

FARAGÓ

Patton

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Writer in Two Soviet

Memoirs: 1921-1941, by Ilya Ehrenburg, translated from the Russian by Tatiana Shebunina with Yvonne Kapp (World, 543 pp. \$6.95), reveal for the first time many aspects of cultural life in Stalinist Russia. Pulitzer Prize-winning poet Peter Viereck is currently working on a book about his own experiences in the Soviet Union.

By PETER VIERECK

THIS second volume of Ehrenburg's memoirs first appeared in various issues of Tvardovsky's monthly, *Novy Mir*, sometimes with a delay suggesting possible government censorship and, in any case, interspersed with public attacks by Khrushchev upon Ehrenburg's advocacy of modern and Western styles in art. Once an apologist for Stalin (how can we, in a relatively free and safe America, demand of Soviet writers a suicidal bravery, a suicidal rebelliousness?), Ehrenburg is now the intellectual godfather of the post-Stalin cultural thaw. The very expression "thaw" was taken from the title of his 1954 novel, which advocated a return to human feelings and intellectual and artistic self-expression after the long era of Procrustean ideologizing. As early as October 1953, he had defied the Party's social-engineering approach to creativity by declaring at a writers' forum, "Books cannot be ordered or planned."

The present memoirs do for culture



Ilya Ehrenburg

burg's enthusiasm and his outrage at the great artists like Pasternak, and

His Own Way to Victory

Patton: Ordeal and Triumph, by Ladislas Farago (*Obolensky*. 885 pp. \$9.95), sets out to prove that the controversial General deserved greater recognition than he is accorded. Forrest C. Pogue is the author of "George C. Marshall: Education of a General" and other books.

By FORREST C. POGUE

THAT "war-intoxicated man" General George S. Patton long ago won adulation from a large American public that admired his headlong pursuit of the Germans across Europe, censured and then forgave him for the slapping incidents in Sicily, and laughed mildly at his anachronistic romanticism as he rode joyously over his slain or captured tens of thousands like a medieval knight transported from steed to tank by a time machine. Now Ladislas Farago sets out to prove that the General, a master of mobile warfare and a brilliant exploiter of enemy weaknesses, was not only a swashbuckling warrior but a superb strategist who earned and was denied greater victories and higher command.

A berserker whose name, like that of Charles XII of Sweden, will long serve "to point a moral and adorn a tale," Patton is the stuff of legend, glittering in the violent hero-worship reserved for the flamboyant and the picturesque. Although at first he deplored the blindly partisan accounts by the General's admirers, Farago ends by endorsing some of their most extravagant claims; and to their list of traditional villains (including Montgomery and Eisenhower) he adds—for the months of July and August 1944 at least—the name of Bradley.

The author, apparently both fascinated and repelled by his hero, displays an odd dichotomy. On the one hand he breathlessly proclaims Patton's special fitness for supreme command, and on the other shows that the General was temperamentally incapable of holding assignments that called for careful handling of political questions or Allied sensibilities. No one has published a more pitiless catalogue of General Patton's foibles: his childish vanity, petulance and tendency to thumb his nose at those in authority, his foot-stamping anger when denied his way, delight in outrageous and shocking outbursts, willingness to flatter shamelessly to gain his ends, belief that his wiles were not trans-

parent. At times his lack of balance bordered on the psychotic; he also had a constant need to prove his bravery to himself. Patton was as steeped in the romance of chivalry as Don Quixote, and he swore that in other incarnations he had served with Alexander, marched with Caesar's legions, and ridden with Napoleon's cavalry. He saw his own way as the only means to victory, and those who did not agree as fools or foes.

Despite Farago's vivid and penetrating analysis of Patton's personality, his book falls short of the publisher's claim that it is the definitive biography of the Third Army Commander. Clearly there are many important official documents that Farago has not seen, and there is no indication that he has consulted the Pershing-Patton correspondence in the Library of Congress. A recent book by the General's nephew indicates that several of Farago's statements need qualification, among them, that Patton was "modest to the point of prudishness" about sexual matters. Farago ignores Patton's role in evicting the Bonus Marchers from Washington in 1932, and barely mentions the costly raid at Hammelburg near the end of the war—an action once described by the General as his only error of the war.

The book obviously suffered heavily when the Patton family exercised its control over the General's papers to restrain the author from quoting from unpublished documents that had come into his hands. Controversial interpretations, unsupported by official accounts and apparently based only on the General's statements, remain in precarious levitation after the underpinnings have been whisked away. The author needs strong support for his charge of "doctored evidence in official histories." In the present version the reader must question whether Mr. Farago is relying on carefully documented accounts or lurid diary entries made by Patton in anger, impatience, or plain ignorance of plans and decisions reached outside his headquarters.

Initially Mr. Farago had disdained overheated charges that Eisenhower and Bradley suffered setbacks when they ignored Patton's advice, won their victories by expropriating his plans, and restrained his genius out of jealousy. But, enthusiastic at finding similarities between proposals by Patton and those of SHAEF and the Twelfth Army Group, he embraces the fallacy of *post*

hoc, ergo propter hoc, against which every budding historian is warned. Farago draws heavily on Blumenson's *Breakout and Pursuit*, Cole's *The Lorraine Campaign* and other official accounts of the fighting in Europe edited by Dr. Cole, who was Army historian with Patton's headquarters throughout the war, but he questions their conclusions when they fail to build up the General's role; he has, in other words, tried to write a "balanced history" of the campaigns in Europe by looking at them mainly through Patton's eyes.

The author's infection with the General's sense of outraged injury is nowhere more evident than in the story of Patton's removal from his combined posts of military governor and Third Army Commander by Eisenhower in the fall of 1945. He prepares the ground by saying that the General was "not the right man" "by experience or training, by philosophy or temperament for the delicate assignment of rehabilitating that part of Germany where the cradle of Nazism had rocked." Then he jolts the reader by saying that "Eisenhower, who had a streak of resentment in his makeup, plus a light touch of vindictiveness, repaid, in his own subtler ways, Patton's animosity toward him."

Despite the portrait of the self-assured, far-seeing commander that he attempts in parts of the book, the author leaves etched on the reader's mind the picture of a swaggering, swearing, pistol-toting, hell-for-leather fighter, screaming in wild exultation over the rubble and stink of a French battlefield: "Compared to war, all other forms of human endeavor shrink to insignificance."

Which is the way most people had seen the General all along.

FRAZER YOUNG'S LITERARY CRYPT NO. 1113

A cryptogram is written in cipher. Every letter is part of a code that remains constant throughout the puzzle. Answer No. 1113 will be found in the next issue.

KMO UYS UVYSDF KMOA GYXEV

ZXEVMOE UVYSDXSD DMCN,

YSC TXUF TFANY.

WFU

Answer to Literary Crypt No. 1112

Nobody ever did anything very foolish except from some strong principle.
—MELBOURNE.