

fully and freely. Yet not *one* of them withdrew his confession or cast doubts upon the validity of the trial; not one of them said, "The prosecutor's demand for the death penalty is a violation of the pledge made to us." From all this only one conclusion is possible: the defendants confessed their guilt over and over again simply because they actually were guilty. No other conclusion stands the test of reason.

The pamphlet under review makes a considerable point of the discrepancies as to the dates when the various conspiratorial centers functioned and as to who the leaders were. It would be remarkable indeed if the testimony of the various defendants did not differ in some respects. If all the sixteen men on trial had told identical stories the critics would have had a far better case, for every jurist knows that only fabricated testimony worked out in collusion dovetails perfectly. All genuine testimony shows discrepancies when several witnesses are involved. The experience of the law courts and the investigations of psychology have shown that no two men witnessing the same series of events can remember them identically, and that even no individual remembers anything perfectly.

In connection with this pamphlet, it is worth noting Trotsky's own views of the trial as published recently in the *New York Times*. His arguments need only to be stripped of their rhetoric for their weakness to emerge. Thus, he contends that Kamenev had lost his morale in 1928 and capitulated. He was too demoralized at the trial to assert his innocence—but just not sufficiently demoralized to plot terror. Zinoviev was a political corpse—but just an important enough political corpse to require killing off by a "frame-up." Bakayev could falsely swear his guilt and could falsely implicate his associates in the crime—but he could not plot treason.

The more one examines the psychological arguments against the trial, the more one is compelled to dismiss them as irrelevant. In the first place, if it is absurd to assume that oppositionists who had been close to Lenin and call themselves Marxists could plan the murder of Kirov, it is equally absurd to assume that government officials who also had been close to Lenin and also call themselves Marxists could plan the judicial murder of the defendants. In the second place, if psychological motivation is to play a role in determining the validity of the trial, then the pamphlet under review makes it abundantly clear that the defendants had far stronger motives for plotting terror than the Soviet leaders had for plotting a frame-up. The author describes "Stalin and his clique" as absolute masters of the Soviet Union; they have boundless autocratic power to do as they please. Stalin, particularly, has everything his own way. His opponents pay him the extraordinary tribute of exempting him from all the laws of history. Here is a man who, as distinguished from Cæsar, Napoleon, Cromwell, and Lenin can alter a social system at his personal whim. Surely, such a man would have little motive to perse-



Blind

Etching by Caroline Durieux

cute innocent critics; he would feel secure in his omnipotence. The defendants, on the other hand, are described as victims of a prolonged, meaningless, and incredibly vindictive persecution. Stalin's vengeance, we are told, has rendered these men "politically disemboweled, demoralized, most of them broken physically and all of them morally." Surely, such men would have far stronger motives for revenge and would be far more likely to plan murder. Under these circumstances, it is reasonable to disregard the psychological motives of both sides and assume the normal view that, whatever the character of the accused may have been at the time of the trial, they would not have confessed to crimes unless they had committed them.

We in this country, distant from the trial, unfamiliar with the individuals involved, are faced with two versions. One says the trial was fair; the other says it was a frame-up. We are left with a choice between what common sense accepts as *fact*, and what a will to believe makes of *inference*. Confession in open court in the presence of many foreign observers is a fact. The notion that the trial was a frame-up is based on surmise, conjecture, suspicion, speculation, and fantasy. It is not a fact but a hypothesis, and a hypothesis which has no real evidence to support it. It is said, of course, that *possibly* there was a frame-up, but when we examine this possibility, we find that it has no basis in the *facts*.

NATHAN FRANKEL.

### From the Masters

SELECTED WRITINGS, Karl Marx and Frederick Engels. International Publishers. \$2.25.

IN a recent book, the philosopher George Santayana deigned to take notice of Marxism: "In my youth I tried to read Marx, but when I read that labor determines value

and price and that therefore the less skilled the worker the more valuable his product, I stopped then and there forever." It is symptomatic of the pervasive and arrogant ignorance among American intellectuals in our universities regarding the most elementary propositions of Marxism that so influential and learned a writer can appear in public with so clumsy a distortion without a sense of shame. In an attack upon a fellow philosopher, intellectual integrity, or, at the very least, a feeling for the security of his own position, should have compelled Santayana to get clear in his own mind the arguments of his opponent.

For it is one of the cornerstones of Marx's political economy that the *opposite* of Santayana's statement is true—that it is neither the labor-time of the most skilled nor the least skilled that determines value and conditions price, but that these are functions of the *average socially necessary* labor-time.

Such examples of official obscurantism can be multiplied indefinitely. They are the hallmark of most university and journalistic thinking today. The reader is familiar, undoubtedly, with the galling myth, so sedulously fostered in a kind of covert agreement by all hacks big and small, that Marx's writings are "dull" and "long-winded," that they are the abstruse metaphysical abstractions of a crazed Hegelian. (This vulgarity appeared recently in the *New York Times* under the signature of a Mr. T. Florinsky—at present teaching at Columbia University and late of the Imperial Academy of St. Petersburg). The truth is, of course, that Marx's and Engels's writings are beautiful in their precision, wit, passion, and lucidity. For sheer *literary* power, for example, certain chapters in *Capital* or *The Civil War in France*, to instance only a few of innumerable possible examples, are quite matchless, and, by comparison, make all accepted classics of historical writing seem lifeless and stiflingly restricted in range.

A writer like Mr. Henry Hazlitt of the *New York Times* and the *Yale Review* considers himself devastating when he utters cute cracks about something he calls "economic determinism," with the implication that this philosophy, whatever it may mean, is synonymous with Marxism. Will gentry like these vow by something that is truly sacred to them (say, a guaranteed mortgage that yields a nice rate of interest) that they will do themselves the honor and their readers the service of *reading* ("If people could only read," Marx once declared in wry despair) such a selected compilation of Marx's and Engels's writings as now appears in this first of a two-volume edition?

Will they dare to quote in their reviews such passages as these:

According to the materialistic conception the determining element in history is *ultimately* the production and reproduction of real life. More than this Marx and I never asserted. If therefore somebody twists it into the statement that the economic element is the *only* determining one, he transforms it into a meaningless, abstract, and absurd phrase. The economic situation is the basis, but the various elements of the superstructure—political forms of the class struggle and its consequences, constitutions

established by the victorious class after a successful battle, forms of law, etc.—and then, even the reflexes of all these actual struggles in the brains of the combatants; political, legal, philosophical theories, religious ideas and their further development into systems of dogma—also exercise their influence upon the course of historical struggles and in many cases preponderate in determining their form. There is an interaction of all these elements, in which, amid all the endless host of accidents (that is, things and events whose inner connection is so remote or so impossible to prove that we regard it as absent and can neglect it) the economic movement finally asserts itself as necessary. (Page 381.)

Against this rich clarity what have the New York Times and the Yale Review to offer but a motley and shallow eclecticism which in the end reveals nothing but their own helplessness in the face of historic events?

Popularization of Marx's and Engels's works is, of course, valuable and necessary, and requires a talent for thoroughness that is not at all common. But this cannot replace the liberating effect of an immersion in the original writings of these revolutionary geniuses, and it is certainly one of the most beneficial results that we can hope for from the publication of these compiled volumes that they will make it easier for students and general readers to read *in their entirety* these groundworks of revolutionary theory.

These writings need to be read again and again, as Lenin used to read them, not because their clarity does not make its immediate mark, but because they are so rich in implication. For example, this passage:

I consider the ultimate supremacy of economic development established in these spheres also (philosophy and literature), but it comes to pass that it is established *within conditions imposed by the particular sphere itself*: in philosophy, for instance, through the operation of economic influences (which again act generally under political, etc., disguises) upon the existing material handed by predecessors. Here economy creates nothing absolutely new, but it determines the way in which *the existing material of thought is altered and further developed*, and that, too, indirectly for the most part, for it is the political, legal, and moral reflexes which exercise the greatest direct influence upon philosophy.

Or consider this remark: "This side of the matter [that is, the specific development within 'the particular sphere itself'] we have all, I think, neglected more than it deserves. It is the old story: *form is always at first neglected for content.*"

Every word here has reverberations which crystallize for us in our present cultural struggles in America. Have we not in such passages at once a surpassing reply to the intellectual monasticism by which the bourgeoisie conceals the material content of its thought, and a key to a more supple probing of contemporary culture than we have yet mastered? The meaning of freedom, the possibility of universality, the uncovering of hidden energies in the human spirit now only half-guessed at, the enormous ranging of the human mind no longer at war with but nourished by the endless tumult of reality, are wonderfully sounded in these writings which have, at the same time, the illusionless rigor of science.

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*Manifesto; Wage-Labor and Capital; Value, Price, and Profit; Feuerbach; Socialism Utopian and Scientific*, essays by Lenin on Marx, Engels's prefaces to *Capital*, Stalin's pithy remarks on Marxism to the First American Delegation, and excerpts from the Marx-Engels correspondence, makes us eager for the second, which will contain the historical writings. Welcoming this new collection, is it not a good time to inquire once more when we are going to get authoritative editions in English of such classics as *Die Deutsche Ideologie*, *Die Heilige Familie*, *Natur und Dialektik*, and Marx's critique of Hegel's philosophy of law, the *Theorien über den Mehrwert*, let alone the complete correspondence, *Herr Vogt*, the articles in *Die Neue Zeit*, etc. The publication of these works would have an immediate effect on American intellectual life, and they would sweep into a deserved oblivion some of the more pretentious of the recent hybrid Marxist-pragmatists who can flourish only in the absence of these basic documents of revolutionary theory.

MILTON HOWARD.

## Thumbs Down

THE STREET OF THE FISHING CAT, by Jolán Földes. Farrar & Rinehart. \$2.50.

THIS novel by a Hungarian woman has been awarded the All-Nations Prize, amounting to the healthy sum of \$19,000. Although the book has no positive social content whatever, its selection by the International Committee (American member: Mr. Joseph Wood Krutch) may be taken as a back-handed tribute to the prestige of the authentic left-wing novel; a tribute and also perhaps—so help us—a rebuke. The tribute is plainly conveyed in the fact that the materials of the book are proletarian. The rebuke, then, would lie in the unorthodox treatment given those materials.

The plot has promise. It deals with a worker-family in exile from Hungary; their struggles to make a life for themselves in a Paris charged with post-war hostilities and crowded with hungry refugees of every nationality and political complexion. Given such a situation the question would seem to be whether the Barabás youngsters will become class-conscious under the hardships and the clash of social opinion that confront them, or whether they will emerge at last as spotless little bourgeois.

However, no such dilemma develops. Miss Földes is so indifferent to the class struggle that she won't even admit it as a temptation to her characters. She liquidates it by the humiliating device of putting it in front of you, obviously and deliberately, and then inviting you to ignore it. Accordingly, two of the young Barabáses shoulder their pretty, sunny, insensitive way through poverty, politics, and heartburn to success and to reconciliation with the French who have snubbed them. Jani becomes an engineer with his face turned toward the land of opportunity, Africa. Klari, having learned to move about "with the perfect grace of a French hostess," marries a Frenchman.

The less fortunate Anna falls victim to the sad but after all thoroughly enjoyable frustrations of expatriation.

As for Miss Földes's gallery of elder exiles, each of them plainly tagged with his particular political affiliation—

Here they are living, fugitives, their life but a wingless semblance of the life for which they had been born. Every year the construction of another empire collapses around them, and buries a few thousand or a few hundred thousand, buries them and condemns them to this shadowy form of death-in-life existence. . . . In the meantime their greatest concern is whether or not Anna has taken a liking to the long-legged German.

Exile, you understand, has softened their old partisan ferocity. Cathrina, the Finnish Communist (who is lame), hobbles around making matches among the young, accompanied everywhere by the endearing knock-knock of her brace of canes; while Liiv, the morose Lithuanian Socialist, has the curious fate of succeeding in the world in spite of himself. Amusing idea! Topsy turvy world! In short, they are just such a lovable band of ex-revolutionists as some nervous member of the ruling class might hope to find at the bottom of his garden.

In all this there is, of course, no malice on Miss Földes's part. It is only, as Mr. Krutch explains on the jacket, that she "is interested in the human rather than the political value of her story." Does "human" mean impotent?

F. W. DUPEE.

## Thumbs Up

THE GLITTERING CENTURY, by Phillips Russell. Scribners. \$3.50.

HERE is a bird's-eye view of eighteenth-century Europe and America: the death of aristocracy, the rise of industrialism, the French Revolution, and our own particular rumpus. More than a simple political panorama, it is a complex, vivid, very readable cinematic presentation of eighteenth-century life in all its aspects.

It seems the eighteenth-century folk, both aristocratic and rising bourgeois, were rather a lively crowd. Defoe wrote about it in *The Review*, although college teachers still prefer to quote the politer *Tatler* and *Spectator*, which said less about moral and political degeneration. It was during this period of the good Queen Anne that Swift wrote about the Yahoos in *Gulliver's Travels* and Hogarth put them in unforgettable cartoons. Anyway, Phillips Russell gives us evidence that this jolly folk were so corrupt they could give cards and spades to our own high livers and lovers. You can imagine that all this makes rather Winchellish reading.

But there is always the danger that in history highly spiced, there is often less history. While Phillips Russell's account is enlivened enough to give us intimate scenes of "Boudoir rule," it must be noted that often it does so at the expense of more fundamental issues.

I advise that you take this book with that one reservation. But if you can afford it, you'll find *The Glittering Century* a very