

which it is presented. In the final analysis, *China's Intellectual Dilemma* is a significant and definitive study that will appeal to the reader whose appetite for the subject may have been only whetted by *Chinese Education Since 1949*. [WV]

RELIGION AND POLITICS IN LATIN AMERICA

by Daniel H. Levine

(Princeton University Press, 342 pp., \$22.95/\$5.95)

Richard Armstrong

Ten years of study of church and state in Venezuela and Colombia has produced this masterly volume by Daniel H. Levine, associate professor of political science at the University of Michigan.

Following the lead of C. Wright Mills in concentrating on the élites—in this case ecclesiastical—of the two countries, Levine gives a rich and revealing portrait. He writes well and has an obvious sympathy for his sixty subjects, who emerge as sincere men whose background and whose vision of the Church and its relation to political life are made understandable. The main title is misleading, however; only two countries are scrutinized.

Colombia emerged from its nineteenth-century civil wars with the conservative forces, including the Church, intact and supreme. One reason for the conservatism of the Colombian Church has been the still-fresh memory of ten years of internecine strife (1948-58), known as "The Violence." Power still alternates between conservatives and liberals, regardless of the outcome of elections. The Church resolved to stay out of "politics."

With plenty of native clergy and a highly educated hierarchy, the Colombian Church has approached social problems with confidence. The bishops' fairly radical critique of inequities in the national system has been accompanied by old-fashioned solutions.

Colombian bishops have tried to keep priests out of political movements. One Camillo Torres was enough, and liberation theology holds no charms for them. One bishop spoke for many Colombians when he saw the nation's problems as the individual ones of alcoholism and other vices. Levine charac-

terizes their position not as reactionary, but "comfortable."

Venezuela's Church, on the other hand, lost its power and influence after the triumph of anticlerical liberals. The discovery of oil in the 1920s led to the creation of new institutions and hastened the urbanization of the masses. In this context the Venezuelan hierarchy has been more cautious than the Colombian in speaking up, but has also been more open and innovative. Less complacent about their position, Venezuelan bishops have a greater tendency to welcome dialogue with Marxists and Protestants. "If they work to raise the level of life in a barrio," one respondent told Levine, "how can I not also try? I am not committing myself to a doctrine, only to action." The generally less-educated Venezuelan bishops talk less but do more.

Levine skillfully employs his sociological tools in his analyses of national Church organizations, in his treatment of the thorny question of education, and in his discussion of the modus operandi of six typical dioceses. These give authenticity to his generalizations.

Levine's major conclusion is a hopeful prediction that fewer tensions lie ahead for these two nations, as compared with other Latin American states in which military regimes hold sway. Unlike Catholic radicals who criticize the hierarchy's concern for the preservation of Church institutions, he finds such attitudes legitimate.

A second major conclusion involves a forecast that the evangelical-pastoral viewpoint adopted at Puebla (1979) holds more hope of adoption than the more confrontational liberation theology, with which it shares many perspectives. The Latin American bishops at Puebla combined a disengagement from partisan politics with a "preferential option for the poor." Marxism, liberal capitalism, and the national security state were all rejected. What option remains? Can the transcendent values of Catholicism be upheld without the commitment of the clergy to partisan politics?

The author labored for ten years in a dense thicket of particulars to arrive at these and other hard-won generalizations. His conclusions cannot be dismissed any more readily than Catholicism itself in this continent of turmoil. Far from being irrelevant, the religious faith of millions of Latin Americans is a

vital—and in some countries the only—promise for human freedom and political and economic justice. [WV]

FOREIGNERS: THE MAKING OF AMERICAN LITERATURE, 1900-1940

by Marcus Klein

(University of Chicago Press, xi + 322 pp., \$25.00)

David Kleinbard

This is a highly perceptive study of the complex relationship between "social fact" and "literary expression" in America during four decades. Klein starts from the argument that by the turn of the century, traditional definitions and myths of America had been demolished by massive immigration from Southern and Eastern Europe and by the growth of industry and the cities. Such questions as "Who are the real Americans? What are authentic American customs, manners, and values? To whom does America belong?" had to be asked again and reanswered. Writers were impelled to invent "a culture in which to be at home," which often involved retrieving or fabricating a traditional past as authority for a claim to "a place in the world."


Klein initially sets up an opposition between descendants of early immigrants from Northern Europe and the Jews, Italians, Slavs, blacks, and others who poured into the cities at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century. His own sympathies are clear at once. Chapter One opens with an attack on the snobbery, the racial and ethnic prejudices, and the conservatism of the American modernists in self-imposed exile. The anti-Semitism of Eliot, Pound, and Fitzgerald is not news, but the quotations which recall it in *Foreigners* provide shocking support for Klein's argument that this and related biases were an essential part of the reactionary values pervasively coloring their works. Eliot and Pound especially reflected, in their exile and fascination with European culture, a sense of dispossession and betrayal at the decline of the Puritan, Jeffersonian, and kindred Anglo-Saxon versions of America. Henry James, Henry Adams, and Woodrow Wilson also found the new immigrants baffling, worrisome, and repulsive.

Only with Franklin Roosevelt, Klein argues, did the American Government at last acknowledge that the masses of ordinary people were authentically American. Roosevelt's egalitarian and inclusive vision of American democracy became the dominant myth that gave people of all kinds and origins the right to feel securely at home in America, although some minorities still had to struggle to enjoy that right.

Within this context Klein explores the writing and thinking that came from the immigrant masses in the urban ghettos, from their children, and from the lower classes of the farmlands and the small towns. He also examines the literature of the more sophisticated artists who wrote about these people, writers like Henry Roth, James Farrell, James Agee, and especially Nathanael West and Richard Wright.

Klein's sympathetic survey of ideas on the Left moves from the mild insistence of Van Wyck Brooks that literature be viewed as "a social instrument" created for the purpose of bringing about a "humane" and "progressive" society to the radical politics of *New Masses*. For *New Masses*, as Klein shows, literature was "trivial" if it did not focus on the daily lives of ordinary people, the simple and often ugly facts and objects of their physical world, and contemporary events of political and social importance. Judged by these standards, modernism was an amusement of the "decadent classes."

With the perspicacity of a first-rate critic, Klein evaluates the urban and rural proletarian literature of the period. Much of the writing he surveys is bad, but at times he is able to give interest to the crudest novels and the popular myths they reflect. Still, the main weakness of this valuable book is its clutter of summaries of dull and mediocre works. Though Klein unflinchingly acknowledges their defects, one feels that this would have been a stronger book if he had been more selective.

For all this, anyone interested in twentieth-century American literature should read *Foreigners*. The encyclopedic exploration of the subject, the vignettes of places and people across the country, the elucidations of conflicting ideologies, the biographical sketches and the critical commentaries, all tightly integrated, make Klein's study a substantial achievement. 

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Briefly Noted

GERMAN SOCIALISM AND WEIMAR DEMOCRACY

by **Richard Breitman**
(University of North Carolina Press; xii + 283 pp.; \$20.00)

Richard Breitman's informative study of German socialism in the aftermath of the First World War traces the evolution of the Social Democratic Party (SPD) from its initial, hesitant involvement in Germany's tenuous experiment with parliamentary democracy to the fall of the Weimar Republic and rise of Adolf Hitler. According to Breitman, the Social Democrats chose to abandon their traditional revolutionary posture because they found the parliamentary course to be the only practical way of rebuilding their war-torn country. Hence they began willingly to collaborate in governments that included many of their past opponents—the business elite, nationalists, the military, and the nonsocialist parties of the

center. But even within such coalitions the socialists still clung to many of their traditional ideals. Parliamentary democracy, they now argued, had become the most suitable avenue for achieving workers' interests and ultimately for passing on to socialism.

Of course the SPD was neither able to realize its own aims nor even to keep German democracy alive. Many of the party's dilemmas arose out of the well-known problems then faced by the Weimar Republic—the miserable state of the country's economy and the unceasing pressures from Germany's neighbors. Breitman also shows how the SPD was weakened by its coalition politics. Nationalist and center parties often refused to go along with the Social Democrats and proved intractable once they found SPD collaboration no longer necessary. In contrast, those to the left of the SPD attacked the party for supposedly selling out its goals and constituency.

As Breitman indicates, the SPD's problems were frequently of its own making. Party leaders were often unaware of their commitments and proved repeatedly reluctant to take firm stands on their convictions. Where tough measures may have been necessary to maintain a stable government and polity, SPD politicians eschewed risks and even withdrew from governing coalitions. Yet ironically, as Breitman shows in one of his most interesting arguments, much of the leadership's ambivalence was due to its democratic beliefs. Rather than sacrifice parliamentary procedures to the pursuit of stability and ideology, the party chose to retreat into passivity and hope for the "inevitable" passage into a better and more just society.

— A. James McAdams

