bonfires, nobody remembers what free capitalism and representative government were like. Rebellion is an idea that occurs to nobody in the lesser "functional" groups of proletarians, for they have been conditioned by solemnly proclaimed "axioms" that have been drilled into them from birth. (The new universal language is Marxanto, which is so peculiarly constructed that logical precision leading to doubt is virtually impossible.)

This dreary state of affairs would have gone on until the planet froze if it had not been for a single mistake of Dictator Stalenin. This monster had banished his wife and son to the Bermudas because of the strange delusion in Madame Stalenin's mind that Wonworld had betrayed the original faith of Marx. (Being of an upper "functional" group, Madame Stalenin had a glimmering idea that Marx could be interpreted in more than one way.) The son, Peter Uldanov, alone of all the youth of Wonworld, has escaped the conditioning process of Soviet "education"; strangely and unaccountably, he has been brought up on music, chemistry, physics and mathematics. (He even plays the old scores of a bourgeois composer named Mozart, one of the classical composers who escaped destruction in the cultural bonfires for the simple reason that certain musicians had memorized him and were in a position to pass the knowledge on to others. This was impossible in the case of Shakespeare, Goethe and other great literary artists, for, where musical notation in Wonworld remained the same, knowledge of languages like English and German disappeared with the first generation that knew only Marxanto.)

Being an unconditioned youth when brought back to Moscow by an aging Stalenin, Peter Uldanov sees things with a preternaturally fresh eye. Accustomed to the bright colors of the Bermudas and the precise accents of music and mathematics, Peter knows that the continental orbits of Wonworld are drab, sad, ghoulish and idiotic. Since his father is bent on making him his successor as Dictator, Peter resolves to do something about the situation when he gets the chance. Alone in Wonworld, Peter wants people to have freedom from fear. Alone in Wonworld, he wants them to think and decide for themselves.

Knowing nothing of the principles of freedom, Peter is forced to work by guess and by God — and by the logical precision of a mind trained in mathematics. He is opposed by Bolshekov, the malevolent Number 2 of the Politburo, but he has on his side a shrewd Yankee commissar named Adams. How Peter and Adams rediscover the principles of freedom, of private ownership, of the free market, and of representative government, is the burden of Mr. Hazlitt's tale. Progressively Peter and Adams hit upon all the "great ideas" that underlie the Western philosophy of the free individual in the free society. They rediscover the idea of money as a medium of exchange (and, later, as a store of value). They work their way back to the idea of "value" as a derivative of desire, as the expression of choice on the part of individuals who have free will. They come to see that economic calculation is impossible in a socialist state. They learn why there has been no invention, no progress, in Wonworld since the last free capitalist government was wiped out. They learn why central planning and tyranny inevitably go together.

It is impossible in the short space of a review to give an adequate idea of the closeness of Mr. Hazlitt's reasoning. All that I can say here is that in a series of remarkable colloquies between Peter and Adams Mr. Hazlitt proves the case for his "great idea" that the nearest we can come to Utopia on earth is to leave the individual free to exercise choice, the sole condition being that the individual will not use force or fraud to hurt others. Freedom of choice naturally implies the freedom to buy and sell in the open market, freedom to own tools of production, freedom to publish one's own newspaper or periodical, freedom to choose one's governmental representatives. The moment that we begin to trifle with "controls" (i.e., with penalties for the exercise of freedom of choice) we are on the path that leads from Freeworld to Wonworld.

While the Socratic dialogues between Peter and Adams are the heart of "The Great Idea," the economic matter is made easily digestible by the novelistic nature of the book. It may suffice here to say that Peter and Adams had to flee Moscow for America before they could put their "great idea" across. In America they were beyond the reach of Bolshekov's assassins. Even though they had been subjected and conditioned to Wonworld rule for decades, the Americans retained a queer creative bias that came to the surface the moment that Peter and Adams promulgated the idea of freedom to own and control land and productive equipment. They began quickly to outproduce Russia and Europe. With planes and guns pouring from their free factories, the Americans were soon in a position to take the offensive against Bolshekov's glum minions. And in the end Freeworld became a world-wide state.

I have said that Mr. Hazlitt's book might be taken as the Utopian novel to end Utopian novels. But Mr. Hazlitt is only a Utopian in a Pickwickian sense. An individualist can believe in competition between a million Utopians, but never in the success of one. That way lies tyranny. It is high time we knew the Utopian for the tyrant he is. What "The Great Idea" proves is that the Utopian generally starts at the wrong end of things. He begins by trying to set up a universal framework into which all people must be fitted. Naturally the "fitting" process entails compulsions of a Procrustean nature. Mavericks must be disciplined; dissenters must be suppressed. As the late Benjamin Stolberg once said, "The devil always offers a closed system." And a closed system becomes a prison.

OF MINOR POETS

Oh lesser poets! in your striven years
  You rhymed your privacies and setting suns;
In the Great Smokies or the far Kashmirs
  Your tears, poor dears, were salt as anyone's.

And yet . . . because you never quite bespoke
  The blazon beauty, nor the bleak absurd,
The sleepy reader, curse him, never woke
  To feel the impress of your searing word.

Or yet, maybe, reviewers never hinted
That the little book was ever printed?

CHRISTOPHER MORLEY

NEW YORK'S RUSSIANS

Moscow on the Hudson, by M. K. Argus. Illustrated by the author. *New York: Harper. $2.50*

Americans who have Russian friends are forever telling anecdotes about them. These Russians are crazy people, they say, and exasperating, but funny as all get-out. Only rarely do Russians see themselves with humor enough to view their own quirks with laughter, or even with a smile.

M. K. Argus, born in the ancient Russian city of Novgorod, is one of the few who can write about his compatriots with wit, irony and chuckles. The slight exaggerations to which Russians will, of course, take exception, are part of the privilege enjoyed by every humorist.

In "Moscow on the Hudson," Mr. Argus has assembled a collection of delightful sketches depicting Russians settled in New York. He writes not of the Russians robotized by being Communist-bred, but of Russians who came here during the past thirty years. These, the Russians of whom Mr. Argus writes, are individuals.

We meet officials, generals, professors, landowners, authors, actors and actresses. (All the theatrical folk claim to have been with the Moscow Art Theater.) Not many of Mr. Argus's Russians have continued in the occupations familiar to them. Now they are doormen, taxi drivers, seamstresses, factory hands. Within a certain orbit their backgrounds are various, and so are their political opinions, yet all are bound together emotionally by the stubborn nostalgia of their love for Mother Russia. They feed the flame of their love with Russian meals, Russian songs, and with endless Russian talk. They adore parties at which someone recites a mournful poem. ". . . the hostess beams with unhappiness. Such a successful party."

The process of Americanization is tedious and painful to these denizens of Moscow on the Hudson. They create a little coziness for themselves by using such lingual adaptations as Washingtonsky, and Sheridansky Square. But a newspaper headline, "Yanks Defeat Reds," enchants them by its slangy Americanism. They think it means appeasement is over.

Mr. Argus came to this country shortly after the Bolshevik revolution. He is a member of the staff of *Novoye Russkoye Slovo*, the largest Russian-language newspaper published in America. He writes a humorous column under his "Argus" nom de plume. His own Americanization, achieved with the aid of his American wife, provides material for two amusing chapters.

"To Russians," says Mr. Argus, "time means nothing." His story of a dinner party illustrates this. His wife is giving the party. He promises to leave the office early. To pick up a manuscript, on his way home he stops for five minutes at the house of a Russian neighbor. One small glass of vodka, with zakouska, becomes three small glasses of vodka because, as Russians say, "God loves the Trinity." The five minutes stretch to thirty. He is late. He must go at once. He has his hat in hand, when his hostess sadly says, "What kind of dinner will you get? American dinner. Grass. I have a real Russian dinner tonight." So Mr. Argus stays. He must taste the lady's pirojki; they were famous even in St. Petersburg.

At home, dinner is almost over when he arrives. He pretends to eat. After her guests have gone, the understanding Mrs. Argus, his American wife, closes the incident by telling her husband that he is just "an incorrigible Russian."

In addition to its amusing readability, "Moscow on the Hudson" has the merit of briefness. Thanks, perhaps, to the influence of Mrs. Argus? Yet I regret the omission of two intensely Russian characteristics. Most Russians feel a fanatical devotion to the land, to the countryside where things grow. Scattered all over Long Island, New Jersey and Connecticut — anywhere within reasonable distance from New York — you will find Russians who have managed, with incredible sacrifice, to acquire some kind of shack and a parcel of earth. They grow things. They put up jellies and jams — for how can you drink your evening tea without homemade preserves? Russians can't.

Nor does Mr. Argus mention the sentimental feeling with which most Russians regard their Orthodox Church. They make a special point of attending midnight mass on Easter Eve, though they may not set foot in church at any other time. Their celebration of Easter plays a deep part in their nostalgic love for their mother country. It is also a mystic protest against the Junkerdom of Russia under the Soviets.

ALEXANDRA KROPOTKIN

PLUTARCHIAN DAYDREAMER

Pierre Vergniaud: Voice of the French Revolution, by Claude G. Bowers. *New York: Macmillan. $6.50*

It is more than a hundred and fifty-seven years since the blade of the guillotine silenced that *superb orateur*, as Sainte-Beuve called him, who is now remembered mainly for his aphorism about the tendency of revolutions to devour their offspring after the manner of Cronus. Ambassador Claude Bowers's biography of Vergniaud is the first in English; indeed there have been only a few in French, the most recent and perhaps best being that of M. Eugène Lintilhac, which appeared in 1920. But Mr. Bowers, it seems, has had the benefit of some hitherto unpublished papers by Vergniaud himself and by his boon companion in life, politics and death, Jean-François Ducos.

Of all the great personalities of the French Revolution in its middle phase, Vergniaud is certainly the most amiable and attractive. He was generous and affectionate by nature, free of malice, and apparently almost free of ambition. He was one of that little band of newly-elected Bordelais deputies, who on their way to the Legislative Assembly had as a traveling-companion the German Count Reinhard. So much was Reinhard enchanted by their gaiety, intelligence and exalted enthusiasm, that under their spell he resolved to embrace the cause of France, freedom and fraternal equality. Alas, the tragedy of those charming young deputies was that the only sort of talent that was missing among them was a talent for politics.

It has sometimes seemed to me strange that the pedagogical disciples of Professor Dewey have never seen fit to use the French Revolution as an example of the dangers and pitfalls of the old-fashioned classical education.