The Lenin Anthology
edited by Robert C. Tucker
(W.W. Norton; 828 pp.; $18.95/$4.95)

Robert G. Thobaben

Marx once said, "Revolution is the locomotive of history." If this is true, then Lenin is the chief engineer of the 20th Century Special. No other impression is possible after reading this anthology.

Tucker's purpose is to place the "enduringly significant Lenin" within a single volume. To accomplish this goal the book begins with a chronology of Lenin's life, a fifty-page commentary on his personality and style of leadership, and a resumé of the major social and philosophical influences on Lenin as a young revolutionary. The major body of the text is composed of about sixty selections from Lenin's writing organized chronologically within the framework of six major themes—the revolutionary party, politics, power, policy, culture, and future.

Although Lenin's thought ran the intellectual gamut from philosophy to anthropology to sociology, his enduring thought is in the area of revolutionary politics. This argument is perhaps best illustrated by a few observations on four political categories that were of central concern to Lenin. *Revolutionary Change*: Lenin must rank with Machiavelli when it comes to political realism. A number of essays are simply basic, concrete "how to" books for revolutionaries. Force is the mechanism of revolutionary change—always, at all times, everywhere—and coalition politics (the United Front) is the crucial tactic. Lenin literally lived and breathed the art and science of revolutionary change from age sixteen until his death at fifty-four.

Politics: "What Is to Be Done" summarizes Lenin's ideas on party organization and tactics. Written in 1902, it is still the Party's guiding document. This and many other selections demonstrate the importance of legal and illegal struggle, ideological struggle, economic struggle, the danger of party factionalism, the necessity to fight bureaucracy, keep control of the press, and finally, the meaning of the concept "dictatorship of the proletariat" as "iron rule."

Policy: Communist international relations were spelled out by Lenin in his essay, "Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism." Everything is there. Nothing is changed. The appropriate relationships with other socialist and capitalist states are described, as are relations with colonies seeking national liberation and self-determination. In domestic policy, economic change through technological development is continually sought through flexible policy, the mechanism of the Soviets, and the guidance of the vanguard—the Communist Party.

Future Culture: Lenin argued continually for the establishment of a new culture, a new civilization, characterized by equality of races, sexes, and the end of nationalism ("social chauvinism"). Human beings linked by their activity—rather than abstractions such as nation, religion, or race—was his goal. Communism was to be built bit by bit through structures such as Soviets and cooperatives. He even predicted the next generation would live in a Communist society.

This is the best single volume available on Lenin's thought. The organization of the book is excellent and the author's commentary helpful. But the major success is the clarity and balance of the picture it gives of Lenin intellectually, personally, and politically. Tucker's writing and selections neither deify nor desecrate Lenin. They show both strengths and weaknesses. They provide an insight not only into Lenin's Russian messianic vision, but also into the qualities constituting his charismatic personality, his candor and honesty in relations with other people, his real audacity in politics, and his hyperactivism. Intellectually, Lenin absolutized violence as the only road to socialism (in contradiction to Marx himself) and tended to dogmatize dialectics until rather late in his life. But his capacity for analysis, his technique of polemical discourse, the sheer volume of his writing (fifty volumes) are a stunning achievment. Politically, Lenin failed to follow his own dictum of "periodic purge," and thus undertook Stalin's expulsion from the Central Committee just a few months too late. In addition, his concern with efficiency produced a centralized party that has evolved into a new ruling élite. But his style of politics (persuasion versus force), his capacity for organization and leadership, and above all his flexibility in political action mark him as one of the giants of twentieth-century revolutionary politics.

The shortcomings of the book are minor. A longer introduction and eliminating some of the redundant selections would strengthen the volume. My suggestion is buy it, read it, and wait for the sequel on Mao Tse-tung, chief engineer of "The Orient Express."

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Briefly Noted

Between Fact and Fiction: The Problem of Journalism by Edward Jay Epstein
(Vintage; 232 pp.; $3.95 [paper])

Mandatory reading for anyone who would understand the role of the communications media in shaping, and misshaping, public opinion. Some chapters appeared earlier in *The New Yorker*, *Commentary*, and other publications, but the power of Epstein's critique is reinforced by reading them together in

this collection. Reporters, editors, and TV executives must make difficult decisions for which Epstein has no certain rules; he does, however, sensitize both consumers and producers of "the news" to the unreflective ways in which biases distort our understanding of the world. The author focuses his analysis on such major stories as Watergate, the Black Panthers, the Pentagon Papers, and the reporting of the Vietnam war.

Correspondence *(from p. 2)*

fourth century, however, before Christianity had become the official religion of the Roman Empire, the Emperor Julian attempted to rebuild the temple and restore the city to the Jews. His efforts, even though aborted by his early death, terrified the Christians. If Julian had been successful, he would have ended the "captivity" (in the Christian view) of the Jews, which had begun in 70 C.E., a captivity that, according to the Christian reading of the prophets, was *never* to end. This captivity has now ended, and the fathers have been proven wrong, suggesting, incidentally, the fragility of any theology based too closely on historical events. Christian theology, though at times seemingly intractable to empirical evidence, will be forced into making the necessary adjustment in its thinking, for the earlier views were shaped in response to other events. And the same will, I am certain, be the case for Christian attitudes toward Judaism itself. Christians have never really known the Jews and their religion, but as they begin to know and appreciate Jewish tradition and history, they will, slowly to be sure, begin the process of adjusting their religious ideas to their new experiences and understanding. Up until very recently Christian theology has seen the existence of Judaism as visible evidence challenging the Christian claims about Jesus and God's presence in the world. It is, of course, too much to say in 1975, and the Jew can hardly be expected to take comfort from it, but there may come a day when Christians will see the existence of believing Jews and the continuation of Judaism as a sure sign of God's presence in the world. From the Christian perspective, then, the starting point of any Christian-Jewish dialogue cannot be the exclusivity of Christianity and Judaism, but their mutual dependence and their complementary testimony to God and his ways with the world.

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To the Editors: Rabbi Henry Siegman's article on the Vatican Guidelines is a wise and irenic discussion, and he is to be complimented both for its occasional bluntness and its prevailing graciousness. As a Christian of Protestant persuasion, I do not feel called upon to agree or disagree with his positions on *Nostra Aetate* and the long-delayed Guidelines. But there are certain points where his observations reach to non-Roman Christianity and may justify comment.

First, I am not sure that there "have been no comparable developments of similar import for Christian-Jewish relations during this entire decade in Protestant...Christianity." At one level there can never be similar developments on *any* subject—for Protestant churches do not have the Roman *magisterium*. At another, to the extent that basic change at judicatory level is accompanied by a changing mind in the congregations, the 1971 statement of the Synod of the *Hervormde Kerk* (Netherlands) and the 1975 declaration of the *Rat der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland* are as important as any Protestant developments can be.

Second, Rabbi Siegman's statement of the way Christianity and Judaism parted may be misleading. It may be a good way of expressing it to say that Christianity "chose the liberating experience of faith in Jesus over the stubborn evidence of unredeemed history"; it is certainly a generous way. But there was another article of belief, the Incarnation, that should have anchored Christianity in history, with all its ambiguities. Instead, Christians have oscillated between flight from history (Docetism) and equating the Second Person of the Trinity with the historical church (Triumphalism), both of which positions are heresies. The sharp questions for Christian self-examination run along this path: "Was Jesus a 'false Messiah'? If not, where are the signs of the millennial age?"

Related to this line of thought is "the failure of the Christian world to assimilate, morally and theologically, the two seminal events of contemporary Jewry: the Holocaust and the establishment of the State of Israel." The Holocaust was also an alpine event in contemporary Christian history, for the mass apostasy of the baptized that made the Holocaust possible is root cause of the credibility crisis we Christians must now wrestle down. To the superficial mind, the incapacity of many churchmen to deal with the historical fact of the State of Israel is excused by "fairness" and "evenhandedness," asking why "the Arabs" should be called on to "pay for Christendom's sins." This formula has the temporary advantage of every flight from history: It avoids the issue posed by a continuing and vital Jewish people (contrary to traditional Christian speculations), it avoids the fact of Israel and how it came about, and above all—true progeny of "cheap grace"—it pulls the plug on any pressure buildup for Christian repentance. An unrepentant Christendom does not have to deal with an earthy Israel, and not because of a true "liberating experience," but because it floats in the nonhistorical dream world of the heavenly flesh of Christ, a dream world where there are no betrayals, no crucifixions, no resurrections, and no word is made flesh.

Third, and this is a criticism rather than an extrapolation, it seems to me Rabbi Siegman's view of the dialogue is too static. I like the blunt way he demands that fundamental differences be faced ("...a mutual acceptance of the ultimate incommensurability of Judaism and Christianity; our most critical affirmations of faith, which define that which is most unique about them, Sinai and Calvary, are mutually exclusive....Judaism constitutes a denial of the central Christian mystery and its notion of salvation..."), but must we assume that the parties will not change through genuine interaction? What then would be the point of initiating a process?

Affirming the Jewish right of self-definition, and insisting as a Christian that our traditional lies and malice vis-à-vis the Jewish people must undergo conversion, I would still affirm that the eschatological hope applies to Jews as well as Christians. We shall *all* be changed.

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