The inner peace that comes with the quiet contemplation of a beach on a still, calm morning, or the feeling of exhilaration that comes from riding a great wave in a small boat, is more reward than most men ever know.

To Bascom every wave is a "masterpiece of originality. It will ever be so," he says. "Go and see."'

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A Popular Synthesis

Geography of Japan. Ryuziro Isida. Kokusai Bunka Shinkokai, Tokyo, Japan, 1961 (available from East West Center Press, Honolulu). xiv + 124 pp. Illus. Paper, $3.50.

The aim of modern geography is to interpret the spatial characteristics of phenomena on the earth's surface. Three questions—*Where* are things located, *why* are they so located, and what is the *significance* of spatial patterns—are central to geography's wide range of investigations. This volume is intended as such a general introductory interpretation of Japan. Although considerable work has been done on Japan by American geographers since World War II, most of these researchers do not handle with ease the great mass of geographic literature being turned out in the Japanese language. Actually Japanese geographers are writing relatively more on the geography of Japan than American geographers are on the geography of the United States. Some indications of the range of literature can be seen by examining the very brief list of references at the end of the volume.

The idea of a Japanese geographer bringing together in English a geographic interpretation of Japan, which has been synthesized from writings in the Japanese language, is a good one. At this point, however, the old question always has to be raised, "at what kind of an audience should the volume be aimed"? Clearly this book is written for the intelligent layman who is interested in the world about him. It will not be very illuminating to the professional geographer who specializes in Japan or to others who have a substantial competence in Japanese problems. The volume is a general description of Japan's geography; it leaves out the great wealth of material relative to local or regional problems and interpretations. A brief introduction to the ties of history and geography is followed by sections on the physical setting, population and settlement, resources and industries, and socioeconomic reality.

Maps are generously used, but most of them are of extremely small scale and are not too well reproduced. Some 50 excellent photographs will contribute much to the ordinary reader's impression of Japan.

The book is one of nine volumes published to date by Kokusai Bunka Shinkokai (The Society for International Cultural Relations) and aimed at presenting the life and culture of Japan to the general reader. Other volumes in the series deal with anthropology, history, religion, folklore, and similar topics.

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British Atlas

The Atlas of Britain and Northern Ireland. Planned and directed by D. P. Bickmore and M. A. Shaw. Oxford University Press, New York, 1963. xii + 222 pp. Maps. $100.

For many countries the possession of a national atlas has become a mark of prestige, and nearly 50 countries have begun the publication of such a work, using public money as well as national resources to do so. *The Atlas of Britain*, in its size, in the scope of its coverage, and in the clarity and at times the beauty of its presentation, puts other such atlases to shame. Yet, in the strict sense, it is not a national atlas. It has been prepared privately and is published commercially.

It presents, as it claims, "a cross-section through the middle of the twentieth century." It illustrates, in 200 pages of maps, not merely the unchanging physical basis of Britain's national life, the geology and relief, the climate, the nature of the surrounding seas, the discharge of the rivers, the soils, and the natural vegetation, but also the distribution of population and of age groups in the population, recent changes in these age groups, and mortality rates, as well as the distribution of agricultural production, industry, and transportation facilities.

Most of the maps are on a scale of 1 : 2,000,000, so that the area of Great Britain and Northern Ireland can be shown on a single page of the atlas. In addition, the relief, vegetation, and solid and drift geology of the whole area are shown on a series of maps (on a scale of 1:1,000,000) that are well laid out for purposes of comparison. The maps themselves represent not merely compilations based on published statistical data, for their construction has involved extensive research by a highly qualified team of experts. The presentation of this data is ingenious to a degree; one could quote many examples of the authors' skill and ingenuity, but the map which shows the size and the number of agricultural holdings, with its subtle use of color to portray very complex data, is a masterpiece that must add a new perspective to any discussion of Britain's agriculture. Should you want to know where winter vegetables are grown or which soils yield potatoes most heavily, or should you desire to test the hypotheses about the contrasting agriculture of western and eastern Britain, the data is all here.

The maps of mineral production have rarely, if ever, been equalled in an atlas. Each coalfield is shown, and every coal mine, with its average depth and thickness of seam; the output per manshift is marked. Geological sections allow the reader, or the browser, to relate these data to the history of the coalfields and to draw his own conclusions about the problems faced by the older and shallower mines. My only regret is that those who compiled this map did not differentiate between mines recently opened by the National Coal Board and the older mines that owe their origin to private enterprise.

The same kind of detail characterizes the maps of all other branches of industry—the production and distribution of coal gas and electric power, of fertilizers and agricultural machinery, of carpet and hosiery manufacture and those of printing, sugar refining, and quarrying, as well as of the more obvious branches of industry which one expects to be illustrated in a work such as this. Most are printed in a wide and pleasing range of color on base maps that show relief by means of a faint hill-shading and built-up areas by a pale gray shading. The resulting maps upset many of the stereotypes, current in textbooks, regarding the distribution of industrial activity.

Already the *Atlas of Britain* has a historical quality. It presents Great Britain in the late 1950's. Works have closed, and new works have opened; the more precise and detailed the atlas, the more quickly it is dated. That is a risk the publishers take, but for the next decade or two this atlas will be the standard work on the distribution of economic activity in Britain.

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Science for the Layman

A Short History of Biology. Isaac Asimov. Published for the American Museum of Natural History by Natural History Press (Doubleday), Garden City, N.Y., 1964. x + 182 pp. Illus. Paper, $1.25.

This little volume is packed with much material, especially in its latter half which treats modern aspects. It is written in Asimov's usual lucid style, with pinpoint accuracy, and covers the entire historical span of the evolution of the biological sciences from Alcmaeon and Hippocrates to Urey and Miller's experiment on amino acid synthesis in vitro and the roles of DNA and RNA in the cell. For obvious reasons of professional bias Asimov tends toward favoring progress in his own field of biochemistry and offers the reader the full and exciting story of such peak achievements as the discovery of enzymes, antibodies, protein structure, genes, nucleic acids, intermediary metabolism, and similar topics. Other phases of biology do not fare as well, plant and animal physiology for example. An author must, of course, choose his own points of stress. The outcome here justifies Asimov's choice, and the reader gains a good view of the great drama of the phases selected.

More serious is the criticism that can justly be raised with respect to the author's entire approach to Greek and medieval biology and medicine, however brief its treatment in the text. In that section one finds the usual stereotyping of a great era of inspired and laborious pioneering through brute hindsight evaluation and superficialities, the end result of having used standards of judgment which by no stretch of the imagination can be justified either historically or anthropologically. For example, no attempt is made to evaluate Galen's actual work, but his religious views are dragged in as though they influenced his skill as an experimentalist or the questions that he posed and the answers he could possibly obtain concerning the function of blood or nerves. The reader thus fails to perceive the great panorama of man's painful quest for science in that era, so devilishly beset by pitfalls within his conceptions and the prevailing level of knowledge. There is a tendency to blame individual views rather than the actual obstacles and intrinsic obscurities, which man ultimately defeats only to be faced with new challenges. Also, the vitalistic-mechanistic class battle is, in my opinion, greatly overplayed since the presumed combatants more often than not struggled with real biological problems rather than with philosophic ghosts.

Fortunately, these two points deal with only a small part of the book. In its totality it is a stimulating, readable, and informative account which fully lives up to the promise of its title.

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Soviet Geography

Geography of the U.S.S.R. Paul E. Lydolph. Wiley, New York, 1964. xii + 451 pp. Illus. $10.95.

Until very recently, those who teach the geography of the Soviet Union in the colleges of the United States have been seriously handicapped by the lack of English-language materials on that area. Fortunately the situation is improving—at least in terms of the quantity of material available. In 1961, the second edition of Georges Jorre's *The Soviet Union* (Longmans) appeared, to be followed by *A Geography of the U.S.S.R.: The Background to a Planned Economy* (Butterworths) by J. P. Cole and F. C. German. In the following year, the late George Cressey's *Soviet Potentials: A Geographic Appraisal* (Syracuse University Press) was published. These three texts, together with a growing volume of journal articles on various facets of Soviet geographic development, afford a basis for intelligent classroom use.

The most recent publication, by Paul Lydolph (chairman of the Department of Geography, University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee), should, if the lecture course is given a regional emphasis, prove to be the most useful elementary text available. It is divided into two main sections. Part 1, The Regions of the U.S.S.R., constitutes about two-thirds of the text; the remaining third, part 2, is entitled Topical Analysis of Cultural and Economic Phenomena. This organization is the reverse of standard procedure, the author's preference presumably having been determined by his successful experience in teaching. The author's justification for the organization as stated in the preface—"Analysis of interworkings of complexes of phenomena in specific localities attached to place names are more real and meaningful to the beginning student than are discussions of social and economic abstractions"—may be controverted, however. At any rate, Lydolph's topical section is not especially abstract, since it includes an assembly of a wide array of descriptive material drawn from a number of good English-language sources.

However, the general usefulness of the text in a regional lecture course should not conceal the basic methodologic weakness of the book's regional treatment. Lydolph has devised his own scheme of regionalization, rather than relying on Soviet practice. Although Soviet economic regionalization is frequently unsatisfactory because of boundary delineations, it is nevertheless based on subdivisions like the oblast and krai for which some statistical data are available in official Soviet handbooks and annuals. Lydolph, in an attempt to improve on the delineation of regions, has chosen to use the following as his criteria: (i) reasonably well-defined zones of agricultural production which are closely related to the natural environment, (ii) recognizable industrial nodal areas which lie within and transgress the boundaries of the agricultural regions, and (iii) traditional areas whose names have a real but unclearly defined significance in the minds of the Russian people. The end result is, in some instances, almost identical with Soviet practice or, in others, even more fantastic!

One wonders by what stretch of the imagination it is an improvement on Soviet practice to include within one large region the Vasyugan Swamp, the West Siberian Steppe, the Kuzbass industrial node, and the semiarid steppes