

The Soviet Middle East, A Communist Model for Development, by Alec Nove and J. A. Newth. (Allen & Unwin, 30s.)

The economic experience of the southern Asian republics in the Soviet Union is summed up in the estimate that in 1928 their *per capita* income was somewhat below the present level in India and Pakistan, while in 1960 it was somewhere between that of Italy and Japan.

The most striking feature of this development is the growth of education. In Tzarist times less than 2 per cent of the Central Asian population passed through secondary schools, while today more than 20 per cent do so. This is accompanied by opportunities for higher education, in the language of the Republic as well as Russian, and the careers open to talents irrespective of national origin. The spread of medical services, leading to a sharp fall in death rates is no less dramatic.

Economic development was carried out mainly on the principle of trade rather than aid. The prices set for cotton and other sub-tropical products were favourable and a large part of local investment was financed from the

local surplus. There was, however, considerable aid also, in the sense that the *per capita* contribution of the Asian republics to all-Union revenue was considerably less than that of the European republics, while the major part of their industrial investment was financed from the centre.

The contrast of their experience with that of their neighbours and kinsmen in so-called developing countries such as Turkey or Iran is very marked.

The story is all the more impressive because the authors tell it with some reluctance. Their turn of phrase suggests that they would have rather preferred to find evidence of colonial exploitation, but at the same time they are too honest to pretend that they did.

JOAN ROBINSON.

Chaliapin. An autobiography as told to Maxim Gorky. Translated from the original Russian and edited by Nina Froud and James Hanley (Macdonald, 65s.).

In the annals of opera—and particularly of Russian opera—the name of Feodor Chaliapin stands pre-eminent. Magnificent singer, equally magnificent actor, a giant of a man, a roaring, rum-

CHALIAPIN AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY AS TOLD TO MAXIM GORKY

with supplementary correspondence and notes translated and edited by NINA FROUD & JAMES HANLEY

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bustious extrovert personality, Chaliapin was all of these, and a world name to boot.

There can be few alive today who heard him at the height of his powers; my own experience of him, apart from recordings, was on the concert platform just over 40 years ago when he was, as a singer, already on the wane. But it is obvious what he was, and what he did.

This life story has a curious history. Originally dictated in a short time, and 'written-up' by Gorky, it was largely published in pre-Revolution Russia. Then much later Chaliapin, in search of further royalties, dictated another version published in America, by all accounts badly 'ghosted.' Gorky's own version, so beautifully put together, is now translated, and this volume has a great deal of additional material in notes obtained from the singer's daughter still living in Moscow, and from correspondence still in her hands and in Russian museums; and some fascinating illustrations.

In many ways it is revealing, of Chaliapin the man, of a rough-and-ready young peasant who grew up in conditions of appalling poverty and brutality in Kazan—where Gorky also grew up, only a few streets away—and by dint of personality alone found his way, first to fair-ground theatres, and then into the mystical mazes of nationalistic Russian opera. Always aware of his origins, in some ways a little ashamed of his own behaviour and at all times a man of the people, Chaliapin developed largely on the basis of a natural affinity for theatrical display. But an understanding of musical and dramatic performance such as he had is not, in itself, sufficient for the professionalism that came to him so quickly; and I for one would have liked to know more about the year he spent in Tbilisi under his teacher, Ussatov, of how the young Chaliapin—he began singing roles in touring provincial opera companies at 17—learned his technique and his craft. According to his own account there was a minimum of learning and a maximum of womanising! Gorky wrote down, splendidly, what he gathered from Chaliapin himself, and this is not his fault. But somehow I wish that Gorky had asked Chaliapin some different questions to begin with.

The result is that there emerges a picture of a great character, such as Chaliapin himself might have portrayed on a stage—and did, for the world was

his stage. But there is little to show what made him as an artist and musician; for great artists, unlike Minerva fully-armed from head of Jove, have to be made as well as born.

Nevertheless, the story of this man's life, from childhood until the narrative ends in 1913, is fascinating reading; and a good part of the tale is continued, by means of notes and letters, well in the 1930s. But there must be more to come, for which this book will be the most revealing basis so far published.

EVAN SENIOR.

Industry and Labour in the USSR by G. V. Osipov (Tavistock, London, 1966, 297 pp., 45s.)

This collection of eighteen articles, with an introduction by Maurice Hookham is one of the most important books to be published on the Soviet Union for many years. It is significant in that the studies are based on empirical Soviet investigations of 'industry and labour' in the USSR. Though sociological articles from Soviet publications are now regularly translated into English (for example, the American journal *Soviet Sociology*), the main sources used by English speaking students of Soviet society are the more impressionistic works of journalists and investigations, often based on émigrés' views, financed by the various military or intelligence arms of the United States government. Soviet sources until recently tended to ignore actual social conditions and concentrated on *a priori* rationalisations. It is against the legacy of dogmatism and scholasticism from the Soviet past and from a biased and often hostile 'Soviet sociology' in the capitalist states that the present volume must be reviewed.

The book concentrates on three main aspects of labour: 'those social problems connected with the creation of the material bases of communism . . . problems arising from the development of communist social relations . . . and problems of individual development.' The articles contain much useful information on such topics as labour distribution and occupational composition, the education and vertical mobility of workers, changes in family budgets, the composition of the working classes and the attitudes to work of various groups of workers. The general impression given by the articles is of a society rapidly industrialising, proud of its achievements, and conscious of the