

in his retinue to amuse him with feats of divination or necromancy, to cast horoscopes and consult auguries, and now and then perhaps to perform an odd job of poisoning on one of his patron's enemies. A good example of the ilk would be the notorious Dr. John Lambe, who had the powerful protection of the Duke of Buckingham. Although convicted of various crimes, including murder and rape, he escaped punishment until he was set upon and beaten to death by a London mob.

One cannot, however, read this and other accounts of the witch mania without observing how much the psychological climate in which it thrived resembles that of our own age, which is likewise an epoch of fanatical wars and revolutions, of profound philosophical hatreds and of vast spiritual and moral confusions. Demonologists of a new sort, hardly less influential than were Bodin, Lancre, James Stuart, and Cotton Mather in their day, occupy many places of power. In their fantastic implausibility the witch confessions cited by Mr. Maple are curiously reminiscent of the self-criminations in the Moscow show trials. And our age, like that of the great religious wars, is one that may demand a sudden and radical alteration of loyalties.

. . . Cruel are the times when we are traitors
And do not know ourselves, when we hold
rumour
From what we fear, yet know not what we fear,
But float upon a wild and violent sea. . . .

Reviewed by J. M. LALLEY

The Great Uncommoner

Herbert Hoover, a Biography, by Eugene Lyons. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1964. 444 pp. \$5.95.

EUGENE LYONS' earlier biography of Herbert Hoover, *Our Unknown Ex-President*, appeared in 1948 and was one of the first steps in the public vindication of a man who was for a time as viciously and unjustly maligned as anyone in our history. It has been gratifying to know that this vindication came about while the beneficiary was still around to appreciate it.

Hoover died not long after the present volume was published, and it may therefore be regarded as the first definitive story of a remarkable life. The emphasis inevitably shifts from the vindication

of a man to the vindication of his qualities and ideals.

There is particular relevance, therefore, in what Lyons says of Hoover's so-called "comeback" into popular favor. "Hoover could not come back," Lyons writes, "because he had never gone away. It would be more accurate to say that the country came back and found Hoover where he always had been, too securely planted in his moral soil to be uprooted by hurricanes and slander."

With few and minor exceptions, Hoover's attitude toward the governing issues of our times never changed. In some men, this might be called stubbornness, or blindness to changing conditions. But this can hardly be said of Hoover. Instead of leaving him behind, the rest of the country—including many of his former enemies—has come around to admire Hoover. It is indicative of the fickleness of politics and public opinion that the same Herbert Hoover voicing the same ideas could be called dangerously "liberal" in 1928, hopelessly reactionary in the 1930's, and ideally representative of the American way of life in the 1960's.

As Lyons points out, Hoover's loyalty to his friends and ideals caused it to be said of him that although he had a multitude of enemies, he had no ex-friends. If there is such a thing as truth and righteousness in the affairs of the world today, Hoover may have been as close to it as anyone.

The present volume is, of course, an exposition of Hoover's ideals as well as a chronology of his life. It is largely a repetition of what has already been written by Lyons and others, including Hoover himself. While Hoover's death may bring to light some unpublished material, it isn't likely to change Lyons' evaluation. Hoover, with his deep respect for history, probably didn't withhold any significant information. The Lyons book, therefore, is no doubt fairly complete as well as highly readable and filled with well documented logic.

What are some of the Hoover qualities and ideals that have proved so durable? The list would start with sincerity. Few men have suffered more than Hoover from the lies and perversions of political demagogues in the 1930's, and Hoover was constitutionally incapable of stooping to the use of these weapons. He could only denounce them for the "corruption of clear thinking."

Hoover's compassion for the hungry, especially when they were children, is well known. When he was criticized for providing food for Communist Russia after World War I, he replied that, "Whatever their politics, they shall be fed." But at the same time he rejected communism as a proper or a

practical goal for any people, and he distrusted its leaders. He gave food to Communists only on condition that every step of its distribution be controlled by his agents.

Such practical conditions as that are apparently unthinkable today, when the countries which seek our aid are so often guided by intense nationalism, international jealousies, and impatience, their leaders greedy and ambitious. But the comparison of the two systems merely proves that Hoover's way was the effective way. Time after time, he would encounter people who thanked him for saving their lives—Belgians, Poles, Russians, Hungarians, and even Mme Wellington Koo of China, whom he carried to safety when she was a child in Tientsin during the Boxer rebellion. It is inconceivable that such a man could sit by while his own countrymen suffered in a depression, yet such was the falsehood relentlessly ground out by the press agents of the New Deal, and with considerable temporary success.

It is well known, too, that many of the legislative acts for which the New Deal took credit were in fact proposed by Hoover and obstructed by the Democratic Congress until after Franklin Roosevelt's inauguration. The regulation of the stock exchanges and the insurance of bank deposits, to cite only two examples, were advanced by Hoover at a time when many conservatives still opposed them as radical and unnecessary. At the same time he denounced other proposals for government action which he called "panaceas and shortcuts"—and these became the stock-in-trade of the New Deal.

It is especially timely that Lyons should call our attention to Hoover's attitude toward the "cult of the common man," under which equality is to be created by whittling "the uncommon man" down to size. This, said Hoover, was "the negative of individual dignity." He called it "a slogan of mediocrity and uniformity."

The reference is timely because those who would "whittle down" the uncommon man are still at work. Hoover's attitude is in no way inconsistent with his compassion for the poor and downtrodden. It is simply that he didn't think they could be helped by actions directed against those most able to help them. "The greatest strides in human progress," said Hoover, "have been made by uncommon men and women." And all of mankind has benefited.

If we needed to be persuaded that Herbert Hoover was an uncommon man, Eugene Lyons has done it.

Reviewed by JOHN T. MC CUTCHEON, JR.