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Misha Koshevoi, or a determined White like Eugene Listnitsky and Mitka Korshunov. Such characters achieve full clarity of position in the course of the novel. As they develop, they pursue a relatively unweaving course to their antagonistic goals; they are either for the Revolution or against it. The central figure is rather a Cossack who more fully reflects the opposite pulls of his society. Gregor Melekhov is torn by a conflict of personal loyalties just as his land is torn by civil war. He struggles between two elements, rejecting both. He fights at one time with the Reds, at another with the Whites, and at no time with complete assurance that he is on the right side.

Sholokhov has given us a remarkable portrait of Gregor. His characterization has nothing in common with the indecisive Hamlet-type so familiar in nineteenth century Russian fiction. Far from being an intellectual sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought, he is capable of great and robust action. He is a fighter of tremendous skill and daring. If he is capable of pity, he can also give expression to the most savage and fiery outbursts of temperament. Sholokhov has shown him as neither a culprit nor a model to be followed. "Life's taken a false turn," says Gregor at one point, "and maybe I'm at fault in that too. . . ." His guilt is not the morbid and febrile guilt of a Dostoevskian hero. His is rather the tragedy of a man whose stubborn pride is coupled with ignorance of the reality which he is striving to penetrate. Unable to survive his prejudices, he brings to ruin those whom he loves most dearly and cooperates bitterly with those whom he despises.

But to understand Gregor fully, one must see him in his unfolding relation to the other characters, his family, his beloved Aksinia, and his comrades in various struggles. This rich and complex relationship will be discussed in a second article next week.

SAMUEL SILLEN.

Whose Truths?

WE HOLD THESE TRUTHS, edited by Stuart Gerry Brown. Harper & Bros. \$1.50.

THIS book consists of a 3,000-word essay by the editor on "The Meaning of Democracy," followed by forty-four selections described as "Documents of American Democracy." Mr. Brown's essay emasculates democracy's meaning by insisting that it pertains only to political forms (i.e., permitting a more or less unrestricted choice between Harding and Cox, Coolidge and Davis, Roosevelt and Willkie) instead of the purposes, controlling elements, means, and functions of the governing apparatus.

Half the book is devoted to the utterances of such great "democrats" as Chief Justice Roger Taney, of Dred Scott notoriety; John Marshall, for whom the protection of private property rights was the function of government; James G. Blaine, a corrupt politician who, in an era of unparalleled political corrup-

tion, had no superior; Theodore Roosevelt; Woodrow Wilson; and John C. Calhoun.

Obvious milestones in the field of American political democracy, such as the Declaration of Independence, inaugural addresses by Jefferson, Jackson, and Lincoln and the Gettysburg Address are, of course, included. And there are other valuable, though less familiar, documents—such as Jefferson's letter on natural aristocracy, a piece from Whitman's *Democratic Vistas*, and the concluding section of Thomas Wolfe's *You Can't Go Home Again*. But Mr. Brown has included nothing from labor, from women, from the Negro, from radical political groups and parties. Whose "truths" are we to hold—those of Roger Taney or Frederick Douglass? John Marshall or Thomas Skidmore? James G. Blaine or Albert Parsons? Theodore Roosevelt or Bartolomeo Vanzetti? Woodrow Wilson or Eugene Debs? John C. Calhoun or William Lloyd Garrison? The second-named individuals are the people's champions, the fighters for the American dream. The former are tinsel gods whose opinions have no place in a book that includes the utterances of Paine and Jefferson and Lincoln.

HERBERT APTHEKER.

The Betrayal of France

FRANCE MY COUNTRY. Through the Disaster, by Jacques Maritain. Longmans, Green & Co. \$1.25.

CLEAR and valuable admissions are contained in this account of France's fall by her leading Catholic philosopher, now in exile here. The French ruling class wanted "revenge for the days of February 1934, and for the great scare of the sitdown strikes." Its triumph was the defeat of France. Petain, a friend of Franco, thought that salvation lay in a Catholic-dictatorial regime. His dispensation to "his" people is a pseudo-medieval tyranny that has dealt the Catholic conscience a strong blow.

The rulers' fear and contempt for the people led to the treasonable surrender and its consolidation in the present order. Maritain cleverly comments upon the desire of the leaders of the "liberal" and Social-Democratic parties to "merit the esteem and regard of the social strata represented by the right." The workers' inability to oust this petit bourgeois leadership, which was afraid of power and wanted to bribe the enemy with good behavior, helped make it possible for the initiative to be seized by reaction.

The military disaster became, in a sense, the form taken by the political betrayal. The substitution of Belgian neutrality for a fortification of the northern border, and the strategy of a "cheap war" were the preliminary groundwork of the "miscalculating" generals who forgot to blow up bridges when they retreated. It foreshadows the decision of the temporary masters of France who preferred the "honorable peace" offered them by Hitler, because, as they declared with breathtaking cynicism, they were afraid that a puppet

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government might be set up in their absence.

Maritain's admiration for the French workers and farmers is summed up in his remark that "It is the privilege of the humble folk alone to be great in the midst of total disaster." He describes their effort to rebuild as best they can under the fist of the enemy and the senile rancor of their appointed guardian, but hints that a day must come when rebuilding is not enough, when they must rise against their native and foreign oppressors.

It is unfortunate that Maritain should be misled by the same demagoguery which was used by German agents like Bonnet and Doriot to disrupt the unity of the French people against fascism. He states, with no factual evidence whatsoever, that the workers were demoralized by Communism, and attacks the Popular Front. As for the campaign in France, even the New York Times was obliged to record the bravery of Communists at the front. And every week brings new stories of anti-Nazi underground work conducted by the Communist Party.

Mr. Maritain is much fairer to his foes. In a burst of unpolitical generosity he imagines that pity for the suffering people entered into the traitors' scheme to capitulate. Sooner say that the jackals show pity for the deer when they let the lion eat first.

CHARLES HUMBOLDT.

Brief Review

MEN OF WEALTH, by John T. Flynn. Simon & Schuster. \$3.75.

In a subtitle John T. Flynn describes his *Men of Wealth* as "The story of twelve significant fortunes from the Renaissance to the present day." In a preface more than usually expansive (if not in words, certainly in promises), Mr. Flynn says he will paint "a picture of the economic system" of the time in which lived each of his twelve figures ranging from Fugger through Vanderbilt, Mitsui, Zaharoff, Rockefeller, and Morgan. But somehow Mr. Flynn fails to live up to his promises. He is content for the large part to describe his villains as men with one characteristic in common—a lust for accumulation, for money for the sake of money. All of them succeed because they are above ethical considerations, because, to put it as bluntly as does Mr. Flynn, they are dishonest in the grand manner. But nowhere do the times and social backgrounds emerge. Mr. Flynn's economics remain oversimple, devoted to the proposition that the New Deal was just as bad as Alf Landon said it was, and that the ills of evil capitalism can be cured by some sort of reformed capitalism never described. The only figure for whom Mr. Flynn has any praise is Robert Owen, eighteenth century reformer. The rest are worthless buccaneers, distinguished only for their greed. It is worth mentioning that when Mr. Flynn discusses the Rothschild family, he indulges in more than a suggestion of anti-Semitism. *Men of Wealth* makes pretty tiresome reading that never gets any place.

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