

in the revolutions of 1830 and 1848, aimed against the privilege of wealth. Later it was men of the educated classes who demanded education for all." (*The Two Sources*). The upper middle class did, indeed, play a leading part in the Revolution of 1848, the leading part, that is, in the betrayal of the Revolution. Bergson evidently forgot the events of the June days of 1848—the suppression of the workers who rose to defend themselves against the reactionary bourgeoisie. And it is an illusion to entrust the cause of public education to the hands of the "educated classes." We have only to observe the restrictions which the French fascists have placed on the educational opportunities of the working class.

Bergson's method of "intuition" led to some curious results when it was applied to social problems. Europe, said Bergson, is overpopulated; therefore, there are wars. Or to quote his inimitable words: "Let Venus have her way, and she will bring you Mars." Bergson proposed that reproduction should be rationally regulated. Presumably the *elan vital* must be mechanized, after all, if it is to survive. In addition to repeating Malthus, Bergson spoke with a vaguely reactionist tinge concerning the need for a "central, organizing intelligence" which would "allot to the machine its proper place." He looked forward to some mystic genius who would transfigure the masses of men. Imperialism, he said, will then become mysticism. Thus culminates the transcendental nonsense.

Class interests forbade the French bourgeoisie's having a complete sympathy with science. Bergson's anti-intellectualism was essentially similar to the ideological products of the German irrationalists and the English metaphysicians. And it is noteworthy that neo-Bergsonian ideas have been brought into circulation by the ideological advocates of American participation in the imperialist war. Antagonism to science is a common property of the "thinkers" of the rival decaying capitalist states. Anti-intellectualism springs from no obscure source. If you don't like the consequences of scientific method, you simply say something is wrong with science, and you look for some alternative "method" of "real" knowledge. The Encyclopedists of the eighteenth century, the spokesmen of the young French bourgeoisie, were ardent teachers of science and joyous concerning the prospects of industrial civilization. Their heritage has been renounced by the decadent bourgeoisie; it will be safeguarded by the working class.

LEWIS WIDENER.

Obscuring History

THE TRIUMPH OF AMERICAN CAPITALISM, by Louis M. Hacker. Simon and Schuster. \$3.

LOUIS M. HACKER's book contains much excellent factual material on the history of trade and manufacturing in America from colonial times until the 1870's. It is important to stress, however, that, in spite of its am-

bitious title, the book contains little else of value.

In some circles Hacker is regarded as a Marxist. This is by no means the case. Hacker belongs to the school of so-called "economic determinists," of which Charles H. Beard is perhaps the outstanding exponent in America; and between "economic determinism" and the Marxist materialist conception of history, there is the sharpest divergence. The major Marxist criticism of Hacker's book must necessarily be that it is too *narrowly* economic in that it fails to recognize the role of consciousness in history—the role of the idea, of organization, conscious struggle, and especially of politics.

By persistently underestimating the role of conscious political activity, Hacker creates the impression that political struggles have been ephemeral by-products of economic events and of no major consequence in themselves. Perhaps the crassest example of this is to be found in his discussion of the Kansas Civil War (p. 213). This conflict resulted from the effort of the slaveholders to vote slavery into Kansas by overrunning the territory with the infamous "border ruffians." To meet the slaveholder offensive, Abolitionist societies of the North, representing the middle-class farmers, artisans, rising industrialists, workers, and Negro people, organized the Emigrant Aid Society to assist the movement into Kansas of free-soilers as permanent homesteaders. Thus two streams of emigration from two different class origins poured into Kansas, and a bitter and bloody clash was inevitable. It goes without saying that real estate companies made fortunes by selling to both free-soilers and border ruffians. Yet Hacker gives the impression that, therefore, the eastern land speculators were pretty largely responsible for the whole affair—a vulgarization of the Marxist theory of the basic role of the modes of production in history. Unquestionably there was land speculation; but it was secondary. The basic explanation of the Kansas Civil War must be found

in the conflict between two modes of production—chattel slavery and capitalism—arising from small scale commodity production. And this conflict took the form of a political class struggle.

The weakness of Hacker's interpretation is clearest in his scanty and superficial treatment of Jeffersonian democracy. After a fairly lengthy account of the Hamiltonian program, the victory of Jeffersonian democracy in 1800 is dismissed in two short paragraphs as an ineffectual agrarian movement which really came to terms with the capitalist interests without disarranging the Hamiltonian pattern "in any essential regard." This distortion of history follows the traditional Federalist interpretation. The conflict between Federalism and Jeffersonian democracy was never over *whether* or not capitalism was to develop, but over *how* it was to develop; whether it should rise rough-shod over the masses through an open political dictatorship as an instrument for rapid expropriation of the small owners even before the settlement of the vast Western lands, or whether it should develop on the basis of widespread democratic rights and ownership of land. In this conflict, the Federalists by no means had their way. Hacker does not even mention the vanguard role of Thomas Jefferson in leading the democratic mass movement, first to force a Bill of Rights into the Constitution and thereafter to support the Constitution, with all its shortcomings, as the only means of preserving American independence and those democratic victories already gained, against British and other foreign monarchical plots, as well as against internal Tory counter-revolution.

Hacker has nothing to say of the Bill of Rights whatsoever. Furthermore, he has nothing to say about the Federalist *political* program and the consequent Alien and Sedition Acts which, if left on the statute books, would have perpetuated a one-party dictatorship in America, making impossible any free election. The triumph of the Democrats certainly disarranged this Federalist pattern, as it did many others. In fact, if the Jeffersonians came to terms so easily with the moneyed interests, whence the long period of Federalist treasonable plots to dismember the Union, culminating in the Aaron Burr conspiracy and the Hartford Convention, of which there is not a word in Hacker's book? If Jeffersonian democracy was so ineffectual that it needs no discussion in a book on the triumph of American capitalism, how account for the fact that the Louisiana Purchase, which doubled the natural resources of the country and created the basis for doubling the home market, was carried out by the Jeffersonians over the *almost unanimous opposition of the Federalists*? How explain the fact that it was the Jeffersonians who defended our national borders against foreign foes and expanded our territory by removing military bases from the hands of those foes or preventing their falling into such hands by taking advantage of the rivalries of the great powers through (1) the Louisiana Purchase; (2) the War of 1812,



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during which the Federalists aided Britain; (3) the purchase of Florida; and (4) the Monroe Doctrine, in its time a purely defensive, collective security pact? Of these achievements Hacker says not a word. Finally, how can Hacker explain the fact that the industrial capitalists supported Jeffersonian democracy? To elaborate his own point concerning the conflict between the industrial and mercantile capitalists, Hacker should have examined the significance of the fact that Jefferson, over the opposition of the Federalists, encouraged the growth of native American industry and was far ahead of any Federalist of the time in the program for internal improvements.

Hacker's underestimation of the role of the conscious activity of the masses is furthermore seen in his ignoring of the Abolitionists, the long and painful work for a third party ending with the formation of the Republican Party. Especially must he be criticized for not emphasizing the heroic struggles of the Negro people before, during, and after the Civil War. While Hacker does not completely ignore the Negro people, nowhere does he challenge the false chauvinist theory that the Negro people were mere instruments in the hands of the Northern bourgeoisie. In fact, he virtually adheres to that theory by failing to elaborate the great positive achievements of the Negro people.

Nowhere is Hacker's superficiality shown so succinctly as in his generalization on page 405 that "The Civil War brought no lasting gains for the workers of the country." According to this view, it would have been just as well for the workers if open chattel slavery had remained in the South, if the Union had been dismembered and a Bonapartist empire perpetuated in Mexico! This is the same sort of pseudo-leftist propaganda as that advocated by certain disruptive elements in the trade unions during the Civil War, who maintained that the workers had no stake in the fight against chattel slavery unless it also became a fight against wage slavery! In view of such expressions as these, it seems by no means accidental that right at the outset of his history Hacker drags in by the hair a long and irrelevant quotation from Trotsky's *History of the Russian Revolution*, although he gives no account of the great role played by the genuine Marxists both in America and in Europe during the Civil War!

Quite glaring is the frivolous manner with which Hacker deals with the labor movement. In a book of 438 pages, only eight pages, apart from brief references here and there, are devoted to this important aspect of the rise of capitalism. Throughout his sketchy account, Hacker adheres to a narrow economist position. In discussing the "significant functional weaknesses" of the trade unions formed during the sixties and early seventies, Hacker points to the fact that "The spokesmen for labor constantly gravitated toward politics." Hacker does not blame the unions for failing to link their political with economic struggles, but for entering politics at all! Finally, in dis-

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GOINGS ON

A. B. MAGIL, editor, NEW MASSES, analyzes the week's events Sunday, January 19, 8:30 P.M. Workers School, 50 East 13 Street. 25 cents.

cussing the rise of the AFL, Hacker remarks, "With 1886, America's organized workers, under the leadership of skilled craft unionists, many of whom were permeated by socialist ideas and *with none of them beguiled by petty-bourgeois notions* [my italics—F. F.], began to move in the direction of effective economic action." In other words, the endeavor to win labor for independent political action is a petty-bourgeois notion!

Hacker centers his entire history around the conflict of the rising industrial capitalists with the older mercantile capitalists, who were both economically and politically allied with the slaveholder interests. This is an important point which has been insufficiently stressed by most American historians. Hacker clarifies many important aspects of this conflict and stresses correctly that the Civil War meant the triumph of industrial capitalism not only over the slave system but also over mercantilism. However, as has already been indicated, in dealing with Jeffersonian democracy he oversimplifies the conflict, failing to emphasize the fact that Jeffersonian democracy, in representing the middle-class interests generally, was not purely agrarian but also representative of the rising industrialists. He fails to illuminate the role of the Jeffersonian Embargo against Britain and the War of 1812 in stimulating the rise of industrial capitalism. He also fails to discuss the significance of the fact that under Madison the Second National Bank was founded, while under Monroe protective tariffs, as well as liberal land legislation, were adopted. In other words, Hacker gives a mechanical, undialectical account of the rise of industry, speaking too simply of mercantile and industrial capitalism as two separate and distinct stages of capitalism, without sufficiently showing the development of industry under the middle-class democratic regime prior to the final triumph of industrial capitalism during and after the Civil War.


In the concluding section of his book Hacker trots out the old discredited theory of Kautsky and Bukharin in maintaining that state capitalism, of which he regards the New Deal as an example, is based (of all things!) on the idea of welfare and social service and is heralding the emergence of an organized capitalism of abundance! How plans of crop reduction together with chronic unemployment are heralding abundance is not made clear. Certainly the present war gives little credence to any devotion to welfare on the part of capitalist states today.

Hacker's utter confusion or wilful obscurantism, whichever it may be, is also apparent in his analogy between the absolute monarchies of early modern history and present day "totalitarianism," in his assertion that what exists in Italy and Germany is the commencement of state socialism and his further assertion that the socialist economy of the Soviet Union is merely the completion of what has commenced already in Germany and Italy! All this is a crass falsification of the facts.

In concluding, it is necessary to remark

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that Hacker does not really finish his book. While he has amassed considerable material on the rise of industry prior to the 1870's, he does not with equal thoroughness describe the consolidation of capitalism following the Civil War. The closing passages skip over the period of the seventies and eighties in a sketchy and haphazard manner. Thus, the book lacks balance and even development. The general conclusion regarding Hacker's book must be that while it contains much valuable material of importance to students of American history, its interpretations are so bad and unscientific as to make it extremely dangerous.

FRANCIS FRANKLIN.