

A Man's Generation

RED POTTYAGE, by Michael Aaronsohn, Johnson & Hardin Co., Cincinnati, 1956, 430 pages, \$4.95.

Reviewed by DOROTHY SARA

FROM the 2nd of August 1923 when the young blinded World War I veteran was a rabbinical student in Cincinnati, to the 28th day of September 1943 when, as national chaplain of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, he offered a prayer at their national encampment in New York, a generation is covered during which the author of *Red Pottage* found spiritual enrichment, gained an understanding closeness with his family, emerged as a national figure through his outspoken concern with economic and political conditions, and became a founding teacher and administrator in the Cincinnati extension of the Henry George School.

In order to present his viewpoints in an objective sense, Rabbi Michael Aaronsohn in this book employed the device of the biographer, writing in the third person and giving his central character a name other than his own; yet this is the story of the author's own unstinting participation in the economic and political drama of those two decades.

As the young rabbi with a social consciousness and an inquiring mind saw beyond the political slogans and hysterical promises of the new deal era, he did not hesitate to give courageous expression of his individualistic views. He took part in local and national politics, but refused to be swept along with the tide of socialization which he soon recognized as a term which was "... the most deceptive, the most seductive, and, in the end, the most enslaving." He

would not accept the twin theory that "... all men are created equal and that all men must share the nation's wealth." He refuted these cliches; he regarded each man as an individual in his own right; he stated, "Only the simple-minded, the hypocrite, the politician . . . will continue to say so." He pointed out that any step toward socialization would, in effect, be a Marxist move, and "... would be perhaps even more devastating upon civilized communities than the detonation of many atomic bombs."

During the period covered in his book, Rabbi Aaronsohn told of the rise of Stalin, Hitler and Mussolini, and the spawning of the new deal political philosophy in this country. He saw the United States going down the same collective road, and was keen in his analysis of the "... political razzle dazzle and economic high jinks . . ." of the multiple presidential terms of Franklin Delano Roosevelt and the fertile soil which existed for the cult of Marxist theories. The author included interesting glimpses into the behind-the-scenes political campaigning and the part he played in them.

In 1929, when he visited Memphis as the National Field Representative of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, he met an attorney, Abe D. Waldauer, who placed a 15-page pamphlet in the rabbi's hand and recommended he read it carefully. This was "Moses" by Henry George, and as the rabbi's sister read it to him he became "... enthralled with both the grandeur of the style and the astonishing comprehension by the Christian interpreter of the character and the accomplishment of Israel's greatest teacher." From this, the logical step was his reading *Progress and Poverty*, and soon after that, when John Lawrence Monroe (now director

of the Henry George School in Chicago, but then the traveling field director) called upon Rabbi Aaronsohn the next move was the organization of a Cincinnati extension. Some years later, when the rabbi delivered a speech in Charlotte, North Carolina at the state convention of the Disabled American Veterans, he said, "I affirm that Socialism, Communism, Fascism, and New Dealism are naught but modern reproductions of ancient

despotisms. I believe with all my mind and with all the power of my soul that the only sure foundation for political, social, and economic progress is the Single Tax program of Henry George."

In a dramatic way he pictures the tensions before and after the entry of this country into World War II, bringing into sharp focus the political personalities who were at our government's helm.

PENNSYLVANIA, by Percy R. Williams, a reprint from the book "Land-Value Taxation Around the World," published by Robert Schalkenbach Foundation in 1955 (at \$3), is available in pamphlet form at ten cents a copy. It is a sixteen-page booklet explaining the Graded Tax Plan in Pennsylvania, and may be ordered from the Schalkenbach Foundation, 50 East 69th Street, New York.
