

ECONOMIC PHILOSOPHY OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY. By *Theo Surányi-Unger*. Translated from the German by *W. Wolf* et al. De Kalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1972. x, 357 pp. \$12.50.

Economic Philosophy of the Twentieth Century by Theo Surányi-Unger is concerned with the origin and evolution of Soviet and Western ideology. Despite the title, its focus is on the East-West conflict, not on economics and not on philosophy.

According to Surányi-Unger, the common origin of both liberal capitalism and Marxian socialism is the humanism that grew out of the Renaissance as expressed by the popular slogan of the French Revolution—liberty, equality, and fraternity. For Adam Smith, the removal of all systems of preference and restraint would automatically establish the simple and obvious system of natural liberty, in which every individual would be free to pursue opportunities that were equally available to all. At the same time, the instinct of sympathy would establish the brotherhood of man. For Karl Marx, writing a century later, capitalism had transformed the laborer into an appendage of the machine and destroyed every remnant of charm in his work. Liberty had been replaced by the despotism of capital, equality by the exploitation of labor, and fraternity by the class struggle. A Communist revolution that eliminated private property in the means of production would permit the laborer to develop his total personality and would join mankind in a free and equal society.

In the twentieth century, neither ideology has lived up to its promise, and both have been forced to modify their positions because of the nature of the modern industrial state. In the West, neo-liberals now stress the importance of liberty at the expense of equality and fraternity, even though the middle class finds itself cast in the role of the organization man working for the giant corporation. However, political power has long since shifted to the advocates of state intervention, who have established social welfare, stabilization, and taxation programs that tend to promote equality. In the Soviet Union, the impossibility of creating an instant Communist Utopia and the necessity of generating economic growth have produced a centralized totalitarian state that subjugates the individual to the will of the party and condones unequal incomes in order to stimulate production. However, since the death of Stalin, economic reforms have been introduced that provide for some decentralization of planning and recognize the interests of consumers. Surányi-Unger concludes that probably the chief obstacles to a convergence of the two societies are the ideological importance of individualism in the West and of collectivism in the East.

All of this is superficial and proceeds at a level of generalization that does not do justice to either the intellectual or cultural history of European civilization, especially West European civilization. Philosophers from Aristotle to Sartre and economists from Smith to Harrod are mentioned, but their ideas are neither clearly expressed nor critically analyzed. The complex political and economic systems of different nations are lumped together in two more or less homogeneous categories called the East and the West. Finally, jargon and poor English obscure much of the book, though this may be attributable to an uneven effort at group translation.

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