

The party acts for the working class and the extraction of surplus by the state is to maintain a high level of investment to ensure all-round industrialisation; while this process has kept down living standards, it is quite different from extracting surplus as a factor source of profit.

The obvious Marxist bias really does weaken the credibility of much of the book, and not only on economic issues.

When the position of the national minorities is discussed, it is asserted that the governments of the Soviet republics are "the equivalent of state governments such as California in the USA." The author's misunderstanding of the significance of the small Jewish population in the Jewish Republic of Birobidzhan is equally startling. Surely the social scientist's concern for comparison and objectivity need not obscure the persistent differences between Soviet and Western societies and institutions.

John Lewis Gaddis's thoughtful and well-written interpretative study, *Russia, the Soviet Union and the United States*, is a very impressive work. Its central theme is the increasing importance of ideology on both sides of the Russian-American relationship, beginning in the late nineteenth and twentieth

centuries. Gaddis states that in the early nineteenth century Russian-American relations were quite good "because both states...gave more weight to interests than ideology in their diplomacy...." It is clear enough from his presentation that American leaders disapproved of Russia's despotic ways. Thus, James Buchanan wrote to President Jackson in 1832 that in Russia there was "no freedom of the Press, no public opinion,...but little political conversation, and that very much guarded." The admiration was reciprocated by the Russian minister who wrote of the United States in 1854 that it was "the principle of anarchy...under the pseudonym of self government."

Clearly, enormous differences in power relations between the infant American republic and the huge Russian empire assured that no major power conflict would develop. Yet, as Gaddis notes, the passions of public opinion that entered American policy toward Russia in the latter nineteenth century, with their focus on human rights, the Jewish question, etc., demonstrate that ideology entered Russian-American relations long before the post-World War II era. But Gaddis clearly disapproves of the tension that ideologically inspired interests and attitudes have imposed upon American-Soviet relations. He concludes that both sides "have little choice but to learn to live with particularism, to learn to live with a different world." 

## Art and Politics in the Weimar Period: The New Sobriety by John Willett

(Pantheon Books; 272 pp.; \$17.95)

### Norris Merchant

John Willett, ex-director of the London *Times Literary Supplement* and something of an authority on Bertolt Brecht, has produced a specialized study of Weimar, supplementing earlier investigations such as Walter Lacqueur's. Where previous analyses tended to be broad cultural inquiries, Willett narrows in on Weimar's revolutionaries. His cast of artistic and political insurgents turns out to be humanists, with innovative minds and styles running to the bracingly tonic. The "metaphysical" Germany of "poets and thinkers," once cited by Madame de Staël, has been pushed into the background. Revolutionary Weimar rejected the Teutonic fanaticisms of Houston Stewart Chamberlain, despised the Third Reich visions of a Moeller van den Bruck, and managed to do without the philosophic

obscurantism of a Martin Heidegger. It wished, in fact, to exorcise the country of such demons, although only a war would finally achieve that.

The words "Art and Politics" in Willett's title may thus be misleading. Much of Weimar's art is missing in this account, as is half or more of its politics. Willett ushers us into a meeting of technicians, experts, and intelligentsia; the walls are lined with revolutionary art—and much of it is magnificent. But there is another Germany outside, whose ideologies are not to be discussed, nor its artwork broached, inside our partisan assembly. We may therefore be deceived about the outer world while inspired by a false security. (One may fancy that something like this actually happened in Weimar itself. The insularity of political sectarians moving only

among their own is nothing unusual.)

Nonetheless, in the early stages of the Weimar Republic *hope* was alive on the Left, and sustained a brilliant outpouring of plays, books, pictures, and architectural experiments. It is just this liberation of creative energy that Willett graphically presents through illustrations accompanied by an instructive and detailed text.

The German revolution that failed in the streets was carried into the epic theatre of Brecht, Piscator, and Max Reinhardt (with Meyerhold coming in for moral support). The Bauhaus school felt its thrust as it moved toward hygienic, functional designs and architectural experiment. The rebellion underpinned novelistic and poetic statements from workers and outcasts—clear and poignant cries of human mis-

ery. It welled over in the satire of a Grosz, and in the acid criticism of a Kurt Tucholsky. It brought to film directors the possibility of converting the public to a new vision of the future. In the moral sphere it upset middle-class convention by a shift in sexual mores the like of which was not to be seen again until today. In all its streams the upheaval broadly paralleled the Soviet one—prior, that is, to Stalinist repression and Russia's return to cultural orthodoxy. Berlin held on to its beleaguered enlightenment a bit longer, unconstrained by the tyrant's whip until 1933.

Willett offers a minutely well-informed report on the personnel of Weimar's memorable breakthrough. The il-

lustrations—212 photos, posters, paintings, title pages, and the like—are often rare enough to have required diligent mining. The "New Sobriety," in Willett's portrayal, is the conjunction of a serious, objective art with meaningful political purpose. He demonstrates that when freely operative, as in Weimar, this marriage can produce landmarks of artistic progress far beyond the drudge-horse socialist realism later imposed in some countries. Rosa Luxemburg, Weimar's most distinguished revolutionary martyr, had taught, in opposition to Lenin, that revolution must be rooted in the spontaneity of the masses—not in élitist parties. Weimar's artistic Left, at least, seems to have heeded her, with lively creations bubbling up in the

stream of practical political involvement. Of course this creativity rested on shaky foundations. National Socialism was hammering toward power from the Right, and in the midst of Weimar's flowering Stalin delivered a painful blow by clamping down on Moscow's avant-garde, previously a vital example to Western cultural rebels. For a while, however, even Hitler's threat and Stalin's reaction fed Weimar's song of defiance. As a philistinism of unimaginable barbarity was about to set in, Weimar gave the world a final view of an impressive artistic ferment paradoxically fueled by the threat of doom. John Willett has recalled that unique cultural event sympathetically, carefully, and with justifiable nostalgia. **WV**

## Terrorist Chic: An Exploration of Violence in the Seventies by Michael Selzer.

(Hawthorn Books; xvi + 206 pp.; \$9.95)

### Halbert Weidner

*Terrorist Chic* is a bizarrely written book about bizarre topics: punk rock, sadomasochism, terrorism. Mr. Selzer's thesis is roughly that these three phenomena are trends promoted by a psychic collusion of jaded pace setters and terrorists. I say roughly because both the statement of the position and its demonstration make a hazardous road for his conclusions.

His first rough spot is geography. He gets most of his trends in New York City: the windows of Bendel's, Studio 54, the *New York Post*, *Times*, and *Daily News*, and Christopher Street. For a book purporting to have the entire United States as a frame of reference, a little more footwork would have helped. The myopia is best illustrated when he interviews and blithely quotes Richard Condon to the effect that the United States has never fought a war on its own soil and that one is not only bound to come, but most likely would be a civil war! Selzer never thinks to ask Condon what happened in the U.S. between 1861 and 1865. Perhaps he would have if General Lee had burnt New York City to the ground.

Even granted the restricted geography, it is hard to tell if there is a real trend. The best S-M club, Le Chateau 19, is as tepid an affair for the middle class as is Studio 54 for the affluent. Business is slack at a Christopher Street S-M store. The window dressers, photographers, and authors trotted out as examples of terrorist chic are now doing something else. There are sadomasochistic concerts, but Helen Wheels, a punk prima donna, is a strange example, since she is portrayed as insane and too fragile to collude with anyone in setting a fashion. In fact, most of the people who are interviewed are either cynics trying to make a buck off of voyeurs or people with a marginal relationship with reality to begin with. They are hardly the stuff from which to extrapolate a social theory.

But if Selzer's thesis is to make its way to a conclusion, extrapolation seems to be its only fuel. There are three kinds of people whom he says are involved in terrorist chic. There are the deviants (a minority) and the entrepreneurs. But the "largest group," the one most "directly responsible for establish-

ing Terrorist Chic as a fashionable pose"—no, not the public—is described as follows: "Many in this group had been active in the peace movement in the 1960s or had been VISTA volunteers or had entered the Catholic novitiate." That is a very small group to write a book about. So tiny is it that it is hard to find them even in the text. True, there is an ex-seminarian VISTA volunteer, another ex-seminarian who used a discipline (called a cat-o'-nine-tails here), and one fellow who took pictures for VISTA. But there is also a list that doesn't fit the categories. It is headed by a Vietnam veteran and concludes with others of nondescript politics.

Selzer also extrapolates about terrorists. They are feeble and spoiled and inept in the United States, and so they must be elsewhere too. He doesn't grant them their successes, organization, or practical use by wealthy groups who sponsor and manipulate them in the field while taking more moderate positions at the bargaining table. He doesn't see behind the terrorists to the politicians who need them, feed them, and rise to power with these moralistic, vio-