

The Vacationers

Moving among simple lives,
The cottages perched on rock, the pastures
And bee-radiance of summer in the provinces,

They, charmed with peace,
Forget the program interrupted for the censored message,
The martial music played in subtle swing-time.

Postured on beaches, how
They offer sensual sun their calm subjection,
Within shut eyes catch spinning fire-works

While history pounds like surf
Upon the persecuted coasts of earth,
Upon the cities rains its neutral brimstone.

Stifled, they will wake
Before the first cock crow, hear stamping
In the stalls where nervous cattle stay;

Like swimmers, look,
No longer submarine, upon the close
Abnormal night, its bolted dark, its silences.

Toes clenched like fists,
Dimly they will watch their dream:
the house
They lived in barred, the hedges burned,
names

Like curses inked upon the gate in blood.
JOHN MALCOLM BRINNIN.

★ ★ ★

New Deal, taxation, the CIO, the National Progressive Party came with the upper strata. Her contact with workers was limited to Pullman porters, cab drivers, and bellboys, to whom she was grateful when they were courteous. Isolation from the people who do the work is characteristic of the liberal individualists. Bred among the middle-class intelligentsia, unable to apply a class analysis to history, and ignorant of the power of mass action, Miss Brittain and her group rely upon moral persuasion to cope with fascist coercion. She is a pacifist of the Huxley-Heard type, confident that love will survive hate, that this eternal principle will release us from concentration camps. It is out of such idealism that she views America as the last haven of freedom. America will not take up arms, America will not be devoured by fascism. No. "From the forward direction of her aspiring,

invincible spirit, freed from the impulse of death that leads ancient cultures to compass their own destruction, arises one sure and certain hope that for those whom she shelters, the dawn of tomorrow will break." A pretty sentiment, if not a program of action.
MILTON MELTZER.

Academic Sociology

THE STORY OF SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY, by Charles A. Ellwood. Prentice-Hall. \$3.50.

THE literature of twenty-five centuries is more than generously stocked with the fruit of man's search for a simple account of his social relations. To survey this literature is not only to follow the story of social philosophy. It is to feel under your own feet the slow bending and twisting of human strata, the gradual acceleration, cracking, and then the open fault. It is to see the Athenian slave become a freeman; the feudal serf the small landowner; the lowly merchant the power of the state. It is to traverse the curve of history with those who lived it, seeing in each account both the social milieu of the age and the private milieu of the writer.

The Story of Social Philosophy spans twenty-two centuries: from Socrates to Lester F. Ward. Since the author believes cultures and institutions owe their development to the guidance of thought, the survey of theory is to him the very closest one can come, in the study of society, to the people. The result is that a very important subject never quite materializes from the realm of Platonic ideas in spite of the device of reference to very contemporary society—Germany, Italy, and Russia—in an effort to bring it to life. The book remains a gymnasium for the exercise of ideas under the coaching eye of Professor Ellwood.

Although *The Story of Social Philosophy* is not the human document of struggle it should be to earn the title, it does, as inevitably any such attempt must, reflect the conflicts of today. It is all too apparent that Professor Ellwood represents a cross-section of the mess that bedevils a great many of our academic intellectuals:

Probably no writing of classical antiquity, besides the New Testament, has had such influence in recent times as Plato's *Republic*. Its influence upon the Russian Soviet government is beyond question, as well as upon every recent experiment in Communism. Plato must be considered the first great apostle of Communism, even though, as we have seen, he limited his Communism to the upper classes. . . . Perhaps here we should add that modern fascism is almost as dependent upon Plato as modern Communism.

No single portion of the book is quite as befuddled as the chapter on Karl Marx. The philosophy of human society called "the economic interpretation of history," or the "materialistic conception of history," is more accurately designated, says Professor Ellwood, "economic determinism." He identifies this



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"unilateral social theory" with the "economic thinkers" following Adam Smith, but while they generally remained "exceedingly conservative" it was left to the "social revolutionists to perceive that this materialistic conception of social evolution might be turned in a radical direction and made to support their revolutionary program. The man who did this above all others was Karl Marx."

In offering this kind of intellectual enlightenment Professor Ellwood squarely takes his stand with the cap-and-gown Red-baiters. The emphasis throughout is that the social philosophy of Marx "was constructed to bolster up a revolutionary social philosophy." It seems pretty clear to this reviewer that the term "revolutionary," as used by Professor Ellwood, has reference to both small and large bombs. However that may be, it may interest Marxists to know that the only "basis for the theory was in the revolutionary wishes of Marx and his co-workers."

It was the same Albion W. Small, at the University of Chicago, the teacher of Charles A. Ellwood, who said, "Marx will have a place in social science analogous with that of Galileo in physical science." From the distant campus of Duke University, Professor Ellwood finds this simply the judgment of an old man.

To what end does this story of social philosophy lead? Although it is not fair to quarrel with Professor Ellwood over what he does not attempt to do, this survey of social thinkers and their theories reflects a very definite contemporary sociological trend, notwithstanding the author's attempt to remain the impartial historian. The attempt to convey to the reader only a judicial aloofness is a matter of literary technique: in detailing or discussing a theory, simply find some ideas true or good, some false or bad, and, for relaxation, some amusing. It is a method in common academic use, but few writers, I suspect, are as adept in its employment as Professor Ellwood. He does, however, forget technique, to the extent of becoming enthusiastic over two thinkers, Aristotle and Lester F. Ward. In the epilogue, he completely abandons disinterested commentary to plead for a combination of "fact-finding" and "philosophical syntheses" in sociological theory, following bold social thinkers of the present (illustrated in "the most brilliant way" by Prof. P. A. Sorokin, of Harvard University!) who "are surely showing us the way out." Such a philosophical development would indeed lead sociology into poverty. The curt elimination of Marxism on the ground that it leads to chaos, and the rationalization of belief in distinctions of race and class under the guise of planned progress, intellectual leadership, is the familiar road to fascism.

It is conceivable, of course, that Professor Ellwood is not at all confused. His book, however, will certainly confound the general reader and prepare the less mature student for the lower depths of fascist theorizing.

F. K. BALLAINE.

MOVIES

WHEN a motion picture audience breaks into spontaneous applause at speeches in a picture, it is a reassuring demonstration to the Hollywood moguls who have been desperately reduced to spending a million dollars in advertising to get audiences to love the movies again. This happened several times during the new film by Frank Capra, director, and Robert Riskin, screen writer. *You Can't Take It With You* is something different from the stage version. The creators of *It Happened One Night* and *Mr. Deeds Goes To Town* have taken a vapid and charming stage whimsy by George Kaufman and loaded it with political and social viewpoints. Pointing out to Hollywood that real reaction to real things is not only artistically necessary but surefire boxoffice has been the main preoccupation of left film criticism for some years. In their previous pictures Capra and Riskin indicated that they understood this simple principle. The gate receipts proved it.

What has been quietly happening in Hollywood is that several major producers have accepted the idea of a social film. Warner Brothers, Columbia, and Walter Wanger need not be told again that there's gold in them thar soapboxes; we are now faced with the *fait accompli*. *You Can't Take It With You* indicates that the period of the big headache is about to begin in the social film. What the upper middle-class audience at Radio City cheered in the picture causes my alarm. In a speech inserted in the mouth of Grandpa Vanderhof (Lionel Barrymore) which was not in the play and has no organic place in the picture, the genial old zany remarks to his novelist daughter that she should put some "ismology" into her book. He goes on to explain that no contemporary novel should ignore Communism, fascism, and Nazism. Everybody who is disgruntled today, says Grandpa, goes out and gets themselves an "ism." This means that if you don't agree with what they think they'll bomb you. What Grandpa wants to boost is "Americanism," and the old gentleman names a dozen American heroes to illustrate his point. The house came down.

Now then, Riskin is no ignoramus. He is a grown man with a kindly feeling for the underdog—remember the exciting invasion of the farmers in *Mr. Deeds* and the whole bus sequence of *It Happened One Night*. When he begins to talk like Grandpa Vanderhof, naming the Communists along with Hitler and Mussolini as bombers, he is doing something that he very well knows is a lie. This disingenuous bid for reactionary applause, this seconding of the confusion hatched in the fink press is a burden that no man of talent and decency can afford to carry.

A second speech of Grandpa Vanderhof brought even greater applause. When the income-tax investigator comes to the mad Syc