

BOOKS and REVIEWS

Anatomy of a Murder

By Robert Traver. 436 pp. New York. St. Martin's Press. \$4.50.

Reviewed by MARY H. SCHMIDT
 "My passion for murder is almost illicit," Robert Traver writes, and if you give him a chance to reduce you, yours will be, too. Traver calls a murder trial "the ultimate drama," and his book—and the way it has sold—proves the point.

"No play in the world is quite like it," he writes. "In this kind of drama the show may not only close abruptly, but the main actors stand to lose all if they fail."

PART ONE is "Before the Trial." With Paul Bigler, ex-district attorney, you call on Frederic Manion, who cold-bloodedly killed the hotel owner that raped Manion's luscious wife, Laura. You sit inside the lawyer's mind as he interviews his would-be client. You watch him mold and lead the murderer's tale to fit the law and the lawyer's professional ethics, and you watch Bigler's distaste for his chilly, egotistical client grow even as he becomes more and more fascinated by the case and impassioned in Manion's defense.

THE SECOND part of the book is the trial itself. And Traver, himself an ex-DA who is now a Michigan state supreme court justice barely hidden behind his pseudonym, gives you a verbatim and breathtaking account.

IT HAS everything: A battle for a man's life. A duel between brilliant attorneys. Rape of a beautiful woman. Legal shenanigans about the insanity plea. Opposing psychiatrists. And a surprise ending.

FAULTS? Oh, yes, the book has

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many. The writing is amateurish and sometimes stilted. The characters vary from likable to not at all convincing. The dialogue outside the courtroom is stiff and unnatural. And as for the love interest, let's just forget it.

But Traver's plot, his court scenes and his suspense excuse everything.

STILL, to me, most interesting of all is the way the author reveals himself in his book—how often can you peek into the mind of a supreme court justice?

Seidman and Son
 By Elick Moll. 288 pp. New York. G. P. Putnam's Sons. \$3.95.

Reviewed by ROBIN BAHR

Morris Seidman is a man with many aggravations. A Dior to the masses, Morris must get out each year a new line of smart stylish dresses which retail at \$29.50. Business being business, chaos ensues. What with the hollering, the fighting, the quitting, and the unions, Morris alone could support the aspirin and bicarbonate business on 7th avenue.

But Morris has personal problems as well. His son Harold returns home from Korea. Deeply removed by the world's wrongs, Harold decides to set things aright and begins bestowing a little welcome human dignity on the employees in his father's shop. In addition there is a bit of confusion over a picture of a Korean baby Morris discovers on Harold's typewriter. As Morris said to a friend "from where do you get the nerve to tell your wife—we got a grandchild. In Korea. His name is Kim Sung."

THEN THERE is his sister Bessie. From Flushing, Bessie has become a self-appointed guardian of Morris' affairs. With a daily phone call she sees to it that Morris doesn't get a swelled head by making so much money.

The line between his personal and business lives is always very fine but it becomes nonexistent when he takes his designer Miss Youseum out to dinner one night. The situations are impossible, the dialogue is hilarious, and Morris, with all his aggravations, is the world's most lovable human being.

Two stories were adapted from the book for TV's Playhouse 90—"Seidman and Son" and "The Man from Seventh Avenue." The book is ever funnier.

The Long March
 By Simone de Beauvoir. 501

World Publishing company. \$7.50.

Reviewed by JULIE CANDLER

Nobody minds an author grinding an axe, as long as he doesn't hit you over the head with it. But Simone de Beauvoir has done just that in "The Long March," her lengthy description of Communist China today.

This important French author presents a convincing analysis of how, and why, the Chinese peasant's lot is improving under the Communist regime. This she has done in spite of the fact that she visited China only once, for six weeks.

THE BOOK'S weakness lies in the one-sided axe with which she

conveys the message. The Communist regime is so obvious that even the most naive reader should see through it.

... workers do not possess the right to strike," says Miss de Beauvoir, "while disputes or disagreements may arise between workers and their overseers, these are not fundamental oppositions; they can be worked out through discussion."

Of censorship, she writes: "There is no preventive censorship. If, once it is published and out, constitutional or legal exception is taken to a book, a provisory judiciary committee is formed, writers sitting at the board, and it is decided whether or not the book warrants seizure."

WHEN Miss de Beauvoir delineates an argument used against

Miss de Beauvoir's argument. At the end, she draws the questionable conclusion. . . . only Communism is capable of proposing and implementing planning; it therefore appears to be the one possible hope for the people of Asia."

Despite its weaknesses, "The Long March" is a book which deserves translation and publication in America.

FOR WHEN Miss de Beauvoir puts down her axe and sticks to the facts she is the same magnificent reporter that she was in "The Second Sex."

She thoroughly covers Chinese agriculture, cities, industry, culture, religion and family life. She reports her personal observations, and includes a carefully document-

ed detailing of the past history of each subject.

The book should be an important contribution to American understanding of China today. And if we are going to coexist and compete economically with Communist nations, we have to know about them. And though Miss de Beauvoir's obvious pitch doesn't sell anyone on Communist ideology, at least it describes it thoroughly.

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