

for forgetting it as quickly as possible. When *It Can't Happen Here* was published, I said that, displaying a new kind of awareness, it might mark the beginning of a new and more significant phase in Lewis's career. I would normally say about *The Prodigal Parents* that, exhibiting a singular asininity, it might mark the beginning of a descent to the level of the *American Mercury*. And, by gosh, I will say precisely that—hoping that Mr. Lewis will again prove me a bad prophet.

Of all his contributions to *News-Week*, the saddest was his review of *To Have and Have Not*. The peroration began: "Please, Ernest! You could have been the greatest novelist in America, if you could have come to know just one man who wasn't restricted to boozing and womanizing." (This means, of course, that Hemingway has known only dirty foreigners, for Americans are kind, shy, and loyal.) "Perhaps you still can be," Mr. Lewis continued. "Please quit saving Spain and start saving Ernest Hemingway." Mr. Lewis hasn't wasted any of his time saving Spain, but the salvation of Sinclair Lewis seems pretty remote. If he discovered precisely why Spain—and all it represents—is worth saving, there might be hope for him yet.

GRANVILLE HICKS.

China's Communists in Action

RED STAR OVER CHINA, by Edgar Snow. Random House. \$3. (Book Union Selection for January.)

IT is a double pleasure to report on this book: first, because it seems to confirm what was said in *The Chinese Soviets*, the present reviewer's attempt, made in 1933, to describe the birth and growth of this vital factor in Chinese history; and secondly, because it is written by a man who only three years ago entertained the possibility that the movement "may be emerging rather belatedly, for with the success of the sixth anti-Red drive of Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek the greater part of 'Soviet China' appears to have been shattered." Obviously, it was not "shattered" to the extent then claimed by the anti-Communist press, for after having visited the area under the Soviet regime, Mr. Snow reports that "in 1937 the Reds occupied a bigger single unified territory than ever before." After spending four months with the Chinese Communists and interviewing them at length under amazingly favorable circumstances, Mr. Snow has written an account which emphasizes their strength and unity. *Red Star over China* is, with one important exception to be noted later, as complete and reliable a picture of the Soviet regime in China as one could expect from such a capable observer as Mr. Snow.

It is not his personal adventure (interesting in itself) that makes the reading so absorbing, but the wealth of material on a social movement the very existence of which



was for a long time denied by most of the "experts" on China. The value of this material can be judged by the fact that most of it was supplied by Mao Tse-tung, the head of the Soviet regime, and some of it was checked by personal observations of the author right on the spot.

Edgar Snow set out to learn about these warriors who had fought so long, so courageously, and as admitted privately by Chiang Kai-shek's own followers, so invincibly. What was the revolutionary basis of their movement? What were the aims that had made of them the incredibly stubborn warriors (incredible compared with the history of compromise that is China), who had endured blockades, famines, epidemics, and hundreds of battles? How account for the historic Long March of six thousand miles from Kiangsi, in which they crossed twelve provinces of China, broke through thousands of Kuomintang troops, and triumphantly emerged at last into a powerful new base in the Northwest?

The section of the book called "Genesis of a Communist" is the story of Mao Tse-tung, as related by himself. It is a record of how Communism grew in China, "no mere orphan adopted from abroad," in Mr. Snow's words, but "a variety of it real and indigenous to China." We learn about the growth of the Red Army (now the Eighth Route Army), its heroic resistance to Nanking's efforts to crush it, and the titanic Long March. To the revealing story of the leader Mr. Snow adds his personal observation that, after visiting the front and studying the Red Army men, he became convinced of "the youth, the spirit, the training, the discipline, the excellent equipment (most of it acquired from governmental troops), and especially the high political morale. . . ."

After his stay among the Communists, the author knew only too well that they were no "bandits," but a disciplined group of people with high principles and an ardent desire to see China emancipated from the imperialist yoke, and first of all from the Japanese invaders. He had found a society governed by men of extraordinary intelligence and ability, leaders like Mao Tse-tung, the chairman; Chu Teh, commander of the troops, who became a legendary hero for most of the Chinese, far beyond the Soviet areas; Chou

En-lai, who negotiated the release of Chiang Kai-shek after the Sian incident; and many others. He had found a government modeled on that of the Soviet Union, but "contrary to the ideas of many people obsessed with the Comintern bogey" completely independent of Russia. "The influence of Russia," he writes, "has probably been more spiritual and ideological than through direct participation in the development. . . ."

Soon after Edgar Snow left "Red China" and returned to Peiping, he found a sharpening tension between the Tungpei-Manchurian troops of young Marshal Chang Hsueh-liang and Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek. The Tungpei troops were gradually being transformed from mercenaries into an army inspired by the national-revolutionary, anti-Japanese slogans of the Reds. They became convinced of the futility of continued civil war; they were stirred by one hope—"fighting back to the old homeland," by recovering Manchuria from the Japanese. This change of spirit developed, eventually, into the Sian incident, when Chiang was kidnaped and then released, with the understanding that he was willing to cease the civil war and follow the advice to resist Japan jointly with the Red Army.

In return for these concessions, the Soviets were ready to adopt the name of "Special Area Government," and the Red Army had petitioned to be included in the national defense forces as a "National Revolutionary Army." . . . These phenomena reflected a general disposition on the part of the Reds to make necessary changes in form and nomenclature, while retaining the essential content of their doctrine and program, and their autonomous existence.

The achievement of the united front in China has paved the way for the emancipation not only of China but of oppressed peoples everywhere.

The victory of the Chinese liberation movement [as Mao Tse-tung told Mr. Snow] will be part of the victory of world communism, because to defeat imperialism in China means the destruction of one of its most powerful bases. If China wins its independence, the world revolution will progress very rapidly. If our country is subjugated by the enemy, we shall lose everything. *For a people deprived of its national freedom, the revolutionary task is not immediate socialism, but the struggle for independence. We cannot even discuss communism if we are robbed of a country in which to practice it.*

And Mr. Snow is himself convinced of the correctness of what Lenin wrote over twenty years ago, that no imperialist force can erase from the earth the heroic democracy of the popular masses in the Asiatic and semi-Asiatic countries. Mr. Snow concludes his final chapter on "Red Horizons" with the prediction that neither "the democratic socialist ideas for which tens of thousands of youths have already died in China, nor the energies behind them" can be destroyed. "The movement for social revolution in China . . . will eventually win, simply because [as this book proves, if it proves anything] the basic conditions which have given it birth carry within

themselves the dynamic necessity for its triumph."

It is extremely regrettable that the author, who in general makes a scrupulous effort to get at the facts, repeats the Trotskyite slander that the Communist International is an incidental "bureau" of the Soviet Union. Although he exposes the long and vicious history of the suicidal tactics advocated for China by the Trotskyites, he advances the utterly false view which we are accustomed to hear only from the professional enemies of the Chinese people. He offers not a shred of proof for his statements in the few pages dealing with the subject. It is amazing to find the same writer who checked and rechecked his evidence about the Chinese Soviets, who consulted with Mao Tse-tung to discover the facts which had been obscured or falsified by so many previous writers, picking up a vicious rumor and echoing it without taking the trouble to examine its truth. Mr. Snow's cavalier treatment of the Communist International is in direct contradiction to the testimony of the Chinese Communists. His distortion in this respect is a grievous error, marring a work which is on the whole so informative, accurate, and penetrating.

VICTOR A. YAKHONTOFF.

Golden Dynasties

AMERICA'S SIXTY FAMILIES, by Ferdinand Lundberg. Vanguard Press. \$3.75.

IN the brief period since its publication this new book by Ferdinand Lundberg has enjoyed some unusual distinctions. It has been the text for a radio address by the Secretary of the Interior and for a widely headlined speech by Mr. Robert Jackson, the assistant attorney-general. It is now reported that the attorneys for the E. I. duPont Co. have instituted action for libel against the author. The publishers are making capital of the first two items by large advertising spreads in the metropolitan press. Much less than this was required to make the liberal reader interested in the book. The wide audience which it will receive, thanks to the build-up, warrants an even more careful scrutiny of Mr. Lundberg's work by those progressive groups which seek further knowledge of the workings of our economic system.

Prior to the appearance of these pieces of advertising for the book there appeared several reviews wherein even the reactionary journals treated the book with respect. Indeed, their method was to kill it with kindness, to wrap it in a fog of mixed warm praise and occasional cool queries. The new technique of attack since the politicians quoted it is best seen at work in an editorial in the New York Times of Sunday, January 2, entitled "The New Mythology." The method employed by the editorial writer is to parade the existence of three to five million employers from whom those in search of a job may

expect help. In this way they discredit Mr. Jackson's contention that there is nowhere for a job-hunter to go except to a "few great corporations dominated by America's sixty families." This is Mr. Jackson's statement and not Mr. Lundberg's.

As a former Wall Street reporter for the Herald Tribune, 1927-1934, Mr. Lundberg would not make the mistake of pretending that the businesses controlled by the sixty families gave all the jobs available, nor that there were less than five million security holders (after all duplications had been eliminated). Yet it must be admitted that Mr. Lundberg has contributed something to his own discomfiture. It is obvious from the hullabaloo that *America's Sixty Families* is a good war-cry. It is equally obvious that the preservation of the position of control held by the sixty families requires the allegiance of a great many more families who, rightly or wrongly, associate their interests with those of the sixty families. By giving his book this title Mr. Lundberg has promised both more and less than he is able to fulfill. He has promised more because the book is not a detailed analysis of the roles of the sixty families as such, delving into the separate part played in the economy by the fortune of each family; nor is it better than an impressionistic approach to the question of the identity of interest, real or fancied, between the sixty richest American families and those remaining elements in our society also dedicated to the maintenance of private social property under the guise of private individual property.

These are some of the shortcomings of the book. The reader may be interested in seeing a summary of the contents so that he may form his own opinion of the desirability of pursuing the subject of Mr. Lundberg. It should be clear by now that this reviewer thinks it highly worth while for both students and laymen to read the book carefully and critically. The summary follows:

America's Sixty Families contains the following twelve chapters: Chapter I, "Golden Dynasties and Their Treasures" states the thesis of the book.



The United States is owned and dominated today by a hierarchy of sixty of the richest families, buttressed by no more than ninety families of lesser wealth. Outside this plutocratic circle there are, perhaps, three hundred and fifty other families, less defined in development and in wealth, but accounting for most of the incomes of \$100,000 or more per year that do not accrue to members of the inner circle. These families are the living center of the modern industrial oligarchy which dominates the United States, functioning discreetly under a *de jure* democratic form of government behind which a *de facto* government, absolutist and plutocratic in its lineaments, has gradually taken form since the Civil War. This *de facto* government is actually the government of the United States—informal, invisible, shadowy. It is the government of money in a dollar democracy.

The second chapter is concerned with the sixty families as determined on the basis of approximations and estimations derived from the 1924 income tax. When Mr. Lundberg says family he means family group. He shows families as mobilized in phalanxes behind great banking institutions. He explains why the largest fortunes multiply continuously. His third, fourth, and fifth chapters are devoted to politics; first the politics of pecuniary aggrandisement from 1896-1920 and then the politics of finance capital from 1920-1932. In these chapters are gathered all the hitherto revealed scandals of this era and certain revelations unearthed by Mr. Lundberg largely by correlating already existing material. Chapter 6 discusses intrigue and scandal. Chapters 7 and 8 have been widely praised even in the reactionary press for Mr. Lundberg's analysis of what he calls the "press of the plutocracy," and the "journalism of pecuniary inhibition." This might be called What Paper Is Whose.

To this reviewer two of the most-interesting chapters are the ninth and tenth, the titles of which explain the content: "Philanthropy or Non-Commercial Investment" and "Education for Profit and Tax Exemption." In Chapter 11, entitled "Dance Macabre: Extravagance Amid Poverty," the psychopathic expenditures of the grossly wealthy are set down. A table of the original cost of the leading steam and Diesel yachts is provided. It is estimated that the existing Rockefeller establishments have a total valuation of between \$50,000,000 and \$75,000,000, etc. The last chapter is devoted to the "New Deal and After." It closes with a plea for the closing of the wide tax loop-holes in the upper-bracket income categories in the interests of reducing the national debt.

The country must seriously address itself to the task of dealing with the historically unprecedented huge fortunes growing like cancers on American society, without having any illusions about the difficulties of the problem. Merely to toy with the fortunes of the wealthy, in which their entire psychologies are bound up from birth to death, is very much like toying with a high-tension electric wire.

From this summary it should be plain that Mr. Lundberg has done a much-needed job of bringing together within the covers of one book the material for the indictment of American plutocracy, material which has been accumulating for so many decades. There are