

to raise wages for Europeans and exclude Africans from desirable industrial jobs. This law—possibly the most severe piece of racial legislation in recent history—provided a national precedent for the later expansion of the apartheid codes that remain in force today. In purely economic terms, Olson notes, this legislative color bar raised South African employers' costs, and the discriminatory policies led to higher prices for consumers. Curiously, he passes over the fact that today the same discriminatory policies account for the competitiveness of certain South African products on the world market; the legacy of that distributional coalition may have encouraged growth in the long run by institutionalizing the barbarous treatment and low wages of an entire race of workers.

While praising the free trade policies of Meiji Japan (1868-1912), Olson attributes the failure of a half-century of British *laissez-faire* in India to the enduring strength of distributional coalitions. These groups took the form of castes, which, according to Olson, over millennia had developed from guilds into endogamous social hierarchies. From a statistical profile of the forty-eight states of the continental U.S., he also concludes that labor unions demonstrate the greatest negative correlation with local growth. The slowest growth occurs in the Northeast and Midwest, and the fastest, predictably, in the South and West. The number of lawyers in a state has a parallel, albeit weaker, negative correlation.

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Has Olson's theory, by reaching across cultural boundaries and historical periods, explained the dilemma of slow growth and its ensuing problems of unemployment and stagflation? Professional historians are likely to find his illustrations from Meiji Japan and medieval Europe a bit inconclusive, perhaps even crude. Those empathetic to the labor movement will no doubt point to his failure to examine the highly disproportionate influence of business and trade associations when they lobby as interest groups. Other critics are sure to see a pro-corporate bias in Olson's appeal for restoring a "more open and competitive environment" and a naiveté verging on coyness in his assertion that "an economy with free markets and no government or cartel intervention is like a teen-aged youth; it makes a lot of mistakes but nevertheless grows rapidly without special effort or encouragement."

For policy-makers the most serious gap in Olson's study is his failure to explore the potential dislocations and tumultuous social

adjustments that will necessarily follow the rapid decartelization he advocates. How will the social cost of restoring efficiency to the economy be distributed? What role will distributional coalitions play in this process? Some of these issues are examined in depth in the recent work of Lester Thurow and Robert Reich. (A selection of critical articles assessing the Olson theory will appear in *The Political Economy of Growth*, edited by Dennis C. Mueller, scheduled for spring publication by Yale University Press.)

Olson's theory strongly suggests that, in the absence of broad consensual support for national policies (something he precludes, except in rare circumstances, in *The Logic of Collective Action*), Western pluralist political structures will be ill equipped to resolve distributional conflicts between powerful competing interest groups. Is he implying that a pluralist political process is fundamentally incompatible with the efficient functioning of a market-oriented capitalist economy? This thought, and the prospects it holds for the future of democratic government, may be even more sobering than Olson's astute reflections on our current economic woes. \WV;

#### MODERN FRENCH MARXISM

by Michael Kelly

(Johns Hopkins University Press; 240 pp.; \$24.50)

#### MARXISM AND MODERNISM:

AN HISTORICAL STUDY OF

LUKACS, BRECHT, BENJAMIN AND ADORNO

by Eugene Lunn

(University of California Press; 331 pp.; \$29.95)

Brian Thomas

Exegesis has its uses. If the English-speaking world is to enhance the vitality of the international discourse hovering in and around Marxism—the democratic variety, that is—we must find out what others are saying. Entire realms are lurking out there, unassimilated, untouched, and largely untranslated. Michael Kelly's *Modern French Marxism* is a much-needed primer in one such realm.

This book aims to put famous figures into context as well as to throw light on less well-known men and women. On the whole the effort is successful in charting very complicated terrain and sorting out a bewildering assortment of names, stances, and controversies. To be sure, Kelly barely

mentions many of the events that have shaken the French Left most visibly. Khrushchev's attack on Stalin, the Soviet invasion of Hungary, and the French Communist party's support of increased military action against Algeria hardly come up at all. The focus is strictly conceptual, by design.

According to Kelly, Marxism in France started slowly, despite the contribution of French socialists and Enlightenment *philosophes* to Marx's intellectual growth. In the '30s, for example, it was Stalin's essay *Dialectical and Historical Materialism* that was a crucial pedagogical source for the French Left and for anyone else who wanted to learn about Marxism. Kelly acknowledges the "yawning discrepancy" between the pamphlet's "historical importance and its cognitive value," noting that the schematism did not prevent its being an effective means of fostering a knowledge of Marxist philosophy.

One of Stalin's decisive failings in this popular work was a crude view of the tie between Marx and Hegel. And, in many ways, that very relation—Marx's "inversion" of the Hegelian dialectic—is the linchpin of French Marxism's subsequent development. The issue serves as Kelly's point of departure too because of the efflorescence that occurred when the Hegelian strand plaited into dialectical materialism began to be taken seriously. Marxists like Henri Lefebvre and Roger Garaudy pioneered this growth at the same time that Alexandre Kojève and Jean Hippolyte were lending their non-Marxist scrutiny to *The Phenomenology of Spirit* and other of Hegel's texts.

Meanwhile, although the Resistance took a catastrophic toll of Marxist thinkers, their courageous stand against the occupying Nazis conferred upon their ideas and the men who survived a prominence they had lacked earlier. People like Garaudy, Lefebvre, and others became names to reckon with in French intellectual life.

During the cold war, however, the wrangling between the Party in France and its opponents as well as among Marxists themselves deteriorated into acrid polemics and rigidly maintained positions on a variety of issues: the status of base and superstructure, bourgeois versus proletarian science, and the scientific claims of Marxism, to name only a few. This tangled skein defies a glib summary, and Kelly's patient examination is commended.

The debates quicken as Kelly turns to Louis Althusser and the people who have followed him. Never have I come across a better introduction to this Leninist philosopher; it is as helpful in its way as E. P.

Thompson's spirited denunciation of Althusser in *The Poverty of Theory*. Althusser's project, says Kelly, is approached most fruitfully as an attempt to minimize the Hegelian element in Marx, to sever the connection that such neo-Hegelians as Georg Lukacs and Lefebvre were anxious to forge between Hegel, the young Marx, and the author of *Kapital*. The attempt to show how Althusser seems to throw out "the Marxist baby with the Hegelian bathwater" takes Kelly on an informative exploration of the subtleties of Althusser's theories, terminology, and alterations. Thanks to Kelly's revelation of Althusser's "rather Manichean view of knowledge" as well as Althusser's oscillations on the role of philosophy and ideology, I now have a far better grasp of the importance of this seminal voice.

Kelly also stimulated my interest in other philosophers: the economist and anthropologist Maurice Godelier, whose structuralist interpretation of *Kapital* is judiciously laid out and criticized here; Tran Duc Thao, whose "rich and astute analysis . . . demonstrates the complexity of Marx's inversion (and reworking) of Hegel"; and Lucien Seve, whose critique of structuralism and influence in promoting a less "star-oriented" style of research among French Marxists prompts some fascinating remarks on Kelly's part. Nor does *Modern French Marxism* neglect more recent names like Pierre Jaegle, Georges Labica, Jacques d'Hondt, and Solange Mercier-Josa. Kelly's bracing, inviting overview makes me hope that these newer voices will be translated into English before long.

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When texts are as unfamiliar as those Kelly discusses, exegesis serves a noble purpose. Not so when the ground has been spaded up many times before. This is the weakness of Eugene Lunn's *Marxism and Modernism: An Historical Study of Lukacs, Brecht, Benjamin and Adorno*. "An historical," groaned a friend of mine when he saw the title; "that is a sure sign of a pedantic mouthbreather." Indeed, Lunn's prose is academese at its most sluggish, and the dullness is compounded by his having nothing new to say. Such books as Martin Jay's *The Dialectical Imagination* have already explicated this turf; and Fredric Jameson's *Marxism and Form* took a more ambitious swing at the subject itself. Listless Lunn suffers by comparison.

Lunn has adopted the pose of a humble laborer in the grove of Marxism, carrying his brick to the site of the great edifice. This is not to imply that he is dogmatic. On the contrary, when he finds himself straying

toward a statement that is too blunt and vigorous, he emits a fog of qualifications. An excellent, thematically organized bibliography only partly redeems Lunn's staid, rambling exercise in Marxology. Enough with the "history of ideas." The topic is ready for more than mere interpretation.

#### HOW I READ THE RIDDLE: AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

by Harold E. Fey

(The Council on Christian Unity of the Christian Church [Indianapolis, Ind.] and Bethany Press; 190 pp.; \$8.00 [paper])

Raymond A. Schroth

Among American autobiographies—that exceptionally versatile and illusive genre—it is the journalist's that seems most likely to provide some definition of the American character, a peek at the representative American soul. In the life stories of Lincoln Steffens and Eric Sevareid, reporter-artists attempt both to record the march of history—wars, rebellions, encounters with men even more famous than themselves—and to

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Harold E. Fey, who joined the liberal Protestant weekly *The Christian Century* in 1940 and served as editor from 1956 until he doesn't say when, has told his story in *How I Read the Riddle*, an extended gloss on Psalm 49—"I will set my ear to catch the moral of the story/and tell on the harp how I read the riddle. . . ." He writes: "Here is my confession of the hunger of the heart, the wonder of beauty occasionally seen or randomly heard, the satisfaction of a Presence sometimes truly known." In this spirit Fey's first two pages have some fine first sentences: "I was young for a very long time" and "I know now that our family was poor, but that made no difference then." The eloquence is not sustained.

Fey first experienced "conversion" at a country church while a high school junior, a moment which moved him toward the

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