

movement in the country, and his development shows the same general curves and zig-zags that a chart of that movement would show.

Thus Franklin introduces to us not Fiorello LaGuardia, "the little Wop" who made good, but an extraordinarily energetic being who showed—and still shows—the strength and weaknesses of the indigenous progressivism—pragmatic at its roots and largely affected by the petty-bourgeois populist traditions of the West. Franklin clearly essays more than the chronological history of a progressive; he seeks to bare the roots of American progressivism.

By progressivism, it must be noted, Franklin has the traditional meaning in mind—the progressivism of the LaFollettes, George Norris, and the other homeless insurgents of the West who never were comfortable in either of the major parties and are only now beginning to find their place in a new political realignment. LaGuardia, who spent his early youth in the West and his formative legislative years in Congress with Norris and the elder LaFollette, absorbed much of their outlook.

Born in a Varick Street tenement in 1882, son of the Italian cornetist, Achille LaGuardia, and Irene Coen Luzzatti, of a Venetian Jewish family, baby Fiorello was soon taken to the West. Father Achille was an army bandmaster and the family lived for most of Fiorello's childhood and adolescent years in the atmosphere of a frontier military reservation.

Came the Spanish-American War and father Achille contracted dysentery from eating "en-balmed beef." Seeking to recover his health, the ailing father took his family to Budapest, but died shortly after they arrived there, leaving the eighteen-year-old Fiorello to take care of himself and his mother.

There followed a temporary clerkship at the American consul-general's office in Budapest and a few months later a job as acting consular agent at Fiume at three hundred dollars a year. That was the period in which the young man won recognition for defending the interests of immigrants against the whims of the Austro-Hungarian royalty. When he reached the age of twenty-one, he was officially appointed acting consular agent at one thousand dollars a year and during the years 1904-05 sandwiched in a pleasant *gemütlich* existence while learning Italian, German, Croatian, Magyar, and a bit of French.

Back in the United States in 1906, young Fiorello worked at various jobs and finally landed a spot as interpreter for the Labor Department at \$1320 a year. Here he worked by day and studied law by night, getting his degree at New York University in 1910.

Politics clearly beckoned. But where to break in? Writes Franklin:

From the practical point of view, LaGuardia had to be a New York City Republican—and an irregular one, at that—if he were to get anywhere in a political career. Where the Democrats had cornered the Irish vote, the Republicans had won a majority of the Italian vote throughout the nation, and with a Fusion administration on the way in

the city it would have been folly for the young western lawyer to identify himself with Tammany Hall. It proved almost as hard for LaGuardia to identify himself with the Republican organization, which was in more or less friendly cahoots with the Tammany outfit, under a sort of general understanding that reform waves come and go but politicians must eat all the year round.

In 1914 he ran for Congress, got the expected beating in a Tammany stronghold, but made such a good showing that Republican Governor Charles S. Whitman appointed him a deputy attorney-general. In 1916 he was elected. The war hysteria was on, and LaGuardia pledged that if he voted for war he would enlist himself. He did both and served in the air corps on the Italian front. Returning, he defeated Scott Nearing in a hot congressional contest after publicly debating with his opponent. In 1919 he was elected president of the N. Y. Board of Aldermen.

This period is of particular significance in his career. The "Red scare" was at its height and Attorney-General A. Mitchell Palmer was Red-raiding the length and breadth of the land. "Bolshevism," according to the staidest of our pillars, was under every bed. It was at this time, February 1920, that LaGuardia wrote about the tory howl against "Bolshevism":

It is used by the sweatshop owner when he speaks of his men demanding a living wage. It is howled by the profiteer. It is ranted forth by rotten political leaders.

Continues Franklin on this subject:

He (LaGuardia) went on to show that the demand for high wages was reasonable, that the amount needed was relatively minute, and that the reactionary employers who demanded "law and order" denied "law and order" to those of whom they complained as Bolsheviks.

His more recent career is fairly well known—his insurgency in Congress, his guerrilla warfare with the Republican high command, his congressional support of most progressive issues, his defeat by Tammany's Lanzetta in 1932, and his election as Fusion mayor of New York in 1933.

That the man has aligned himself with the broad general progressive movement in the

country a study of Mr. Franklin's book makes clear. That he is a figure of national importance is also self-evident.

LaGuardia's weaknesses on the whole were those of the progressive movement, Franklin implies. Because there existed no powerful people's-front movement, no effective third-party movement, LaGuardia and the other progressives "had" to fight from inside of the two major parties and ally themselves only on occasion with movements outside of these. One of LaGuardia's chief weaknesses—the major weakness of the liberals in American politics, in fact—is hardly touched on by Franklin. That is, of course, their fear of theory, their blind worship of rule-of-thumb politics.

It is this that seemingly gives many of their actions the "bad" smell of too-too "practical" politics, like an endorsement of George U. Harvey. Lacking a guiding theory, they are often subject to pessimism and panic. They seek the middle-of-the-road policy of attempting to placate the people and reaction simultaneously, efforts which earn them only the contempt of the Tories and weaken their popular support.

All of this has been illustrated over and over again in the current mayoralty campaign. Marxists understand this phenomenon and reject the attitude of sterile doctrinaires, so fashionable today among certain Socialists, of applying a foot-rule to types like LaGuardia. Communists understand that the LaGuardias are a product of the peculiar development of the American social structure, with all the strength, weakness, and peculiarities of the type. Communists are often sharply critical of the progressives, but they never forget that, with all their limitations, they are today an organic and indispensable part of the broad movement against reaction in the United States.

From this point of view a study of the Franklin biography—despite its occasional effusive and blurb-like character—will prove of real value to earnest progressives seeking to fight fascism in the United States. By shedding light on one outstanding figure in the country's progressive movement, Mr. Franklin's book serves to teach us more about the real elements of the developing people's-front movement in the United States and to clear the atmosphere of both utopian illusions and arid doctrinairism.

S. W. GERSON.

### Signal to Attack

REHEARSAL IN OVIEDO, by Joseph Peyré. Translated by R. H. Torres. Knight. \$2.

THE reading public owes a very real debt to writers like Malraux, Bates, and now in a smaller but genuine way to Joseph Peyré, for they are men who bring to first rank writing material which deeply concerns the future of the world. News reportage like Agnes Smedley's is needed; documentation like *From Spanish Trenches* is greatly



W. MILLS

needed; but along with these there is a need for that final, if slower, integration represented in books like *Man's Fate* and Bates's two novels on Spain.

*Rehearsal in Oviedo*, in the space of 40,000 words, gives—largely through the experience of an awkward Socialist miner—a striking view of the Spanish people's attempt to come into power in 1934. The "revolt"—and it is momentarily difficult to think of the people as "rebels" and the present "rebels" as "loyalists"—fails, is put down in the well-known bath of blood, which helped the people find their way to the democratic People's-Front government of today. The initial hope and the final despair of the people, as of the miner, Morenù, are the two boundaries of this moving short novel. At the opening of the book Morenù is awaiting a local signal to attack, a blast of dynamite. He reads an editorial in *Avance*, the Socialist organ, and is stirred by it. Days later, as hope is ending for him, he passes a corpse in the streets of Oviedo—"a man in a blue suit stretched out on the grass, his right cheek eaten away, and the cookies that he had been carrying in a copy of *Avance*, strewn about. On the topmost page of the Socialist newspaper, yellowed by dog urine, Morenù thought he recognized the appeal of October 4—the editorial whose moving phrases he still remembered." These are the boundaries of the book; between them are the heroism and steadfastness of a people who were for the time repressed, but who were not defeated.

Besides the main character, Morenù, the middle-aged socialist with his fingers bitten away from the mines, there are two other characters of particular interest. One is Marifé, a girl who represents the spirit of Asturian women during the revolt; the reader, like Morenù, will remember her slender throat and its scapulary as he hears of her death while fighting to hold up the final government drive. Perhaps even more significant is the figure of the *rampero*, a twenty-year-old Communist, who fought "justly" but ruthlessly—Morenù hated him. And the difficulty of union, of the "alliance" between Socialists and Communists to gain a common end, is clearly brought out. Only after a long, obsessive proving did Morenù have to admit that the Communist had something to him. I think that in this not at all sympathetic study of the *rampero* Peyré succeeds in showing the hard resistant core which Communists so often add to any group who, however reluctantly, take them in.

Peyré, who has written a number of novels in French, is known to the English reading public only by his Goncourt prize novel, *Glittering Death*. *Rehearsal in Oviedo* covers a period of time only half a year after that of *Glittering Death*, but the two novels are separated by an astonishing distance. *Glittering Death* is a novel of the bull ring, which rewrites Ibañez's *Blood and Sand*, effectively but still with the emphasis about where Ibañez left it; it is the world of the "ama-

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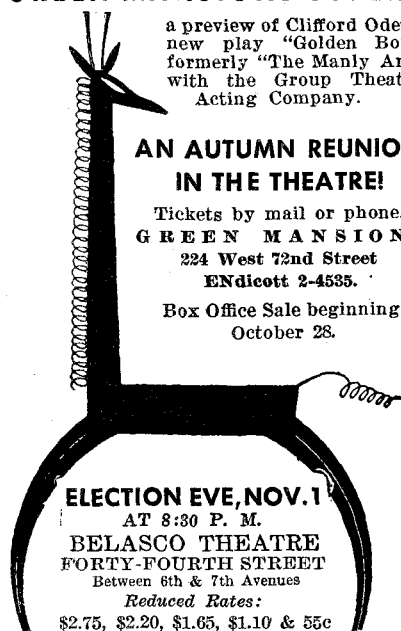
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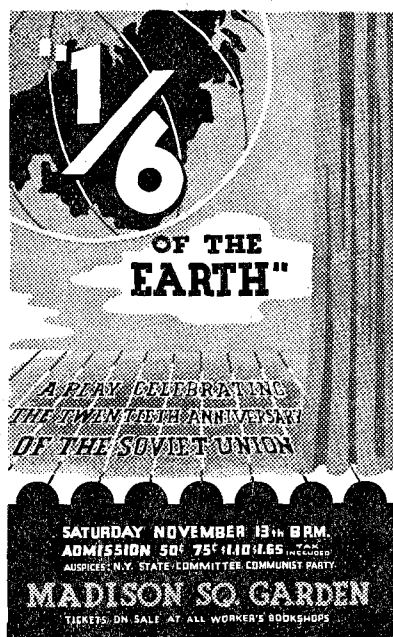
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teur," the watcher. In *Rehearsal in Oviedo* Peyré is no longer a spectator but a participant; the nostalgic, indirect quality of *Glittering Death* is gone, and there is only clear statement. That this clear statement is achieved with difficulty—as witness Morenù's confusion—there is no doubt, but there is also no doubt that in it, in all such tendency, there is health.

Mr. Torres's translation of *Rehearsal in Oviedo* is excellent; the feeling of rain, of autumn odors, is conveyed with purity; when the emotion must mount as it does in the finest scene in the novel—the dying Morenù throwing his useless dynamite against the cathedral, the translation moves with a sharp and penetrating fervor. **MILLEN BRAND.**

### Should America Quit China?

FORTY YEARS OF AMERICAN-JAPANESE RELATIONS, by Foster Rhea Dulles. D. Appleton-Century Co. \$3.

**I**MPERIALIST antagonisms in the Far East are fascinating to study, because they are so full of apparent paradoxes. Especially is this true of American antagonisms, past and present. Even the casual student is soon confronted with a number of obscure and complicated problems, the more difficult because at first glance they do not seem to square with expectations. For example, it is well known that the actual economic stake of the United States in China is comparatively small, only some 1.3 percent of our total foreign investment. Our trade with China is less than 3 percent of our total foreign trade. In both trade and investment, our stake in Japan is considerably larger. Yet, the prestige and power of the United States have for the most part been thrown, even if ineffectually, on the side of China against Japan.

One school of thought has arrived at a very simple solution. American policy in the Far East is explained as an inexplicable aberration. That Secretary Stimson should have made a determined effort to keep Japan out of Manchuria is considered the private whim of an ambitious but fumbling novice in world politics. This theory seems very satisfying because it does away with the problem which it started to answer. Like all purely idealistic constructions, the problem vanishes only to reappear under a somewhat different, but nonetheless bothersome, guise.

For it may be asked: how does it happen that an aberration can be so persistent? How does it happen that Mr. Stimson should have been possessed of the same aberration as Mr. Hughes, Mr. Hughes as Mr. Wilson, and Mr. Wilson as Mr. Hay? A span of about thirty-five years separated Secretary Stimson from Secretary Hay, yet both were moved by identical whims. They all adopted a "positive" policy in the Far East for the defense of China's territorial integrity as the necessary concomitant to the Open Door. Mr. Stimson was secretary of state in a Republican administration. The Republicans were

largely responsible for having defeated Mr. Wilson's attempt to bring the United States into the League of Nations. Since the early post-war years they had never weakened in their opposition to the League. Yet this Republican secretary in a Republican administration went farther in his collaboration with the League of Nations in 1931-33 than the most optimistic supporter of the League would have dared to predict in 1920.

*Forty Years of American-Japanese Relations* is the latest addition to the literature of the "aberration" interpretation of American Far Eastern policy. Mr. Dulles finds American statesmen lavish in making, but extremely feeble in backing up, their promises or threats. When it came to put up or shut up, the United States has in the past shut up. That happened from 1901, when Secretary Hay ruefully confessed that he could not make czarist Russia conform to the Open Door policy, until 1933 when Secretary Stimson finally admitted that he could not make Japan release its grip on Manchuria. Mr. Dulles's book really consists of a running summary of American Far Eastern diplomacy with special emphasis on those occasions when promise outdistanced achievement. In conclusion, he bids us leave Asia to Japan, surrender China immediately, reconcile ourselves to the loss of this largest of potential markets, make no threats, and thereby save ourselves the mortification of backing down.

I have placed Mr. Dulles in the "aberration" school not because everything he says is false, but because his general viewpoint is unrealistic, because he hangs his whole analysis on a "single set of circumstances" (as he himself puts it). His "single set of circumstances" is the failure of the United States to apply force to carry out threats. Why there was such a failure and why the attempt persisted in spite of the failure never comes within the scope of his study. He is content to record the fact and to put forward a deceptively simple prescription for avoiding future embarrassment: let the United States henceforth make no threats against Japan nor promises to China. This advice has been offered for forty years and it has never been followed. That alone should have given Mr. Dulles some pause.

For the contradictory position of the United States in the Far East is itself the result of objective circumstances over which diplomats have limited control. Mr. Dulles would have it seem as though our secretaries of state have been very dull fellows who did not know that bluffs are sometimes called. The truth is that our secretaries of state had to participate in the scramble for concessions in China after Great Britain and Japan had already preempted the most strategic positions of privilege and power. They have tried to safeguard the present and potential interests of American capitalism in the Far East by such means as they found at hand. It is true that they had to back down from time to time, sometimes at the cost of considerable loss of