

were those who established their own personality cults, namely Tito and Mao.)

But after Stalin's death on March 5, 1953, Ulam argues, "it became of great importance for the Kremlin to revive communism as a meaningful creed for its own citizens." For the next 30 years, the Soviet Union's powerful nuclear arsenal, its space program, and its international standing all seemed testimony to a viable ideology. Behind the "Potemkin" posturing, though, the Soviet economy stagnated. By the time Gorbachev obtained power, the Soviet Union could no longer afford to prop up communist regimes in Eastern Europe, much less sustain new expansion in places such as Afghanistan. As a last resort, Gorbachev attempted *perestroika* and *glasnost*, but these involved, Ulam says, "the virtual demolition of the entire edifice" of communist ideology. Once communist regimes had to justify themselves on economic rather than ideological grounds, the handwriting was on the wall.

Ulam has written one of the finer books—and possibly one of the last—in a once-flourishing genre, Kremlinology. With Soviet archives formerly closed to them, Kremlinologists practiced the arcane art by focusing on the top leadership and oversimplifying the complex remainder of society. With the archives now open, Soviet and Russian scholarship could well become as fragmented as the country (or countries) it studies.

THE DISPOSSESSED: America's Underclasses from the Civil War to the Present. By Jacqueline Jones. Basic. 399 pp. \$25

For the past 30 years, when the media or the government reported on poverty, says Jones, a Brandeis historian, they "created the false impression that all black people were poor and that all white people were middle class.... Middle-class Americans in general and policy-makers in particular [have] persisted in defining the nature of social distress in racial terms."

Jones examines the history of poverty in America to dispel the popular misperception of the poor as largely the product of a black "culture of poverty," immune to government remediation. In fact, she argues, poor whites and

blacks have often suffered a common lot. After the Civil War, the changing world market for cotton and other southern products drove the South's white yeoman farmers from their land and closed off opportunities for the 3.5 million newly freed slaves. Both wound up with the same narrow choices—tenant farming or wage-labor in the South's mines, farms, and sawmills—and subject to the same economic forces. By and large, Jones maintains, both reacted the same way. Black tenant farmers were commonly stigmatized as "shiftless" because they pulled up stakes and moved from place to place. Yet the 1910 census showed that 42 percent of white tenants and 29 percent of black tenants had moved within the previous year: Far from reflecting a "roving" instinct, Jones says, this was a product of the farmers' ceaseless effort, against all odds, to better themselves.

Unfortunately, Jones's attempt to extend her argument about racist stereotyping and neglect of the poor today is less persuasive. "Postindustrial America," she maintains, "remains colonial Virginia writ large." How else, Jones asks, can one explain the fact that while 21 million of today's poor are white and only nine million black, the specter of a small black "underclass" dominates popular thinking on poverty? A good question. But Jones's dogmatic insistence that the poor are all alike—all merely victims of larger economic and cultural forces—prevents her from attempting a real answer. She may point out that *in absolute numbers* the majority now characterized as poor are "not black, Northern, or urban," but this fact does not so much refute her social critics as miss their point. What excites alarm today is the other poverty, the existence of an urban "underclass" that seems, unlike the rest of the poor, bound to transmit poverty from generation to generation.

Science & Technology

FROM PARALYSIS TO FATIGUE: A History of Psychosomatic Illness in the Modern Era. By Edward Shorter. Free Press. 419 pp. \$24.95

Even medical doctors often cannot tell whether a strange bodily symptom is caused by organic

disease or "merely" by psychological distress. The true test of a medical symptom may be the same as that for a literary classic—longevity. Symptoms of organic disease remain constant over generations, while those of psychosomatic diseases come and go like fads.

Shorter, a cultural historian at the University of Toronto, has researched a vast body of European and American sources to clarify this phenomenon. He shows doctors and patients engaged in a *pas de deux* in which physicians not only diagnose patients' symptoms but indirectly induce them. In the 19th century, for example, clinicians proposed the existence of an "irritable" nervous system, and, as this medical knowledge was disseminated, patients (usually "hysterical" women) began presenting themselves as paralyzed by irritated nerves. Shorter does not blame medicine entirely for creating the immobilized female patients of the 19th century. He turns to culture as well, specifically to the family, as another agent that helped a patient "select" his or her psychosomatic symptoms. Alice James and Elizabeth Barrett Browning may have been "paralyzed," Shorter suggests, not only because their doctors confirmed the symptom but also because their lives were constricted—in a sense, already paralyzed—within the Victorian family.

After the 19th-century model of an irritable nervous system was empirically disproved, Sigmund Freud and his followers proposed a new, psychological explanation to account for nonorganic paralysis. Certain cases of nonfunctioning limbs and shifting pains were shown by psychiatrists to be the corporeal expression of psychological repressions that could not be expressed directly. Psychiatry has succeeded in curing many such psychosomatic complaints, but, according to Shorter, contemporary patients manage to escape into new fashionable symptoms, notably chronic pain and chronic fatigue syndrome.

From Paralysis to Fatigue stands in the shadow of pathbreaking works like Michel Foucault's interpretation of the interplay between culture and the body, Philippe Ariès's discussion of the family in history, and feminist critiques of the relationship between gender and psychosomatic disorders—none of which, incidentally, Shorter bothers to acknowledge. A more serious flaw is Shorter's rather simplistic

separation of mental and physical disorders, his strict demarcation between the purely organic and the purely psychosomatic. The old doctors may have been truer to life when they shook their heads perplexed, uncertain whether a patient's disorder was physical or mental or, somehow, a bit of both.

CARDINAL CHOICES: Presidential Science Advising from the Atomic Bomb to SDI. By Gregg Herken. Oxford. 323 pp. \$24.95

C. P. Snow defined "cardinal choices" as those "choices that in the broadest sense determine whether we live or die." Snow was writing at the dawn of the atomic era, when mankind had just made the quantum leap into the ability to annihilate itself. To avoid doomsday, sensible people believed, science and government would have to learn new forms of cooperation.

Herken, chair of the space history department at the National Air and Space Museum, traces the beginning of this era to a letter Leo Szilard and Albert Einstein wrote President Franklin Roosevelt in 1939. The two scientists urged FDR to build the atomic bomb before any other country developed the technology. For the next two decades, however, there would be no direct channel of communication between the nation's scientific community and the White House. Only in 1957 did Dwight D. Eisenhower establish the President's Science Advisory Committee (PSAC). PSAC's influence waxed and waned, depending on the president, the scientists, and the issues. Finally, in 1972, with numerous scientists criticizing his conduct of the Vietnam War, Richard Nixon disbanded the PSAC—showing how much he valued his critics' views.

Herken suggests that "the question of 'Who advises?' is hardly less important than that of 'Who governs?'" In 1969, physicist Richard Garwin helped convince Nixon, an enthusiast of supersonic transport, that it was too costly and posed serious environmental risks. (Subsequently, the low demand for the Concorde and its hazardous effect on the ozone have justified Garwin's caution.) In 1983, by contrast, adviser George Keyworth failed to inform Ronald Reagan, who wanted to hear no objections, that the SDI (Strategic Defense Initiative or "Star