



Dutch woman. By permission of W. W. Norton & Company.

warfare, science, and medicine and had even turned an ear to the social ideas of the French Revolution. But Efendi's attitude had prevailed among his countrymen since the seventh century. The Muslim scholars, travelers, and diplomats whose works are examined by Lewis, professor of Near Eastern Studies at Princeton, regarded Christian Europe as the enemy of Islam. Islamic scholars such as Avicenna (980–1037) and Averroes (1126–1198) drew upon the works of the pagan Greeks. But for centuries “Frankish religion, philosophy, science, literature” excited little interest. In many ways more tolerant of outsiders than Christians, Muslims were slow to develop a curiosity about other cultures. To learn a Western language was a useless, even impious, pursuit. The French Revolution shocked them into greater awareness: The new French government, printing the first newspapers (in French and, later, in Arabic) ever to appear in the Muslim world, spread Enlightenment ideas that broke through anti-Christian feelings. And Napoleon's invasion of Egypt in 1798 drove home the message of Western military superiority.

**THE REVOLUTION OF 1525: The German Peasants' War From a New Perspective**

by Peter Blickle  
trans. by Thomas A. Brady, Jr. and H. C. Erik Midelfort  
Johns Hopkins, 1982  
246 pp. \$20

In 1525, German peasants took up arms against their lords in an attempt to create a just society. Long treated as a footnote to the Protestant Reformation, the German Peasants' War of 1525 was not, in fact, exclusively German, peasant, or military. It was, according to Blickle, a historian at the University of Bern, a revolution of the common man that spread to French- and Slavic-speaking regions and included town-dwellers, journeymen, and miners as well as peasants. Even the date is misleading: The War of 1525 was only the culmination of events that began with the weakening of feudalism in the mid-15th century. Landowning nobles and ecclesiastics, losing wealth and power, increased their demands on the peasantry, reimposing a kind of serfdom. At the same time, they curtailed the common man's hunting, land-use, and wood-gathering rights. The

afflicted commoners at first appealed to the "old law"—customary rights and principles of fair treatment. Unsuccessful, they turned to religious reformers such as Martin Luther and Thomas Müntzer and found in their preaching a new justification for social justice: "godly law." The "Twelve Articles," penned in 1525 by a German furrier, marshaled Biblical support for its radical demand: "the abolition," writes Blickle, "of all rights and privileges specific to particular social groups." This, of course, was unacceptable to the ruling elite (and even to Luther). The resulting war crushed the commoners' dreams but did prompt modest reforms (e.g., restoration of rights) that for a time preserved the old order.

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**THE TRUANTS:  
Adventures among the  
Intellectuals**  
by William Barrett  
Doubleday, 1982  
292 pp. \$15.95

From 1945 to 1952, when *Partisan Review* was publishing some of the outstanding writers and critics in America, Barrett, a philosopher-critic in his own right, served as one of its associate editors. Under the direction of Philip Rahv and William Phillips, the review broke with its original sponsor, the U.S. Communist Party, and championed containment of the Soviets even before Harry Truman did. Avant-garde in its aesthetics, the journal also became a major forum for the latest European ideas. Hannah Arendt introduced American readers to existentialism on *PR*'s pages. And Clement Greenberg's critical essays on the new native movement, abstract expressionism, explained that bewildering visual explosion. Barrett demonstrates how pervasive the journal's influence was, but he wonders now if it was altogether salutary. Among other effects, the fuzzy leftism of Rahv and the other "truants," with its strains of fashionable nihilism, may have contributed to the more infantile aspects of 1960s' radicalism. "Follow the zigs and the zags of any given intellectual," as Barrett puts it, "and you may turn out to be reading the fever chart of the next generation."