

finding a thrill in the easy vice of the *boîtes de nuit*? And is the same Senegalese tribesman in his home necessarily more free and ardent and unprejudiced than a Methodist preacher in a Tennessee hill town? Blacks and whites alike rear their taboos and then flounder into chaos without them.

Because his interest is intense and his intelligence alert it might be Claude McKay's privilege—since he repudiates the task of pure creation—to answer the doubts aroused by these assumptions. He has moved from Jamaica to Harlem and from Harlem to Marseilles—each a step in the direction of more complete race-consciousness and experience. Why does he now not take a final step and live in the center of an African community; live there wholly and without reserve, feel and see, and then come to fresh and perhaps more authentic conclusions about the racial characteristics of blacks and whites?

FREDA KIRCHWEY

Karl Marx in American Thought

Karl Marx. His Life and Work. By Otto Ruhle. The Viking Press. \$5.

IT is the fashion with us to pooh-pooh Karl Marx. There is hardly a freshwater college in the land which cannot boast a local Boehm-Bawerk, superior to Marx's "fallacies," which is a good deal like dismissing Isaac Newton with the Hertizian waves. To my knowledge, there is not a single great American university which offers a competent course in socialist theory. There is, come to think of it, nobody to give it, unless Professor Mitchell at Columbia cared to prepare it or Professor Perlman at Wisconsin could rid himself of his fears. Socialist theory in America today, if we except the esoteric influence of Veblen and some of the earlier works of Hillquit, is at the mercy of a dozen or so academic manikins, pretending to an ornamental curiosity about a system so ingeniously deceptive, and to one or two doctrinaire socialist pundits. In the minds of even intelligent Americans Marx is a sort of economic Dr. Caligari, a fantastic German savant, half crazed by his own ponderosity, a fit target for Mr. Mencken's uproarious shafts as the abstruse bore of "Das Kapital"; whose first volume, incidentally, Mr. Mencken really should read, for no one would appreciate more hugely its vituperative genius.

It is thus we gauge Marx's influence on American thought. It is supposedly a mere truism that "socialism" never has had and never will have any "influence" in this country. But that depends, of course, entirely on what we mean by "socialism" and also by "influence." If by socialism we hold the popular view of it as a sort of scientific looting expedition under police protection against "rugged individualism", or if we confine it to the technical maledictions of the Communist Society of Jesus against the Yeshiva of the Socialist Party, and if by "influence" we mean nothing more subtle than the bond between Tammany Hall and Mayor Walker, then indeed socialism means nothing in American life. But to the historian of social theory, this view of it is about as convincing as that other platitudinous observation that Christianity has had no influence on this country because Dr. Cadman's canned homiletics is nothing like the Sermon on the Mount or because army chaplains do not act like Christian martyrs. Vast social movements are significant because their inner historicity can hold all contradictions. What marks them is an ideological nexus.

In this philosophical sense socialist theory has had an incalculable influence on our industrial democracy, on our organized labor movement, and even on many of our daily economic notions. In theory, that is in economic theory and not in the head of Mr. Matthew Woll, American trade unionism is nothing

ing in the world but a primitive form of anarcho-syndicalism, primitive in its craft jealousies and anarcho-syndicalist, indeed more anarchist than syndicalist, in its belief in the non-political and purely economic weapon of the strike and in insatiable collective bargaining as a pragmatic aim. No matter what the labor oligarchy may think it thinks, without an ultimate readiness for violence the strike has no sense, without an implicit, no matter how unwitting, indictment of the profit system chronic collective bargaining has no meaning, and the Gompers battle-cry of "more and more" is merely a naive version of the more or less discarded Marxian conception of surplus value. Provided we have an infinitely vigilant regard for the cultural disparities between European and American history, the historic struggle of our organized labor movement against its inner socialist opposition is the traditional fight between anarcho-syndicalism and more or less conventional socialism, the old struggle of thesis and antithesis, mutually indispensable. In European labor the socialist tendencies proved dominant and with us they proved recessive. Indeed the fundamentally disingenuous anarchism of our labor movement is gradually liquidating it in the ever more powerful atmosphere of American capital before our very eyes. But without the Marxian base the social metabolism even of American labor would be unthinkable. Think away social democratic doctrine and only a fabulist could write the story of American labor or even the tale of the simplest strike.

Our conventional critical notions of contemporary American civilization, which the radical holds and the conservative protests, are beaten through with social-democratic concepts. The widely current presuppositions of the impotence of liberalism, of the preposterousness of "scientific" philanthropy, a direct descendant of mid-nineteenth century Utopian socialism; of the deep inner contradiction in the capitalist reformation through company unionism and other such devices; of the intellectual predicament of the "modernist" church, all these critical attitudes can be traced directly to Marxian influences. Above all, that ominous anxiety of our times, whether it be right or wrong, that the arrow of history, sharpened by the scientific temper and dipped in the spirit of social rationalism, is fatally directed at the heart of the profit system is a typical Marxian ideograph. The shadow of Marx on the American scene is phantastically transmogrified, but to deny its darkness is insensitive.

It is for these reasons that some acquaintance with Marx and social-democratic theory, with its innumerable winds of doctrine blowing in each others' paths, should be popularized in this country as a simple task in adult education. And Ruhle's volume is good enough for the purpose. Like every other biographer of Marx, he manages somehow to bring out the world-shaking importance of the man. He shows the folly of estimating his significance entirely by the logic of his system. Marx was not a professor but a movement. In his statement of Marxian doctrine, often in direct quotation, Ruhle is selectively intelligent. He cannot help but bring out Marx's epic struggles against the great figures of his age and his equally passionate but absurd struggles against mere pigmies. The heroic devotion of Engels comes out magnificently. We get a clear picture of the tragic and abject economic poverty of the Marx household. And we get even a clearer picture of Marx the egotist, vindictively self-righteous, a bitter, cantankerous, often unfair and usually nasty genius, but withal an authentically tragic and great figure.

Yet this is far from being a great biography. And the bark of the jacket that here "for the first time" we can meet "Marx as a man" is so much ballyhoo. There is probably a good deal of truth in the author's contention that Marx's chronic indigestion tended to make him splenetic. But the old accusation that his Jewish origin and appearance made him profoundly anti-

Semitic is quite untrue. Marx never discriminated against Jews. He exposed, with cutting brilliance, the intrinsic reaction of Judaism, which is quite another matter. And Ruhle's labored point that Marx suffered the inevitable "inferiority complex" of the first-born child seems to me even more far-fetched. The most interesting observation the author makes is that Marx's woeful incapacity to adjust his own economic life was one of the psychic motives for his creation of a system, in which all may find economic justice. But on the whole Ruhle simply lays Marx for a brief half hour on Dr. Alfred Adler's psychoanalytic couch, and the resulting diagnosis is rather thin. When Marx gets up he is the same Karl Marx: colossal, great except in his psychological insight, and as an individual inexplicable. The man Marx escaped Ruhle faster even than he escaped Mehring's far sharper pen.

It is, I believe, the gigantic labor of Marx, the fact that Marx is so hidden in his Marxism, which explains why his brilliant mind undoubtedly leaves us cold. One has the feeling that his loves, his magnificent hates, his friendships, his remarkable wit and irony, his stomach troubles, that everything about him was simply part of a theoretical system. Nothing so alien as monumental intellectual labor is ever quite human to us. It is men and women and not works which really fascinate. By their works ye shall know them, but by their works alone ye shall not understand them.

BENJAMIN STOLBERG

A Great Diary

The Diary of John Quincy Adams, 1794-1845. Edited by Allan Nevins. Longmans, Green and Company. \$5.

THE DIARY OF JOHN QUINCY ADAMS has never been as well known as it deserved to be. The twelve volumes of the only issue offered a formidable task to the student, an even greater one to the reader, and they have long been out of print and quoted at a price beyond the means of the many. It followed naturally that the "Diary" has been consulted rather than read, and more has been made of its high spots than of its rich historical material. With a turn for drawing pen pictures of his contemporaries, and with a host of political enemies open to such description, the work has been termed a "treasury of damnations." It is really much more. For it is the greatest American political diary we have, kept by one whose long public services, at home and abroad, gave him the opportunity and the schooling required for such a record. As a New Englander he had a moral sense—his contemporaries thought it a little too highly developed for the party conditions of the day. As a tireless student and reader he possessed critical ability and kept his interest in the classics to his last years. Having mixed with men in many countries and conditions, and tasted of political persecution and public ingratitude, he recognized the motives of action, seeing them sometimes in too dark colors. He made mistakes in his judgments, yet his very errors only bring out the general correctness of his scrutiny and discrimination. He did not spare himself. The following entry in the year 1833 was almost echoed by his grandson, Henry Adams, without the saving clause:

In the multitudinous whimsies of a disabled mind and body, the thick-coming fancies often occur to me that the events which affect my life and adventures are specially shaped to disappoint my purposes. My whole life has been a succession of disappointments. I can scarcely recollect a single instance of success to anything that I ever undertook. Yet, with fervent gratitude to God, I confess that my life has been equally marked by great and signal successes which I neither aimed at nor anticipated.

It was a happy thought to attempt to compress the twelve

volumes into one and thus, by selection, make the "Diary" more accessible. This has been done by Mr. Nevins, who has written himself on the period covered by the "Diary." While no two persons would make the same omissions or comments, and no student would depend upon a compressed record, Mr. Nevins has shown intelligence in making his selections and has produced a most readable volume. Enough is given to show Adams's career in the many high offices he held—as diplomat, Senator, Secretary of State, and member of Congress—as well as to indicate his conscientious examination of self, his sensibility to hostile and friendly influences, his strong likes and dislikes, and his self-humiliation under rejection by party and people. A true nationalist, he could not stand with either of the great parties, then in a state of change. Not being a party man, he was suspected of party disloyalty and his support shifted with the fortunes of partisan warfare. At last he rested secure as the representative of the Quincy district and performed his greatest service on the side of freedom. The "Diary" expresses the man. His faults are displayed at full length by his own hand; his virtues must be discovered in good part from the same record, but to an equal degree from the history of the time and the memoirs of his contemporaries. The temptation to quote liberally from his pages is strong, but extracts would be unjust to him and to the reader.

Unfortunately the new volume is not what it should be. The notes are inadequate in number and in quality. What was omitted in the text often required to be summarized in a note to make the story complete. The original issue, edited by the elder Charles Francis Adams, gave a text that was above criticism, remarkably few errors having been found in it. In Mr. Nevins's volume there are a number of serious lapses, indicative of haste or carelessness. The inauguration of Madison is placed under December 4, 1808 (p. 59); the omission of *he* makes "as perhaps there is not quite satisfied" meaningless (p. 91); George III is made to reign sixteen instead of sixty years (p. 233); *not* is omitted from the description of Canning, leading to his being a man "of extraordinary parts" instead of the opposite (p. 296); two lines have been dropped from a paragraph on p. 356, reducing what is printed to unintelligibility; Paymaster-General in text becomes Postmaster-General in note on p. 389; Benton's *object* of the original is altered to Benton's objection (p. 401); French accents of the Adams publication are omitted and a number of names are misspelled. Such errors are likely to raise doubt upon the accuracy of the text and that would be unfortunate.

WORTHINGTON C. FORD

The Fatal Subject

Russian Literature and the Jew. By Joshua Kunitz. Columbia University Press. \$3.

WITH a formidable array of illustrations Mr. Kunitz sets out to prove his thesis: the Jew has not received adequate treatment at the hands of Russian writers. He was treated with contempt by Pushkin, Gogol, Turgenev, Dostoevsky; with hatred by Krestovsky and others of his ilk; with offensively sweetish pity by more recent writers, since the eighteen eighties. For this matter, one may ask, has the Jew fared better elsewhere? The Gentile portrayal of Jews runs, approximately, the gamut of Shakespeare—Lessing—George Eliot—James Joyce—Hemingway, a gamut with hatred, contempt, pity as its dominant notes, the note of understanding sounding hopelessly flat. The Jew has been an enigma for the Gentile, an unfathomable alien. It has remained for a Nordau, a Zangwill, an Henri Bernstein, a Yushkevich, a Wassermann, a Ludwig Lewisohn to attempt a genuine appraisal

Copyright of Nation is the property of Nation Company, L. P. and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.