
Alexander II in 1861, Russian estate owners fell even deeper into debt, tried to cobble together rural factories staffed with serf workers to recoup their losses, and simply sank into a genteel lifestyle amid Russian-made furniture patterned after Biedermeier originals from Central Europe.

However few Russians participated in this world, the insistent reality of country life left a profound imprint on the larger culture in art, literature, and music. When the tsars of Soviet culture lauded Russians' passionate love of the Russian land, they were in fact echoing the lyric effusions of 19th-century Russian gentry writers such as Turgenev. The anarchic strain that coexists with Russians' supposed subservience to authority also traces in part to these same gentry, who were accustomed to thumbing their noses at the

bureaucrats in St. Petersburg. Indeed, Mikhail Bakunin, the founder of European anarchism, was just such a rural aristocrat. Finally, the sense of a lost golden age that permeates Russian culture from Chekhov to our own day is a direct legacy of the long, slow death of the Russian estate in the late-19th and early-20th centuries. Despite their passion for modernity, Russians still fear the sound of the ax in the patrimonial cherry orchard.

It is no criticism to say that Roosevelt's richly illustrated book is not the last word on these subjects. Rather, it is the *first* word for a very long time, and, as such, should be heartily welcomed.

—S. Frederick Starr, president of the Aspen Institute, is the author of *Bamboula! The Life and Times of Louis Moreau Gottschalk*.

OTHER TITLES

History

REPORTING WORLD WAR II: American Journalism 1938–1946 (2 vols.). *Library of America*. Vol. I: 912 pp.; Vol. II: 970 pp. \$35 each

To commemorate the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II, the *Library of America* has made a rare break with its normal practice of publishing the work of a single author and issued two volumes of reports and reflections on the war written by American journalists between 1938 and 1946. It's an inspired memorial, likely to be valued even when the war's anniversaries are no longer routinely tallied.

The "reporting" in these volumes generally consists of feature stories and essays rather than "breaking news" about events. For the most part, the authors try to recreate the experience of being there—on battlefields and bombing runs, in villages, cities, and concentration camps

during the war and as the fighting finally came to an end. And, for the most part, they succeed.

The 150 or so pieces are the work of gifted and important writers—among them William L. Shirer, A. J. Liebling, Edward R. Murrow, Margaret Bourke-White, Walter Bernstein, E. B. White, John Hersey, James Agee, Ernie Pyle, and Vincent Tubbs. (Brief but helpful biographies of all the contributors are included.) Cartoonist Bill Mauldin's book *Up Front* appears in full and may be the best thing in the collection. By contrast, Gertrude Stein's account of life in a rural village in France is notable mainly for its silly punctuation. Reports from the home front are also included, but they are mere counterpoints to the principal action, which is elsewhere. Battle stories, life-on-the-line stories, and refugee stories crowd these pages.

The volumes follow standard *Library of America* editorial procedures. In other words, the texts are accompanied by less explanatory



"You'll get over it, Joe. Oncet I wuz gonna write a book exposin' the army after th' war myself."

information than some readers will wish. There is no introduction to explain why the editors chose what they did, and no discussion of the overall strategy of the war, though maps and a chronology in the appendix suggest its course. It's churlish to complain about what's *not* in 2,000 pages, but one does miss stories of the military behind the lines (the sort of thing about which *M*A*S*H* and *Catch-22* have subsequently made us curious), stories of the navy as a navy rather than a mere support for air or infantry forces, and reports about pacifism on the home front (perhaps something by Dorothy Day of the *Catholic Worker*, who was nothing if not a journalist).

Reporting World War II concludes with the full text of John Hersey's *Hiroshima*, which first appeared in the *New Yorker* in August 1946. Hersey addresses, but does not resolve, the moral ambiguity of using nuclear weapons, and his doubt contrasts with the certainty most of these journalists felt about the rightness of their cause. In this valuable collection, at least, the war ends not with a period but a question mark.

THE BLACK DIASPORA: Five Centuries of the Black Experience Outside Africa. By Ronald Segal. Farrar, Straus. 477 pp. \$27.50

The numbers are still contested and perhaps fall short of the reality, but they are sufficiently awful without increase or precision: from the 16th century through 1870, some 12 million individuals were taken by ship from Africa against their will and transported in chains across the Atlantic in squalid, airless confinement. Between 10 and 20 percent of the kidnapped Africans are thought to have died at sea. Some 400,000 of those who survived were cargo for North America; the vast majority were brought to South America, in particular to Brazil, and to the islands of the Caribbean.

Segal, who spent more than 30 years in voluntary exile from his native South Africa, where he was the first white member of the African National Congress, and who is the author of 11 other books, has set himself the monumental task of writing an account of the 500 years of this vast displacement and its consequences—"the story of a people with an identity, vitality, and creativity all their own." (He does not write about slavery within Africa itself, or within the Islamic world.) And he tries to find in these people's experience "some underlying meaning, some redeeming force, a very principle of identity that may be called the soul." This soul he identifies with freedom.

The first third of his book is the most riveting. Its catalogue of horrors about the Atlantic slave trade fascinates and overwhelms. But Segal's schematic approach robs the book of cumulative power. He does not tell the story of events in any one country straight through. Rather, individual chapters recounting the introduction and spread of slavery in a group of countries (Brazil, Haiti, Guyana, Cuba, the United States, etc.) are followed by chapters that recount the resistance to slavery and the struggle for emancipation in each of those same countries—and then by chapters on subsequent political, economic, social, and cultural development. The locales change, but too often the reader has the feeling of going over the same ground.

At the same time, Segal's narrative ambition allows scant space for nuance. One often wants