

lem of affirming a higher reality, the transcendence of God, at the same time one renews the commitment to engage in political struggle—to say No to the world in the sense that it inevitably falls short of the realization of the Kingdom and at the same time say Yes to the world in the sense of waging a continual struggle to reduce this gap; or, as the title of the book on the Hartford Appeal puts it, to be *Against the World for the World*.

The example of The Hartford Appeal suggests that the secular and the sacred, the material and the spiritual, are not

united by obscuring their differences but by relating them in a creative dialectical relationship. The attempt to remove oneself from this polarity, as Albanese tries to do, only drains its terms of meaning; it contributes to a confusion of language in which the prospect of a common horizon of consciousness grows ever dimmer and in which "Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold; mere anarchy is loosed upon the world." Only when a fixed center has been found can a common horizon be drawn.

day-to-day experience was generally uncomplicated and predictable, and hence dreary and unsatisfying. In this light, it is hardly surprising that they sought personal identity in the Fabian movement, for the society provided a much-needed outlet for emotions and talents, an organized sense of moral purpose and direction, and a ready avenue for an education in politics and social action.

Like many intellectual types, the Fabians were also incorrigible élitists. They had little immediate contact with the working class whose rights they supposedly championed, and it is doubtful they would have wholeheartedly welcomed such a tie. When it came to social change, they, much like Shaw's "unsocial socialist" and *Saint Joan*, found it considerably more realistic to rely on the superior intelligence and skills of an "elect" than on the spontaneity of mass action. This gave them a clear tactical advantage over those of Marxist bent, who might wait forever for the proletariat to rouse itself. This élitist tenor may also explain why so many of the Fabians subscribed to such curious political doctrines at the ends of their careers. While traveling in the Soviet Union, the Webbs discovered a future that worked, a "new religious order," even though they were well aware of the enormities of Stalinist terror. Shaw shared similar sentiments and also expressed a fascination with Italian fascism, finding its élitist orientation vastly superior to liberal democracy's politics of accommodation.

The MacKenzies are not blind to the personal shortcomings of the Fabian élite. Among such unique types, egos were bound to clash. Wells, to cite one case, practically split the society apart at times; his passionate self-certainty and Messianic fervor drove him into repeated conflict with his comrades. The Fabians also displayed some of the most striking of eccentricities, ranging from the comic to the pathetic. Shaw, for example, oscillated from an occasional flirtation with misogyny to innumerable ménages à trois. In contrast, such passion would have been an exceptional thing in the Webbs' relationship. Shortly before their wedding, Beatrice returned Sidney's photograph with the telling remark: "Let me have your head only—it is the head only that I am marrying." Happily, more was to come

## The Fabians by Norman and Jeanne MacKenzie

(Simon and Schuster; 446 pp.; \$12.95)

### A., James McAdams

The history of modern England is virtually incomprehensible without consideration of the Fabian Society. The society's mark has proven truly indelible. British socialism, the Labor party, and current social democracy all bear its impression. Since its founding in 1884 the club provided Britain with some of its most distinguished leaders. Institutions like the society's own London School of Economics and Political Science still serve Fabian ideals and principles. Extant publications, like the *New Statesman* afford a lasting record of the group's accomplishment; a record complementing such social scientific classics as the works of Sidney and Beatrice Webb and the literary genius of George Bernard Shaw and H. G. Wells. Now, with the release of *The Fabians*, we have Norman and Jeanne MacKenzie to thank for providing us with an authoritative and extraordinarily readable account of Fabian intellectual history, and hence for guaranteeing that the memory of the society will be furthered and enriched.

Named after an obscure Roman general noted for both forthrightness and prudence, the Fabian Society was organized as a hybrid between a debating club and an activist cell. Its membership was highly heterogeneous, with simple humanists, utopian Socialists, revisionist Marxists, pantheists, anarchists, and aesthetes all taking part and all

united by an undogmatic commitment to human happiness and social betterment. To the extent the club did work for positive social change, its policies were decidedly gradualist, its reforms idealistic yet largely piecemeal. If the Fabians didn't invent a politics of incremental, humanistic reform, they certainly epitomized it, and, as the MacKenzies emphasize, the society's distinctive lack of orthodoxy worked in its favor, facilitating its "permeation" (to use Shaw's term) of social strata and allowing its members to mingle freely with Liberals, Laborites, and Tories alike.

But *The Fabians* is more than history of a particular association. It is a case-by-case analysis of the remarkable individuals who made up the society—Annie Besant, Bertrand Russell, Sydney Olivier, Edward Pease, Ramsay MacDonald, and Hubert Bland, as well as Shaw, Wells, and the Webbs—for it was on the charisma and unique vitality of these personalities that the life and death of the organization rested. What is striking about the society is the fact that it could count so many rare individuals among its numbers. Its key figures were all enormously talented. Like intellectuals today, most led materially comfortable lives; some were quite well-off indeed. But many of the early Fabians were also young and unsure of what they really believed. Their

of their marriage than the remark suggests.

One may, as many do, debate whether the Fabians made England a better place to live in, but they undeniably made its history richer. The MacKenzies contribute to that history in a fashion both scholarly and lucid, preserving the record of one of the most important and colorful intellectual currents of modern times.

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### Briefly Noted

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#### Gates of Eden: American Culture in the Sixties by Morris Dickstein

(Basic Books; 293 pp.; \$11.95)

*Gates of Eden* is perhaps the most ambitious assessment of the cultural life of the previous decade not written entirely as a brief for the defense. Born in 1940, Morris Dickstein considers himself a child of the Fifties, when he imbibed the ideals of complexity and ambiguity before they were to be tested in the academy and in the streets. This is a hybrid book, at once chatty and pretentious, grandiose and highly personal. Dickstein claims that it could not have been written until the Sixties spurned the notion of objectivity.

The cast of characters, apart from the author himself, is reassuringly familiar. The intellectual demiurges of historical

change: Ginsberg, Norman O. Brown, Paul Goodman, Herbert Marcuse, Norman Mailer, C. Wright Mills. The rock groups: The Beatles, the Rolling Stones, The Band. The blacks: James Baldwin, Malcolm X, Eldridge Cleaver, Ishmael Reed. The black humorists and experimental writers: John Barth, Donald Barthelme, Joseph Heller, Kurt Vonnegut, Thomas Pynchon. The journalists: Tom Wolfe, Hunter Thompson, the ubiquitous Mailer (but not, oddly enough, I.F. Stone). By the Seventies, he writes, "the times have gone from bad to worse"; but the legacy of the political and cultural protest of the Sixties remains "permanently available."

The nine chapters are brisk and pungent, but they do not add up to a coherent view of the period. Essentially a collection of essays, *Gates of Eden* does not form a sustained argument and shows no conceptual command over its disparate material. Not even the title, which is also that of a Dylan song, seems worth the bother of explaining. The utopian impulses of the radical young became dissipated by the end of the Sixties, it is apparent. But Dickstein never pauses to examine how or why those gates of Eden became shut, or who shut them, or what—beyond metaphor—Eden was supposed to have consisted of anyway.

What really happened in the Sixties, Dickstein claims, is as discernible in the *Berkeley Barb* as in the *New York Times*; and Dickstein is fond of criticizing the criticism that older intellectuals directed at the new sensibility. The "usual amiable obtuseness" of Dwight Macdonald, the failure of Philip Rahv to find a capacious human dimension in experimental fiction, Irving Howe's distaste for the Paradise Now mentality of the young radicals—all come under attack. But in Dickstein's own judgments of the art and style of the period he sometimes invokes similar standards against the excesses of the Sixties. Apparently without realizing it, the author discovers the same limitations to Adamic innocence, the same illusions.

The result is a lame conclusion, which can be quoted as an egregious example of the author as thinker: "If it's not the book I might have dreamed of writing, it's at least the one I've actually written." No argument there. Though served up with vibrancy and with some

piquant local insights, *Gates of Eden* finally dies, like Susan in E.L. Doctorow's *Book of Daniel*, "of a failure of analysis."

—Stephen J. Whitfield

#### G.K. Chesterton: Radical Populist by Margaret Canovan

(Harcourt Brace Jovanovich; 175 pp.; \$10.95)

Chesterton, who died in 1936 and is probably best known today for his Father Brown detective stories, was a man of infuriatingly complex parts. Although his writings on sundry topics were enormously popular, Chesterton did not fare well with the intellectual establishments of his time, and has not done much better since. He was and is accused of anti-intellectualism, anti-Semitism, fascism, and general rowdiness. Margaret Canovan, the English political theorist, last graced us with *The Political Thought of Hannah Arendt* (reviewed in *Worldview* in December, 1974), and now comes to the defense of "G.K." Her case is always engaging (it is hard not to be when under the influence of Chesterton), usually persuasive, and, on the critical points, convincing. The trouble with Chesterton, says she, is that he was a populist who was incorrigibly respectful of the common man. Inevitably, this put him at swords point both with the Tory reactionaries and with the Liberal and Socialist reformers. The former thought the poor eminently deserving of their unhappy lot, while the latter's contempt for their lessers took the form of wanting to uplift the masses forcibly through social planning. In the contest between "beer and liberty versus soap and socialism," Chesterton was unquestionably on the side of beer and liberty. Professor Canovan's interest in Chesterton is more than personal. She aims at something more than rehabilitating the reputation of a man unfairly pilloried, although that too is her purpose. She correctly underscores the importance of Chesterton in illuminating present confusions in England and America about what it might mean to be radically concerned for ordinary people who are regularly dumped upon by both their professed enemies and their leftist allies.

Those who find themselves deep in today's swampy debates about the meaning of "conservative" and "liberal" and "radical" might want to give the Chesterton option a hearing.

## A History of the Jewish People

ed. by H.H. Ben-Sasson

(Harvard: 117 pp.: \$40.00)

One-volume histories of the Jews usually end up as the history of an idea rather than the history of a people. The explosion of historical knowledge, the growing complexity of historical studies, as well as the vast scope of Jewish history, only increase the temptation. But this new work, a joint enterprise of Israeli historians (Malamat, Tadmor, Stern, Safrai, Ettinger, and the editor) successfully avoids that temptation and offers a comprehensive, detailed, continuous narrative of the Jewish people from the conquest of Canaan to the Six-Day War. The work is

marked throughout by sound judgment, judicious scholarship, disdain for irrelevant trivia, and avoidance of ideology. It is also carefully edited.

The bulk of the book (approximately two-thirds) falls, as it should, on the more recent history: that is, the medieval and modern periods, which are of particular interest to Western English-speaking readers. But the ancient history (in Christian terms, the "biblical history," the period of the Second Temple, and the era of the Mishnah and Talmud) are given thorough treatment. The editor—himself a medievalist—wrote the long section on medieval Jewry, and it is superior. Page after page provides information, citations of sources, description of events that are simply unknown to most medieval historians. The account of the modern period, written by S. Ettinger, is equally illuminating especially for his discerning and levelheaded discussion of the background of modern Jewish history, especially in the nineteenth century, and his organization of the complex events of the twentieth century. Originally published in Hebrew in 1969, the work is ably translated into

English and furnished with up-to-date bibliographies and a large number of splendid illustrations. A remarkable achievement—and all in one volume.

—Robert Wilken

## Criminal Russia: A Study of Crime in the Soviet Union

by Valery Chalidze

(Random House: 240 pp.: \$10.00)

Hooliganism, thieves' societies of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, stealing socialized property, sodomy, abortion, and indulgences in economic free enterprise are among the subjects covered. Except for those who still think the Soviet Union has "solved" some of the problems plaguing capitalist societies in decay, few readers will be surprised by Chalidze's information. Although holding the reader's attention most of the time, the organization of the book seems disjointed at points. The best and grisliest sections for the bloody minded have to do with Russian criminal traditions that go back far before the Revolution and show every sign of thriving today as the Soviet Union continues its trudge toward the worker's paradise.

## The Last Kaiser

by Tyler Whittle

(New York Times Books; 366 pp.: \$15.00)

For twenty-three years Wilhelm II of Germany lived out the postlude to his life in Doorn, Holland. The author suggests he saw himself as something of a Wodehouse character, more specifically, "Clarence, Earl of Emsworth, whose chief joy was the fattening of his prize sow, pottering in the rose gardens, and reading up his valued text book *Whittle on the Pig*." This biography might have been *Whittle on the Pig* if its author had followed the lead of the many British and American writers who raged at the injustice of the "Swine of Prussia" not being hung as a war criminal. But in fact Whittle has tried to give us a sympathetic portrait of a not very

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sympathetic man. Wilhelm, we are told, was intelligent, well-meaning, moody, and, finally, the victim of vicious betrayal by his lessers. World War I occupies a relatively small part of the book, and the Kaiser's role in this "war that he never wanted" seems largely limited to striking heroic postures among the troops at the front. Whittle's is a far, far cry from the propaganda picture of the Despicable Hun so vigorously promoted by Lloyd George and other Western leaders. The book is less concerned with Wilhelm's part in the Great War than with the interminable bickerings in German domestic politics and, most of all, the complicated relationships within European royalty. While the author seems enamored of kings and queens and dukes and czars, none of them appear as very impressive persons, with the possible exception of Queen Victoria, Wilhelm's grandmother. It is the kind of book that monarchists will no doubt enjoy, but it does little to advance their cause.

### Truthfulness and Tragedy by Stanley Hauerwas

(University of Notre Dame; 264 pp.; \$12.95/\$4.95)

It is a grave misfortune, if not a tragedy, that the study of ethics today, whether religious or secular, has so largely degenerated into esoteric language games far removed from the worlds in which people must be and act morally. One notable exception in this unhappy state of affairs is Stanley Hauerwas of Notre Dame University. In the past he has gifted us with *Character and the Christian Life* and *Vision and Virtue*. Now his essays of recent years are brought together in a book that should be welcomed by all who care about the moral life. Some are theoretical illuminations of elementary concepts such as obligation, duty, and virtue; others address specifics such as suicide, euthanasia, the care of the retarded, and a host of ethical questions posed by modern medical practice. This gleaming of Hauerwas's thought to date gives added support to his reputation as one of the most consistently provocative ethicists working today.

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