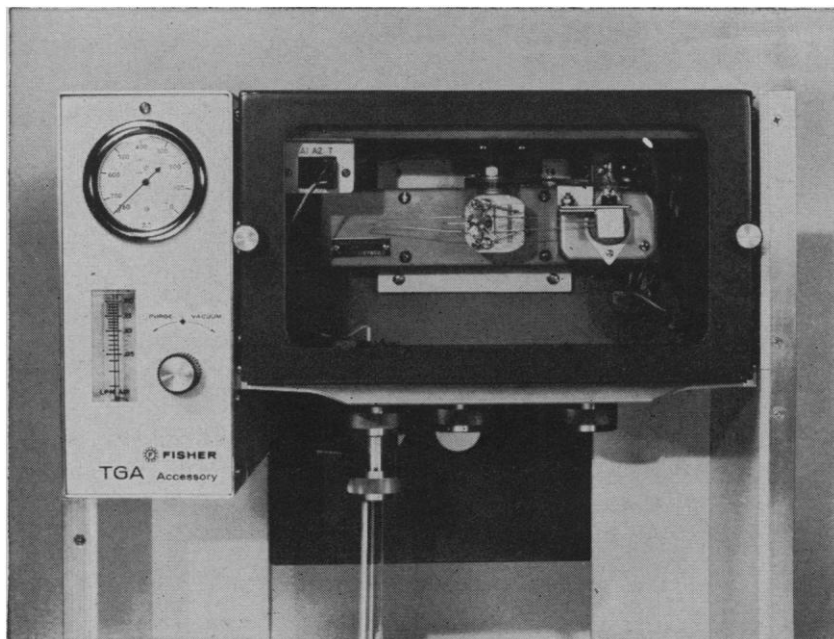
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