# MAIN-STREAM

## A Literary Quarterly

*Summer, 1947*




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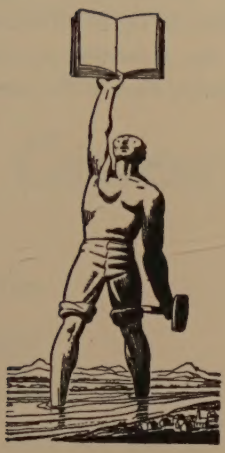

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# MAINSTREAM

## A Literary Quarterly

## *Contents*




VOLUME 1 · *Summer, 1947* · NUMBER 3

## *THE EDITORS*



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## *THE CONTRIBUTORS*

SANGGUNI BATONGBUHAY, BAYANI GRIARTE, and MARIA LAUAAN are Philippine anti-fascists, who for obvious reasons are forced to use pseudonyms in order to continue their fight for democracy and genuine Philippine independence.

JOSEPH BERNSTEIN is the editor of a recent anthology, *Baudelaire, Rimbaud and Verlaine.*

ARNAUD D'USSEAU is the co-author of *Tomorrow the World* and *Deep Are the Roots.* He has also written for films.

HOWARD FAST'S new novel, *Clarkton,* will be released this fall by Duell, Sloan and Pearce.

BEN FIELD is the author of *The Outside Leaf* and *Piper Tompkins.*

S. FINKELSTEIN, a veteran of World War II, is the author of *Art and Society,* to be released this fall by International Publishers.

WILLIAM J. GRIFFIN, a New York working-class writer, died April 18, 1947, at the age of twenty-nine. This story was written while he was confined at Bellevue Hospital.

HARRIET HAMBARIN'S work has appeared in *New Masses.*

RALPH KNIGHT, who edits a trade union paper, is a member of Contemporary Writers.

ANNA SEGHERS, distinguished author of *The Seventh Cross* and other novels, recently returned to Germany.

JULES A. WEIN is a veteran of World War II and winner of the Lola Ridge Award for poetry.

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*All manuscripts should be addressed to The Editors of* MAINSTREAM, *832 Broadway, New York 3, N. Y., or P. O. Box 1108, Hollywood Post Office, Wilcox Avenue, Hollywood 28, California, and accompanied by stamped, self-addressed envelopes for return.*

# The Saboteurs

By ANNA SEGHERS

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IN THE SPRING OF 1943, when the German soldiers along a section of the Ukrainian front were ordered to retake the village of Sakoje, a few hand grenades failed to explode during the assault on the farmstead which occupied a key position. On examining the list of casualties, it was discovered that several men had been killed by the premature explosion of their own hand grenades. It was determined that these grenades had been assembled in a factory near Griesheim on the Main River. The German soldiers would not have been able to hold the farmstead in any event for on the following day the whole battalion was pushed back eight kilometres behind the village of Sakoje. For not in the heavens, nor in the fleecy, airy clouds sailing through the skies over the endless Ukrainian steppes, nor in armored staff cars are such immutable decisions forged. Such decisions spring from that deep mysterious pool, the will of the people.

From the code stencils on the grenades, the Gestapo determined the workshop and the day of their manufacture: It was the day of the outbreak of the war against the Soviet Union. Consequent investigations proved incontrovertibly that three workers had participated in the sabotage: Herman Schulz, Franz Marnet and Paul Bohland. But when the arrests were about to be made, it was discovered that two of them, Marnet and Bohland, had long since gone to the front. Bohland had already become a casualty. Franz Marnet was missing. The third, Herman Schulz, who was still in the factory, was arrested and executed. And thus again the Gestapo proved that its millstones ground as busily, as exceedingly fine as those of the Lord, who having long since become superfluous, had been deposed.

## I

Early in the morning when Herman Schulz left his village on the right bank of the Rhine, he pedalled across the Main River Bridge and turned into Wilhelm Opel Strasse, formerly called Langestrasse. Even before he reached the large corner house, Herman always rang his bell three times,

and invariably glanced up at a particular kitchen window, decorated with curtains and geraniums. Once shortly before the war, Frau Bohland had even received a prize for this window, when the block captain, who also held a position with the N.S.D.A.P. Women's Organization, turned the remodeling of the house into a competitive occasion. The house was three stories high and fairly old, having been built during the first decade of the century. It had seen generations of day and night shift workers, perhaps ten or fifteen thousand of them, pedalling on their bicycles from Kostheim and Mainz-Castell and from the Ried-villages to the factories at Hoechst and Griesheim.

When Herman rang his bell, the window opened. Like a round shining silvery morning sun, Frau Bohland's head emerged among the fluffy curtains. She was slightly older than her husband but she looked much more so. She shouted: "Paul's coming!" And by the time Herman reached the door, Paul Bohland was already mounting his bicycle. He was a tiny bristly man, popularly known as the Little Plum Pit because his face always turned purple when he drank or was particularly pleased or especially angry. The two men rode side by side into the crowd of workers. At the end of the Wilhelm Opel Strasse they generally met Franz Marnet, who bicycled down from Schmiedheim. Franz rode along with them but their greeting was not friendly. This fact no longer amazed anyone. Paul Bohland had frequently enough indicated the reason. Herman Schulz and Franz Marnet, who had been friends for years, had quarrelled shortly after Marnet's marriage. Franz had leased to Herman at the original rental price the garden plot on the bank of the Main River which belonged to his wife's family. Afterwards Herman discovered that the pump was broken. It was understandable that he should be annoyed. It was also understandable that Franz, after finally succeeding in getting married, should look more sharply after the interests of his new family. Gossip on this subject always turned to the marriage itself. There must have been something about Franz which displeased the girls. Countless of his love affairs had gone wrong before he finally got himself Lotte. Lotte was no longer very young and not exactly pretty; she had lost an eye in some industrial accident, and she also had a little daughter by some young fellow whom she had lost somehow. No one any longer remembered exactly just what had happened. And it wasn't everyone who would feel like raising someone else's child.

But people stopped speculating after a while. The whole breathless world began to move. People speculated about France and Holland, about

England and Africa. People speculated about such far off places as the northern seacoast town of Narvik and the Mediterranean island of Crete. People no longer bestowed as much thought as formerly on broken garden pumps.

On the eve of June 22, while on their way home, Paul Bohland and Herman Schulz bumped into Franz Marnet, as they usually did. Franz had just dismounted from his bicycle to walk it uphill to Schmiedheim. The men going home into the city and towards the Ried-villages and up into the hills, as fast as their exhaustion permitted, never suspected that this evening, which finally brought another bitter day to its close, was but the eve of new things to come. Here and there the evening light broke through the greyish-blue smoke and played faintly on the river. The smoke billowed around the factories in heavy clouds. It sank down on the villages so that hardly a light could blink through. This sudden, artificial, sinister twilight tasted bittersweet on the tongue; it blackened a man's face, the corners of his eyes, his ears and his nostrils; it oppressed his heart with unspeakable anxiety.

Paul and Herman pedalled around Franz. Paul did not miss the single brief glance Franz cast at Herman's face. That glance, unlike a word, could not be remembered, nor could it be repeated or denounced to the authorities. That glance cut sharply through the artificial twilight, but was withdrawn immediately because here no light dared shine.

Ten minutes later as Paul sat at his kitchen table, too stiff and too tired to have washed, he muttered into his soup plate: "Funny."

His wife asked: "What's so funny about the soup?"

"Not the soup," said Paul, "but the feud between Franz and Herman. To think that after such a long friendship Franz could get into such a quarrel with a fellow like Herman. Why? Because of a garden pump."

His wife answered: "It's not because of the garden pump that they're enemies. For real hatred you have to have a good reason. Perhaps they do not want to admit the real reason. So they look for an excuse. The garden pump is just what they needed."

As Paul continued to brood, she went on: "I think it is because of the wife." She added, although Paul still did not say anything: "You think perhaps because of Franz' wife? Oh, no! I mean the other. Herman's wife is still very young. She could even be his daughter."

Paul answered sharply: "You're crazy!"

He bit into the soup bone. He chewed it thoroughly. Then he said: "Franz looked at Herman today as if to say: "I'd be willing to try again if

only you would.'" Paul fell silent. He went back to chewing his bone. A thought had come to him which he did not wish to express. The oblique look he had caught signified more than an attempt at reconciliation. It was a warranty of the old friendship. But such observations were not meant even for his wife.

Frau Bohland sat down beside her husband, and as she looked at this bristly little man with dull eyes gnawing steadfastly on the bone, her heart contracted in a sorrow which even she no longer understood. And when in his accustomed manner he sucked the marrow out of the bleached bone she again thought despairingly of that Sunday when they had sat together, as if all human sorrows were somehow interrelated. The quavering whistle emitted from the bone sounded like a fanfare that was forever associated with the bad news. That day the mail had interrupted their meal at this very point. "Died in the Battle of France." She had never believed that anything could happen to her son. And in France where there were only victories! Paul had locked the door so that the neighbors should not come rushing in at her lamentations, that they might not hear her sob: "What good are all these victories?"

Luckily Herman had gone to visit his in-laws that day and he had his son on the handlebars of his bicycle. Paul had waved from his window to Herman and the boy and beckoned them to come up. At that time he knew Herman only from their daily rides to the workshop. At first Paul had wanted to cover his wife's mouth with his hand as she wailed at the sight of the little boy: "Make an end to this horror before they devour that little one too!" But Herman had gently removed his hand and Paul had marvelled silently as Herman in restrained sorrow awkwardly stroked the woman's hair. The little boy had watched in wonder.

That night Herman had stayed with them until late. Strange words had fallen between them as Frau Bohland's sobbing quieted. The next day they had gone to work on their bicycles as usual. When Paul came home the following afternon, he found his wife not comforted, but somehow dazed by the countless expressions of sympathy she had received so unexpectedly.

She said: "One might think we are important people!"

Not only had all the neighbors come to her one after another, but also the block captain, the representatives of the Women's Organization, of the Arbeitsfront, of the Hitler Youth, of the 178th Infantry Regiment.

Paul said: "If they had been only half as concerned over our boy while he was still alive!"

Then he became silent because he did not wish to rob his wife of even the scanty comfort she had found. Clearly it helped her that people knew what sort of a son had died. Even now, after all this time, she was comforted that her son, her only son, had not disappeared ingloriously but had died, as everyone understood, for something special, for everyone, for his people. That is what she thought. What Paul thought remained unsaid. He never spoke of the deceased.

Paul had not yet finished gnawing the soup bone when Herman arrived in his Rhine River village of Binzheim. He had the longest way home ever since he had moved into the tiny house that had belonged to his wife's parents. But he felt compensated because when he finally crossed the Main River Bridge and pedalled along the quay towards his village he escaped the infernal canopy of fog hanging over the factory area. The Rhine shimmered between the weeping willows. There was a fragrance of water and earth.

Marie awaited Herman at the front door. She had tied a kerchief around her head. She seemed more like a peasant's daughter than the wife of a factory worker. Absolute loyalty shone in her clear grey eyes. As Herman tasted the slightly burned soup, she furrowed her brows somewhat anxiously, as if in fear of a strict father. But Herman never noticed it, or made believe he didn't, whereupon she ran out happily and started to sing.

He always felt the same remorse at the sound of her clear little voice. Five years ago he had married this young girl so that he might have some sweetness and graciousness in his muddled life. Each night during that first year of their married life he had feared that his house might be surrounded by the S.S. and the S.A. His heart had been eased by the very thing which nettled his conscience most: Marie had not the slightest notion of the dangers which almost miraculously passed him by. He was the last of an old group of friends to remain unsuspected by the Gestapo; in due time all others had fled or had been arrested or murdered. Herman followed the advice which was meant for him: To keep silent and spare himself for a really important task. Was it possible to hoard up a life which moved onward so irresistibly? How? For what? From time to time he was overwhelmed by the

feeling that that most important task had long since presented itself but that he had spared himself. . . .

His young wife sang because he had not been angry at the burnt soup. But he had been recalling what he had heard about life when he was a child: Life must be wagered in order to be won.

His son tugged at his sleeve. Every month the youngster's height was measured against the door where notches showed his growth. Herman had begun this when the boy could hardly stand straight. Three hand-breadths above the highest notch there was a single, solitary, sharply cut notch. When Herman had cut that notch he thought to himself:

"When my boy is that tall, Hitler will be finished. I shall never send my son into his school."

The boy slipped out of his shoes. He stood in his stockings in front of the door post. He himself put on his head the only book left on the chest of drawers. It was his grandmother's Bible which his mother would not give up. The boy stood as straight as possible because he aspired to reach that single sharply cut notch.

Herman thought: "We do not have much more time. It doesn't look too well. Those fantastic victories in France have cheered everybody. The boy shouldn't stretch himself so; he is growing too fast!"

Herman thought also that he would like to talk with Franz, just a few minutes, just once and only for a few minutes. Being all alone was insupportable. He thought and felt this way not only because it was the eve of unexpected events, but because he thought and felt the same way every single night.

When dawn broke, he tottered over to his bicycle, still half asleep in spite of the pail of cold water he had dashed over his face and chest. His wife, who had heated a cup of coffee for him, went back to bed. Lights twinkled behind the curtained village windows. The last stars blinked behind the willows, too bright and too sharp for the blackout regulations. The stars were already fading as he neared the crossing where the road to the village of Riedlingen cut into the quay. A group of men had assembled here and all were facing in his direction.

In the twilight he could not recognize their faces, but his heart began to beat ominously as if mysteriously in tune with these men whom he could barely distinguish.

"Herman," said the men, "Herman, what do you say now?"

"I? What do you mean?" asked Herman.

Now that their chalky faces surrounded him and their eyes blazed at him, he knew that something dreadful must have happened. He also realized that they had waited for him here, hoping for advice, even though he lived apart from them, silent and lonesome.

"He hasn't heard," they said, "just imagine, he doesn't know yet."

One of them, Sievert by name, said as he looked Herman squarely in the eyes: "There's war with the Russians."

They all stared at Herman's face as if the news he had just heard was a magic formula to open the most secret cave. But the men, who could not see in the greyness of the dawn how deeply his face had blanched, saw only an inscrutable expression of pride and reserve. Sievert looked him unblinkingly straight into the eyes. Finally Herman had to say something.

He said: "We'll have to take that in our stride, too."

Thereupon Sievert withdrew his glance, both disappointed and satisfied because nothing had been said that was open to suspicion. Old Bentsch looked thoughtfully at Herman. He knew Herman from of old. Just what had Herman's answer meant?

Suddenly there was a simultaneous stirring and they all rushed to their bicycles. During the wild ride along the quay Herman heard bits of sentences.

"This is the beginning. . . ."

"This is the end. . . ."

"This had to come. . . ."

"This wasn't necessary. . . ."

"Now it is going to end. . . ."

"Now it is just going to begin. . . ."

As they neared the bridge, and the men from the various villages drew alongside with worried or astonished faces, Herman felt that he had left his home, his wife and his child behind. They had been left so far behind that their very memory faded. He felt this was the last time he would ride past these familiar scenes—the twisted clumps of willows, the church spires on the other shore, the landing place with its two piers. After having passed the two bridgeheads and having entered the factory zone, death would be as close as it can be only when a person has decided to spare himself no longer. The men from the Ried villages along the road or across the fields crowded over the Main River Bridge. Herman thought something seemed to quiver in all these faces as though, already mouldered, they had been awakened today out of their eternal sleep for this particular morning shift.

He wondered: "Will they work their ten hours today? Will they fulfill their quota even though they know now that it will be used against the Red Army? No, the dead do not awaken merely to slip back into the old life. No, the impossible can not be possible!"

Below the Main River Bridge a crowd milled around the small grey Opel car which belonged to Engineer Kress. He was an adroit, sarcastic, humorous person whom everyone liked. He looked more cynical than ever as the crowd pressed against him.

They asked: "Engineer Kress, is it really true?"

"Surely it's true," answered Kress, "you all heard it."

"Will we finish them off just as quickly as the others?"

"Surely," said Kress.

"Will there always be something else? How is this to go on?"

"It's clear," said Kress, "that when the Fuehrer crosses the Niemen River, he will destroy a great nation."

One pair of eyes among the hundreds locked in his gaze. Kress knew the man to whom they belonged. Once, five or six years ago, he had had some dealings with Herman. They had each recognized the other as they had finally landed in the same factory after having worked in various other places. But they had played at being strangers, as if they had forgotten their meeting that certain night in Frankfort when Herman with a quick handclasp finished his report of Heisler's successful escape. Both of them had had a hand in that escape. Kress with his cynical smile had trembled long lest it might still become known that he had hidden the fugitive overnight. Where was Heisler now? Still on earth? Under the earth? Kress drove carefully down the street as a policeman waved him on.

During the night a double row of guards had been stationed on the street. From among the mass of people a "Heil!" croaked out at intervals. But it came from a loudspeaker set up over the crossroads. The disembodied voice of the loudspeaker was drowned out by fragments of conversation.

"To think that the Russians should also be fighting us!"

"I guess we are fighting them. . . ."

"But yesterday they still said that this pact would last forever."

"Can't you keep your mouth shut? Open your mouth only when they shout 'Heil!' "

A group loitered in front of the corner house where Herman always rang his bell three times. Today Paul was already waiting on the street and his eyes sought out Herman among the bicyclists. Not since the night

Paul had received the news of his son's death, had Herman seen such consternation in his harried and yet childlike face.

On the way to the factory Paul said to Herman: "Well, now we must also fight the Russians."

"Nobody must," answered Herman.

These two words, like two boulders pushed into a millstream, made Paul's thoughts thrash around and falter, thrash around and falter.

Beyond the junction of Wiesbadnerstrasse with the Wilhelm Opel Strasse the crowd of bicycles became so dense that the whole street appeared to be rolling towards Hoechst. Paul was very short when standing on his feet, but on the bicycle he did not have to look up at Herman. Herman paid no attention to the glances Paul shot at him. He looked straight ahead and listened to what was being said all around him.

"Now the war is really beginning. . . ."

"This will have to be finished before winter . . . or else. . . ."

Paul was not at all amazed suddenly to find Franz riding next to Herman nor was he amazed when Herman addressed Franz as if there never had been a rupture between them nor even a trace of enmity.

"Do you think they will complete the same quota today?"

Franz answered: "No."

Before leaving that morning, Franz had had only a few minutes—for the news and for the farewell. The neighbor from the first floor, still in her bedjacket, was standing in his kitchen. She slipped out as he entered. Franz' wife, Lotte, had turned pale. What had happened? She had forgotten to pull a little hair over her disfigured eye. He grasped her arm; she looked at him with her one good eye; she said: "We are at war with the Russians."

She turned away. Both walked up and down the narrow room, one past the other, as if in a cage. In a strange movement Lotte pressed her whole face, especially her eye, against the little picture tacked against the wall. It was the photograph of a young boy, who looked cheerful and strong and trustworthy. He had been murdered by the Gestapo during the summer of 1933. Franz realized that his wife frequently made this gesture when she was alone and he realized also that this boy had been her first and had remained her only love. But the war news was too overwhelming for this knowledge to hurt him now.

He only said to her: "Come, Lotte, I must leave now." He added: "Anything can happen. One must always be prepared. From now on any leavetaking may be the last."

That had been ten minutes ago. That is how long it took him to ride down. Now he rode along on Herman's left while Paul was over on the right.

Old Bentsch rode just ahead of them between the two brothers Fritz and Ernst Enders. Paul was pushed over a bit and a man by the name of Abst rode between him and Herman. At one point Franz dismounted. He fumbled with a screw. Herman helped him a bit, at the same time talking passionately to him. As far as Paul could make out as he glanced at them, Franz seemed to understand, for he nodded his head. When they rode along again their positions changed and Herman was now between the brothers Enders.

In the past Paul had never had any dealings with Franz, since Franz and Herman had never associated. Paul's attachment for Herman was of the kind that develops only when a person has given up all hope and then unexpectedly stumbles upon a new friendship. Boyishly he had ferreted out Herman's emotions and thoughts as if thereby he might find ways of drawing Herman's life closer to his own. Paul's own life spent itself in a dull weariness, rolling uniformly into the war. If someone had taken the trouble to observe him carefully—but there was no such person—he would have been amazed at the great bitterness filling Paul's heart, which had dried out and seemed no longer capable of any feeling. Suddenly Herman had crossed his path; Herman had taken the trouble to look and Herman was not astonished.

Paul noticed that Franz wanted to speak with him and so he steered his bicycle over to him.

"Remain near Abst," said Franz. "As soon as you see me speak with Herman, move right over next to me and then pass on what I say to you."

Paul was astonished that Franz bridged so abruptly the silence and evasiveness of the last few years. He remained near Abst. Franz moved in between Herman and Fritz Enders.

"Herman," said Franz, "make it snappy. What'll I do?"

"Keep your mouth shut and . . . ," Herman mumbled carefully, "shorten the spring so that it will not reach the percussion cap."

Herman then turned quickly to Ernst Enders. He laughed and said something which made Ernst laugh also. Then he looked straight ahead and only his teeth were set in a smile. He thought:

"If I could only ask Kress a few things now, just a few, which we could pass on before we go through the tunnel; afterwards it'll be too late."

Laughingly he shouted to Enders once again. And as the latter shook with laughter, Herman glanced straight ahead. Inaudibly for the others, he spoke to Franz:

"Tell Bentsch for the foundry: he should make a soft spot in the cap so that it will not splinter, instead it will only break in half."

Fritz Enders explained aloud to his brother Ernst: "If he thinks that he can again do anything he wishes with us. . . ."

Ernst stopped laughing and said: "Then he is making one great big mistake."

Franz threw a glance at Herman. They mulled over what they had just heard, only they never quite discovered to whom the brothers had referred. They had to turn off now across the field.

Paul pushed over to Franz: "Young Abst wants to know what he is to do. Right away. This morning."

"Overheat the spring, let it cool very slowly. Then it'll remain weak. Let him tell Doerr and Moser and his brother, but no one else."

Franz turned to the man behind him; his mouth twisted into a kind of grin. That made him look strange because his face was generally sad and thoughtful.

As they went across the field Bentsch came close to Herman. "There's an awful lot can be done."

"What do you mean?"

Their glance penetrated into each other's heart.

"An error in the time mechanism," said Bentsch, who was always hard to understand, and who moved his lips only when he was absolutely forced to do so. "A hole can be drilled so that the flame reaches the powder more quickly."

Herman nodded. Recently he no longer had been quite clear in his mind about Bentsch, but had not yet given him up. He had observed and waited. Now he looked at Bentsch sharply. Each saw the little sparks of light in the other's eyes, the glimmer in the darkness through which in distrust and loneliness they had tapped their way throughout the years.

Most of the men continued along the Hauptstrasse to Griesheim. A small group pushed its bicycles through the field to Herman's department, which was an outgrowth of the works at Griesheim. The new factory development lay far behind the potato fields under a round sun like an edging of rose colored blocks. A light sooty fog touched everything. People came out of their homes along the hills and down the narrow paths

across the fields. They all had later information. A river had already been crossed, three villages taken.

Some asked: "Is it really true?"

Others said: "Perhaps the Russians only let them in and then they'll close in behind them." They did not say: "Behind us," they said: "Behind them."

Still others said: "This'll have to be finished by winter . . . and then?"

"If it is finished by wintertime, then something else will start. . . ."

"Well, the pact was a fake after all . . . yesterday they were still writing about it as if it were genuine as gold. . . ."

"Why did this too have to come?"

"It had to come!"

There was a residual memory, camouflaged in many questions, which eight years had not been able to burn out or to drum out: Over there, far in the east, there was an invulnerable land, different from all other countries of the earth.

Once more Franz came over to Herman. He added a few words. "Kress is the last control. How will he behave? We don't know anything about him."

"Even if he notices, provided that he wants to notice, but I don't think that he does, but even if he should make a report, nobody can prove that it was more than carelessness. Pass on: Every fifteenth piece . . . no oftener. And now don't speak to me anymore."

But Franz came over to Herman once more before they went through the gates. "What'll you do?"

"Don't worry about me. First of all, I can look for mistakes; I can bawl out some people; I can let the errors pass."

Franz pushed his bicycle before Herman through the control. Paul had already gone through. The first control took place at the gate of the wall which separated the factory from the fields. This wall towered over the opposite wall which was formed by the factory building. The passageway between these two walls was called the tunnel even though its only ceiling was the sky above. Herman waited for Sievert. Sievert seemed the best companion for the rest of the way. Sievert exchanged a glance with the control guard who gave him his badge and who, because he knew Sievert to be a confidential agent and informer for the Nazi Party, appeared to give him an especially thorough going over. Sievert whistled gaily to himself, although the others felt constrained once they were between the two walls.

The open skies were still above them. But the June sun no longer pierced the dome of soot. There were no more shadows. The rattling of the machines sounded louder in the tunnel than outside, even louder than in the factory building itself.

The balance of the way was through smoke and heavy noise and was like going to the relief of a beleaguered fort. One's own voice sounded strange in the tunnel which led from the first control in the wall outside to the second control at the entrance to the factory itself. Out in the fields there had been a loud and a soft murmur of voices and the soft murmurs had carried as much weight as the loud. But here between the walls only the brazen could be heard:

"We'll take care of them before long. . . ."

"Our Fuehrer will show them soon enough. . . ."

"It's not so long ago that they themselves killed off their generals."

Some thought: "Will it be another Blitz? If so, then we'll never get rid of Hitler."

Others thought: "Is there any point in doing something concrete right here and now? . . . And if the others don't go along? What if I'm the only one? Won't they see right away that it was me? . . . How many are sure to come along?"

There were three in the group who thought: "I'd rather die right here and today than lift a finger against that country." These three were Herman, Franz and Paul.

Herman bumped into Bentsch once more in the locker room. He would have liked to repeat his directions, but now Bentsch avoided his glance. The perspiring walls were covered with black lettered slogans and commands. The loudspeaker blared forth a speech from the factory or from the Reich. The phantom voice followed everyone to his workbench, disembodied but tough:

"You German workers, countrymen, whatever leaves your hands today . . . world Jewry and Russia at its head . . . Russia against our people allied with the Jews and the bankers. . . ."

No matter how many answers had presented themselves outside the factory walls, only two were possible inside: "Heil" and "Silence." Herman looked for Abst before they went into their department. Herman worked in the second assembly hall and Abst in the foundry. Abst's forehead was wrinkled with a network of furrows as if a wind had passed over it. He was greenish. . . . I also look greenish in this light, thought

Herman. Paul passed him on his way to the foundry. His forehead was smooth. Herman noticed for the first time today that Paul's forehead was the only part of his face which was not furrowed and wrinkled. He also looked greenish in the lamp light, but green or pink, Paul always looked like a little plum pit. There just wasn't any kind of light which might have changed him.

Franz loitered at the door until Herman passed him. He said: "Spengler is going into the control room with Kress to do the loading. He will let us know how Kress reacts."

Fritz Enders relieved the man who had his job on the night shift. He checked against his tally sheet the material which came rolling out of the workrooms. Everybody in the division knew that he was the brother-in-law and friend of Sievert and this relationship left no doubt as to what to expect of him. However witty and cheerful he was on the street, as soon as he came in here he no longer found anything to laugh at. He was sharper and more conscientious than was called for in his job. It was impossible for something to escape him. He checked the samples not only for proof of skill or carelessness but also for the attitude of the worker. After making the necessary sampling he sent the cases on into the assembly halls. There the separate pieces were assembld into the two main sections of the hand grenades.

In the second assembly hall Herman tested the grenades which were already assembled and loaded. After he had put his chalk mark on the cases, they rolled to the last assembly bench. There the caps were screwed on and the press stencilled each completed piece.

Herman started. He thought: "Here the hammer is too short. But that might be an accident. This is the balance of work from the night shift. I'll take it out. Then it will be easier to pass the work of our people." Later on he thought: "I should have let it pass anyway." He had put aside the piece whose hammer was too short to reach the percussion cap. The faulty mechanism would be replaced and the grenade would explode as anticipated. The battlefront passed exactly through this point.

Without looking over at him Herman sensed where Franz was sitting. Franz felt just as strongly that his friend was in the same room with him. Suddenly the loudspeaker blared and although his place was at the farthest end of the hall Franz felt himself drawn more closely to Herman. The mounting of the loudspeaker in their hall was a surprise.

"Countrymen, we are crossing the river L. The Russians are five times

as strong as we are. They are holding on to the shore. They are determined to hold their position at all costs!"

From his seat at the furthest end of the hall Franz glanced over at the assembly bench. Shots rumbled and exploded through the radio. Apprehension and tension mounted in the faces and in the hands of the workers.

"Now, countrymen, our first soldier touches the enemy shore, he has been hit, our men push forward . . . the Russians defend themselves desperately . . . you German workers at home, whatever everyone of you does in this minute. . . ."

A new load of completed pieces rolled up. This load came from the new shift, from his own people. Herman looked for defects as for gold nuggets. Why hadn't Abst understood how to cool the spring—too slowly so that it would lose its resiliency? But someone like Bentsch, surely he must have understood everything. He himself had explained it all as they walked along. Why, Bentsch himself had even suggested it. He had done the very same thing in the last World War. He had even taken part in the 1917 munitions strike. The issue had remained the same. Bentsch had understood that earlier in the day. He even had understood it between the Landstrasse and the tunnel. Had anything special happened in the meantime? Was there a different duty now? Had fear become a different fear? Was death a different death? Was life harder to lose?

"Perhaps," thought Herman as his hands worked independently of his thoughts. "Perhaps, if one believes a little less firmly. Perhaps one is not even aware that his belief is slackening. One begins to realize it only when fear grows stronger. Why haven't I found a single defect? Where are they, Moser, Doerr, and old Abst? Young Abst had been sure of them. This load is from their section. I can't find a thing wrong; everything is in order. And Abst had been particularly sure of these three. Perhaps he himself lost his nerve and with him the three others."

From his work station Franz could not see the disappointment on Herman's face. But he did feel his own first mighty excitement fade away. Now it became clear to him how apart he was. The outside world quietly continued moving along. With a few movements of his hands he had withdrawn from the everyday life borne by the rest of the men about him. He had minutely shortened the hammer so that it could not hit the percussion cap. This tiny differential in length separated him immeasurably from all other people.

Herman had thrust his disappointment behind him. What he now had in his hands was unquestionably a greeting from Paul. Paul in another de-

partment was separated from him by two walls. His old face was furrowed up to his forehead. Paul had no time to picture how his hand grenade would inevitably explode before arrival at its destination. But within himself he felt fresh and youthful as he pursed his lips and held his drill at an incorrect angle. His dried out heart pulsed warmly like in the old days.

Noontime arrived. Irregular beams of dusty sunlight broke through the artificial light. The lines and wrinkles in the men's faces had long since been etched in soot.

The loudspeakers droned on during the midday pause.

"The nation which impudently calls itself socialist has allied itself with the sacks of gold and the Jewish bankers. From this night on it is the most important link in the capitalist encirclement of our fatherland. This break in our relations was inevitable. Our Fuehrer avoided it as long as was compatible with our honor and our future. The great hour has struck. From now on every factory is an arsenal of the German people. The forge must always remain red hot."

Sievert looked sharply from one face to the other.

"Study me well," thought Herman, "try to ferret out whether I still am the same fellow described on your list: a former Red, who recanted just in time. Who saw the error of his ways. You and I, we both, Sievert, know the meaning of this day. The last, the great test."

The oldest worker in Herman's section, Straub, whom everyone called granddaddy, grumbled: "Who can figure what it's all about. . . ."

New red placards covered the walls of the section when the men came back from lunch. Any carelessness would be punished severely because every error threatened the lives of German soldiers. Any word of doubt would be punished like mutiny in the Wehrmacht. It was said that a man by the name of Betz had been arrested. He had let slip a derogatory remark. It was rumored he was already in Lager Osthofen.

Herman could no more than Franz, no more than any other person, maintain that highest pitch of excitement. When he was back at his post his heart had become as cold as it had previously been warm. He slid back into every day life, only now it was even more so. Hands worked as usual. The old faces were as dull and tired as always. He glanced over at Franz. Although Herman was generally the stronger and more determined of the two, he now drew courage from that quiet familiar face. Franz looked as goodnatured and lethargic as ever.

But Franz was now prepared to feel a hand on his shoulder as he was

being led away under arrest. By now the completed grenades must have reached Kress. The engineer could find the defects in his sample tests. And if he found the same defect twice he might become suspicious. The series would be investigated. If it was discovered that the spring was too weak in several specimens, then there could be no question of unintentional error. The whole series might be withdrawn as a precautionary measure. But Herman, who thought he knew Kress, did not think the latter would make a report. During recent years Kress had withdrawn completely within himself. However, it was certainly easier for a man like Kress to overlook the actions of another than to undertake direct action himself.

A certain Schmidt stepped in. He waved at Sievert. Franz thought: "This is it." Would there be a general work stoppage? And if they took him away, would his neighbor's hands continue working just as if nothing had happened?

Sievert worked at the end of the hall near the passage way to the testing station. He, like everyone else, had his own special work. His close attention to his work encompassed another still sharper alertness; he kept his eye on everyone. Franz looked as indolent and sleepy as usual as Sievert quickly went over to Schmidt. He thought: "Well, it seems as if Herman had made a mistake after all. Kress put through a report." Franz reviewed his life in the minute it took Schmidt and Sievert to walk over to Herman. They had almost arrived there when Franz thought of his wife. He saw Lotte's disfigured eye as she had forgotten to cover it under her hair that morning. He also saw his little step-daughter, Anni, whom he loved as his own. He thought: "Lotte has had bad luck in love for the second time, although it will not hurt her as much today as it did the first time. I never was her great love."

Schmidt laid his hand on Herman's shoulder. Sievert said something and laughed. Then he went back to his work and Schmidt left the room. If Herman paled, it was hidden beneath the grime. Nothing could be seen on his face except a sharp alertness.

Herman could no longer hide from himself the fact that his advice had not been followed. He decided to do something about it himself. At various intervals he would hammer the mechanism so that it would no longer be strong enough to explode.

Franz had decided that under no circumstances would he lose his composure. By now he was convinced that Herman had judged Kress correctly. But it was Herman who no longer was sure of himself. Since hardly anyone had cooperated, it was possible that Kress had not found any defects, but if

he had and reported on them, then it would be that much easier to detect the sabotage. If Kress had made a report, they could be nabbed as they left the factory so that there would be no general disturbance. Kress had no reason to fear anything for himself. Who could, after all, pin anything on Kress after the cases had left the testing station? One the other hand, Kress, who knew the work of the factory right down to the minutest detail, might conceivably figure out for himself just how he could be suspected. It was exactly for this reason perhaps that Kress might be more fearful than the others. The others had failed and Kress had at least as much fear of death as they. He, like all the others, would want to see his wife and child again.

"I shall see you both again tonight," thought Kress. "You will see me again, and you will never notice that I am no longer the same person you greeted last night. My little one will greet me with the fondness I would like to receive from her mother. With little kisses on my ears and on the tip of my nose. Are those ears and that nose part of a mask fitted over yesterday's face? Or was it yesterday that the mask was fitted over today's face? My wife will watch our embrace quietly, she will pour tea and chatter about all sorts of things and she will continue thinking to herself what she once in her bitterness told me to my face: 'Once you wanted to reform the whole world and that is why I loved you, but the world has changed you.' Contemptuous and resigned, cheerfully and politely, she will prepare my dinner. And I shall have to leave it that way. I will not be able to explain to her that particularly today can she be well satisfied with me."

Right from the start he had suspected that not everything might go smoothly today. He had even thought of Herman once or twice. Such a person most assuredly must have instigated action at some time or other. If he had not been successful thus far, he would be today. And under this factory roof there must certainly be several Hermans. . . . But one test followed another without incident. In accordance with regulations he sent samples of each shipment out to the proving grounds after he had finished with his measuring instruments. He was not astonished when no report came from there either.

Spengler, who helped load and unload the cases which rolled in for the final control and were then sent on for packing, paid close attention to his own work. At the same time he did not take his eyes off Kress. But all he could make out was that the corners of Kress' mouth curled more and more perceptibly. Suddenly, around noon, shortly after the rest period, something

new appeared in his face. Spengler realized what it was that brought about the change: Nothing had been added to the face, rather, something had disappeared. For the breadth of a second, the lips were not curled superciliously or scoffingly, or whatever else it was that gave the face its characteristic expression. For a few seconds—as long as it took Kress to measure a few parts of the mechanism that he was testing. The change had disappeared when Spengler looked at Kress a second time. Spengler could merely suspect how Kress' face might have looked, if. . . . "If," thought Spengler, "not only for a few seconds but for all time that expression had remained in Kress' face that had been mirrored there for a short second."

Kress did not reject the piece, but added it to the shipment going out. Spengler breathed deeply. "He's with us; he's not going to report anything." —Kress had already motioned his helper to push the next mechanism on to the testing table. Once more his mouth drooped with cynicism or fatigue. Kress had two faces mounted one on the other and each closely resembled the other, but only one could be genuine. He paid no attention to his helper who stood a few feet away from him—today as always.

In the locker room that afternoon Spengler went over to Herman:

"Kress discovered it but he is keeping mum. Don't worry."

Herman could not reach either Paul or Franz to reassure them. Both would have to suffer a little longer the fear that they might be quietly arrested on leaving the factory. His own relief made him realize how happy he was to know that in two hours he would see once more all that was so dear to him—the boat landing, the willow clumps, his wife at the door and the little boy who rubbed against his leg like a puppy. He also realized that he had been just as afraid as the others, perhaps a little more so. He loved life even more dearly than the others; that is why it hurt him more to give it up.

The men had to listen to another speech before they could leave. Even though the voice, representing the Board of Directors, came from a human throat, it lost its human qualities in the loudspeaker. Once more it hammered into everyone's brain the significance of the alliance between Russia and England and the United States:

"Now the International stands revealed as the secret covenant of the Jews to seize all treasures of the world and to suck the very marrow out of the bones of those nations disinherited by nature. No wonder then that that base and mean commercial spirit, the British voracity for profit, can unite

with hatred against God and faith. Now it is up to us to save Christianity for Europe if the English do not hesitate to ally themselves with the Anti-Christ in order to improve their business. What meaning have treaties and pacts for people of such viewpoint? For the Russians they are only paper to be torn up at will. . . ."

Herman heard behind him a faint grumble. "That must be old Straub again," he surmised as the loudspeaker continued blaring forth:

". . . For a long time they thought they could fool us . . . we are such goodnatured, simple people that it is easy to arm behind our backs. And then to attack us like the Blitz out of a clear sky. But they wrote their bill without the host. Our Fuehrer held his patience as long as possible. He wished to save our martyred people from the terrors of this additional war. But when he saw that the enemy was counting on our stupidity, that he planned from hour to hour to attack us, then our Fuehrer decided to take the surprise into his own hands."

Herman discovered Bentsch ahead of him and a little over to one side. Bentsch was just closing his mouth, which had been opened wide in a "Heil." Now Bentsch appeared as flabbergasted at his own cry as a bewitched person might be astonished at the brutish roar bursting from his throat. Herman also saw Kress in one of the reserved seats up in the front of the hall. Kress' face to the very tip of his nose was frozen in an expression of arrogance and indifference. On this icy crust there was no reflection of any outside world nor were there any cracks to permit someone to peek inside.

Herman was first through the control. He was accompanied by Sievert as he had been that morning. He did not look around for anyone, he avoided encounters. He pedalled as fast as he could to keep ahead of the main rush and to get home quickly. The fields seemed to stretch endlessly as soon as he escaped the fog of soot. Many more guards were posted than usual. Everything else remained unchanged. Herman recognized this plainly, as if returning from a distant voyage after a long absence. The towers and gables of the city across the river were clear and sharp as if they were eternal or as if seen in a dream. The willow clumps along the embankment, the bulrushes, the smell of water—all this was as always. It was much easier to think of himself as no longer a part of the scene. The afternoon was still light and warm as he reached his village. But here, upstream, on the east side of the Rhine Bridge, the villages and the fields, the church towers and the cornfields began imperceptibly to fade away. The first day neared its end. Time, that might have been expected to end forever, flowed on. It was already clear

that this eventful day would be followed by another—less strenuous, less extraordinary.

## II

Herman lay on his bed. He had made all sorts of plans for this free morning but when he tried to rise early, every fiber and every nerve forced him to remain in bed.

At the factory he was considered irreplaceable and indispensable. A large number of the workers were foreigners and prisoners of war. Due to his ability, there was little friction in his department. Although he avoided open familiarity, there seemed to exist from the very beginning an unspoken understanding between himself and the workers.

After an interval during which they had avoided each other, old Bentsch had once said to Herman: "You yourself can see there is no sense in doing anything. The prisoners themselves are putting up no struggle. They're producing grenades for use against their own country."

The more earnestly he talked, the more stubbornly Herman kept silent.

"When only a few take action, they can be shot and a few new people are put in their places. We are too few. No one does anything, no one will take a chance with us, that is why it is all so senseless. And you fellows? You had plans. Did you do anything that day?"

Paul had long since been transferred into another department in which a few old reliable workers were scattered among the foreigners. And Franz had long ago been drafted. He had disappeared so suddenly that Herman felt an indescribable emptiness in his heart where one usually feels sorrow. The same emptiness overwhelmed him each time he pedalled past the junction of the Schmiedheimerstrasse and the Hauptstrasse without meeting Franz.

Drowsily Herman now listened to the sweet little voice of his wife, humming evenly like a bee or a cricket. He heard his child rattle something. His wife stopped short to scold and then went on singing. She did not start at the beginning, but resumed from the very note on which she had broken off to rebuke the child. This made Herman still more sleepy. His thoughts on awakening and on retiring were always the same.

He pondered: "What's to be done? The old order to which I would like to hold fast is finished. It's been shattered and become lost and when it

does bob up here and there, and you try to cling to it, it immediately slips away and disappears from sight. The feelings that agitated me so strongly that June day were but a faint memory to the others. You can't appraise others by your own standards. Everyone's education must begin from the ground up; and like the truth seekers of old, you must inculcate the seed of doubt in mankind. But how did they succeed in this mission?"

Herman felt relaxed only when he heard his wife's singing on the other side of the closed door. Her melancholy and yet gay little voice sounded like a cricket or a bee, and before long he seemed to be in a meadow or among the clouds or in a clover field with the sound of churning millwheels in his ears.

Once more his wife stopped singing. This time she reproached the boy for not unbolting the door fast enough. A guest had arrived. Then Herman heard his wife speak with another woman, whose voice seemed to remind him of something. Marie came softly into his room in order not to awaken him if he were still asleep. Since his eyes were open she said:

"The woman who was here once before has come calling. She's related to the people who leased us the land on the river bank. She wants something from you. I believe it's the screw from her garden hose, which must be lying in the arbor."

When Herman came out, his little boy was staring at the child that had come with the visitor. His glance also rested on the child. There was something in its eyes that sparkled so quietly and clearly, in its round forehead, even in the carriage of its head with its blond braids, which reminded him rather of the woman as she looked ten years ago than as she now stood before him. The woman wore a sardonic smile. Her hair fell in artful curls over one half of her face to hide her injured eye. Everyone knew that.

She said: "I cannot buy a replacement for that lost screw. So will you be good enough, please, to look again in your tool kit?"

Herman saw the trace of a bitter and harsh glance in her healthy eye. He nodded and said:

"We can go out and look. It might be around some place."

Herman, the woman and the children walked towards the garden plot through the fields behind the house. The little girl ran off and picked something. She knelt under the fleecy spring sky. It looked as if everything, the clouds and the bushes and the young delicately green land had gently enveloped her tiny figure.

Herman said: "Your child will be as beautiful as you were, Lotte. How proud we were of you! What ambitious plans we had in those days!"

Lotte answered quietly: "It is really a comfort to look at her."

The two entered the little garden arbor, which Herman had started to paint the previous Sunday for the spring season. They did not look for any screw. They sat down on the bench.

Herman said: "For a whole year now I have been yearning for someone I could talk to freely. When a man is always isolated he gives rein to thoughts that can strangle him, even when, as I, he is used to loneliness."

Lotte said: "That's precisely the reason why I came."

They fell silent as if being silent together were also a relief.

Herman began: "Have you still heard nothing from Franz?"

She crinkled her eyes so deeply that her injured one disappeared in little folds of skin. At this moment she no longer thought of drawing her hair over it. She said:

"No more than you. That day of national mourning, decreed after Stalingrad, will also have been meant for him."

She scraped the sand with her shoe, then she continued:

"By now I am accustomed to losing whatever is dear to me. Every heart must have a tough core that always grows back. So many pieces of my heart have been torn away that nothing can be left of it anymore. And yet something always grows back so that I can feel despair again and even pleasure. First, in the beginning, the Nazis murdered my friend. That was in the summer of 1933. Now they sent Franz to the eastern front, where he may have frozen or been left lying somewhere to bleed to death."

Herman said quickly: "That you cannot know."

The woman choked back her answer. She looked at him attentively. She felt that his faith was stronger than hers. He would not accept the inevitable. He would not let hatred and sorrow take their own course.

"I do not believe," said Lotte, "that Franz will rise from the dead on the third day."

Herman answered sharply: "I am still far from believing that he is really dead."

"But he was in the midst of it. The whole Stalingrad Army is kaput."

"I went through the last war from the first to the very last day. I know what it means when they say: 'Loss of an army corps.' Whole groups just don't die. Some are always lying around in holes with broken ribs or shot up legs. Some manage to get to the other side just in time. And plenty are

taken prisoner. Provided that the whole Stalingrad business is true. This time the Nazis couldn't arouse us with Heils and flags. So they are trying to trick us in a new way: with half mast and funeral marches."

The little girl looked into the arbor. Herman said: "Get the boy. He knows where to find pussywillows you can pick." They watched as the children went off across the fields speckled with sunlight.

"Her father was murdered," said Lotte in a thin, distant voice. "Most likely they got her stepfather, too. What'll she make of her life, such as it is?"

"Something better. After all, we've shown her about everything that is vicious and all the suffering that can possibly be endured."

"Not everything was foul," said Lotte. Thoughtlessly she threw back her hair as in the olden days. Between the crumbled lids of her injured eye there twinkled the same sparkle as in her round healthy one.

Herman said: "Yes, but the good did not prevail. That's why it was wrong."

Lotte answered harshly: "What did you do to counteract this? Were you less weak? On the first day of the war against the Soviet Union you men were ready for anything. You did do something then."

Herman thought: "So Franz did tell her."

Lotte went on: "But then, because you few remained alone, you lost courage. Franz had to throw those very grenades against the Russians. Paul continues to work in his factory. And you, you do your work so well that they declared you essential."

"Yes," said Herman, "I'm doing it so well that I shall still be here at the propitious moment." He used the very expression he had always loathed. And Lotte gave him the answer he formerly had given himself.

"When will that be? The right moment was here long ago."

"It was indeed here, but we weren't ready. For us three, yes. We thought that all we had to do was to set the wheels in motion. To give a signal. We thought the others felt as we did. That was wrong. Our contact with the others had been lost."

They heard the children shouting as they raced from the shore to the arbor. Breathing heavily, the little girl paused in front of her mother. She said:

"The pussywillows feel like baby chicks."

"They feel like pussycats," said the boy tartly, "and that is how they get their name."

They all went back into the village, the children walking ahead. Herman said:

"Now we cannot continue talking together and we just got started. . . ."

"This was good for me," said Lotte. "It was worth my while coming."

Herman said to his wife who stood in front of the door: "We looked through the whole arbor, but did not find any screw."

Marie said, after Lotte and her daughter had left: "I am happy that the old quarrel about the pump is finally laid to rest."

To share with someone the burden of one's thoughts, merely to walk alongside someone bearing the same burden, seems to lighten its weight. Right now Paul had the advantage over Herman. He was happy when he met Herman on the way to work. Herman generally avoided visits and so it was only when they met in this way that Paul could hear some news or get an interpretation of the news. Paul never mulled over anything very much. He was not frequently disappointed and not often too full of anticipation. He did not easily become upset. Whatever Herman explained he accepted at face value. He believed in Herman and he had always believed in him. Little did he know how many headaches it cost Herman until he himself felt satisfied with an interpretation.

Paul was neither confused nor depressed by the howls of triumph which burst from the throats of his fellow men and from the metallic loudspeakers in recognition of all the victories and advances. Nor, when these voices became less raucous, when they cajoled and comforted instead of threatened, when the people waited nervously for news from Stalingrad, was he particularly astonished. The defeat of the German army surprised him no more than its stalemate before Moscow during the winter of the first year. He had never been able to imagine that Hitler might get to Moscow. He had always believed that at some point the war would take the course it apparently was taking now. Why? That the Soviet Union might be defeated appeared to him just as impossible as that the sun and the moon and the stars might fall out of the heavens. There might be retreats and sacrifices, just as there were, after all, eclipses of the sun and shooting stars . . . his sacrifice had been his only son. But the law could never be broken.

Herman was happy when he saw Paul among the crowd of bicyclers —even when it was at a distance—a hairy little man, full of confidence and courage. One afternoon he rang his bell under Paul's kitchen window. The events of the last few days had been such as to stifle one if one remained all

alone. It was even a good idea to visit Paul again. Sievert, that Nazi informer, had recently asked casually:

"What's suddenly happened between you and Paul? You used to be one heart and soul."

Paul's wife said joyously as she opened the door: "Well, well, it's good to see you here again!"

Herman stepped in, looked around and sat down. Paul mumbled something out of his corner. The room sparkled like a mirror, the glass panes and the floor shone. Paul's dirty shoes rested on a newspaper his wife had shoved under them, since he was too lazy to pull them off.

"You know from Paul," said Herman, "that we no longer have time like we used to for a cup of coffee and a little chat."

"How long is this supposed to go on?" asked the woman. "What do you think, Herman?"

Herman looked at her. Three images seemed to nest in her face. The first, which glimmered through the next two layers, had traces of former sweetness and motherliness. The next had deep lines of misery and bitterness. And the uppermost was deeply furrowed with new lines of hopelessness and worries and something else which Herman could not understand immediately.

"God alone knows," Herman answered haphazardly.

Paul shot him a warning glance from his corner and Herman understood that Paul was just as alone as he. Though Herman had his cheerful little boy and his young, carefree and constantly singing wife, and though Paul had his fat old wife, forever scrubbing, and his dead son, they were both very much alone. The only difference was that Herman was more depressed by being alone. Paul accepted even this condition as a law of nature, unpleasant but irrevocable. There happen to be people like you and me, and in times like these they must be alone, and there's just nothing to be done about it.

Paul's wife set malt coffee and cups on her oilcloth; she immediately wiped off the drops which spilled over while she poured. "I guess she is such a stickler for order," thought Herman, "because she, too, senses the great disorder in the world and would like to remedy it."

She said: "But now things can't suddenly go wrong. What happened to the Italians cannot happen to us. After all, we are a different sort. Such a thing just couldn't happen. All this misery could not have been in vain."

"A misfortune is not in vain," observed Herman.

"You talk like a priest," Paul's wife replied.

She felt herself a member of that community of mothers who had lost their sons. This kinship was her pride. The three talked and drank their coffee. As Herman rose to leave, Paul said: "I'll accompany him to the bridge."

Herman pushed his wheel. Paul walking alongside, pronounced:

"This is the end for that blackguard of a Mussolini."

"No, not quite," said Herman, "since the Nazis managed to pilot him out of his prison."

Paul remarked: "Well, then Hitler and Mussolini can spend their short reprieve from disaster together. Soon our Germans will be able to see for themselves what it's like when an idol falls."

They remained standing in front of the Main River Bridge. They stared for a second into the water where the rings of sunlight did not seem to fade, but rather seemed to sink.

Herman said: "We should take some action."

Paul nodded. All the experiences of the past years crowded through his mind: disappointments, objections, subterfuges, the many insistent questions: "Is this the right moment? Are others coming along with us?" Simultaneously with these thoughts, he passed in review the people he had to judge. He knew these people through and through. It took him no longer to arrive at a decision than it did to nod affirmatively:

"This is, in spite of all, the right moment. We must do something."

In Paul's house there lived a boy by the name of Otto Schanz. Before accepting Herman's proposal, Paul dwelled on the various people he knew: some were frightened, some cowardly, some degenerate, some stalwart, some traitorous. Among all these Schanz also came to mind. In the very first year of the war Schanz had lost a leg and suffered a few other injuries. He was disabled for military service but not for factory work. Formerly he had been magnificent and dazzling and always gay and brash. He had been involved in countless love affairs and brawls. And even in the war, before he was hit, he had been wild and brave. Now he was moody and reserved and generally alone. Nothing was left of all his past manliness except his thick black hair and his heavy black eyebrows and his erstwhile sparkling but now cold blue eyes. He spent time with Paul although he generally avoided other people in the house. They probed each other until they discovered their

unanimity: The war would end soon and badly and with it would come the end of Hitler.

From the very first, and quite unconsciously, Paul seemed to seek in Schanz a sort of substitute for his dead son; it was but a poor substitute, the fragmentary remains of a bungled life. Paul treated Schanz as he had never treated his own son. He would not have brooded so much about his son had he remained alive. He was as concerned over young Schanz as if he had been his own son who had returned from the brink of despair. But Paul's son had never returned, and so Paul could no longer worry about his own boy. Instead he had to teach Schanz that even if one could no longer rove freely, the world still contained unknown areas which one could study albeit from an armchair. The more attentively the boy listened, the more Paul warmed up. Sometimes, muffled in blankets they lay in bed with the receiver Schanz had patched together to hear the forbidden foreign broadcasts. Because Schanz could not climb the steep stairs to the top floor where his family lived, the tenants had generously given him the use of the toolshed in the courtyard which they formerly had used jointly.

One day Paul gave Schanz the leaflet which Herman had passed on to him. Schanz was by nature quickwitted and cunning. The wit he formerly had used for all sorts of pranks and adventures, he now employed to such advantage that one might have thought a dozen people participated in his activity. Constrained and crippled as he was, he now enjoyed influencing many people. Rumors and resentment and astonishment among the people helped disseminate the contents of the leaflet even though Schanz could only print a few dozen copies on his toy printing set. Hearings and house-searches followed. Some few were arrested, who for one reason or another were on the suspected list, but neither Schanz nor Paul was among them. Herman himself never met the newcomer whom Paul had found. He never discovered what sort of person he was. He knew only that Paul would not choose the wrong sort. When Paul brought Herman reports of the foreign news they had heard on the radio, Herman analyzed them as if this unknown boy, who had learned to think independently so late in life and so abruptly, were also listening. Herman had hidden a small book, proscribed by the Nazis, in the walls of his house. He gave it up now. He asked Paul what Schanz had said about the book. But Paul was not the man who could observe keenly; he merely replied:

"He was happy about it," or "He has never read anything like it."

During the fall of that same year Herman was lying on the warm sand of the river bank one Sunday morning. His boy was throwing flat pebbles into the water and seeing how often he could make them skip before they sank. Herman was too lazy to raise his head. On a level with his eyes he saw the reflection of the city on the opposite shore shimmering in the river; in the mirrored reflection the tallest church spire almost reached over to him on the right bank. The bells chimed as if a sunken city were ringing forth.

He paid no attention to the faint sound of a motor nearby. Neither did he pay attention to the fact that the boat came ashore behind him. He started when his name was called.

For years a sudden shout, the appearance of a stranger in some remote locality, the unexpected pressure of a hand on his shoulder, all these tiny casual incidents which had no meaning other than the approach of individual human beings in the community of mankind, were for Herman a warning signal which might proclaim any danger. He was a hundredfold more prepared for danger since he had begun to unite individuals through a contact man, who was shifted constantly and who did not belong to any single group so that no one person could know another. Herman alone knew everyone. Paul knew what he had to know, and Schanz knew his assignment.

Old Bentsch had put in an appearance one day. He had long felt oppressed because he had made such numerous promises that June day on the way to the factory but had not kept faith. He continued rationalizing why he had done nothing. It had been clear to him at once that absolutely no one would cooperate, not even those who had promised faithfully to do so since such sabotage must be properly prepared. It could not be done spontaneously. When his neighbor showed him a leaflet one day which he suddenly had found in his toolchest, Bentsch knew that if any action were still being undertaken anywhere Herman might be participating in it.

Bentsch approached Herman: "Listen, that day, you remember which dav I mean, that was only foolhardy. But if you are doing something sensible for which you need someone on whom you can rely absolutely, then please think of me."

Herman had answered: "I don't know what you are talking about, Bentsch."

But Herman suggested to Paul that he find an opportunity to contact Bentsch.

Thus they had slowly grown to a group of ten, twelve people. Some-

times it seemed as if in that large locality other groups had developed individually. Then suddenly many people would be pulled out of their homes at night or arrested as they left their jobs. Out of their own circle two were arrested with whom the others had had no contact. It could not be discovered if the arrested people had been chosen indiscriminately or if they had been under some suspicion, or if they had been under observation for a long time, or if some totally unsuspected person was a stool pigeon. It was also possible that such an informer had been arrested merely for the sake of appearances.

Those who remained were left ignorant of the answers to these questions which were of such vital importance to them. And no newcomer joined their ranks. There were none to take the places of those who had left. A sort of no man's land—treacherous, ominous, inscrutable—surrounded their tightly knit group and separated it from the Nazis.

In the beginning voices from that no man's land had said: "Impossible to do anything against the Nazis," or "You see, once again we got stymied; they even rescued the Duce again. Undeniably, that was some feat!" Now those voices said: "The war will end even without our doing something about it," or "After we have suffered so much, we don't want to kick the bucket now when it will soon be all over." It seemed as if the echo, instead of fading in the valleys, withdrew back up into the hills.

And so when Herman heard his name called that Sunday morning as he lay on the warm sand, he thought: "Well, here it is." At first he made believe he had not heard. Then in feigned indifference he raised himself on his elbows.

He might have known that the police would not be so leisurely about an arrest! At first he did not recognize the man coming so unexpectedly through the sandpit. Kress had taken a boatride that morning. Now he sat down on the ground next to Herman.

"I have always wanted to speak with you—alone. While out riding in my boat, I discovered where you like to play with your boy Sunday mornings."

Herman did not answer. He looked from Kress' face which he knew well enough to his tie pin—a beautifully delicate little Swastika, so modest, so unostentatious that it appeared unimportant to some, and reassuring to others.

"I guess," said Kress, "you have often wondered since that evening, more than six years ago, when we met in Frankfort to exchange information

on Heisler's escape, whether I had disappeared from the scene. I mean from the field of battle."

Herman did not answer. The tiny sparkle from the tiepin, the white shirt front, his visitor's entire appearance fascinated him.

Kress waited a second for an answer. Since there was none, he continued: "Compared with today, the day on which I met you, and all days before and since, seem almost happy. The worst, the most terrible dangers which we could imagine at that time now appear childish, adolescent. In those days we dared to act. We were full of hope and we believed that because some action had succeeded, the main issue had been resolved. What appeared to us, Herman, as the turning point was in reality only an unimportant little episode. We survived it. Afterwards it appeared silly to me to gamble my good position, my reputation, still unmarred as far as the Nazis were concerned, to gamble all this for trivial escapades. It seemed right to wait for the proper turning point. That the tide will turn eventually, I am convinced."

Kress waited. But since Herman still remained silent, he continued anew: "My dear Herman, I know that you have understood me correctly. Particularly you, otherwise you yourself would no longer be still free. You cannot suddenly make me believe that you have changed completely. I understand human nature. . . . Devil take it, Herman, won't you talk with me? I did not come here to listen to your silence! You know me as well as I know you."

"What do you want?" asked Herman. "What do you want me to tell you? I don't know any more than you." Herman thought to himself: "I have vouched for this man twice already. All I know about him is that he has kept his word twice: First, during Heisler's escape. And then, Spengler watched him carefully that day in June while he worked on his tests. According to Spengler, Kress discovered the defects and kept silent. Kress never realized that those tests were also a test for him. . . ."

Kress went on: "I have not remained quite as aloof as you may believe. I am certain, Herman, that you had your hand in certain affairs. And because I was convinced of that, I made believe that I never noticed a thing. You know, Herman, what I am talking about. It might have meant your end that time, if I hadn't kept my mouth shut. You and a few of your friends. During those days, Herman, you know which I am referring to, they say there was a whole flood of arrests throughout the Reich. Also in our factory, not only in our section but over in Hoechst. There were others beside yourself who had the same thoughts of protest; not very many, to be sure, not

so many but that they could easily be picked out and beaten to death or sent into a Lager. And because there were so few it was possible for everything to coast along the old path. Nobody excited himself. Our countrymen still preferred to die a hero's death on the battlefield instead of being clubbed to death in the prison courtyard or dying some other way in the Gestapo prison cellar. And now, even when it is beginning to dawn on them that the thousand year Reich is approaching its end, they'd rather live to see what is yet to come. Formerly they thought: 'No matter what I do, everything will still continue after me.' Now they think: 'The game is about up so why should I risk anything at this point?' "

The little boy came running up: "We have to go home. Mother is already waiting with our meal."

Herman got up.

"My jacket is lying in the boat over there," said Kress. "Will you bring it to me, my boy?" Kress jumped up, grasped Herman's sleeve and said: "How loathsome it is to think that way! I am not that way. I don't think that way! And you don't think that way either, Herman. And I don't want you to think it of me. I don't want to get away with anything. When this is all over, I don't want to say to myself: 'Well, I survived.' I want to act with you. I know more of what is going on than you do and I can help."

The little boy waved the jacket from the boat. Now there was no more time to be lost. Kress spoke vehemently and quickly: "Don't say that you are not up to something. If that is the way you feel about it, then continue your silence. I cannot force you to have confidence in me, but I know that you are still the same. I know that you are still active. Last year when my colleagues, foaming with wrath, showed me your leaflet, then I knew. It was clear to me on whose traces I had stumbled. I was afraid for you. But then, after so and so many arrests, they quieted down again. I guess they thought they had caught the right ones.

"I have now told you everything. I have not kept back anything. I cannot do more. Please think about it—if I can help, what I can do. Send someone to me. Many, many people speak to me every day on the way to work and in the evening on the way home. I'll notice soon enough who comes from you." He patted the boy, who had arrived with the jacket. Then he added in a changed voice: "So I'll be waiting."

He searched in his jacket for some cigarettes and walked off in the direction of his boat. The little boy pulled his father in the opposite direction toward home. Herman heard the put-put of the motor as it faded upstream

on the Rhine. He thought: "We must try him out carefully so that even if the worst comes to the worst he won't be able to spill too much."

As long as her son had still been home, Paul's wife had always made herself look young so that no one could notice how much older she was than her husband. Paul was not only younger, but also much smaller and thinner. After the two of them remained alone, however, she no longer put any value in looking youthful. She appeared to confuse the two men of her family, or they seemed to melt into one for her. She scolded Paul for bringing in dirt or for losing his handkerchiefs. She scolded when he came home too late or forgot to make a purchase. She could not bear Schanz because he was quick tempered and fresh and because her husband spent an unnecessary amount of time in his shack. She liked Herman. He had been good to her in that awful hour when she had lost her self-control. And he had understood that it was best not to refer to it again. He was there when you needed him, and he was not there when he was not needed. He was a decent person.

After all influential pressure and all efforts had failed and Paul finally was drafted, she felt afraid in the empty apartment, which looked still emptier because now she had time enough to clean endlessly and there was no one to bring in dirt. She sewed for hours in an army workshop. She patched and darned all her husband's things when she got home.

Paul wrote her shortly after his departure. He was at a training camp in central Germany where he expected to remain for some time yet. She felt unspeakably empty and lonesome. She waited for mail. Whenever she came home she looked for some new unnecessary work. She ripped up her mattress, she emptied out the seaweed with which it was filled, and refilled it evenly. She said there were lumps on Paul's side. Now she finally had time to tidy up everything just as if they were newly married. At night, when she came in, her heart beat violently. Perhaps there would be a white spot on the floor, a letter shoved under the door.

Finally one day the white spot was there. She walked over to the afternoon light at the window. But when she looked at the letter more closely, she refused to admit that it was possible. It was impossible that it could have arrived for her. And it was impossible that it could refer to Paul. Perhaps the letter had no significance. It must be a day like other days, a day without mail. Paul had written once and then not again. He could not have been killed. Why, he had just been drafted.

She did not say anything to her neighbor who came in to borrow something. And because the woman stayed to gossip, she even took out her sewing, Paul's oldest pair of pants, and continued to darn them. She went on sewing for a minute or so even after the neighbor had left. When she heard the workers going home, she went downstairs again. She stood in the open housedoor and looked for Herman.

"See what just came," she said.

He cast one glance at the death notice between her fingers, and then looked at her face, devoid of the pain which pierced him through and through. She asked him sarcastically how one could believe such nonsense.

And it was nonsense. Paul with his sharp, lively little eyes just couldn't be shot full of holes or be lying somewhere, dismembered. His was the very life most urgently needed, on this side of the front and on the other! No grenade could hit Paul. He would certainly pop up somewhere—on his bicycle or at his workbench with his puckered lips, or sitting tranquilly in a corner of his kitchen, where he had sat silently during Herman's last visit.

This time there was no danger that Paul's widow would break forth in uncontrolled despair, in imprecations and abuse as she had when she received news of her son's death. She moved her lips continuously without saying a word. She trembled inwardly, but her emotions never came to the surface. She merely made many fidgety, tremulous movements of her hands.

Just then Schanz came up. Herman could see that he, too, was dismal with misery and sorrow. Several times since Paul had been drafted they had tried to meet. But it was not until today during this unhappy visit that they could scrutinize each other. They nodded and in spite of the circumstances they understood immediately that this was the time and place to make their unobtrusive arrangements for another meeting. They both felt as if any moment now Paul would nod his head once or twice in agreement or might even mumble a question.

"They're coming," said Marie. She had awakened before Herman. On hearing the approaching footsteps she had sat up in bed even before the door bell rang. Many a night Herman had lain awake next to his sleeping wife. He had listened to every sound; in his mind he had frequently heard the police arrive. And then it had become still again. And he had brooded long on what would happen to his wife and son if the police caught him. Two months ago he had thought of fleeing when they suddenly arrested the younger Abst brother. Perhaps Abst would be tortured and would then

reveal from whom he had received the directives. And perhaps through trickery he could be made to give some names in his group. But Abst must have declared that the sentiments he had expressed were his own, for everyone else had been left in peace. Herman had often asked himself if it had been correct to initiate Kress right away. Certainly, twice Kress had been found true, but would such a man be able to keep his mouth shut under duress? In this regard he had more confidence in Abst, who would equal his torturers in cunning and also in physical resistance. What did his cynicism and his reserve avail a man like Kress when death was pitted against life, when he could no longer skate around on thin ice? It was harder for Kress to lose his life than for Abst. Kress' life was full of comforts and he would excuse himself by reasoning it was all useless anyway. Herman thought of Kress as he heard his door bell ring as it only rings when someone presses his thumb on the bell.

He realized in a flash that he could no longer escape. The village was certainly encircled and if he leaped through the window towards the Rhine . . . He recalled the trench behind the house in which a guard had been posted for weeks. And the moon was too bright, a full moon under which one could count the leaves and the shadows. He said as quietly as he could:

"Open the door, Marie."

His wife's eyes were round and dark. She said: "I shall go with the child to my relatives in the Taunus."

Herman had no time now to be amazed. But all of a sudden it was clear to him, even though he no longer could attach importance to it, that his wife had considered the possibility of what was happening now. She had made her plans. Silently she had suspected that he was something beyond the taciturn man who was too lethargic for her youthfulness. The realization did not astound him, he did not even find it strange, time was too short for that. Suddenly she was brightly illuminated by the cone-shaped beam of a flashlight directed against his bed, precisely and only for a moment not to disturb the darkness. The three words: "Come with us!" etched three lines, perhaps forever, on Marie's forehead, which had been as smooth and round as an apple. The buckles glittered on the belts of the three uniforms which were darker than the rest of the room. The little boy had stood up. He slept in his own bed at the foot of his parents' bed. He was still too drunk with sleep to understand and by the time he started to ask questions, his father was already gone. Marie listened as the auto drove along the village street. She pressed the boy back into his bed, and ran to the opened

door, gazing in the direction of the auto, where there was no longer anything to be seen.

Herman drove with his captors over the street on which he had ridden to work year in year out. Now he did not think of home. He felt as if several light years had elapsed rather than a few minutes since he had left home. It seemed to him as if the police car were followed by invisible swarms of workers on the three shifts. He glanced up at the dark corner house. It seemed as if Paul's wife were peering through her curtains like a morning sun crowned with gleaming white tufts. He heard her shout: "He's coming!"

Herman pulled himself together and began to contemplate the possible questions and the proper answers. They certainly had not been under scrutiny. Their group had been too carefully combed out for that. The contact man had been changed frequently. Had they been betrayed by one of their own number? He thought once more: "By Kress? Is that possible?" He refused to let this name take final possession of his suspicions. Why, for instance, not Bentsch, who once before had not kept his promise? Why not little Anton, who was honest, but so young and silly that he might have had his tongue loosened. Why not young Abst in whom the older Abst had such implicit confidence? And this Hartmann, who had been released from a concentration camp? He had been in the movement since childhood. Could he have been softened up?

The moon and the stars had faded during the trip. They drove into Frankfort. Herman thought: "And supposing it is Schanz after all? Paul had brought him in. Paul had sworn by him. Schanz had a peg leg, but is such a peg leg a guarantee? The defiance and the hatred in this boy might be variously interpreted. Life no longer had any meaning for him. His own had no significance, and perhaps neither the lives of others."

When Herman was led into the Gestapo room, a quiet room looking out on a courtyard and shaded by a green linden tree, the sun had already begun to shine over the just and the unjust. The one-armed man behind the desk wore a uniform decorated with medals. His one hand made a derisive gesture of invitation. He looked much younger than Herman. He smiled as he compared the arrested man with the description before him, as if immensely amused at seeing the incarnation of this description. Herman waited nervously for the first words. In the light of the small lamp he saw his own shadow on his dossier. The man behind the desk looked at Herman as if the latter had just dropped from heaven at the right moment. He said:

"Well, now we're well met, my boy."

Herman remained silent. He tried to read as much as possible in that face in order to tailor his answers to fit the man. All he could see on the young face was a sneering amusement, which he could not quite understand. Herman's heart beat evenly now and his head was clear. In his ears there was a slight buzzing, so that he thought for a moment that somewhere, some distance away, a buzzer were being pressed down. However, when this tone did not stop, but instead became imperceptibly stronger, he knew it could only be death drawing closer. He thought: "I don't believe they can torture a man so that he'll betray a cause against his will."

"Are you Herman Schulz?"

"Yes," said Herman.

The official leaned forward. He spoke softly, though obviously amused, and he waited intently for the expression which his surprising news would induce in the face of the prisoner.

"You have been arrested because on June 22, 1941, you actively supported acts of sabotage in your department at the factory and did not report this sabotage."

He continued staring at Herman's face; he could not explain what he found there: unfathomable relief. Since the prisoner remained silent, he continued:

"You need not try, Herman Schulz, to deny your participation. You do not have to think about that at all. We have your fingerprints, so to speak, your call number."

He looked down at the paper. The monotony of the reading was somewhat eased by his tone of satisfaction. "The depositions made right at the place of battle proved that a number of these grenades were made on June 22, 1941, at the factory in Griesheim, Division B, in accordance with the control numbers you yourself, Schulz, marked on them at the said time and place."

Herman thought to himself: "In my scepticism I did Kress and Schanz and Abst an injustice."

As if both men were destined to a common share of triumph and consternation, the face of the one-armed official became more and more confused and unsure as Herman's face became more and more triumphant.

## III

"He's alive," said Lotte, "just imagine, he's alive!"

Marie turned slowly. In her childish face there was a strange joyful

fear. Then her face darkened, she dropped her head as if she but now understood who was alive. Naturally not Herman, her husband. He had long since been murdered, and the dead do not return. She still could not realize that now with the war over and with here and there a husband or a son finding his way back home, that just Herman would remain away forever.

At the time she had never quite comprehended why she should have been so lucky that such a clever, serious, adult like Herman, who had a job and earned money, should cast his eye precisely at her. She had always been considered silly by everyone; by the neighbors, even by her own mother, who had always said:

"My five other children are cleverer. Marie can only sing. No good will ever come of her!"

And suddenly she, Marie, had found such a suitor. She had landed in this small house, she had become a mother. Herman had always spoken gently with her. She had never suspected that a man could be so gentle at home. Her father had always shouted and threatened. At first she had only been amazed. She had been afraid of Herman because he was grownup and clever. Then she had come to love him with all her heart. She had noticed that he felt comforted when she was sweet to him and presently many tender acts suggested themselves to her which made him so happy. He also liked to listen to her singing that had only angered her mother at home. He listened to her quietly and his face grew composed. For his sake she also tried those things in which she had been less successful—cooking and sewing and such duties as other women understood better.

And then it was all over, since that night when they suddenly took Herman away. She no longer laughed and she never sang. Sometimes she played with her little boy as one child with another. The war which had devastated whole industrial sections on the other side of the fields, which had destroyed the city on the opposite shore of the river so that only two church spires still pointed upwards from among all the ruins and smoke—the war had left her and her child untouched, two little birds in an unnoticed nest. Gradually they had emptied the flour sack, eaten the few provisions Herman had brought home. They would have starved to death had they not sometimes found something to eat on their window sill. It had been laid there so quietly during the darkness that one might have thought the spirit of the dead man had brought it. She could well understand why Herman's friends did not come to her during the daylight, although at first the loneliness hurt her.

When the Allies reached the right bank of the Rhine, after the Nazis had been driven off, first one, then another friend would make his appearance at her door.

"Oh, dear Frau Schulz, those Nazis, they kept their sharp eyes on us. And if we had been caught coming here to see you, it would not have brought your Herman back again."

Marie did not know what to answer. She had never been garrulous. The visits became fewer and fewer. There were so many widows and orphans on both sides of the river that no one troubled to discuss at any length who had died where. Whenever Lotte came to visit her from Schmiedheim, each tried to do something for the other. Once Lotte had taken off her own wool scarf and put it around Marie's shoulders. Once Marie had given Lotte some cereal she still had.

Today as usual Lotte had brought along her daughter who liked to play with the little boy. As a delicate but beautiful flower sometimes blossoms in poor soil, this girl grew up with her charm and lovely little face among all the misery and distress.

Now the two children sat on the bench under the window, each hoping there would be a plate of soup. They leaned against each other and their hands were clasped in friendship and fatigue.

"He's coming back!" exclaimed Lotte. "Heiner brought me a note from him, a paper with his handwriting. So your Herman was right after all. Franz wasn't dead. He was only taken prisoner and he was far away at the other end of the Soviet Union and since Russia is so big, it is as if he were at the other end of the world. It will be a long time, but he is coming."

"Yes," said Marie, "it'll take a long time, but he's coming."

Suddenly Lotte started to speak as she formerly had spoken only with Herman.

"Believe me, Marie, when they tell me he is coming, even when he himself writes it—I can tell you, Marie, you will not think the worse of me—I too always think in the first moment that the news is from the other one. I mean the father of my child," she added softly, "whom they murdered in thirty-three. I always think, if all come back, why shouldn't he come back? But it is Franz who is coming, and he is coming for them all, like a representative."

Marie trembled as Lotte put an arm around her. Her pale face had blanched still further, as if the last glow had flickered out within her.

As Lotte went home with her child, she met a young man on the quay who seemed familiar even at a distance. It was Spengler. She recalled that he had been to see her a few weeks ago and had asked for Franz. She was so full of her good news that she stopped him now and showed him the letter.

Spengler said: "So, at least a few of us oldtimers will be together again, after all." On his face and in his words lay the shadow of those who would no longer be there.

The thin little girl in her outgrown, patched little dress sought protection from the evening breeze by huddling between them. The vesper bells in their domes tolled from across the river. They sounded as if the ruined city were struggling to rally itself once more. Spengler caressed the child's hair. She turned her frozen little face toward him. Her expression of sweetness, which nothing had been able to eradicate, touched his heart. He said gruffly:

"She will be beautiful!"

And without thinking Lotte asked: "Did you know her father, Seidler?"

"No," answered Spengler, "which Seidler?"

"What a stupid question! How could you know! You yourself were still a child at that time."

Lost in thought Spengler continued toward the village. Every so often Herman's little house lured him. Immediately on returning from the war he had learned how Herman had met his end, and so he had crossed the Main River to the little village to see his friend's widow. Later on Marie felt as if his very knocking had proclaimed a special visitor. At that time, however, she did not know the shabby young man who stood in front of her door. He asked:

"You are Herman's wife?"

And from the way he said it she knew that he had known Herman and thought of him as one thinks of the living. And he looked at her the way one looks when one sees a friend's wife for the first time. And he ran his hand over the boy's head the way one tousles the hair of a friend's child. He said:

"They've told me everything. At first I wondered how they had caught him. The Nazis must have been all puffed up thinking they had discovered everything in good time. I guess they would have liked to pull Paul out of his mass grave. They certainly must have been sorry that they had access only to the living. There was many another besides myself who knew all

about the whole business. And even if they did not help us, at least they kept their mouths shut. Herman was not betrayed by them."

"I thought," said Marie in a low voice, "someone had denounced him."

She did not ask much. Of his own account Spengler told how his colleagues at the factory had described the discovery.

This visit did not make Marie happier, but it did help her relax. Ever since that fateful night at every word and at every glance she always thought: "One of you denounced Herman." The evil of this unidentified person cast its shadow over everyone. Life was not easier now, but it was clearer and in better focus. The people with whom she had to get along, and wash her laundry, and go shopping, were generally neither really good nor really bad. Their good-natured or bitter faces seemed colorless when she compared them with the face of her dead husband . . . Perhaps among them a few were really evil, and perhaps once in a while there was a genuinely benign person like Herman. And possibly this visitor might also be such a one.

Spengler had left Herman's house after his first visit in great uneasiness. He had respected Herman greatly. After his return home he had looked up those few people who had been important to him. He had sought them out as one hunts some axial spot in a wilderness of despair and perplexity, hunger and fatigue. Ever since his childhood, since his father had come back from the First World War, he had seen his country speckled in all shades of military colors—in field gray and blue gray, in brown and in black and now on his own return from the war, in khaki. The two cities between which he had grown to manhood had formerly appeared to him ancient and eternal like the constellations. Now they were ground clean into the earth. No matter how many bombed out cities he had passed through during the last years, here at home it appeared to him that the two constellations, which had shone at his birth, had disintegrated. Only the Rhine flowing through its broken bridges, remained unchanged whether it reflected towers and housetops or a confusion of rubble and jagged stone pillars.

The people looked at the foreign soldiers, sometimes with scorn, sometimes indifferently, sometimes hopefully and sometimes disappointedly. Those who were disappointed had pictured their liberation differently. They had believed one could hoist freedom like a flag over a conquered city. They had thought that thus they might be freed of everything that tortured them; not only of the burden of the last twelve years, but of the burden of their entire span of life, of the burden of a hundred, of a thousand years of his-

tory. They had not realized that liberation would only lift a certain burden off their shoulders so that they could take a deep breath and stretch their arms in order to continue on their inevitably difficult way.

After Spengler had listened for hours to stories about what conditions had improved and which had remained just as bad as under the Nazis, and who was in the right kind of a job and who was where he did not belong, and a thousand other amazing details, he felt an urgent hunger and thirst for those few people who could share his thoughts. He went up to Schmiedheim to Franz; there he discovered that Franz had been reported killed in the Battle for Stalingrad. He went to Kostheim to Paul. Strangers were living now in his apartment. And long ago Paul's widow had moved to Frankfort to her own people. He met Schanz, whom he knew from before. Spengler remembered him as an insolent, addle-headed boy, with whom he had quarreled frequently. Spengler could see no change during their short conversation. It seemed to him that in spite of his grave wounds, Schanz tried to appear just as indifferent and arrogant as before. He did not know yet that Schanz adopted his old ways whenever anyone asked him about Paul or Herman, because that opened a wound so deep that Schanz could not express the pain, and so he simply took refuge behind his old mannerisms, which he assumed easily.

At first Spengler did not have to reflect long on whom he wanted to see above all others. But slowly he realized how alone he was. He had to ponder whom it was worthwhile going to see. Mentally he passed in review the familiar old faces. Finally he recalled Kress, who had been an engineer in the old days. Spengler did not see him in his mind's eye as Kress usually looked, with narrow eyes, a sardonically thin mouth; he saw his face open up in a single second of excitement, freed of disgust and derisiveness, a face that only he, Spengler, saw because he had promised Herman to watch the engineer carefully during the testing on that particular day.

The military authorities had given Kress and his family an apartment in one of the undamaged factory buildings. His own house, together with the section of the city where it had been situated, had been bombed out. Spengler discovered that Kress had found a good position for himself with the occupation authorities. It was rumored that the factory in which Kress worked would be removed to another part of Germany and that Kress was supposed to keep his position even after the removal. Kress was mentioned by Spengler's friends as one of the few examples in which the occupation authorities had made a wise choice. Out of the welter of gossip Spengler

understood that Kress was said to have dealt with the right people up to the very end. When he entered Kress' room, the engineer's face bore neither the expression to which one formerly had become accustomed, nor the one Spengler had caught for a second on that long-past June morning. There was still another, somewhere between that outermost shell which all the world knew for years, and that deepest, innermost expressiveness which had appeared once so briefly. He did not look cynical now nor excited but disturbed and tired. He asked Spengler why he came. Spengler answered that during the year 1941 he had worked for Kress as a loader until he had been drafted into the Wehrmacht. Kress thought to himself that he came to find work. He answered hesitatingly that it was difficult to give anyone a job right now. But Spengler replied that he had temporary work, and this had not been the reason for his coming. Then and there Spengler decided not to tell Kress the real reason. At that particular time he had been able to report only to Herman what he had seen. And now he no longer wished to speak of the affair to anyone, not even to Kress. He simply said:

"I had the desire to see someone I had known before."

Kress answered: "That's true, you are quite right." And thereupon he gave Spengler his hand.

Later on Kress had the feeling that he had been with this person on some special occasion. He delved into his memory for a minute. But then he comforted himself that he had had so many shipping clerks in his division that he could not remember every single one.

Spengler frequently went to visit Marie. Once in a while he soldered an old pot for her or carved a pipe for the boy. Sometimes he gave the boy a bit of food; he gave it to his dead friend's child, and not to his sister or his mother. Marie spoke but little, and there was nothing for him to find here on his unexpected visits except her timid requests and the welcoming gleam in the eyes of the child. Nevertheless, he felt a greater sense of comfort here than elsewhere, as if he not only ministered to Marie and the boy, but might also come upon a testament of the departed.

That night after he had said goodby to Lotte and her child on the quay, he continued on his way to the village, lost in thought. Marie was still standing in the same spot. She still felt Lotte's arm that had been folded around her shoulder. Even though it had grown dark in the room, it did not escape Spengler that Marie was paler than usual. They spoke about the news from Franz.

Suddenly Marie began to speak, fluently and easily as never before.

"How happy Herman would be with Franz. He felt closest to Franz. They put on an act as if they were forever estranged. But they only did this so that the rest of the world would not realize how closely they were allied. Thus they frequently were able to work together, as for example, on that very June day. I also acted as if I believed in this enmity because that made it easier for Herman. I always behaved as if I knew nothing about him. But I always knew what went on in his head. I knew whom he met and why. And when he was arrested, I thought it was for things that he had done much later. I knew exactly when he again began organizing groups.

"But I realized he felt more at ease when he came home and imagined I knew nothing, that I had not the slightest fear. I can tell you I was worried about him. But I behaved as if I had remained what he thought I was—a silly little thing without ideas, who was simply happy when he came so that he could rest himself. And I sang. Even when he had worries, he always forgot them when I sang for him—just like the little fellow, who falls asleep when I sing to him. I did not feel like singing, you understand, but I did."

Spengler felt his disconsolate, dried up heart grow warm for the dead man and for his wife. He said:

"Marie, please sing a little, for me, please. . . ."

Smilingly she shook her head. She placed three plates on the table for herself, for the boy and for the guest. Later on she sang of her own accord as she was thinning the soup and putting it on the fire. The delicate little tones tinkled in the dark room. She felt comforted by her own thin voice. Her boy plodded along the street outside towards home. Because there was no light in the house and he heard no sounds, he paused at the door. Then he cautiously let himself in.

(*Translated by Minna Edith Lieber*)

# At the Movies

By RALPH KNIGHT

. .

The sensible Connecticut country house
And warmth of cocktails after exercise
And sleep, the talk of idle afternoon:
A perfect setting for their moderate
Success. Like straining actors come on stage
Once more in a repetitious comedy,
They gather to repeat the preordained,
Each man an island wholly to himself
With wife moored at his side in risen seas
Like a sloop. The movies told me this.

None ever hung a kerchief on his nose
And thrust a gun into another's ribs
Or slit a throat. Life can be affable,
Exclaim the ruddy cheeks and casual clothes,
The costly countryside that yields but lawn,
If only we maintain the sanctity
Of form where all are bandits more or less;
God grant at least two servants for our house,
Friendship and marriage excellent as wine
And guard our Anglo-Saxon names.

The visiting slick fortune-teller says
Good luck shall stick by each, casting his dice
Upon a rug of dreams. He interrupts,
Like laughter with uncontroversial fun,
Some conversation sagged between the guests
And a fast developing adultery;
Also a mind-reader, but he hesitates

To cartograph their emptiness of mind;
Good judgment wins a dinner seat for him;
    Everyone is wreathed in smiles.

And there the picture curls, suddenly snapped;
The figured celluloid like memory
Rolls up its dream, the table vanishes
With all its appetizing sound effects,
The lights go up, the curtains close. The End.
My imitative neighbor, powerless
Before this million dollar argument
For typical America, stares on
The screen a moment, sets her bargain hat
    And wipes her eyes and slowly leaves.

# Chaplin's Monsieur Verdoux

By ARNAUD D'USSEAU

MONSIEUR VERDOUX is Charles Chaplin's finest picture. That it has baffled the majority of critics and won the enmity of the self-righteous arbiters of our film industry is not surprising; it would have been more surprising if it hadn't. Hans Christian Anderson wrote a fairy tale about a child who had the eyes and courage to announce to the multitude that an emperor was nude; Chaplin has been equally clear-sighted and fearless about most of the shamelessly naked contradictions in capitalist society. What else could his critics express but bewilderment or indignation? You can't tell a man with savage impertinence that his cherished world is a monstrous lie and expect him to remain silent.

Perhaps the best place to begin our discussion of this fascinating picture is with its central figure—Verdoux himself. Once Chaplin had the startling idea of making a film about a modern Bluebeard and giving it a serious theme, there were several conceivable ways he might have approached such a character: as a pathological killer, or as Dostoyevsky dealt with Raskolnikov in *Crime and Punishment,* a murderer at tortured variance with his conscience and society. Chaplin happily chose to do neither. Pathological Bluebeards have little reality outside the distempered walls of a lunatic asylum. A sadistic thirst for blood may send shivers up an audience's spine but it can rarely challenge its morality. Besides, the limited appeal of the hot needle under the fingernail or the child's throat slit from ear to ear was long ago exhausted by Boris Karloff, Bela Lugosi, Peter Lorre and those other fugitives from Grand Guignol who haunt our screen.

Chaplin's presumable reasons for not choosing to portray a Raskolnikov are more interesting to speculate upon. Raskolnikov has moral size. When he kills it is with the hideous knowledge he is not only committing a crime against society for which he may be punished, but he is also staining his immortal soul with a sin that will damn him to an eternal Hell—a twin conflict Dostoyevsky has presented with such dramatic force and psychological insight that it has long been considered the apotheosis of all torment within the breast of a murderer. But Chaplin has also avoided this inter-

pretation. The "authorized murders" at Buchenwald and Maidenek have made Dostoyevsky's conception somewhat pallid and a little old-fashioned. After the mass graves, the lamp shades fashioned from human skin, the flourishing cabbage fields fertilized with the bones of the innocent, how possibly can murder be reduced to the guilt feelings and fears of a single individual; and of what relevancy is God? Is there not, Chaplin asks instead, a Twentieth Century conception of murder that must be explored psychologically? And is it not possible to explore such a concept with comic irony, leaving God out of it and placing the moral burden squarely on Society?

This, it seems to me, is Chaplin's intent. His style, as always, is satirical, but like the very best satire its underlying purpose is serious, revealing the profoundest concern for human destiny. He has rejected the moral apathy of those who declare blandly that the hate and fear from which murder springs have been predetermined by man's essentially barbaric nature. He has dismissed the superstition of original sin, insisting instead upon what we know to be scientifically true: that man has the capacity for both good and evil and will behave according to the social incentives with which he is presented. Like Hugo, Dickens and Shaw, he has recognized that the reason one man kills another resides within the structure of society, and the sickness or soundness of a society is reflected in that society's sensitivity to it. He has seen, in Shaw's words, that "not only does Society commit more frightful crimes than any individual, king or commoner: it legalizes its crimes, and forges certificates of righteousness for them, besides torturing anyone who dares expose their true character."

Let's glance at the story. In outline it is extremely simple, but Chaplin has told it with great subtlety and many implications, unfolding it like all great stories on several levels at the same time.

Verdoux is an industrious bank clerk who is fired after thirty-five years of faithful service to a single firm because of a temporary business slump. The blow is a harsh one to the dapper little man who has always believed in the efficacy of hard work and loyalty to the firm, but so thoroughly has he accepted these virtues in their bourgeois context that he does not for a moment question the social reasons for so great an injustice; rather, he decides the deficiency has been within himself. He has jeopardized his security because he has failed to realize with sufficient clarity that in his society it is dog-eat-dog, a knife always at the other fellow's throat; if one is to survive then one must be prepared to act ruthlessly, daringly. Thus he turns calculatedly to the profession of marrying and murdering wealthy

middle-aged women, posing alternately as a country gentleman of leisure, an engineer and a sea captain. And for a time his career is grisly successful. The police are cleverly outwitted; his wife and child are prosperously provided with all the middle-class comforts; his neighbors remain friendly and unsuspecting. In between lucrative amours, he runs an antique shop; nothing is ever sold from this cluttered shop, but it answers nicely the problem of storing his victims' possessions once he has disposed of their bodies and used their money to invest in a fluctuating stock market.

As Verdoux goes about his uxorious job, his complete conviction that he is behaving no differently than the ruthless men who dominate modern business frees him from any sense of guilt. Nor do his lethal activities give him any sadistic satisfaction when a web is woven over the moon and he decides he again must kill. Chaplin insists upon quite the contrary. The sight of pain nauseates the ex-bank clerk and he is a vegetarian for presumably humanitarian reasons. In short, Verdoux is the "completely integrated" bourgeois, as thoroughly conditioned by society as one of Pavlov's dogs was conditioned by the sound of a bell. When he counts money or riffles a ledger he does so with extraordinary skill and rapidity, one of those souls condemned to compute figures and never interpret them. His dealings with stock-brokers are always punctilious, displaying a particular respect for those envied servants of high finance. His deference for the police is never hypocritical; though he is deceiving them, he has had their protection for too many years as a law-abiding bourgeois ever to regard them as adversaries except in the most impersonal sense. Above all there is Verdoux's attachment to his family. It is his love for his wife and beautiful little boy which justifies everything, and to show that Verdoux's affection for his wife is of the most sublime order Chaplin makes of her an invalid. Verdoux is not killing for the purposes of power, but because he wishes to provide security and happiness for those who need him, who could not possibly survive without him. Chaplin deifies the institution which our society pretends to hold highest, the family, while sharply commenting on that fallacious sentiment we hear so frequently expressed: "All a man can hope to do is to take care of those who are dependent upon him. As for the rest of the world, well, that's somebody else's grief, not mine." Like so many fathers, Verdoux's concentration on his family alone has robbed him of any larger social vision at the same time that it has satisfied his need for being loved, for acting responsibly and for playing ruler in a safely proscribed area of relationships which society has sanctified.

So audacious a conception demanded of Chaplin that he make as plausible as possible how such a character as Verdoux could ever operate successfully over a sustained length of time. This, too, he achieves brilliantly. When Verdoux meets old friends he is briskly evasive, and he takes great precautions to see there are no photographs of himself. His various roles permit him to be logically separated from his different wives when necessary, and though it is part of Chaplin's intent to satirize each of these roles, and at the same time to guarantee their success, he deliberately gives Verdoux the best of social positions. It is a middle-class assumption that a sea captain is a man of unimpeachable integrity; an engineer is best fulfilling his destiny by being off in the colonies building bridges for the empire; and though a gentleman of leisure is a little absurd and fills no specific function, he does have manners, he is sensitive to the finer things, and it is really unfair to keep ignoring his beautiful flowers, importunate telephone messages, and embossed calling cards with their persistent declarations of love.

But there is another reason, more important than any of these, for Verdoux's success: it is the social position of each of his victims and the psychological contradictions which their social position creates. At the opening of the picture we are introduced to a middle-class family, somewhere in the French provinces. A more odious tribe is difficult to imagine. Rudeness and contempt mark every interchange between them; affection is only displayed when it is linked with avarice. Here, declares Chaplin with savage insight, is the environment of Verdoux's victims. Is it for a moment difficult to believe that one of them might wish to escape such a domestic hell, especially if she has a little money of her own with which to do it?

Our only glimpse of Verdoux's first wife is heavy black smoke pouring from a large incinerator set beyond a row of blooming rose bushes at the back of a garden. Simultaneously, we meet Verdoux, and as he turns his charm on his next prospective bride Chaplin elaborates this particular theme. The majority of middle-class, middle-aged women are dissatisfied; they don't live alone and like it; they are far from regarding their best years as after forty. Dead husbands may have worked long and hard to insure their future with an annuity or a little property, but it has been at the expense of insuring them with little else. Though these women have developed a strong sense of property, equally strong are their emotional needs which have been denied or warped and are awaiting release.

Chaplin is careful not to oversimplify or schematize this insight. Indeed, much of the humor of the picture comes from this central supposition being extravagantly frustrated. Though these emotionally impoverished women are gullible, they are not stupid; for all his agile charm Verdoux must work hard for his victories. And in one instance he meets with no success whatsoever. This is the indestructible whore, played superbly by Martha Raye, whom Verdoux has married because she has won two hundred thousand francs in a lottery. Voluptuously raucous, the lady is enchanted with Verdoux's elegance; the idea of being married to a sea captain who wears a winged collar leaves her a little breathless. But whenever Verdoux brings the subject around to her wealth, her enchantment promptly vanishes. Before her windfalls she dealt professionally in passion and understands its monetary value; on this score she cannot be duped. She is, however, vulnerable in another way. Because she has won her money accidentally, she has no developed sense of property and therefore is fair game for any promoter who presents her with any scheme on a straight business basis. One of the funniest and most perceptive scenes in the picture is Verdoux's outrage when this particular wife falls for a proposal to make gasoline out of salt water. We not only get another glimpse of the woman's extraordinary naivete, but Chaplin adds another brush stroke to Verdoux's character. What but outrage could Verdoux express in the face of such an insult? She has succumbed to the most obvious of propositions while he has been attempting to rob her with the greatest of finesse.

The average bourgeois may feel that he is being driven by inexorable necessity, but he never looks upon himself as an insensitive individual, totally immune to the suffering of others. He may sweat his workers and fail to provide them with adequate safety devices, but he will also contribute to the Red Cross. So it is with Verdoux. He behaves ruthlessly, but he is not callous; his code has made him hard, but it hasn't turned him into a fiend. His relationship to his family indicates this, and we see it underscored again when, one rainy night, Verdoux meets a young girl and takes her home with the intention of testing a new poison he has learned about. But then he learns the young girl's story. She has a husband who is sick and whom she takes care of; in doing so she has run afoul of the law and has been thrown in jail; now she has just been released. Verdoux is touched, and abruptly decides not to kill her. He recognizes that the girl is a kindred spirit, one who, like himself, has risked the wrath of society for someone she loves; the difference between them is that she has failed where he thus far has been

successful. Even here, however, Chaplin dos not succumb to sentimentalism or violate Verdoux's character. Verdoux gives the girl money, annoyed at the same time by her tears and expression of gratitude; he wishes her to leave as quickly as possible. Like so many bourgeois, he has neither the inclination nor the time to learn too much about the miseries of others.

What, then, defeats the "completely integrated" Verdoux? It is the very society into which he has put so much faith. For even after he has uncompromisingly abided by its most ruthless demands, a financial crash wipes out the fortune he has so energetically brought together, confronting him with the incontestable knowledge that there are forces at work which make it impossible for that society to provide his faith with any real guarantees or rewards. All his risks have been in vain; his many murders have netted him no more than the thirty-five years he put in behind the cage of a bank.

It is right here, if anywhere, that one might have expected *Monsieur Verdoux* to break in half or go soft. Surely if Capra or McCarey were the director, Verdoux would have been infected with a tardy remorse and the climax of the picture would have been his expiation within the conventional framework. But Chaplin uncompromisingly carries through with the theme he has begun. Verdoux assesses all that has happened to him and decides his greatest mistake has been that he did not operate on a sufficiently large scale, dealing, perhaps, in munitions. As Verdoux himself declares, "numbers sanctify"; his Achilles heel has been that he recognized this important fact too late.

Verdoux is so convinced that society, not he, is the monster that he will not admit the right of the law to condemn him, or the church to offer him "spiritual comfort." Indeed, in a brief scene with a priest, Chaplin furnishes us with as scathing a comment on the spiritual uselessness of the church as we have ever had in American films and should, once and for all, rid us of the tiresome histrionics that go on in most Hollywood death cells. Verdoux bluntly tells the priest he has made his peace with God, his quarrel is with men. It is they and their institutions that have blackened the sky and robbed the earth of those good fruits it could so readily produce for everyone. It is they who have oppressed and impoverished other men and made of him a stranded hobgoblin. Verdoux is equally candid with the reporter who has come to like him during the trial. Ominous in an atomic age, he says he will see all those who have condemned him very soon—"goodbye for now." And in final fade out, as Verdoux walks slowly toward

the guillotine, his hands tied behind his back, a guard on either side, we realize with shattering force that there have been many victims in the picture, but there's been no greater victim than Verdoux himself, and that out of the most appalling ingredients Chaplin has evoked a tragic figure capable of evoking our profoundest sympathy.

## II

Why have the critics been so baffled by *Monsieur Verdoux,* and why have they come down on it so hard? There are a number of reasons, and I think they are worth examining.

It has long been a standard complaint of our better film critics that Hollywood "types" its actors and this is one of the chief causes for the screen's present impoverishment. What has not been seen so sharply, however, is that the very same thing has long been happening to the best of our comedians. Indeed, the assumption has developed that a comedian is an artist apart and that his talent and personality are so utterly unique that he can only be "typed." New routines, new subtleties are expected of Groucho Marx, Jimmy Durante or Bobby Clark, but only to the extent that they are integrated into a personality already recognizable. The critics have come to classify our comedians as clowns and use nostalgia as a slide rule for their judgments, expecting them to perform like the captive horses on a carousel. Thus when Chaplin refuses to accept this conspiracy they are surprised and a little irritated and more than one declares frankly that he prefers the old Chaplin, not bothering to bring a fresh intelligence to a picture like *Monsieur Verdoux.*

Refusing to repeat past successes, Chaplin has also refused to plagiarize any of the Hollywood story patterns. Much of the picture's fun, indeed, comes from satirizing of the more pronounced cliches. When Verdoux, amused and invincible, orders prodigious quantities of flowers it reduces to complete absurdity this opening gambit in the standard Hollywood love affair. Then there is the scene in which Verdoux again meets the girl he once decided not to poison. She is wearing furs and riding in a limousine; Verdoux notes the change and asks the cause. "Oh, you know, the old story, from rags to riches," the girl replies casually, throwing away in a line the stuff out of which Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer has made millions.

There has been the complaint that there are "dull spots" and "slow scenes" in *Monsieur Verdoux.* Perhaps this is because Chaplin's creation of Verdoux is a highly stylized one, depending upon external detail for its validity, and concentration upon character for its interest. Chaplin never "plays" a scene in the conventional sense, preferring always to "throw away" an idea, rather than underline it. Like all great artists he pays his audience the tribute of assuming an intelligence equal to his own. He deliberately changes the signposts marked "tragedy" and "comedy," just as Voltaire changed them when he wrote *Candide.* In *Monsieur Verdoux,* as in *Candide,* there is a mordant gaiety, a wisdom mixed with impudence, an extravagant use of farce to make the most serious of points.

A number of critics have lamented the picture's technical deficiencies and here, it must be said, they are partly justified. Much of the lighting is hard and flat; the settings frequently lack the authenticity we are accustomed to expect in even the poorest Hollywood film. A number of Chaplin's group scenes are decidedly awkward. In his earlier pictures, Chaplin depended on rapid physical movements and cutting to give his comedies their pace and fluidity; his pictures, since the advent of sound, have lost some of this, despite Chaplin's free use of the moving camera, particularly when it is on his own nimble figure.

Chaplin's dialogue is not always smooth. When he speaks it himself it is sharp and right, but when he gives it to others, it is often stiff and even a little amateurish. Like many mimics—and Chaplin is a superb one—he depends more upon tone and manner than upon locutions and colloquialism for naturalness, something which is difficult to convey to other actors. We cannot, however, judge Chaplin's dialogue on the same basis that we judge the dialogue in an Andy Hardy picture. Chaplin is intent upon working for more than verisimilitude or an expeditious method of telling his story. He is satiric, at the same time freighting his lines with ideas, a difficult task for even the most skilled of poets or playwrights. He is also interested in keeping his dialogue spare, allowing more often for the gesture or the look to convey the essential meaning of a scene. If there is a great deal of dialogue in a scene, it is usually to prepare the point, rather than make it.

It is difficult for the artist not to be influenced by his critics, and it is part of Chaplin's greatness that he has always resisted their efforts to have him conform. What is perhaps more remarkable about a picture like *Monsieur Verdoux* is that Chaplin has also gone beyond that which is expected of him by his most ardent admirers, a much more difficult thing.

Chaplin has not played safe, he has not allowed his genius to be frustrated or extinguished by those forces which seduce men of lesser courage.

This is not to suggest that *Monsieur Verdoux* is the triumph of a clown who at last has won his chance to play Hamlet. The social perception in Chaplin's pictures has always been acute; his sympathy for the so-called little man has become axiomatic in any consideration of his work. *The Immigrant, The Kid, Easy Street, City Lights, Modern Times, The Great Dictator*—all of them have expressed a spirit of revolt. However, the revolt in these pictures differs sharply from the revolt in *Monsieur Verdoux.* Heretofore, the revolt of the little man with his battered derby, his bent cane and baggy pants was dictated by instinct. He was running furiously, but like a squirrel in a cage; his staying power was derived from a native vitality which seemed inexhaustible. Chaplin's social comment was that of "the subversive primitive"—a phrase Heywood Broun once used in another connection, but which seems particularly apt for describing the merry fatalism in these early pictures.

But in *Monsieur Verdoux,* the revolt has been objectified. Chaplin's little man is no longer the perennial truant wandering the earth. His energy is undiminished, and his wisdom has grown; he has come of age and is able to point his finger at those who have for so long kept him a vagabond. Verdoux comes to understand the causes for his defeat; when he goes to his death it is not a pathetic conclusion to all that has happened, but a truly tragic one.

If comparisons are to be made, then one might go back to the early René Clair pictures, to which Chaplin frequently has been indebted, or some of the other French films that have come to us in recent years. One might also go back to the gangster films of the early Thirties. There, too, the heroes were depicted as men thoroughly conditioned by their environment, able to kill without conscience or moral hesitation. In the best of these films, such as *Public Enemy, A Doorway to Hell, Little Caesar* and *Scarface,* the heroes remained unrepentant, their authors refusing to regenerate them in the accepted bourgeois framework. There was a minimum of moralizing, just enough to get by the old Hays office, and the blame for their deeds was aimed directly at society.* But here again Chaplin goes

* It is highly significant that in connection with the Truman Doctrine, Eric Johnston has issued an order banning any future showings of these early gangster films, and the motion picture companies have complied by withdrawing them from all theatres, film libraries, museums and schools. Violence for violence's sake in a picture such as *The Killers* is all right, but when it is given a social basis, suggesting that our society is at fault, our custodians of culture begin to qualify their meaning of the word freedom.

further than any of his predecessors. He has not simply indicted our slums; he has directed his fury at the very heart of our civilization. Verdoux has been conditioned by a bank—an institution which forecloses mortgages, aids in monopolization, offers collateral in an economy that finds it can only expand by going to war. His tragedy, unlike that of the gangster, is not a marginal one. His behavior is a comment on those values our society celebrates, not those it cannot but condemn.

It is this, of course, more than anything else, which has disturbed our critics and enraged those who are more canny about where their interests lie. And that is why they have lashed back so sharply, not only attacking Chaplin as an artist, but also as a citizen. They question his politics, his nationality and his private life; and in Columbus, Ohio, over 350 exhibitors called on theatre owners, throughout the country to "give serious thought to the matter of withholding screen time from the film *Monsieur Verdoux,*" while the picture was banned in Memphis, Tennessee. In short, behaving precisely like the dismal little minds that Chaplin is beating against.

After seeing *Monsieur Verdoux* the spectator is troubled seriously by one thing—the picture's pessimism. It is there; it is unmistakable; and within the context of the film itself it is not easily answered. Chaplin does not admit the alcoholic solution suggested by Eugene O'Neill in *The Iceman Cometh*; he does not indulge in any of the metaphysical legerdemain we find in Sartre's despair; indeed, because Chaplin has explored his theme as ruthlessly as Verdoux has carried out his amatory designs, the pessimism of these two artists seems a little facile. One does not ask for a less ruthless exploration, or a different exploration (always a foolish request), but one does ask if every individual in the world is as corrupt as Chaplin has made most of his characters. Are the only good people the very young and the crippled, and is death their only escape? Is capitalism a cancer that has infected us all?

Max Lerner, one of the few writers to recognize the film's extraordinary brilliance, suggests that the picture's pessimism stems inevitably from Chaplin's "moral anarchism." But this is an inaccurate label. The anarchist is essentially one who sees himself apart from society and above it, subject neither to its benefits nor its stupidities, heir neither to its laws nor its economic pressures. Being essentially a subjective idealist, he does not challenge bourgeois idealism, but presumes to ignore it, placing his own value above that of society. Chaplin's emphasis in *Monsieur Verdoux* is not this. Chaplin's concern for society is as great as his concern for Verdoux. If it

were not, then Verdoux would not voluntarily have surrendered to the police and allowed himself to be tried; it was in his power to escape punishment, and thereby express his basic indifference to society; instead, he preferred to issue a warning to society, demonstrating his identity with it and a concern for its future.

The picture's conclusion is unmistakably pessimistic, yet audiences applaud vigorously. Which suggests, from another angle, that though the pessimism is there, it is not all-inclusive. One reason, perhaps, is that Chaplin's tone is comic; another reason is that we are always aware of Chaplin's moral vantage point. Pessimism is only pervasive when an audience is made to feel that the artist shares his characters' lack of morality; it implies that things must always be as they are depicted, that man's desire for good is an illusion. We have no such feeling at the conclusion of *Monsieur Verdoux,* anymore than we have such a feeling when we gaze at Picasso's *Guernica,* similar in that it also is a work of art that expresses a profound revulsion with overpowering force, yet does not leave us depressed. Both are works of art so permeated with an implacable moral fervor, with a profound social indignation, that we know that life can be different

But perhaps the reason audiences applaud, more than any other, is that Chaplin is uttering social truths that square with their own knowledge of life and which they have long waited to hear. By concentrating on the tragedy of Verdoux, he has been able to draw a transversal line across the entire grain of our social structure, and without succumbing either to sentimentality or mysticism, he has laid bare the vast contradictions between the vaunted bourgeois ideal and bourgeois reality. This is a rare accomplishment at any time, and in our time it calls for cheers.

In his book, *My Life and Art,* Stanislavsky tells us that whenever a man in Russia was depressed, whenever life seemed most dismal, he had but to remember that at Yasnaya Polyana, Leo Tolstoy was living in his time, and his spirits would lift. Tolstoy's art was a beacon light cutting through the darkness, reminding Russians there was hope. Today, in America, it is not too much to say that we are grateful to be alive in Chaplin's time. He is indeed our greatest artist. And it is good to know that *Monsieur Verdoux* will be seen in Europe and Asia, in South America and Africa. As our militarists and politicians sow their imperialist hatred, it will serve as a sort of special ambassador, telling the world that our conscience is not dead, and that our film art, despite all the efforts of those who control it, has not been hopelessly degraded.

# American Imperialism and Philippine Culture

By MARIA LAUAAN AND BAYANI GRIARTE

AS EVERYWHERE, the culture of the Philippines is part and parcel of its historic development and emerges from the economic, social, and political forces interacting within and from without the country.

More than 7,000 islands lie like a bolo against the South China Sea and the Sulu Sea, larger in land area than the British Isles. It is rich land, rich and strategic, pregnant with gold, silver, iron, copper, bismuth, chromium, mercury, platinum and nickel. Two thirds of the land is covered with fine timber, red narra, black mahogany, ipil, teak; ten million acres are under cultivation—rice, tobacco, sugar cane, coconuts, Manila hemp. To this moment the natural resources are scarcely scratched.

Before historiography, doughty Indonesians sailed their long boats across the China Sea to the west shore of Luzon and built their homes along the coast, pushing the native Negritos into the hills. Centuries later these Indonesians were in turn pushed into the mountain regions by new influxes from Malaya. They became divided into several groups, each remarkable for its unique culture and crafts: the Ifugao Igorot for magnificent rice terraces, elaborately irrigated, carved out of the perpendicular cliffs thousands of feet high; Bontocs for their beautiful handwoven textiles; Kalingas for ironwood sculpturing; all of these mountain peoples for their own indigenous folk music and story-telling dance forms, from esoteric nose flute to calypso-like repartee songs.

The Moros, another group of Malayan invaders, who were converted to Mohammedanism by the Arabs, settled in parts of Mindanao, Palawan, Basilan, and the islands of the Sulu Sea. They, too, have their own cohesive national culture which resisted conquest by Spain and the Catholic Church. They use the Arabic system of writing and fight with a kris (a short Malay sword or dagger).

Those who remained in the lowlands of Luzon, Leyte, Cebu, Negros

and Mindanao evolved the three major languages, Tagalog, Visayan, and Ilokano, all with well-developed literatures.

The heterogeneity of culture is seen in the fact that the population of eighteen million is divided into these four main groups (Lowlanders, Moros, Mountain Peoples, and Negritos) with over eighty tribal divisions. More than eighty-seven distinct native dialects have been recorded. Add to this the trauma of conquest by three foreign powers plus the cultural influence of immigrants from China and India along with scatterings of European refugees.

*The history of the Philippines is a history of imperialistic conquest, subjugation, exploitation, degradation, and slavery imposed by Spain, America, Japan, then American again—imposed by these but resisted by the people in their continual struggle for real national independence and self-determination, their struggle towards native industrialization through completion of the bourgeois-democratic revolution and the establishment of a truly democratic republic.*

Spain was first to bring her ambivalent blessings in the person of Magellan—in 1521, on Mactan Island—and the first Mass was said in the city of Cebu. Church and State, cross and lash, the former the instrument of the latter, came hand in hand. They found a flourishing culture and their first tactic was to destroy it; that has always been necessary in order to enslave a free people.

Before Spain's conquistadores, the Filipinos stood alone for centuries, a free and independent country with a civilization well developed for the times. Said Fr. Gaspar de San Agustin, "The women were very expert in lace making . . . not at all behind the women of Flanders. There was a literature of books which the first missionaries zealously and completely destroyed. How numerous were the writings may be judged from a single town, Batangas, where over 300 manuscripts were burned . . . the Philippines originated three alphabets of its own and four centuries ago had a largely literate population. 'Hardly could there be found an illiterate man,' wrote the chronicler Chirino, 'and much less were there women who could not read and write.' " And today, after 370 years of Spain and the Church, forty-five years of American rule, three years of Japanese rape, over half the population is illiterate. This is what imperialism calls progress.

Do not think the people took this lying down. Magellan not only arrived on Mactan Island, he was also killed there, and the resistance con-

tinued and continues. There were more than 71 armed and bloody revolts, an average of one every four and one-half years, culminating in a big continuous revolution of three years in which the Spanish forces were practically annihilated and which flowered in the victorious establishment of the Philippine Republic on January 23, 1899. Great heroes rose out of these struggles: Mabini, who wrote the splendid constitution for the Republic; Rizal with his devastating anti-Spanish, anti-Catholic novels *Noli Me Tangere* (Social Cancer) and *El Filibusterismo* (Reign of Greed). Rizal, incidentally, was jockeyed by American interests into the place of number one national hero over Bonifacio because he was basically a reformist whereas the great Bonifacio, student of the French Revolution, founder of the Katipunan (the organization that fought for full independence), was revolutionary to the bone.

The Americans who posed as allies in our struggle for independence against Spain turned on us with force and lies. Admiral Dewey and his boys who had steamed into Manila Bay on May 1, 1898, were so intent on convincing the people of their friendship that they shot down 300,000 Filipinos in the streets of Manila and environs and bought out Aguinaldo; they couldn't buy off the people, who carried on a revolution for three years against this first invasion of American imperialism. But America had too many ships and guns and organized too many treacheries. The rebellion was broken; America had her colony.

So the Filipinos have been slaves for more than four centuries. And while the fine arts of their conquerors have permeated and enriched their culture, the devastating repressions, limitations, and corruptions of Philippine culture are also the blessings of these same conquerors. Those crafts and arts which developed directly out of the social and productive relations and processes of the people were, of course, indestructible and constitute the rich folk culture of the nation: the dances and songs that accompany planting, harvesting, birth, love, death; the bamboo art and the bamboo dance *tinikling*. The innumerable fiestas represent this folk culture infiltrated by clerical ritual except where they celebrate secular national heroes and aspirations.

World War II, in which thousands of Filipinos died bravely by the side of their American brothers (we were always the "little brown brothers") against the common fascist enemy, meant occupation and ruin to the Philippines. Civilians starved in the streets and were twice caught in the crossfire.

The Japanese stripped whatever they could use; guerrillas fought back from the hills; and America made fantastic promises over the short wave.

Ironically, there were more cultural activities during the Japanese occupation both in enemy-occupied territory and in the guerrilla region than exist in the Philippines under the present American puppet regime. In the cities, legitimate plays were staged daily with low admission prices; symphony concerts and dances were held regularly; art exhibits and the ballet attracted large audiences. Much of this of course was well leavened with propaganda, but the point is it did take place. And today, creative cultural work is not encouraged but repressed on every front by the Roxas clique.

The whole of central Luzon and part of southern Luzon was *Hukbalahap** territory, wrested from the enemy by these intrepid and determined patriots with guns captured from the Japanese. Here the people learned about democracy and enjoyed a democratic way of life that many had never tasted in their lifetime. Here we had an island within an island and a progressive cultural program never before found in the Philippines was carried out. Barrio (village) schools were organized; textbooks were mimeographed and children and adults in the barrios learned the work of guerrillas and the part they could play. Teachers were trained. Adults and even the aged were taught to read and write so they could be better citizens and vote in the local elections. Even in schools frequently visited by the Japanese, the teachers, like financiers, had two sets of books.

The Cultural and Information Division of the Hukbalahap set in motion youth and women's organizations, educational and art projects. Groups went from village to village to perform in plays and skits, to prepare songs and dances. The plays depicted life as it was under the Japanese oppression and as it would be in a free and democratic country. Guerrilla songs became so popular that five-year old children sang them at play. Everyone who had interest in or talent for musical instruments, writing, painting, dancing, singing, acting, was encouraged to participate. Their creations were used in school and public programs, on wall newspaper boards, and published in the weekly people's paper, *Katubusan* (Redemption).

* Hukbalahap (People's Anti-Japanese Army) was the most militant, active, progressive guerrilla organization, most feared by the Japanese; comparable to Yugoslav Partisans and ELAS of Greece. In Huk areas civil governments were set up with free elections, courts of justice, and widespread land reforms carried out.

Life was meaningful for all those who lived and worked in Hukbalahap territory (except for those sorry few who sold out to the Japanese, who proved beyond rehabilitation). Most of those who risked their lives and the lives of their families never dreamed that the coming of the Americans would mean the resurgence not of independence, happiness, security, Roosevelt's four freedoms, but of oppression, fear, torture and intellectual darkness.

*What has occurred has been a fantastic topsy-turvy nightmare.* More terrible because of its duplication in Greece (as Gen. Scobie "rewarded" ELAS who fought German fascism, so MacArthur "rewarded" the Hukbalahap); in Indonesia—"take the U.S. labels off the lend-lease arms" used by Japanese troops impressed by Dutch and British to murder patriotic nationalists; in defeated Japan—turned into an outpost against our great Soviet ally, where Zaibatsu, Gumbatsu and the Emperor have been really rewarded for their part in despoiling humanity; in every country where the unabashed Truman "anti-Komintern" (ghost of Goebbels!) imperialism chokes the breath of life and freedom from the very people who fought for decency and America.

*This second American "liberation" and the Trojan-horse-independence (pregnant with the Bell Act, Parity, and in fact slavery on an economic colonial status) bids well to be the greatest hoax in modern history.* The Japanese also gave the Philippines independence but everyone knew this was a fraud, whereas the American version has resulted in widespread confusion, as the people still identify America with the great American, Roosevelt, and the American citizen-soldiers who fought here at their sides.

Through American imperialist machinations the Philippines became the only country in the world where a quisling was made president. House and Senate are packed with former Japanese collaborators, and Dr. Jose P. Laurel, the Japanese puppet president, is at large, being groomed by ultra-reactionaries for the Senate and the presidential palace.

Taruc, Alejandrino, De Leon, leaders of the People's Army against the Japanese, were thrown in prison by MacArthur, and the Hukbalahaps were outlawed and ordered by Secretary of Interior Zulueta to be "shot on sight."

*Shot on sight*—that's how fascism works here. Progressive leaders are driven into the swamps and the hills, and if any man stays in your house you must report it to the police. It can happen to anyone here. If five

people assemble without a permit it's treason and you can be taken and beaten within an inch of your life, then released with "no charges made." The city is an armed camp. Everywhere you go, the plainclothes men, the Roxas hatchet-men, the secret agents, the paid thugs, the "SS" men, are there with American revolvers stuck in their belts or the hip pocket. They don't bother with holsters.

*This is the soil in which our culture aborts today.*

Roxas promised "peace and order" in sixty days but after a year he is still sending armies of military police with tanks, planes, artillery (here nobody bothers to take off the U.S. labels) to liquidate the peasants who would liquidate feudalism. Civilian guards (landlords' private army) have a hooligan's holiday looting, burning, killing in the provinces—hated by the people.

The puppet government sags at the seams with anomalies, malfeasance, corruption, and outrages against the people who were deceived by a false independence and at the same time deprived of their civil rights and of even the vestiges of democracy. Where does this leave culture and the fine arts?

One-third of the present national budget is slated for "national defense" (defense of the rich, repression of the democratic movement, and degradation of the poor). This doesn't leave much for culture and education. Education is free to the fourth grade but not universal. Out of 500,000 children who should enter primary school, 400,000 are turned away because there are no facilities.* Many families are so desperately poor that even if fine schools were available they could not feed and clothe their children well enough to send them or could not spare the centavos the child's labor brings to the malnourished family. It is hard on a man's morale to see his children eat out of garbage cans. This is not a figure of speech, for here wherever there are garbage cans there are dogs and children picking through them. For forty-five years American capital drained a steady fortune from our land in return for this.

*It is because American imperialists, and the native compradores** and hacenderos*** who dangle from their coattails, can no longer maintain their rule of oppression against the rising democratic movement that they must re-*

* First Education Conference of the Philippine Association of Colleges and Universities, reported in *Manila Times*, June 14, 1947.

** Compradores: native capitalists who act as "buy and sell" middlemen for American capitalists.

*** Hacenderos: rich, feudal, usually absentee, landlords.

*sort to extra-legal force, brutality, and must ultimately attempt to legalize fascism to save their corrupt system. Their program even under the cloak of "independence" could not be carried out if a free and progressive cultural movement were permitted to exist in articulate form. Thus we find the Philippines brought face to face simultaneously with fascism, economic crisis, and cultural crisis.*

Here we see why they must destroy the cultural movement along with their attempt to destroy the progressive movement; why today even in Manila, the "pearl of the Orient," there is no legitimate theater, no symphonic orchestra, no modern dance group or ballet; why in all the Philippines the prostituted press and soap-opera radio is controlled down to the last comma. The movies are run-of-the-mill-Hollywood or local Tagalog films aping the worst in Hollywood; the kept magazines are controlled by falangist advertisers like Elizalde and Andres Soriano. Every progressive poem, story, or essay is emasculated before printing (here anti-Franco, anti-Salazar sentiments are deleted as controversial and subversive).

Now they have suppressed and starved out of print the people's paper, *Katubusan,* which published its last issue on June 9, 1947. In the provinces when civilian guards catch a man reading a copy of the *Katubusan* he is lucky if he is only beaten and his house burned. If caught selling a copy he would be lucky to be killed quickly and not tortured for "further information." This paper was the clear outspoken voice of the workers and peasants. Who will speak for them now? Who will publish their poems, cartoons, stories and statements now? There is not a single newspaper, magazine or literary publication in the Philippines that will publish the unexpurgated work of an honest writer.

Books sent by International Publishers, New York, have been impounded by the bureau of customs and will not be released here on the grounds that the government does not permit the entry of "subversive" literature. A year has passed; the books are still impounded behind the iron curtain.

*This attack upon culture is, then, an attack upon the people themselves, upon everything positive and progressive in the Philippines. It is the American imperialist-sponsored counter-revolution against the rising democratic movement which evolved out of the historical struggle for Philippine independence and liberation. This democratic movement became politically conscious and was crystallized through the organization of resistance against*

*the Japanese led by the Hukbalahaps and the Philippine Communist Party. It was through the impetus of these organizations that its cultural program flourished before betrayal by Wall Street imperialism.*

Today these and other progressive organizations with all their cultural potentialities are the focal target of the administration's storm-troop tactics. These organizations represent the peasants, workers, nationalist bourgeoisie, and patriotic intellectuals: the Peasants Union (PKM), the Hukbalahap with its Chinese allies of the Wha-Chi,* the Congress of Labor Organizations (CLO), the Democratic Alliance, the Civil Liberties Union, the Lawyers Guild, the Philippine Cultural Committee.

In defiance of American imperialism and its puppet Roxas, the CLO staged a demonstration of 25,000 workers in the heart of Manila on the first of May. Hunted and harassed, the Huks still continue their work in central Luzon, rice basket of the Philippines, and the confused man in the street who misunderstood what MacArthur meant when he said, "I shall return," is finding out the long, heartbreaking way.

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* There is a strong well-knit group of Chinese progressives in the Philippines who publish a progressive paper, the *Chinese Guide*. They had a division in the Hukbalahaps, the Wha-Chi, who also fought the Japanese. Their cultural program, with plays, chorus-concerts, skits, etc., still continues despite raids and persecution.

# Eight Poems from the Philippines

By SANGGUNI BATONGBUHAY

. .

*To you in America who dedicate your effort and talent (when necessary your lives and fortunes) to the fight for a better way of life—you may read these statements as personal lyrics and love poems.*

*I do not write upon these themes because I like to but because I am impelled to—so much do they arouse my deep affection and my burning anger.*

## *LIGAYA, MY DARLING*

*—San Miguel, Manila*

The slender moon hangs in the night
  like a silver bolo*
and look—
  beneath the bridge our lives
  flow with the Pasig, slowly
  into the sea

Reflecting harbor lights
  the bridge becomes a rainbow
  (no crock of gold, but poverty
  and pain at the foot of this
  atavistic rainbow)

* Bolo: large knife used in warfare and for cutting sugar cane, bamboo, etc.

*Barong-barongs** by the Santa Cruz bridge
and Ayala bridge, huddle together
like mushrooms in the moonlight
a few feet away limousines
glide over the bridge
to another world

And always, Ligaya
as in a dream the slender moon
hangs overhead like a silver bolo

I will not burn down our cancerous
shack, and sleep in the street
I will not stuff cloth in the child's mouth
to stop the crying of his stomach
nor cover his hideous sores with superstitions

We will kill stray dogs for food
and roast the black rats
We will not be starved into silence

They will not drown our voices
in their treacherous river
We are too many to let them push us
over the edge

They can not drive the wedge of
desperation between us
Ligaya, my darling
we will not go down
under the water
and into the sea
with our frantic hands
clutching
at each other's throats

* Barong-barongs: makeshift cardboard and scrap tin shacks in which thousands of homeless Filipinos live.

## *FOR FREEDOM LOST IN MARCH**

*—Republic of the Philippines*

I do not speak of the ballot box stuffed or
dumped in the river, the precinct shifted, the
military police

They say this was a plebiscite held by a free people

I do not speak of the registration of fictitious voters,
of ballots marked in the name of the dead
and the unborn, nor do I mention those who
went to the polls to find their own names
dropped from the list—those who were turned away

The Philippines is a free and independent nation

I do not speak of the supervised voting, the civilian-
guards, the open threats, the paid counters reading
'yes' for 'no', the dirty politics

The president said this was not a political question
*(freedom or slavery: this is never a political question)*

But there is no need to speak of these things; the
facts will soon enough become common knowledge
among the people

I speak here of those who by their own free will went down
to the polls and voted 'yes' for slavery

Do not plead confusion at the hands of the press
nor ignorance of terms
The cities were covered with posters:
PARITY MEANS SLAVERY!

What have you done, you who said 'yes'?
Have you played the role of pimp and made

* The plebiscite on parity took place in March, 1946, and the provision was passed.

the Philippines whore to America?
Do you cherish your three hundred years as a
Spanish brothel? Franco would like you back.
And the Japanese rape—how does that ride with you?

O my brothers, ours is a rich country to sell so cheap
The people are poor but the land is rich
with red narra and chrome and copra
with timber and rare metals and rope
Ours is a rich country to sell for an empty song
and a false promise, to sell into slavery

What will you say, you who said 'yes'?
What will you say to Mabini, to Bonifacio,
to Rizal, to the Hukabalahaps who fought
and fight for freedom?

What will you say to your children when you and
they become wage-slaves in American mines,
in American sawmills, in American factories in the
Philippines—when in our own country we become
not *free citizens,* but *cheap labor!*

What will you say then of freedom lost in March?

## *CHRISTMAS IN THE PHILIPPINES*

*—Concepcion, Tarlac*

Do not think only the rich have Christmas:
with gay parties, the tinseled pinetree fragrant,
laden with presents, everyone happy, plenty of
good wine and *lechon**, the children screaming with delight.

The poor also have children, and Christmas;
and most of us are poor in the Philippines.

* Lechon: native barbecued pig eaten especially on festive occasions.

Christmas is for everyone,
like love, and the brotherhood of man.

Ask this boy living in this *talahib** shack in Tarlac
with his mother and sister.
They sit on one side of the empty *dulang*** while Sickness
and Death sit across from them, on the other side:
they are having *their* Christmas party.

The small girl can no longer laugh because
it makes her cough so painfully and already
the roots of disease have grown deep in the
sockets of her big round eyes.

Beside the shack is a half-burned tree.

*Mother, is this our Christmas tree?*

Yes, children, this is your tree
(the MP's tied your father to this tree because he would not
tell the names of comrades, then they burned the tree;
see how the leaves are blackened and the bark is dead).

Mother, why are the vultures standing stiff as stone
among the charred branches?
Is this a dream, Mother, why do they stare at us so with
their stony eyes and their stony beaks?

I do not know, children. I was not born angry
and before I saw your father killed I had
no hate for any man.
It's only a nightmare, children, do not be frightened.

*Shall we open our Christmas packages here*
*beneath this tree?*

How red the ribbons, Mother, how bright as fresh blood
are the red ribbons bound 'round our Christmas packages!
Who sent us these lovely presents, Mother?

* Talahib: thatched grass.
** Dulang: low native table about one foot high.

Eight Poems from the Philippines: *Batongbuhay*

Hush, children, they were sent by rich Americans
and the palace of Malacanan*
You may open them now.

Look, Mother, what is in mine—a little brown
bird that's died of T. B.
You're crazy, Maring, it's no such thing!
And, Juaning, what did you get in yours this year?
Rickets, Mother. T. B. for Maring and rickets for me.

And what's in your pretty package, Mother?

*Why are you crying, Mother, did you only get tears?*

* Malcañan: the presidential palace occupied by Roxas.

## *SPEECH TO FARMERS AND PEASANTS OF THE PHILIPPINES*

*—San Fernando, Pampanga*

Filipino farmers, peasants
These are not Japanese shelling your barrios
burning, confiscating, killing
These military police are not sent by the kempetai*

While the slow storm gathers
behind the black forest of Arayat**
out of Candaba swamps*** choked with buri palms
Moves ominously over the fearful rice fields of
central Luzon

* Kempetai: Japanese military police equivalent of German Gestapo.

** Arayat: mountain stronghold of the Hukbalahap, recently the target of "operation Arayat" in which Roxas sent MP's, tanks, planes, artillery (arms and ammo courtesy of U.S.) in an all out attempt to annihilate these "dissident" (read: democratic) elements.

*** Candaba swamps: where persecuted Huk leaders have been driven into hiding; here they are sustained by the village people.

To flood the angry hearts of free men beating
in Nueva Ecija, Pampanga, Bulacan*

Roxas speaks; a cock crows
this piper who would lead us
back to a dark sea
this articulate marionette
who would strangle us
with puppet strings

"Farmers, put down your arms," Zulueta** said
but when Feleo*** came unarmed
to speak for peace
they killed him

Do not confuse the issue
with talk of Filipino fighting Filipino
(free men are fighting fascists still
nationality or color of skin
has nothing to do with it)

*Oppressors and oppressed:* that is the issue
the two sides of this bitter coin
Workers in farm and factory alike
we have only one enemy anywhere:
*the enemy of the people*

Never forget this, and that
out of our poverty-stricken birth
(for every child a tooth gone
into the crooked legs of rachitic children)
out of our crying hunger and our silent pain
comes realization of the single loaf
the common lot:

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* Nueva Ecija, Pampanga, Bulacan: the provinces of central Luzon where the Peasants Union is strongest. From these areas seven Democratic Alliance senators (among them Taruc, head of the Huks) were elected to Congress only to be barred from their seats.

** Zulueta: Secretary of Interior, who does the dirty work for Roxas.

*** Feleo: late vice-president of the Peasants Union (PKM) who was murdered under MP "protection" while voluntarily helping in the campaign for peace and order upon the personal invitation of Roxas and Zulueta.

*We the peasants believe in the right to*
*own the land we work*
No longer will the land be broken by
our backs for others
*That we have a right to the produce of*
*our own labor*
who would drag the iron plow of
despair over our desperate lives
*To bear arms in self-defense*
to plant the hollow seeds of
death between our bones
*To live a decent life*
No longer feed for swine
the sleek round swine of Roxas

We stand erect at last
above the flowing fields of rice
with something solid in our
muscled fist

## *THIS WAS THEIR CRIME*

*—Santa Maria, Bulacan*

They were young boys
all four of them, students,
and though there was much in their books
concerning the rights and dignity of man
the MP's shot them down without trial
in the middle of the day
under the hot sun
in Santa Maria, Bulacan
they were all sweating and one cried out
the others were silent
they were accused of sympathy
for the *Hukbalahaps*
this was their crime—
*this sympathy*

## *I SAW THE SEVERED HEAD*

*—Candaba, Nueva Ecija*

Skin drawn tight, black hair
lips blue, swollen with death
swollen blue with death and from the beating

No song on those lips now
no marching song nor fighting song
no song of joy of love
nor pain of love
no song but silence
on those blue and lifeless lips

Yes, the head was dead
the man was dead but
the eyes lived, burned
in their sockets bright
as the horrible stars of hell
stared at the monster-like men
standing erect, posing, smiling
proud of their brassards
shining in the weird picture
of military police and the mayor
and the severed head

The tongue they had torn
from the bleeding mouth
(kicked in the teeth when he wouldn't speak
smashed in the teeth with a rifle-butt
fixed him so he couldn't speak)
the tongue is black with death now
buried in the dirt with the broken body
so much pain buried in this earth
so much man-made pain
and who will speak of it?

Who will speak of the pain buried
and the living pain?

The eyes—
they have seen
they will speak of it
smoldering in the white skull
sharp as angry stars and the piercing sun
they will speak of "Peace and Order"*
*the order to kill*
*and the peace of death*

## *EACH OF THEM SOUGHT AFTER*

*—Minalin, Pampanga*

The girl with the long black hair
sits by the window
in the evening in Minalin
in the lovely evening of summer
sings tenderly the *kundiman***
remembers the rifle and the resistance
remembers the mouth of her lover
and his laughter

When he saw her courage in the face of fear
and felt the warmth of her friendship
kindling another campfire in the eyes of comrades
when she touched the wounded, gently,
soft as a bird's shadow upon the moss
then for the first time he saw that she
was truly beautiful
and in all her ways shaped of her convictions

Then he knew that out of the struggle only
would others find each other
and themselves: the children their
mothers and fathers, all men
their multitudinous brothers and sisters

* Roxas' notorious slogan, "I will give you peace and order in 60 days. This I guarantee."
** Kundiman: native love ballads.

And when the wonderful new star
reaches the center of the open sky
only then
will you find all women to be
truly beautiful
each of them sought after
and loved
for her own sake

## *FOR LABOR MARCHING ON THIS DAY IN MAY*

*—Tondo, Manila*

Brought together by the common use of tools
in field and factory
through the nature of production
we learn to live together
When my neighbor has no food
I go hungry
When his child is sick
my own son dies
Yet we are indestructible
for those who would destroy us
have placed in our hands
the weapons of their own destruction
Even the press which has lied to us
shall learn to speak for us

Witness the gathering of workers on this historic day
the public speeches, labor parades
revolutionary proclamations
the unfurling of red banners and slogans
the laying down of tools
mass meetings in the streets
carpenters and cigar makers
*en masse,* collectively marching, singing
The irrepressible struggle for political liberation
and workers here are but a fraction
of the workers of the world

Yes,
On this memorable May Day*
We demonstrate our strength
(only those who have grown fat
on the blood of our strength
are afraid of our strength
only those who fear the people
fear labor
only those who despise the people
degrade labor)

Our feet move with precision against the shifting pavement
against all obstacles, traps, pits, snares
against those who would turn us aside
hold us back, stop us
those who cry conspiracy at every forward step

We have the dialectics of accurate maps to guide us
We know where we are going and how to get there
We have seen the radiant cities
that shall rise in our name, reaching skyward
We have the blueprints
the careful designs
The cities are planned to the last library
the number of schools
the hospitals, with skill, science, and kindness
the homes with clean baths, bright kitchens
and friendliness
the quiet parks to be filled
with the exuberant laughter
of our children

From the earth at last fertile with the flesh
of our generations
Out of the technology of our sweat and pain
emerges inexorably the multifoliate flower

* On May 1st, 1947, in defiance of what Roxas himself terms his "mailed-fist policy," the CLO led a huge demonstration of 25,000 workers in Tondo district of Manila.

# Departure

By HOWARD FAST

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IN A WAY, it was like I had become old over night, and I woke up heavy; I woke up like a man suddenly with a family, two kids and a wife, and rent to pay, but I had none of those things, only a feeling that this, for me, was the end of a lot of things, crazy drinking sprees and whoring and foolish bats of one kind or another, all the things that made them grin at me and put up with it, too, whatever it was, the way you put up with a clown. "Clowning," they would say, "that sonovabitch is always clowning." But they didn't mind.

I shaved carefully and thoroughly, and Laurençon, who had a four-year old girl at home, made some crack about how she did as well but without a blade, just a time-worn inept crack, but an indication that it was nobody's lark, nobody's day of grace. "Go to hell," I told him.

"No offense, sonny."

"To hell with you, pop. You can't offend me. My mind to me a kingdom is. Age is no achievement; it's just a passage of time."

The trucks were waiting, but I still dressed slowly and deliberately. For some reason I didn't fully understand, I had a relationship with my clothes, the boots I had won at the bandage raffle, the heavy brown pants, the blue ski jacket, the black beret. I had never liked my clothes before, but I liked them now; they seemed to be unusual clothes, and I felt foolish and sticky and sentimental toward them. I even borrowed a clothes brush from Cohen and brushed them off. It was good for a laugh from everyone who saw me, but I didn't do it for a laugh.

The whole battery was like that. To see them offhand, you wouldn't have known, but as I was with my clothes, so each of them was with one thing or another; and in the thick soup of dawn, they moved with measure and deliberation, as if they were counting out steps to a prearranged dance. I try to think of some of the things that were said, but it was so long ago and I was young. Words don't stick as well as the scent of the damp earth, the sound of the truck motors idling, the pale flash of a spotlight that had overstayed the darkness. These things made a pattern for memory; I

suppose Lossowski was telling us to step lively and get moving, but I don't remember for sure. I do remember that the truck we got into was already half-full of Croats, big, sleepy-eyed, blond men, who grinned at us and pushed together to give us plenty of room.

Our truck roared into life, and we drove out of the hospital compound.

"Goodby, Denia," Mac Goldstein said thoughtfully and respectfully. Then he handed me one across the behind, and told me, "Nice to go home, huh, kid?"

"Home is where you make it." Parker, an Englishman, used to say that, and I picked it up. I would pick up a lot of words and phrases then; maybe that's the way speech grows when you're a kid. Sometimes, I used them right, but mostly wrong, I suppose, and it may be that they stand out across all that bridge of time for that reason. A word, a phrase, or a sentence is flung away, and how are you supposed to remember, even if you have taken an oath and are up before a formal court of the law? If I were under oath and answering, I don't know but that I'd perjure myself anyway.

How old were you?

I don't know—twenty or twenty-one.

You don't know? Surely you know. Surely you can think back and calculate. You are an intelligent and thoughtful human being.

Am I?

What date was it?

It was the fourteenth of January, or the fifteenth, or the sixteenth. They don't figure a date by a date, you know; the way they figure—when my first-born saw the light, or when I threw a fistful of dirt on the grave of my blessed mother, or when the cow calved, only there were no more cows then, or when the shadow of the church was ragged instead of straight and heat lightning of four colors flashed in the east; but not by a calendar. So I can remember that before we went into the barracks at Valencia, where they all were, the men of all nations, French and Slavs and Croats and Serbs and Germans and yellow-haired Northmen and dark-haired men of the South, the Italians and the Greeks and the Crete men—before we went into the great barracks there, I saw a Spanish girl who was more beautiful than any other girl that lived, slim and with a lissom stride, and she walked past and was gone, but I remember her and that was the day it was, and I have been in love with her ever since but never saw her again.

I remember too the color of the Mediterranean sky that evening when we went down to the boats.

It was the same day?

Well, I think so. It seems to me that it was the same day. You see, I was in love with the girl, and thinking about her, and it seems that I was only in the barracks for a while, because all I remember, aside from the fact that there were many thousands of men there, was that the Greeks were singing a song. I remember that because I always thought what strange people the Greeks are, not like us or the British or the Germans, either, more like the Spaniards, maybe, and they never seemed to grow tired; it was always beginning for them; wherever they were, it was beginning, a very hopeful people. I remember the song because it was a song of love, and I was in love, in a way of speaking, and the sky over the harbor was like that, pink that turned violet and made me want to cry. You know the way guys are; they kept ribbing me because I had stopped clowning; it wasn't fair to them, I should have kept on clowning, but I couldn't; and then when we marched onto the boat, I began to cry; but it was almost dark and nobody noticed.

It was an excellent operation, smooth and without a hitch, just the way the League of Nations and the Congress of the United States and the Reichstag wanted it to be, except that the boats were old and dirty and rusty and nobody was very sure about what kept them afloat. We marched onto our boat and down the steps into the hold. Before we went down into the hold, I looked back at the beautiful city, Valencia, the jewel, the ancient one. How do I recall what I thought then? I was a kid, a tough, hard-boiled, wise-cracking kid who would live forever, but I was tenderly in love and my face was wet with tears, and I must have thought profoundly and deeply. Or perhaps I thought of nothing but goodby.

If I thought goodby, it was the way you do when you are very young, and every place you are you will be back again, so dry your tears of sorrow. The French have a good word for it, but there is no word in English that is just right. There was a Welsh miner there from Pittsburgh, who was a captain with the 129th Brigade, who were Yugoslavs, and a hand grenade had torn open his loin, his testicles, his stomach and his legs, yet he was able to walk; and he stood at the edge of the hold, watching the darkening city, the jewel city, the bereaved one, but said nothing. I don't know what his goodby was. There were thirty-five or forty of us who were Americans, and we went down into the cargo hold, a big, empty place at the bottom of

the ship, and all around us there was warmth and odor from the men of many nations, the sick, the wounded, the stretcher cases too, and they clamped on the hatches so that not an ounce of light shone through, and the ship put out to sea.

I can tell it as a dream, but not really as a memory. When I lie at night and I am afraid to die, as all men are, except now and then when there is a thing worth dying for, I think of it, and it's like a balm for a troubled soul. But what is memory as against the facts? And, believe it or not, there is no memory for terror, for there in that hold men couldn't breathe or sleep or move, but I do not remember that anyone was afraid. But maybe my memory is poor and because I was a kid, they were good to me, asking me:

"How's it going, kid?"

"Good enough."

"Well, take it easy. Easy does it."

"Look, lay off me. I'm all right."

"Sure, you're all right, kid, you're all right."

But where do you stow your thoughts when your thoughts tell you that the fascists must know, and they will come out in a fat-bellied German battleship and pick off the old tubs like a hunter picks off ducks? The Slavs made a song; they are the loneliest people in the world, and yet they are never lonely the way we are lonely, and when they sing a song there is a memory of all the hurts they knew and their fathers and their grandfathers. I like our songs better. We sang *Digging Our Way to China.* Then we sang *There's a Long, Long Trail a-Winding,* which is the most beautiful song in the world, and the saddest, too, as I remember, for someone in love and lost of his love. I don't remember anything else of particular importance, and I suppose we slept.

It was seven o'clock in the sunny morning when we arrived at Barcelona, and for some strange reason our arrival there is confused in my mind with all the old newsreel pictures I have seen before then and since of troops coming home by ship and departing too; but really I don't suppose it was too much like that. But there were people on the dock, and I heard afterwards that Negrin was there. I don't remember him, but I remember André Marty; it was the first time I had seen him, and the guys pointed him out.

They had let us up on deck with the sunrise. A submarine was escorting us, and after I saw it, I felt a lot better. I don't remember us talking about anything else but the submarine, even when we entered the bomb-

wracked harbor and saw the sunken ships. And the bigness of Barcelona was different from the loveliness of Valencia. We hold Barcelona, so I told it to the nameless girl who had walked past me with such a lissom stride. We hold Barcelona, and, by God, we will hurl the fascist back into the hills of Portugal, and there will be a victory parade in Madrid, and as I march down the Avenue, I will see her and she will recognize me.

You remember well, and you remember badly?

It's that way, I'm sorry, some little things you remember and some big things you forget. I remember a melon rind floating in the water.

By eight o'clock we were all of us disembarked. The trucks for us were drawn right up to the docks, and we climbed into them. They took us to the barracks, which were on top of a hill outside of Barcelona. I don't know what the hill was called, or what was the name of the barracks, but it was a barracks in the old Spanish style, four square, with a compound in the center, and there were balconies all around four or five stories high, a place big enough to hold all of us, and we were thousands. There were all the Internationals who were left; there were the men of the nations. Someone—I don't know who it was—but someone said to me:

"Put it in your memory, kid, put it in your heart."

"My heart is full," I said, speaking in Spanish. "My heart is full and flowing over. I don't want to go home. I have no home, I am the homeless one." You say things in another tongue, and they do not sound foolish, as they would in English. Whoever he was, he answered so softly, *"Vamos juntos, vamos juntos——."* And I thought of the thousand and one times I had wanted to go home, whimpered to go home, pleaded to go home, wept to go home, a frightened kid and no soldier, but now I was a soldier and no land to fight for, no people to give me arms and say: Stand here, stand and no further.

They called us out and we filled the balconies and listened to Marty speak. Then Negrin spoke. Then the whole place broke into the *Internationale,* in fifteen tongues, and that is a memory, for when had it happened before and when would it happen again? And we were going away; we were leaving Spain, who is like a beautiful woman you love, and we were going away.

It could have only been a day or two later when the thing happened. The fascists had reached Barcelona, you understand, and we had moved up to a place called Cassa d'la Selva. It was the way out; it was the end already, and there were only the Cubans and the Mexicans with us, and we

had stayed too long; we were guests departed but lingering, and we had given away to the Spaniards left behind our guns, our leather belts, our boots, and whatever else was of value. We ate and we slept and we waited, and rumors filled the air; but the strongest of all the rumors was to the effect of Barcelona being handed over to the enemy, the pig with a voice, the dog without even a dog's soul, the fascist; given up and no struggle; handed over and no struggle; a gift for the devil. I lay in the sun, and my love lay beside me. I told someone then that I was in love. With whom? With a Spanish girl whose eyes are like black olives and whose lips are like poppies. They would have been fools to believe me, but we believed anything then. It was my first love and my last.

You remember what you want to remember; a man's past is part of all the past, and everywhere little gates are carefully closed. Only when it is all finished, our way, will we open all the gates. It was two or three or four days after we were there that the big meeting was called in the one theater the town boasted. Seven or eight hundred of us crowded in there, full and over-filled and cloudy with the smoke of our brown-paper cigarettes.

This is it, kid, someone who knew and was on the inside.

He spoke in Spanish, "You men of the Internationals, *amigo de corazon,* you men of the Internationals who are my comrades, my brothers-in-arms, listen to me! We will defend Barcelona to the death! We go back!"

That is also a memory. I cried again; I put my hands over my face and wept, but I haven't wept since then. Through all the rest, I was dry-eyed. No more clowning, and the kid was not a kid anymore. Sitting and listening to the speakers, one after another, telling how Barcelona could be held and made a bridgehead for all free men, I made a disposition of myself. Then we went outside into the dry sunlight of Spain.

The people from our land, America of the lovely name, the free land over the mountains and over the sea, went to a carpentry shop, and there some volunteered and others said they would go home. The volunteers would not go home anymore. They stayed together, talking and making arrangements for the battery; I didn't have anything to say, and someone asked me:

"What is it, kid, worried?"

"No."

"Take it easy, kid. Nobody is brave."

"I'm not brave," I said. My childhood was over, youth and adolescence and the sprouting of the weed as juices run through its stem, and the wonderful, beautiful conviction that you will live forever while all other mortals

die; manhood is a benediction as well as a curse, and the calm inside of me was life's repayment. It was a fair exchange. "I'm not brave," I said. "I want to stay here."

You see, it was to defend Barcelona to the death, if necessary, and most likely necessary, and you made your own choice. The great bulk of the Internationals were gone, but you had stayed with the leavetaking. You had overstayed; then sleep, and tomorrow we will break bread again.

What else do you remember?

Well, then, I also remember these things: the children who played in the streets, they the inheritors, and I was grown now and saw them as children. The fresh baked bread we had for our dinner, oh, honored guests. We shared our bread with the children, who made us at home as you do when a guest is no longer a stranger. There were also things to be done, arrangements for the new guns, which were coming down from France, arrangements for officers and for a table of organization, arrangements into the sunset, the sweet, cool night. I was bedded with a cobbler's family, and we sat before bed with a glass of wine and a piece of sausage.

Partake, oh cousin, and tell us about how it goes in the South. Is there death in the South? Will there be victory or defeat? Will the fascists be driven back?

*A su tiempo.*

Cunning words from an old fighter. You are one of the new ones, a machine gunner?

An artilleryman.

Drink the wine and don't spare the sausage. When will Spain see better men? A glass of wine makes the couch easy.

And then I slept until a whistle wakened me, and this was it, was it not? We formed into ranks and then onto the train, and nobody really knew except rumors; but after a while we understood. The train was going north, not south. Barcelona would not be held; the last of the Internationals were going away. This was a night train for the border, salute and farewell. Somewhere, men were afraid; somewhere men lost heart and hope, and they had opened the doors and said: Take this maiden for yourself, she with the lips as red as poppies and the lissom stride. I had only hatred and contempt for those whose eyes were wet now.

"What is it, kid?"

"To hell with you! To hell with you!"

And when the train stopped in the morning, we were in France.

# National Art and Universal Art

By S. FINKELSTEIN

THE RELATION of a national to a universal art is a central problem of culture today. On one hand we find Hearst becoming an advocate of a "pure" American art, denouncing modern art as an importation from Europe subverting the American national character. What he is really doing, of course, is reviving in America Hitler's attack upon modern art as "cultural bolshevism." He thus displays a fascist-inspired ideology far more menacing to the American people than the work of Joyce, Picasso and Prokofieff, who, of course, are a menace to nobody but philistines. Obviously such a concept of national art is reactionary and destructive to culture, American and any other.

On the other hand, we find among many scholars and theoreticians of art an opposite approach which fears and disparages national qualities in art as reversions to primitivism. Examples of such thinking may be found in the literary essays of Thomas Mann, the music criticism of Alfred Einstein, the art criticism of Roger Fry. They seem to uphold a goal of progress in the arts based upon universal standards of style and form, opposed to racism and chauvinism of the Hearstian kind, and thus seem to be "progressive" as opposed to Hearst and fascist reaction. Yet such theories hinder, rather than help, the flowering of a healthy international as well as national culture. Both Hearst and these academicians represent essentially the bourgeois approach to the national question, which sees the struggle for national freedom and self-expression in terms of exclusively nationalist and racist theories.

The opposition between the "national" and the "universal" is contrary to both the history and the contemporary realities of the world of art. Both the nationalist and the academician agree that folk art or folk myth, upon which a national art must lean, is a realm of pristine purity and sweet simplicity. The nationalist upholds it as a mystical return to the land or to the distant past, a means of shutting off the mind from the scrutiny of contemporary problems. The academician frowns upon it as too local and primitive, too much "of the people," too distant from the "great traditions." Yet folk art is neither exclusively simple nor exclusively local in its

origins, as may be seen from even a cursory examination of the folk art of the Negro people in America. The poetry of the Negro spiritual, for example, did not come from Africa. Its idiom was found in America, and shared in common by Negro and white. The images and mythology come largely from the Bible, surely one of the most international of possessions. What gave this art its national and folk character? It was the integration of these elements into an art which in form and content served the immediate communal needs of the Negro people for self-expression, communication and struggle. The formal patterns of the poetry arose naturally out of church service and work song. The imagery, taken from nature and the Bible, took on a new symbolism and real content from the miseries, protest, and active militant struggle of the Negro people. The Underground Railroad, with its need for signals and secret communication, was no mean factor in the development of the spiritual.

Similarly, the "New Orleans" jazz music, beloved for its "folk purity" by jazz critics, was made up of the most fantastically diverse elements. Some of these elements were African. Others came from hymn tunes, military marches, square dances, Spanish, cowboy and Creole songs. What gave this music its integrated folk character was its use of these elements to serve the needs of the Negro community, not only of New Orleans but of such cities as Memphis, St. Louis and Kansas City. These diverse elements were gathered up into a new unity, bearing the stamp of the emotional and psychological nature of the community of people that the art served. Because this art embodied so powerfully the imagination, the emotions, the communal life and relations of the people it served, it gained a realistic content and power which raised it far above the diverse elements which went into its making.

And this art, so wholly folk and national, became a powerful international influence upon music. It was taken up by white musicians, who found in its formal practices and melodic phrases not only a better music than they had been playing, but a means through which they could achieve an emotional expression of their own. This music is loved by people the world over, and it has entered as an influence into the art of such composers as Debussy, Milhaud, Ravel, Prokofieff, Stravinsky, Shostakovich, Vaughan Williams.

The folk art of all countries came into being through a similar combination of many different elements into new unities, growing through a process of assimilation, division and reproduction. Purity in the idioms of art

is as much a myth as it is in the case of language or race. For example, the great wealth of folk art of the Middle Ages combined the heritage of tribal myths and practices, the Bible, images taken from contemporary life, all welded together into new art forms reflecting the social life of the medieval community. Such art forms spread throughout Europe, in each land taking on a new local and human character. Thus the practice of miracle and mystery plays spread throughout Europe, differing in every land, and becoming germinating forms for the Elizabethan drama in England, for oratorio in Italy, for comic opera in Italy and Germany.

Folk art, then, shows no contradiction between a faithfulness to the community and a power to spread its message far and wide, influencing new art cultures. It shows no opposition between the qualities which came to be called "national" and "universal." Folk and national art are not only influences upon other art, but are themselves influenced. Two painters, for example, Jacob Lawrence and Robert Gwathmey, one Negro and one white, base their art upon the imagery and character of the people of the South. In both we can see a simplicity of line and transparency of pattern which makes their work close in style as well as human image to folk art. Yet this seeming simplicity is actually the medium of a fine sophistication, and one can say that this art has profited from the study of such international influences as Cezanne, Matisse and Picasso. There is no contradiction between such national and international influences. Actually the proper study of the giants of modern European art has helped these American artists to develop, through a finer use of line, design and color, the national and human images of their art.

If we take the three figures mentioned at the beginning of this essay, Joyce, Picasso and Prokofieff, we will find each rich in national qualities. Joyce cannot be understood, in idiom and ideas, except as an Irishman, his language an outgrowth of the Irish literary renaissance, his pessimism and mysticism directly related to his despair at the middle class leadership of the Irish national movement. Picasso is influenced by Goya, by peasant images of the Spanish people, African sculpture, Catalonian folk art, and makes conscious use of symbols such as the horse and bull taken from the folk lore of Spain. Prokofieff has always been national in his idiom, and today constructs his works about great epic and national themes taken from Russian history and contemporary struggles.

The roster can be enlarged. In our literature of this century we may cite Dreiser's *An American Tragedy,* truly an American tragedy made up of

language, imagery and characterizations that may be called the folklore of American city life. There are Carl Sandburg's *The People, Yes* and his monumental life of Lincoln; stories of Erskine Caldwell; Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath.* Even Gertrude Stein, so idolized for a while by the literary abstractionists, began her writing career in *Three Lives* with an attempt to catch the speech rhythms, immediacy of imagery, simplicity of statement of folk speech. From other countries there come Sholokhov's *The Silent Don,* a national epic in every sense of the word, dealing with the life of an entire nation, the Don Cossacks, and with the theory of the national problem. Halldor Laxness' *Independent People* is also national in idiom, in its use of Icelandic historical and folk heritage, its characterization, and political theme. Among painters there are Chagall, whose work abounds in folk portraits and symbols of the Russian village and of the Jewish people; Rivera, Orozco and Siqueiros, who built the epic mural art of Mexico. Among composers there are Bartok, whose large-scale designs are among the most strong and sustained in contemporary music and whose music at the same time is a scientific compendium of methods with which folk idioms can be used with subtlety and expressive freedom; Debussy, who learned from Moussorgsky and from Oriental music, and whose harmonic textures taught a multitude of composers how to preserve and expand the unique character of a melodic folk line with the utmost sensitivity; the great and ignored American, Charles Ives.

These artists, who exhibit national qualities of idiom, form, even political content on so many different levels, are far from provincial or backward looking, as the "universalist" would describe national art. On the contrary, they are the ground-breakers of the arts today, and their works will stand up as most characteristic of our civilization. We are left, then, with the opposite of the thought with which we started. It is now the "national" which seems to be progressive, and the "universal" which is perhaps "reactionary." But this also is not acceptable as a theory, for the term "national" brings to mind jingoism, racism, irrational attacks upon progress in society and the dignity of man.

The problem is one of understanding the national question. For there is a profound difference between bourgeois nationalism and the struggle for national freedom, and a profound difference between academic uniformity and genuinely universal qualities.

The classic definition of a nation is that given by Joseph Stalin in *Marxism and the National Question:*

"A nation is a historically evolved, stable community of language, territory, economic life and psychological make-up manifested in a community of culture. It goes without saying that a nation, like every other historical phenomenon, is subject to the laws of change, has its history, beginning and end."

Applying these definitions to the problems of art, we arrive at the following generalizations. A national art employs an idiom common to the people of the nation. This idiom is made up of patterns of communication in word, music and painted symbol, common beliefs and even appearances as a painter would transcribe them, which together embody the psychological make-up of the people. A national art gives the people a greater consciousness of their history and of their present problems. It adds to their unity by giving them a common social life, through which they can better know one another. A national art is bound up in its production with the territory and economic life of the nation. It seeks means of production and dissemination that will be part of the nation's normal life.

It is obvious that no single work of art can fill such requisites of a national art. We are discussing here the problem of what may be called a national cultural life, rather than the production of a single work of art which may be called "national." The two problems, however, are interrelated. It is the entire cultural life of a nation which determines the character of the individual works produced within it. It makes a great difference to an artist whether the production of works of art is controlled by an oppressing class, or whether vast audiences are his patrons; whether he is encouraged to tackle the full sweep of the moral and social problems his age throws up to him or whether he must narrow his art to suit reaction and express himself in circumlocutions; whether his society gives him adequate tools and materials with which to work, or whether such materials are limited by snobbishness, bad education and outright censorship. And it is impossible to understand the single work of art without understanding the cultural life of which it is a part. Thus, simple song, apparently innocuous in words and music, may have electrifying power because it expresses the feelings and aspirations of the people at a time of intense struggle for national freedom. A work of art may seem to embody secret symbols, stilted conventions, peculiar distortions, which become completely understandable when we put ourselves back into the times out of which it came.

The problem of a national art has a double aspect. One is to create the conditions under which a national art can grow, the cultural life that will be

beneficial to the production of art. The other is to bring into being the works themselves that will fill this need. These two struggles go on side by side. Just as a national culture broad in its audiences, living in its demands for the most profound and illuminating experiences, will encourage great works to flower, so a ground-breaking work of art will itself win new audiences for art, inspire and educate other artists to help build a national culture.

## II

The folk art of the Middle Ages is not a national art, for one cannot speak of nations in that period. But medieval folk art provided the basic material, the idiom patterns and germ forms of the national art to come, just as the people of the Middle Ages, forming new languages and building a common economic life, created the preconditions for the new national states that were to arise. The nation came into being with the rise of capitalism in Europe, which may be placed at about the beginning of the fourteenth century in Italy. The great wealth of art which accompanied the rise of the bourgeoisie was predominantly national in idiom and form and occupied in its content with the struggle between bourgeois and feudal lord, a content expressed in terms of moral conflict, religious symbolism and the search for national traditions and history. Dante, although coming out of a scholastic rather than a folk tradition, turned to the vernacular idiom for his *Divine Comedy.* The great artists of the Florentine city-state, from Giotto in the early fourteenth century through Masaccio in the early fifteenth, used as their favorite form the public fresco, the form beloved by the people of the entire city as a source of national pride and a means of education. They painted religious themes in terms of contemporary moral and social controversy, often taking their actual images from the people of the streets and from folk plays.

Painters such as Bosch and Breughel reflected in their art the struggle of the Netherlands against Spain, using fantastic images taken from folk myths, faces and characterizations taken from the common people of the land, religious themes treated in such a way as to show the analogy between Biblical tyrants and Spanish invaders. Elizabethan drama grew out of the heritage of English popular drama, with its long history of theological and political controversy. In Shakespeare's plays we can find not only the foundation and source for modern English literature, but the culmination of English medieval literature, with its folk tales, folk songs, ballads, miracle and

mystery plays, chronicle histories, slang and racy vaudeville. The German and North European music which accompanied the rise of Lutheranism was similarly an art rich in national qualities. Such composers as Schuetz, Buxtehude and Bach drew upon the Lutheran hymns and the practices of German popular vocal music for their idiom, and upon the Lutheran service as the basis for their musical structures.

These giants who founded bourgeois art cannot be called folk artists, for their outlook was broader than the folk community. Yet their attitude towards art was still close to that of the folk artist. They were practical craftsmen freely using the social avenues that existed for their art. They made the necessary conventions and artifices of these media the very framework of their formal structures. They used themes that were a common social stock in trade rather than seeking as later romantics did, a pseudo-originality of theme. Giotto was a painter, sculptor and architect. He and his fellow painters created many variations on the same Biblical and allegorical themes. Misnamed a "primitive," up to recent times, he solved the problems of uniting human drama and characterization with the monumental design demanded by a church wall, on a level unsurpassed by any later artist. Shakespeare was an actor who wrote originally to provide material for his company. He turned every limitation of the Elizabethan stage into an artistic advantage, and was a master alike of prose and poetry, pure verse and drama, lofty soliloquy, comic repartee and practical stage craft. Bach designed organs, was a noted virtuoso, was one of the greatest of practical and scientific theorists of the art of music. For all the subtlety and finesse of his composition, his writing was still referred to in his time as "improvisation," the process of composition being still considered an advanced form of the folk method of improvising upon a basic communal idiom and set of themes.

These artists differed from folk artists mainly in the scope of their forms and in the audiences they addressed. Folk art had been narrowly communal. These national artists recreated the epic in new forms, an art addressed as much as possible to the entire nation, based on broad social and historic themes, embodying a wide variety of social characterizations. They loved the popular art and idiom of their time because through it they were able to bring into their own art the character of the common people. They used these folk forms and idioms not as things to be quoted literally for their archaic beauty, but creatively, as the folk artist himself used them, with delight in the earthiness, the close contact with nature and the harsh material

realities of the world that had always been the content of the people's art. They could not lean on folk patterns alone, but to satisfy the demands of their new, epic forms, they drew upon all the highly developed methods and practices available to them. Thus the early Italian painters studied the newly discovered Greek and Roman sculpture; the German Lutheran musicians used as much as they found necessary of the polyphonic art of the Catholic Church musicians. Shakespeare and the other Elizabethans studied Renaissance and Roman literature avidly. These models, too, they used with the utmost imagination and freedom, so that it is in the aptness with which they solved the new esthetic problems offered by their age, and the new forms of breadth and grandeur they achieved, rather than in any slavish imitation, that we can best see their appreciation of classic models.

Their art was national to the same extent that the states within which they worked were national. Largely left out of this art was sympathy for the miseries of the peasantry, for the peasantry was able to play only a relatively small role in forming the new national states, being exploited by feudal lord and bourgeois alike. The national states of Europe in these centuries were formed by the leadership of the bourgeoisie, in collaboration with the new bourgeois-minded aristocracy, with no possibilities for democracy in our modern sense of the word. Yet in the earlier years of bitter struggle against the landed feudal nobility, broad strata of the population took part. In Florence, for example, the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries found bankers like the Medici, the guilds, and the city artisans all fighting feudalism, and for a period Florence was governed by republican institutions. It was during this period that Florentine painting was most social in theme, folk-inspired in idiom, lucid and yet monumental in design. In Elizabethan England, the most varied, richly political and popular art was created during the period of national alliance of queen, merchant, new aristocrat and city artisan against the feudal lords and feudal reaction in France and Spain.

It is because this art was so profoundly national, serving as much as the times permitted the needs of a rising nation, so broad in its human content, that it had the greatest universal influence. Engels says, "The men who founded the modern rule of the bourgeoisie had anything but bourgeois limitations." These artists were studied by the bourgeois artists who followed them. They are being restudied, with entirely new lessons drawn, by the national artists of today. Giotto, and the Gothic art which preceded him, are powerful influences upon contemporary painting. The music of Bach, and of the entire Renaissance in Europe, is a powerful influence upon

contemporary national music. Shakespeare was studied by the Restoration dramatists. He was studied again, and entirely different lessons drawn from his work, by romantics such as Schiller in Germany, Shelley, Byron and Keats in England. He was used by Engels as an example to a Marxist dramatist of how to put the fullness of the history of a period into a work of art, and he is a powerful influence upon contemporary Soviet literature.

This is an entirely different kind of "universality" from that fostered in academic circles, a theory and practice better termed *uniformity.* True universality is the appreciation of what is common to all people and cultures, based on an understanding of their differences. It is a recognition of the infinite diversity and basic sameness of human beings. Its economic and political manifestation in the Renaissance was the spread of the mercantile and banking bourgeois system throughout Europe, breaking the independence of the landed feudal lords, transforming the economy and government of every land. It was an incomplete attempt at internationalism, just as it was only a partial step towards democracy, fostering the rise of the absolute monarch along with the bourgeois parliament and the formation of the national state. Today the highest political manifestation of universality is the internationalism of the working class, which fights for the right of all peoples to develop in terms of their national heritage and needs for progress.

Just as the international spread of democracy carried further the world wide struggle for national freedom, so socialism in the U.S.S.R. made possible for the first time the complete abolition of national oppression and the fullest expansion of the national independence and political life. Lenin forged the collective strength of the U.S.S.R. by fighting for the right of its separate republics to secede, calling this principle "division for the sake of unity." By the same dialectic principle, a true national art is one that uses all that can be learned from the world heritage of art and science, in order to solve its own exacting problems of expressing the character and meeting the cultural needs of its people. And the greater the power with which this art serves the nation and expresses the national character, the more stimulating, useful and powerful will be its contribution to world art.

## III

Pseudo-universality, or uniformity, in the arts appeared first as a reactionary theory in the early Renaissance period with the scholastic attempt to

preserve Latin as the literary language and the Church attempt to preserve the Gregorian chant as the idiom for musical composition. Neither scholastic Latin nor the Gregorian chant had been reactionary, but rather progressive, at the time of its first appearance. Becoming a limitation, however, in the face of the new bourgeois and national forces, they were swept into discard. When the wave of the first bourgeois social revolution had subsided, uniformity appeared again in the form of a doctrine of neo-classicism. Such an art appeared in Italy during the twilight of the Renaissance. Merchant families like the Medici, now assuming titles of nobility and holding the reins of state rule in their hands, retired to the villas, making their peace with the landed aristocracy their ancestors had fought so bitterly. The "upstarts" had become kings, and now exercised all the privileges of kings, even those of leaving Italy open to the invasion that destroyed its independence, progress and hopes of unity, leaving intact only the estates. The art they fostered was a simulation of the Greek "harmony" and "balance," an art of sweetness, masterful technique and perfect taste, whose great genius was the artist Raphael. But such idealization of the Greek was a denial both of the social character of Greek art and of the impulse toward the new explorations of epic form and human content which the early Renaissance artists had found in the Greek.

In English literature a similar pseudo-universality appeared during the period of the Restoration and the reign of Queen Anne that followed. Again fostered by a reactionary class, it appeared as a movement against the two great waves of national literature in England; first that of the Elizabethan period, and second that of the Puritan revolution, in which artists like Milton and Bunyan used popular Biblical imagery to fight political and social battles. Neo-classicism came at a time of alliance between bourgeoisie and all but a small group of the aristocracy against the peasantry and workers; an alliance based upon the exploitation of the newly appreciated principles of stocks, bonds, corporations, investment, interest, the right of private property and the wonderful ability of money to reproduce itself. Without deprecating the magnificent achievement of poets like Dryden and Pope with the heroic couplet and the accepted literary diction, such restrictions made a broad national art impossible.

In music such uniformity appeared in the spread of Italian opera to every court of Europe; it was an opera based on poetic librettos which were generally a travesty on classic drama, and an intellectualy empty idealization of aristocracy. A composer as great as Handel, serving the British aristocracy,

had to work in this medium, setting librettos written in Italian for English audiences. It was a stultifying form for his art, and for all the inspiraton of the music he poured into these works, not one can be restored today as a living work. Bach refused to work in this most lucrative of musical forms of his time, preferring instead to remain with the great German national forms of Lutheran church music, although in his time all hope of a unified Germany had been crushed by the Thirty Years War, and this art, formerly a great national and people's art, was dying out. Mozart, near the end of the eighteenth century, tried to build a German national opera, rich in folk qualities and social implications. Although his music was loved by the people of Vienna, the court politicians ignored his work in favor of the polished and empty pseudo-universalities of imported Italian opera.

Out of these attempts to establish uniform practices in the arts rose the institution of the academy. Aiming at the useful function of preserving the accumulated knowledge and technical advances of the arts, the academy was turned into a medium for upper-class snobbery in idiom and censorship of content. Academic teachings fostered wholesale misinterpretations of great areas of folk—oriental, African and early, national Renaissance art—as "primitive" and not worthy of serious study. From the French Revolution on all the major advances in the arts took place *against* the academies.

The French Revolution, Napoleon's blows at the established feudal regimes of Europe, and the struggles of liberation against Napoleon's invasions, unleashed a host of movements for democracy and national freedom among all the peoples of Europe who had not yet attained national statehood. These struggles found expression in the arts, and movements for a national art are inextricably intermingled with the general romantic movement of the early nineteenth century. All the arts were affected by the search for a national base, a national heritage, national idioms and forms. In prose, poetry, music and painting, there appeared a new interest in folk lore, fairy tale, forgotten episodes of national history and forgotten heroes of early peasant and bourgeois revolts.

Examples of this new national art are the paintings, lithographs and etchings of Goya; the songs and instrumental works of Schubert, saturated with Austrian popular rhythms and melodic phrases; the operas of Verdi, Glinka, Moussorgsky, Borodin, Smetana; the early poetic dramas of Ibsen; Manzoni's novel, *The Betrothed;* the instrumental music and songs of Grieg and Dvorak; the Hungarian rhapsodies of Liszt; the polonaises and mazurkas of Chopin; the literature of the Irish renaissance, which arose alongside of

the Sinn Fein movement after the Irish famine of the mid-century. Almost all of Russian literature of the nineteenth century, from Pushkin and Gogol through Dostoyevsky, Tolstoy, Turgenev and Gorky, is occupied with one aspect or another of the national problem and the Russian people.

It is this nineteenth century art which has been pounced upon by academic scholars as representing "nationalism" in the arts. Admiring some of its qualities, theorizing mainly upon the weaknesses they find, they have tried to describe these movements for a national art as an aberration rooted in the nineteenth century, found mostly among peoples clamoring for national independence, provincial in idiom and lacking in depth. This was counterposed to a "universal" art dealing with "eternal" human emotions not contaminated by national feelings and historical movements. But as we have seen, such "universality" is an academic myth.

The movements for a national art which started in the nineteenth century are extraordinarily complex. They are not to be contained within the narrowness of "nationalism." Nationalism is a bourgeois version of the national struggle. As Stalin describes it, "The bourgeoisie of the oppressed nation, repressed on every hand, is naturally stirred into movement. It appeals to its native folk and begins to cry out about the fatherland, claiming that its own cause is the cause of the nation as a whole." But the basic drive of the "young bourgeoisie," out of which this national movement stems, is "to sell its goods and emerge victorious from competition with the bourgeoisie of another nationality." This movement broadens as the peasantry and working class enter. But so long as it is dominated by the bourgeoisie, it results in racist and chauvinist theories, and incitements of hostility to other peoples; it is a mirror, in the oppressed state, of the nationalist theories in the dominating state. For a dominating state has its own nationalism, its doctrines of supremacy, "manifest destiny" and the "white man's burden," its jingoism and distortion of historical traditions. Fastening a cultural uniformity upon its minority peoples and subject nations, it fosters at the same time the most violent hatreds and antagonisms among them, resulting in inter-racial fights, pogroms and massacres.

Comparatively little of the national-inspired art of the nineteenth century shared such ideology. Much of this art served the purpose of the bourgeoisie by its vague and uncritical approach to folk lore, folk speech and historical tradition, or by its superficial synthesis of folk quotations with academic techniques and forms. It is this weak art which is generally held up as horrible examples of "national" art, but its fault was that it was not national

enough. It did not seek for the true human and social meaning of ancient myths, and so was unable to apply them properly to the struggles of the present. It did not search for an idiom that would handle folk material creatively, as the folk artist himself had done, creating folk art rather than imitating it; for an idiom flexible enough to portray the character, psychology and struggles of the people of the artist's own time, on the land and in cities. It was an art frequently of great power and beauty, as in the piano music of Liszt and Chopin, the songs of Grieg, the lyrics of Yeats, giving the people a sense of their own existence as a nation and a feeling of common bonds; an art not in itself reactionary but sufficiently small in scope, narrow in ideology, to be used possibly for reactionary ends.

Some art does appear which might be called "nationalistic," and the most striking example is the music of Richard Wagner. But Wagner's operas, with the exception of *The Mastersingers,* are at the opposite pole from a truly national art. The stories, taken from old tribal myths, are drained of historical significance and made into a combination of fairy tale, personal autobiography and medium for the expression of Schopenhauer's revulsion at reality. The musical idiom has little folk or popular character. The works themselves are designed for presentation not to the people of the nation but to those able to make a pilgrimage to the "shrine" devoted to the glory of the composer. They came into being under the sponsorship of the German wealthy bourgeoisie and aristocracy.

The struggle for true national independence and freedom in every land rested on the achievement of political clarity, which meant the rise to leadership of the working class, with its fight for democracy and against exploitation, the formation of a progressive land program for the peasantry and the understanding of the relation between national freedom and international unity of peoples for democracy. The preconditions for such an internationalism had been created by the merchants and industrialists themselves, with their development of industry, their world-wide search for raw material and markets, their proletarianizing of backward and colonial peoples. The theory for such a struggle was provided by scientific socialism. On the cultural front, this struggle for a national art truly representative and expressive of the people, rested upon the discovery of an idiom that would contain the character and life of the people of the city as well as the country-side; one that would divest folk idiom of its archaic content and exotic appearance and would give it a new contemporary flexibility fit for the expression of the psychology of contemporary people. It meant

the full use of the civilized heritage of art, along with a struggle against academicisms which held within them the platitudes of an outmoded and upper-class psychology and view of life. Most important, it meant the break away from forms and media for art through which art had become a possession of upper-middle-class and aristocratic patronage; the search for media through which the artist could speak directly to the people. On such a practical plane of communication, the formal problems of a national art could best be solved, the art itself hammered into shape.

Cultural and political achievements moved hand in hand. Goya's art grew out of his immersion in the struggle of the Spanish people, both against the Napoleonic invaders and against the betrayal by their own nobles. Tolstoy's art, concerned with the place of the land and the peasantry in the national life, reflected the profound shift of Russian society which followed the freeing of the serfs. Verdi reflected the best, most democratic side of the Italian struggle for unity and independence. And out of the rise of the Russian Bolshevik party, under Lenin, came the towering figure of Gorky, so completely of the people, so clear in his understanding of the true relations between the national and the international struggle. Out of the Easter Week rebellion in Ireland, led by Larkin and Connolly, emerged the new, realistic and proletarian national art of O'Casey.

## IV

In its lesser, as well as its greater achievements, the national art of the nineteenth and twentieth century had qualities which made it a powerful force opposed to the art-for-art's-sake neo-classicism and the individualistic, anti-social, pessimistic and introspective individualism which dominated so much of the art of the times. One of these qualities was a vitality which came from the entrance into this art of the masses of people, through a language which they themselves have helped fashion. This quality may be seen in the sheer abundance of human beings who fill the pages of Dickens, Mark Twain and Gorky. In music it is found in the torrents of melody that pour through the works of Schubert, Dvorak, Verdi, Moussorgsky and Tschaikowsky, a melody that although bent to the most subtle expression still carries within it the germinating strength of dance and song. The operas of these composers abound in varied human characterizations, with frequently the people themselves, in mass, becoming a protagonist of the drama. In painting, this quality is marked by a sharp, clean, revealing

line, as in Goya, Daumier, Van Gogh, never allowing romanticism to soften the perception of outward human reality, gaining its expressive quality through its record of the miseries and struggles of life as they have etched themselves on human faces and bodies.

With the masses of people there entered into this art their philosophy of life, a realistic acceptance and love of the world reaffirmed in the face of its multitude of hardships. And so if we find irony and protest in the work of these folk-inspired and national artists, we also find the most full-throated laughter. Dickens, Mark Twain, Gorky, Sholom Aleichem, the Verdi of *The Masked Ball* and *Falstaff,* Daumier, Henri Rousseau, Picasso, Prokofieff are great comic artists in complete contrast to the romantics' emphasis on the "man alone," his pseudo-tragic feeling caused by a self-imposed withdrawal from the real world.

Still another quality of this art was its imaginative use of whatever materials came to hand. While these artists fought for their integrity as honest artists, against censorship, they did not regard a practical use for their art as an intrusion upon their freedom. It was an intrusion only when its conventions were dictated by a ruling-class forcing its own fears of reality upon the artist. When a new medium for art brought these artists closer to a mass audience, and allowed them to speak honestly within it, the medium itself set their ideas flowing. Thus Goya created his epic history and portrayal of the Spanish people in the etching and lithograph; Daumier did the same for the French people, between the 1830 revolution and the Commune, in the form of the lithograph and newspaper cartoon. Dickens grew on the penny serial, Mark Twain on frontier journalism, the Irish poets and prose artists on the Abbey Theatre.

This national art was and is highly experimental. Its experimental qualities were obscured in the later nineteenth century, when critics were enraptured by the one line of romanticist, impressionist, symbolist and expressionist experiments, the deliberate invention of ambiguities, the probing into dream and the subconscious. It remained for the twentieth century to discover the fresh and truly ground-breaking character of the national movement in the arts, and to carry this movement to a new level of technical achievement. It was the attempt to embody in the idioms of art the constantly changing aspect of the world and people, the search for new materials and media for art, which led to the scientific analysis of the languages of art, the vast enlightening study of ancient, folk, Asiatic, Indian and African cultures, which has made our own age, in the sheer knowledge

of its tools, the most educated in history.

A new obscurantism has appeared in critical theory, clinically discussing the styles of such art with an ignorance of the search for greater realism and power in communication behind it. Whitman's free verse is studied without Whitman's democracy; Picasso's cubism without his humanity; Bartok's polytonality without his folk core. Such attempts to abstract the formal achievements of contemporary art from the healthy impulses behind its appearance are only a new contemporary academicism, as upper-class inspired and barren an approach to art as any academicisms of the past. Such tendencies have been fostered by some of the artists themselves, such as Stravinsky and Gertrude Stein, who moved increasingly in their art away from human images and broad emotions, and by the small-minded imitators who far outnumber the genuine creative minds.

The most striking quality of national art is that almost alone among modern art movements it seeks to recreate the epic line. The bourgeoisie, who had raised the epic to such heights when they were battling against feudalism, almost destroyed the epic when faced by the struggles of the working class, fostering every theory that would remove art from a devotion to contemporary history and the fullness of society. The epic, except in false neo-classic imitations, is the study of human beings in terms of history, with human knowledge of nature and of social forces replacing the myths that had served such a function in ancient times. The national artists restored the story to painting not of course in the manner of the *genre* sentimentalists but in full plastic terms, as in the popular Biblical fresco art of the great early Renaissance painters. Goya's *Disasters of the War* and *Caprices,* Daumier's series of cartoons, Picasso's *Guernica,* Orozco's symbolic history of Mexico, are such modern epics. Beethoven's grand line, his fresh human symbolism and broad portrayal of human conflict and resolution appear again in the *London Symphony* of Vaughan Williams, the *Leningrad Symphony* of Shostakovich, the *Fifth Symphony* of Prokofieff, the *Violin Concerto* of Bartok. Novels like *The Quiet Don* restore the story in the best sense of the word, the portrayal of human beings who in their interaction make up the movement of history, to a novel form that has been increasingly given over to passive introspection.

A national art is one that operates simultaneously on different levels: the small forms of immediate popular impact and daily use, the grand line of the social epic, the scholarly research into the past, the laboratory experiment. It is broad in its base, allowing the richest differentiation among

the peoples and localities who make up the nation, and profiting from the wealth of idiom developed by the people through their active participation in cultural life.

The movement for a national art is now faced with the practical problem of having the political air and space in which to grow. In America, cultural as well as political democracy is under increasing attack by reaction. The artist who hires out his talents is forced to give up his integrity and to work hobbled by the most stifling restrictions of form and content. The great public realms of radio, newspaper, motion picture, magazine and book trade, as important to the public domain as education and food, are increasingly forbidden to artists who want to remain artists and to serve the public as honest masters of the means of human communication. The great areas of the American land, the working class and the national minorities who together make up the majority of Americans, are denied the cultural life through which their artists can grow and develop in home soil, speaking to audiences of their own people, rising in stature (as artists can only rise) through constant living contact with an audience. The great masses of people are robbed of the healthy folk and popular culture which can only come through the restoration of creative participation in art to the people. The growing monopoly of every public form of communication, of the means of production and distribution of art, has produced a grotesque mockery of a national cultural life. Yet the potentialities exist in America for a renaissance unequalled in history.

Today the working class is the leading force in the fight for democracy and for a thriving American nation that will serve the welfare of its people. The struggle for a national culture is part of this struggle for a democratic America, and just as the working class must realize the powerful ally it can have in the artist, so the artist striving to grow as an artist must understand that his ally is the working class. Art is the expression among people of their joy in life, their growth, their understanding and mastery of the world. It is the exchange of their experiences and ideas. The very variety of language and forms a national art can take makes for unity among peoples, for the very depth and insight with which art portrays the unique character of a people gives it the power to transcend national boundaries, becoming a force through which people can better understand one another, work together and build a world without exploitation of human beings and wars among states.

# Genesis

By JULES ALAN WEIN

. .

In the beginning there were transports.
*Sh'ma Yisroel!*
Hear O Israel!
And the round earth had no corners
For the old bewildered men,
The girls whose fingers plucked their mouths,
The young men and their pale young wives,
The big-eyed children.
A careful transport.
A most scientific transport.

*"For resettlement in Eastern Poland*
*Bring your precious family heirlooms,*
*Bring your dreams in little parcels,*
*Bring your slippers for the dancing.*
*Gaily, lightly, come!"*

A most scientific transport.
Yet a child cries, *"Hold me, Mama! I have fear!"*
And it was evening and it was morning
The first day.

And the second day was sorting.
The old men sorted from the young men,
The young men sorted from their wives,
The children sorted from their mothers.
A careful sorting.
A most scientific sorting.

*"The human infant*
*Passes sixteen fluid drams of urine,*

*If wrested from its mother punctually,*
*German Fascist Time."*

A scientific sorting.
*Shall I see thy face again, my Brother?*

And it was evening and it was morning,
The second day.

On the third day there was grading.
The virgins graded from the matrons,
The worker graded from the intellectual,
The burly graded from the lean.
A careful grading.
A most scientific grading.

*"Adult males of sturdy frame*
*Are worth the nourishment required*
*To extinguish them with labor."*

A scientific grading.
*Is it suicide or brothel, O my Sister?*

And it was evening and it was morning,
The third day.

On the fourth day there was inventory.
Ladies' undergarments, silk, so many;
Spectacles, with frames so many,
Without frames so many;
Human hearts, how many, O too many!
A careful inventory.
A most scientific inventory.

*"Fillings, gold, in bin eighteen.*
*Fillings, silver, in bin twenty-three.*
*Neatly tied together by the laces,*
*Shoes, assorted, half a million pair."*

A scientific inventory.
*You will need no doll tomorrow, O my daughter.*

And it was evening and it was morning,
The fourth day.

On the fifth day there was gas.
*Yisgadal v'yiskadash . . .*
And weeping . . .
For the old bewildered men,
For the young men with thin arms,
For the matrons shrieking for their children.
A careful gassing.
A most scientific gassing.

> *"The human adult, trapped and screaming,*
> *Sprayed with Cyklone,*
> *Will expire amid its excrement most punctually,*
> *German Fascist Time."*

A scientific gassing. Yet not all gassing.
*"Why are they throwing dirt upon us, Daddy?"*

And it was evening and it was morning,
The fifth day.

And the sixth day dawned, defiant.
*Kidush Hashem . . .*
Now I lay me on the altar . . .
And a stone was as a fortress,
And a shred was as a banner,
And a heart was as a citadel.
A lone defiance.
A most glorious defiance.

> *"To the world,*
> *From the slaves of the embattled Ghetto,*
> *Greetings!*
> *For mothers, wives and children, yours and ours,*
> *For human dignity and honor, yours and ours,*
> *In the Warsaw Ghetto we will die, but not surrender!*
> *Death to the fascist hangmen! Joy to the world!"*

Oh proud defiance!
O most glorious defiance!
Comrades! . . . Sons of David! . . . Hail!

And it was evening and it was morning,
The sixth day.

And the seventh day was triumph.
*Am Yisroel Chai!*
Israel lives on!
Triumph in the silent bodies,
Triumph in the splintered rifle,
Triumph in the fallen banner,
Triumph in the broken eyes.
A flaming triumph.
A most everlasting triumph.

> *"From the smoke of conflagration,*
> *Live the brotherhood of blood and battle!*
> *From the murdered Ghetto population,*
> *Long live freedom!"*

And it was evening, the seventh day,
And death was but the birthcry of the morrow.

# The Best Kind of Night

By WILLIAM J. GRIFFIN

. .

THE NIGHT WAS THE BEST KIND OF NIGHT. From the bay two miles downtown and from the river to the East came the slow fog, insinuating itself past the filthy pane.

There were six beds in the ward: three against each of the two longer sides. Mine was one of the two much sought after places at the window where, through the unwashed hospital glass, you could look out over the tenement roofs at the pigeons in their stupid wheeling flight; at the men who sat in their shirt sleeves smoking their pipes into the summer sky.

But at night, fog was best. The pigeons huddled in their gratings and copings and strong angry gulls made quickening sounds on their flight inland.

In the ward the light coming up from the street lamps was dimmer and the details of our lives were hidden. The unembarrassed rolls of toilet paper kept on the tops of the bed-stands, the cardboard boxes into which one coughed the slimy secrets of disease, the torn six-months-old magazines, enamel urinals hanging in white cotton bags, tooth-brush glasses and half-eaten oranges—all shared a blessed gloom, became parts of another world.

Fog brought new sounds too. On those nights I had only the chimes coming over from the Metropolitan Tower. Not much, you understand, but making it somehow possible to reach morning. Fog, however, added the sounds of the river.

I knew how the river looked at night: the red and green detached blurs of light, the glint breaking the water into designs of Marin-like facility and excitement, but the sounds were more exciting still and I had them. I didn't have to remember them. I had them.

Every mutter and shriek and metallic imprecation recognized and greeted. Freighters churning along, cheaply, by themselves. Tugs cuddling the bulky railroad barges. Diesel driven tankers and dowdy New England

passenger ships. All of them sending the sounds of their feebly hysterical whistles and bells and horns into the ward stink, successfully competing for my affection with the old clock in the building where my mother worked as a girl.

It was the very best kind of night. When death, the impersonal, sterile, white death of the ward retreated into the dark canyons between the beds, into the corridor lighted only by a red *EXIT* bulb, into all the threatening crevices and tunnels of the hospital.

I lit a cigarette and thought how badly I wanted a drink, and remembered bars I had been in. Bars with soft, warm lights and cool, cool drinks. Bars with glasses that frosted, tall glasses, glasses making wet rings on the oak. Then, saving it for last, I remembered too, one by one, as a prisoner in solitary confinement remembers his name and his age and his address over and over again to stay from being mad, the parts and the wholeness of my young wife.

"Pass me a smoke."

I reached over, rolling onto my right side, and stretched with my left arm until he could grasp the pack. He had probably been talking to me ten minutes or so after he had seen me light up but I didn't like leaving the fog. His coughing was hard and came often. What had he asked me? I couldn't remember. I knew he wanted company. They all do then.

"Christ, I'm as high as a kite. Listen, there's so much I have to do. Do you know I wanted to write? I guess I've been saying that ever since I've been sick and now that I know what to say there isn't time."

He lit a cigarette with the sheet held so that there was no glare reflected into the corridor. His face, in the quick light of the match, was all eyes. They were like windows through which frightened people looked out into the street at the murdered men's blood. I could see right down into him.

"I want to write down what I know. I don't care if it's a poem or a song or a story. I'd make it all into an editorial for some crummy little union weekly. As long as I get it down. About pride and anger and truth and what they have to do with the taste of coffee and the look of my girl walking. But Jesus, Mary and Joseph, there's no time. No light and no time."

What had he asked me? Once he told me he was twenty-four and now, with the knowing of his death on him like the weight that comes

of being in water too deeply, he looked older than the scrawny derelict in the corner; he who drank the methylene-dyed rubbing alcohol.

"Do you think I'm smart now because I'm hopped up? You know I think this epiphany is the result of that last lovely goddammed shot."

"What time is it?"

I didn't answer. He didn't more than half know I was there. But I was there all right and very, very tired of hearing a man die. "Or am I smart because I have a girl who loves me? How the hell do you know all of a sudden what you know?"

A loving girl was what I had left in the fog. Buddy, I thought, why don't you be a nice guy and get it over with? But I knew he might go on all night. I still couldn't think what it was he asked me to do. He wanted me to do something.

"I've worked around, believe me. I've worked around and I've been around and I'm one smart baby. With no time."

Yes, Buddy, I thought, you have told me and I believe you. Don't you remember, you poor bug-eyed curly-haired kid, that you were going to die last night too? All right, so you've worked around and the things you did to make your coffee—and were sweaty and hard and a long way from home. You've been around, you poor punk, but now you're blowing big red bubbles in Bellevue.

"I don't know where the knowing began. Maybe back in high school, although what I know was in me before that. But the knowing of what I know. When and where the hell did it start? I want to put it all down so that the rest won't waste all the time I did."

He was talking too much then and getting too loud. I wanted to quiet him and tell him to pray or something and forget about what he knew and the books and pamphlets on his chair and the little time he had left to do anything. What had he asked me to do? Remembering what he had asked I was mad at him again. I didn't want any part of hospital priests.

"Listen," he had said, "don't let them bring in the priest. I'd only embarrass the both of us. When he came this afternoon I didn't know what to say to the poor old guy. I don't want any praying. That stopped a long time ago. Stall him off, somehow."

He was a kid. A curly-haired, blond, Irish, West Side kid. He had been hungry and he'd been mad and now, when he should have been tired enough to lie down and let the old priest pass him over, he kept me awake

telling me about what he hadn't time to do and about what he had done. Telling me of the picket lines along the river in February, and how King or something street was in New Orleans. Telling me about his girl. She would have been a Holy Roller if he had been a Holy Roller, but he said he "converted" her. Telling me that *surplus value* wasn't only an equation or a set of figures and footnotes in a dime pamphlet but was his old man; a tired, ill-used drunk-happy bull of a longshoreman. Telling me of his twenty-four years all ready to bust and dissolve and be nothing, like the fog; be nothing except to what it had touched and then only to be a reminder of something else.

He listed every book he'd ever read, saying the Russian and French and English and Spanish and God knows what all names of the authors as he might once have said the responses of his Rosary.

He remembered for me the girls he had known and with his eyes and his hands and from the thin Irish fire of him he would have had it easy with girls. He remembered their names and the way they looked on certain days he also remembered, in detail. Now he had one girl and he talked about her too and what they had wanted, the two of them.

I lit another smoke for him and passed it over, but his cough began more strongly then before. The cigarette dropped to the tile floor—the color, in the dark, of a stop-light.

He wasn't talking anymore then and I could see him fighting hard to hold back, clenching himself like a fist, lying scared and angry and wanting another year, another hour, another life.

Suddenly the cough was a shriek in the darkness.

Explosively, painfully, the slight body tossed as if from unseen punches. I groped for the wall switch and pushed the button. A red wall light snapped on. He was moving faster and faster in the bed and then came the dreaded gurgle, like a jug pouring, the splatter on the tile floor, the wet bark of pulmonary hemorrhage.

The short, heavy night-nurse came in and, pulling the curtain around on its ring hanging from the ceiling, concealed the bed.

Four of the six bed-lights went on but two went off again and interrupted snores regulated themselves. The rest of us, fascinated by this preview of our own disaster, lit cigarettes and waited, looking at the silhouettes on the curtain.

Gradually, almost imperceptibly, the cough softened, the sound com-

ing now as if from beneath some heavy wetness. We smoked and waited until the cough, the strangled murmur, the protesting, thrashing hands stopped. We watched the muscular interne and the nurse push the heavy bed out into the corridor. On the next afternoon the interne would play tennis and the nurse would get up late and have breakfast at Childs.

Slowly, peacefully, thankfully, I grated the butt into a glass ashtray used to keep dust out of my glass. I put one of my two pillows on the chair and thumped the other out of its middle of the night flatness. I turned my back to the ward.

It was a fine night. Down in the street the lamps were moist haloes. The fog was thick now against the walls, against the sweaty brick and the sooted glass. Nothing could touch me in the dark, in the fog. Nothing could touch me as I lay there; not the sound nor the smell of death, not the leap of blood from inarticulate throat, not the suffocating end of breath. For the rest of the night, the fine night, nothing was real but the fog.

# Book Reviews

## *First Novels by Four Americans*

By HARRIET HAMBARIN

*THE GENTLE BUSH: Barbara Giles.* Harcourt, Brace & Co. New York, 1947. $3.50.
*ALL SOULS' NIGHT: John Kelly.* Harcourt, Brace & Co. New York, 1947. $3.00.
*THE HOURGLASS: David Alman.* Simon & Schuster. New York, 1947. $2.75.
*KNOCK ON ANY DOOR: Willard Motley.* D. Appleton-Century Co. New York, 1947. $3.00.

Barbara Giles, Willard Motley, David Alman and John Kelly are first novelists; and they tell us solemnly that life has been rather desperate, that there is much cause for alarm, and the first three tell us that unless we act together against John Kelly's asserted "right to be irresponsible" we shall be led into the hypnosis of death, fumble in our decay, and all land in the hell of an *All Souls' Night.*

Though all four of the novels deal with the social scene, the time and the particular sector of society described vary. In Barbara Giles' *The Gentle Bush,* the time is the turn of the century in Louisiana, in a sense the time of preparation for the complete decay of prewar days which Mr. Kelly describes in his *All Souls' Night.* It also interestingly enough prepares the background for the new tension and climax of forces of the maturing Negro and frightened white reached in *The Hourglass* right in our time. *Knock On Any Door* by Willard Motley does not concern itself with the South. The time here is the depression thirties, and the setting is a Chicago of gangs, drunks, prostitutes, suicides, jackrollers, murderers and the ruthless police characteristic of the fighting discontent and restlessness of that era.

The Giles book is the most sweeping, and perhaps because of this holds the keynote to the other two novels dealing in some way with the South. In *The Gentle Bush* the Southern "problem" comes alive. It is not

merely a fictionalized study of the degeneration of a culture, nor a didactic treatment of what clinging on to the dead but not yet buried can do to a whole society. It is not the Faulkner agony of violence, that superstructure raised to the point of rottenness but ending almost in bitterness and a lack of hope. Here there is hope, because the forces of alliance are apparent; the forces that can demolish the "unyielding" are shown in their full historic significance.

The Durel family with its sprawling uncles and *tantes,* once supplying the "aristocratic" gentlemen and Southern "belles" of their community, is now down to the last driftwood of memory and legend. Contrasted to this dying out aristocracy with its cemetery-like household, heavy with old talk and old smells, old furniture and bickering women emaciated with make-believe, is the energetic, cold-blooded man of affairs, Alcee, son of Agricole, Jr., a Durel who kept his plantation because he followed not the unproductive feudal planting methods of the pre-Civil War days but the more efficient techniques of the Northern industrialists. Alcee does not luxuriate in remembering the past and in looking backward on extinct "chivalry," as did Uncle Louis, who left his family nothing, and Uncle Adrien, who is barely holding out. Alcee manages his plantation with the ruthless objectivity of the business man. But the elements are already being formed for the breakdown of this efficiency in the new society with its callous indifference to the plight of the Cajuns (the poor whites of the bayou) and the Negro workers. Michel and Felice are the first to recognize that even the program of the Teddy Roosevelts and the Progressives is not enough. Militancy is demanded, and the Cajun Peter Boudreaux who himself almost sold out his own people actually fires the first shot against the planters. Thus "the gentle bush" of change and freedom moves forward along its course and begins to split the boulder of decadence and iniquity.

Even before the turn of the century, however, there was a growing rebellion against this decadent society. There was Agricole Sr. who had once loved the left bank of the Seine, which he never forgot although he later embraced a dubious "peace" and not the "battle" he was born to. And at the turn of the century there was the subtle insurgence of Nicole, who was so much of the "elegance" of the past, so sensitive to its pressures that she could not bear its guilt, could not live with it, could only rebel by escaping into death. Cousin Leonie had earlier escaped by fleeing to the luxury and rugged enterprise of the North, a foul escape, yet a rebellion too. Felice, of Nicole's generation, did not drag any of the old into her rebellion. Completely rejecting the cemetery existence of her relatives' make-believe, she married Peter Boudreaux, the Cajun. She

had married a man who was the representative of rebellion, of the people, a symbol of a free life. When Peter became a successful lawyer, therefore, it was Felice who was tormented —she did not marry to reach an easy peace. Had he forgotten "all those people?" Felice and Michel do not let Peter forget, nor, in an inverse fashion, does the other moving force forget, the "monstrous power" that sends others to kill. The historic agony plays itself out, and in the playing Michel grows up. Michel at an early age hates the brutal environment where Negroes are lynched with great crosses flaming in the sky. Michel, grandson of the elder Agricole, filled with self-doubt and irresolution, finally remains on the land to battle, remains because he discovers and articulates the forces that will destroy "the power of the swamp."

Not only in the clarity of its historic vision is the book so amazing. It attacks several layers of perception at once. The beauty of its style, the inevitability of its symbolism, the author's awareness of the real and ideal, never simplified, the imaginative grasp of the inner as well as outer lives of her characters, produce bounding vitality. One has but to look at *All Souls' Night* to see the difference between vitality and decadence, life and death. In John Kelly's book, MacGregor or Greg, like Michel, rebels against his Southern environment. The material of rebellion is here, but since there is absent not only an understanding of history but a belief in life, Greg's rebellion is merely against the intellectual vacuity that he finds in the South. John Kelly is interested in a mere display of the decadence and corruption he embraces. Greg is restless and disturbed, an easy prey for Pearse, the suave lover of music and the "arts." The act of living to him is of no consequence. "So many tons of coal, so many democrats, so many fascists"—all this is "desperately unimportant." The important thing is the "froth" of civilization, its "culture." The important thing is to be "free," and so when Greg becomes so neurotic that he breaks down, Pearse is proud because "neurosis is a cheap price for freedom." One has to be above reality, to dominate it, and all the sophistry that will allow one to believe in what is really an existential "freedom" is welcomed. The confused medley of ambiguities that Pearse uses in his "somewhat hypnotic essay" explaining Greg's troubles to him is illustrative of the whole empty purpose of the book.

Mr. Kelly wants to use his method of ambiguity to root out what he calls the bourgeois "Anglo-Saxon code of ethics." What he does not see is that this sterile, unimaginative code of ethics is the result of the political and economic debris that he is indifferent to. Like Nicole of *The Gentle Bush,* Greg too escaped from a decadent reality. Nicole escaped into sickness and finally into death. Greg

escaped into the blur of a death-philosophy, then into neurosis, and finally into death itself. Miss Giles, however, has Nicole oppose reaction (subconsciously) by her sickness and death. Mr. Kelly makes Greg the dupe of reaction as symbolized by Pearse. Mr. Kelly hails the triumph of reaction; Miss Giles, the triumph of rebellion. Of course Mr. Kelly would shrug his shoulders—he is indifferent to reaction *and* rebellion. Ironically enough, however, John Kelly has to embrace a "froth" of civilization which is the very product of reaction, the sterile morality that is anathema to him. He is therefore planting even more firmly the repugnant morality he is trying to avoid.

David Alman, however, wishes to destroy the morality that has plunged the Jim-Crow South into an orgy of cruelty and unbridled animalistic wrath. He tells the story of a rape of a Negro woman by Brian, a young lawyer born and bred in the South, the boy Jim, and a middle-aged and discontented general storekeeper Silas. He shows how corruption changes Silas—and how it has so eaten into the heart of the restless South that the town makes political capital out of Silas' complete moral disintegration by suggesting him for mayor. But the main story is what Brian's brutality does to him. Brian learns that the disease of white supremacy is deadly and degrading. In his rape of Mary Jefferson, Brian had calculated wrongly on a Negro's fear to retaliate. Mary Jefferson's husband demanded justice: dollars could not buy him off; the burning of his home could not terrify him. He insisted on a trial and received it with the help of both Southern and Northern sympathizers. Realistically enough, however, the author does not sugar-coat the corruption still prevailing in the South. There is a packed jury. Brian's freedom could have been an easy one. But Brian repudiates this ease. He has fallen in love with Lottie, a sensitive young college graduate who cannot entirely discard the spurious philosophy of white supremacy, yet can hardly help questioning its bloody arrogance. Lottie indeed is very well portrayed. Her yearning for a true freedom in which she can have a career of her own and her striving for truth amidst her difficult environment, become symbols of equality and fairness to a Brian who is sick with the foulness of his own moral indifference. His love for Lottie makes him refuse to lie to the packed jury. He stands up and says the charge of rape is true. The story of the complicated phenomenon of Southern guilt thus ends with a Brian seeking the larger justice which Lottie symbolizes.

Mr. Alman has not oversimplified. Brian does not suddenly become a man of political action; his guilt is changing into sympathy and desire for more information. He sees that men hate and destroy because they are afraid. Despite his hesitancy and

uneasiness he is groping toward a new strength.

The writer of *The Hourglass* has considerable talent. His craftsmanship is allied with a fine sense of economy. But the book has one significant weakness that requires comment. In the author's hands Brian's regeneration is due entirely to Lottie's love. A motivation of this kind is sentimental and not congruous with the definite social implications of the remaining aspects of the novel. The whole preparation of Brian's character was toward an admission of guilt because of a feeling of guilt, regardless of how hesitant this feeling was. (When Brian strikes a white woman because she has come to the aid of the Jeffersons, is it not because of a passionate sense of guilt?) Had Lottie instead of being the motivating force for a change of heart actually helped Brian merely to articulate his own feelings, the love relationship in the carrying out of the author's own intention would have emerged more fully as a rebellion against the sick society.

It is Willard Motley who openly rages against this sick society. This young Negro writer's furious indignation against the inevitable cycle that turns upon the wheels of free-enterprise poverty is overwhelming. He is angry because environment could turn a Nick Romano from an altar boy to a murderer. Poverty led this boy to steal; his theft led him to reform school; reform school led him to the demoralizing influence of the gangs of jackrollers, sex perverts and alcoholics of Chicago streets; and the streets led him to murder. His anger has a tremendous energy—it is like a big broad enveloping hand struggling to crush the demoniac forces that kill a boy before he has had his say.

It is an anger, however, in the naturalistic tradition, and therefore the impression left on the reader is one of pity, pity for the pretty boy who has become the vicitm of society. Here lies the weakness of the novel, but it is a weakness that is inherent in the naturalistic attitude itself.

What is this society that leads to the disintegration of Nick Romano? Mr. Motley quotes Clarence Darrow: "The crimes of children are really the crimes of the State and Society." As a naturalist all a writer would have to do would be to describe the crimes themselves. But Mr. Motley shows by his anger that he wants to be more than an observer of surfaces; the creator of Nick Romano wants to change the society that produces crime. But this power of feeling, to realize itself fully, needs to be directed against the warped relations within society rather than a generalized concept of society. What is this society that drives boys behind "any door down the street" to live so foully in corrupted sex, money and hate? Interestingly enough, there is a certain recognition of it in the book itself, in the creation of Tommy. With

Tommy, Mr. Motley seems to be aware that at the same time that poverty can turn weaklings into murderers it can also produce the very forces that will make war on poverty itself—that will *change* society. The writer has created this boy of courage and decency, a street urchin who refused to be bullied into ignoring a Negro at reform school, who attempted a bold escape—and who distributed strikers' leaflets at the very moment that weak-willed Nick Romano was on trial for murder. But this act is almost parenthetic, so that instead of the reader's being left with a sense of the strength of the oppressed classes, there is only helplessness in the hands of society, an inexorable fate.

While John Kelly appears to be looking for an excuse to stay put, Barbara Giles, David Alman, and Willard Motley are responding to changing reality by growing with it and urging in the words of Carl Sandburg:

"Let the gentle bush dig its root deep and spread upward to split one boulder."

# *The Folk Image of Jacques Roumain*

By BEN FIELD

*MASTERS OF THE DEW: Jacques Roumain. Translated by Langston Hughes and Mercer Cook.* Reynal & Hitchcock. New York, 1947. $2.50.

*Masters of the Dew* is a novel of the Haitian peasants by their uncompromising champion, Jacques Roumain. It is a simple tale of simple folk, fashioned into a tight little nut which carries an explosive power and the sweetness and bitterness of the lives of the oppressed. The translation by Langston Hughes and Mercer Cook richly conveys the lyrical folk quality of the story.

Manuel, a young Negro, returns to his native village of Fonds Rouge after fifteen years of work in the Cuban cane. The countryside is desolate, burned by drouth. His aging parents eke out a living by selling charcoal from their pit and hats of macaw straw. Few of their neighbors are better off. They bury their misery in drink and cards or flee to the city, the men to find themselves the most

menial of jobs, the women often to find themselves in the whorehouse. The neighborliness which prevailed in the village years back is gone like the life-giving water, and brother has turned against brother violently in a feud over the land which no longer sustains them.

Manuel's experiences in Cuba have sharpened his vision and armed him with patience, pity, and understanding. He knows the oppressors, sees through the mumbo-jumbo and voodoo bush religion, has learned that only by working together can the peasants gain their freedom and knock off the leeches. Shocked by the dissension among the people, mindful of the days when neighbors tilled their fields in a *"coumbite"*; or collective, he hunts for ways to liberate them. He enlists the help of Annaise, a handsome Negro girl who comes of a family bitterly at odds with his own.

It is this Romeo and Juliet theme which gives this tale much of its beauty. In spite of the hostility of the police and the scheming of the boorish Gervilen, who hankers after the girl, Manuel and his sweetheart succeed in bringing the peasants out of the sloughhole in which they are mired. For the heart and drive of the story lie in the way they find a spring in the mountains which is led down to the plains to irrigate the dying land. To harness the water the peasants must work together. Manuel is killed by Gervilen, but the feud which has split the village is bridged over, and the book ends with the water coursing over the small holdings and the procession of women led by Annaise, who bears Manuel's child in her womb, going to meet the triumphant peasants.

Brief and simple as the story is, it becomes heavy with meaning and fraught with great significance when we consider Haiti's history, particularly the recent pages made bloody by America. Haiti was the first and only independent Negro Republic in our hemisphere, among its revolutionary heroes Toussaint l'Ouverture and Jean Jacques Dessalines. Caught up in the imperialist game, its people used as playjacks, it was taken over by our marines in 1915. When we withdrew them eighteen years later, Wall Street kept hanging on like a monstrous spider-crab. In 1942, to develop rubber from a wild Haitian vine, Cryptostegia, we forced 300,000 peasants off the land which had been parceled out to their forefathers after l'Ouverture had smashed Napoleon's best troops early in the 19th century. This despoliation of the people, the spittle-licking and iniquitous role played by the native whites, gives us keys to a better understanding of this novel, brings closer to us these Haitians at a time when the lynch spirit grows here and the men in Washington like busy little bees are so involved in exporting democracy to the furthest reaches of the earth that it is becoming an increasingly rare com-

modity inside our own borders.

Jacques Roumain was an outspoken foe of this Yankee imperialism. He was a founder of the Communist Party of Haiti and was hounded and jailed because of his activities. The leader of Haiti's intellectuals, belonging to one of the first families (his grandfather had been president of the Republic), Roumain grew to understand that only through the masses of the Negro peasants of the plains could come Haiti's salvation. He brought all his equipment as a poet into his later fiction, and found in the peasant novel an effective medium.

The incredibly beautiful plains and mountains of Haiti, which make it a paradise to all but its own people, are more than background in this novel; they are living figures, part of the plot. Against them move Roumain's peasants, majestic in spite of their wretched conditions, elemental and primitive, the hand quick to the machete. There is something Biblical about these charcoal-burners, hat-weavers and laborers of the soil. They seem to be covered with a freshness as if they were still touched with "the dew of their own birth"; and they are courteous and charming and colorful with their creole lingo and their outlandish religious rites, a mixture of the African and the Christian.

Nevertheless, these peasants are not picture postcard figures, animated by the thumb of Roumain. They have a life all their own with their earthy and homely idiom and the humor and shrewdness which pierces to the ultimate core of things. They bear on their brows, like a blaze, universal qualities which bring to my mind Sholokov's heroes, my upstate farm friends and the Negro hands with whom I worked cutting broadleaf on a tobacco plantation.

In another novel the set speeches, the didactic quality might have marred the naturalness and artistry of the narrative. Here they heighten and enhance. The speeches are not pigeon-milk, pre-digested stuff which Manuel pumps into the crops of the peasants. It is a bread which has to be torn and chewed massively. Manuel is a symbol; his death is the blood sacrifice which brings the peasants together. As a symbol, he is more than a man, he is a magic image, a source of power, and this with the thinness of the plot, the meagerness of the characterization, the oratory and the simplicity lend themselves to a readier understanding and to the possibility of public readings before groups of illiterate and semi-literate peasants.

By creating such effective images of his people, Roumain added to his own stature and recreated and built up his own image. This is the image of a leader, of a Communist politician, of a poet and scientist. His work proves emphatically again that not in the fission between citizen and artist but in their fusion can the

highest creative energies be released. Reaction is massed outside the windows, clamoring in menacing notes that the opposite is true, but we shall dance only the more heartily at the wedding of the citizen in the writer: much joy and fruit come of that.

The most effective images are naturally those which release energies of the people and make change possible. Such images when they grip the imagination are converted into power since they make men conscious of their desires, help them experience themselves as human beings, and show that they are capable of taking their destiny into their own hands. It is such "seizure of power" which helps their minds and bodies, and thus good novels like this one serve the people. For there is no doubt that in Haiti, under the shadow which also blackens our day, the images of Manuel and Annaise and their creator, Jacques Roumain, are engraved on the hearts of simple men and women who will be the masters of the dew and the planters of the seed of tomorrow.

# *Writers of the French Resistance*

By JOSEPH BERNSTEIN

*THE REPUBLIC OF SILENCE: compiled and edited by A. J. Liebling.* Harcourt, Brace & Co. New York, 1947. $4.00.

*THREE SHORT NOVELS: Vercours.* Little, Brown. Boston, 1947. $2.00.

Léon Moussinac, a Marxist writer, found himself in the autumn of 1940 in the French concentration camp of Gurs. He was in the eyes of the men of Vichy a "political criminal"; and so the loyal collaborators of Hitler in France put him in a concentration camp along with thousands of other French patriots. In his Diary, *The Raft of the Medusa,* Moussinac tells how the underground "university" functioned under the very eyes of the Vichy jailers. One afternoon in October he gave a lecture to about thirty of his comrades, young and old, while other prisoners kept watch outside. He writes: "I had been asked to talk on the origins of the French language. It was very moving. I was struck by these attentive faces that seemed to lean toward me. Using an elementary grammar and a school

anthology of the classics of the French language which I had brought along in my exodus from Paris, I chose as illustrations for my lecture the text of the *Oath of Strasbourg,* and excerpts from the *Song of Roland* and the *Chronicles* of Froissart. I quoted from memory some verses of Villon and, to finish, Ronsard's sonnet, *La Mort de Marie.* When I reached this point, the emotion rose to such a pitch that every eye in the audience was filled with tears. I felt all the greatness — I might say the grandeur of this scene I was living."

What a tribute to the genius of French culture! What a heart-warming testimonial to its rootedness and continuity, its beauty and human significance across the centuries! Here were imprisoned Frenchmen living in hunger and squalor in their enslaved homeland; here were the common people of France, workingmen and peasants for the most part, and in their simple way they manifested their love of the French language, their devotion to the French spirit, their will to be French. Moussinac, the intellectual, could not refrain from exclaiming: "Never shall I forget this day, those faces, all that beauty, our pride at being men and speaking French."

*Our pride at being men and speaking French!* This is perhaps the keynote of a remarkable book, *The Republic of Silence,* edited by the American journalist A. J. Liebling. Here is a running story of the French Resistance movement in fiction and in fact, in creative literature as well as in personal letters, diaries, and crisp day-to-day journalism, from the first moments of stunned bewilderment in June, 1940, then, with a steadily mounting crescendo, through the first spasmodic signs of organized resistance to the thunderous finale —the liberation of Paris and all France!

It is a pity that similar volumes are not forthcoming to tell of the Resistance movements in all the countries that rose up and defeated fascism. Everywhere the pattern was similar, differing only in degree. Fascism sought to extirpate the culture of the nations it conquered. Burning books, controlling "dangerous thoughts," exiling or executing the best men of culture was a systematic policy to enslave the human mind. But in every overrun nation, writers banded together and made common cause with the people. Instead of decay and death, there was a magnificent flowering of national cultures in and through the Resistance movement. Nowhere in the West was this more clearly manifested than in France.

The excerpt from Moussinac's Diary is in Liebling's collection. So is the farewell letter of Jacques Decour, shot by the Germans on May 30, 1942. Decour was the pen-name of Daniel Decourdemanche, a gifted young writer who taught German lit-

erature at the Lycée Rollin in Paris. Decour, though he came from a well-to-do family of stockbrokers, was a Communist. His exploits in the Resistance movement have become almost legendary. He founded the underground literary publication *Les Lettres Françaises.* This young French patriot wrote to his parents from prison a few hours before his execution:

"For a long while you have been expecting a letter from me. You did not expect to receive this one. I too hoped to spare you this grief. Always remember that I remained worthy of you and of our country that we love to the end. You see, I might very well have been killed in the war, or even in the bombardment last night. So I am not sorry to die a death that has some significance. You know that I have committed no crime. You have no reason to blush for me; I have done my duty as a Frenchman. I do not think of my death as a catastrophe. Remember that at this moment thousands of soldiers from all the countries in the world are dying every day, swept away by the same great wind . . . I consider myself rather as a leaf that falls from a tree to become mold nourishing its roots. The quality of the mold depends on that of the leaves. I am thinking of the youth of France, in whom I put all my hopes."

Today the great Lycée Rollin in Paris has been re-named Lycée Decour, monument to a hero of the France of our times.

Jean Guéhenno is also in Liebling's book. He is an old and wise Frenchman, a writer devoted to truth, an artisan of ideas. Guéhenno noted in his diary written under the Nazi oppression how "all France, all Europe, is in prison." He felt himself heir to the traditions of Voltaire, a man of letters to whom liberty was both weapon and honor: "A man is free or a slave according to the measure of his soul. A true man of letters is not a purveyor of diversions. His liberty is not the liberty of his laziness or of his musings. Idle contemplation of himself is not enough, nor are the subtleties of his mind. For any man of principles, liberty, even more than his own liberty, is the liberty of others." This *pure* intellectual fought actively in the Resistance under the pseudonym of Cévennes, itself a historic symbol of the stubborn human fight for freedom.

Then there is the example of Vercors. Before the war he was Jean Bruller, a fairly well-known artist and illustrator. Now, after the French débâcle, he turned to literature and became one of the animators of the writers' Resistance movement. His *Silence of the Sea* was published by the underground *Editions de Minuit* (Midnight Press). This story of the "good" German who felt remorse for the crimes Nazi Germany was perpetrating on the French people had a mixed reception. No one could deny the author's feeling for style, his

finely etched character-delineations, his subtle use of understatement, his unerring psychological insight, his almost classic French prose. But many of his associates felt that Vercors was still too kind toward the enemy: he had not yet learned to hate and to express that hate with all the lucid passion and disciplined intensity of which he was capable. Vercors evolved in the course of the struggle: he combined hatred of the Nazis—"O you that I cannot call my fellow men"—with a deeper faith in France. His art matured. The three stories, *Guiding Star, Night and Fog,* and *The Verdun Press,* which have been excellently translated and gathered in a single volume, attest to this maturity. The story, *Guiding Star,* sums up in terms of creative literature what we mean when we speak of *pride at being men and speaking French.* It is a parable of the sense of the national. It is love of France and French culture embodied in a human being: Thomas Muritz, born in Slovakia on the shores of the Danube, loved France from childhood with an almost incredible passion. He read French books, pored over French maps, and France became the guiding star of his life. As a young man he left home and deliberately set out on foot over the Alps to reach Paris. Thomas Muritz established himself in France, married a French girl from the provinces, and one by one saw his childhood dreams come true. His only son fought in World War I and gave up his life; but Muritz, though he grieved at the loss of the boy he loved, was proud that he had died for *la patrie.* When World War II came, Muritz refused to believe that Frenchmen like Marshal Pétain could collaborate with the Nazis. Was not the Old Marshal a "Hero of Verdun?" So abiding was the faith of Muritz in France that he could not believe Frenchmen capable of sullying the country's national honor and dignity. But alas! It came to pass. Old and physically incapable of Resistance activity, Thomas Muritz, a non-Jew, walked about the streets of Paris wearing the yellow star of the Jews. It was a conscious, deliberate act. This was his protest against fascism and racial laws, his way of showing solidarity with the Jewish victims of Nazism. Finally, he was picked up as a hostage. He was not afraid to die—was it not for France? But in that final moment before death, all that Thomas Muritz had believed in, dreamed of, longed for—his entire universe crumbled. His image of France changed from a thing of joy to a hideous nightmare.

"In the end, we were all gathered round him. And when the gate opened, when, instead of Fritzes, we saw Frenchmen—"

Frenchmen acting for Hitler, shooting down Frenchmen! That was why the last look in the eyes of Thomas Muritz was one of infinite horror and infinite human agony. He

had been prepared for death. But the realization of French national betrayal—that was far worse than death.

For the real history of France produced infamy as well as heroism. Our picture would be falsely idyllic if we failed to mention the writers who became running dogs of fascism. There was the senile academician Abel Bonnard; the despicable Bernard Fay, known to American and French universities as a historian and biographer of Benjamin Franklin; the diseased, anti-Semitic Céline, wallower in the cloaca of the human spirit, who sought to crown his infamy by petitioning for German citizenship; Jean Giono, whose cult of the soil led him to embrace Nazism; Henri de Montherlant, elusive, opportunist, venal, unable to cover over his fundamental dishonesty with the glitter of his literary talent; Jacques Chardonne, novelist of the fashionable and well-to-do; and Drieu la Rochelle, the fascist intellectual, who was at least logical and committed suicide when France was liberated.

But the great bulk of the writers in France stood with their people. They fought—and many died—in the Resistance movement. Overwhelmingly, the intellectuals allied themselves with the most progressive and forward-looking class in the society of our times. Now there are many who see in this welding of politics and literature a blight on creativity. They protest that in the heat of the struggle literature is raw, crude, biased, lacking the polish and refinement that comes with "emotion recollected in tranquility." They erect a Chinese Wall between form and content.

Significantly, the writers of the French Resistance movement have demonstrated the spuriousness of any such theories. Far from sacrificing form, the French writers produced outstanding works when they integrated their culture and their politics. The poets Louis Aragon, Paul Eluard, Loys Masson, Pierre-Jean Jouve and Pierre Emmanuel, welded these two elements: their hauntingly beautiful poems became public not private acts. And for the first time in decades poetry was read and loved by millions of ordinary Frenchmen. The poet broke out of his isolation and restored poetry to its almost-forgotten position of honor and dignity in society. (Since poetry played such a vital part in the Resistance, one wonders why Mr. Liebling included no poems in his otherwise admirable volume.) Prose-writers like Vercors, Claude Morgan, Georges Adam, Claude Roy, and many more took the same path. How their healthy, robust writings contrast with the preciosity and mannerisms, the sterility and excessive preoccupation with the *ego* so characteristic of decadent writers! Consider even Jean Paul Sartre, who enjoys such a vogue today in certain sophisticated circles of the West. Compare the books he wrote when he fought actively against fascism

with his present works. Defeatism and nihilism have taken possession of him; and he has constructed a misty cloud-castle called Existentialism, compounded of the mysticism of a Heidegger, the spiritual anguish of a Kierkegaard, and his own loss of faith in the future of man.

The fact is that every progressive movement in France has rallied to its banner the finest representatives of French literature and art. At crucial moments in France's history, her men of culture have enjoyed remarkable and even decisive influence and importance. Literature has for centuries played a central and unifying role in the nation. The writings of Rabelais and Montaigne heralded the springtime of the great Renaissance with its re-discovery of the individual after the long and bleak medieval winter. In the 17th century, the golden age of French classicism, Richelieu and Louis XIV deliberately fostered literature for the sake of the nation-state. The 18th century Encyclopedists—Diderot, Voltaire, Helvétius, Holbach, and D'Alembert—helped prepare the ground for the French Revolution. And France's Revolution itself was steeped in literature.

So were the Revolutions of 1830 and 1848. In 1848, the poet Lamartine who sought vainly "to suspend the terrible misunderstanding which exists between the classes," was placed at the head of the Second Republic. Emile Zola was deservedly famous for his epic novels; but he became a world-hero, "a moment in the conscience of mankind," after his stirring defense of Captain Dreyfus during the Dreyfus Affair. Anatole France, esthete and ironist, became in the closing years of his life a Communist. The Third Republic gave him an official burial, but French workers formed most of the procession that followed him to his final resting place. Romain Rolland and Henri Barbusse became world symbols of the struggle against war and fascism, symbols of the humanist tradition they so luminously exemplified.

And so it is in the France of today. The best French writers are on the side of life, not death. The domain of France is fertile.