

*Revolution*, edited by Thomas Walker and published last year by Praeger.

The documents and essays here are particularly useful in assessing two of the most important questions posed about Nicaragua: Is Nicaragua a military threat to its neighbors and a threat to the peace of Central America? And have the Sandinista leaders carried out the promises of the 1979 revolution? A careful reading of the book leads to the conclusion that the Sandinistas have, in fact, carried out most of the programs to which they pledged themselves during the civil war, and it is precisely because they are engaging in a thoroughgoing social revolution that their enemies both within Nicaragua and in Washington have put the country under siege.

John Hughes, deputy director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, documents a significant military buildup in Nicaragua by the Sandinistas, citing a Nicaraguan military force of 70,000, construction of new airfields, deployment of heavy artillery and mortars, and the presence of 2,000 Cuban military and security advisors to make the case that the country is becoming a military bastion that threatens the security of its neighbors. While the figures presented by Hughes are generally agreed upon by most analysts, the problem lies with his conclusion, which places the responsibility for such a buildup solely on the Sandinista government.

"Target Nicaragua," by George Black and Judy Butler, and another piece from *Newsweek* show that the Nicaraguan military buildup is probably a prudent response by the Sandinistas to a systematic effort by counterrevolutionaries, backed by the United States, to overthrow their government. Butler and Black trace the Reagan administration's Nicaragua policy to October, 1980, Heritage Foundation policy recommendations. Cleto Di Giovanni, a former CIA officer in Latin America and another source cited here, identified potential allies that should be supported in a "well orchestrated program targeted against the Marxist Sandinista government." Those potential allies include the several thousand former Somoza National Guardsmen who fled into Honduras in 1979, the conservative Catholic Church hierarchy led by Archbishop Obando Y Bravo, leaders of the Miskito Indian community with ties to Somoza and the CIA, businessmen affiliated with the private enterprise council, the opposition newspaper *La Prensa*, and the Permanent Commission on Human Rights, an institution that had received support from the Heritage Foundation.

All of these groups and organizations have

who paradoxically escapes total exile but only at great cost. Was it worth the price? Kundera seems to acknowledge it as a courageous and soul-stirring as well as significant act. With Tereza, Tomas finds "at least a glimmer of that paradisiac idyll in the country, in nature, surrounded by domestic animals, in the bosom of the regularly recurring seasons." In that passage, which is reminiscent of the only relief from despair Winston and Julia find in Orwell's *1984*, Kundera also asserts that this is not his way: "The longing for Paradise is man's longing not to be man." But where does that leave him?

According to Kundera, "we have no idea anymore what it means to feel guilty. The Communists have the excuse that Stalin misled them. Murderers have the excuse that their mothers didn't love them.... No one could be more innocent, in his soul and conscience, than Oedipus. And yet he punished himself when he saw what he had done." It is on this perilous frontier that Kundera lives in his isolated, total exile.

And this leads to an ominous conclusion: "It takes so little, so infinitely little, for a person to cross the border beyond which everything loses meaning: love, conviction, faith, history. Human life—and herein lies its secret—takes place in the immediate proximity of that border, even in direct contact with it; it is not miles away, but a fraction of an inch." This is a voice of compassion, of a novelist who gives honest service, who is faithful to a human purpose to which we aspire but whose demands make us feel inescapably inadequate.

## THE DAY LASTS MORE THAN A HUNDRED YEARS

by Chingiz Aitmatov

translated by John French

(Indiana University Press; 352 pp.; \$17.50)

Patrick J. Ryan

Chingiz Aitmatov, a Central Asian member of the Supreme Soviet and a delegate to the last four Communist party congresses, hails from the Kirghiz Soviet Socialist Republic. The Kirghiz Republic borders China on the east and, on the west, the much larger Kazakh SSR, with which it formed one political entity until 1936. Aitmatov, trained as a veterinarian in the Stalin era, turned his attention to literary concerns during the 1950s. For his accomplishments in the latter area he has been awarded a Lenin Prize and a State Prize; in 1978, on his fiftieth birthday, he received the Hero of Socialist Labor medal.

None of these biographical details suggests that Aitmatov's fiction might interest anyone unattracted to the grayness of socialist realism. But Aitmatov, even though he makes all the right noises during his frequent appearances at Soviet-sponsored peace conferences, has published substantial amounts of fiction deserving translation. This most recent novel was published in *Novy Mir* in 1980 and in book form in 1981. Ably translated into English by John French, it appears with a brief but informative introduction by Katerina Clark.

If the title sounds vaguely like something from the pen of Gabriel García Márquez, the impression is deliberate. Aitmatov prefers to recognize his literary kinship with the socialist García Márquez rather than with his fellow memorialist of Stalinist repression, the antisocialist Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn. García Márquez evidently supplied Aitmatov with a model for the curious mixture of socialist realism, Turkic legend, and science fiction in the present novel. From Solzhenitsyn, however, he may have learned something of his pre-exilic technique of denouncing the Soviet system without going too far. Solzhenitsyn's postexilic expression of his Russian Orthodox faith, a religiousness firmly bound up with his Russian nationalism, may also have inspired something of the feeling for Central Asian ethnicity and Islam one finds in this novel by Aitmatov.

The novel takes shape on several planes simultaneously. In the frame story the reader follows the efforts of Yedigei Zhangel'din, a decorated veteran of World War II and a dedicated worker at a Central Asian railway junction, to

anity, the attitude of the Sandinista government toward the Church, and the role of the contemporary Church in social change and social justice. All three men are convinced that Marxism and Christianity are compatible, that the Sandinista revolution is a Christian revolution, and that the gospel of the Church implores its priests to be activists for social change and social justice. The sentiments are summed up by d'Escoto, a Maryknoll priest born in the United States of Nicaraguan parents: "I'm a priest—a missionary priest, essentially. I travel for the cause of peace, justice, and the dignity of my people." The powerful, though simple, words of these priests bear moving witness against the U.S. administration's claims of the Sandinista grand design to extend atheistic communism up the coast of Central America. (WV)

#### HER INDIA: THE FRAGRANCE OF FORGOTTEN YEARS

by Blikees Latif

(Arnold-Heinemann; 264 pp.; \$7.50)

Ralph Buultjens

Tastes in popular history and culture are as volatile as those of fashion. Currently, India is "in." To a segment of this market, M. M. Kaye, Richard Attenborough, Ruth Pravar Jhabvala, and a host of less talented purveyors of nostalgia, project an India that never was quite the way they present it. Their subcontinent is peopled with essentially four species of humans. Two types of Britons, those with a stiff imperial upper lip and those who have gone native in romance or politics, cavort with two types of locals, Indians who serve their masters for cash or conviction and new nationalists ready to lead the masses to independence. Reality was much more complex. The Indo-British relationship was a multilayered embrace. Colonist and colonized were both affected in a variety of ways, many of which were unrecognized by the participants.

In the midst of this turbulent encounter there were occasional and very special individuals whose lives testified to the opportunities for personal growth and spiritual development that resided in the crucible of these tensions. Alys Iffrig was such a person. Born to a French-German family of comfortable circumstances, Alys fell in love with and married a young Indian Muslim who was studying in Paris. In 1927, at the age of nineteen, she returned with her husband to the southern Indian city of Hyder-

arrange for the Muslim burial in a Kazakh ancestral burial ground of his old friend and co-worker Kazangap. Yedigei is eventually frustrated in his desire to inter Kazangap's remains because access to the burial ground has been cut off by barbed wire surrounding a cosmonaut launching site. While Yedigei is made into an intruder on Kazakh native territory by an unfeeling military bureaucracy caught up in the space race, those very military bureaucrats, in tandem with their counterparts in the United States, have undertaken to exile from the earth a two-man Soviet-American space travel team that has discovered and entered into collusion with extraterrestrial beings anxious to have contact with the inhabitants of Earth. At the end of the novel, the Soviet and American space agencies surround the planet with the satellite equivalent of barbed wire to prevent intergalactic dialogue or the return of the space team.

During the day's journey to the ancient Kazakh cemetery, Yedigei reminisces about his early years at the railway junction. Those years were scarred by the tragedy of a fellow-worker, Abutalip, hunted down by the Stalinist machine because he had, after escaping a German POW camp, fought alongside the Yugoslav partisans in the last years of the war. Aitmatov's own father, according to the introduction, had been purged during the novelist's childhood—a fact that seems to have kept Aitmatov from joining the Party until 1959. Yedigei's feeling for Abutalip's surviving sons verges on the maudlin, but this detail from the author's life makes it more intelligible. The suggestion of a romantic attraction between Yedigei and Abutalip's widow—he has died under interrogation, heartbroken with longing for his sons—is the least interesting element in the novel. Yedigei is apparently not so Muslim as to consider taking the widow as a second wife, possible because Soviet law enforces Christian monogamy on all its citizens.

Turkic legends are interwoven with these narratives of a funeral journey, space travel, and Stalinist repression, especially in the tale of a Kazakh mother and son, the latter turned into a mindless *mankurt* (a zombie-like slave) by Mongol invaders of Kazakhstan in the Middle Ages. Unable to recognize his mother, the *mankurt* kills her at the bidding of his Mongol master. No more chilling image of the attempt to erase the ethnic past of the non-Russian Soviet peoples can be imagined.

Aitmatov's early experience as a veterinarian, combined with the nomadic totemism of Central Asia, may explain the prominence given throughout the novel to animals. Yedigei's oversexed camel Karanar is more vividly sketched than his colorless wife, Ukubala. Vixen, dog, and eagle emotions are frequently analyzed in the course of this complex novel; they seem to counterbalance the superhuman characteristics of the inhabitants of the planet Lesnaya Grud' contacted by the exiled space travel team. Dualistic imagery throughout the novel stresses, to the point of tedium, that all the characters are involved in a tug-of-war between East and West. The railway line has its two terminals. Soviet and American officials meet on board a jointly manned vessel stationed at a point equidistant between Vladivostok and San Francisco to determine the fate of their vagrant space team.

In burying Kazangap, Yedigei wonders whether younger Kazakhs will know enough for the Muslim funeral ritual to do the same for him; he even entertains some mild doubts as to whether there is a God to mandate such ritual:

"They don't believe in God and know no prayers at all. No one knows, and no one *will* ever know, if there is a God. Some say there is, others say there isn't. I want to believe that You exist, and You are in my thoughts, when I come to You with my prayers. In fact I speak through You to myself, and at such times I am given the gift of thinking. It is as if You, Creator, had Yourself thought these thoughts of mine. In this lies the heart of the matter. But these young men do not think about this, and they despise prayer. But what will they have to say for themselves and for others at the great hour of death? I am sorry for them. How can they appreciate their innermost, secret humanity, if they have no way in which to rise up in their thoughts as if each of them should seem to be a god?"

Of course these are the thoughts of an aging Kazakh railway worker, not necessarily to be identified with those of a Kirghiz veterinarian-turned-novelist. Nevertheless, this is a fascinating production to come from the pen of a Hero of Socialist Labor. (WV)