The UNIVERSITY BOOKMAN

A Quarterly Review

Edited by Russell Kirk

SPRING • 1969

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Spring, 1969 Vol. IX, No. 3

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THE UNIVERSITY BOOKMAN is published four times a year by The Educational Reviewer, Inc., 50 Emmett St., Bristol, Conn. (Accepted as a controlled circulation publication at Bristol, Conn.). All manuscripts, letters, subscription orders, changes of address and undeliverable copies should be sent to:

THE UNIVERSITY BOOKMAN
P.O. Box 3070
Grand Central Station
New York, N.Y., 10017

RATES: $2.00 a year.
The editors cannot be responsible for unsolicited manuscripts unless return postage, or better, a stamped, self-addressed envelope is enclosed. Opinions expressed in signed articles do not necessarily represent the views of the editors.

What Should Teachers Know about Communism?

HENRY WINTHROP

A MAJOR MISTAKE is being made in those courses now taught to teachers about Communism in the modern world. Florida and other states have introduced such courses in their public school systems.

This mistake has three aspects, all of overemphasis: 1) overemphasis in the imparting of knowledge concerning the external, institutional forms of Communism in different Communist states; 2) overemphasis of the political expansionist policies of world Communism; 3) overemphasis of the opportunistic techniques employed by the Communists in international relations. It is true that teachers, and students who are prospective teachers, should be well acquainted with these matters, so that they may deal adequately with such concerns at the secondary level of schooling.

But I speak of "overemphasis" for good reason: when topics of this sort constitute most, or virtually all, of a course on Communism, imbalance results. This imbalance occurs if the course either treats insufficiently the *mentality* and *modes of thought* of the Communist, or else fails to treat of such matters at all. In referring to the mentality and modes of thought, I do not mean merely what orthodox Marxists call *diamat* or dialectical materialism. True, dialectical materialism is a form of theoretical casuistry by which Communists everywhere endeavor to justify any political act, conviction, or value that they wish to see generally approved or accepted. Yet dialectical materialism is only a small part of the Communist mentality and modes of thought.

Here I propose to discuss those features of Communist mentality and thought-patterns which are outside strict dialectical materialism. I do so because I believe that a course on Communism, when properly taught to teachers who will transmit what they have learned, should emphasize these subjects almost as much as it does the matters I have mentioned above as overemphasized just now. We cannot expect high school students to apprehend the dedicated

Communist's outlook, values, confusions, distortions, and decay of spirit, unless they have achieved some understanding of the way in which he perceives life and the world of our time.

At the University of South Florida, the course called "Communism in the Modern World" (taught within the Department of Interdisciplinary Social Studies) still emphasizes those matters mentioned in my second paragraph. But as they accumulate experience, the staff will move toward achievement of the balance I commend.

The choice of a textbook for such a course, at most institutions, is left to the instructor. Still, it is difficult to find a manual which does not concentrate chiefly upon the standard content of institutional forms, expansionism, and opportunistic techniques. This overemphasis may be discerned in such standard books as the following: *The Theory and Practice of Communism,* by R. N. Carew-Hunt (Pelican); *Main Street, U.S.S.R.,* by Irving R. Levine (Signet Books); *Contemporary Communism: Theory and Practice,* edited by Howard R. Swearer and Richard P. Longaker (Wadsworth Publishing Company); *The Many Faces of Communism,* edited by Harry Schwartz (Berkeley Publishing Company); *World Communism,* by Franz Borkenau (University of Michigan Press); *Inside Russia Today,* by John Gunther (Harper); *The Dynamics of Soviet Society,* by W. W. Rostow (Mentor Books); *Russia and America, Dangers and Prospects,* by Harry L. Roberts (Mentor Books); *What We Should Know about Communism,* by Harry and Bonaro Overstreet (Pocket Books); *Khrushchev's Russia,* by Edward Crankshaw (Pelican), and several others.

The two important things to note here are 1) that these volumes are representative of materials properly used in an introductory course about Communism, and 2) that they contain little material which introduces the student to the character of Communist mentality and modes of thought through which the Communist views social change.

Let me employ a convenient phrase to describe what I have in mind when I refer to the Communist mentality and its typical modes of thought—"the adaptive outlook." The first thing to note about the adaptive outlook is that it is subject to political and cultural pressures, and to onslaughts from the Soviet press and from the image-makers and public-relations people of the Communist world. This

is true whether such propagandists live in the USSR or in a satellite country. An imaginative glimpse of the power of these onslaughts is dramatically presented in Orwell's *1984*. The mind which has been molded by the adaptive outlook is a captive mind.

The character of the Communists' adaptive outlook has been profoundly and extensively described by Czeslaw Milosz in *The Captive Mind* (Vintage Books). A volume of this sort is what should be added to a course about Communism in the modern world, to redress the balance in a fashion that may convey the adaptive outlook under Communism. *The Captive Mind* not only translates the meaning of dialectical materialism into flesh-and-blood apprehension of everyday life in the Communist world, but it reveals dramatically the monolithic reasoning of the adaptive outlook—a line of reasoning expressed through action in a thousand ways, in private and in public, throughout Communist lands.

There are certain forms of the adaptive outlook—discussed by Milosz, by Hadley Cantril in his book *Soviet Leaders and Mastery Over Man* (Rutgers University Press) and by others—which should be brought to the attention of students in a course on Communism in the modern world. The first and most commonplace form of the adaptive outlook occurs in what the Russians call *partiinost*. This term refers both to the whole complex of sentiments associated with unswerving fidelity to party decisions and to the recognition of the complete and eternal rectitude of the party apparatus. *Partiinost*, as a psychological and spiritual state, must be accompanied by the conviction that high party officials are modern versions of the ancient Russian heroes or demigods, the *bogatyri*. Milosz points out that the ability to make the average credulous Communist swallow this, and other convictions, depends upon a peaceful technique of brainwashing that is used to overwhelm the individual.

Milosz calls this technique the intellectual equivalent of "the pill of Murti-Bing." Murti-Bing is a fictitious Mongolian philosopher described in a novel written in 1932 by Stanislaw Ignacy Witkiewicz, a Polish painter, writer, and philosopher. In the novel, Murti-Bing invents a happiness pill which enables those who take it to see the most horrible circumstances of everyday life as beatitudes. By analogy, the adaptive outlook—whether in the form of *partiinost* or some of the other attitudes to be described below—is a psychological and intellectual form of the pill of Murti-Bing. The important thing

to note in this connection is that *partiinost* fails to do away entirely with the still, small voice of reason, human conscience, and human fellow-feeling. Those who swallow *partiinost* uncritically are converted, in effect, into socially approved types of schizophrenics.

A SECOND FORM of the adaptive outlook in the Communist world is called *grazhdanstvennost*. This is a term that refers to the whole complex of sentiments which relate the individual to society—that is, to Communist society—rather than to the party. *Grazhdanstvennost* is a sort of official Soviet humanism which recognizes the acceptance of the Soviet way of life as a form of salvation, as well as a form of recantation and purgatory for indigenous counter-revolutionaries and fallen-away Communists. The stress is on fidelity to the group. It is *grazhdanstvennost* that makes defendants in Soviet treason trials wallow publicly in guilt and remorse. Therefore, in *grazhdanstvennost,* one automatically adopts Group-Think and Togetherness. Group-Think and Togetherness are brought about by education, beginning with the pressure of the "links" system or the Junior Soviet Cell—a classroom group which combines the attributes of the Cub Scouts and pint-size informers. The civic objectives of *grazhdanstvennost* are really the Soviet form of the Greek educational ideal of *paideia*—self-development and civic responsibility.

Frequently a student introduced to the notion of *grazhdanstvennost* will ask what the difference is between Soviet Group-Think and the type of conformity in America which has been the butt of criticism by many American writers. Some students will insist that there is no difference. This challenge can be met, I believe, by pointing out that social pluralism in American democracy offers us the opportunity of affiliating with many publics, including some nonconformist ones. By contrast, there is only one public in the USSR, and no opportunity to ally oneself with an unofficial point of view. Furthermore, since the principle of voluntary association is practiced only in a democracy, it would be treasonable in the USSR if Soviet citizens tried to form any group with a point of view which ran counter to the official one.

Such are the semantic distortions of Soviet New-Think that "self-development" does not mean what it would mean in the West—viz., the liberty to choose alternative modes of self-expression. It is only the "liberty" to choose one of the paths which the Kremlin's leaders

feel will forward the purposes of the classless society-to-be. It is the Soviet analogue of Henry Ford's dry humor when, in turning out old model Fords, he remarked that the customer could choose a car in any color, provided it was black. The phrase "civic responsibility" likewise suffers a distortion in meaning. It means nothing more than compliance with the will of the state's decision-makers. It is the Comintern's form of social conformity.

The third form of the adaptive outlook occurs in what the Communists call *ideiinost*. This term refers to the loyalty expected of the dedicated Communist in relation to the whole complex of Marxist ideological commitments. Foremost among the things it would include are 1) an appreciation of and reverence for dialectical materialism, 2) an appreciation and employment of the Soviet grammar of politics, and 3) the manifestation of "high principle" which is supposed to be characteristic of the new Soviet man. In general it may be said that if one shows *ideiinost*, then one is willing to sacrifice one's personal life and, unfortunately, also the lives of others to high-flown abstractions and to Marxist forms of cant. Every culture, of course, including our own, has forms of the same commodity. Clearly, however, an American's ideas may deviate from forms of our own social and political myths without his suffering punishment while, at the same time, he stands a good chance of a hearing from some minority public. In fact, social criticism is respected in the American tradition. But social criticism does not have a ghost of a chance to survive in a Communist world that makes strong and systematic deviations from *ideiinost* punishable in some form or other.

In dealing with the adaptive outlook of the Communists, it is important to convey in a course of the type to which we have referred, the mental straitjacket created by Communist New-Speak. The manner in which the traditional meanings of words are distorted or reversed works efficiently to promote many forms of alienation that depersonalize and dehumanize the citizens of the Communist world. These forms of alienation created by New-Speak prevent genuine communication from occurring. New-Speak in this sense reflects the cultivation of word-fluency—a psychological ability which may be defined as the capacity to speak beautifully but emptily about much that matters very little. Let us illustrate Communist New-Speak

with three examples of the twisted meanings so characteristic of it.

Self-Criticism (sometimes called "Bolshevik" self-criticism). When the Communists employ this term, they do not refer to an evaluation of one's assets and liabilities but rather to the process of public confession of errors in order to save oneself from the consequence of such errors. Confession or self-criticism consists of violations, in one form or another, of *partiinost, grazhdanstvennost,* or *ideiinost,* or any combination of these.

Initiative. In the Soviet vocabulary this is defined as "not just blind obedience but as an independent search for the best way to fulfill a command." Independence and initiative are displayed by great self-denial and the readiness and ability to obey an order absolutely, regardless of obstacles and dangers involved. Any effort to think through the morality of the order or to promote public discussion concerning that morality would, of course, be a violation of *partiinost, grazhdanstvennost,* and *ideiinost.*

Charity. The *Great Soviet Encyclopedia* defines this term as "help granted hypocritically by representatives of the dominant class in societies of exploiters to a certain fraction of the disinherited sections of the population in order to deceive the workers and to divert their attention from the class struggle." This is how charity appears when you have *grazhdanstvennost.*

THE ADAPTIVE OUTLOOK goes hand-in-hand with all those factors which, in the West, work against what we call independence of mind. Among the factors which we must include—but without limitation—are such considerations as 1) the inability to speak one's mind if this will endanger one's bread and butter, and 2) the Communist use of Hitler's technique of the "big lie." If things are repeated often enough, people will believe them, no matter how absurd and fantastic they may be and no matter how obviously they conflict with common sense or the evidence of one's own experience. The technique of the big lie is, in general, assured of success because of the unfortunate fact that most people decide the truth in terms of hearsay, gossip, opinion, and by in-lining themselves with the beliefs of those they like. 3) Even if one should try to exercise intellectual independence, it is difficult to do so when one is a member of a group. The modern social psychologist is aware of the fact that natural and aggressive opinion-leaders arise in any group. Members

of groups typically go along with such opinion-leaders. If one fails to do so, he will be ostracized in one way or another by all the sheep who "follow the leader." This is true to some extent even in a democracy. This in-lining phenomenon is multiplied a hundredfold psychologically in the atmosphere of the adaptive outlook so characteristic of the Communist world. Combine 2) and 3) of the preceding, and you have it made. That is why psychological, spiritual, and intellectual reconstruction is so difficult under Communism.

What can be done to immunize the American student against the damage that could conceivably be created by the adaptive outlook—assuming that it could take successful root here and there? I believe that a genuine rebirth of the religious impulse—coupled, of course, with the requisite knowledge of the institutional behavior of the Communist world—can do much to prevent Communist ideas and modes of evaluation from taking successful root here.

And by "the religious impulse," I refer to three of its basic characteristics. These are 1) the effort to improve man's relationship to man, 2) the reduction of human egocentricity by sponsoring interest in, and action on behalf of, the plight of others, and 3) the vision of an extra-mundane, creative, and intelligent power, the embodiment of perfect love in the sense of what theologians call *Agape*—a power always concerned with man's fate.

The knowledge that is the proper content of a course on Communism in the modern world must be balanced by a genuine understanding of Communist mentality and modes of thought—that is, the adaptive outlook. If the achievement of such a balance is coupled with the instructor's capacity to illuminate Communist behavior and modes of thinking, so that these may be seen as the destruction of the religious impulse as we have just defined that impulse—then the value of such a course becomes immeasurable in this our "time of troubles." Armed by a course of this type, our current and prospective high school teachers may really be able to make the issue of Communism versus a just society come alive for their students.

Graduate Study in England

REGIS A. COURTEMANCHE

Some Americans would benefit considerably by doing their graduate work in Britain—particularly in London. The opportunity to compare societies, the sense of adventure, the prestige of an English degree, and the chance to accomplish primary research at a cost much lower than is possible in the United States—these are a few of the reasons for study in the British Isles. In addition, if one hopes for a career in the foreign service or to enter international business, European experience is helpful.

Heretofore, exclusiveness was a hallmark of British education. With a population of some fifty-five million and a full-time university enrollment of about three hundred thousand, Britain ranks below Switzerland, France, and the Soviet Union in the proportion of college-age citizens who enroll at universities. But one great advantage of England's educational system is that, what with the small number of students, the individual receives much attention. And although there are now only twenty-six universities in the United Kingdom, eight new ones are being built or are in the planning stage.

British universities have always welcomed foreign students; today there are more than seven thousand doing graduate work there. But half of these are from the Commonwealth. Many of these students are attending London University, which has a total enrollment of more than twenty-six thousand. The writer has lately returned from studying for three years at the London School of Economics, where he received a Ph.D. in international history. This article is based on his experience as well as that of other foreign students who have studied in the United Kingdom.

British universities are in session for three terms: Michaelmas, from October to December; Lent, from January to March; and Summer, from April to July. One should arrive in the country about mid-September so as to register, look for lodging, and make other necessary arrangements before term starts in early October. A tutor is assigned at the beginning of term, and since there are only 7.3 students to every member of the teaching staff at British universi-

ties, one is assured of ample individual attention. The ordinary duration of the Master's course is two years, but there are several new one-year Master's degrees offered by London University. International history, economics, sociology, international law, and geography are some of the subjects included in this new program. Only end-of-year examinations are required; the writing of a dissertation is not necessary.

For these courses, the student usually attends certain lectures and seminars, and submits fortnightly papers on his subject to his tutor. The graduate student normally spends most of his time in the library, doing research for theme papers that the tutor criticizes and evaluates.

ANOTHER advantage of studying at London and some other British universities is that one may register for a higher degree instead of the one-year Master's. Then, if the student's work and thesis topic seem promising, he is often allowed—after one year or less—to register as a Ph.D. candidate. While it is possible to complete a doctorate in two years from the date one arrives in Britain, it usually takes from three to four years of study.

Thus it is possible as a candidate for the higher degree to by-pass the Master's and to begin study directly on the doctorate. It must be noted, however, that if one is accepted by the individual college within the University of London, one must also be accepted by the university itself; and for foreign students, this might require the passing of preliminary examinations. These would be taken during the student's first year in London.

Once the applicant is accepted as a Ph.D. candidate, the emphasis is almost completely on the thesis. One stands or falls on its quality. A minimum number of lectures and seminars is required, but one spends most of the time in the archives, the British Museum, or on other work directly related to the thesis. If the thesis is concerned largely with an English-speaking area, e.g., a study of British governors in New York before 1776—the foreign-language requirement may be waived.

To summarize, then, there is no credit system at British universities. When one is accepted for a Master's degree, his primary obligation is to his individual tutor; the only examinations he takes are those given at the end of the course. Similarly, for the

doctorate, one will attend some seminars and lectures, but the student spends most of his time doing research and writing draft chapters which are submitted to his supervisor. When the thesis is finished and the oral examination has been passed, the degree is conferred. If the oral is unsatisfactory, the candidate may have to rewrite a portion of the thesis and take another oral exam in several months' time.

Of course, British universities want foreign students with good marks; but, perhaps equally important, they look for other qualities in a prospective student. If one is an older applicant, has had military service or experience in more than one occupation—these and other evidences of maturity are also criteria for acceptance.

The varied and interesting Master's and doctoral subjects that are available, together with the proximity of primary and secondary research material, make London University an ideal place for graduate study. The Public Record Office, repository of the British archives, contains invaluable primary source material. If one is interested in the emerging nations of Africa or Asia, the Record Office has the Colonial Office papers on Sierra Leone, India, Ghana, Kenya, and many other former British possessions. Possible thesis topics abound: American history before the Revolution, Anglo-American relations since 1783, British diplomatic and commercial history—the list is inexhaustible. At the Record Office, one may study nearly all sides of a subject. For example, if a student is writing on British reaction to the American Civil War, the Admiralty papers cover British interest in the Union blockade of the South, new types of ships, etc. The Colonial Office papers reflect the concern of the West Indies at this time, and the Foreign Office material—including Cabinet minutes—show the evolution of policy during this period of crisis in Anglo-American relations. England's long history of involvement in international affairs is reflected in her complete and readily available archives.

Since January 1968, the old fifty-year rule has been replaced by a new thirty-year rule. This means that one can now read, at the Record Office, government papers up to 1936. Thus, in the last few months, a vast new source of historical material has been opened to scholars. One can write a Master's or Ph.D. thesis using the primary official sources contained in the Record Office, and one other source—the British Museum.

The Library of the British Museum, a short walk from the Record Office, stocks at least one copy of practically every book printed in English, from the nineteenth century to the present. One can obtain as many as twelve books at a time and read the necessary secondary material for most theses. Both the Record Office and the British Museum also hold extensive collections of private papers. Those of Gladstone, Palmerston, Russell, and many other British leaders are open to readers.

Besides the official sources, it is possible to trace the families of many British statemen and private subjects. This may be done at Somerset House, five minutes from the Record Office. Here is the Probate Registry of Wills for anyone who has died in the British Isles. If one is searching for the family papers of some individual, his will may give valuable information and perhaps clues to present-day descendants. The writer has used Somerset House records with some success and has located interesting letters and papers, then made the acquaintance of some of the families concerned.

A STUDENT'S EXPENSES are considerably less than one would pay in the United States. Tuition for foreigners is now about $750 per year. University-maintained halls of residence charge about $500 for a thirty-week academic year. This includes full meals and usually a private room. The majority of London University students, however, live in lodgings; these average from $15 to $20 per week and may include a kitchenette. Living in "digs" gives one a glimpse of every-day London life, with landladies, neighborhood shops, and people, and a greater degree of freedom than is possible in the halls of residence. London still has many of the Sherlock Holmes type of Victorian lodgings with a fireplace, fringed lamps, and a bric-a-brac. The British are a cultured people; their whole pace of living is slower and, it seems, more conducive to study than one is used to in the United States. Much of Regency and Georgian London remains, and many of the city's buildings are only four or five stories high. This gives a "human scale" to the capital which, with other attractions, makes living in London an endearing and memorable experience.

The pubs, where one can have tasty and inexpensive meals and where good conversation seems to bloom, are the students' meeting

places. Tea time is observed daily at the university, and, as at the departmental sherry parties, the foreigner will meet people of every climate of opinion. One need not fear becoming ill and having to pay large hospital bills, as the free National Health Service is open to overseas students.

For further information, write to the British Information Service in New York or to the local British Consul. *Which University*, published in London, is a useful guide to the best institution for an applicant's particular field. For London University, write to the Registrar and indicate the area, if not the specific topic, of one's major interest. These inquiries are passed on to the individual departments, which then decide if there is a professor qualified to supervise the applicant's studies. One might also apply to several institutions which are within commuting distance of the capital. For example, the University of Sussex, the University of Kent at Canterbury, and the University of Reading are in this category. Even a year spent at serious study in the United Kingdom will yield rich dividends in experience, friendships, and scholastic achievement.

Microfilms Available

Microfilm copies of current as well as of back issues of *The University Bookman* may be purchased from Xerox University Microfilms, 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 48106.

The Little Platoon in Politics

STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT: POLITICS AND PROCESSES, by C. Theodore Mitau. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1966. 641 pp.

Reviewed by **Ruth A. Bevan**

WITHIN the last decade, the tendency to relegate the study and teaching of state and local government to one or two chapters in a textbook on American government has noticeably changed. Dr. Mitau's book, designed as a textbook for college students, expresses the new concern for an awareness of the governmental apparatus immediately surrounding the citizen on the state and local level.

To some extent there is a seeming paradox in this change. It might be argued that towns, cities, and states have lost their direct importance to the individual in his ability to manipulate and influence the direction of their political processes, since many of these processes have now converged into the wider federal stream. It is, therefore, allegedly more important for the citizen to look to the national government than to state and local government. Indeed, this attitude was nicely summed up in a campaign speech of a New York mayoralty candidate in 1965, who asserted that a vote for him meant "the straight road to Washington." On the other hand, it is precisely because the federal government has become so overwhelming in its jurisdictional scope that the study of state and local government becomes imperative.

The traditional American commitment to "grass-roots" democracy was always more profound than the mere suspicion of the Goliath of federal government. It expressed the basic idea that sound citizenship in a democratic state begins with the individual's participation in and benefit from the "lower" or more immediate levels of government. If we are concerned today about the "crisis in our cities," it would be foolhardy to assign this crisis merely to the lack of funds and fringe benefits. This sort of thinking would lead to the rather dangerous fallacy that only the rich and well-to-do can lead meaningful existences.

The "crisis in our cities," more importantly, has resulted from

their human neglect, that is, the increasing failure to instill in present generations a sense of "grass-roots" citizenship. As the local and state governments come more under the wing of the federal government, this citizenship-building process is vital. As Edmund Burke pointed out in the eighteenth century, it is erroneous to think that the individual can be attached to the larger nation or state without first being attached and loyal to the "small platoon" of family and community relations immediately about him.

It was also Burke who stated that to love one's country, that country must be "lovable." The same can be applied to the cities and states in which Americans find themselves. Mitau has done an admirable job at pointing out the anomalies in these levels of government—things which militate against the effectiveness and congeniality of the city and state environment. There are, for example, the burdens of exhaustive and outmoded constitutions. Rather than merely maintaining a status quo, as Mitau claims, they frequently impede growth and rejuvenation. The required ritual of reading lengthy bills at each legislative stage certainly does not affect the kind of deliberation of which Madison spoke, but fosters legislative apathy and exasperation. Nor does the domination by one political party or governing faction *ipso facto* lead to political harmony. More often than not it produces corruption and corruptive collaboration.

In addition to outlining the main functions of state and local government, Mitau penetrates the political problems of these areas, stressing his own point of view. In the effort to transform what might be a passive reader into a conscious observer and even a participant of state and local politics, Mitau presents at the end of each chapter several problems which are to be worked through by the student-reader on the basis of what he has learned in the text as well as from what he has gleaned from the sizable bibliography attached to each topical division of the book. The book is written in a smooth and precise style without indulging in the customary spoon-feeding of anecdotes which many American textbook writers believe are necessary to stimulate the reader. Obviously Mitau takes his subject matter seriously and feels no need to make excuses for it.

Teaching *What* 'Unteachables'?

36 CHILDREN, by Herbert Kohl. New York: New American Library, 1967. 227 pp.
Reviewed by **Leo Hamalian**

HERBERT KOHL'S *36 Children*, an American's version of the *To Sir, With Love* experience, has a rather complicated history, but it is worth unravelling for the benefit of other teachers who want to know how such books come into being.

In November 1966, *The New York Review of Books*—the closest thing we have here to those provocative if slightly paranoid British journals of dissent—ran an article flamboyantly advertised on its cover as "Teaching the 'Unteachable,'" by Herbert Kohl. From a "professional" educator's point of view, the author brought an unconventional background to the subject: he had studied at Harvard, read philosophy at Oxford, knocked around in Paris, and taught schizophrenic children before deciding to "go after the action" in a ghetto school in East Harlem.

Mr. Kohl not only survived this toughest of teaching assignments, but while facing the pressures of this daily reality, began to develop some fascinating and imaginative strategies for meeting the problems of youngsters who allegedly could not master the skills of reading and writing beyond sixth or seventh grade level.

Nelson Aldrich, a friend of Kohl's, persuaded him to describe the results of his experience for *The Urban Review*, a very respectable but not widely read publication which he edited. When Robert Silver, the editor of *The New York Review*, read the piece (then called "The Literature of Children"), he immediately recognized the importance of the message disguised by the title, and with some minor alterations, published it as "Children Writing: The Story of an Experiment." In advertising it as "teaching the unteachable" to his audience of intellectuals, Silver shrewdly discerned what the article was actually about and where it would strike home.

According to Silver, the article met with a response unprecedented in the publication's history, on all levels of the teaching profession and the government. So encouraged, *The Review* brought

out an expanded version of the article under its "catch" title, with an introduction by John Holt, the author of *How Children Fail.* Almost 50,000 copies of the pamphlet were distributed to members of the NCTE and almost another 30,000 sold at one dollar a copy.

While this was going on, Mr. Kohl, recuperating from an automobile accident, embarked upon a more ambitious and more detailed account of the classroom encounters which had inspired the article, giving equal emphasis to the process and to the product of the process. Shortly before Mr. Kohl left the post as director of the Teachers-Writers Collaborative at Teachers College for a post at the University of California (Berkeley), the expanded version appeared in 1967 under the title of *36 Children.* Thus, from such modest roots, grew one of the most readable and useful books on a subject that is increasingly engaging the interest and energy of aware educators.

Though the book occasionally catches Mr. Kohl in the act of beating a dead horse, the writing is more nimble and more natural and more vigorously narrative in thrust than the more self-conscious, cerebral style of the original article. Mr. Kohl, incidentally, credits his former Harlem students at P.S. 103 with sharpening his style—giving it "play and boldness" while helping him to remove the self-consciousness. It is good to have a teacher not only confess openly that the learning experience cuts two ways, but also demonstrate that truth so aptly.

Yet Mr. Kohl learned more than a relaxed style. He came to his classroom armed with good intentions and traditional approaches and found himself faced with daily disaster. His experience in white undergraduate and graduate schools, even his black friendships, proved to be no preparation for dealing with children whose cultural deprivation, whose repeated failures with a reality not their own, had produced such negative attitudes that in effect the children were crippled even before they began the attempt to learn. They were the living proof of prophecy that fulfilled itself—that black youngsters in a ghetto school can dream only of dropping out; or, if they are ambitious, of graduating with some sort of diploma that testifies more to their stamina than to their scholastic standing. Whatever hopes beyond this these youngsters brought with them were soon frozen by the unvarying routine of classes chopped methodically into sausage-like sessions, by lesson subjects derived

from middle-class values and "whitey" styles of life, and by "flat and uninteresting textbooks that touched upon only the pleasant in life."

CAUGHT BETWEEN desperation and determination, Kohl became curious about the inner lives of the youngsters whose apathy was agonizing him, and became less anxious about his own ego, his own security, his own image of himself as a "teacher." His curiosity forced him *to observe*, and as he did, his eyes were opened, not magically, but gradually, gently, finally. He saw how his students related themselves to one another, to their surroundings, and even to him—how they *felt* about their world rather than *thought* about it—whereas he had been "hung up" previously on how *he* related to them, how *he* related to his surroundings. This simple, subtle, but significant shift in his angle of approach made him aware of *their* reality and the strength required to cope with it daily. He then discovered that he had to acknowledge his awareness of them and his awareness of his own fallibility: he tried to participate in their realities and when he failed, he admitted his failure. In brief, he became humane and human. A person of flesh, blood, and error, not an exemplar of moral perfection. He expressed admiration and disapproval with equal vehemence. He became a model but he remained a man.

As he gained insight into their reality and won their confidence, he found he could afford to modify his standards—he no longer expected them to perform according to traditional white criteria—and at the same time he could press them gently to raise their own definitions of performance. When the Patterson-Liston fight was current conversation, he introduced his students to the mythical accounts of conflict and confrontation (e.g., the Greeks and the Trojans). Then he excited them into searching out labels for the myths that captured their imaginations—and before long, they "became word-hungry and concept-hungry." Thus unfolded, they were now ready to describe their own experiences, imaginary or real, as though they were discovering new worlds in themselves (which they were) parallel to the domain of myth and literature that they had discovered outside of themselves in books. Now they could make their own "books." By such creative coaxing and coaching, Mr. Kohl called up pieces of prose that were not always "correct,"

but which crackled with vitality and relevance. A good part of the book is devoted to examples of the writing his students—once dismissed as "delinquents" or "dummies"—produced out of the very depths of their imaginations and beings (some titles will indicate the range of their interests: "The Boy in the Slums—A Story of Modern Life in Uptown New York, with Comments, Passions and a FEW DIRECT Questions"; "On Playing Around"; "Married to a Stranger"; "The Assassination"; "Journey Through Time and Space"; "A Barbarian Becomes a Greek Warrior").

After leaving the classroom to take up duties in the Teachers-Writers Collaborative (which makes materials for experiments in writing available to interested teachers), Mr. Kohl followed the careers of several of his students as they came into contact with the harsher realities of "outside" life. Some of them seemed to be "making it," others falling by the wayside. Mr. Kohl concludes:

> The thirty-six children are suffering from the diseases of our society. They are no special cases: there are too many hundreds of thousands like them, lost in indifferent, inferior schools, put on the streets or in prep schools with condescension or cynicism. . . . I know they will fight, falter, and rise again and again, and that if I have the strength I will be there to rejoice and cry with them, and to add my little weight to easing the burden of being alive in the United States today.

This book demonstrates what a devoted teacher who loves his own language and who is flexible and ingenious can do within the confines of The System. It is one of the best of the recent books dealing with the problems of public education (Bel Kaufman, John Holt, Jonathan Kozol, James Herndon, etc.). These books are not happy books, whatever the moments of gaiety or triumph they describe. They draw the same grim conclusion: much of education in elementary and secondary schools today, irrespective of their location and composition, is oppressive and irrelevant, and damages rather than extends the natural desire of children to learn.

The tragedy that Mr. Kohl deliberately dramatizes is not the tragedy of youngsters who willfully refuse to learn, but the tragedy of youngsters who *can* and *will* learn a great deal in a creative atmosphere sustained by imaginative (everyone is "dedicated" these days) teachers who know that learning begins with love of language. What he reveals unwittingly is that such teachers, deemed success-

ful even by the standards of The System, do not find enough inducement to remain where they are most needed: being human, they are tempted to take more glamorous posts on the university level or to devote themselves to writing or lecturing for enormous financial rewards.

THE CRISIS gets worse and the crisis-criers grow rich. We people who share in the preparation of those who will teach the "unteachable," who are "committed to education" (if you will excuse that expression), what are we doing about the crisis? Where does our responsibility begin and end in public education? Isn't the education of our youngsters too important to leave to the schools of education? Do we have the right to complain about the results if "we turn aside and brood"? Isn't it time we in the universities gave such questions the same hard look that we gladly cast upon issues and problems in chemistry, history, or literature? Perhaps the answers we give to such academic questions will determine the nature of the society that will survive the crisis in contemporary public education. The future prospect, if we are to believe our reporters on the subject, is nasty.

Though the book was written some time before the issue of decentralization arose in the New York City public school system, Kohl unwittingly makes a case in favor of it. The last paragraph begins: "In this setting the ancient slogans of unionism have lost much of their relevance. It is hard to fathom what 'job security' means to a teacher who loathes his job in a ghetto school, and waits as eagerly as his pupils for the bell to toll the end of another working day." The System will remain moribund until the governing boards of its districts are permitted to have a large voice in deciding who will teach their children. It cannot be teachers who despise the assignment, however just their attitude may be, or who flee the community when the final bell rings. Even the Herbert Kohls do not stay. And perhaps this is one of Rhody McCoy's best arguments for the Ocean Hill-Brownsville position in the recent confrontation.

Books of Interest

Presidential Primaries: Road to the White House, by James W. Davis (New York: Crowell, 1967, 324 pp., paper). Dispassionate, impartial, and accurate, this book is a clearly-written study of this peculiar political institution, with some suggestions for its improvement. Many tables are included, and an appendix giving state-by-state primary results from 1912 to 1964.

The Mandate of Heaven: Record of a Civil War, China, 1945-1959, by John F. Melby (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1968, 308 pp., $10). Photographs are by Henri Cartier-Bresson. The diary and historical commentaries of an American diplomat in ruined China. Some shrewd insights, and considerable wit.

Ventures in Social Interpretation, by Henry Winthrop (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1968, 551 pp., paper, $6.75). Casting his net wide, Professor Winthrop divides his book into five sections: "Technology and some of its Social Consequences"; "Culture, Leisure, and Education"; "The Burden of Social Complexity"; "The Pathologies of Overurbanization"; and "Technology, Decentralization, and the Restoration of Community." He has read widely, and writes with some courage.

The Onin War: History of its Origins and Background, with a selective translation of The Chronicle of Onin, by H. Paul Varley (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967, 238 pp., $7.50). A careful account of the great struggle in medieval Japan (during the fifteenth century of the Christian era), in which central authority was defeated.

Japan's First Modern Novel: Ukiguno of Futabatei Shimei, translated (with commentary) by Marleigh Grayer Ryan (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967, 380 pp., $10). *Drifting Clouds*, as Shimei's title may be translated, was much influenced by the nineteenth-century Russian novel.

Peasant Customs and Savage Myths: Selections from the British Folklorists, edited by Richard M. Dorson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968, 2 vols., 751 and 402 pp.).
The British Folklorists: a History, by Richard M. Dorson (Chi-

cago: University of Chicago Press, 1968, 518 pp.). The most energetic and lively of living American scholars in folklore, Professor Dorson describes the Antiquaries, the Literary Folklorists, the early Scottish Folklorists, the Mythological Folklorists, the Savage Folklorists, the "Great Team," the Society Folklorists, the County Collectors, the Overseas Folklorists, and the Celtic Folklorists. The two volumes of selections extend from Walter Scott and Hugh Miller to the early years of this century.

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Dr. Regis A. Courtemanche, of the Department of History at C. W. Post College, Long Island University, wrote his doctoral dissertation on Admiral Milne, who commanded the North American station of the British fleet during the American Civil War. This study is to be published by the Naval Institute.

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Accepted as controlled circulation publication at Bristol, Conn.