

for understanding the total problem, since each provides facts and perceptions not offered by the other. Robertson considers the Anglo-Saxons, original and assimilated, to be the *Staatsvolk* of the United States; only their revitalization can save the Republic from ruin. Novak, on the other hand, would do without a *Staatsvolk*.¹ His ideas point toward recognition of the United States as a multicultural and multilingual society, in which Anglo-Saxons are merely one ethnic community among many—though still in a favorable position, since they happen to speak the common language of communication. The logical implication of his theories is multicultural education, following experiments in Florida and California, so that every American child would be at least bilingual. Members of each ethnic group would then be free to live with their own kind or in a mixed community as they see fit, and to engage in cross-cultural contacts without the existential fears that pervade society today.

As between the Robertsonian and Novakian approaches, this writer prefers the latter. He differs from Novak only in questioning that gentleman's belief that the Democratic Party could be a suitable vehicle for ideas so eminently sensible.

Reviewed by KURT GLASER

¹Neither author uses this necessary word, but the English circumlocution would take too much space.

The Radical Archetypes

The Rise of Radicalism, by Eugene H. Methvin, *New Rochelle, N. Y.: Arlington House, 1973. 584 pp. \$11.95.*

PROFESSOR FRANCO VENTURI in his *Roots of Revolution* described and analyzed the Russian revolutionary movements, their leaders, and thinkers from 1848 to 1881.¹

In recounting the lives and times of Rousseau, Robespierre, Babeuf, Buonarroti, Marx, Chernyshevsky, Nechayev, Tkachev, Lenin, Mussolini, Hitler, and the New Left in America, Mr. Methvin portrays the rise and roots of radicalism from the French Revolution through 1972, and broadens the canvas to Europe and the United States. To equal Venturi's thoroughness and insight in a longer and wider field is difficult, but Methvin succeeds.

The author explains:

We are tracing a *delusional belief system*: that men can through a violent and apocalyptic showdown play messiahs and create the Kingdom Come; . . .

Into this grand theme he weaves variations. Naïve idealism becomes malignant hatred, as each new prophet tries to increase and funnel every discontent in order to manipulate mankind by propaganda, agitation, and terror, always to the end of overthrow of the government by violence.

Abundant detail enlivens the narrative. For example, the pretty red-haired Sophie Lapierre, a singer at the popular Café of the Chinese Baths, whom the Babeuvists used to popularize their doctrine, foreshadows today's Joan Baez.

"Scholars in the conventional history of philosophy and political thought," according to Methvin, "spend too much time studying *what* philosophers think and too little on *why* they think." To fill this lacuna, the author relates the lives of his characters and in many cases their psychoses, not neglecting their relations with their parents. Because of Methvin's easy style, this book would still be vivid without the lives, which do, however, add welcome color. The historians the author criticizes have left the dissection of motives to biography, another field, which in our day has no lack of psychoanalysts. And if Methvin's radicals suffered mental afflictions, other great men, including Julius Caesar, have had their share of them; and a significant percentage of lesser men have been similarly troubled.

Because of "distinctive contributions to the growth of revolutionary radicalism," Methvin ranks Babeuf as a principal founder of "the technology of social demolition." He was "the first man ever to use a newspaper as an instrument of mass conspiracy, propaganda preconditioning, and urban insurrection." In the abortive attempt of the Babeuvists to overthrow the French Directory (in which Bonaparte succeeded by more orthodox methods), they

for the first time in modern Europe advanced the concept of *power seizure* by a small minority elite, . . . and adopted a crass *manipulatory* attitude toward the masses they claimed to love and serve.

One of the Babeuvists, Buonarrotti, stands out as the only pure idealist in Methvin's rogue's gallery, with a life free from any of the usual causes of frustration. As the chronicler of the legend of Babeuf and as teacher, recruiter, and conspirator, Buonarrotti was active in the European post-Napoleonic revolutionary movements. One of his recruits was Auguste Blanqui, to whom Marx owed much.

Methvin captures the essence of Tkachev in only seven pages.² To Lenin, under whose sinister shadow we still live, Methvin rightly devotes almost half of his book without allowing the reader's interest ever to flag.

Methvin makes plain that his characters, while professing and believing in an ideology, pursued power to satisfy their own egos and mostly by nefarious means. While Methvin's scope limits him to radicals, a broader view of history, which perhaps Methvin will give us in a subsequent book, would find no difference on the other side. DeGaulle went too far in saying: "The banner of ideology in reality covers only ambitions."³ But as the many assassinations of kings by sons, wives, and brothers demonstrate, radicals have no monopoly on the lust for power. Nor is inducing hatred of opponents a technique of radicals alone; it is as old as Demosthenes, and was used

to inflame European Christians in support of the Crusades. On "crass" manipulation of the populace in reaching for dictatorial power, the master was Julius Caesar. In the use of false fronts, the conservative Sir James Harris, as ambassador to Holland in 1786-1787, was the perfect example.

The author tells Lenin's story with perception, but if scope had permitted, Methvin could have reached further back with profit. Of all the tools of power, Lenin was original only in subversion, in which he drew heavily on his monarchistic precursors, including Philip of Macedonia and Elizabeth I of England. Looking at Lenin as a prophet-king of power rather than as a radical would have shown that he added nothing to the tactics of subversion, but did change its previous strategy by a simple but effective adaptation in its space and time of operation, which enabled him to exalt subversion over war as the preferred tool to place Communist parties in control of all governments.⁴

This work is distinguished in its field, which has needed the thorough coverage Methvin gives it. The author in his summation paraphrases the late Reinhold Niebuhr:

Man's condition is inherently sinful, . . . It is idolatry to suggest that human beings can blueprint and create the Kingdom of God on earth, . . .

In expanding that theme with scholarship and charm, this book has the sweep and power to command it to both the expert and the general reader.

Reviewed by LAURENCE W. BEILENSEN

¹Venturi, F., *Roots of Revolution*, Weidenfeldt and Nicholson, London, 1960.

²For a fuller portrait, see Weeks, A. L., *The First Bolshevik—A Political Biography of Peter Tkachev*, New York, 1968.

³News conference, July 29, 1963, U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, Publication 24, *Documents on Disarmament 1963*, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, 1964.

⁴Beilenson, Laurence W., *Power Through Subversion*, Washington, 1972.