but not the only cause for the widespread corruption in the administrative services. Russians were accustomed to view an office as a benefice which entitled its holder to a living even if the salary did not. Then too, Russians were wont to make payments for special services. In spite of repeated efforts to end this constant bribery it remained a characteristic of Russian administration. Many things contributed to the lack of a real esprit de corps, among them the great variety of the services and the very extent of the country. Officialdom in St. Petersburg and Moscow was vastly different from the rural area of southeast Russia or Siberia; service in the Guard regiments brought standing and privileges far beyond those of regiments of the line. Here a discussion of the recruitment of officers for the separate Cossack detachments is worthy of special mention.

Both the civil and military services were plagued by lack of initiative and the constant reliance on orders from the man higher up in the official hierarchy. This led to a flood of paper work, and offices often ran years behind schedule. All and all it was not a very efficient system; there was much loafing and endless attention to matters of routine. But in spite of all this many officials did work very hard and the vast empire kept functioning. Jews—except physicians—and Roman Catholic Poles were discriminated against, although conversion to Orthodoxy went far to remove their disabilities. Aside from this there was no other race or religious discrimination. About one-fourth of the army officers did not belong to the Orthodox church but it was expected that they adhere to some religion.

It is clear from these studies that Russia was poorly administered and the army poorly led, and above all that little was done to bridge the wide gap which existed between officialdom and the mass of the people.

Ernst C. Helmreich


This is a truly fascinating memoir. The introduction, notes and bibliography prepared by the translator Peter Sedgwick make it all the more valuable. Having access to additional papers and letters, Mr. Sedgwick, briefly but succinctly, has been able to carry the painful story of Serge's life beyond 1941, the point where the author chose to conclude his autobiography. The book, with its emphasis on people and ideas, clearly reflects Serge's personality. By vignette and character sketch it illuminates over thirty years of the intellectual and revolutionary history of Europe—from the years prior to World War I when Serge was an enthusiastic young anarchist to the chaotic days of the fall of France and the seeming collapse of the European Left. Serge was involved in almost all the great events of the period. He passionately declared his desire "to share in the common life of mankind" and believed it necessary to "range oneself actively against everything that diminishes man and involve oneself in all struggles which tend to liberate and enlarge him". He did, and as a consequence found himself in opposition to every political structure in which he lived, be this royalist Spain, bourgeois France or Stalinist Russia. As he consistently was on the losing side of political confrontations he spent nearly ten years in Spanish, French and Russian prisons. It is not without reason that he described his entire life as that of a "political exile."

Russia in the early years of the revolution provided Serge with his most
congenial surroundings and scope for his considerable talents. Arriving in early 1919 he plunged immediately into the organization of the Third International. Although not yet a Bolshevik he became a member of Zinov'ev's personal staff concerned primarily with administration and the preparation of revolutionary propaganda. Even in those early days of the revolution he was suspected of potential “heresy”, a suspicion reinforced by the frequency which he intervened to save individuals from the Cheka. Nevertheless, he was a devoted servant of the revolution, participated in the defence of Petrograd against General Iudenich, held a commission in the Red Army and, after much soul searching, managed to justify the crushing of the Kronstadt uprising. With NEP and the increasing bureaucratization of party and state, however, he could no longer tolerate the official environment of Petrograd. Seeking an escape Populist-style, he joined a collective of intellectuals who wished to “return to the land”. They tried to till the fields of a confiscated estate only to find that the local peasantry, already enflamed by the policies of war communism, looked upon them as intruders. Theft, hostility and open violence by the peasants soon led the latterday Narodniki to return to the city. Serge then applied for, and received, illegal work abroad. As a Comintern agent he witnessed the debacle of the German revolution in 1923 and viewed with alarm the increasing careerism within the foreign apparatus of the Communist International. “Already around 1922,” he wrote, “the International was unintentionally modelling factotum officials, who were prepared to give passive obedience.” When he returned to Russia he quickly became involved in the opposition to Stalin, was expelled from the party and exiled to Orenburg. His description of these events and the conditions he found in the provinces constitute some of the most interesting and informative portions of his book.

Even more interesting is the attitude which he adopted toward the problem of terror exercised by a revolutionary regime. This was rather ambiguous to say the least. Although opposed in principle to terror and, in fact, actively short-circuiting its application to those whom he did not consider ideologically dangerous, he justified it in the circumstances of foreign intervention and domestic counter-revolution. If counter-revolution succeeded, White terror, he believed, would be much more violent and unthinking than that inflicted by the Soviet regime. When the official definition of counter-revolution came to include his own views and activities he objected bitterly, declaring that “I hold as an abomination unspeakable, reactionary, sickening and corrupting, the continued use of the death penalty as a secret and administrative measure (in time of peace! in a State more powerful than any other!).” He was appalled by the ease with which the Stalinist regime was able to crush heterodox views and seal the Soviet state from outside influence. Although always careful to speak in terms of principle it is clear that Serge could not divorce terror from the circumstances in which it was applied. If he agreed with the cause it was meant to advance he could justify terror; if he did not it became an abomination. This problem clearly bothered him, for time and again throughout his memoirs he returned to this question. He was caught painfully on the horns of the dilemma, knew he could not escape, but continued to grapple with the problem.

The reader of Memoirs of a Revolutionary can not escape the sad and melancholy brooding of the author. In his very first paragraph Serge tells us that as a child he felt himself to be “living in a world without any possible escape”. But this led him to resignation rather than despair. He came to live by three commandments: “Thou shalt think”, “thou shalt struggle”, and “thou shalt fight back”. Although this meant that he usually had to live by yet a fourth commandment, “thou shalt be hungry”, he never gave up the struggle for his libertarian views. As a child and man he felt only “wrath and indigna-