Dostoevsky
The Seeds of Revolt 1821-1849
by Joseph Frank
(Princeton University Press; 417 pp.; $16.50)

Martin Green

This is the first in a four-volume biography that will surely be definitive, despite the author's disclaimers. Joseph Frank declares his interest to be in Dostoevsky's artistic and intellectual career: "I see Dostoevsky's work as a brilliant artistic synthesis of the major issues of his time"; "My interest in Dostoevsky's personal life is therefore strictly limited." This is no false modesty, but still the book does have important things to tell us about Dostoevsky's parents and brothers, and everything else of importance to him, so it's hard to imagine another version displacing it. This volume takes us up to Dostoevsky's decisive act of political defiance—his reading aloud to the Petrashevsky circle from Belinsky's inflammatory Letter to Gogol—which resulted in his arrest and condemnation to death.

Mr. Frank has built up a massive model of the cultural geography and climate of Russia in the 1840's; in particular that part closest to the Dostoevsky family—starting with the books Feodor read as a child, the religion he was taught, and the oppressiveness of his father's personality. Though it seems that Dr. Dostoevsky's "old Karamazov" side developed only in the last years of his life, after his wife's death and after he lost direct contact with his sons, still he was an oppressive father, albeit in a different and more "Victorian" way. The Dostoevsky children were oppressed by the sacrifices he made for them and the ambition he felt for them. When Feodor failed to be promoted at his military academy, Dr. Dostoevsky, upon learning the news, suffered a partial stroke. Frank speculates that Dostoevsky's pathological shyness and evasiveness may have resulted from his childhood need to cope with a dictatorial father, totalitarian in his concern for his sons.

Nevertheless, it is true that three-quarters of Mr. Frank's attention and enthusiasm goes not to Dostoevsky's emotional life but to the books he read and the ideas that reached him in other ways. He shows us the cardinal importance of Schiller and Hoffmann in Dostoevsky's early years, and a bit later of Balzac and Scott—and draws our attention to the very similar feeling Marx and Engels then directed toward Balzac. Perhaps most interesting is what he has to say about various forgotten works that are likely to have meant a lot to Dostoevsky, notably George Sand's Spiridion and Victor Hugo's Dernier jour d'un condamné.

In this way Frank reminds us how essentially Dostoevsky was a writer, a man of letters, and even a journalist. These forms of activity were not accidental but essential to his identity. But Frank does not deny the existence of the religious Dostoevsky, the soul, the spiritual self, which was in this period an organ of acute social conscience rather than the purely metaphysical-religious entity it later became. Thus Frank helps to correct Dostoevsky's misleading account, given in that later period of religious and social conservatism, of what Belinsky's ideas and his friendship had meant to him in the '40's. Frank recreates for us two personalities, important to Dostoevsky but faded by now from all but the Russian specialist's view: Shilovsky, a typical literary Romantic in the style of 1830's Russia, and Speshnev, the revolutionary conspirator who inspired the figure of Stavrogin in The Devils.

One impression that emerges very strongly for the general reader is how Russian cultural history is unified by a few large themes. The figures of Napoleon and Peter the Great hang over Dostoevsky as they hang over Pushkin and Tolstoy. On two or three occasions in his writing Dostoevsky gives a hero a vision of the Neva, in which St. Petersburg vanishes; in A Raw Youth this vision is made very similar to the
corresponding scene in Pushkin’s *Bronze Horseman*. Those great figures of modernization, the destroyers of the old, religious Russia, haunted the nineteenth century like a nightmare memory—but also like a nightmare premonition.

In the interests of the sociology of knowledge one notes also the limitations of this excellent book. Frank presents Dostoevsky as so completely the intellectual, so busily acquiring the key ideas of his time and experimenting in how to use them in literary form, that the moments when Dostoevsky behaves in a “Dostoevskian” way strike us as incongruous. To borrow a phrase from Northrop Frye, Frank presents his novelist as a “scholar of myth” and, like Frye, assimilates the poet to the key.

In many ways this is an act of taste and tact for which we should be grateful. As a professor at Princeton who has spent twenty years preparing this volume, Frank has built a connection or communion with Dostoevsky. It would be improper for him to dwell on the sensational aspects of Dostoevsky’s personality and behavior. One knows all too many biographies that are fundamentally acts of scholarly vampirism upon the exhausted corpse of some flamboyant exhibitionist.

But still it is absurd that we should be led to find the “Dostoevskian” aspects of Dostoevsky incongruous. One sees many signs of how a book like this is shaped into slight absurdity by its academic nurturing. It is dedicated with the word “Enfin.” It was inspired twenty years ago by the author’s youthful interest in existentialism, and in *Notes From the Underground* as a precursor to that. But that was back when those books were “making such a splash,” and at time passed Frank lost interest in contemporary existentialism and became absorbed in Russian nineteenth-century culture. His major polemic is against Freud’s melodramatic theory of Dostoevsky, which he demolishes quite completely. One cannot regret the absence of false melodrama, but one does regret the dead-leveling effect of an academic style that so generally diminishes significance and excitement. Take the murder of Dr. Dostoevsky by his peasants. We are now told that he was never murdered at all; that was a rumor started by a neighbor. But since Feodor thought his father was murdered, nothing is changed. The lurid event is revealed to be an imposture, but the lurid idea of it is allowed to poets as a concession to their weakness. That seems to be typical of truth as it emerges from academic investigation.

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**Briefly Noted**

*A Nation of Behavers* by Martin E. Marty

(University of Chicago Press; 239 pp.; $8.95)

Marty proposes a bold new metaphor for describing what’s happening to religion in America. He “maps” its “topography” into six elements: Mainline Religion (yes, Judaism and Catholicism are now “mainline”), Evangelicalism and Fundamentalism (the only solely Protestant element), Pentecostal-Charismatic Religion (cutting across all denominations, churches, and sects), the New Religions (the streetcorner, often Oriental influx), Ethnic Religion (“roots”), and Civil Religion (claiming a universalism coextensive with the whole culture and society).

This is an historian’s social reconstruction of America’s religious reality, a new map, a new topography, basing itself on a description of what religious people are observed as doing (“we are a nation of behavers”) rather than on what they say they are believing (the old theological, institutional “nation of believers” mapping). This new description of the visible religious loyalties of people expressed in their self-locating public quests for group identity is bound to have a powerful influence on future history and sociology of religion. Situations described as real are real in their consequences, W. I. Thomas said. “We live in the description of a place and not in the place itself.” Wallace Stevens said (the book’s epigraph). Since Marty we now live in a new place.

Marty’s chef d’oeuvre is the chapter on civil religion. He displays a cool mastery of the by now bogglingly vast literature on civil religion. “Religion as religion does,” he notes, applies as much to civil religion as to any other. His call for a behavioral paradigm, here as elsewhere, is not an anti-intellectual explication of creedal, institutional, and other approaches, but an attempt to supplement these by reporting on “religious behavior.” Marty’s “behaviorism” is Durkheimian, not Skinnerian. He has in effect radicalized Durkheim’s concept of rite.

*—John Murray Cuddihy*

**The Reconstruction**

of the Republic

by Harold O.J. Brown

(Arlington House; 205 pp.; $8.95)

The author is a politically conservative evangelical Christian and about as thoughtful a representative of that breed as one finds writing today. The publisher, Arlington House, unashamedly panders to the hard-core conservative claque, which is not where this book should be read. It should be read by liberal Christians and secularized Americans who need to know that an intelligent case can be made for a radically different way of envisaging the American experiment. The dustjacket blurs: “Leading evangelical challenges Christians to return our country to her Pilgrims’ pride.” In fact, Brown is less interested in return than in pointing toward a reconstruction of political thought and action that is unafraid to ask the big questions, which historically and logically engage the beliefs by which people live. If the author’s case is finally unpersuasive—and it is—it is largely because he fails to ground pluralism and respect for diversity in the Christian faith he espouses. Thus his view of America cannot help but seem...
threatening to those who do not share his faith. Nonetheless, this is a better book than its publisher's promotion of it might suggest. For journalists and others who, in the Carter era, want a quick course in "born again religion," one suspects this book illuminates more of the intricate connection between religion and politics in the mind of Jimmy Carter than do his occasional, and not entirely plausible, claims to being a student of Reinhold Niebuhr.

America in Our Time by Godfrey Hodgson
(Doubleday; 561 pp.; $12.95)

We Americans frequently have been well served by overseas observers who see about ourselves what we cannot see or refuse to see. In this book, subtitled "From World War II to Nixon, What Happened and Why," British journalist Godfrey Hodgson sees and reports what has been the conventional wisdom for some years now in a community of discourse that ranges from The New Yorker to Tom Wicker and Anthony Lewis. The themes are disillusionment with American purity and omnipotence, guilt over Vietnam, the need to give equality of condition priority over equality of opportunity, and the like. While sometimes indicating a grudging respect and affection for "the majority of ordinary Americans," it is not clear that Mr. Hodgson has met many of that species, except through the above-mentioned community of discourse. His redistributive proposals for the American future sound very much like the measures that have contributed so greatly to the stunning economic and social success of contemporary Great Britain. And sometimes we Americans have been badly served by overseas observers, this being one of those times.

No Compromise: Selected Writings of Karl Kraus edited by Frederick Ungar
(Ungar; 260 pp.; $10.50)

Until very recently the genius of Karl Kraus was almost entirely unknown in the English-speaking world. Through studies of Wittgenstein's Vienna and other angles of vision on the world destroyed by World War I, the awareness of Kraus's importance has increased. This book offers key essays, aphorisms, and poems together with a generous chunk of his classic polemical drama, The Last Days of Mankind. The aphorisms are the best introduction to this scourgé of conventional wisdoms. "I speak of myself and mean the cause. They speak of the cause and mean themselves." "You wouldn't believe how hard it is to transform an action into a thought!" "Psychoanalysis is the mental illness for which it claims to be the cure." "Medicine: Your money and your life!" In inveighing against journalism and the popular press, Kraus touches upon the heights of a Kierkegaard, although, as he would be the first to confess, without the latter's conviction of a transcendent truth that gives name and warrant to prophecy. He wrote: "My readers believe that I write just for the day because I write about the day. So I must wait until my writings are outdated. Then they may possibly achieve timeliness." Four decades later they are very timely indeed.

The Conscience of the Courts: Law and Morals in American Life by Graham Hughes
(Doubleday; 311 pp.; $8.95)

Hughes is a naturalized American from Wales who now teaches at New York University. He brings to his subject a measure of freshness of discovery that is often found among those who were not raised to take the American political system for granted. Here he deals in general with the relation between law and morality and, more specifically, with abortion, drugs, pornography, and other questions under the broad category of "victimless crimes." On all scores this is an eminently sound introduction to the complexities faced, but seldom resolved, by the courts. One regrets the omission of many major figures from the fields of moral philosophy and ethics, and frequently Hughes seems to draw back from pressing his arguments to their logical conclusion. This is particularly the case in his treatment of the Supreme Court's 1973 ruling on abortion. Nonetheless, in a time when most legal thought is captive to sterile positivism and precedent, this book is a welcome provocation to rethink first premises.

The Moral Context of Pastoral Care by Don S. Browning
( Westminster; 144 pp.; $7.95)

In a society rife with encounter and sensitivity groups, where hucksters for Transactional Analysis assault our sensibilities, where the church freely takes over the "value-free" group techniques used by business corporations, where people no longer "say" things but are "heard," where friends remind us when we act childish that we are playing the P-C "tape," and where what one feels is more important than what one thinks, this little book is a welcome distraction. Browning makes the eminently sensible point that "care," especially in the church, can never be associated only with acceptance and understanding but that it must exhibit a "kind of practical moral inquiry into the way life should be ordered." "We must know what we believe about marriage, he says, if we are to care for people with marital problems. Emotional acceptance and psychological sophistication are not enough. Pastoral care functions within a context of values and meaning derived from the Christian (and Jewish) tradition, and its purpose is as much to incorporate people into the "discipline" of the church as it is to aid them in handling personal or familial crises. The impact of this book, however, is weakened by careless argumentation, indiscriminate and uncritical use of disparate and conflicting social scientific methodologies, and innocence of non-Protestant Christianity. Were Browning's argument more broadly catholic, and more expressly theological (but informed by the social sciences), we could hear him better.

How Jimmy Won by Kandy Stroud
(Morrow; 441 pp.; $10.95)

We were prepared to dislike this book. The genre itself seems merely ritualistic, even phony. The Washington office of Women's Wear Daily traipses about with the campaigns of Ronald Reagan,
Gerald Ford, Jerry Brown, Mo Udall—and Jimmy Carter—and then blesses us with her hindsight on why Jimmy won and the others lost. The difference here, however, is that Stroud signed up many months in advance for a book to be titled How Jimmy Won. Putting her eggs in the Carter basket, she apparently invested many hours and days getting to know the people around Carter; unlikely as it seems there is anything more to be said about the plain folks of Plains, this is in many ways the best part of her book. The stereotypes are not demolished (of Billy, Miz Lillian, the evangelist sister, etc.); they are enriched. One appreciates more the shy (Stroud uses "alienated" at one point) and surprisingly brittle aspects of Carter himself, but she helps us understand these are probably inseparable from his personal depth and awesome determination. On the campaign itself ("In 1976 issues were no more important than the price of hoopskirts.") there is little new here. Occasionally the author reaches for an element of drama that apparently was not there at the time. For example: "Two thousand people waited two hours in the freezing rain at the airport in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Fifteen thousand greeted him in the seventy-four-degree heat of McAllen, Texas, later that afternoon." Freezing rain, just maybe. But seventy-four-degree "heat"? She supplies the obligatory epilogue on "why Jimmy won." and her analysis will not disturb the conventional wisdom on that score. Perhaps in recognition of that fact she wisely ends with Jody Powell's comment on the campaign before the election: "The only thing that will make it brilliant is if we win. If we lose, they'll just say, 'It was just a bunch of dumb kids who didn't know what they were doing.'"

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Yet More
Briefly Noted

Bonhoeffer: Exile and Martyr
by Eberhard Bethge
(Seabury; 191 pp.: $7.95)

Lecturing in South Africa, the confidant and biographer of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the pastor-theologian executed for treason by the Nazis, reflects upon parallels between the Third Reich and Vorster's South Africa, and upon the meaning of martyrdom in a world of oppression.

Namibia
by Colin O'Brien Winter
(Eerdmans; 234 pp.: $4.95 [paper])

Although consistently reelected by his people in Namibia, Anglican bishop Winter has for some years been in exile. This is an impassioned, and informed, appeal to Christian conscience for the "liberation" of Namibia from South Africa. Winter's readiness to countenance violence, and his aversion to everything that smacks of compromise, may offend some readers, but he offers a strong case that must be taken into account by those who arrive at different conclusions about the meaning of moral responsibility with respect to this tortured part of the world.

The Eccentric Tradition:
American Diplomacy in the Far East
by Robert A. Hart
(Scribners; 276 pp.: $10.95)

An historical analysis pleading for professionalism and a maturity that resists eccentric swings from universalism to isolationism and back again. Balanced, cool, dispassionate, dull, and, for the most part, probably correct. The author teaches history at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst.
Bible and Ethics in the Christian Life
by Bruce C. Birch and Larry R. Rasmussen
(Augsburg: 221 pp.; $4.95 [paper])

An intelligent and necessary, if somewhat pedantic, argument for bringing together biblical studies and ethical reflection, which the authors believe have operated in separate worlds for too long.

The Socialist Decision by Paul Tillich
(Harper & Row: 185 pp.; $10.95)

Billed as Tillich’s “longest connected work in the field of social ethics,” this book was published in 1933 and now, well translated by Franklin Sherman, makes its first appearance in English. It places Tillich solidly in the Frankfurt School, which was to be developed by Horkheimer, Lowe, Mannheim, Habermas, and others. Opposed to dogmatic Marxism, the focus is on the young (“‘the real’) Marx. Although it will no doubt be picked up by current groups intrigued by the possibilities of democratic socialism, it will be of chief benefit to those interested in the development of Tillich’s thought but who have not facility in German.

The History of the German Resistance 1933-1945
by Peter Hoffmann
(MIT Press: 847 pp.; $19.95)

Five hundred thirty-four pages of text and more than three hundred pages of notes witness to the exhaustive nature of this study. There is very little padding, and, surprisingly, the story does read like a story and not merely a catalogue of data. Among many interesting points the author reports that Churchill, a few years after the war, privately expressed regret that England had not taken more seriously the approaches from Dietrich Bonhoeffer and other resistance participants who wanted assurances that a coup against Hitler would be rewarded by more moderate peace terms from the Allies.

Announcement

Black Philosophers. A study is being conducted on the history of blacks in philosophy between 1700 and 1970. The research includes writings by such authors as Anton Wilhelm Amo, Leopold Sedar Senghor, Paulin J. Hountondji, Jerome R. Riley, Alain LeRoy Locke, and William Thomas Fontaine. Works by black lay and professional philosophers are included. Any information or published articles, books, unpublished manuscripts, and bibliographic data on philosophic works by these and other black authors would be appreciated.

Please forward information and inquiries to Leonard Harris, Ph.D., Moton Center for Independent Studies, 3508 Science Center, Philadelphia, Pa. 19104.

Correspondence (from p. 2)

freedom, their comfort. even their lives to charge our atmosphere. He helped me see that, and I appreciate it.

Jerry Roback

Gig Harbor, Wash.

Update

The son of Cuba’s most celebrated dissident, Huber Matos, was shot up in Costa Rica on December 27, 1976. Huber Matos, Jr., 32, had been traveling around Latin America, calling on prominent politicians, clerics, and journalists to publicize the cause of his father’s release.

Chile had proposed the release of two prisoners in Chilean jails in exchange for imprisoned Soviet dissident Vladimir Bukovsky and Cuban prisoner Huber Matos. When Bukovsky was released, the hopes of the Matos family were raised.

Young Matos telephoned Bukovsky in Switzerland immediately after the Russian was freed. Bukovsky responded with appeals to Cuba to accept the second exchange, appeals that were widely publicized in Latin American press and broadcast media.

Food Aid

To the Editors: I read with interest the article by Kai Bird and Susan Goldmark on food aid to Bangladesh (“Food Aid for Bangladesh”) in your January/February issue.

I must, however, take issue with the statement in paragraph two that “food aid generally does not reach the poor…” which is certainly not true as far as the World Food Programme (WFP) is concerned. This Programme, which handles about one-sixth of all international food aid, is providing very considerable assistance to Bangladesh.

An excerpt of my Worldview article, “The Yellow Uniforms of Cuba,” urging the proposed freedom swap—Matos in exchange for former Chilean Senator Jorge Montes, a Communist—was published as a Washington Post “Op Ed” column less than twenty-four hours before Matos Jr. was sprayed with bullets. His car was hit six times. Two shots hit him, one passing between his heart and liver, the other passing through his shoulder. Now nearly recovered, he intends to resume his campaign for his father’s release.

The would-be assassin escaped.

Theodore Jacqueney

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