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HEAR

Orson Welles, Marc Blitzstein,
V. J. Jerome, Anna Sokolow
and Roberto Berdecio

on

"The Culture of the People's Front"
Friday, MARCH 11, 8:30 p.m.
Center Hotel, 108 West. 43rd St.
Tickets: 35c in advance, at Bookshop

past dilemma of the Labor Party. This mature analysis of the social and political development of the labor movement—an analysis made possible by Hutt's Marxian insight—has for its lesson the fact that the primary necessity of a Socialist Party is to be Socialist. By repudiating principles on which the British Labor Party theoretically rested, the party floundered until it became merely an adjunct of reaction. Instead of offering guidance to the working class, it bogged down in reformism and misled the working class into collaboration with its exploiters. After almost twenty years as one of Great Britain's two major political forces, the Labor Party was responsible for the existence of the present cabinet with its desire to conciliate the fascist war-making nations.

Once it won office, the British Labor Party adopted the policy of choosing what it considered "the lesser evil." The majority of party leaders soon lost their fervor even for reform. Their service to the working class was to order the police to club the unemployed, to sell out strikes and restrict the labor movement, to slander the Soviet Union and legislate against civil liberties. The mere mention of Communist Party affiliation with the Labor Party aroused the MacDonalds and Snowdens to hysteria, but they were willing enough to use their influence to assure the election victories of the Tories. They refused to resist the government's rearmament program though they supported non-intervention in Spain and thereby reinforced fascist aggression. Their abandonment of Socialism—the theory of which they never understood and never studied—transformed the Labor Party into a political grouping indistinguishable from the reaction it supposedly opposed.

As a result, Labor Party leaders grew more anxious to bait their supporters and to apologize to their enemies than to take political initiative. They exhausted their energy in witch-hunting and remained apathetic toward the problems of the unemployed and the workers—though they managed to stifle the voice of the rank and file.

German Social Democracy, from which the top officialdom of the British Labor Party failed to take warning, capitulated to fascism. The leaders of the labor movement in England gave the British fascists a free hand and often more than passive support. But the resentment against the misuse of power of Ramsay MacDonald and his cabinet now promises to revivify the British Labor Party. Sir Stafford Cripps and Harold Laski, recently elected members of the Labor Party executive, are firm supporters of united action with the Communist Party and advocates of militant struggle of all progressives against fascism. Within the Labor Party itself, the resistance to reformism grows: leaders such as C. R. Attlee increasingly repudiate MacDonaldite acquiescence to reaction and gravitate toward a policy that will reflect the militancy of the majority.

To understand British foreign policy, it is necessary to understand the internal situation

in Great Britain. Hutt's keenly perceptive history presents the story of post-war labor dramatically, in a manner that does not demand of the American reader a detailed knowledge of English events. His treatment is a model of historical writing, a model that reveals the lack of a similar book on the recent history of the American working class. It is written with the simplicity and wit which distinguishes so much of English Marxist writing; and Hutt's descriptions of the days immediately after the World War when revolutionary strikes threatened British capitalism, of the general strike of 1926, of the unemployment demonstrations in the thirties, have the vivid impact of first-hand labor reporting.

But the great value of Allen Hutt's *History* to the American labor movement is that it can serve, as Professor Harold J. Laski writes in his Foreword, as a guide to "save the working class of the United States from some of the mistakes we have made."

BRUCE MINTON.

Myth for Our Time

HEARKEN UNTO THE VOICE, by Franz Werfel. Translated by Moray Firth. Viking Press. \$3.

FOR his latest novel, *Hearken Unto The Voice*, Franz Werfel has utilized a variant of the historical method—a method which has been employed in our time by such diverse writers as T. S. Eliot, James Joyce, and Thomas Mann. Viewing the present as an era of wavering and uncertain values, these writers establish terminal points of moral reference by bringing the complexities of the present into focus with the historical patterns of the past; and it is obvious from the prologue and epilogue of the present work that Werfel intended his fictional version of an



John Heliker

Old Testament chronicle—the story of the prophet Jeremiah—to have some such mutually retroactive meaning. Indeed, in the closing pages of the novel, he speaks through his modern hero, Clayton Reeves, and says: "Jeremiah was a sensitive man, who was implacably opposed to his world and his age. Though he was timid, even the evident and potent iniquities of this earth could not vanquish him. For he obeyed none other than the voice of God, which spoke to him and within him." Since the kinship between Reeves and Jeremiah has already been indicated, the allegorical implication is, of course, that the modern world's doom was foreshadowed in the destruction of Jerusalem; and only those who obey the voice of God, like Reeves and Jeremiah, can hope for safety in the inevitable conflagration.

It would be futile to quarrel with the truth or falsity of Werfel's mysticism: such a quarrel would be irrelevant to the main issue, which is simply whether an unquestioning acceptance of Biblical material on its own terms is sufficient justification for the composition of a novel. Where Thomas Mann has reinterpreted the Joseph myth with all the subtleties of psychological symbolism, Werfel merely adds a few pages at the beginning and the end; and in so doing omits almost completely that clash of perspective which gives the historical method its peculiar relevance to our time.

As a result, the novel is converted into a tedious moral tract, with none of that ironic ambivalence of meaning which is so integral a part of Mann's design, and which would have charged the story of Jeremiah with significance for the contemporary reader. In spite of the lavish hand with which he fills in the anthropological and religious background, Franz Werfel's version has none of the harsh grandeur of the original; and since he has brought nothing to the original except the embellishments of ornamental detail, his novel fails to justify itself as a work of art.

JOSEPH FRANK.

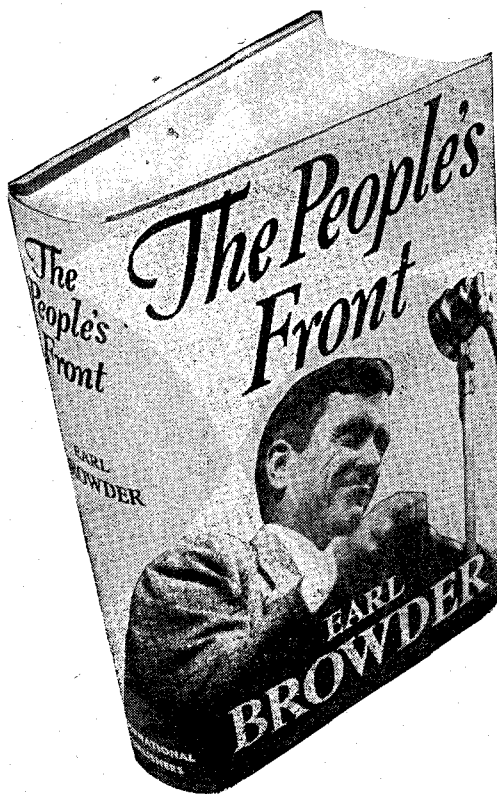
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