

for the overwhelming majority of one's fellow-citizens (victims of "spiritual castration", as the poet Iosif Brodsky put it) who are leading such shallow, two- or even one-dimensional existences chasing after "real" but in fact ephemeral or empty goals. Dazed by the heat, peering through a drunken haze, Maksimov's hero and heroine, Boris Khramov (= Temple) and Mariya (Mary), perceive and comprehend this new reality and, thus transformed, go out into the world which is itself transformed.

It seems that slowly and surely a very great reappraisal of values is taking place in the USSR. In particular a growing aversion to superficial doctrines, a process from which we in the West have much to learn. One can do harm when wanting to do good but, as Goethe's Mephistopheles knows, the forces of evil themselves cannot help but continually do good, however paradoxical and undesirable they may find this. The Devil (doing God's work?) in Bulgakov's novel and Stalin in Maksimov's *In Quarantine* make one think that something good might even come out of the hideous experiences of Russia since 1917 and that there is positive meaning and value to be found in the appalling sufferings that have been inflicted on the Soviet people.

MARTIN DEWHIRST

Red Star Over Tibet, by Dawa Norbu, Collins, London, 1974, 254 pp. £3.50.

This is an excellent book by a most unusual young Tibetan, Dawa Norbu, the second son of a Tibetan peasant family living in an isolated village near the famous monastery of Sakya, the second oldest Buddhist sect in Tibet. The story begins with the author describing the little-known world of Tibet before the arrival of the Chinese communist army and colonisers, and then goes on to describe the take-over, its effects and his eventual escape to India.

His account of the clash between the two cultures is first-class, his personal involvement interestingly interlaced with the historical and religious events taking place in the country at large. His maternal grandfather was a distant descendant of a famous tantric practitioner, with considerable yoga powers, and himself head of a roving mission from the Sakya monastery. The account of the Buddhist "missions to the heathen" is illuminating :

The Sakya sect had reached its greatest period of influence in the thirteenth century, a time of remarkable intellectual and spiritual development in the history of Tibet . . . These expensive monasteries were not simple shrines; they were

complex works of art and unique architecture, the quintessence of our culture. They were the treasures of the Tibetan people, embodying most of the fruit of their toil and sweat. Every monastery that I knew in Sakya was filled with gold, silver and bronze images . . . To offer your earthly possessions to a lama was to ensure light in darkness after death, and to live for your faith was to reserve a ferry-boat that would carry you to eternal bliss. The main function of the roving religious missions, initiated in the thirteenth century and dispatched thereafter to the nomads of Chang Tang, was to collect donations; a minor purpose was to convert the barbarous nomads themselves . . .

Dawa Norbu is at present the very able editor of *Tibetan Review*, and his journalistic style makes the book a delight to read even when the subject is obscure religious events or modern political ones. The post-1947 monastic clashes in Tibet are admirably summed up in about four paragraphs.

Appropriately, the possibility of Tibet's political and cultural salvation lay in the hands of the lamas (priests) and it was they who triumphed over the "Young Tibet Group" who wanted to initiate the reforms which would have democratized Tibet. Even when one of themselves – Geshe Choepal of Amdo, a brilliant Buddhist scholar in Tibetan and Sanskrit – attempted to lead them out of superstitious ritualism he was ignored, ostracised. He died a tragic early death. The author quotes him :

Even though evidence is produced and truth proved,
Blinded are the eyes of malice and ignorance.
It is true that an envious man
Is angered by the greatness of others.

Significantly, Geshe Choepal had visited Mongolia and Russia as well as India. Now, almost 30 years later, the Dalai Lama is also considering a visit to Russia and Mongolia to "study Buddhism and socialism" as a possible preliminary to returning to Tibet under some mutually satisfactory arrangement with China. Dawa Norbu is one of the young Tibetans in favour of this and in the latest *Tibetan Review* he quotes the representative of the Dalai Lama as saying :

The Dalai Lama does not see any basic contradiction between Buddhism and communism. On the contrary he believes that there is common ground between them; the two "isms" could possibly converge to serve the Tibetan people in both their spiritual and material aspiration. In an interview with the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, His Holiness said: "According to the Mahayana School of Buddhism you sacrifice for the benefit of others, for the good of suffering humanity. So is the goal of communism."

GEORGE PATTERSON