

trate the unitarian mentality of New Agers: (1) All is one. Differences are apparent only, without ontological standing; (2) All is God. The divine essence is everywhere and in everything; (3) Humanity is God. (Good news for the would-be divinities, who take their cue from *The Next Whole Earth Catalogue*: "We are as Gods and might as well get good at it."); (4) A change in consciousness. If we fail to see the unity of everything and understand our own status as gods, the fault lies in bad thinking. We can raise our consciousness on classic Asian religions, or for lazy Americans there are quick fixes like est; (5) All religions are one—all roads going to the same place and all that. Similarly no systems of thought are unique, and no religions either. So watch out when

they talk of the "Christ event"; they mean something else; (6) Cosmic evolutionary optimism. The unfolding of the world divinity in history means everything keeps getting better all the time. Much of Groothius' book is a fleshing out of the premises of the six marks. He's particularly good at showing the inroads of New Age thinking in the ordinary affairs of American life.

Unholy Spirits is a very different book. This fat tome, originally published 10 years ago under another title, has now been brought up to date with a good deal of fresh material. The first chapter alone, entitled "The Crisis of Western Rationalism," is worth half the price of admission. The bulk of *Unholy Spirits* is taken up with extended treatments of some of the weirder aspects of the movement. North has

read his Edgar Cayce, Carlos Castaneda, the androgyny propaganda, the meticulously documented and filmed instances of occult healing, Kirlian photography, and so on. He has refused to get caught in the Kantian trap. Having rejected the old rationalism, now breaking up on the rocks, he also sees the disaster wrought by the mystical void. He's done that by finding common ground for the worlds of flesh and spirit, a unifying conception for the One and the Many. And he finds it the same place Groothius does—in the orthodox Christian faith.

As the century wears on, that faith may once again resemble an embattled sect struggling against the forces of a bizarre and sometimes brutal pantheism.

Republican Vices *by Buddy Matthews*

The New Republic: A Voice of Modern Liberalism by David Seideman, New York: Praeger Publishers; \$32.95.

For some 73 years, since November 1914, *The New Republic* has been the self-constructed soapbox for the best ideas and insights proffered by the liberal intellectual community (which may explain why the magazine is always so thin). Some of the most important names in American liberalism have graced the magazine's pages as it has laid out its plan for a new America.

What exactly has been that plan? In his new book examining the first 25 years of TNR, David Seideman, who worked at TNR from 1979 to 1986 and edited the magazine's special 70th anniversary issue in 1984, explains in the Preface:

In the first half of the 20th century, the forward momentum of U.S. history seemed stalled. The previous century's scattered and diffused economic and political institutions proved ill-equipped

to master the complexities of the modern industrial age. The traditional liberal principles of individual rights and natural freedom impeded national progress. During both active and dormant areas, TNR guided the United States away from self-reliance and laissez-faire and toward collective identity through the active intervention of the state.

So far from expressing any remorse for the abridgment of liberties, Seideman continues, "No cause was ever as tirelessly and faithfully championed as social justice, a keystone for reform and civilized societies in the modern age. TNR's editors believed a stronger central government was the means by which social justice could exist." Seideman makes it clear that for the early editors of TNR, the Soviet Union under Lenin and the younger Stalin would be the paradigm for those "civilized societies in the modern age."

As much as anything, *The New Republic* is an examination of the personalities and ideas that helped create the magazine. The magazine's financial backers were Dorothy and Willard Straight. The daughter of the very wealthy William C. Whitney, who made a bundle in streetcar lines

and investments in Standard Oil, heiress Dorothy had more humanitarian concerns. Willard had a personal apprenticeship with Teddy Roosevelt before joining the J.P. Morgan firm.

With their vast accumulation of wealth, the Straights decided to back a magazine which would promote the distribution of wealth (everybody else's wealth) to the less fortunate or less productive members of society. (It's a pattern that would appear again and again in 20th-century America.) Herbert Croly was to be the editor of the weekly magazine while Walter Weyl, Walter Lippmann, and others would be added later. Eventually, it would sport Edmund Wilson, Malcolm Cowley, Bruce Bliven, and economist George Soule.

In its first issue, the editors proclaimed that "TNR is frankly an experiment, it is an attempt to find a national audience for a journal of opinion." While not entirely new, issues and ideas journalism was to have a major impact on the publishing industry.

In an attempt to stress independence, the various editors were permitted to express their opinions freely, an action which sometimes led to clashes. In an effort to draw national attention, they called on the biggest names they could find. A partial but revealing list of the contributors includes John Dewey, Charles Beard (the historian

Buddy Matthews is a journalist based in Dallas.

who saw the U.S. Constitution as a huge money-making scam), and the indefatigable John Reed (the only American buried in the Kremlin wall).

When this "progressive" hodge-podge of a magazine began appearing in print, it was received with mixed emotions. The magazine was not quite leftish enough for the real radicals, and, in the opinion of Willard Straight, it was a little too high-brow for almost everyone else. The magazine, he complained, was filled with too much opinion and not enough fact. "Lighten up the tone of the paper and give it a sugar-coating to get it across even with the semi-intelligent reader." It is tempting to suggest that the editors took Straight's advice by appealing to the "semi-intelligent" progressives who constitute the major part of the magazine's readership. In looking back over the early issues, it is interesting to compare the editorial

wisdom with the actual course of events. *TNR* had been appearing for three years when the October Revolution of 1917 occurred. Many of the stated goals of the Communists were in harmony with American progressives and liberals. For over 20 years, *TNR* would be a defender of the revolution, and despite its close connections with Teddy Roosevelt and later Woodrow Wilson and even later FDR (after first denouncing him as too conservative), the magazine would also recommend Communist candidate Earl Browder for President in 1936.

The author recognizes this close ideological affinity, and, though he contends that the Communist Party never directly influenced the magazine's editorial position, he admits that "its unabashed romance with the Soviet Union attached it firmly to the party line in the international sphere." One of the less savory episodes in the romance came during Stalin's show trials. (You can find the back issues in any good library, and microfilm will preserve their infamy down to the last days.) *TNR* managing editor Bruce Bliven was a little concerned about the political impact Stalin's actions were having on the Communist cause worldwide. In "A Letter to Stalin" published in *TNR* on March 30, 1938, Bliven makes several suggestions.

"Soviet court procedure in most types of trials is admirable," Bliven states, but he suggests that Stalin use a style more compatible with the Anglo-Saxon and Roman tradition. "It may be unjust of the Americans, for example, to suspect that torture is used in these cases; but in the United States there is a nationwide and long continued tradition of police brutality, of extorting confessions by torture in every sort of case from petty larceny to murder. It is inevitable that this country should look with suspicion upon confessions obtained in secret hearings, however plausible these confessions may be on their face." Bliven also suggests that Stalin "publish every scrap of documentary evidence" in order to vindicate his integrity, that he abolish the death penalty (that's some suggestion for one of the world's greatest mass murderers), and that he create a "legal Opposition."

Bliven concludes with a revealing

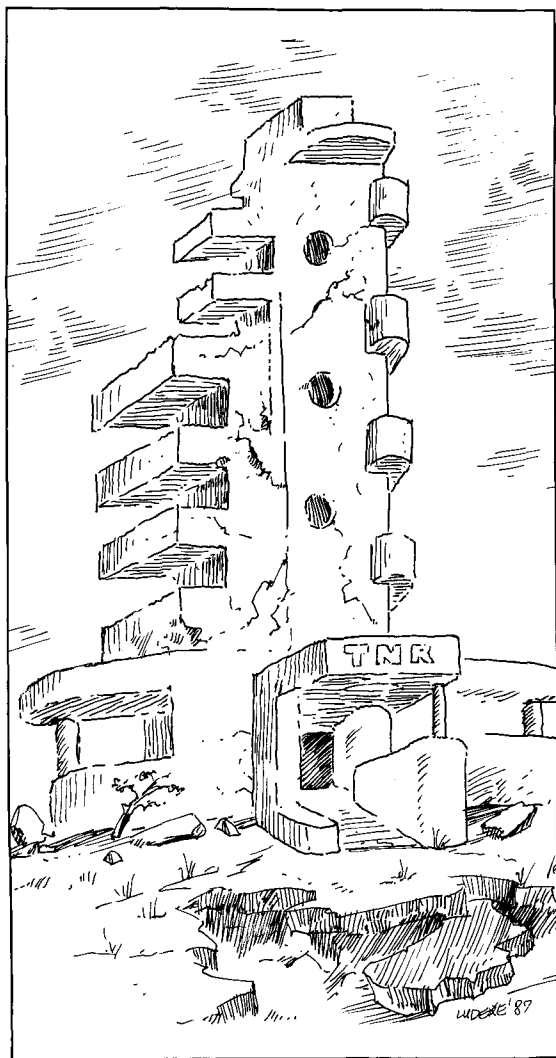
statement. "I am profoundly convinced that nothing you could do for the USSR by remaining in office for a length of time could be as great a service as the demonstration that among 190,000,000 comrades no one is indispensable, that those foreign critics who lump together 'Hitler, Stalin, and Mussolini' have been altogether wrong."

Fortunately, the magazine would come to lament its former position on the Soviet government. It would have to do some more lamenting in the future. In the 80's, of course, *The New Republic* moved a tad to the right, by its own admission. If it did not learn from Stalin, and it did not learn from Mao, the magazine finally learned something from Ho. In an issue dedicated to the 10th anniversary of the fall of Saigon, some of the editors regretted that they took the wrong side on the Vietnam problem.

It's a little late, now that freedom is gone, and millions have been reeducated to their graves. As a leading journal of opinion opposing the war and a supporter of McGovern, *TNR* must bear a good deal of the moral responsibility.

In repentance, perhaps, the magazine did a long and well-reasoned piece on the foolishness of our agricultural policy, and Fred Barnes wrote a scathing article on National Public Radio's news program *All Things Considered*, entitled "All Things Distorted."

Experience keeps a dear school, as Poor Richard advised, and the "fools" at *TNR* have learned a few hard lessons. But instead of saying "I'm sorry" and shutting up (and shutting down), they continue to advise Americans on everything under the sun. The President's recent misadventures over Iran and the *contras*—about which *TNR* is sputtering in uncontrollable indignation—proceeded according to a script which might have been written by the magazine's global democrats. On most social and ethical questions, the present magazine is worse than its com-symp predecessors. Gay rights, pornography, and stuffy *avant-garde* novelists were not exactly Herbert Croly's cup of tea. *TNR* may have moved to the right on some issues, but on most questions it is as wrong as it ever was.



U.S., A Captive Nation

by John C. Vinson

The Captive Public by Benjamin Ginsberg, New York: Basic Books; \$18.95.

Benjamin Ginsberg's *The Captive Public* is a breath of fresh cynicism. With insight and illustration, it argues that mass opinion and majority will are not necessarily the nemesis of Big Brother. In modern society, Ginsberg argues, the Orwellian state can adapt and even mold them for its purposes.

Nor is this a new development. Ginsberg maintains that the emergence of public opinion as a political force was not so much a concession from the powers that be as a device to give their ruler greater legitimacy. Before the Industrial Revolution, his argument runs, authorities had little incentive to dwell on popular discontent. Poor communications and isolation tended to keep upheaval from spreading, and feudal economies, filling the royal coffers, continued to function despite localized troubles. But with the machine age, communications, and interdependence, rulers realized that discontent could cost them commerce, taxes, and possibly their lives.

Consequently, they sought to neutralize opposition, while appearing to yield to it, by extending free speech and elections. Ginsberg holds that free speech was not a great danger to the then rising bourgeois classes because they owned printing presses which could dominate discourse. Rather than fearing mass literacy, they promoted it, assuming a larger audience to read their ideas. This strategy of rule has application in our own day, for scarcely does a Communist revolution pass before the new regime boasts of increasing literacy. In the case of elections, the bourgeois strategy was to limit genuine options, while persuading the populace that ballots were better than bullets.

Nineteenth-century rulers generally sought to divert popular opinion into desired channels. They lacked the techniques and technology to do much more. Twentieth-century governments operate under less con-

straint. Their aim is to manufacture opinion from the start, then claim obedience to the popular will. Effective tools of the trade are advertising and public relations. Authentic public sentiments certainly persist, but would-be rulers, both liberal and conservative, says Ginsberg, are adept at molding them to fit personal and partisan agendas. "Put not your trust in Princes" should be the watchword of conservatives.

Another tool of control is the public opinion poll. Ginsberg endorses the repeated charge that polling is more a reflection of polling method and questions than genuine popular opinion. Too often, as well, polls can minimize the intensity of minority viewpoints by comparing them with opposing, though highly apathetic, majorities. If King George had had polls, he might have persuaded the American patriots that their cause was doomed for lack of support.

An even more sinister use of polls is that of political intelligence. By gaining adequate knowledge of public attitudes, rulers can take steps to thwart genuinely popular movements. Ginsberg reports that a number of Communist states have used polling for this purpose.

The final tool is refinement of the election to provide the illusion of choice. An example is the one party "election" in the Soviet Union which we Americans properly deride. And yet our own elections frequently offer only slightly different versions of Tweedledees and dums.

Ginsberg concludes by raising, but not answering, the question: Will Big Brother eventually assimilate all opinion? A question the author might have asked, but didn't: Is democracy itself sacrosanct, or possibly just another tool for rule?

Perhaps Ginsberg couldn't bring himself to squeeze the trigger on so sacred a cow as this. Few people today can. But it is instructive that the nation's Founders saw private and public virtue rather than majorities as the bulwark of liberty—a view rooted in classical antiquity and Christian sensibilities. (It was a majority, after all, that voted for the Crucifixion.)

John C. Vinson writes from Athens, Georgia.

Mistress of Deceit

by Ronald Berman

Shakespeare by Germaine Greer, New York: Oxford University Press; \$13.95.

Oxford University Press advertises its Past Master series (of which this book is one) as being "a noble encyclopaedia of the history of ideas" in which "lucid and authoritative" modern critics introduce us to the best of what has been thought and written. Oxford seems to have dropped a brick on this one. Lucid? Here are some passages which may help the reader decide:

The public duty of the playwright was to bring the caviare of his angelic intellectual exercise within the grasp of those savage hordes. . . .

The godlike power of the creators of illusory worlds, the irresistible tendency of man to debauchery rather than improvement, the blindness and self-indulgence of intellectuals, has cropped out, as the defrocked hierophant begs our intercession to save his soul.

The language ranges from Victorian prissy to the imitation of—i.e., "the unsynthesized manifold of everyday life"—a kind of Minimalism.

Authoritative? When Greer talks about Desiderius Erasmus, she identifies him as one of the "schoolmen" and explains that they were philosophical antagonists of Shakespeare. The greatest "schoolmen" had been safely dead for more than a century before Erasmus' birth. And by no stretch of the imagination was Erasmus a medieval. When she analyzes the winter song in *Love's Labours Lost*—

When all aloud the wind doth
blow,
And coughing drowns the
parson's saw,
And birds sit brooding in the
snow,
And Marion's nose looks red
and raw,
When roasted crabs hiss in the
bowl,