

Review

Author(s): Frances Leon Quintana

Review by: Frances Leon Quintana

Source: *Science & Society*, Vol. 44, No. 4 (Winter, 1980/1981), pp. 503-506

Published by: [Guilford Press](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40402287>

Accessed: 12-06-2015 10:45 UTC

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



Guilford Press and S&S Quarterly, Inc. are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Science & Society*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

menaces as well as promises”

Jack Lindsay writes an extraordinary literary analysis-in-depth of an obscure Chartist poet, Ebenezer Jones, whom he sees as an amazing early Symbolist.

A.L. Lloyd documents the multiple historical origins of a popular but hitherto unpublished Irish ballad, “Lord Leitrim,” condensing a great deal of early 19th century Irish history in the process.

Finally Arnold Kettle, in “Bernard Shaw and the New Spirit,” comments briefly on “what Shaw and Brecht and the modernists had in common: an assault on the *forms* of bourgeois realism.”

In addition to the remarkably high level of both style and matter in each individual contribution one is impressed by the fruitful interaction evidenced in this rich variety of interests and approaches. Almost all make it clear that they see themselves as part of a growing Marxist tradition, recognizing the cross-fertilization of their separate work and delighting to emphasize this in generous footnote or bibliographical listing.

Unlike most *Festschriften* this small volume contains “infinite riches in a little room” and is well worth reading even if one knew nothing of its contributors or the man they honor. For those who both honor him and know many of them it is, of course, doubly valuable.

ANNETTE T. RUBINSTEIN

New York City

Wasi'chu: The Continuing Indian Wars, by Bruce Johansen and Robert Maestas. New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1979. \$15.00 Pp. 268.

The reality which most tarnishes the vision of social good expressed in the Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights is the record of treaties broken by the United States government with nations and peoples whose military might was unequal to that of the nation of Manifest Destiny. *Wasi'chu: The Continuing Indian Wars* examines this shabby record as it relates to Native American peoples. Throughout, the recurrent perfidy of government agencies, racist land grabbers, and energy conglomerates is linked with the socio-political system of the United States.

“Wasi'chu” is a traditional Lakota (Sioux) term meaning “greedy one who takes the fat.” As applied by the authors, this term refers to the European system of colonialism which began to sweep over the New World at the end of the 15th century and which still exists in the

decadent phase of monopoly capitalism. "Wasi'chu," then, refers to a system rather than to all white people or to the white people of the United States.

The authors introduce their theme with a brief account of the atrocities committed by Hernando de Soto in 1540 against the Indians of Georgia. This reference, aimed at broadening the definition of "Wasi'chu," unfortunately also obscures an important distinction in the annals of colonialism. Despite the rapaciousness of Spanish explorers and conquistadors and the brutal exploitation practiced at Spanish colonial mines and plantations, the Spanish system was different in important ways from Anglo-American colonialism. The difference was partly due to implementation of the relatively humane Laws of the Indies and even more to Spain's late entry into the stage of industrial capitalism. Native peoples under Spain suffered less displacement from their lands and resources, less destruction of their languages and cultures, and less social demoralization than native peoples under Anglo-American rule. Harsh and exploitative though it was, Spain never practiced genocide as a policy of colonial management; on the contrary, it often gave official approval to marriages between the conquerors and the conquered.

The authors of the book are journalists. They have assembled a vast amount of data from periodical, governmental, tribal, and scholarly sources. Like the best journalism, their work is highly readable and informative, even if not necessarily well-digested.

Part of their problem in rounding out their theme is the amount of information packed into a brief volume. They provide detailed case histories, but also race through the records of United States Indian policy. They discuss the development of the Bureau of Indian Affairs from an office of the War Department to the bureaucratic octopus it is today, touching on the Allotment Act of 1887, the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934, Termination policy and its impact on the Menominees, and so on. They mention Benjamin Franklin's apparent application of the model of the Iroquois League to his proposals for government structure in the newly independent United States, then go on to the influence of Lewis Henry Morgan's Iroquois and social organization studies on the thinking of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels.

The Navajo leader John Redhouse, in his preface to *Wasi'chi*, succinctly introduces its theme when he states that Indians today feel they face a new and potentially terminal Indian war. This time not only the U.S. cavalry but the full apparatus of federal and state government will be turned against them, abetted by a majority public opinion corroded by an anti-Indian "backlash" mentality.

When President Carter characterizes the energy crisis as the

“moral equivalent of war” and urges “national sacrifice” to meet it, Native Americans know that this war will be fought over control of their tribal lands, rich in uranium, coal, oil, gas, and timber. It is their lands that are to be sacrificed. The energy conglomerates have an insatiable appetite for these resources, exceeding even the lust for gold which dispossessed and destroyed so many American Indians in past centuries.

In the opinion of Redhouse and the authors, those who most threaten the very existence of Indian communities are the Carter administration and the federal agencies, in collusion with the energy monopolies. This collusion is largely confirmed by the inattention of the Carter administration to such non-perishable and non-monopolizable resources as sun, wind, and ocean waves and tides, which are precisely those energy resources most amenable to community rather than monopoly development.

The case histories in *Wasi'chu* deal with the threat to Indian resources and communities posed by the energy crisis and with repressive government-abetted measures to prevent effective Indian mobilization for self-defense. The classic instance of repression is provided by Wounded Knee and terrorism on the Sioux reservation starting in 1973. At the climax of these events FBI agents massed with goon squads of tribal police to put down demonstrations led by AIM activists in alliance with Indian traditionalists. This alliance, now on the rise among Native Americans, is more profound and potentially strategic than the present tactical alliance of religious traditionalists and political radicals in Iran, and the authors would have done well to explore its significance.

The second case history deals with the pressures of coal and uranium mining on Navajo communities in New Mexico and the struggle to build united resistance in the Navajo Nation to such destruction of the tribal homeland. In the third case history, the Northern Cheyenne and Crow communities of Montana temporarily halted the strip mining of their lands for coal. The Puyallup struggle for control of tribal fishing rights also receives a chapter.

The theme of the book inevitably leads to conclusions, not about the Indians but about their oppressors, the military-industrial complex of *Wasi'chu*. It is urgent for non-Indians to face the fact, well-documented in the book, that the current assault on Indian rights in the name of the energy crisis poses an ultimate threat to all Americans.

While this book could have been, and should have been, better organized, everyone interested in current energy problems and/or the Indians situation should read it. Above all, the book should be read by those environmentalists who, in their zeal to defend whales and forests,

forget the human equation and the burning social issues in environmental destruction.

FRANCES LEON QUINTANA

Aztec, New Mexico

The Life and Soul of a Legendary Jewish Socialist, by Vladimir Medem. Translated by Samuel A. Portnoy. New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1979. \$25.00. Pp. 583.

This volume is the first English translation of the memoirs of the Bundist leader Vladimir Medem. The memoirs first appeared in Yiddish in 1923 as *Fun mayn lebn (From My Life)*. Medem died of a life-long kidney ailment shortly after his book was written.

Medem's memoirs have a certain fascination for anyone interested in the history of revolutionary Russia or the history of the Jewish labor movement. Medem was a Russian of Jewish ancestry who was raised as a Christian in the city of Minsk. Like many other young people of affluent backgrounds, he developed a sympathy for the workers' movement and finally joined it himself, ultimately becoming the foremost leader of the Jewish Bund. In the process he came to regard himself as a Jew. Even though he learned Yiddish as a foreign language rather late in life, his natural literary gifts enabled him to master it completely and become one of the most noted Yiddish writers of his time.

The long rambling narrative carries the story of Medem's life up to 1915, when he was released from a Czarist prison in Warsaw as the German army penetrated the defenses of the city. Not surprisingly, the political events described here are interpreted according to the ideology of the Bund — an ideology that was social democratic but anti-Leninist, and nationalist but anti-Zionist. The translator, Samuel Portnoy, seems to take particular delight in Medem's frequent denunciations of Lenin and his allies. He includes long foot notes, consisting mostly of material gathered from such anti-Leninist writers as Adam Ulam and Bertram Wolfe, to back up Medem's arguments. One footnote, offering "evidence" that Lenin was mentally disturbed, stretches on for an incredible five pages. Lenin's intense antipathy to some of the Menshevik leaders is interpreted as a symptom of a manic-depressive state. Similar examples of ideological overkill appear in other parts of the book. If intense hostility to one's political enemies is a sign of mental illness, Portnoy himself would seem to be a prime candidate for a psychiatrist's couch.