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Greetings from uphill-----

I suppose I will lose all my respectability, but all these years it has never been edible or profitable, so what the heck? Last week at the library I ran across what some people would call a weirdo book, and others would clasp to their bosoms with excitement, and still others will carefully pretend, it never got published, there ain't no such book and even if there were you have no right to discuss it before scholars etc. etc. far into the night.

Psychic Discoveries Behind the Iron Curtain, by Sheila Ostrander and Lynn Schroeder, with foreword by Ivan T. Sanderson. Prentice-Hall 1970

Shades of Marr and Lysenko, I suppose you will say. Well, if so, how about a couple of other Russians, named Schillinger and Yasser, whose theories were slightly awry also? The philosophy labelled "dialectical materialism" has produced very strange offspring.

In 1968 these two girls went through Russia, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, and a few other places and tried to put down what they saw and heard. It reads almost like fiction, so maybe some of it is, but pointing out the foolishness of this or that idea (such as a Czech cardboard pyramid which is supposed to restore the sharpness of razor blades kept in it for a couple of days) does not necessarily refute everything in the book.

I don't know how you would go about proving or disproving the assertion of a Russian astronomer that time is a form of energy, and that this fact has something to do with the occurrence of psi, but the idea is at least worth writing about.

Quackery aside, there are dozens of assertions in this book that could be checked out in laboratories and other suitable experimental settings, so at least in principle it should be possible to find out whether or not this is another Marr & Lysenko deal.

Unfortunately, this probably will never be done--because those who might do so will read obvious hokum in the next chapter after reading something worthwhile, and will tar the whole thing with the same brush. I suspect that the publishers have used these authors, in order to increase the sale of the book by making it attractive to the spiritualist, astrological, and other moonstruck lecture-meetings throughout our fair land. The authors admit that the communists tried to use them--and that there must be hypocrisy in high places to proclaim materialism and permit investigation of psychic phenomena at the same time.

But--the hypocrisy of the American businessman who is a mechanistic materialist on weekdays and a pious churchgoing dualist on Sundays is just as serious and harmful. Or the hypocrisy of the monopoly corporation practicing paternalistic totalitarian collectivism while spouting off about free enterprise.

And for that matter the hypocrisy of the mad bomber who blows up public buildings in behalf of world peace. And all those diplomats---it's too disgusting to go on.

In the morning's mail another letter from that spelling reformer, Newell Tune. He encloses the varityped proof of a letter I wrote him in 1969, not for publication, just to ask him to get somebody to write for him instead of me, on the subject of the social pressures against spelling reform. Or against any change. I thought the whole thing was ignored by him and safely buried away in the files. So he makes a change in it--he can't leave other people's letters alone, it seems. He has a hot feud on with another spelling reformer, so when I mentioned this man's name for the sake of commenting on the expense that would be incurred in having new typewriters and type cast for some 8 new letters, he took this fellow's name out and put another reformer's name in instead, excusing himself by calling this anathagonist "an ungrateful wretch". Tempest in a teapot, as far as I am concerned. So I will just ignore the whole thing.

However, the long history of international languages and spelling reform and calendar reform and propaganda for the metric system is replete with bitter feuds and polemics and irreconcilable differences. They use up all their energy fighting fellow-strugglers for the same cause, so that no energy is left to vanquish the real opposition to change.

Which leads to the Foreword to that book, by Sanderson. He falls into a semantic bramble-trap, criticizing the existing terminology of pro and con partisans alike. As though the dictionaries could prove or disprove the matters of contention.

Yours