

Third Big Week
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plan for bringing socialism to the countryside. Miss Rochester describes the unique methods used to accomplish this rural revolution: how the machine-tractor stations have aided the collectives; how in 1933 some 25,000 Communists from factories and schools were mobilized to help the new collectives in their problems of management, organization, and bookkeeping; how in 1934 a Congress of peasant delegates drafted a model constitution to embody the best kind of relationship between farm families and the collective farm.

A chapter on "Underlying Principles of Lenin's Analysis and Program" is of broad general interest. It not only summarizes the development of Lenin's agrarian thinking but it describes concisely—and largely in Lenin's own words—the process of social change.

"A Postscript on American Agriculture" affords a sharp contrast with the development of socialist agriculture in the Soviet Union. It brings up to date the chief findings of a study which Lenin made of the 1900 and 1910 United States Census of Agriculture. Lenin had pointed out the marked trend in America toward the impoverishment of the small farm operators while larger operators tend to increase their capital and constantly produce a greater share of the total commercial output. In short, the capitalist process pursues the same course in both industry and agriculture, with the sole difference that in agriculture the process is slowed down by the draining off of capital for the possession of land and by the retarded development of automatic machinery for mass production methods.

Miss Rochester's book is a "must" for everyone who aspires to a Marxist library. And all people who are deeply concerned over the future of American democracy will want to read and re-read this book, not only in these wartime days but in the years to come.

LEM HARRIS.

Robert Frost's Poetry

FIRE AND ICE, by Lawrence Thompson. Holt. \$2.50.

THE Emersonian doctrine of self-reliance is one of the forks in the road of our American tradition. It may lead us via ignorance, smugness, and indifference right smack up to Cal Coolidge's doorstep. Or it may lead us to a fiercely individualistic pride functioning for a collective good. The doctrine itself is, I think, unassailable. What is important is the use we make of it, how we fit it into our own time and for our own needs.

Robert Frost has built his house of poetry right at this fork in the road. It's a snug New England house possessing all the virtues of a lack of pretentiousness and an easy-to-take style. Mr. Thompson sees in it far more architectural inventiveness than it really has. Pains-taking and scholarly, his exposition of Frost's work—humanistic in its slant—is invariably that of a disciple rather than a critic.

For this poet contains the strength and the weakness of the Yankee manner. His over-the-fence farmer-talk with its wit, skepticism

("We dance around a ring and suppose, But the Secret sits in the middle and knows."), taciturnity, shrewd indirection—we can build more than stone walls with these. We may question the philosophical priority of "Resourcefulness Is More Than Understanding," but certainly the stress may be heard with profit—especially in military circles.

It is when Frost (and Q.E.D., Mr. Thompson) begins to relate the individual and society that he goes Coolidgean. He is an old States Righter and distrusts industrial society and its inevitable centralization of government. "Keep off each other and keep each other off." And "We congregate embracing from distrust as much as love." What of it? We must congregate nevertheless, so we'd better learn to do it as intelligently as possible. Yes, we must become better individuals, but this is not—as Frost seems to think—incompatible with neighborliness practiced internationally and nationally as well as locally. Even he has understood this at times, as when he wrote of this land:

*Something we were withholding made us weak
 Until we found it was ourselves
 We were withholding from our land of living,
 And forthwith found salvation in surrender.
 Such as we were we gave ourselves outright
 (The deed of gift was many deeds of war)
 To the land vaguely realizing westward,
 But still unstoried, artless, unenhanced,
 Such as she was, such as she would become.*

SIDNEY ALEXANDER.

Address Unknown

WILL GERMANY CRACK?, by Paul Hagen. Harper. \$2.75.

TO THE observer of developments in the main citadel of the Axis this book offers nothing new. It is a diligent collection of well known material and previously published reports about the situation in Germany. It points to the many weaknesses in the structure of the Nazi war machine, ranging from the shortage of iron, steel, and oil, the transportation crisis, the need for food and the lack of tractors, to the overaged, overfatigued, and undernourished German and foreign workers. The greatest weakness is the political exhaustion in the Third Reich.

The author describes the solidarity of interests between big business and the Nazi ruling clique, but government control of the economic life under war conditions leads him to the erroneous conclusion that "big business has definitely abdicated as the leading monopoly power." What the author calls the "continued retreat" of German big business has been clearly refuted by the events of the last few months: the most influential capitalist circles, the iron and steel barons, have achieved greater independence and power than ever before. This, of course, will not prevent the disintegration of the alliance that constitutes German fascism when the final crisis comes and each group tries to save its own skin at the expense of the others.

Hagen proposes that the United Nations seek the collaboration of those elements in Germany who share their democratic outlook and have demonstrated before and during the Hitler dictatorship their steadfast opposition to Nazism. The principle he argues for is good, but his approach to methods of political propaganda during the war and to the problem of postwar Europe does not go beyond hazy generalities.

Hagen gives no picture of the struggle of the German opposition because he knows nothing about it despite boasts about connections and his trips in Germany. He ignores or falsifies the activity of the most vigorous German anti-Nazis, the Communists. He wants us to believe that the organized underground groups in Germany are composed mainly of supporters of his own Social-Democratic sect, *Neu Beginnen* (New Beginning). Unfortunately for Hagen, this group is completely unknown in Germany though it has managed to place more of its members in the US Office of War Information and the British Ministry of Information than it can muster in the Third Reich. Now Hagen is attempting to transmute the reputation he has gained in certain American drawing rooms into leadership of the German opposition. However, the responsible heads of the German Social-Democratic Party in exile in America have published a wealth of material questioning and contradicting his aspirations to "leadership." Some day the German opposition will be amazed to learn of Paul Hagen's existence.

ANDREAS NIEBUHR.

The Best?

THE BEST AMERICAN SHORT STORIES, 1942. Edited by Martha Foley. Houghton Mifflin. \$2.75.

MISS FOLEY's collection contains one good and funny Lardnerian story by James Thurber, and the rest might as well not have been collected. The extraordinary thing about them is that they seem so trivial, not only for a time of war but for a time of peace or any other time. Irwin Shaw and John Steinbeck, for instance, are represented by incredibly slight efforts. The tone of the whole collection strikes one as uniformly absent-minded—as though the writers weren't interested in their own work. Possibly this is due to preoccupation with the war. But in that case the nine stories dealing in one way or another with it ought to be very good, which they are not. The most successful of these are the sensitive studies of refugees by Nancy Hale and Marjorie Worthington; the rest are oblique, unreal, and not honestly felt.

The remainder of the stories are presumably of permanent, rather than timely, interest; but nothing new is discovered in experience or in technique, and the themes are written around and around to exhaustion. Even "Biceps" by Nelson Algren, one of the best stories in the book, seems over-written and too long. All of them are like receding echoes of the thirties.

JOAN ROCKWELL.

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This is an announcement to all our friends and readers of the forthcoming **NEW MASSES** dinner celebrating a new board of contributing editors. The board will include distinguished journalists, teachers, trade unionists, and artists. The place is the **MURRAY HILL HOTEL**, at 112 Park Ave., corner of 41st St., the date, Saturday evening, **NOVEMBER 28th**, at 7 P.M. The subscription is \$2.50 per plate and \$25 per table of ten. Read **NEW MASSES** for further details of this event, one that will be a landmark in progressive journalism. For reservations call **CALEDONIA 5-3076**, or write to **NEW MASSES, 461 4th Ave.**