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THE EDITORS

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THE CONTRIBUTORS

HERBERT APTHEKER is the author of several outstanding works on the history of the American Negro people. His essay, in an expanded form, will be issued by International Publishers.

LLOYD L. BROWN is the managing editor of *New Masses*. A Negro veteran, he is at work on a series of short stories dealing with Negro troops in World War II.

JACK M. CLARK is a Californian who has worked in industry and farming in that state. This is his first published story.

LUIS ENRIQUE DELANO, who contributes the article on his countryman Neruda, is a novelist and biographer who has served as Chilean consul in Mexico and the United States.

PHILIP EVERGOOD, the distinguished artist, has created "The Miner" group of drawings for *Mainstream*. Harry Gottlieb, himself a well known artist, has written the introductory note.

BEN FIELD is the author of *Piper Tompkins*. "Virge Doggity" is the opening chapter of his new novel, *The Last Freshet*, to be released next spring by Doubleday & Co.

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The Novel of Action

By CHARLES HUMBOLDT

ANY ATTEMPT TO CHART new paths for the contemporary novel must take into account the mental climate in which the writer seeks to grow, the ideas upon which he feeds, and the social roots of his view of the world.

Perhaps never before in history has the cultural scene mirrored so quickly and minutely the contradictions within capitalist society. Like a landscape over which storm clouds pass, it changes from light to dark, glare to gloom, recording in delicate detail the shape and density of mankind's problems. In this country of the mind the artist and thinker must learn to tell shadow from substance. Otherwise each day will find them chasing or fleeing phantoms of thought which only vaguely reflect the real world, pursuing questions of the spirit while material issues swell to the breaking point over their heads.

American intellectuals have especially to guard against the efforts of the ruling class to foist upon them the illusions by which it conceals its true aims, its rapacity and its hostility to rational thought. The new "eternal" truths of the bourgeoisie, its revivals of religion and mysticism, its attacks upon reason and science, must be seen for what they are: tactical moves to prevent any inquiry into the causes of human misery for which it bears such heavy responsibility. In its heyday this class used to relieve its uneasy conscience with schemes and promises of reform. Now in its decline, it places the blame for its fiascoes and horrors squarely upon the shoulders of all mankind. It tries to brand the universe with its special mark of uncertainty and fear, which it now dubs "awareness of evil" or "the tragic sense of life." Thus bourgeois apologetics, which began with the affirmation of class objectives as eternal values, ends with the negation of all values except the recognition of guilt. But this tragic sense, the monopoly of ruling class journalism, universities and literary circles, is a pretentious fake, with no more relation to tragedy than a gargoyle has to Apollo. It is Big Business posing as man's fate.

The serious contemporary novel has not escaped the effects of this bankruptcy of thought and perversion of reality. For the nature of the novel is determined by its inherent conception of man's place in the world, of his social relations and his potentialities. If the novelist believes that men are powerless to alter their fate or even to communicate adequately with one another, then action will become secondary to what were formerly subordinate elements of the narrative, to descriptive details, psychological observations, intellectual byplay, etc. Similarly, dialogue must reverse its traditional role. Whereas it had once served as a means of recognition and communication, its purpose must now be to emphasize that the *dramatis personae* do not even understand one another sufficiently to come into conflict. All the technical resources of the writer are directed to the description of two opposing processes affecting the personality: on the one hand, its breakdown into discrete elements which mix with the environment, and on the other, the influx of the external world to which the individual succumbs. In either case, what is left is no unified personality, nothing capable of action. In place of a man there is an endless absorption and pouring forth of ideas and sensations, including those of the author who often merges with his characters or directs them in such a way as to emphasize their helplessness. These elements of characterization are present in greater or lesser degree in the work of certain of the masters of modern fiction, such as Proust, Joyce, Kafka and Thomas Mann, who have exercised a deep and persistent influence on contemporary writing.

The accomplishment of these writers is indisputable. They helped to wear thin the fabric of bourgeois illusion, uncovering the corruption of our society, and contrasting its realities with the pretensions and ideals, the dreams of its "heroes." They invented means of expression by which their probing could penetrate entirely new levels of experience made available by advances in the sciences, particularly psychology. After their irony and parody had disposed of him, the standard positive hero could show his face only in the pages of best sellers. He had become an anachronism. It was this which so enraged the conservative critics, the "humanists" and others, who wanted no breath of the vile world to taint their fantasy of the good life. Who does not remember the anathemas of the professors like Irving Babbitt and Paul Elmer More against decadence and cynicism? What actually disturbed these philistines was that the realism of the moderns (termed decadence) projected images of a decadent social structure, and that the mockery

(called cynicism) was aimed chiefly at the representatives of dying classes within that structure. Stemming from severe and honest observation, this realism and mockery proclaimed the disintegration of bourgeois society, though the writers themselves had neither revolutionary vision nor intention.

It is one thing, however, to bear witness to the decay of a class; it is another to break out of its circle, not to react to its hopelessness with despair or even cultured amusement, not to be overwhelmed by the vileness it spawns, nor trapped in fascinated contemplation of the trivial existence to which it condemns those who live in its shadow. The failure of writers like Joyce and Thomas Mann to accomplish such a major break-through has had a paralyzing effect on their disciples. Their very stature lent weight to the conviction that the bourgeois character was a symbol not of its class but for humanity. But in giving that character a universal significance which it does not possess, they prepared the ground for the denial of true individuality; the inability to act overcomes the figures of contemporary fiction.

Furthermore, as the bourgeois character is taken out of any historical context, it is deprived of whatever dramatic possibilities are still open to it. The individual makes his appearance on the stage of the novel in full retreat from the demands of reality. His dissolution is already so near completion that the reader can never gauge its tragic extent. He is too rootless for us to sense in him the potentialities that were annulled. So the drama of his destruction is replaced by the fixed portrait of his ruin; the crucial scene by the lyrical interlude, and tragedy by pathos. The individual has lost the power to arouse emotion, and often even to evoke our interest in what happens to him. A comparison between the rebels Heathcliffe and Stephen Daedalus, or between the students Peter Bezukhov and Hans Castorp, appears ludicrous on the face of it. But the very fact of its absurdity suggests what has happened to the concept of individuality in the novel, and how desiccated that individuality has become, how lacking in passion, motion or fulness. Even more, it reveals the writer's feeling of impotence in a society dominated by capitalism. He cannot imagine his characters even beginning a real-life struggle against it, in no matter how oblique a manner. This is most noticeable today; the sharper the class conflict and the greater effect this must have on every aspect of personal relations, the more strenuously do many writers try to banish it from their books. This evasion may take the form of simple exclusion of the subject, or its translation to a "philosophical" level on which the characters are seen in the light of eternity while the political issues are treated like poor or vulgar relatives.

I will illustrate my point by citing a novel, published in 1947, Malcolm Lowry's *Under the Volcano,* which is almost a compendium of the characteristics I have described and which has received inordinate praise from such critics as Alfred Kazin, Stephen Spender, Robert Penn Warren and Mark Schorer. The critics' overestimation of Lowry's book is a secondary matter, though it should have been obvious to them that it is almost a caricature of Joyce and other truly original writers, from whose handling of experience he borrows and whose style he converts into clever effects. What is notable, however, is their agreement with Lowry that it is futile to look for basic meanings in the actions of people. Even their disintegration and death have only an incidental reality, as symbols of an intangible destiny. In this fog of fate, deeds are replaced by sounds and scents, colors and textures; if there is no human being around to clear the air, a thunderstorm will do as well.

What plot there is in Mr. Lowry's book centers upon the attempt of Geoffrey Fermin, former British consul in Mexico, to drink himself to death despite the efforts—useless by nature as well as result—of his ex-wife and half brother to restore him to citizenship in the world. Before Geoffrey can accomplish his self-destruction he is murdered by a group of Sinarquistas who make the grievous mistake of thinking him an anti-fascist. His wife Yvonne is accidentally killed by the horse of an injured Indian whom they and brother Hugh were too cowardly, petrified or indifferent to help.

Neither of these agents of doom, the fascists nor the animal, can be taken seriously on a factual level. As such they give the effect of figures painted on a backdrop stepping forward suddenly to hit the actors over the head. On the symbolic plane, however, they teach us first, that nature works in a mysterious way to punish us for our civilized futility, and second, that the realm of action, of politics, is ruled by irony. Thus there is no escape. Man is lost, whether he struggles or not. The baffling tie of crime to freedom, the predominance of chance in social relations, prove to men that they cannot, on principle, be masters of their fate. Any attempt of theirs to encroach on the unknowable evokes a cosmic smile; worse yet, even the most everyday realities become portentous and incomprehensible. Mr. Lowry's Mexico has become a rococo inferno where flora and fauna twist in the cleansing fire of death.

I shall not try to follow the trail of the symbols in *Under the Volcano;* a book as long as the novel would be needed to do justice to the butterflies, gardens, old ladies, bus drivers, ferris wheels, ravines and corpses which

share the stage of the mystery equally with its chief characters. These signs and the host of literary references are the trappings of the novel of despair, which, despite the absence of formal religious belief, is essentially theological and inhuman.

Basic formal changes accompany the shift of emphasis in all such novels from the actual relations of human beings in a given society to Man under the aspect of Destiny. As though embarrassed by the thinness of their message the writers encumber their vehicles with countless scraps from the *Dictionary of Dates* to the *Treasury of the World's Literature.* The novel of this type turns into a repository of opinions, analyses, discussions, refined sensations, shrubbery, fascinating word-games and other stylistic flights, bits or even whole systems of philosophy concealed in parables and riddles. Eclecticism and a restless preoccupation with form-in-itself absorb its author, compensating for an absence of realistic thought. The novel becomes like a grapefruit with a thick skin. Everything but the juice of life is in it—reflections, lyrical effusions, laments, but rarely life itself.

The individual? One can ultimately reconstruct him from the scattered fragments of his sighs, memories, interests and reactions. From these he emerges usually as a slightly ridiculous, will-less or capriciously wilful figure on whom the writer expends his sentimentality, pity, irony or contempt, for whom he has obviously no respect. Even, as in the case of Saroyan and the later Steinbeck, where a spurious faith in humanity is unpleasantly sprayed over the characters, there is a revealing contrast between the deep meanings which are supposed to be present and the trivial means used to convey them.

But is not this lack of faith an expression of the writer's disillusionment with society for not presenting him with the solution of his or its own problems? Further, does not his own refusal to participate in the search for solutions contribute to society's failure to satisfy him? He is himself the pitiable or ridiculous character of his novel. And because the writer feels this deep down, the mediocre character becomes the hero of the novel. It is not, of course, the fact that such a character is portrayed which constitutes the weakness of the novel. It is that no serious effort is made to evaluate him either historically or as an individual. No character is in essence more important than another, though one may be described in greater detail. The novel loses tension, will, conflict. The more ideas the author expresses, the more evident it becomes that they cannot, are not intended to inspire action in his characters. It is not intelligence but conviction that he lacks. So his book must prove that not only he but life "is like that." The great poem of

the lonely soul threatens to end up in simple naturalism. Not with a bang but a whimper.

Thus the writer may reject the illusion that bourgeois society can ever satisfy his sense of values and yet succumb to the illusion that it cannot be transformed. But he thereby accepts the conditions of that society and becomes its apologist. The political impasse is also a creative one. If the writer is unable to relate his disgust with bourgeois society and its values to a course of action for himself, he cannot imagine other men and women for whom true action is possible. His work becomes repetitive and monotonous, mere proof that a new way can always be found to say the same old thing. Only by breaching the walls of a society whose cornerstone and cement is the exploitation of man by man will he see the fully rounded human being who will renew his imagination.

II

As with most art forms, any fixed definition of the novel of action is valueless. We can, however, describe its general nature and give a few contemporary examples.

The novel of action is also the novel of ideas. This is stated most unequivocally by Balzac in his fifty-page review of Stendhal's *The Charterhouse of Parma.* Balzac first describes the "literature of imagery," to which lyrical writing belongs. This, he says, is the work of "minds that are elegiac, meditative, contemplative, minds that attach themselves more especially to the great imagery and vast spectacles of nature and transpose them into themselves." Hugo is the great nineteenth century master of this type of novel.

Then Balzac turns to Stendhal. "There are, on the other hand, other active souls who like rapidity, movement, conciseness, sudden shocks, action, drama, who avoid discussion, who have little fondness for meditation, and take pleasure in results. From these another whole system from which springs what I would call, in contrast to the former system, the *Literature of Ideas.*"

There is a healthy informality in Balzac's definition. While he neglects the historical factors, and falls back on temperament as an explanation for fundamental differences in outlook, he allows for a passing over of boundaries from one style to another in the same writer. In fact, he assigns himself, along with Sir Walter Scott, to a third category, the Eclectic, in which the two previous forms are united. Yet he is careful to say that it is the general

impression which characterizes a work. And in this sense, Balzac is so much closer to the Literature of Ideas—and therefore to the novel of action—that we must place him among the masters of that form. But Balzac does not elaborate upon his statement. It is up to us to show how the opposites, action and idea, meet and become one in the characters of the classical novel of action.

Human beings are the main concern of the novelist—not abstract ideas and not unrelated feelings, but individual men and women and their ways of grasping hold of the world they live in. The degree to which they are conscious of their relations with others, intellectually as well as emotionally, and the extent to which that consciousness is registered in acts, determine their rank among the characters of the novel. The major character has not merely a distinct personality but also a fuller awareness of himself and of others. He may be right or wrong in his judgments, but it is the exercise of judgment that lends him the quality of greatness. It is judgment that gives him the power to act instead of imposing upon him the need only to suffer.

Here we part company with the naturalistic novel which performed such great service in describing the effects of society upon men, but ignored man's capacity to return blow for blow. Usually, the rise of naturalism is attributed to scientific progress and the consequent development of a materialist view of the world. Man, it is said, was thought of as a passive object in the chain of cause and effect, and therefore the novelist observed only how he was impinged upon, displaced, moved about by his environment, by forces external to him. To make man a free agent again, we must give up the scientific view. The trouble with this argument is that it identifies the materialist position with mechanical materialism. Actually, while it uses mechanical materialism as its *rationale* (as Spencer used the survival of the fittest in his sociology which preceded Darwin's biological theory), naturalism in literature was an offshoot of the massive advance of capitalism. It expressed the fear that men were powerless in the grip of social forces over which they seemed to have no control. That is why, in its decline, the naturalistic novel may merge with the novel of despair.

In contrast, the novel of action presupposes an equal interchange between the individual and society, a constant welling-up of ideas and emotions created in the midst of contradiction and conflict. It goes without saying that the writer must have a deep understanding of society and be able to assess the role of individuals in its transformation. He rejects the belief that the individual is free to do as he pleases as well as the dictum

that he cannot do anything at all. In his work, the individual becomes the expression of necessity in the very act of coming to grips with it; what he does and what happens to him as the result of his acts are the visible forms of the struggle between his character and the social relations of his time.

But there is a further step. The character must be pushed to the full use of his faculties, his spiritual resources revealed and *his* understanding of the world intensified. (I italicize the word "his" so that I shall not be taken to mean that the character should mouth ideas other than his own or become a spigot for the author's purpose.) Whatever is potential should become actual; only in this way can the individual be tested and remain memorable. The profoundest symbol for a type of action, the symbol most completely expressing its quality, is the act itself. And that act must not only be capable of evoking a judgment; it must uncover a judgment on the part of the character committing it. Let the reader think whether Don Quixote, Melville's Ahab, or Sholokhov's Gregor can be divorced from their particular intellectual grasp of the world around them.

Action and idea are inseparable. In the novel, no idea can be considered apart from the event which brings it forth, nor from the person who utters it, so that what comes out is not an idea but an intellectual experience. Conversely, the individual whose conduct expresses no thought has limited dramatic possibilities. For great drama there must be the ability to particularize the most difficult and subtle ideas (as well as the simplest) by creating characters who embody them in their lives, give them the form of flesh. At the same time, the writer does not conceive his character as the mechanical representative of certain ideas or social forces. *The characters' function is to be themselves*—persons unique in their particular combination of passions, hopes, fears, ignorance or knowledge. But in the act of conception (which takes place throughout the book, continually adding to the stature of the characters) there emerges from the welter of personal traits and problems, consciousness of self, class position and social forces, an individual who does represent more than himself, more than his own adventures, more than his own fate. He has become a type.

The *scene* is the decisive element of the novel of action. In the naturalistic novel there is a relatively even flow of the narrative, an accumulation of documentary detail serving mainly to produce a feeling of authenticity, and just enough dramatic presentation to establish the progress of the characters toward triumph over or defeat by their environment. The naturalistic novel is essentially discursive.

The novel of action, on the other hand, is studded with scenes whose aim is to exhaust the utmost possibilities of expression of the characters at each stage of their development. It employs realistic detail, but in order to emphasize human relationships. In the extended crucial scene the novel of action does far more than reveal the result of gathering contradictions which have been described in the course of the narrative. It allows the contradictions themselves to burst forth in the open struggle of the characters. The gain in realism as well as esthetic pleasure is obvious. Dostoyevsky's remark on his own work comes from this knowledge: "I shall observe this only: that character is described by me in scenes, in action, and not in discussions—therefore there is hope of turning out a person."

Deeply ethical in purpose, the novel of Zola and Dreiser succeeds in assembling such a weight of evidence on basic social realities, on the nature of life under capitalism, that the reader is forced to a verdict of guilty against his society. (Zola's magnificent record in the Dreyfus case shows that he did not divorce what he knew from how he acted. Dreiser, as we know, went even further in his understanding of social forces to become a member of the Communist Party.) It is not surprising, therefore, that the main body of proletarian literature in the United States has been, with few exceptions, in the naturalistic tradition.

But the cumulative effect of the naturalistic novel has its drawbacks which the novel of action can overcome. In the former, so much of the development of the characters takes place offstage, so to speak, that the impression evoked by their appearance in person is greatly lessened. The reader must take the writer's word for many critical moments in their lives, which the novel of action permits him to see with his own eyes. This accounts for the frequent lapses into banality of naturalistic dialogue. It has usually the minimal function of registering an accomplished fact in the relationship of people. Often the multitude of such facts, the "weight of evidence," overwhelms the individuals, depriving them of resiliency and strength to oppose their progressive destruction, except in the most feeble way.

The contemporary novelist need not renounce the gains of his predecessors. For example, he will use their investigation of the origin, growth and make-up of the emotions whose final expression is in action. It would be presumptuous of him to pretend that unconscious drives had no place in the development of character. At the same time we will insist that unless that final expression, the action, is itself portrayed *in all its fullness,* the reader will never completely understand the character whose progress has

been so carefully charted. He will be deprived of the moment in which all the contradictory emotional and intellectual elements fuse and burst under the pressure of their meeting. That moment is the scene.

A simple illustration is the talk in the tavern between Ivan and Alyosha in *The Brothers Karamazov.* Despite the fact that both brothers have been presented in great detail, in description and narration, before this scene, there is an utter lack of preconception in their treatment. Nothing is predetermined in their behavior as nothing is fixed in their natures; they seem to surprise not only the reader but themselves. Yet the reversals of mood and expression are never arbitrary or capricious; they are always achieved by the introduction either of new thoughts or of elements of their situation which the characters had hitherto repressed from their consciousness. The brothers' gay talk about "love of life" serves not only to draw Ivan and Alyosha together, but also to make them resemble their father, in this at least. Ivan, sensing this, is ready to renounce his love at the age of thirty. So we know that not only does he hate the "nasty" old man but identifies himself with him. And immediately he asks Alyosha whether he has seen Dmitri, who is in open conflict with his father. "No, but I saw Smerdyakov," says Alyosha, and the gayety is gone. Ivan becomes anxious and irritable, and when Alyosha presses him about Dmitri's quarrel with his father, Ivan says, "Am I my brother Dmitri's keeper?" These are almost the same words which Smerdyakov used when Alyosha questioned him in the previous chapter: "How am I to know about Dmitri Fyodorovitch? It's not as if I were his keeper." So the terrible bond between Ivan and Smerdyakov is presaged. Note, however, that the key phrase is not merely a static word-symbol for the coming actions of the characters; it is itself a preliminary act involving Ivan in the murder of the elder Karamazov.

In the midst of this, Ivan announces that he is over his love for Katerina Ivanovna, but the merrier he behaves over his new freedom, the more depressed Alyosha becomes. Here again, Alyosha's disbelief in Ivan's protestations is not described in terms of Alyosha's feelings, but directly, through dialogue which implies his disbelief without uttering it. Similarly, Ivan's realization that Alyosha does not believe him, which is conveyed by his noticing Alyosha's growing depression, tells us that Ivan does not believe himself. At this point, from Ivan's answer to a question of Alyosha's we learn that Ivan may leave town the following morning, thus clearing the way for his father's violent death.

There now opens the conversation on the existence of God, and the

refusal to accept His world, which leads up to Ivan's reading of his prose poem, "The Grand Inquisitor." Why are these "eternal questions" raised by Ivan? To justify himself. They are at once the expression of his "philosophy" and a defense for his actions. But the defense is prepared in advance. It is therefore both a justification and a contributing cause of those actions.

Even the way in which Ivan starts off is significant. He begins "as stupidly as I could on purpose," on the grounds that "stupidity is honest and straightforward." How like his father whose buffoonery always leads up to the most naked and direct purposes. Ivan cannot yet tear himself away from this detested figure. But as he goes on to his pictures of oppression and injustice, of the sufferings of certain children at the hands of gentlemen and landowners, pressing the saintly Alyosha to admit that he would not be the architect of a universe founded on the unavenged tears of a tortured child, forcing him to murmur that the torturer should be shot, we suddenly know what frightful struggle is going on in Ivan. He, Ivan, is one of the unavenged children, and he wants Alyosha to justify him in whatever course he may take against his vile father. That is why Alyosha cries, "Why are you trying me. . . . Will you say what you mean at last?"

It is not my purpose to discuss Ivan's ideas as expressed in his long speech or in "The Grand Inquisitor," nor to show the difference between the significance Dostoyevsky intended them to have and their even more important mundane content. But one must see that Ivan uses his prose poem to place himself among the "strong ones" to whom the "tens of thousands of millions" will look for guidance, renouncing their freedom in order to avoid responsibility for making decisions. He wants to be thought of as one of the masters (like Raskolnikov). But when Alyosha asks him how he will live with such an icy hell in his heart,

" 'There is a strength to endure everything,' Ivan said with a cold smile.

" 'What strength?'

" 'The strength of the Karamazov—the strength of the Karamazov baseness!' "

So, despite his own intentions, Dostoyevsky reveals the actual social roots of the idea that "everything is lawful," and shows that Ivan, for all his "rebelliousness" and his cries for justice, is a bourgeois at heart, who more than toys with the most degenerate bourgeois-intellectual fancies. His great idea is merely the reverse side of the slavish philosophy of his half-brother Smerdyakov. Yet now we know still more: that Ivan is looking for a human instrument who will carry out his will against his father. Alyosha knows this

too, in his own fashion. That is why, imitating the Prisoner's way with the Grand Inquisitor who has threatened to burn Him, he kisses Ivan on the lips. A minute later he runs to the monastery to be saved from Ivan. He too is tainted with the Karamazov spirit.

I have dealt only briefly and selectively with this complex act of the Karamazov drama. Yet it is easy to see how here, as elsewhere, Dostoyevsky has forced his characters to the utmost limits of expression, beyond which they can go only upon the entrance of new objective elements. He does this by raising their self-awareness, giving them the power to argue the most general issues as matters of life and death, and showing that, translated into their lives, these issues are indeed matters of life and death. In other words, he gives them what the Hungarian Marxist critic, George Lukacs, calls "intellectual physiognomy."* On the other hand, the general issues would never acquire the force they do if they did not meet the most imperious demands of the characters, if, for example, Ivan did not want his father killed. The act is a culmination of *all* intellectual and emotional drives and interests, not of some or of others alone.

Thus, in the novel of action, the scene provides the crystallization of all conflicts—internal, personal, ideological, material, social—in a visible, tangible and contrapuntal form which will in turn give way to new pressures and pass on to further crystallization. It is not a resting place but an arrow. The minor characters take part in these transformations without contributing to them to any great extent. They rarely go beyond their personal traits. But the major characters, in and about whom the conflicts rage, reproduce, by their own acts and speech, the contradictions on every level of private life and social relations. However, this reproduction is no assembling side by side of diverse and paradoxical fragments. There is a human being at stake, of whom the novelist is the physiologist, not the anatomist. And so whatever is expressed, whatever idea is uttered, bears the stamp of *this* or *that* man or woman, and no other. You cannot put the words of one into the mouth of another. The passion of the character fuses the elements that lodge in his soul.

Can it be argued that such passion is exorbitant, that people as we know them do not speak or act as they must in the novel of action? That, therefore,

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* A study of Lukacs' work is indispensable to the modern critic. The two major essays on the novel available in translation are "The Intellectual Physiognomy of Literary Characters" (*International Literature*, August, 1936), and "Narration vs. Description," I and II (*International Literature*, June and July, 1937). A third, summary article is "Essay on the Novel" (*International Literature*, May, 1936).

such a novel is an unnatural contrivance which distorts reality? On the contrary. The surface clashes can only be understood if the underlying conflicts are analyzed. The problem is then to find an art form which will translate the analysis into human terms. That form is the novel of action, whose characters strain with their whole being to understand the world and who act with all their might to express what they desire of it. Only through this heightened effort can the great social issues find adequate human voice and the causes of tragedy be revealed. The way in which Dostoyevsky realized this explains in part his capacity to create scenes which constantly belied his own reactionary opinions, often even despite his own wish. He once wrote in a letter, "Man has not the right to turn aside and heed not what is happening in the world around him, and this I maintain on moral grounds of the highest order. *Homo sum, et nihil humanum....*" (*Nothing human is alien to me.*)

III

"It is true," wrote Ralph Fox, "that novel writing is a philosophical occupation."

We have seen how the bourgeoisie, in its decline, has infected the novel with its own defeatism. Its literary apologists embrace theories of history whose logic leads them to deny the positive human values which the bourgeoisie itself championed in the periods of its rise and development, values which went into the making of its great literary characters. The restoration of these values is now out of the hands of the bourgeoisie. Though it may occasionally utter the battle cry of "freedom," this is nothing but the shriek of a repentant sinner whose stolen goods are threatened.

Nor can the writer who has thrown in his lot with the working class and the progressive forces in society resurrect the old values without investing them with a new content. For example, freedom had one meaning for the ancient Athenians, whose democracy was founded on slavery. It has another in a bourgeois democracy founded on the exploitation of wage labor and the oppression of national and racial minorities. Its meaning is immeasurably widened under socialism to include not merely the exercise of formal political privilege but the right to creative, socially useful expression of the full human personality. Moreover, the new social content transfigures the very idea of freedom, changing even the quality of the emotions which it arouses and liberates. So for all other ideas and feelings. The forms

they assume are conditioned by social developments and contribute in turn to those developments.

The great novelists have always dealt with the violent conflicts of interest and will which result from and affect the transformation of society. Their achievement is not lessened, but seems even more remarkable, if we note that their descriptions were unrelated to any scientific theory which could explain the upheavals they observed so accurately. Yet, one could hardly say that their works did not suffer at all from the disparity between their observations and their social thinking. Is it totally irrelevant that Balzac allowed his class sympathies to blind him to the significance of the emerging proletariat, though he admired their heroism? Is it a matter of indifference that Dostoyevsky's reactionary politics should make him try to pass off repulsive petty bourgeois nihilists as socialists, just as (forgive the comparison) Koestler plants Trotzkyite provocations in the mouths of his "Communists"?

The artistic harm done when there is a vast difference between the real meaning of the plot and the author's interpretation of it may be seen more clearly perhaps in a modern work, like *Man's Fate.* In Malraux' book, the actions of the characters tend to go in one direction, while the atmosphere, the reflections face the other way, against the actions, nullifying their effect. The implication of the action is that man's fate is practical, rooted in the success or failure of his struggle, the outcome of which depends upon his effort and on historical, material conditions. But the philosophizing is based on a conception of the necessity and universality of suffering. The tragedy is supposed to lie in the characters' inability to realize that they can never transcend pain—an assumption both false and undramatic, since it negates the meaning of their struggle, their sacrifice and that of all humanity. The contradiction is only resolved at Hankow when the discussion on whether to submit or resist takes place. Here fate is truly decided, imbedded in practical considerations, in action. Man's fate is assured by something being won or lost; it is not sealed by any conviction that it can never be humanly determined. In Malraux, with the exception of an occasional scene, tragedy always turns into pathos, since it stems less from the defeat of the heroes than from their unawareness of its supposed inevitability. Furthermore, as the reader's mind is torn between the plot and its evaluation by Malraux, his esthetic reaction must remain incomplete and troubled. The fatalism which denies the relation of being to doing, of what a man is to how he acts, is inimical to art as well as to humanity.

There is, however, a philosophy which can reveal to the contemporary novelist the material basis for the spiritual conflicts he wishes to project, and help him to penetrate the crust of social phenomena to their underlying causes. That philosophy is dialectical materialism, which also rejects the primacy of mind over matter, and thinking over doing, thereby restoring the fully rounded human being to fiction. (Marx put it, "Man adapts his all-sided being in an all-sided manner, in other words, as a total man.")

The influence of dialectical materialism begins more and more to be felt in modern American fiction in the form of social realism. I shall give three examples.

Here is a passage from the opening chapter of *Tucker's People,* by Ira Wolfert:

"Which shall be the user and which shall be the used? Is the world a cloth that may be cut to fit its people? Or are people cloth that must be cut to fit the world?

"So this story is of people cutting themselves to measure where they have to, and of the two, world and people, rolling through the universe embraced in battle and altered by battle.

"What was the beginning of this? Where is the end, since altered people alter their children, and altered children must likewise subdue themselves to this way of life? They must join the battle and cut the world and be cut by it. Then the children are further altered by the battle and must alter further, in their turn, their own children."

Throughout his book, whose stage is the numbers "business" in Harlem in 1930, Wolfert demonstrates the power of money to poison human relationships. He is careful to delineate the social base for the individual psychology of his characters. Theirs is no trigger-fingered, oversimplified and unmotivated ferocity. Their hostility and insecurity are typical of their lower middle class background (Tucker, the exception, is a declassed worker) and express themselves in violence under objective pressures which tax their limited resources. Wolfert, in fact, intends a comparison with the psychology of the German lower middle class, which provided the mass base for fascism, and he elaborates his warning in a long reflective passage.

In few American novels are the social insights made so explicit as in *Tucker's People,* and with such gains in plot enrichment and character portrayal. The scope of Wolfert's book is greater, though, than his characters' capacity to present it fully. I have mentioned their limited resources; these are both emotional and intellectual. Their struggles are mainly for oppor-

tunity and against fear, but each one either accepts his environment or contrives to come to terms with it. He lacks the essential feature of a major tragic character: defiance of or conscious alienation from his society. Consequently our interest is more involved in the meaning of what happens to Tucker and his people than our feelings are involved in the people themselves. At least, Wolfert tells us considerably more about them and our society in his reflective interludes than they can convey by their own speech and actions. Because he has only minor central characters, he is forced to devise a kind of lyrical discourse which is independent of and to some degree destructive of his dramatic form.

Howard Fast's story of Captain Murray, in *The Last Frontier,* is an example of intellectual portraiture. We watch the moral disintegration of Murray as he diverts his fury at his job and his superior officer to the Indians he has been ordered to bring back to their reservation for punishment. We perceive the historic irony that moral disintegration is the form his ethical development must take under the circumstances; he must kill his conscience because he cannot afford to think out what he understands dimly: the rights and wrongs of this frontier incident. But in the end he learns that the death of one's conscience does not restore one to health, that "when a man sells himself, he sells all of himself," and he will never be able to buy back the old man of simple faith that he was. This final knowledge is gained not in discussion but through the hundred tests of war.

Here we are in the realm of necessity. Murray has no choice but to obey orders; the Quaker Indian agent has no choice, for all his morality, but to consent to the use of troops; Carl Schurz, Secretary of the Interior and former German revolutionary, bows to necessity in the handy form of a violated treaty, and proceeds to romanticize his own moral cowardice. He has to be reminded by a reporter that the guns at Fort Robinson were not pointed only at the Indians, "they were pointed at you and me." So after all, the recognition of necessity does not absolve men from making moral choices; on the contrary, it compels them to make them. Captain Murray's side is more than morally answerable for what happens. For, like Schurz, all of them could sense something of "a future where it would occur again and again and again, where the trail would not be the trail of three hundred primitive horsemen over a thousand miles of green prairie, but of thousands and millions over the blackened and tear-wetted face of the earth." It is Murray who bears this future in his heart, and it is his heart which must burst.

One has only to compare *The Last Frontier* with the average historical

novel, piled up with furniture, lace dresses and flintlocks like an antique-store moving van, to realize what a solid achievement it is. With an economy that is almost heroic, when one considers the tradition he had to break through, Fast makes us see that the moral problems in historical situations are the outer forms in which the "base" material issues—expansion and settlement of the West, robbery of the land, railroad plunder, graft in government bureaus, the class struggle with its concomitant oppression of national and racial minorities—appear and are grappled with. This does not negate their importance; rather, it increases their poignancy. Further, the struggle on the moral or ideological plane is not treated as a pathetic pantomime, as in Malraux and other novels of despair; for the degree to which a character's actions express his understanding or failure to appreciate historical necessity is shown to determine what part he will play in "the long trek to freedom."

The role of necessity is dealt with most deeply in Barbara Giles' *The Gentle Bush.* Throughout the narrative, whose events take place in the sugar plantation country of Louisiana at the turn of the century, the oppression of Negroes runs like a polluted underground river. Almost no one understands, or dares to find out, what has poisoned him; even the acts of violence, the beatings, murders and lynchings are automatically justified, pushed out of sight and thought in a constant preoccupation with caste and family trees. On the other hand, the developing awareness of the leading characters is portrayed on every level of consciousness; the reader is made to feel the effect of a decaying class on the souls of people who resist it. This is a much more complex task than the depiction of swift and simple positive decisions to which we had become accustomed in the early stages of proletarian literature. Many confusing years will pass before the Cajun boy, Peter Boudreaux, allows his hatred of the planters ("But I will tell on them! Wait—I know already some of their ways. I will tell on them some day!") to cost him his life in an attempt to save an unjustly accused Negro from a mob which they have incited. He will even call his future friend, the planter's son, Michel Durel, a fool for making a similar hopeless attempt. Michel will suffer all the pangs of a man who cannot find out why he has failed. His sister, Nicole, in an indescribably subtle passage, will stretch out her hands toward death to escape the cruel, boring and terrifying world which has sickened her and nullified her lighthearted acceptance of it. Only in dying can she seem to expiate a guilt which is not really hers, but that of the families of the great houses. Michel's cousin, Felicie, whom he loved and who married Peter, will

hide her disappointed expectations and say to her husband no more than "It has been too quiet sometimes. For both of us, I mean."

But in the great scene which ends with Peter's going to his death, awareness becomes knowledge for Michel, Peter and Felicie. First, though, the friends must taunt and torture each other with ironic questions: what has each done, how much can and does each now promise to do to oppose the ancient forces that have stunted his or her living will? Their knowledge does not come easily; it is discovered, lost, and found again, like blazing on a trail.

Michel knows that it is not enough to win the election in which Peter is running as a progressive candidate. He senses that "we are still fighting the swamp alone," but he is unable to do more than recite the wrongs, the lies, excuses and myths of the people with whom he has broken, and to accuse Peter of having forgotten the "piece of wisdom" he once had when, as a child, he cursed the planters. So Peter mocks him: "What are you looking for? An earthquake? A bigger flood—? . . . A Judgment Day? Something at any rate impossible, to save you the trouble now—?" To which Michel answers, "—an earthquake made by men—that would be something else, would it not? And if I could see how it might happen, not tomorrow but in ten years or twenty or even a century—if I could only see what might bring it about—that is all I would ask."

It is Felicie who offers Michel what he seeks, the bow, the center of the seed of the "gentle bush" of social change. She recalls a Cajun dance at which she first saw Peter's people, the poor whites and sharecroppers of the bayou, the still deluded and exploited ones who will one day shake the earth, fulfilling Michel's dream.

Only now is Peter freed of the illusion that evil can be uprooted from above, through the voting of enlightened landowners and traders. With the cry, "I have forgotten nothing!" he goes to the jail to be killed by an enraged crowd, among which are those whom he remembered too late.

In this quite inadequate resume, I have emphasized only one aspect of a crucial and wonderfully intricate scene. Yet it is one vital for the novel of action. When Peter decides to defend the Negro with his own body, it is not simply to become the victim of an eternal irony. He knows that despite, or perhaps because of, the mistakes one has made, one must begin somewhere to change the world. He is not blind to his danger, nor even to its source. Neither does he seek death; he chances it. He has acquired true freedom of will, "the capacity to make decisions with true knowledge of the subject."

He has become a positive hero in the real sense of the word, a man who is ready, if he must, to lay down his life for his fellow men, for the oppressed who hold the future in their hands.

The argument with Michel and Felicie which frees Peter is not abstractly moral, though it involves the highest kind of ethical judgment. Their questioning has gone beyond: how shall a man justify himself in an unjust world? What they must know is: at what time, with what forces, and under what conditions can a given act be carried out; and what circumstances limit or negate it? The argument is therefore historical and practical, not for the author alone, but for the characters as well. To raise the gravest social issues in this manner, directly in the intellectual consciousness of the leading dramatic figures, marks a salient advance for the modern novel.

Thus social realism comes of age in the novel of action and ideas. Opposing the blind acceptance of surface reality, of appalling loneliness and alienation, which has stupefied so many talents in the capitalist world, it refuses to concede the defeat of humanity as inevitable. Through the novel it scans the wheels within wheels of man's thought for the spring of knowledge and spark of will that set him in motion to free himself. In the torment which men suffer when their creative senses are crushed in the mill of profit, the writer discerns the power latent in them to master the world with science and shape it with their love. The novel of action is the art form through which that suffering and power find full outlet.

To sum up then:

The decline of the novel of action was only secondarily a matter of esthetic choice. Nor did it really stem from discoveries in science which stimulated analytic trends in literature. More basic than these was the emergence of monopoly capitalism, of imperialism, spreading frustration throughout the earth and grinding its victims with a sense of guilt and impotence.

The rebirth of the novel of action, so imperative for the development of a healthy literature, is likewise not dependent upon arbitrary moral choice or fiat. It can only spring from a faith in human potentiality, neither abstract nor sentimental, but rooted in an understanding of history—a faith assured by the discernible ultimate victory of the working class over the dying forces in society. The revival of the novel of action is therefore an entirely possible task for the writer today. It is on the order of business for him, just as the transformation of society is on the order of business of the working class and all progressives.

Four Poems

By NICOLAS GUILLEN

Translated by Robert Brittain

. .

WORK SONG

If I don't work they kill me,
and if I work they kill me;
always they kill me, kill me,
always they kill me.

Saw a man a while back looking
looking at the sun go down,
saw a man a while back looking
looking at the sun go down;
he was looking mighty solemn
'cause he couldn't see the sun go down.
Ai!
blind man can't see nothing, no,
blind man can't see nothing when
the sun go down
the sun go down
the sun go down.

Saw a kid a while back playing
at killing another kid,
saw a kid a while back playing
at killing another kid;

some of these kid games sure do look
like the work of grown-up men.
Ai!
who's gonna tell 'em when they grow up
that grown-up men aren't kids,
O no my no,
O no my no,
O no my no!

If I don't work they kill me,
and if I work they kill me;
always they kill me, kill me,
always they kill me.

SUGAR-CANE

Negro in
the sugar-cane patch.
Yankee on
the sugar-cane patch.
Earth under
the sugar-cane patch.

Blood
out of our backs!

EVICTION SONG

Little tenant, the rent is due:
and you have to move.
Oh but the problem is serious,
see what I mean, serious;
you see, the problem is serious:
no dough. You have to move.

If you find a vacant room
you have to move;
if you look and find none . . .
you have to move.

If the landlord says, "Too bad,"
you have to move;
if he only bites his lip . . .
you have to move.

Somehow, anyhow,
you have to move;
with the dough, without the dough,
you have to move;
somewhere, anywhere,
you have to move
you have to move
you have to move.

Hush, little tenant,
let's sing a song:
here comes the landlord,
he'll go along.

Listen Mr. Landlord,
when the Judge sent
the sheriff here I told him
I haven't paid the rent
because I haven't got a buck,
I mean, I'm stuck.

Four Poems: *Guillen*

I like it better off the streets
because the rain is wet:
listen, Mr. Landlord, please,
please,
tell me, Mr. Landlord, please,
how I'm going to cure my cold,
please, how can I cure my cold
if I keep on getting wet?

I know houses boarded up,
big fine buildings, dry and tight:
with all those places empty, why
must I stay in the rain all night?

Hush, little tenant,
let's sing a song:
here comes the landlord,
he'll go along.

Feel better now? Fear gone away?

No, sir:
none of my fear has gone away

and here I stay,
yes sir,
here I stay,
yes sir,
here I stay.

ARRIVAL

We are here!
The word comes heavy with dew from the deep woods,
the vigorous sun
sending the flush of dawn along our veins.

Fist is strong
gripping the oar.

In the depths of our eyes unbelievable palms are sleeping;
the shout wells from our throats in droplets of virgin gold.
Broad and tough are our feet
as they flatten the dust in abandoned roads
that squeeze our marching files.
We know where the waters are born:

our love to the waters impelling our swift canoes
under reddening skies.
Rippling our song
like a muscle under the skin of the soul
our simple song.

We bring a pillar of smoke by day
and a pillar of fire by night,
and a knife whetted keen as a sickle of moon
for the barbarous hides;
we bring
crocodiles drowsing in mud;
we fit to our bows the barbs of our patient longing,
our breastplate the tropic girdle,
our spirit clean.

We bring the shape of our bones
to complete the definitive profile of America.

Well, friends, we are here!
The city awaits us with all of its palaces, fragile
as the comb of the wild honey-bee;
its streets are dry
as rivers when no rain falls in the mountains,
its houses stare with the timorous eyes
of windows.

The aged men will offer us milk and honey,
they will crown our work with the garlands of green leaves.

Well, friends, we are here!
In the full sun
the glaze of our sweaty skins
will mirror the damp faces of the conquered,
and at night,
while the glittering stars
dance on the tips of our flames,

the dawn of our laughter will rise flooding out over rivers
and birds.

Battle in Canaan

By LLOYD L. BROWN

. .

SO JOSHUA AROSE, AND ALL THE PEOPLE OF WAR, TO GO UP AGAINST AI: AND JOSHUA CHOSE OUT THIRTY THOUSAND MIGHTY MEN OF VALOUR, AND SENT THEM AWAY BY NIGHT. . . . AND IT CAME TO PASS, WHEN ISRAEL HAD MADE AN END OF SLAYING ALL THE INHABITANTS OF AI IN THE FIELD, IN THE WILDERNESS WHEREIN THEY CHASED THEM, AND WHEN THEY WERE ALL FALLEN ON THE EDGE OF THE SWORD, UNTIL THEY WERE CONSUMED, THAT ALL THE ISRAELITES RETURNED.

Joshua, 8: 3, 24.

Goddam. Who ever heard of a place like this? What they want us out here for? Act like they really don't want us at all. That's all right with me. Let me go back to Jersey. Or Pennsylvania. Or Georgia. Yeah, I said Georgia—that's my home, and I'll bet your folks came from there too, so don't give me any of that crap. At least they got places for colored down there. Well, you can keep your Georgia but this place ain't good for anybody. Goddam.

For weeks they didn't seem to know what to do with us. The white boys were processed and sorted, examined and tested, and then they'd go away to the schools — radio, gunnery, mechanics, clerks, cryptography, weather. But us — we drilled. Every morning. Every afternoon. We drilled. Fall out! Count off! Hup tup thrup foh. And they taught us their song: *"Off we go into the wild blue yonder, flying high into the sun. . . ."*

There was sun all right. It beat you on the head like a club. And there was the sand which wasn't in the song. You tied a handkerchief around your face to keep it out of your mouth when you drilled. It gritted in your mess cup; you shook it out of your blankets—but you couldn't get away from it. Not in a desert. And at night if you were one of the lucky ones who got a pass before they gave out—well, you weren't so lucky. When you got to the town, which wasn't much anyway, you found there was no place to go. Not for you.

That was Utah. So when they read the roll and told us to pack our barracks bags and that we were shipping—well, it was good. Where we were going was a military secret and we didn't find out till that night on the train that it was Kansas. A new air base in Kansas, Smoky Ridge. How far is that from Kansas City—boy! Nobody knew anything about Kansas but it was a fine place to go. From Utah.

The porters were from out West and had never been to Kansas either, but the old man who was in our car knew something about it. Not that he'd let on he knew where we were going, but when the boys asked him how it was there he said, "I don't know nothing about us going to Kansas. But I know where we are going. And I know a little something about the place—got kin in Wichita. And I've been down to Tulsa. Folks there said the other state is pretty much like Oklahoma. You know. Of course it's not official there like it is in Oklahoma—no laws or separate cars. But it's not so good I hear."

Nobody said anything and the old man must have thought we'd be worrying some because when he came back through again he said, "I don't reckon people are real mean where you boys are going. Never heard of any trouble there." And then he added softly, "Not since way back—before my time it was. But I don't think you boys will have any trouble if you carry yourself right."

"Shucks Dad," a soldier said, "we ain't worrying none about Kansas."

"Where's your home, boy?"

"Claiborne County—Mississippi."

"Oh," and the old man chuckled.

When young Lieutenant Wilson came through on the third night to announce that we would reach our destination in the morning the boys all cheered just as if we hadn't known that since early morning. The station master back in Hugo, Colorado, had told us that when we stopped for water.

Smoky Ridge. Now ain't that a bitch—and not a hill in sight for a hundred miles I betcha! Hell, I bet there's not a hill in this whole damn state. Or a tree even, it looks like. What a hole. Goddam.

Utah was a long ways back—now it was Kansas. And it wasn't nothing to look at, this Smoky Ridge Army Air Field. It wouldn't have looked much better even if it hadn't been raining hard when we piled out of the trucks onto the muddy road. The long, black celotex barracks looked bleak and dismal in the early light. Piles of fresh-sawed lumber and building material

lay everywhere. The contractors must have been rushed to get through on time.

It was a quick job they did. Work had been started in the spring to make this western Kansas wheatfield into a base for the bombers. Now it was October and the first troops had come. We didn't know it then but far across the field they were still working on the runways. All day and all night —under floodlights—the bulldozers were rooting into the earth while hundreds of trucks reeled through the mud bringing up cement.

Well, this is one time that we're first. Maybe they made a mistake, do you think? Nah, they don't make any mistakes with us. Well, what then? I don't know—but you'll see.

We did. The first bomber crews were scheduled to come in for training within two weeks, and a lot had to be done to get the base in shape. That was us—our basic training. Where the contractors left off we started in. Mountains of debris—scrap lumber, metal, pipe, tarpaper—had to be removed. Huge piles of earth had to be graded down or hauled away in trucks. Buildings cleaned, supplies hauled, brush cleared, duck-walks laid. Trucks, spades, axes, brooms, mops, hammers, crowbars—and around the clock on three shifts.

We did the job and the new base commander, a sprightly little colonel with a crushed down cap, told us that he was proud of us and the great work we had done—on schedule. He added that he was glad to have us; he always got along well with colored people. He had a man down on his farm in Texas, name was Abner, and he was a fine worker. Anybody here named Abner?

Now he was a colonel and we were standing at attention so we didn't get a chance to tell him what our ideas were. But from then on his name was Li'l Abner.

When the flying crews came in our outfit had men detailed to the officers' mess and their barracks—cooking and KP, making beds and keeping the coal stoves going in the rooms. A few of the boys liked that work because of the tips but most of them grumbled and said what the hell kind of an Army is this. Shaking smells out of blankets—is that soldiering?

But Pfc. "Pop" Calloway—he was forty-two—couldn't see it like that. "You young 'uns don't know when you're well off," he said. "Them flyboys ain't no trouble. And when you're in one of them barracks who knows if

you're working or not? And what's to stop a man from parking his ass on one of them bastid's beds when you get tired?"

"Look, Pop," said Amos Stark, a shipyard man from Chester, "what about those wise guys with their remarks and all? And we can't say nothing back?"

Pop didn't answer right off. Not till he'd spit a long, hard stream of juice into the No. 10 can he kept under his bunk for that purpose, and wiped his hand slowly across his mouth in disgust.

"That's what I always say about you boys. Been to school and ain't got the sense God gave a billygoat. Damn!"—he looked around the barracks accusing us all. " 'Remarks'! For Crissakes don't you know nothing? Can't you put just a little coal on the bastid's fire and let him freeze to death nights? Can't you shake ashes all over his goddam room? Can't you grin in his face and tell him a story about some dumb cracker you knew back home? Can't you keep him so mad at you that he won't feel friendly-like and make those cracks? Didn't you boys ever work for white folks before?"

We didn't have much contact with the white soldiers from the other squadrons which had come to the base. We had our own PX and they had theirs. And we had our own section of seats at the base theater—separate. There were only two groups of reserved seats in the place: those in front stencilled "Officers Only" and those in the rear "1379th Avn Sq Only." The white boys probably had their own troubles and didn't think much about us one way or the other until the day of the battle.

It all started that day when the first frost came. Shorty Cole who drove a refueling truck saw the rabbits out in the fields past the East-West runway when he was coming in from the second shift. After supper he and his brother Lester hiked back across the four miles to see if they were still there. It was after dark when the boys got back, but they had three big jacks with them.

"Told you we was going hunting. Told you we'd get some rabbits. Yeah, all you need is a club. Course if you had a shotgun—Godamighty! There's millions of 'em. The whole field—nothing but rabbits. Never knew there was so many in the whole world. Never seen nothing like that back home."

Hunting. That's all the barracks' talk was that night. Up and down the row the talk was about hunting. That was one time when the Southern boys did most of the talking—rabbits, 'coons, 'possums—hound-dog and rifle talk. Nothing much the boys from New York and Philly and those places could say. They got excited too, but of course they wouldn't let on. Like

Earl Clay from Pittsburgh who said, "What's so hot about chasing some old rabbits around anyway?" But his buddy, S/Sgt. Blackwell, took care of him. "Yeah, I know about you. All they'd have to do is tie a skirt around one of them damn jacks and you'd run it clean back to Salt Lake!"

But one thing was sure: every man off duty was going hunting tomorrow. You could tell it by the way the fellows whooped when little Benjy Collins jumped up on his bunk and hollered, "Action, men—this is it!"

Look out Rommel!—here come the desert soldiers. The fighting 1379th, we're on our way—every sonuvabitch and Jesse James too! The Battle of Smoky Ridge—Goddam!

Maybe it was because of the season, with the wind blowing now from the north and the mud frozen hard on top. Or it might have been that nobody'd had any fun since we came to Smoky Ridge and the work had been so hard. But anyway there hadn't been such good feeling since we came out of the desert. The boys stayed up late—all except Shorty Cole and Lester who started it all.

"Better save all that wind for running rabbits tomorrow, you guys," Shorty grunted as he rolled in. "And turn out them damn lights."

After Retreat next day there were about 150 men standing around outside the supply room. There hadn't been enough ax-handles and pick-handles and mop-handles to go around so some of the boys had their pup-tent poles and others had gone down by the creek and cut off some branches for clubs. Our captain and lieutenants weren't there; they'd taken off for the Officers' Club—green spot in a dry state.

Froggie Buford—that was because he came from Frogmore, South Carolina—took charge. A couple of weeks back he'd been busted down from corporal but he was still the best drill man in the outfit. A little black man who was older than he looked, his commands cracked out like a carbine. Squadron—*tenshut!* Right-shoulder—*harms!* Right—*hace!* F'war-r-d—*har!* The 1379th marched off to battle.

It was a round-about way but we all knew he'd give us a column-right at the corner and take us down the main street, to pass by all the other squadrons' barracks—and the officers' quarters. Froggie counted out a fast clipped cadence and every heel hit the hard tar road on the beat. Every club was lined up smartly. Every eye was straight ahead. But even so we could see them looking out their windows as we marched past. Doors banged open

and a few of the white boys came out to see. They didn't say anything. Just looked at us—150 Negroes marching, with clubs.

More of them must have come out after we'd gone by because when we'd gone a couple of blocks past the last building Wilkerson asked Froggie what they were doing now back there. Froggie was walking backwards, lifting his knees high keeping step, making out like he was checking to see if our lines were straight. After Utah you didn't have to do that with our outfit.

"Christ, they're all out now," he reported. "Looking this way—a swarm of 'em." He grinned. "They just don't know, do they? They just don't know." Then he wheeled around and marched alongside the column, counting out a slower cadence now and a longer stride. Not as smart looking, but easier—and you make better time.

The boys relaxed a little, and somebody started talking. Probably Wilkerson—they called him "Gabe" on account of that fellow on the radio who was always running off at the mouth too.

"Cut out that talking in ranks!" Froggie glared back and then there was silence. Just the rhythmic clumping on the road.

Shorty and Lester weren't lying. When we halted on the road by the field you could see the long ears sticking up as they jumped around in the knee-high weeds. A couple of guys broke out and started for the field.

"Halt! Goddamit—" and Froggie blew his whistle. "Get back in ranks. We're going to do this thing right," he added. And when we were back at attention he gave us left-face and backed off a ways onto the field so we could all see him.

"Now look, men, here's how I want it done—and here's how it's gonna be done. You're going to move out of here in order and deploy around the field. The first and second squads will go around the left side and the other two by the right. And spread out—there's a lot of 'em out there. And get this: I don't want a sonuvabitch to break till you hear this whistle. All right, then."

We stumbled some in the weeds going out, and a few rabbits jumped up and started running. But we kept going around till the circle was formed—maybe about a half-mile across. It seemed to take him a long time but finally we heard the signal.

Charge! They must have heard the yelling clear back on the base. And it's a wonder somebody wasn't killed the way those clubs were whooshing around—some of the guys started throwing them. For awhile you wouldn't have been able to tell who was doing the chasing—running soldiers or run-

ning jacks. Even above the yelling and the laughing you could hear the whacking of clubs on the ground when they missed one. But there were always more, leaping and dodging and running in big circles.

Git 'em! Look out, look out—ugh! Missed. Goddamit I gotcha—you rotten no 'count rascal you! That way, there—a whole gang! Over there, see? Outta my way, Fats—ugh! Lookit that big one go will ya? Here! Here! Here! Geez, don't hit 'em so hard soldier. Sure knocked the guts out of that'n all right. There, look! Hey you guys—git 'im! Still kicking, this bastard—ugh! Here's one won't run no more—a little one. Look.

Running soldiers. Running jacks. Clubs and guts and whacking and grunting. Then there wasn't laughing any more. Just the killing. The sticks were red and bits of fur stuck on. And there was blood on the trampled weeds and smears where someone had slipped. The killing went on for a long time.

Some of the older men couldn't take it. They slumped down in the field and waited out the finish. Pvt. Crane walked over slowly to where a couple of guys were squatting. He eased his weight down with his club. Quiet sort of a guy—never talked much about anything except his tailor shop back in Richmond. He worked on the truck washrack at the Motor Pool.

"Me, I'm beat," he sighed, wiping his hands on the grass. "Tell you the truth—beat. Never thought I'd do that much runnin' less'n somebody'd be runnin' *me.*"

"You?" Big Smitty snorted, "I'm wondering how I'm going to make it back. Got a light?"

They leaned back on their elbows, idly watching those who were still going. There was no circle now. Here and there small groups of boys were running in packs, beating at the ground. Some were so far away by now you could hardly see them—little figures that barely seemed to be moving at all on the level prairie.

"Helluva thing, huh?" asked Crane.

"What?" said Big Smitty.

"War. Fella said that."

"Yeah? Bet he was colored."

And when we were all tuckered out and no more jackrabbits in sight we gathered up the casualties in a pile and counted them. Hundreds—and a lot must have been lost in the grass. Sgt. Hughes who had come along even though he said he was too old for such foolishness told us that he had saved some lard so we could have a fried rabbit feast when we got back. "But

you bastards will have to clean up the mess—I'm not working my KP's all night. And maybe with all you guys cleaning up the kitchen we'll pass inspection tomorrow." That's all a mess sergeant thinks about.

Froggie had the jacks strung up on some mop-handles and they made two long lines in the rear of the column when we started back. "How about some singing, you guys?" our leader called out. And when nobody started one he did himself. All he knew were church songs, but they were good for marching too. It must have sounded funny to the other soldiers when we swung back into camp singing *When the Saints Go Marching In.*

It was getting dark by now but they could see the bloody splotches on the clubs. Then they saw the rabbits.

"Geez, look at that! Look at all those rabbits! Where'd you guys find them?"—they came running out to the road, looking and laughing and talking to us as we marched along. "Look's like you boys won," they said. "Gonna have fried rabbit tonight, huh? Boy oh boy!"

A few of them came around to our mess hall afterwards and we let them in. There was plenty, and Lonnie made up a big batch of cornbread to go with it. Probably no one ate more than the tall, freckled kid from one of the bomb squadrons who was sitting at our table. He could really put it away. And when he was through he shook his head sadly and looked across at Froggie: "Gosh, I ain't had nothing like this since I left home. You-all sure know how to live!"

Biography of a Journey

By THOMAS McGRATH

. .

The journey began in childhood, among soft hills,
And even this was Indian country. Some,
Ambushed by Adolescence, were left to die.
But we were quick on the draw, we shot from the hip,
Our rapiers were the best, and some had charms—
Though many scorned them. This was play among
The dangerous canyons.

Then onward. The fierce ice mountains of Youth
Were all around us. In winter hangouts here
Lurked loathed Melancholy, the aristocrat.
That gay bandido murdered us in fashion,
And our few survivors, scaling the great col,
Heard overhead the monstrous Hungers, their manic laugh.

From that place the going was very difficult
In the high plateau of the Thirties.
Unemployment swept in on the wind:
Paranoia had spies everywhere.
We have had to ford a hundred Delusions
And there was nothing to live on but the Giant Trauma:
This is your birthday who were born in the first war,
And every headline hides a machine gun nest,

Yet now in the soul's night millions are moving.
Many-voiced, the hills of history shake with their shouting—
How past Time's murderous ambushes they move,
Wordless desires, the clamorous gestures of hunger!
And climbing from that dark plain, leaving deserted
The blazing beaches of the twentieth century,
Moving through the monstrous night of the poor, they turn,
Advancing toward the great peaks of the third millenium.

Often attacked, harried, they go over their own destroyers,
Trampling the bones of the mighty; and over their own dead,
They tread the unknown dark through windy chasms
And past the howling of demons and strange apocalyptic beasts—
The fearful imagined specters. Climbing through their own night,
And lifting clairvoyant eyes, they find the communal reaches:
The crystal of those pale peaks, terrible in their calmness,
Lifted like altars out of that dark sea—already in sun—
O radiant, radiant in the waking light!

Pablo Neruda: Poet in Arms

By LUIS ENRIQUE DELANO

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I

THE POETRY OF PABLO NERUDA is a poetry of combat rather than contemplation. To understand it fully in relation to our times one must study the influences in both life and literature which have altered the intellectual direction not only of Neruda but of many other great artists and writers.

First of all, I ask myself why Neruda is not as popular in the United States as he is in Spanish-speaking countries, France, Russia and every other place where his poetry has been published. The answer may lie in the fact that the work of this great Chilean poet has been only partially translated and published in North America. This does not appear strange, nor do I blame anyone for it. However, I believe it imperative that a poet of Pablo Neruda's stature be widely known in the United States. In this country there exist large sectors of the people who would enjoy his poetry and benefit from it; where the great events of our epoch are reflected in Neruda's work, they would undoubtedly discover close affinities with their own conception of reality.

Pablo Neruda was born in Parral, a small town in Chile, in July, 1904. His father was a railroad employee and his mother a school teacher. He spent his childhood in a humid city, his home the railway depot where his father was station-master. Here, in the city of Temuco, rain beat against the walls for long months of the year, and this circumstance induced in the young poet a deep-rooted melancholy which echoed in his first writings. Dissatisfactions, vague longings, the desire for other places less severe and monotonous, were expressed in his first book of verse, *Crepusculario,* written when he was seventeen years old.

Its publication in 1923, cracked like a whiplash against the previous

dime-store varieties of poetry practiced by his contemporaries. At his very first appearance, from a literary point of view, Neruda was already a revolutionary writer. His words were those used by every Spanish poet, but his structural organization and audacity of expression, his experiments in form, and the honest ideas embodied in his poems were so shockingly new that they provoked the wrath of the critics. Nevertheless, the younger writers were enthusiastic; they saw in him a master, one who, although only nineteen years old, set them an example to follow. His work quickly spread throughout Chile, and traveled like a cyclone across Argentina, Uruguay, Peru and Mexico, challenging the generation of "accumulative" poets who were still writing in the style of their predecessors.

Meanwhile, Neruda had left the provinces to live in the capital, Santiago, where he studied at the Faculty of Philosophy to become a professor of French. He reached the final examinations for his degree, but then decided against taking them, recognizing this was not his path. He would teach, but not French. His poetry would contain his teachings, he would reveal man to himself, his destiny to man.

Since 1920 he had belonged to a romantic, vaguely anarchistic "barricade" movement, which had united Chilean workers and students. It had its own minstrels, its organ *Claridad,* which printed Neruda's first poems, and it endured a police persecution which claimed a number of victims. One of them was the poet Domingo Gómez Rojas, who died in an insane asylum.

During these years Neruda wrote his second book: *El hondero entusiasta* (*Man With a Sling*), a sonorous poetry of extraordinary verbal and musical richness. But he kept it in the bottom of a trunk until years later, 1933, when it was published as a tribute to that earlier period. In 1924, his *Twenty Love Poems and a Desperate Song* burst forth like a shimmering geyser, increasing his renown as a poet and emphasizing the continuing blindness of his critics.

Later came a long narrative: *El habitante y su esperanza* (*The Inhabitant and His Hope*); then another book of poems: *Tentative del hombre infinito* (*Endeavors of Infinite Man*)—perhaps the least familiar of all Neruda's work. This may be due to the fact that it signifies the transition between his early poetry, resonant and architectonic, and his later work, where the traditional scaffoldings begin to disappear and disclose a richness of content and interior emotion so powerful that they require no mechanical forms for adornment.

The *Twenty Love Poems and a Desperate Song* could be defined as neo-romantic, in which the artist, isolated from the world surrounding him, can only immerse himself in the bittersweet waters of amorous experience. However, these poems have nothing in common with the usual "love poetry" beyond the specific theme of love which inspired them. The forms and metaphors which love assumes with Neruda are profoundly new, astonishingly beautiful. The *Twenty Love Poems* are products of a temperament which effortlessly commands an integral originality:

> Unmoored from the sky the half-moon anchors
> Between two mountains
> Gouger of eyes, errant whirling night.
> How many stars have fallen into the pool.
> A mourner's cross lies between my eyebrows. Escapes.
> Forge of blue metals, night of silenced strife,
> My heart tosses about like a mad shuttlecock.

The critics persisted in their intellectual darkness, refusing to accept Neruda's originality or his daring use of resources hitherto ignored by poets. His name, however, crossed borders and finally reached Spain, where the magazines of advance-guard writers introduced his poetry.

In 1927, Neruda was appointed Chilean Consul in Rangoon, and his sojourn in Indo-China and the Far East lasted for five years. He visited China, Japan, India and the Dutch colonies; in Batavia, Java, he remained for a long time. This journey proved a great trial for him, for he was forced to witness the methods of the cold and proud British colonizers.

In India he met Rabindranath Tagore, attended various political meetings, where Gandhi spoke; he observed the rise of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, and lived among young Hindu writers and revolutionaries. But despite these and many other adventures he felt alone, surrounded by strangers with whom he could not speak of poetry in his native language.

Traces of this period in his life appear in his poems from 1927 onwards, not only the imprint of his solitude, but also the reflections of the brilliant Orient. His poems became esoteric, hermetic in content and bejeweled in form, reminiscent of Oriental Baroque. But simultaneously we detect another interesting manifestation: the injection into his poetic idiom of the material elements of daily living, "impure" ones, according to those critics who admire the "precious."

In the first volume of *Residence on Earth*—suggestive title, under which much of his future work was to appear—we note the presence of such objects as vinegar, salt, shirts and fish, all of which belong to the ordinary life of man and are the very stuff of his existence. Do such elements form part of poetry? How is it that a poet decided to cull them from their obscurity and incorporate them into his work? Does this act of turning whatever he touches, however homely, into poetry, make him a magician? The following example shows his use of words usually considered incongruous to poetry; it is a fragment from *Colección nocturna,* included in *Residence on Earth*:

> Comrades whose heads rest on water-casks
> of a distant, drifting, dismantled ship,
> tearless friends of mine, women with cruel countenance,
> midnight is now and a deathlike gong
> sounds around me like the sea.
> In my mouth the salt taste of sleepers.
> Faithful as a penalty to each body clings
> the pallor of the district's lethargy:
> a cold sunken smile:
> the dilated eyes of exhausted prize fighters:
> a breathing that devours ghosts soundlessly.

Thus were forged the first links between Neruda and the simple things of man, and from then onward he encountered no stumbling blocks. Critics might as well have forgone lamentations, because eventually Neruda was to declare himself *poeta impuro* in virile reaction against those who claim metaphysics and the soul to be the only legitimate raw material for poetry.

In 1932, Neruda left the Far East and returned to Chile aboard a cargo ship which took seventy-five days for the voyage. Those of us who were his friends observed a great change in him: his former detachment and love for solitude had been buried beside the Asiatic temples he had left behind him. Now he was a man who sought and found pleasure in the company of others; first the company of his friends, and soon that of the people, of the great masses of men.

The first volume of *Residence on Earth* was published in Chile, confirming the evolution of his resplendent lyricism. Like Picasso, Neruda does not seek but finds; and he finds fantastic subterranean beauty, obscure metals, rare configurations, nocturnal destruction, all enveloped in the dense clinging

smoke of the *viudo terrible,* the terrible, mourning widower. Studied for its intrinsic value, this stage of Neruda's art yields a marvelous, essential magnificence, a nebulous loveliness, that is despairing and yet possessed of grandeur. From the historical point of view, this is indisputably poetry in transit: the passage to another level, where the writer introduces new and more explicit figures: those of man, of the night in which, as a social being, he is held prisoner.

II

In the middle of 1934 Neruda was assigned to a diplomatic post in Spain and thus became the second great Spanish American poet to reach Madrid filled with the desire to conquer. The first had been Rubén Dario, the "sorrowful Indian" of Central America, who with his brilliant imagery had launched the modern school in Spanish society.

From the day of his arrival in Spain, Neruda exerted an influence fully as intense and transforming as had been Dario's thirty years earlier. This is not the caprice of a personal opinion, but a fact, concurred in by Garcia Lorca —who reaffirmed it during his presentation of Neruda before the University of Madrid.

In fact, for a while, the majority of youthful poets of America and Spain wrote in the style of Neruda. His influence throughout these years was as pervasive as that of Picasso in painting, to compare him again with the great Spanish artist. And as with the latter, while Neruda's followers were distorting his essential qualities and revolving formulas of which they believed themselves to be the originators, he himself had journeyed far ahead, in another decisive and controversial direction.

We know that man is affected by his environment, and in the case of Neruda this is doubly incontestable. All the countries where he had lived are reflected, intentionally or not, in his work. Chile, with its aridity of nitrous rock, its cold tropic, its harsh ascetic character; India, with its baroque and sensuous lavishness; Mexico, with its heights of rarefied stone, its winds laden with blood and gunpowder; and Spain—above all Spain. The sojourn of Neruda in Spain constituted the true inception of his "residence on earth." This was a land he learned to know and love; its market-places gleaming with oranges and fishes; its vivid sky and enormous stars; its taverns, where the red Spanish wine is the most eloquent of all wines; village streets paved with blue cobblestones; the leathern counte-

nance of Castile, barren and treeless; and most important, the cordial communicative nature of the Spaniard himself. All these vital realities seemed to urge Neruda to enter the world: Spain for him was the great human lesson. He lived with her people, poets and shepherds, along her roads, in her *metros* and in the poor quarters of her towns; amid her statues, flowers and fountains.

Here he wrote the second volume of *Residence on Earth,* and the *Tres cantos materiales* (*Three Material Cantos*), whose very titles demonstrate what was transpiring within the poet, the unfolding of a major phase in his evolution. These cantos, *Entrada a la madera* (*Entrance Into Wood*), *Estatura del vino* (*A Statute of Wine*) and *Apogeo del apio* (*Apogee of Celery*), are the most exquisite interpretations of these commonplaces: revelations of things men see every day, but do not know how to observe. At the same time they exalt the splendor of life which lies concealed in apparently inanimate objects.

The outbreak of the Spanish War caught Neruda by surprise in Madrid. When this first onslaught of world-fascism attacked Spain disguised as a military *coup d'état,* the poet placed himself at the service of the Republic by enlisting as a civilian soldier; he fought side by side with the Spanish writers. His instrument, which until then had been preoccupied with subjective, interior fantasies, one day awoke in a fighting, popular mood. This was not an irrational change but a logical outburst which had been foreseen in his love for the people; a poet's love, wrought of sensitivity, understanding and compassion, had been gathering force and now found its release.

The first poem with which Neruda unfurled his new banner bore the challenging title, "Song for the Mothers of Dead Militiamen." It is a deeply moving work. In the town of Cuenca, which clings to a mountain-side, I attended the meeting where it was first read. There I watched, in their black blouses, illiterate peasants whose long, ascetic faces—as in the paintings of El Greco—betrayed their suffering while they listened to these haunting lines which pay tribute to the Republic's fighters.

Here I would like to digress and single out some of the antecedents, however remote in his past, which anticipated this Nerudian cycle that began in 1936. Back in 1920, when the poet had taken part in revolutionary student groups, he had written two poems which appeared in his book *Crepusculario* and displayed a tendency toward social awareness. This inclination lay dormant for many years until it was fully aroused. The first poem, *Oracion,* was a cry of rebellion in defense of prostitutes, those victims lowest

in the scale of social slavery. One of the verses is like a pronouncement, a declaration of principles:

> It is not only silk that I write.
> Let my verse course with life
> as memory alert in a foreign land
> to brighten the somber luck
> of those who go towards death
> as blood flows towards the hand.

Later on, Neruda knew that what he had called "somber luck" was instead social injustice. The other early poem, *Maestranzas de Noche* ("Dockyards at Night"), draws a noctural picture of slumbering factories amid whose silent steel walls wander the spirits of workers killed on their jobs.

The *Canto a las Madres de Milicianos Muertes* is historically interesting in Neruda's poetry, because it was to be followed by many others whose inspiration was the heroic struggle of the Spanish people to preserve their hard-won liberty. Recurrent themes in this series of poems are the rattle of machine-guns, streets running with children's blood, the destruction of cities, the treason of the generals. For several months Neruda stayed in besieged Madrid, sharing the trench with Spanish writers, performing his part as a poet should under such tragic circumstances. His literary contribution to the Spanish War may be considered of equal importance with that of Spain's best poets. A collection of these war poems, *Espana en el corazon, (Spain in the Heart)*, was published in Chile in 1938 and translated into French by Mme. Tzara, with an introduction by Louis Aragon. A Moscow edition followed, translated by Ilya Ehrenburg. Later on it was translated into Czech.

In Paris, Neruda tirelessly organized aid for Spain. Those who had known the adolescent, contemplative dreamer, sunk in the last translucence of a splendid twilight, could not recognize him in this dynamic man, hurrying here and there, talking to all his friends, circulating manifestoes, publishing periodicals that told the truth about the fascist invasion of Spain, and ultimately reaching the platforms of vast mass meetings to recount in the moving words of a poet what was really taking place on the other side of the Pyrenees.

He helped organize the World Writers Congress which was to convene in Madrid and Valencia, and then returned to Spain, only to find his

Madrid home in ruins, and all the cities and places he had loved destroyed. In October, 1937, Neruda was once more en route to Chile; a new Neruda, one who now lived integrally as a part of the people, who promised never to leave them, to accompany them always with his person and his poetry, as writer and citizen. In his own country he organized assistance to Spain, participated in national politics, founded the Alliance of Chilean Intellectuals for the defense of culture, and above all, he wrote.

He no longer sang about Chile's beautiful seas but about the rags of proletarian children. His love poems now were about love for his abandoned people, for the endlessly exploited peasants. That same emotional power which had stirred thousands and which is the innermost core of Neruda's genius, now was channeled toward other objectives.

True as never before was that line written when he was seventeen years old: "It is not only silk that I write. . . ." No, now it was not silk, not even the iridescent shimmer of noon light over the harbor. Now he wrote of gunfire, sorrow, protest, the despair of the poor, revolt. This cycle of Neruda's poetry was shaken by a warlike resolve; it understood its task of the moment was to convert itself into a militant and combative earthquake, vibrating with his people's feelings and expressing their highest collective aspirations.

One must add that apart from the inherent literary value of this poetry, it has had an extended influence over a host of young writers who, with the best of intentions, have attempted a category of poetry known as "proletarian," in which may be seen a superabundance of external revolutionary effects. Generously studded with red flags, party slogans, and facts which are mere strips from the whole bark of popular political action, these writings disastrously lack the essence, the basic substance of revolution, and consequently the poetical symbols and spirit of the Revolution itself. Other notable Latin-American poets, among them the Cuban Nicolas Guillen and the Argentinian Raul Gonzalez Tuñon, have contributed much to this wholesome task of establishing the true course and character of social poetry. Not to be excluded from this endeavor is the fine contemporary Spanish poet, Rafael Alberti.

When the Spanish War ended in the first months of 1939, the Latin-American peoples, who had closely followed this life-and-death struggle of the Republic, now prepared to rescue, in part, the soldiers who had been compelled to flee Spain. In this task of providing a haven, Mexico and Chile distinguished themselves, and the Chilean Popular Front Government sent Neruda, erstwhile consul, to France, where he was to select the Repub-

lican Spaniards who were to find asylum in Chile. He carried out this work in Paris and in the concentration camps where the refugees were languishing. Fishermen, mechanics, lumberjacks, workers who had laid down their tools to grasp the rifles of liberation, now embarked for Chile aboard the steamship *Winnipeg.* Once in Chile, they scattered over the length and breadth of this land which was to give them new hope and shelter, until the hour when they could reconquer their own country. This chapter in Pablo Neruda's life held great meaning, for it permitted him to enjoy close contact with the finest and most incorruptible sons of that *tierra de encinos y guerreros* (land of evergreens and warriors), as he had once called Spain.

III

In 1940, another consular appointment carried Pablo Neruda to Mexico. This eternally rebellious and magnificent country was to make yet more ineradicable impressions upon his mind. Traveling throughout its various regions, its luminous landscapes, he became intoxicated with its sun and the languor of its tropics, with the gentleness and ancient wisdom of the Indian, that most ubiquitous and admirable of Mexico's inhabitants. He grew familiar with the deepest roots of its culture.

His literary achievements in Mexico were outstanding and fecund, from the elegy on the death of the composer, Silvestro Revueltas, to the *canto* with which he bade farewell to Mexico three years later, and which he read, one memorable night, to thousands of admirers and friends who had gathered to pay him homage. In Mexico he also wrote the famous "Canto a Bolivar," several of the poems for his book *Canto general de Chile,* about which we will speak further on, and the two poems dedicated to Stalingrad, which were translated and published in the United States during the war.

His Mexican stay coincided with the most desperate moments of the anti-Nazi conflict; I refer to the German advance into Soviet territory, the fighting around Moscow, and the mighty battle of Stalingrad, which decided the fate of the whole war. This defense has been narrated, sung and praised by poets, strategists, statesmen and politicians, though today some people would like to forget its heroic aspects. Considered as an epic, the movement of a people who poured into it their sacrifice and heroism, Stalingrad penetrated the heart of a poet like Neruda. The result of this impact was the first *Canto a Stalingrado,* a work of singular majesty. With

equal passion it honors the bravery of Stalingrad's defenders and censures those allies who refrained so long from opening the second front.

Something curious occurred with this poem, something highly significant: the Mexican people snatched it from the hands of its author, printed it on large oblong sheets of paper, and pasted it up on walls and buildings. One morning Mexico City awoke to find its streets flowering with this terrible song of energy and denunciation. People stopped before these great white blots which seemed to shout from the walls, and read stanzas that glowed as if embedded with precious stones.

What had taken place? What were the virtues of this poem that it should achieve such a unique contact with the masses? For the first time in America, poetry had conquered the streets. The significance is clear: the poet had been able to interpret mass sentiment; he, rather than newspapers, radio commentators, orators and military spokesmen, had captured and expounded the intense popular wish for the launching of the second front which would change the course of the war.

Some months later, Neruda wrote his *Nuevo canto de amor a Stalingrado* (*A New Lovesong for Stalingrad*). With victory in sight, the strings of his instrument were tranquillized, although it still retained its tone of courage and combat. The final verse of this *canto* resembles the recapitulation of a confession: the poet's emotions return and hover over Stalingrad as in other times they had lingered over the woman he loved. They have the same virile tenderness and immaculate dignity:

> Keep me a fleck of turbulent loam,
> keep me a rifle and then a plow,
> and place them beside me in my tomb
> with a sprig of wheat from your red crown,
> so there be no doubt, so all may know
> your love for me, how I loved you as my own,
> and since I fought far from your battleground
> I leave in your honor this dark pomegranate,
> this song of love for Stalingrad.

This poem raises a literary question: the return to a traditional form, abandoned for nearly twenty years, which the poet utilizes in this instance with complete freedom, unhampered by its conventional meter. The *Nuevo canto de amor a Stalingrado* is written in lines of eleven syllables and in

rhymed metrical stanzas. The first and third lines of each verse rhyme consonantly or assonantly whereas the second and fourth have a sonorous, consonant rhyme. All the verses end with the world "Stalingrad."

Does this usage have any particular importance, or does it mark any significant change in Neruda's poetry? Might it perhaps denote a retrogressive step? There is no evidence that this is so. Poetry does not depend on the traditional forms which apparel it, even as a man's character does not change with his clothes. This problem of poetic patterns and its neglect by recent generations of poets has been so exhaustively discussed that we need not enter into it here. But one thing about it must be said, always understanding by traditional form those laws which govern stanza and meter: it is a most private affair of the poet himself, dependent upon his mood and upon the content of what he writes. That is to say, formal patterns matter and do not matter, are necessary or are not, are convenient or inconvenient, are imperative or may be discarded, all according to the demands of the poetry and the writer.

The two songs to Stalingrad emphasize this very markedly: the first is utterly devoid of any traditional form, its force is unrestrained, cyclonic and fearsome. The second is confined within a framework which, without limiting or subduing it, on the contrary enhances it. Both *Cantos* are beautiful and both attained wide popularity; the first challenged her citizens from Mexico City's walls; the second reached out from the pages of its elegant edition to persist in the memory and spirit of its readers.

Critics have conducted quite a controversy over the permanent quality of poetry of this type ("commissioned" works) done by Neruda to commemorate specific events. They contend that this class of poetry cannot survive, will be forgotten, and that the only creations of Neruda which will endure are those wherein he exalts love and the world's beauty, subjects that they esteem to have exclusive rights to immortality.

These critics are mistaken, for while it is possible that certain of the events celebrated in Neruda's poetry may be forgotten, such epics as Stalingrad will never fade. Moreover, while a work of art does not depend simply on its subject matter, on its sources of inspiration, on the conventions of formal expression, it cannot be separated from its content; it has imperishable quality if it is good art, if its esthetic aims are fulfilled, and if its humanity is commensurate with the profoundest beliefs of its creator in man and his world.

Here is an example of Neruda's epic poetry, where his vivid imagery is

interwoven with the forcefulness of his thought to evoke a work of genuine passion—not the passion of "eternal," sensual love, but of love for oppressed man and his desire for freedom. It is a fragment from *Canto a Bolivar,* which fuses the figure of Bolivar with present-day political realities:

> But now it is your shadow that leads us toward hope:
> the very light and laurel of your own red army
> pierces America's night with the shaft of your glance.
> Your eyes stand watch beyond all the oceans,
> beyond all the peoples oppressed and wounded,
> beyond all the cities bombed and blackened;
> your voice is reborn, your hand born anew,
> your army again defends the sacred banners;
> liberty clamors its bleeding bells
> and a fearful mourning sound ensues,
> heralding this warrior, crimson with mankind's blood.
>
> Liberator, a peaceful world was born in your embrace.
> From your blood emerged peace, and bread, and wheat:
> as sons of your veins, from our own young blood
> will flow peace, bread, and wheat, for the world we will make.

This article should not overlook mention of Neruda's attitude toward his critics and toward certain literary movements which have claimed him as their own. I have already shown how at the inception of his writing career, bourgeois criticism took alarm at his originality and berated him for having rejected the acknowledged forms to set out for destinations hitherto unexplored. The younger poets followed him for years, but occasionally some of them, enticed by surrealism, or recoiling from Neruda's tendency toward "impure" poetry, returned to "pure" art, asserting themselves to be free from any political persuasions. Neruda observed their vacillations while imperturbably pursuing the path dictated by his own intelligence, but whenever these young American poets grew vociferous in their attacks, he would assail them mercilessly. For instance, in the opening lines of his *Nuevo canto de amor a Stalingrado* he proclaims his own independence:

I send my soul where I will
and nourish it not on weary paper
stewed in ink and inkwell.
I was born to sing to Stalingrad.

To produce art one must absorb life; just as the cow grazes over pastures and produces milk, not herbs and grasses. The line "I send my soul where I will" contains a superb poetic potential, the recognition of forces that seethe within man. "I send my soul where I will" is another way of stating: wherever I look I see poetry, and since it is within my power to do so, I transmute it into verse.

In Europe the poet met with another type of criticism, like that of the Spanish writer, Juan Ramon Jimenez, who hailed him as a "great bad poet." He attributed the chaotic violence, the cosmic disorder of one Nerudian period (*Residence on Earth*) to the disruptive geological aspect of America, a continent still in its formative stages.

Perhaps there is some truth in Juan Ramon Jimenez' theory, for the work of every great American poet has been torrential and insurgent, subject to the winds of every social holocaust. Whitman, Dario, Herrera, Gabriela Mistral—from none of them could one demand poetry with the imprint of Greek or French civilizations. It would be like asking them to perjure themselves.

There are also people who in part ascribe Neruda's art to surrealism. This is another error. True, there are a few points of similarity between them: both have in common their derivation from Romanticism and certain untrammeled expressional characteristics. But their differences are vaster and more salient: whereas the surrealists have a proclivity for theorizing, Neruda has none; while they grope for the juncture of dream and reality, Neruda believes that each has its own time and place and leaves this investigation to the psychoanalyst. The surrealists delight in metaphysical concatenations and the analyses of omens; Neruda valorously confronts the sharp realities of the world. Surrealism has pitched a petty, infinitesimal, political tent beneath which to hide; Neruda has embraced the party of humanity. The former work in a little literary group; Neruda has never attempted to found either a literary school or a "cult." Surrealism wished to identify poetry and the man in such a manner that the poet would live exclusively within his poetry; Neruda carried his poetry out into life itself,

with the most forthright, non-metaphysical effectiveness, thereby achieving a new integration: that of poet and citizen.

IV

After a brief trip to the United States in 1943, Pablo Neruda succumbed to a heavy weariness and nostalgia as a result of his long exile from his own country. This mood permeates some of his poems written in Mexico, such as *Melancholia en Orizba, Quiero volver al sur* and *El corazon magallanico,* (*Melancholy in Orizaba, I Would Return South, The Magellanic Heart*). In fact, these were preludes to his actual return to Chile, where he entered into militant politics not only by offering the riches of his art, but by establishing himself as a citizen in the service of his people.

The saltpeter mine-workers elected him senator, and shortly afterwards he joined the Communist Party, becoming a leader among the intellectuals. He was now a true poet of the people. When he appeared at a political meeting, the mass audience would show their admiration not by requesting a speech, but by asking him to read his poems. His language had at last attained its ultimate clarity and simplicity. The esoteric writer of yesterday whose verses had necessitated unraveling by a Spanish philologist and critic,* was now capable of communicating directly with the masses—and through his native tongue, poetry.

Since 1937, Pablo Neruda has been working on a book which until now has been made known to the public only in fragments: *Canto General de Chile.* Immense in both content and length, it encompasses every conceivable poetical form and subject, from the epic, elegy and song for humble things, to protests of the rebel and non-conformist. It covers the history, geography, botany and other aspects of his native land, dating from before its discovery; all its physical beauty and all its social injustices; the grace of Chile's flowers juxtaposed with her nitrous North and her humid, lichen-covered South. There are poems in this gigantic work which possess the grandeur of Walt Whitman's elegy on the death of Lincoln. It will be many years before we see another masterpiece of such magnitude as the *Canto General;* in process of creation for ten years, it embodies the rarest and most absolute of Chile's characteristics.

* I refer to the book *Poesía y estilo de Pablo Neruda. Interpretación de una poesía hermética,* by Amado Alonso (published in Argentina).

Now forty-three years old, Neruda is in the prime of his intellectual maturity. Very rarely has he endeavored to define his own poetry, inasmuch as he has never been tempted to theorize about such a tenuous art form. Nevertheless, in 1926, in his preface to *El habitante y su esperanza,* Neruda outlined some of his ideas and principles, which even after twenty years are still valid: "I have always had a predilection for great ideas, and despite the fact that literature tempts me with its doubts and vacillations, I prefer to do nothing rather than write diverting pastiches. I have a dramatic and romantic sense of life; whatever does not touch my profoundest sensibilities is alien to me."

This might be a precise statement of the creed to which Neruda has adhered during the past twenty-five years of his literary existence. He has never abused his natural gift by writing just for writing's sake. He has written only when he had a message to impart—of whatever order—when his poetic powers were forcibly aroused and he felt compelled to communicate his feelings, to vanquish his "great vacillations and doubts."

What will be the route taken by his poetry tomorrow? Will it follow the path of combat, the poetry of battle, or will it explore those still waters beneath cold starlight, where once it lingered? This depends upon the poet himself and upon the stimuli provided for his wide, generous nature. Neruda may write again of personal love. And who would oppose this? Is it not as important a theme as any other?

What occurred with Neruda is, that once roused by the momentous events which stirred not only his own heart but that of collective mankind, he left behind his poetic interests of that particular time and devoted himself to the great issues of humanity. As poet, he was a soldier who performed his duty. Should he resume these interests it would only be the soldier's return to civilian life, the reconversion of war industry into one of peacetime.

But Pablo Neruda will never lay down his arms; he is a fighter amid the realities of the world. The vital factors which have altered the creative direction of so many of today's great artists are still in force, and will operate for a long time to come. Louis Aragon, Paul Eluard, Dmitri Shostakovich, Ilya Ehrenburg, Anna Seghers, Rafael Alberti, Nicolas Guillén, Pablo Picasso, Pablo Neruda and many other illustrious creators, have not *accidentally* identified the best of their work with the highest human aspirations. Those who cynically maintain that they have are lamentably mistaken.

It is neither accident nor coincidence when the most prominent artists of any given period in history demonstrate related tendencies or purposes

in common. It is simply that they realize their productions will be sterile and empty unless made to vibrate with the most vital chords of the human instrument. Man is the subject matter for all works of art. The phenomenon of our own era is not man individually beheld, but social man: seen in relation to other men, battling against outworn forms of life in order to construct new and superior ones. Solely within this context can we fully comprehend the road chosen by so many noted artists and scientists today. They have elected not to remain inside the easier framework of virtuosity, of perfect technical mastery. Instead, with true awareness of the implications of contemporary society, they have apprehended and emanated real warmth: the human warmth of men in battle.

(Translated by Waldeen)

Advantages Over the Dog

By JACK M. CLARK

. .

Diego walked along the bank of the creek and fingered the money in his pocket. Fifteen cents: where could he get the most beer for fifteen cents? He decided on Cabral's and walked off the levee and toward Front Street where Juan Cabral's joint was located.

Diego looked about through the smoke haze as he entered but saw no one he wished to speak to. It was the usual crowd. The juke box over in the corner was blasting away and the floor was crowded with people dancing; Negroes, Portuguese, Italians, and many Mexicans with an occasional "white" bobbing about. The bar was close-lined with drinkers. At the back of the long room was a group of gamblers seated at half a dozen card tables. Diego wondered if anyone would be injured tonight.

The bartender came along behind the bar wiping up moisture with a cloth. "What's yours?" he demanded.

"One draft," said Diego. He watched the thin watery beer foam into the tall glass. "Where's the *big* glass?" he said as the bartender slid the glass along the bar toward him.

"No more for the duration," explained the bartender succinctly. Diego slowly laid down a dime on the bar and tasted the beer. It had no quality, it tasted like white-lead. He half turned and watched the people dancing.

Then he felt a touch on his shoulder and turning about saw Manuel Hortado, standing, grinning down at him. "Man!" cried Diego gladly, pounding Hortado on the back. "I thought you were in San Quentin!"

"They let me out," explained Manuel. "And besides it never was San Quentin." Diego started to buy a beer for Hortado, then remembered he had only a nickel. He scowled darkly at Manuel.

"What are you grinning at, man?" he said.

Hortado's smile widened. He pointed to the bad beer. "Throw it away," he advised. "I know you're broke." He pulled out a roll of bills and showed them to Diego. "Money I earned in the road camp," he explained. "Fifty dollars." He gave five to Diego, who promptly ordered two shots of whiskey.

"We shall celebrate your freedom," he announced, as the bartender gave him the change. The silver felt good in his hand and heavy in his pocket; there was nothing like having money.

"It is only temporary," said Manuel. Diego raised his brows in consternation; was this going to end? "I am going into the Army," explained Manuel. "That is how I got out of prison, out of the road camp. I enlisted. They cut my sentence down six months." Diego raised his glass.

"To Manuel Hortado of the Army," he said.

"You embarrass me, man!" said Manuel.

"You will look well in their uniform," said Diego.

"When I get into it, it will be mine," said Manuel.

"That is so," agreed Diego. "Who are you to kill then? What people on what front?"

Hortado shrugged. "That is a mystery to me. A man should always shoot his enemies if possible." Diego rubbed his close shaven chin.

"What branch will you be in, what department?" he asked.

"That too is a mystery," replied Manuel.

"Perhaps in the kitchen-department, perhaps a police in the kitchen, like they are always talking about, eh?" grinned Diego.

"If the same should prove true I shall return a fat man," said Hortado.

"Your children will be proud of you," reflected Diego.

"Even as they are today," said Manuel. The bartender refilled their glasses. Hortado paid him. As he waited for his change he glanced through the glass front of the place and saw Cabral's old black dog in the reflection of the neon lights outside, walking soberly by, very stiff in the hind quarters.

"Poor dog," he said. "He has had his day, his days are numbered."

Diego stared out the glass front at the dog. "He is monumental," he said. "All his life he has been abused, run-over and starved, still he will not die. It is my theory that he is indestructible."

"He is like us," grinned Manuel thoughtfully.

Diego raised his glass in sardonic pantomime. "To the dog of the future then," he toasted. "To the dog that is not like us!"

Hortado stared in amazement, then raised his glass also, in mock solemnity. "To such a dog," he said. He paused, then grinned sarcastically at Diego. "But do you think they can do it?"

Diego raised his brow in exaggerated surprise. "With all the Progress and Science we have, why not?" he demanded.

"It will be a great relief to all dogs," sighed Hortado.

He looked speculatively at the row of bottles stacked neatly on shelves along the wall behind the bar. To the waiting bartender he said, "Give us one of those with the black label." The bartender complied with alacrity. Diego watched with mingled feelings of pride and consternation as Manuel paid the man and pocketed the change. The transaction both reduced them and increased their stature at one and the same time.

Diego shrugged. It was in the spending that one realized pleasure—like with a woman. To save it was no good. At least they were getting the right kind of start and the evening was comparatively early. "What of 'Chita?" he asked Manuel. "Surely it has been some time since you saw her?" Manuel poured two glasses full from the bottle and sampled the whiskey.

"Not so long as you might think, man," he replied. "She came to see me at the road camp!" Diego slowly raised his brows.

"So-o-o. She went all that way to see you? Well, good! She is more woman than I thought."

"The whole thing miscarried," explained Hortado calmly. "She never did get to see me. They have regulations of course . . . although she did get to see the Boss of the Guard."

"It is too bad that it miscarried," said Diego.

"True," agreed Hortado philosophically. "But it was not a complete loss. I noticed after that the Boss of the Guard let up on me a little." Diego looked satisfied.

"She is a good woman," he enthused, "if she can touch the heart of one of those."

"It was not exactly his heart," corrected the practical Hortado. He took a drink and continued. "Anyway, man, she is now married and this big with child they tell me."

Diego fell to ruminating. "Nor is she the only one. There is Luisa, Maria, Purisima, Bettina, Dorotea, and Concepcion, all newly married and swollen with child."

"It is a strange thing, this sudden fertility where before was only barren sterility," mused Hortado over his drink. "Had I but known in my captivity of this feverish planting I would have been tempted to break out."

"It is just as well you were in ignorance," consoled Diego. "For it is a bad thing to dwell upon while held captive." Hortado hastily took a drink as if to clear it from his mind. "Shall we leave this place?" suggested Diego. "There is Gomez' place."

"Gomez," sneered Manuel. "With his fat wife and three ambitious daughters!" Diego shrugged.

"They are all very active," he said.

"Active!" chided Manuel over his drink. "They are the Machine Age itself." Diego gave it up and poured another drink. "So they are all married and big now, eh?" said Manuel.

"Without fail," said Diego.

"What of the slim one with gray eyes who worked for the rich lady who lived by the park on the other side of town?" Diego smiled slowly and gently.

"That little one," he said. "She too is married."

Hortado frowned. "It is almost as if a law had been passed," he complained. "What was her name? I have lost it."

"Carmelita."

"Carmelita . . . Carmelita so slim . . . with gray eyes . . . and very pale . . . and with black hair." He hastily took a drink.

"A very beautiful woman," said Diego.

"I used to look for her when she crossed the bridge on her way to work in the mornings. What a walk she had . . . with her head up, and a little smile for you."

"That one," said Diego pensively, "had something."

"It is a shame they are rushing foolishly into marriage," said Manuel. "Who did she marry?"

"The son of old Santos the dairyman."

"Why, he is the painter, the artist," said Manuel. "He studied for it somewhere in the South, Los Angeles, I believe."

"The same man," said Diego. Then he nudged Hortado and pointed to the wall above the rows of bottles. "Look at that, man," he said. "That is young Santos' work." Hortado looked at it glumly.

"I had not noticed it," he commented. "Now I know why. It was nature protecting my eyes."

"You don't recognize it?" quizzed Diego.

"What does it mean?"

"It is an old Basque proverb. Around a small table sit three men. In the center of the table sets a decanter of red wine. The men are all devoutly religious. They have just come from Mass. It was very dry and now they wish a little wine. However, there is not enough wine to satisfy the thirst of all so they decided to cut the cards and let the man who was high take the wine. But since they are devouts they would not think of doing this without declaring the Church in. Thus the vacant chair; it is for the Church. Well good. As you see, the men have cut in turn, then cut for the Church. There before the vacant place reserved for the Church lays the highest card. Naturally it could have been no other way. So there the men sit, stupefied, unable to drink because of course the wine is now the property of the Church. They don't fully comprehend their position."

Hortado sipped at his drink and considered the work. "One would not think the son of Santos could conceive it," he said. Diego nodded in agreement.

"He didn't. He merely painted it. It is an old proverb."

"You would not think he could even paint it," said Manuel. Now that he had studied the picture, its simplicity and the power of the peasant figures sitting placidly with mingled expressions of sad, angry confusion on their faces strangely affected him.

"It has caused more than a little trouble already," said Diego sadly. Hortado continued to stare at the mural. "One of the police came in while young Santos was still occupied with it," explained Diego. "He asked simply enough what it meant . . . you know how they are. Young Santos, not thinking, told him. The next time he came in, the police, there was another with him. They began poking fun at the work."

Hortado turned slowly, seriously, and studied his friend. "Did they kill anyone over it?"

"Worse," said Diego slowly. "One evening about six-thirty young Florito, the carpenter, stopped in on his way home from work for a drink. You know how he is, just like his brother Miguel, the prizefighter. He is plain and true and will take nothing off no man. There were three police. They ordered beers and then wouldn't drink them, saying the beer was bad, which of course it was. Then one of them asked Florito for a match and got it. After he had lit his cigarette he flipped the match at the painting and said: 'Someone oughta come in here an' smear whitewash all over thet thing.' Young

Florito lit a cigarette very slowly and took a drink of his beer. 'Why do you say that, gentlemen?' he asked pleasantly. One of the officers, a tall fellow from Texas, walked along the bar toward him. 'Do you know what thet paintin' means?' he demanded. 'All my life I have known it,' answered Florito evenly. 'Do you believe in it?' the police snapped at him. 'As a work of Art?' Florito asked him. The officer threw away his cigarette and placed his hand on the butt of the gun at his hip. 'Now don't come none o' that smart talk with me!' he said in a sour voice. The other two officers stepped around behind Florito, who watched them in the glass. 'Where do you work, Mex?' one of these barked at him. 'With Bordeaux the contractor,' Florito told him. 'What are you, a ditchdigger?' the officer asked in an insulting manner. 'Sometimes I dig ditches when it is necessary. Most of the time I work as a carpenter,' Florito told them. Then he turned and faced them with the beer still in his hand. 'Sometimes, gentlemen,' he said, 'I have been known to dig graves.' Then all the people who were in the bar flung themselves to the floor to escape the bullets. But because of the way the officers were standing about Florito they could not fire for fear of shooting each other. Florito at once hurled his beer into the eyes of the man in front of him and smashed into the man blocking his path to the door. He knocked this man down, but the police who got the beer in his eyes kicked out instantly with all his might, knocking the legs from under Florito. The third police jumped on his spine with his knees and beat him back of the ears with the butt of his pistol. As soon as the others could they too jumped on Florito and beat him severely. Florito made no sound nor did he struggle after the first blow." Diego turned and pointed to the floor a few feet away from them. "There was a puddle of blood there six feet across. There were pieces of mashed flesh and some hair in the blood. We also found the heavy pencil Florito used at his work and twenty-five cents in change. The pencil and all the money we took across the canal to his mother . . . who lives alone now that they have drafted the other boy, Miguel."

Hortado's face had slowly drained of color. "It was unfortunate that I was not here at the time," he said. Diego nodded quickly.

"There were those here at the time who said it would have gone off differently had you been here." He paused and took a drink, then shrugged. "But . . . as I pointed out to them . . . You were already a prisoner."

"What happened to Florito?" Hortado asked in a very quiet voice.

"The police took him away. They carried him out through the back to the alley and threw him on the pavement. When the call wagon came they

threw him into it like you would toss a quarter of beef. Then they drove away with him. We naturally thought him to be dead." Hortado poured himself another drink from the bottle. His jaw muscles were tense. Diego continued.

"We sent young Cabral to the police to find out about him and when we would be allowed to have the body. I and old man Cabral went to his mother, old lady Machado, to tell her he had been arrested for being drunk, but she was disturbed because he was not a boy to drink beyond his capacity." Diego finished his drink and Hortado filled his glass from the bottle.

"Then?" he said.

"At the jail they would tell young Cabral nothing. For days no one knew what to think or what to do. We told his mother there would have to be a trial now and that it would be a little while yet. Finally one day I went to the police again, it was my turn, and they took me into a cell and there he was. It was the first we knew of his still being alive. He was laying on a filthy cot. He did not seem to know me nor would he talk to me; maybe he couldn't. It was hard to tell much about him, he was so beaten I could hardly look at him. His whole head seemed to be out of shape and his features were all smashed and broken. He could only open one eye a little, but as I said, didn't seem to see much. They had washed some of the blood off him and had tried to shave his head, I guess to treat the wounds. There was a great bloody bandage which had worked part way off. He just lay on the cot without moving. Once in a while he would whimper. The guard said he had been doing that for ten days and nights. I had to get out of there I tell you." There was sweat on Diego's brow. He took a stiff drink and continued.

"Finally old lady Machado could stand it no more. She went to the jail to see her boy. She went with old Santos' girl, that is the painter's sister, you know. She had been Florito's favorite. Everyone had expected them to get married soon. She went to the jail with old lady Machado to show she had confidence in Florito." Diego paused and looked down at the floor for a time. Hortado gulped his drink.

"Go on," he said.

"Well . . . they let her in. She went sort of crazy when she saw him. There was no preparation. The police sent for Cabral to come after her. She had been screaming, but the Santos girl was dry-eyed, white as plaster, with not a sound coming out of her. She was almost paralyzed I guess.

"Cabral then went to the authorities to ask if Florito was receiving

medical attention. They told him the doctor who looked after prisoners was taking care of him. Cabral wanted to know if we could get our own doctor to care for him. No, they said, it was against their rules. Cabral then offered to pay the expense if they would put him in a hospital, under constant guard, if they thought it necessary. They said under no circumstances could they allow such a dangerous criminal out of jail." Diego stopped and wet his throat with whiskey.

"Get on with it," urged Hortado.

"Florito did not die. He simply lay day after day whimpering. He never did get so he knew any of us. When Marguerita went with his mother to visit him he just stared dully at them out of his one eye and whimpered. He had begun to drool too, badly. Old lady Machado broke down under it. She sat in her little place across the canal and rocked back and forth all day, singing religious songs. She would eat almost nothing and wasted away badly. Marguerita had of course been terribly stricken from the first and she was bewildered.

"Finally they had the trial. It was perhaps the most peculiar trial ever held, although many of their trials as you know are very peculiar. Old Cruz Madera said himself that in all his eighty years spent both in Mexico and California he had never seen anything exactly like it. They got all ready and finished the preliminaries. The witnesses testified. The testimony of the police was not attacked at all by the attorney they had appointed to defend Florito. However, the attorney doing the prosecuting so confused the handful of witnesses who tried to testify for Florito that what they said went for nothing. All those who were capable had been carefully disqualified on various technicalities, earlier. We were, however, allowed to testify as character witnesses. The judge allowed it to be read into the record that Florito was a man of apparent good character. But it seemed that the police had different ideas about this. They had records which showed that they had been watching Florito as a suspicious character for a long time. This was a great surprise to all of us who knew him. There was nothing against his record, he had never been arrested for even a traffic violation, but the police it seems had suspected him of almost everything. This seemed to impress the judge. Later we learned that this should not have been so, but at the time Florito's attorney did not protest. He seemed alarmed at all the things Florito had almost been accused of. At the last when it was necessary for the culprit to appear they brought Florito in. Two guards, one on either side, supported him. He hardly weighed a hundred pounds. He had im-

proved a little in that he was now able to hold his head up, but he still could not talk, only whimper. I guess the judge had never seen the prisoner before. He looked so startled and almost frightened that I thought for a moment the whole thing would break down. But the judge rallied and in less than ten minutes' time sentenced Florito to three years at hard labor for attacking the police. There were several then who stood up and spoke out, but there was a special heavy guard and these were seized and held for contempt of court.

"Old lady Machado had fainted away when the guards brought in Florito so she did not get to say goodbye to him. The judge allowed her thirty minutes for this purpose but she was still out of her mind when the time was up, and they drove Florito away under a very heavy guard." Hortado had his glass halfway to his mouth, but this time he set it back on the bar.

"What is left?" he asked.

"There is much more," said Diego. He lit a cigarette. "At last Marguerita began to recover herself. She began to act, to shake off the strange paralysis which had come over her. Anyway, she went to the police who had beaten and arrested Florito. She explained to them honestly and politely that Florito was a good man, that it was all a mistake. She said they had been engaged to be married. I guess she told them many things like that thinking of course that it would make everything clear to them. She told them she would spend the rest of her life trying to make him well and whole again. She then asked for permission to marry him as soon as possible in prison. She was sure this would make Florito stronger and give him faith again.

"I do not know of course what these police said to her but they must have given her some encouragement, for she kept going to talk to them. I heard they told her they might be able to get him out before two years. When Cabral heard this he went to the authorities to see if it would be possible to have a specialist treat Florito, since it was obvious he would not recover otherwise. He offered to put up five hundred dollars to show his faith. Nothing ever came of this. But a funny thing; a short time later Cabral was arrested for operating a disorderly bar. They tied it up with the attack on the police by Florito. Cabral said that the police were always coming in and causing trouble. They fined him five hundred dollars." Diego paused to wet his throat. Hortado stared silently at him.

"Shortly after that Marguerita stopped going to talk to the police. In a few more weeks it became apparent to all what had happened. She began

to swell up rapidly. Old Santos went wild but stood by the girl. Young Santos got hold of a gun somehow and started after the officers, but was disarmed by us before he met the same fate as Florito." Hortado slowly raised his glass and drained it.

"Then," he said.

Diego passed his hand across his face and ground out his cigarette. "Two weeks later two little Negro boys fishing in Bear Creek down where Little Mariposa cuts into it found Marguerita's body. She was not a pretty sight." He fell silent. Hortado lit a cigarette and smoked silently. At last he spoke.

"Was this Marguerita the girl who played the guitar and sang on the Mexican-hour on the radio, the program that came on every noon, on the local station?"

"The same."

"I can hear her now. She had a fine clear voice and much feeling for the music."

"It was always a great pleasure to hear her," agreed Diego. Hortado lapsed into silence again. Diego finished his drink.

"What of Miguel? You say they took him into the Army?" asked Manuel.

"Yes. He had been working in a cannery up in Sacramento, boxing every two weeks or so and sending money home. He was getting along fine. We tried to keep it a secret about his brother. He was hot-headed and would only have killed someone. After it was all over Cabral wrote him and told him his brother had been sentenced to prison for beating some officers. Naturally Miguel was proud and wanted to visit Florito in prison. Cabral wouldn't tell him where Florito was.

"Then Miguel made a trip home about two weeks later. It was his birthday, his twenty-first birthday. He was overcome by the breakdown of his mother. Then of course it was impossible to keep the story from him. It took five of us to control him. He cried all night. He is a proud, hot-headed man. By morning we had persuaded him of the futility of taking violent action. 'What of your old mother, man,' we said. 'Someone has to be left to look after her!' Before he ever got permission to visit Florito he was drafted." Hortado refilled the glasses.

"Where is he stationed, do you know?" he asked.

"I do not. For a time he wrote to his mother through Carmelita Santos, who takes care of the old lady as if she were a child. Then he was sent to

another place and his letters stopped coming. He could be dead. They send some of his pay to the old lady every month. It helps keep her alive."

"When I am inducted I shall ask them about this man at once," said Manuel.

"I doubt if they will give you any information at all," said Diego.

"Surely if he is alive I want to contact him," said Manuel. Diego shrugged. Hortado raised his eyes to the mural, studying it again. Diego took a drink.

"There were many who were bitter about the painting then," he said. "They said that if it had not been for the painting Florito and Marguerita would be with us today, alive, well, and happily married. Others, however, said the painting was a sign of our rights."

Hortado shook his head. "It is a plain picture," he said, "honestly painted. Why should anyone kill over it?"

"Cruz Madera's grandson, who is studying in the school up North, said it was because the painting casts reflections on a pillar of their society," explained Diego.

"I thought it was about our society. I thought it was an old proverb," said Manuel sullenly.

"I think they were just looking for trouble," said Diego. "As usual."

Above the noise of the bar they heard the shrill cry of children's voices. Turning, they saw a group of children in the glare of the colored neon lights outside. They had tied a rope around the neck of Cabral's old black dog and were dragging him happily along the street after them. The old dog was resisting, his hind quarters stiff and grotesquely raised.

Hortado watched them bitterly. "We *are* like that dog," he said. "We are no different than a dog!" Diego watched until the procession had disappeared from sight into the dark.

"In many ways yes," he agreed. "But in some ways we have the advantage over the dog."

"In what ways do we have the advantage?" demanded Manuel savagely in a low tone.

Diego lit a cigarette. His face showed concentration.

"The dog," he argued, "can never read nor write. He can not spread information."

Hortado's eyes narrowed angrily. "That is true," he agreed.

"And most important, or equally important, is this fact," continued

Diego, nodding toward the mural. "The dog could not paint a picture like that nor could he conceive it."

Manuel Hortado glared sullenly out the window at the dog for a time. Then he raised his eyes to the painting. Slowly his face relaxed, and his eyes took on a new light.

"You are right," he said.

The Miner: EIGHT DRAWINGS BY

Philip Evergood

. .

THESE DRAWINGS of a miner's life are characteristic of Philip Evergood's deep and moving identity with working people and with progressive human values.

The mine molds the miner—it never masters him. His hands, large and strong and gnarled, are shaped by his environment, yet never lose their expressiveness, their capacity to fight, to embrace a beloved one, to clasp firmly the hand of a comrade. There is so much of the elemental in Evergood's drawings of workers that they become symbols of man's struggle with nature and against exploitation.

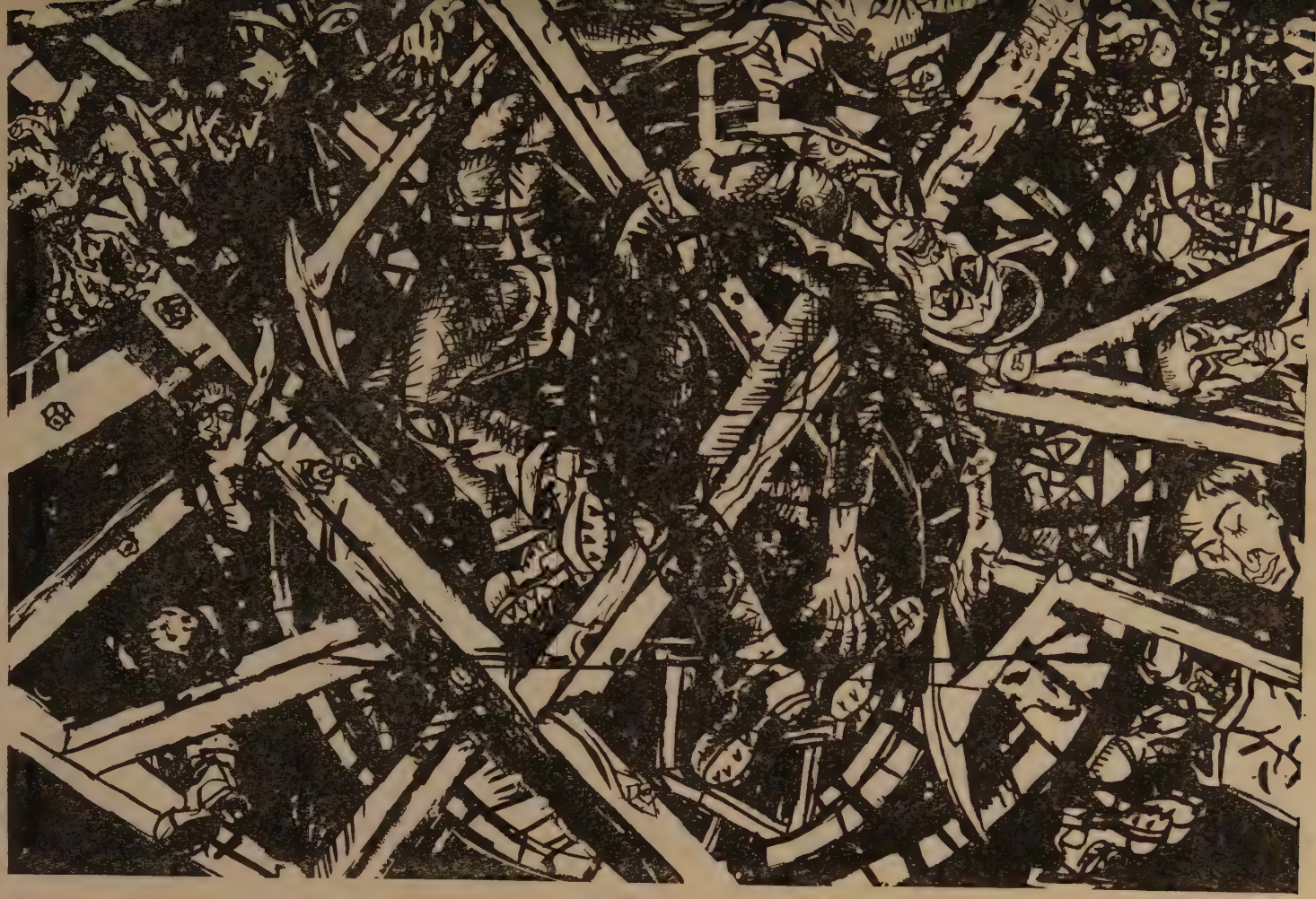
There is nothing facile or merely polished about Evergood's work. One cannot absorb the impact of these drawings without assimilating something of the artist's own intense emotional experience in creating his men and women. Where the conditions of their life crush and deform them, the artist discovers and reveals their inner grace, warm humanity, simple emotions. In doing this, Evergood conveys his own love for people and confidence in their ultimate triumph.

An artist of national and world reputation, his paintings are in the permanent collections of many museums and galleries. The present series, entitled "The Miner," was drawn by him for *Mainstream.*

HARRY GOTTLIEB

1. *Birth*


Philip Evergood
47

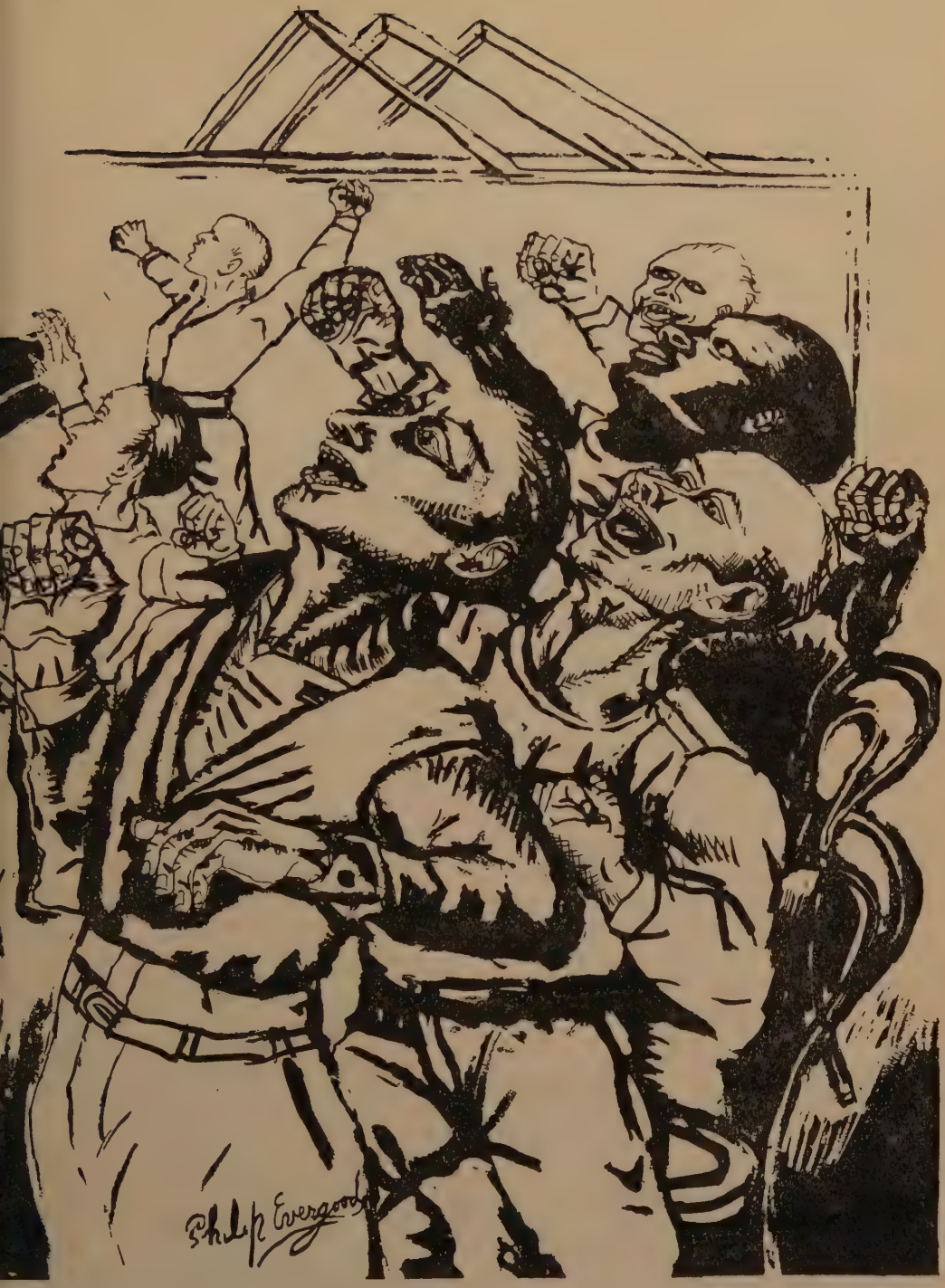


3. *Mine Disaster*

4. *Union Card*

5. *No Peace with Fascism*

6. *Wedding*



7. *"The Strike Is Won!"*

8. *New Birth—New Struggle*

Adam

By EVE MERRIAM

. .

The peril was always there.
Dark sliming ooze
Under leafy green Eden ease.

Even before Eve came,
Life was not simple and single.
There was always the snaky tangle.

Hard to make up one's own Adam mind:
To sink in the writhing mud,
Or free striding ahead.

Decided. Not Refined Christian White Clientele,
Not Aryan or Non-
But merely: Man.

Great-great-great-great
Grandson of a son,
Scene is the same.

Either promise or peril,
Choice is upon us.
(Name of deceased was Doubting Thomas.)

Peril is plain, though global.
Ooze in high places and higher.
Promise is wider.

Not idle Eden,
But working peace to be won
By Citizen Man.

Virge Doggity

By BEN FIELD

. .

THEIR LUNCHBOXES CLANKING like a bunch of bells, the loggers galloped their horses into the timber. The red mare led as usual with her wild trumpet, Slim Taylor, perched on her neck, yelling and kicking. Behind her clattered the older horses with the whites of their eyes bared and their nostrils afire. They flew down the road between the mountain laurel, leaped the brook, and scrambled up the bank to circle the skidway where the day's work began.

High on the skidway the logs glistened with frost, and the air cut like a whip. The men yanked, whoaed, and leaped off the snorting horses from whose heaving barrels screws of smoke rose. Some dropped the tracechains and put on the grabs, others filed axes and hooks or moved briskly about to hang up their lunchboxes. Slim tied his mare, pushed through the men asking whether Doggity wasn't to join the gang today, and then suddenly tripped one of the teamsters, dumping him into the laurel. The teamster came back at him; the two circled and clashed, while the rest gathered around to egg and cheer them.

The chug of a truck could be heard above the scuffling of the men—the fallers were coming in from the village. An engine drummed after it, but the wrestlers threshed around until the teamster with a grunt sent Slim flying headlong into the laurel. The teamster winked at the men as Slim clawed forward again, white-faced, panting hoarsely. A man advanced up the roadway, carrying a pail and a lady's pocketbook. The wrestling stopped. It was the boss, Fowler Martin.

Fowler's eyes ran over the men. "Where's Adam?" he demanded.

There was a boom in the bushes, "Here!" And out marched Adam, hitching up his overalls.

"Ain't Virge Doggity showed up yet?" Fowler dumped the wedges out

of the pocketbook. "Jeeroosalem," he growled, "we're short hands. The mill's on my tail all the time. Now there's Virge, a man you could bank on, no better than the next fella. The war sure killed plenty a good man."

The men got into their rubber boots and looped cable for the swamp work. As the sound of axes started up in the heart of the swamp, they clucked to their horses, and in a single file they entered its fastness over a trail which wound between pools and Indian burial mounds. Here and there light pierced the tangle of spruce and hemlock, hitting the blackish water which gave off flashes of fire, and the hundreds of bogs which looked like dug-in beasts. The red mare, leading the line, snorted and pulled back as a snake slithered across the path and disappeared in the oily ooze. And then again with clink of chains and suck of hoofs, men and horses pressed forward to be swallowed up in the gloom of the swamp.

"Heads up there! Oh, timber, timber!"

Doubled-up, a couple of the fallers darted toward them, carrying a long saw. Ahead of them trees crashed, tearing breaches in the sky, bringing down smaller stuff with them and landing with a sharp rip and a mighty swat. The fallen giants were still quivering when the trimmers hopped up and ran their lengths lopping off boughs, and the fallers followed to measure and saw the timber into logs. Some of the huge butt logs had to be drawn out to firmer ground by means of the cables, then they were skinned to make the going easier, and with three hooks knocked into them, with rollers under them, they were pulled slowly and laboriously through the swamp to the loading skidways.

Fowler Martin checked on the gangs with his time book which the men called the "works Bible." At his elbow stood a broken-down boy who acted as his runner and handy man. He stopped a truck coming down the roadway, asked whether the driver had seen anything of that peppercorn, Virge Doggity, and growled under his breath while his runner watched him anxiously.

At the skidway there was a jam because of the huge butt logs which required a whole gang to roll them up the skids. The drivers were as nervous as cats to make sure their stakes would hold those great white babies. As the trucks churred back and forth, the drivers gave the loggers hell. "Come on there, Slim, you ain't in the army no more. Get the lead out. What's the matter with the red mare—she horsing, you got to stick to her tail that way? Give's a hand with the canthook. That's the boy. Now throw me the binding chain, son, and I'll tap out."

As the trucks pulled out with the last of the big logs, the whistle of the sawmill in the village piped up, and the men left the swamp and gathered on the high ground around the skidway. The teamsters watered their horses at the brook and grained them, then dumped themselves under the trees. Fowler Martin squatted on a log in the sun, a favorite perch, since he was slow-blooded. He ate sparingly, soon closed his lunchbox, and stuffed his mouth with his plugs; around him were castings of his black tobacco, an accumulation of weeks.

Talk is the wedge which keeps the work from binding, talk is the grease which softens and speeds the day, and though the men had been caught in the swamp for weeks, working at a pace which had their tongues hanging by midday, the news that Virge Doggity was to join their gang gave them a lift, and as they sprawled and ate, they talked Doggity. A teamster observed that since the death of his boys in action, Virge had become a changed man, all the whistle stopped in him. But one of the old fallers snorted and said Doggity was Doggity, that breed never changed, the devil always in them.

Virge's father had come from Ireland as a stowaway, a shaver, ten years old, all alone. There were Doggitys who helped build "crazy Wurtz's ditch," which joined the Delaware and Hudson Rivers, and became canal men; others crossed into Pennsylvania to dig coal. Virge's father was a stag that browsed alone, got himself a job as a shoer after floating all over the country, and when the priest scolded him for shoeing a horse Sunday, he flew into such a rage that he never entered a church after that. He became one of the best steersmen on the Delaware, but he was always fighting the lumber speculators. One story was he sank a raft of fine yellow pine, every stick over fifty feet without a knot in it, rather than have them go into the hands of a timber louse of a cheating speculator. Then he gave up lumbering and tried everything under the sun, always tough and dogged as the long augers they used in the old days.

The dog-eyed runner sat at the edge of the crowd listening to the old faller reeling it out. The boy's mouth was wide open with excitement. He worked his nose, pricked up his ears, and bounded into the roadway, crying, "Here's Doggity. Here he is."

Up on his perch, the boss crouched and let loose a massive rumble, "Yeh, it's Virgel William Doggity in person. The old crock's a'coming."

Legging it up the roadway was a squirrely man, who came in fast, cuffing the sweat off his red face. "Got rid of the last of my hens this morning," he piped, and as the men made room for him, he dropped, tearing off his hat.

A fiery tuft of hair, released like a spring, stood over his freckled, burned forehead.

The care drained out of Fowler's udderlike face as he took in the touseled fellow. "Glad you made it, Virge, sure glad. With you here we'll have one good logger to bank on. Takes a Doggity to know his way in the woods." He shifted his rump. "So you got rid of them hens?"

"I give my last whistle up the hen's tail. Just leave my old rooster and a couple three hens for replacements."

The men pondered the "replacements," but Doggity offered no further explanation. He seemed cheery enough although around his eyes the flesh was eaten away. Giving the men a wink, he whipped tobacco and a short charred bowl out of his pockets. He smoked his pipes stemless, liked to feel the hot bowl smack up against his cheek, saying he had gotten into a brawl when he was a lineman with a fellow three times his heft just to get his teeth battered out so that he would be able to grip his bowl tighter.

All eyes were trained on that red-headed tough as he pecked his match: work would be something with this shot of fire around.

"So the chicks was too much for you?" observed Fowler with a knowing grin.

"Don't know if they was too much for me or I was too much for them. Maybe it cuts both ways," said Doggity a little somberly.

"Which chicks you mean?" asked Slim, rolling over on his belly. "You mean them two girls to home, you'd be wise not to let them out of sight, Virge, old boy. Chicks is got tricks."

Doggity studied him and said dryly, "I shirked plenty a day's work in my life, but there's one thing I ain't never been, I ain't never been a draggle-tail little cock, show him a crack, and by golly, he'll stand there all day and all night gaping and craning and straining like a spike's gone clean through his liver." And he strained and grunted and acted out the cock.

As the men hooted at the way Slim had been heeled back, Fowler pulled out his watch with a benevolent smile and gave a nod to signify it was time for them to hit it up again.

"What was them replacements for the hens you was talking about, Virge?" asked a teamster before the men scattered to the work.

"Oh, that. That's to build up a flock again if I'm ever that loony again. With the shenanigans going on, it's another war, by Christ."

The man paled, giving a sickish grin; the others gawked. It couldn't be

one of Virge's jokes—no man kids around who has had both of his sons killed with one blow.

Horses were hooked, logs snaked, and trees, shaking their headlocks against the sky, crashed and thundered with a great suck and swat of the air. The men threshed around in the swamp, and slowly the day, streaked with mud and sweat, wore down to its end.

Deep in the swamp the hemlocks grew at all angles, twisted and turned, their mossy butts as crooked as horns. The fallers were having a tough time landing the timber right. One hemlock split, got out of hand, and fell so that it hung in a maple.

Fowler heard the crack and sized up the situation though he wasn't in eye shot of the hemlock. He came over to prod the two stiff-legged old fallers who were fussing around helplessly. The three studied the hemlock, they studied the maple. It would be taking a risk to bring down the maple with that hemlock quivering in it.

Fowler dispatched his runner to fetch Adam Burch, the strongest man in the village, who had walked off with a freight car wheel in each hand. Adam took an ax and whanged away at the stump. The hemlock shook and settled more firmly in the maple. "By rights, it ought to come," he mumbled and spat into his hands. Then he picked up a crowbar, slipped it under a butt, dug a hole into the squishy soil for a better toehold, and heaved. The blood swelled the chunk of his face, the veins roped his forehead. The hemlock moved an inch, two, and then remained firm.

Up came Slim Taylor. "Let a real man do it." He leaped on the stump and ran up the hemlock, slipped and fell off with a yawp. He wiped his face with his overseas cap and muttered in disgust, "Time I could of done that in my sleep."

Fowler sent the runner for Virgel William Doggity. Then he fetched another crowbar and facing Adam, cried, "Let's double it. Maybe we move the dratted stick."

The two big men strained, facing each other as if they were butting one another, when Virge ran up at a double trot. He studied the swamp maple, studied the hemlock, and winked at the shamefaced faller responsible for the poor judgment.

"What you make of it?" grunted Fowler, straightening out.

"I make of it what you make of it—it's hung."

He shooed the men away, and with a chirp mounted the hemlock and flew toward its crown, was lost among the heavy green boughs, flashed out

like a squirrel, slashing with his ax, and then teetered as if he had lost his footing. The men, ringed round the stump, turned white while leaves and twigs showered down on them. With a sharp cry of pain, Doggity froze in the treetop. A branch broke, and then they saw him hanging by one arm like a dropworm.

The runner boy gagged and hid his face in his hands. Fowler threw up his hands and blared like a cracked brass, "Hold on, Virge. Hold, hold, by God!"

Quickly Virge kicked, straddled the hemlock and began chopping away and singing at the top of his voice. Then with a squawk, he suddenly caught the next tree and swung over as the hemlock was freed and thundered away from him.

When he got down, landing lightly on his feet, Fowler stormed up to him. "You devil, scaring the daylights out of us thataway!"

That guy wire of a man, his bill longer than his head, his hair the color of weathered iron, said solemnly, "It was a close shave, Fowler. I ain't half the man I used to be, when there was nothing so high give me the shakes, nothing so deep give me the bends. Christ, if it wasn't a terrible close shave."

He turned to see the grizzled old faller watching him with a relieved grin, and he clapped him heartily on the back. "It's all in the day's work, sonny. At your service." With a wink he twinkled back to his trail, hugging his ax.

The men shook their heads, laughed, and hustled to make up lost time. The sun pulled in its light, and slowly the frost penned them in again. Deep in the swamp, from the heart of the gloom which crept up on them, the red-necked flicker could be heard hammering away in bursts like a machine gun.

History and Reality

By HERBERT APTHEKER

THIS ESSAY CONSISTS OF TWO SECTIONS. The first attempts to survey the leading bourgeois philosophies of history today; the second counterposes to these philosophies an exposition of the essential features of historical materialism. The essay is not concerned with the application of particular philosophies or theories to specific historical areas, and thus such figures as Frederick Jackson Turner and Vernon L. Parrington are outside its purpose.

To the Marxist, as Marcel Cachin has written, history being "the true science of society . . . is the science of sciences. . . ." Many scoff at this evaluation of history and deny the possibility, let alone the reality, of a science of society. To them history becomes, as certain English educators have remarked, nothing but "the curse of modern education" filled with "best forgotten facts for boys to be crammed with." It is, then, not surprising that history has been dismissed as merely "an interesting form of literature" deserving little time in college, and one which might well be omitted from the curriculum altogether. Clearly the fate here assigned to Clio is preferable to that which is worse than death and is urged by such individuals as the former corporation lawyer currently employing his talents as Governor of Michigan, i.e., its prostitution as "a powerful weapon in the war against subversive activities."

The belief that history is "incoherent and immoral," in the words of the tortured Henry Adams, permeates bourgeois historiography today as a part, and a very important part, of the current deliberately provoked phenomenon of the renunciation of reason and the glorification of mysticism.

Thus Jerome Frank, in a book subtitled *A Philosophy for Free Americans,* finds that those who laughed at Henry Ford when he declared that "history is bunk" were in error. "It would be better for us today," writes the distinguished Judge, "if we had heeded, rather than jeered at, Ford's

skepticism." Historical works are, *and can be,* nothing but "amusing, imaginative accounts," much like Kipling's "Just-So" stories. With such a beginning the ending is pre-ordained. We need, concludes Frank, a new revelation, a new church, fitted for the uniquely American "democratic religious attitudes."*

It was not always so, of course. In the vigorous days of capitalism, handbooks on historical method, like that by Langlois and Seignobos, and scholars like Buckle, Spencer, Flint, Lamprecht, Freeman, Ranke, Bury, the young Carl Becker, insisted, at the very least, on the possibility of a science of history. Most of these, however, postulated an idealistic world, and even the exceptions like Buckle and Spencer were, in Marx's words, the creators of an "abstract materialism" assuming an absolute distinction between mind and matter, neglecting the *processes* of history, the reciprocal character of cause and effect, and above all the active role of the masses of mankind, not merely the elite, in the determining of history.

In our era an obsolete economy turns to the politics of barbarism and the culture of chaos. A leader among England's professional historians, Harold Temperley, declares near the end of his career that "the idea that history is a science has perished." Another, John Buchan, later Lord Tweedsmuir, asserts that he can picture the muse of history "most easily" as "a child staring at the kaleidoscope of the centuries, and laughing—yes, laughing—at an inconsequence that defies logic, and whimsicalities too fantastic for art."

In the United States Charles A. Beard announced his flight toward the abyss with a presidential address in 1933 before the American Historical Association entitled "Written History as an Act of Faith." He saw the historian as compelled to choose among three alternatives: history as senseless; history as some cyclical, non-evolutionary, mysterious drama, *à la* Spengler (or, one may add today, *à la* Toynbee); or "history as actuality" in the sense of Condorcet or Marx. As for himself, while pledging the retention of the techniques of science, he felt it necessary to "dispel the illusion" that there could be "a science of history embracing the fullness of history, or of any large phase, of past actuality." His paper was marked by repeated appeals to the authority of the neo-Hegelian idealist, Benedetto Croce, the deviser of one of the most consistent philosophies of the dying bourgeois world.

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* Jerome Frank, *Fate and Freedom* (Simon & Schuster, N. Y., 1945), pp. 3, 27, 220. Compare Jose Ortega y Gasset: ". . . science taken as a whole, is it not also a myth, the admirable myth of modern Europe?"; "Man stands in need of a new revelation"—*Toward a Philosophy of History* (Norton, N. Y., 1941), pp. 15, 223.

As such, Croce requires somewhat extended notice. An early polemicist against historical materialism, Croce developed his idealistic historiography as an alternative to Marxism and has pushed it to its nadir. His own "philosophy of the spirit" is the single over-all reality. With this he has been slaying the materialistic interpretation of history for over fifty years, because, according to himself, it denies "spiritual and moral values." From this materialism "society itself must be cured so that it may inhale a freer, fuller air, and attain a nobler humanity." So rang one of his innumerable battle-cries for liberty—this one dated Naples, 1933! And from the same citadel of freedom he produced in 1938 *History as the Story of Liberty.* His admirers across the waters, in hailing this work, felt called upon to pause over the mystery of Mussolini's state and press permitting the appearance of a "story of liberty." Professor J. Salwyn Schapiro could only decide that, "If and when Fascist Italy is brought before the bar of judgment of an allied peace conference, she can appeal for clemency on the ground that she had not entirely lost her liberal soul. Proof: Benedetto Croce was allowed to live and write this book in Italy."*

That, then, is the reason: a fragment of a "liberal soul" remained in fascist Italy! Could there be some less abstract reason? Could it be because the book urges "repudiating materialism" as the prime necessity of civilization? Could it be because, according to Croce, Communism leads inevitably to "the beaten track which every absolutism, every despotism, every tyranny has always entered upon" and because Marx has produced a system "without a breath of humanity or liberty" and was himself "nearer than one imagines to Prussianism and to its cult of brutal force"? Could it be because, to Croce, liberty "will always be formal and legal, and therewith spiritual and moral: material or economic liberty is a meaningless phrase"? Finally, could it be because in this work the twenty-year crucifixion of his own countrymen is nowhere mentioned by this eulogist of "spiritual and moral liberty"?**

With the spirit as the only reality (and with its origin inexplicable), with all history therefore *inside* each historian ("all history is contemporary his-

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* *Journal of the History of Ideas* (Oct., 1941), II, p. 505.

** Croce, possessor of vast landed wealth, headed a reactionary bloc, *Fascio dell'Ordine* back in 1914. He was a member of the Giolitti Cabinet that prepared the way for Mussolini, and his closest collaborator, Gentile, became a member of Mussolini's own government. To 1924 Croce actively supported the fascist dictator; thereafter he remained the tolerated leader of the Loyal Opposition.

tory") and thus with no such thing as error and no criterion for truth, even "liberty" may serve—did serve—fascism.*

Having such a mentor it is not surprising to find Beard now at Croce's level in urging that the "terms 'cause' and 'causality' should never be used in writen-history" and deciding that "any definition of a complicated aggregation of events, conditions and personalities in history-as-actuality, such as the French Revolution or the American Revolution, is an arbitrary delimitation in time and space—an isolation of the 'data' in the mind or the imagination, not outside the mind . . . and the assignment of cause or causes to anything that cannot be accurately defined and isolated in fact is at best a highly dubious intellectual operation."**

Beard's three alternatives, chaos, mysticism, materialism, are indeed real and the necessity to choose becomes more urgent daily. The revolutionary quality of the last has long been recognized, for Marxists have always insisted that a consistent materialist view is possible only from a proletarian standpoint. It is this quality which led a rather naive lady to decry the asserted fact that today "we tend to look on an understanding of the political, social, and economic world in which we live as the primary aim of the social studies program." This approach is wrong, says the headmistress of an exclusive girls' school, because it tends to produce a belief in "the need for change. . . . A materialist interpretation of past and present problems presupposes a materialist solution," so that, concludes our writer, with gleaming ink, "The door is thus directly opened to the 'isms' " and no longer is there full reliance on "moral and spiritual principles [and] Divine authority."***

With such dangers and such alternatives one need not be surprised that a one-volume condensation of Toynbee's *A Study of History* comes upon the market at this moment and sells over one hundred thousand copies in a few months and is to reach another half million homes as a book club gift. Nor is it surprising that such a work is hailed enthusiastically by almost all reviewers as offering, in the words of the *New York Times,* a "Way of Salvation."

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* See the analysis by M. Mandelbaum, *The Problem of Historical Knowledge* (N. Y., 1938), pp. 39 ff.

** See note signed by Beard and Alfred Vagts in *Theory and Practice in Historical Study: A Report of the Committee on Historiography* (Social Science Research Council, N. Y., 1946), p. 136-37; see Mandelbaum, *op. cit.,* chaps. 7 and 8; and his "Causal Analysis in History," in *Journal of the History of Ideas* (Jan., 1942), II, pp. 30-50.

*** Katherine Smedley, "Moral Forces in American History," in *Social Education* (1943), VI,I pp. 293-94.

To Toynbee the movement of history comes from God-endowed "creative personalities" who lead, in one way or another, the inert and passive masses. While these elite remain dynamic, civilizations bloom; when success, however, makes them proud and arrogant, break-down sets in. Another marked characteristic of Toynbeean world history is the "Schism of the Soul" which has hitherto characterized it. This schism, this "archaism and futurism," (in our era represented by the bourgeoisie and the proletariat) in actuality represents one vast spiritual dilemma, for each is "intrinsically incapable of succeeding" in its own efforts at self-realization. Essentially, moreover, "The difference between them [i.e., archaism and futurism] is a superficial difference of direction," and neither will get where it wants to go, wherever that may be, "because both are attempts to perform the impossible acrobatic feat of escaping from the Present without rising above the spiritual plane of mundane life on Earth." (VI, pp. 118n., 132.)*

If this particular direction of the "Way" appears to be marked by something less than utmost clarity and precision, certain others do not so suffer. For if the struggle between archaism and futurism is really superficial in content, one may ask whether there are not some real and meaningful conflicts today?

Yes, we are told, there are; or, at least, there is one very real and meaningful conflict. Today we face a supreme contest between a Western Way of Life, essentially Christian, and an Eastern Way of Life, not only non-Christian, but, in large part, essentially Jewish.

Let the author speak for himself:

"When Descartes and Voltaire and Rousseau and Marx and Machiavelli and Hobbes and Lenin and Mussolini and Hitler have all done their best or worst, in their diverse spheres, to dechristianize the various departments of our Western life, we may still suspect that their scouring and fumigating has been only partially effective. The Christian virus or elixir is in our Western blood—if, indeed, it is not just another name for that indispensable fluid. . . ." (V, p. 190.)

Or, again:

"The distinctively Jewish (or perhaps originally Zoroastrian) element in the traditional religious inspiration of Marxism is the apocalyptic vision of a violent revolution which is inevitable because it is the decree, and irresistible

* Arnold J. Toynbee, *A Study of History* (6 vols., Oxford University Press, N.Y., 1934-1939).

because it is the work of God himself. . . . Marx has taken the Goddess 'Historical Necessity' in place of Yahweh for his omnipotent deity, and the internal proletariat of the modern Western World in place of Jewry . . . it is actually the pre-Rabbinical Maccabaean Judaism that our philosopher impresario is presenting in modern Western costume. . . ." (V, pp. 178-79.)

Once more, Marxism "is doomed to failure" precisely because it has rejected Christianity; and so obsessed is Toynbee with this insidious delusion that he descends, in this instance, to the crassest type of misquotation: "Marxians . . . actually declare that Christianity is one of the most formidable obstacles in the way of their own effort to apply Socialism in practice. 'Christianity,' they say, 'is the opiate of the people.'"* (V, pp. 585-86.)

In the midst of such concern for this Christianity, this virus, this elixir, this blood, this Absolute Idea, one wonders, whose Christianity—Francisco Franco's? John Brown's?

Though Mr. Toynbee fears with Spengler the coming of chaos, of some kind of destruction of Western or Christian Civilization—"our doom," as he calls it (IV, p. 122)—still, unlike Nazidom's favorite philosopher, he is not altogether pessimistic. He finds, for example, that "There is a significant touch of irony in the fact that he [Lenin] is constrained to arm Russia for her fight against the West with a borrowed Western weapon, and to take his indictment of the Western Civilization at second-hand from a Western critic: the German Jew Karl Marx." (III, p. 201.) Then, too, the society has managed to survive the First World War and the Bolshevik Revolution even with its borrowed principles. There is, moreover, the possibility that Stalin "may chiefly be remembered as a politician who slyly shepherded his silly sheep back out of the Marxian wilderness in the direction of the bourgeois fold." (VI, p. 111.) So, it may be concluded, that "inasmuch as it cannot be supposed that God's nature is less constant than Man's, we may and must pray that a reprieve [from "our doom"] . . . will not be refused if we ask for it again in a contrite spirit and with a broken heart." (VI, p. 320.)

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* It may be well to quote at some length the passage from Marx in which occurs this much-cited but little understood "opium" remark. It appears in Marx's "Introduction to a Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law": "Religious misery is, on the one hand, the expression of actual misery, and, on the other, a protest against the actual misery. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the kindliness of a heartless world, the spirit of unspiritual conditions. It is the people's opium.

"The removal of religion as the illusory happiness of the people is the demand for its real happiness. The demand that it should give up illusions about its real conditions is the demand that it should give up the conditions which make illusion necessary."—The entire essay is published in *The Modern Quarterly* (London, 1947), II, pp. 245-47.

This then is Toynbee's message, this is his Way, this is his "opiate." No wonder the Book-of-the-Month Club decided to distribute some 500,000 copies free-of-charge! *

The "dangers" of materialism are not generally put quite so bluntly as by the last authors we have been considering. More often the alarm is raised to the effect that with "materialism the historical process appears devoid of soul. Everything is stripped of soul, of inner and mysterious life." Thus, materialists are upbraided for their coarseness. They are asked: Do you not understand that "History is not an objective, empirical datum, it is a myth?" Do you not understand that "history . . . possesses an inner significance and mystery?" Materialists are told that they must understand this, for "To understand the relationship between God and man as a drama of freely-given love is to lay bare the sources of history." Still, upon replying, "it is not clear," the materialist is brought up sharply, for he is now told that it is all right that way, he need not be unduly concerned if he does not understand, for really, it cannot be understood: "this freedom of God's love which is absolutely irrational and inapprehensible to reason, offers a solution [!] of the tragedy of world history."**

In the United States an influential group approximating philosophically the position of Berdyaev and Toynbee is that of the self-styled "theological realists," including figures like Reinhold Niebuhr, Paul Tillich and Sherwood Eddy. The latest presentation of this school's philosophy of history has come from Mr. Eddy.

The title "theological realists" is well-taken, for to these individuals reality is neither mechanical nor organic nor material, it is "superorganic." They conceive of history "as the joint work of God and man," with God "in control of all events, whatever be the measure of man's freedom or sin." God is "the center of history and this center determines the aim of history." And it is because "we have left God out of our materialistic civilization" that evils exist; evils are due to "the self-destructive character of human nature when

* See also Toynbee's "Encounters Between Civilizations," in *Harper's Magazine* (April, 1947), vol. 194, pp. 289-93, being an abstract of lectures with which he favored the students of Bryn Mawr College. Here we learn again that the great present danger to the West arises from "the offshoot of Orthodox Christendom in Russia . . . a Christian heresy. . . . The Russians . . . are now shooting it back at us. This is the first shot in the anti-Western counter-offensive . . ." Note too Toynbee's one method of salvation for our era—transfiguration, i.e., "enrolling ourselves as citizens of the City of God, of which Christ crucified is king." Of the creative personality needed today we learn: "It is only in so far as he succeeds in finding, and showing, the way into an Other World, out of the range of this City of Destruction that the would-be saviour is able to accomplish his mission." (VI, p. 279.)

** Nicolas Berdyaev, *The Meaning of History* (Scribners, N. Y., 1936).

independent [!] of God." Now, "we cannot demonstrate the existence of God"; indeed, "demonstration is impossible here" for this is "a God of mystery, who is often a problem to us, as man is to himself and is perhaps to God." Nevertheless, Mr. Eddy "is absolutely sure . . . that God is indeed working and working effectively and ceaselessly in history." He is not only certain of this but certain that God is Christ, for faiths like Judaism, Buddhism, and Hinduism do not reach the "deepest and highest" levels of Christianity.*

Sentences such as these may or may not constitute effective ecclesiastical disputation, but they have nothing in common with science—or history.

After immersing oneself in the thoroughly mystical writing of Toynbee, Berdyaev and Eddy it is somewhat refreshing, and relatively revealing to follow the late Gertrude Stein in her exposition of history:**

"Now history has really no relation to the human mind at all because history is the state of confusion between anybody doing anything and anything happening.

"Confusion may have something to do with the human mind but has it.

"I would rather not know than know anything of the confusion between anyone doing anything and something happening.

"So says the historian."

That is true. Some do.

Repeatedly one hears this denunciation of historical materialism on a "holier than thou" level concocted of misapprehension or distortion, the most common form of the latter being an identification of Marxism with economic determinism—something the good bourgeois readily understands!*** It is "crude, immoral and unhistorical" (Nicholas Murray Butler); it denies that historical figures "were human beings" and turns them into "economic or social abstractions" (Herbert Heaton); it cannot explain why a man "should . . . sacrifice his life for an idea" (Fred M. Fling); it makes of humanity

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* Sherwood Eddy, *God In History* (N. Y., 1947, Association Press, for the International Committee of Young Men's Christian Associations).

** Gertrude Stein, *The Geographical History of America or The Relation of Human Nature to the Human Mind* (Random House, N. Y., 1936), p. 105.

*** Typical is this from Toynbee (*op. cit.*, V, p. 426): "The classic exposition of Economic Determinism is, of course, that philosophy—or religion—whose founder is Karl Marx. . . ." It is this, rather than Marxism, with which M. M. Bober's misnamed *Karl Marx's Interpretation of History* (Harvard University Press, 1927) does battle; and it is the basic error in Henri Sée's *Matérialisme historique et interprétation economique de l'histoire* (Paris, 1927). And it is with this type of distortion that George Plekhanov's *The Materialist Conception of History* (International Publishers, 1940), written back in 1897, is most concerned.

"merely ventriloquist dummies of inscrutable forces" (Jerome Frank); it represents "essentially the repudiation of real discussion and reason . . . and direct appeal to violence . . . [and] finally spells . . . complete social chaos" (Frank H. Knight). No wonder that, with such a philosophy—denounced more often than studied during the past one hundred years—Sidney Hook, in his recent *The Hero in History,* requires only five pages to arrive at a point where he wants "one final word" in order to "leave Engels dangling on this *reductio ad absurdum* of his position."*

How strangely have behaved these "ventriloquist dummies" to whom human beings are mere abstractions! How idiotic of them, in the face of their own preconceived inscrutable forces, to resist the Bismarckian club, the Kuomintang terror, the fascist inquisition! What weird conduct all this is for devotees of chaos, for these crude and immoral men and women incapable, as they are, of understanding why anyone—let alone they, themselves—should sacrifice life for an idea!

Still, for the bourgeoisie denunciation alone will not do; there must be enunciation too. What shall replace historical materialism? To this two types of answers are offered. One is of a positive nature and attempts another interpretation; the other is of a negative type, and denies the necessity for, the propriety or possibility of, any rational interpretation—a type already anticipated, to a degree, by the comments of Croce, Buchan, the present Beard and others.

Some within the positive group are moved to assert the existence of an alleged distinction (made long ago by Aristotle and repeated by Schopenhauer) between natural science, supposedly dealing with regularities and repetitions, and history, allegedly dealing with the particular and the unique.

The idea that history is concerned only with the absolutely unique is clearly allied with the Crocean thesis that all history is contemporary history, or in the words of a disciple, Ortega y Gasset: "The past is I—by which I mean my life." This decision is necessitated by "the collapse of physical reason" which is to be replaced by "vital, historical reason." Indeed Croce himself insists that "The material of history is the singular in its singularity and contingency. . . ."

Professor Fling has probably developed this concept more systematically than any other historian. He insists repeatedly that the interest of

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* See the excellent critique of Hook's book by E. B. Hobsbawn and Stanley Evans in *The Modern Quarterly* (London, 1947), II, pp. 185-88, 279-86.

the historian must be directed solely "toward the *uniqueness,* the *individuality* of past social life." As a result not only are historical laws ruled out, but so are generalizations, for "a generalization assumes repetition." With generalization goes causation. And, though Professor Fling does not say so, language itself goes by the wayside, for may an historian employ generic terms which assume a similarity, may he use comparative words which assume a relationship, may he use descriptive words which assume a cumulation of experience if history is concerned only with the unique? In brief, is not the absolutely unique, by definition, indescribable, unknowable, inexplicable, and therefore not a subject for communication, let alone historical writing?*

Many, of course, like Berdyaev, in practice though not in form, deny the possibility of interpretation by providing one so clouded with abstractionisms that they, in fact, give up rational explanation. The classic examples of this school are the counterparts of Hegel in the field of history, namely Ranke and Lamprecht with their Idea of Spirit (reaching according to them its finest form in Prussia). The presence of this Idea cannot be accounted for and its character must be intuitively known; nevertheless, in some way the Idea serves as the unifying and dynamic force in world history. With such a philosophy of history dominant in western academic circles, it is no wonder that some fifty years ago a revolt should have occurred resulting in the repudiation of attempts at any systematic interpretation. Historians thus were transformed into something approaching monks cataloguing "pure facts," the selection of which was determined by their conditioning, and the presentation of which served as justification for that conditioning.

Where under such circumstances interpretation and synthesis were attempted at all the results were generally of three types: mechanical materialism tending to omit humanity; or an eclecticism in which was found any and all types of alleged causes usually accompanied by the denial of the possibility of assessing their relative importance; or some form of mysticism, of a denial of reason.

Thus, as examples of mechanical materialism may be mentioned the works of men like the late Edward P. Cheney, and the influential geographer and climatologist, Ellsworth Huntington. These tend toward the position, to quote Cheney, of denying any consequence to the "voluntary action . . . of

* F. M. Fling, *The Writing of History* (Yale University Press, 1920). See Mandelbaum in *Journal of the History of Ideas* (Jan., 1942), III, pp. 31-33.

individuals or groups of individuals, much less of chance," and so suffer from a fatal weakness.

That there is a relationship between natural environment and history, that is, the activities of human beings within that environment—a relationship somewhat analogous to that existing between the physical setting and staging of a play and the content and acting out of that play—is certainly true. Indeed, the fact is so obvious that this may account for its being frequently overlooked in the past, and individuals like Montesquieu, Henry T. Buckle, Ellen C. Semple and Huntington himself, have rendered important service in calling attention to this. But where one tends to make the natural environment a determining factor (not only in a relatively static, but also in a dynamic sense) in history to the practical exclusion of the human beings whose conduct constitutes that history, he is guilty of a fundamental error.

The eclectic approach is, in a formal sense, a compromise between mechanical materialism and mysticism. Fundamentally, it adheres to the impossibility of effectively generalizing historical phenomena, postulates an absolute separation between man's "will" and man himself in a real world, and denies that historical causes, if at all ascertainable, can be "graded according to the degree of their influence."* This theory of no theory recoils with horror from the danger, as Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., saw it in his *Age of Jackson,* of "being enslaved by a theory of the past, or by a theory of the future," but generally ends up with a liberalism whose aim, citing the same writer as a witness, is "to keep the capitalists from destroying" capitalism.

This hypothesis of multiple, equal, cumulative, and, in part, unknowable causes—in which, citing Gunnar Myrdal's *An American Dilemma,* "everything is cause *to* everything else"—results, as does a materialism bereft of humanity, in the denial of the possibility of any effective resolution of human injustices and oppressions. It leads to the belief, as expressed for example by the aforementioned Mr. Schlesinger, that "most important problems [are] insoluble."

A variant of this approach derives from that philosophy of no philosophy called pragmatism. Its disciples boast that the historians' task is to produce not truth, but usefulness. When one equates the physician and the faith-healer in terms of "truth"—i.e., achievement—as did James, the search for a valid historical theory will surely appear nonsensical. One may, how-

* R. L. Scuyler in *Political Science Quarterly* (1941), LVI, p. 37. For a systematic presentation of this approach, see Lewis Einstein, *Historical Change* (Cambridge University Press, 1946).

ever, dismiss pragmatism, for our purposes, with the words Oliver Wendell Holmes penned to his British friend, Sir Frederick Pollock, apropos of the then new intellectual fad: ". . . I always think of a remark of Brooks Adams that the philosophers were hired by the comfortable class to prove that everything is all right."

Finally, there is the increasingly influential school of mysticists themselves whose fundamental area of agreement is a scrapping of the concept of causation.

To replace it some have adopted Harold Temperley's "conflux of coincidences" idea and others have adopted the somewhat similar concept, originally propounded in another connection by Karl Pearson, of correlations. Thus, Professor Brinton, in a volume specifically renouncing the causative thesis, attempts a study of the French, English, American and Russian Revolutions with the idea of finding correlations or similarities amongst them which might offer some clue to a comprehensive understanding of complex historical events. Yet the similarities or correlations considered implicitly assume causation. How else can one account for those which are selected for comment? Thus, the author points to the fact that each of the revolutionary epochs was preceded by the renunciation on the part of a considerable number of intellectuals of the dominant values of the ancient society. But why point to this? Why not consider such similarities or correspondences as, let us say, the fact—if it be a fact—that Cromwell, Washington, Robespierre and Lenin were bald?*

This type of implicit assumption of significant similarities would appear to remove the "conflux of coincidences" or the theory of correspondences schools of history-writers from the concept of causation only verbally and actually to place them with the eclecticists.

Others, most notably Charles A. Beard and Alfred Vagts, have called, as we have seen, for the eradication of the words "cause" and "causality," and have decided that where a "complicated aggregation of events" is concerned the assignment of causation "is at best a highly dubious intellectual

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* Crane Brinton, *The Anatomy of Revolution* (N. Y., 1938, Norton). Note this on page 248: "We certainly must avoid the stupid question whether such symbols [revolutionary ideas] 'cause' any kind of social change. Here as almost everywhere in the social sciences the cart-and-horse formula of causation is useless and indeed misleading." But the same author's *The United States and Britain* (Harvard University Press, 1945) has much old-fashioned causation in it. Consult the excellent critique by R. B. Schlatter, in *Journal of the History of Ideas* (June, 1943), IV, pp. 349-67. See also Frederick J. Teggart's plea for "revision of inherited ideas concerning causation in history," in *ibid.* (Jan., 1942), III, pp. 3-11 and Morris R. Cohen's cogent reply, *idem.*, pp. 12-29.

operation." Unlike Teggart and Brinton, however, neither Beard nor Vagts has offered a specific substitute. Judging from Mr. Beard's latest volume,* he certainly has not discovered an alternative. For though that volume does avoid the use of the *word* "cause," it does not appear that the essential elements of the theory of causation have been in fact abandoned. Rather, a verbal escape from the necessities and implications of such a theory seems to have been fashioned with notably deleterious effects on both style and content.

Without generalization, synthesis, causation, it is not possible to write history. Men may turn to logography or to antiquarianism and spend their days pursuing "Researches into the American Army Button in the Revolutionary War," or describing a sleeve-link or a cartridge-box badge of the same period, as some have done, and be amiable gentlemen, honest and resourceful searchers for facts, but they remain experts on buttons, sleeve-links and badges and not, while in that capacity, historians.

Or, one may turn to another of Mr. Beard's alternatives—to chaos. Here nothing is impossible and everything will find a buyer. This is true whether it be Koestler's Yogi, Wylie's vipers, Orwell's pigs, Sartre's no exits, Wilhelm Reich's and Henry Miller's "orgastic impotence," or the pistol culture and blood science of Goebbels and Rankin.

Finally, one reaches absolute negation. There is, for example, a professor at Cambridge University, Mr. Michael Oakeshott, whose philosophy postulates not only no world but also no values. And all this appears in the name of analyzing the nature of history.

To this individual—as to Croce and Ortega y Gasset—"all history is contemporary history." To him—as to Beard and Vagts and increasing numbers—causation is a snare and a delusion. The idea of any kind of general causative process he rejects as too comprehensive. The idea of any specific causative process he rejects as too limited. The idea of grading causes he rejects as tending to abstract historical events and this "is a monstrous incursion of science into the world of history." The idea of a conflux of coincidences, or of correlation and correspondences he rejects as similarly abstracting certain events arbitrarily and as showing a kinship to the insidious theory of causation by that very act of abstracting.

What, then, remains? Of history, nothing. "History accounts *for* change

* Charles A. Beard, *American Foreign Policy in the Making, 1932-1940: A Study in Responsibilities* (Yale University Press, 1946). See M. Mandelbaum's remarks on Beard in *Journal of the History of Ideas* (Jan., 1942), III, pp. 30-50.

by means of a full account *of* change. . . . The method of the historian is never to explain by means of generalization but always by means of greater and more detail"—but apparently without a criterion of selection; army buttons will do as well as army movements. One is reminded of Darwin's comment to those who insisted that geologists should not explain but only catalogue: ". . . at this rate a man might as well go into a gravel-pit and count the pebbles and describe the colors."

That such a concept of history should be held by one who feels that, "A philosophy of life is a meaningless abstraction" is proper, for if all history is contemporary history and admits of no synthesis, one may choose only between "the practical apprehension of the futility of living" or "philosophic disillusion." As for the Cambridge scholar he chooses the last, for the first "carries with it melancholy, and may lead to suicide." But suicide dignifies life too much, it is an act involving choice; better philosophic disillusion, for this "is itself a disengagement from life to which suicide could add nothing relevant." Thus, and at last, "Philosophy is not the enhancement of life, it is the denial of life."* Such is irrationalism's ultimate rationalization!

II

Against mechanical materialism, eclecticism, and mysticism in any and every form the Marxist wages an implacable struggle. He adopts with Terence the proposition that nothing human is alien to himself, he asserts the existence of matter and the reality of the world, he insists that circumstances make man and man makes circumstances, he uses, cherishes science and devotes his philosophy to the enhancement, the fulfillment of life. To him the world is not a haphazard, meaningless abstraction; no, it is an "integral whole, in which things, phenomena are organically connected with, dependent on, and determined by, each other."** And not only are they interdependent and interconnected, they are also simultaneously moving, changing, dying, growing, appearing and disappearing, struggling, and withal, progressing.

With such a philosophy, existing because of, and in order to serve, humanity, that discipline of thinking which concerns itself exclusively with

* Michael Oakeshott, *Experience and Its Modes* (Cambridge University Press, 1933). See a critique of this work by G. C. Field, "Some Problems of the Philosophy of History," in *Proceedings of the British Academy, 1938*, pp. 64-65.

** Joseph Stalin, *Dialectical and Historical Materialism* (International Publishers, New York).

man and with his processes of existence in the past—that is, history—is indeed in Cachin's words, "the science of sciences."

Such a science must begin with man in this world, and it must begin with those activities of man which make possible his existence, that is, his productive activities. The latter concept is not confined in any narrow, mechanical or vulgar sense to involve merely money-making; it does not hold the filling of one's pocket-book to be the determining force in history (though, of course, the necessity of having something in one's pocket-book is not without influence!).

Within the concept, productive activities—the ways in which the means of life are obtained, the manner of bringing into being those things without which the existence and continuance of human society are impossible—are subsumed not only the natural environment and the instruments of production, but also the people themselves who, as people and as the bearers of an antecedent culture, are the indispensable agents of production as well as the consumers of all that is produced.

This, all this, is clearly what Marx and Engels intend to convey when they refer, as they sometimes do, to "economic conditions" instead of mode of production or productive activities. The fact shines forth from most of their writings, and we shall content ourselves by citing one quotation specifically pertinent:*

"What we understand by the economic conditions which we regard as the determining basis of the history of society [wrote Engels in 1894] are the methods by which human beings in a given society produce their means of subsistence and exchange the products among themselves (in so far as division of labour exists). Thus the *entire technique* of production and transport is here included. . . . Under economic conditions are further included the geographical basis on which they operate and those remnants of earlier stages of economic development which have actually been transmitted and survive. . . . Men make their history themselves, only in given surroundings which condition it and on the basis of actual relations already existing, among which the economic relations, however much they may be influenced by the other political and ideological ones, are still ultimately the decisive ones, forming the red thread which runs through them and alone leads to understanding."

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* Engels to Starkenburg, Jan. 25, 1894 in Marx-Engels, *Correspondence, 1846-1895* (International Publishers, N. Y., n.d.), pp. 516-17. Italics in original.

And that even when so defined economic conditions may be unduly stressed—that is, stressed to the exclusion of the reacting superstructure—particularly as a natural response to their previous minimization, is clear, and has been forcefully stated by Marxists from the days of Marx and Engels through those of Plekhanov, Lenin and Stalin. One example of this, too, may suffice: "Marx and I," wrote Engels in 1890, "are ourselves partly to blame for the fact that the younger writers sometimes lay more stress on the economic side than is due to it. We had to emphasize this main principle in opposition to our adversaries, who denied it, and we had not always the time, the place or the opportunity to allow the other elements involved in the interaction to come into their rights."*

Marxists hold, then, that it is the productive activities, and the experiences of the human beings responsible for those activities, that form the body of history, that constitute a history of peoples. They hold, also, that the societal relationships of those human beings, particularly in terms of their condition relative to productive forces—that is, their class position—play a key role in the acting out of the drama of history.

Because of the fundamental significance of the means of production, both natural and artificial, in terms of existence and in terms of the relative kinds of existence endured or enjoyed by people, the Marxist seeks to understand the modes of ownership and control of these means. He sees within these varying modes—primitive, slave, feudal, capitalist—certain patterns of class relationships, certain relationships in the possession and utilization of property, which differ within each mode and which give rise to conflicts therein. And he sees the resolution of those particular conflicts arising as a result of the smashing of the productive restrictions inherent in each of those modes. And he believes that the present conflict differs decisively, qualitatively, from all others because its resolution, postulating the common ownership of the instruments of production, makes possible the elimination of class conflicts by expropriating the exploiters, by bringing into being a society consisting entirely of producers. This is why, to Marxists, the triumph of the workers will inaugurate the *human* epoch of history, the epoch free from man's exploitation of man, the epoch making possible the full, uninhibited and unimpeded development of mankind.

And while the Marxist holds this result to be certain, he does so be-

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* Engels to Schmidt, Aug. 8, 1890, in *ibid.*, p. 477. Compare all this with the type of distortions to which attention has already been called.

cause of his reading of human history. That is, he feels it will certainly come because he is certain of man's response to the developing contradictions produced by a senile social order. *The certainty, therefore, is not independent of humanity, the result does not come in spite of people; no, the certainty depends upon them, the result will be achieved, can be achieved, must be achieved, only by them.* That is, in a word, Marxism differs decisively from mechanical materialism both as applied to the past and as applied to the present and the future.*

Observe, then, the ludicrousness—or viciousness—of those who charge Marxism with being sordid and having no room for ideas and ideals, with creating a man all of stomach. Nonsense. Marx and Engels dealt in ideas. To charge them with ignoring or deprecating ideas is analagous to charging an electrician with ignoring or deprecating electricity. It was Marx who said that when an idea seizes the masses they transform it into a mighty material force.

Ideas, customs, mores, taboos, faiths, prejudices, *once they exist,* exert influence, frequently profound influence, at times an influence so great as to override certain immediate and material considerations. But they are derivative, they are secondary. They spring ultimately from material relationships, interests and forces. They are, therefore, explicable, and they respond in any decisive sense, to similar relationships, interests and forces.

When one knows that but a century ago the majority of white inhabitants of the United States of America approved of the enslavement of other human beings, while today practically none does so nakedly, he cannot believe that this was because those people were all mentally retarded or morally perverted. No, it is because slavery was and had been for some two hundred years the normal mode of production over a vast area in America, as a result of which enormous vested interests and certain tenacious patterns of conduct and ways of life had associated themselves with this institution. That one hundred years ago it was condemned at all is due first of all to the activities of the Negroes themselves, the prime victims of that mode of production; to the necessities of that system to grow or smother, a necessity precipitating struggle; and to the development of a contrary system of production within the same nation, at a differing rate and with differ-

* On this question of inevitability see particularly: G. Plekhanov, *The Role of the Individual in History* (International Publishers, N. Y., 1940), pp. 11, 12; and John Somerville, *Methodology in Social Science: A Critique of Marx and Engels* (N. Y., 1938), p. 66; and his *Soviet Philosophy: A Study of Theory and Practice* (Philosophical Library, N. Y., 1946), p. 93.

ent—in large part, contradictory—economic, political and ideological needs.

Those, then, who honestly confuse Marxism with some type of mechanical materialism or vulgar economism and assert that to a Marxist ideas and ideals have no reality and no influence would appear to be confusing origin with significance. Upon this particular facet of the question the words of Stalin are especially apt:* "We have been speaking so far of the *origin* of social ideas, theories, views and political institutions, of *the way they arise,* of the fact that the spiritual life of society is a reflection of the conditions of its material life. As regards the *significance* of social ideas, theories, views and political institutions, as regards their *role* in history, historical materialism, far from denying them, stresses their role and importance of these factors in the life of society, in its history."

And just as historical materialism affirms the role of ideas so it points to the existence of so-called "accidents" and the contributions of personalities, of individuals, to history. Thus, Marx declared, in 1871, that history would be "of a very mystical nature, if 'accidents' played no part . . . acceleration and delay are very dependent upon such 'accidents'."** And no one who reads the historical writings of Marx and Engels themselves can fail to see that they are very far from ignoring the influence of individuals upon the course of events. Their writings are filled with evidences of this, with concern over the effects of "personal animosities, fears and hopes; prejudices and illusions; sympathies and antipathies; convictions, faith and principles" upon the course of events.***

But in dealing with such phenomena the conviction is present that as to "accidents," frequently a prolonged and detailed examination of the particular incident involved will materially lessen the significance hitherto attributed to "accident." Moreover the event itself and the direction of its impact are ensconced within the body of surrounding forces and relationships which limit and help determine the results.

Much the same considerations apply to the role of individuals. They, too, even the greatest among them, reflect the society and the circumstances which produced and sustained them and it is neither possible for them to propose nor is it possible for their society to accept that which is without relevance, without continuity, without meaning for their era and area. It is here

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* Joseph Stalin, *op. cit.*

** Marx to Kugelmann, April 17, 1871, in *Correspondence,* p. 310.

*** The quotation is from Marx's *Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (Kerr, Chicago, 1904), p. 24, having reference to the differences between the Legitimists and the Orleanists.

that the scientific problem lies today—given our present limits to knowledge —to discover as fully and as completely as possible the processes explaining the production of a Lincoln or a Lenin and their influence—that is, the degree of their acceptance by society. Biology offers a pertinent analogy: that science has not yet fathomed the causes of mutations and variations. It has not, however, abandoned its quest, and meanwhile labors to explain the survival within nature of particular variations.

Even should, however, the utmost clarity be attained in the spheres indicated concerning individuals and accidents this would not mean that all problems had been solved and that the complete and perfect truth might be laid bare subject to no additions, corrections, amendments and qualifications. Ignorance may very well remain not only as to questions which have already been posited, but also as to questions which have not presented themselves to man's brain as yet. This has been true in the past and there is every likelihood that it is true today.

Historical materialism, then, does not claim to be a cure-all for ignorance. It is not some magic wand to be waved only by the initiated who then find all scales lifted from their eyes. It is not some simple expedient miraculously resolving knotty problems, much less some shibboleth the invoking of which spontaneously produces desired "facts" in meaningful sequences.

How Marx and Engels scorned the simplicists!—those who "simply make use of the phrase historical materialism (and *everything* can be turned into a phrase), in order to get their own relatively scanty historical knowledge . . . fitted together into a neat system as quickly as possible. . . ."* Marx, who well knew the meaning of research, excoriated the "simpletons" who felt the answers were ready at hand and "whose inspiration comes 'from above.'" Exhausting and excruciating search was not for them: "Why should the innocents bother their heads about economics and history?" To them, "everything is so simple." Yes, "everything is so simple!" Marx exploded. "In their heads perhaps, the simpletons."**

But the fact of ignorance does not justify cynicism and escapism. Rather, may not an awareness of ignorance be the beginning of all wisdom, the beginning of science, the beginning of a disciplined logical pursuit of reality?

Charles A. Beard is grievously in error when he asserts that a science of

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* Engels to Schmidt, Aug. 6, 1890, in *Correspondence*, p. 473.
** F. Mehring, *Karl Marx* (Covici, Friede, N. Y., 1935), p. 238.

history is impossible and inconceivable because, among other things, given its existence, "it would be omniscience. It would reveal mankind enclosed in the iron framework of its own celestial destiny" and with all past, present, and future known "humanity would merely await its doom."*

This identification of science with certainty is Mr. Beard's act; it is not that of scientists. Rather they prefer to avoid "finality in statement" as being "out of place in science, especially today, when change and doubt are the very spirit of scientific thought, when the immutable elements are known to be mutable, when constancy in size and weight is no longer a necessary quality of the molecule and when the laws of thermo-dynamics are being questioned."**

We presume Mr. Beard would admit that celestial mechanics is not the only science. Moreover, the predictive capabilities of sciences vary with their nature. Thus, for example, neither geology nor paleontology is very much given to prediction into the future, but both are sciences—or, are they too to be dismissed by some such formula as: "All geology is contemporary geology"? And in terms of uncertainty one has not only the remaining riddles of biology and physiology, but disciplines such as meteorology, psychology and medicine, still largely characterized by their uncertainties, but withal sciences.

What effects subjection to bombardment may have on a particular individual psychology cannot as yet tell, whether it will rain in Detroit ten days from now meteorology does not yet know, when some individual will die medicine is unable to say. Yet great areas of knowledge are established, and such areas appear particularly when one leaves the individual or the singular and considers the mass or the general, a fact of considerable significance for the historian. Thus, on the basis of psychology it is possible to declare with some confidence what percentage of men, in a given society, will "crack" in combat, on the basis of meteorology it is possible to declare with some certainty how much rain will fall in Detroit or Delhi within any given ten day period, and on the basis of medicine (and always assuming that men and women do not decide to dispense with the services of physicians!) one may discover the life expectancy of segments of a population—Negro and white, male and female, poor and rich—within a given society. Notwithstanding areas of ignorance—in some cases enormous areas they are—all

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* C. A. Beard, *The Discussion of Human Affairs* (Macmillan, N. Y., 1936), p. 87.
** William Seifriz, *Protoplasm* (McGraw-Hill, N. Y., 1936), p. viii.

these are, then, sciences representing disciplines of cogent, correlated, explicable data.

Langlois and Seignobos were correct when they wrote fifty years ago that, "History, which is more encumbered with details than any other science, has the choice between two alternatives: to be complete and unknowable, or to be knowable and incomplete. All the other sciences have chosen the second alternative." That history *must* always be incomplete is true, for so much has perished without a record, and none of it may be recreated again. But the world and man do exist and have existed, the past has reality and much of it is knowable and is subject to examination and presentation. The task of the historian is to discover which scheme of approach to this reality is most fruitful and most illuminating. That frame of reference which holds in place coherently and meaningfully the total mass of the ascertainable past, or more of it than any other, is the instrument with which a science of history comes into being and may be developed and further perfected.

Marxists believe that historical materialism is this frame of reference, this tool, this guide. Let that be the question. It is on that level that the debate belongs; anything less than this dissolves into senseless chatter, cowardly escapism, or despicable cynicism.

What follows from all this for those who have examined and have chosen? What are the obligations of the Marxist historian, particularly so far as the United States is concerned?

Engels provided the answer in six words: "All history must be studied afresh. . . ."*

Are the responsibilities imposed by this truth clearly perceived? Do we mean what we say when we speak of the inseparability of the past, present and future? Do we mean what we say when we speak of the dignity, maturity, wisdom bestowed upon a people and a class who are in possession of their heritage, who understand from whence they derived in order to know where they are going and in order to get there? How shall the victim of amnesia fend for himself—and in a hostile world! Is this not a task worthy of the best amongst us and in us, and does it not require prodigious labors and numerous laborers? Something approaching a beginning has been made, but so much remains to be done. Now is the time and now is the need.

American history to date, almost in toto, is the work of non-Marxists

* Engels to Schmidt, Aug. 5, 1890, in *Correspondence*, p. 473.

and so we arrive at the necessity of re-writing it. But *we* must re-write it, at first hand. We must search out new meanings from established facts and from newly-uncovered facts. Our eyes must search for *sources,* and we must search out meanings from those sources.

The task, then, is not one of "interpreting" the standard American historians, of "making allowances," or shifting emphases. The task is one of mastering their works, and of supplanting them. This process can begin only when Marxist eyes go into their sources, and uncover and use sources never touched by them because of distate, disinterest or ignorance.

It would be well to examine at this point the problems of historical objectivity so incessantly raised by these historians. The question is a two-fold one. It involves in the first place the argument between those who differ as to whether or not an historian can be free of assumptions, prejudices, a certain set of beliefs largely guiding both his selection of data and his use of them. It involves in the second place the very much more profound question as to whether truth as such, good as such, exist or not.

As to the first quesion, the argument against so-called impartiality has been stated and restated innumerable times, and is overwhelming, but the conclusion generally drawn therefrom—the impossibility of an historical science—does not at all follow. Certainly Harry Elmer Barnes is correct when he declares "that no truly excellent piece of intellectual work can be executed without real interest and firm convictions," and that "the notion that the human intellect can function in any vital form in an emotionless and aimless void" is absurd.

Clearly, the challenge offered by men like Beard and Allan Nevins to be shown one "non-partisan" historical work, one work free of a subjective quality, in the sense in which this term is used by them, has not been and apparently cannot be successfully met. The very fact that man is the historian —or the natural scientist for that matter—guarantees the presence of his personality, his viewpoint, his interpretation, his selection—in a word, his work.

It is, then, unquestionably true—indeed, self-evident—as men like Turner and Beard have written, that to quote the latter, "any written history inevitably reflects the thought of the author in his time and cultural setting." When one says this he demonstrates the inseparability of the past and the present, *but he does not refute the reality of the past or the present.* Carl Becker, anticipating Beard, exclaimed, "O History, how many truths have

been committed in thy name!" and insisted that the past was a "screen upon which each generation projects its vision of the future." And Harold Temperley felt that when one showed the impossibility of an impartial history he had simultaneously banished the possibility of a science of history. He accepted this "resolution" of what appeared to him to be a dilemma with vigor and insisted that, therefore, the notion of objectivity was not even "desirable."*

And in the midst of assertions that "complete objectivity would be as undesirable as it would be impossible," one has appeals for "non-partisan history," by which is meant history with neither "Whig [n]or Tory spectacles."** In practice this materializes either in such writings as Oberholzer's notorious "non-partisan" accounts of labor struggles; or, in some more subtly worded weighing of "both sides of the question," with judgment —and history—suspended in ostentatious indecision, resulting in works that, like pendulums, are *full* of movement and yet motionless.

Unless one lifts himself above this intensely partisan "non-partisanship," unless one sees that though there have been "many truths," there yet may be truth, unless one disengages himself from an ethic premised upon man's exploitation of man, this question of subjectivity is indeed insoluble and one can either ignore it or accept it, but he cannot overcome it.

John Somerville has put this point extremely well:***

"The historical materialist believes in absolute right in the same way as he believes in absolute truth, as an objectively existing state of affairs to which our accumulating knowledge and practice become a fuller and fuller approximation, relative because there is something for them to be relative to. Belief in an absolute right [or truth, one may add] is evidently not the same thing as a belief that our knowledge of it is absolutely correct."

This, too, is an essential thesis of Lenin's *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism,* this concept of truth as absolute and knowledge as relative, this

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* According to Louis Gottschalk, because "good historical method requires that one gather with regard to any subject which one is studying, all the available data," the historian has a choice "between knowing more and more about less and less, or less and less about more and more." This, plus the allegedly ineradicable subjectivity of history, led Professor Gottschalk to declare that "history, in my opinion, cannot be scientific"—"The Scope and Subject Matter of History," in *University of Kansas City Review* (Winter, 1941), VIII, p. 79. But in all science, "a minute division of problems has been found the usual predecessor of complete solution; the small, the seemingly unimportant, the usually neglected must be considered in arriving at a well-rounded, whole idea. Thus science advances by dividing and conquering."—Morris Goran, "The Literati Revolt Against Science," in *Philosophy of Science* (July, 1940), VII, p. 382.

** Charles M. Andrews, in *American Historical Review* (Jan., 1925), XXX, pp. 243, 244.

*** Somerville, *Soviet Philosophy,* p. 91.

conviction that there is an objective yet dynamic reality to which knowledge, as it becomes more and more complete, more and more closely approaches.

Aligning oneself with the rising class, the class whose victory, at any given epoch, results in enhancing the productive capacities of mankind and thus in making possible the enrichment of life for more and more people, resolves not only the problem of what is good, it resolves the related one of what is true.* Only by this complete renunciation of the accepted values and premises of the bourgeoisie may one resolve that class's problem of an infinitely regressive relativism,** may one break the bonds of its subjectivity and create, in this sense, an objective history. Only by the fullest and most complete devotion to one's nation may one achieve internationalism; only by the fullest and most complete understanding of necessity does one arrive at freedom; and only by the fullest and most complete identification with humanity may one achieve objectivity.

Such a philosophy carries for its upholders the obligation indicated in Allen Johnson's remark that "the more daring and more promising the hypothesis the greater the obligation to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth." In our world the most daring and the most promising hypothesis is dialectical and historical materialism.

From those who use it, or attempt to use it, then, one must expect the most rigid adherence to the canons of science, the most uncompromising and relentless search for data and their meanings. This is preeminently a philosophy for life, and those who use it are affecting life. Thus it was that "Marx thought his best things were still not good enough for the workers and . . . regarded it as a crime to offer the workers anything less than the very best!"***

The Marxist conception of history is, as Engels declared, "above all a guide to study, not a lever for construction after the manner of the Hegelians."**** It is a powerful searchlight, so powerful that if improperly han-

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* Engels to Schmidt, Aug. 5, 1890, *Correspondence,* p. 474.

** For a Marxist approach to morality and "the good" see Howard Selsam, *Socialism and Ethics* (International Publishers, N. Y., 1943). As to those who raise the question, how does one know that such things as health, security and education are "good"?—one need not reply, for such individuals, and they are increasing in our society, require therapeutic treatment, not argumentation.

*** Engels to Schmidt, Aug. 5, 1890, in *Correspondence,* p. 473.

**** One must, of course, guard against anachronism, or distortions occasioned by hindsight, "so that later history is made the goal of earlier history, e.g., the goal ascribed to the discovery of America is to further the eruption of the French Revolution."—Marx-Engels, *The German Ideology* (International Publishers, N. Y., 1939), p. 38.

dled it may blind rather than illuminate. And it must be *used,* it must accompany the searcher, who, light in hand, diligently works at unearthing the truth.

From great responsibilities flow great opportunities. Faced with the challenge of mastering the past, comprehending the present and thus assisting in forging the future, what greater opportunity for service exists?

Ascending social classes are wedded to science. That the decadent ones now grasp at every repudiation of reason and make of intellectual despair a lucrative virtue is indicative of their impending doom. Does not the scripture tell us that the devil rages, "for he knoweth he hath but a short time"?

Two Pastorals

By EDWIN ROLFE

. .

I

The lonely evening crouches, darkens as the hour
ages toward dusk; waits in the cool shadows.
Last gold pigment gleams on gray shacks of the poor;
final sun retards the death of green in meadows.

No smoke rises, wraithlike or billowing,
from low silent houses. Herd and herd-keeper
alike drink the lengthening darkness, pillowed
luxuriously in coolness. It soothes the sleeper

fallen exhausted on field; it lulls the human
moaning of the crushed. Fallow, the deep red soil
flows upward to gray sky, and fireflies illumine
bark of scarred tree and hut's peeling wall.

The river flows like tallow, is yellow no longer.
The water is silent, except where dark branches
droop to dip foliage in the flow; and anger
of tired arms is cooled, bodies balanced on haunches.

The lonely evening crouches, poised: darkens, grows black.
Dusk deepens, mountain and field forfeit outline.
Faces merge softly: no white man draws back
when black approaches, humming, on the night-scene.

II

Now, on this bluest of mornings, we wake
to watch the winter receding before sun,
the light like lava down a shaken crater's
slanting side compelling conquest: oblivion

to snow preserved in last hidden corners,
water pooled in earth's deep crevices, bored
by beast for winter sleep. Death is no longer
in the air we breathe, nor frost in the fruit's core.

Now singing we rise to watch the infant deer
rocketing down wood lane, timid suspicious eye
hypnotized with green, counting as a faun does,
calculating growth-time before ripening.

Sharp beaks of sparrows stab the swollen soil,
still heavy with moisture where the last snow fell,
seeking fresh sustenance for flight; and all
living things follow them, bright with new hunger.

This is true season's end, true quest's beginning:
man discards artifice of ice, becomes artist
of natural summer, mature, eyes set on winning
the warm world entirely, to the farthest horizons.

Crossroad Madonna

By LEV SLAVIN

. .

THE VAGARIES OF WAR had brought us to the small provincial Polish town of Syedlez.

It is true that in those days, when the territory of the Polish Republic stretched only as far as the Vistula and its capital was in Lublin, even a dirty little hole like Syedlez had risen to the rank of important center.

A low-hanging sky, nearly always gray, with ragged little clouds scurrying across it; the melancholy clang of church bells; ancient cab drivers in long coats with tin buttons, sitting there waiting on the high seats of their dilapidated vehicles, with their long circus whips and the pimpled noses of accomplished drunkards; wild gusts of wind which flew here from the frozen banks of the Vistula to wail mournfully through the shells of bombed-out houses; dingy shops with pompous signs such as "Cosmos" or "New Babylon," their show-windows full of Moscow cigarettes, dried-up German shoe polish and tiny plastic crucifixes; the peeled walls of the town hall, which had seen no plaster since 1939 and were covered with fiery posters of the Peoples' *Rada Kraiyova,* calling for a redistribution of the large landowners' estates; cobblestone pavements, strewn with straw from passing peasant carts and dotted with oilstains from the cars—the "Zises" and "Dodges"—which kept rushing through to the Front; on Sundays, the traditional "promenades" of women who thought themselves stylish, with funny conical or mushroom-shaped hats on their heads and cork-soled shoes on their feet, escorted by the local dudes in fur-trimmed hunting jackets too narrow in the waist, with their Charlie Chaplin mustaches, their canes and their ambiguous smiles behind the backs of marching soldiers of the Dombrovski Division; Anna Louise Strong, the American writer and journalist, energetically striding through the streets of this obscure corner

of Poland—gray-haired, enthusiastic, experienced—and exclaiming: "Poland is like Spain was in the Civil War! Lublin is like Valencia, Prague like Madrid. But this place!"—and she would make a broad gesture with her hands, as though in excuse. Such was Syedlez in the winter of 1944.

The Commandant had assigned quarters to us—that is, to my friend the Major and myself—in the house of *Pan* Adam Barkovski, the local sausage king. It stood on the outskirts of the little city. Through our window we had a view of backyards, a broad meadow covered with flimsy snow, a small village on the slope of a hill, goats trying to graze around frozen puddles in the clayey soil, an endless line of telegraph and telephone poles which led to the Front.

Just opposite our gate was the junction of three highways—to Lublin, to Brest-Litovsk and to Warsaw. The last city was still in the hands of the Germans.

At the crossway of the three roads stood a stone Madonna—as tall as the color-sergeant of a Guard regiment. A *Madonna Viatoria,* a goddess of the highways, a patroness of travelers, an all-merciful mother of the crossways. The unknown sculptor had formed her rough, large-nosed features in a languorous, somewhat sorrowful smile. No pompous masses were ever held here, the Cardinal Bishop did not deign to honor the Madonna with his high presence. She was a wayside deity, beloved of wandering merchants and of water carriers, worshipped by passing shoemakers and pickpockets, who preferred to pray for forgiveness of their daily sins at the feet of this plebeian Madonna.

Her head benevolently bent, crowned with a mitre and slightly chipped by the fragments of a two-hundred pound bomb, the common people's Madonna looked down smilingly on small boys praying for good marks in arithmetic or penmanship on their way to school; on the laborers dragging squealing pigs to *Pan* Barkovski's yard from the neighboring villages; on theology students in their mud-flecked brown cassocks and brittle starched white collars, hurrying past on their way to the newly opened theological faculty at Lublin; on smartly dressed young ladies who came to Syedlez from Praha-Varshavskaya, to effect complicated commercial transactions concerning the exchange of manufactured wares for foodstuffs, and who in summertime stopped to lay wreaths of roadside flowers at the feet of the Holy Virgin.

All these passers-by slipped *zlotis* of the democratic Lublin Govern-

ernment into the spacious tin collection box fixed to the stone robes of the Madonna. Every evening the box was emptied by the warden of the Prince Chartoriski chapel, of which this roadside deity was a filial branch. At her feet burnt the tiny flame of an eternal lamp. When darkness came, a Polish militiaman, reverently removing his "confederate" cap and crossing himself devoutly, would place a dark blue shade over the lamp, in conformity with blackout regulations.

Next to the Madonna was the post of our military transport service. Here stood a traffic regulator of the renowned 15th Motor Transport Division, expertly channeling the noisy stream of traffic along the three roads. Generally this post was occupied by Corporal Tatyana Sapozhkova, a tall, red-cheeked, hefty girl from Moscow. On her powerful bosom hung medals for the Defense of Stalingrad and of Sevastopol, and the badge allotted to voluntary construction workers of the Moscow subway during the war. Unruly flame-red curls kept tumbling out from under her perky garrison cap. Sometimes at night, when the batteries of her flashlight gave out, the Corporal would bend over the Madonna's pedestal to check the oilstained documents of military drivers by the light of the eternal lamp.

Thus they stood there side by side, the two rulers of the road, one clad in a broad mantle of stone, the other in a stiff and spacious army issue raincoat of impregnated sailcloth. The resemblance between them was so striking and amusing that I once drew the Major's attention to it, and he promptly sat down and wrote a little gem of a poem about it.

Pan Adam Barkovski's two-story house was inhabited by his large family. Proud of their wealth, the Barkovskis considered themselves as belonging to the highest "magnates" of the town.

Pan Adam, the genius of the clan, was a small, stout man with black streaks of eyebrows and mustache on a round, always smiling face. His smile was a tense spasm of politeness which created an expression of benevolence, but behind which, it seemed to us, lurked calculation, sentimentality and treachery. Our suspicions were partly confirmed by rumors concerning the origin of *Pan* Barkovski's wealth. Prior to the German occupation his house had belonged to a Jew. In the frames of the doors were still the holes from which the "mezzuzahs" had been torn out—those miniature scrolls of the Torah, to which religious Jews attribute holy, even miraculous qualities, and which are supposed to bring good luck to the house. Now everywhere there hung and stood little stone crucifixes, sculptured or en-

graved images of the Holy Virgin of Ostrabrama or Chenstokhovo—all the lesser requisites of Polish Catholicism. In the rest of its furnishings—its plush tablecovers, its padded settees, its multitude of crocheted antimacassars and its lithos of Italian landscapes—it was the same eternal middle-class dwelling that can be found the world over.

Strange as it may seem, the sausage king's prosperity had grown considerably during the war, owing to the savings which were entrusted to him by Jews who were being driven away to the ghetto. Very few of these unfortunates were alive—only those who had managed to escape or been set free by the speed with which our Soviet tanks had cut into German-held territory. Those who were thus miraculously saved came to *Pan* Barkovski to claim their money.

Through the thin wall which separated us from the owner's apartment, we could hear the sound of angry discussions. Curses were mingled with pleas. And afterwards, through the window, we would see weeping people walk slowly away, showering Biblical curses on our house. *Pan* Barkovski would stand in the gate, laughing it all off with a jovial air.

The Barkovskis had divided production and sales equally between themselves. While *Pan* Adam would work till late hours of the night in his "factory," *Panje* Genevieva, his wife, sleeves rolled back over her well muscled arms, sold his wares in her own shop, situated in the center of the town, not far from the monument to Pilsudski, with the spread wings of its plaster eagle.

Their eldest daughter, *Panje* Irena, had once studied in a university and had even displayed literary tastes. At least, for one whole winter she had assiduously frequented one of the Warsaw cafes, where well known writers and journalists were wont to gather. By judiciously choosing her seat, she could get a rather good view of a famous poet's features, and by straining her ears she could even catch some of the breath-taking paradoxes pronounced by a famous novelist. With the help of the local hairdressers who transformed her thin, freckled face into what she considered to be a perfect resemblance to a Hollywood star, she found herself a husband. *Panje* Irena relaxed. Now she spent her days reclining on a sofa and studying the doings of high European society in back numbers of prewar magazines.

Sometimes the catching strains of the mazurka, "In every Polish peasant there lives a Polish soul," would reach our ears. That meant that *Panje*

Irena's husband, Doctor Jan Kopacz, had arrived from the Front to fetch medical supplies. He was a tall, lanky and noisy young man, a typical peasant lad. In his exuberance there was a certain lack of real assurance—his mother had been a farm-helper in the Vilna district, and it was not customary to mention Doctor Kopacz's parents in the Barkovski household. After only a couple of drinks Kopacz would get expansive and knock on our door. Boringly and at great length he would explain to us, his "Soviet comrades," that he had sold his "free soul of a Polish peasant for a secure life as the sausage king's son-in-law."

Pan Adam would repeat that he had had no luck with his sons. The youngest, Richard, had seemed to be such a meek, obedient boy. But of late he had become a source of worry to his parents: to be exact, from the moment when the Soviet armies had liberated Syedlez. The wave of noble enthusiasm which had swept the Polish people had carried Richard into the ranks of the Koskiuszko Division, which had fought its way over the Bug River shoulder to shoulder with the Red Army. After consulting his wife, *Pan* Adam went to Lublin, taking with him a suitcase full of banknotes and hams. He managed to find Richard a job as chauffeur to a Polish colonel of the supply service. But Richard soon had enough of driving around the noisy Lublin streets. He got himself transferred to a combat unit, became one of the best scouts in his outfit, and completely exasperated his father by joining the Polish Socialist Party.

The eldest son, Fabiusz, the "heir apparent," had long been considered lost. His portrait hung in the former nursery: a narrow face with a high, pure forehead, eyes with a far-away, fanatical, shy and melancholy expression in them, a delicate but firm fold to the lips.

We were told Fabiusz's story. The war had caught him in Warsaw. Without a moment's hesitation he volunteered for the barricades. Together with many other millions of Poles, he waited in vain for the British help which never came. He was taken prisoner. The Germans sent him to Osvieczim. Having distributed enormous bribes to the German authorities and to Polish renegades, *Pan* Adam managed to reach the Osvieczim region. There he learned that Fabiusz had been transferred to Buchenwald, then to Maulthausen, and then somewhere else. His trail was definitely lost among the numerous extermination camps spread over the territory of the General Governorship, the Wartenland and the Old Reich. Ever since then a weekly mass was held for him in the Saint Stanislas Church of Syedlez. And *Pan*

Adam always wore a black armband on his sleeve, even when busy killing pigs in the little slaughterhouse that adjoined his factory.

The former nursery was now occupied by the local unit of the 15th Soviet Motor Transport Division. Corporal Tatyana Sapozhkova, who was in charge, kept the room in exemplary order, considering this to be a most important point of honor for soldiers of the Red Army stationed in foreign countries. Not a single article of the owner's belongings had been moved from its customary place. But now tommy guns had been hung up over the beds, a portrait of Stalin pinned to the wall, and a pile of dumbbells neatly stacked up in a corner. The Corporal, who was something of an athlete, used them for her morning setting-up exercises.

Pan Barkovski was quite satisfied to have soldiers stationed in his house, for nights in Syedlez were far from peaceful. Wild shooting would often break out in the streets, and from time to time there would come loud knocks on the heavy gate. Then *Pan* Adam would slide back the bars with trembling hands. A most unprepossessing face with a short mustache would appear in the slit, and a voice heavy with menace and alcohol would say: "We are a flying detachment of the Polish National Army. Here is a receipt acknowledging that *Pan* Barkovski has voluntarily paid us five thousand *zlotis.* Please hand it over in large bills—we have to be going, we can't lose time counting."

And the next morning the millionaire would pour out his tale of woe to us. "I really have to pay two kinds of taxes: one to the official Government in Lublin, and a secret tax to the Government in London. Really a most disorderly state of affairs, gentlemen. . . ."

In those days a small band which called itself a "division of the Polish National Army" operated in the surrounding forests, a happy hunting ground for such outlaws. The tactics of the "division" consisted in shooting from around corners and organizing hold-ups. Occasionally they would kill some active member of a labor union, or some democratically minded priest on his way home late at night from administering the last sacraments to a dying person. They reported every such act by clandestine radio to London, describing as a feat of patriotic valor what was in reality merely a dastardly murder.

Some nights the Major and I would take a walk before going to bed. We used to stroll through the dark streets of the so un-Russian town, discussing the latest issue of the Moscow *Literary Gazette.* The critics'

report on some new anthology published in Tambov would plunge us into heated discussions. We would interrupt each other and make wild gestures in the dark with our hands—in which we prudently clasped our pistols. The wind from the Vistula howled among the ruins. Somewhere from the neighborhood of Pulaski Street would come the sound of firing—Polish soldiers from the MP command were giving chase to diversionists. And pleasantly refreshed by our literary debate, we would go home and sleep soundly.

For the moment things were very calm at the Front. For several months the front line had been stabilized along the Vistula. The yearly "Day of the Artilleryman" had been celebrated in great pomp. All energies had apparently been concentrated on organizing the exhibition of drawings and paintings by army artists, held in the wooden barracks at Minsk-Mazovezki. Some of the exhibits were indeed worthy to hang in any European picture gallery. And all these efforts were not in vain: for our Intelligence Service reported that the Germans were beginning to believe the Russians had settled down definitely to position warfare, evidently having convinced themselves that the German positions were impregnable. Marshal Zhukov took extraordinary pains to strengthen this impression by a series of well planned bits of misinformation. At the same time, with typical merciless thoroughness, he was preparing the terrific blow to be launched in January. Several allegedly secret, important troop movements, information about which was carefully allowed to trickle out, added the final touch to the wrong picture German Intelligence was getting.

In the meantime real winter set in at last. It was a severe winter, almost a Russian one. The Vistula was covered by a deep, solid layer of ice. The two tiny assembly areas that looked no larger than a dime on the maps, which had been wrested from the Germans on the western side of the river, lay under deep snow. It was at the limit of one of these areas, close to Pulava, that Fabiusz Barkovski unexpectedly appeared on a dark January night.

He had managed to escape from the death camp, in the company of two Russian airmen. Moving only by night, they had worked their way across Brandenburg and reached our front lines. Fabiusz's pale face and incoherent speech made our scouts think he was another "psychiatric case." And it is quite possible that the suffering he had been through had indeed somewhat

affected his brain. He was sent to a village where units of the Second Polish Army were stationed.

There he found an old friend, one Joszi Zvolinski, a happy young lad, now the regimental priest, but formerly the right half-back of the "Polonia" football team. And what was more, he was the brother of Zosya Zvolinski, who, it had been rumored, was Fabiusz's fiancee.

Joszi installed Fabiusz comfortably in his folding cot. Not for long, however, A couple of hours later he woke him up and explained that the order to go forward had just been received. It was the fateful day of January 13, 1945.

Fabiusz immediately declared he wanted to join the regiment and take part in the attack. But the doctors whom Father Zvolinski called in shook their heads. Fabiusz was too weak; he must first rest a few days at home.

"You'll catch up with us on the road to Berlin," said the priest gaily.

Fabiusz was supplied with identity papers, and hoisted into a truck which was going East with a load of tires to be vulcanized. The Lieutenant in charge, after a look at Fabiusz, mercifully gave up his seat in the driver's cab to him.

Towards evening the truck reached Kaluszin. Here Fabiusz had to get out—the truck was going no further.

He stood at the edge of the Warsaw highway. The traffic was dense. But everything was moving West, not East. Having stood there for half-an-hour, Fabiusz went to the guardhouse of the Service Command. A young Sergeant, with a shrewd and care-worn face, shook his head decidedly.

"Where to?" he said in an appalling mixture of Polish and Russian. "To Syedlez? No—you can see for yourself, there's nothing going East. Everything's going West, now!" He laughed happily.

Fabiusz set out on foot. After all, it was not more than twenty miles to Syedlez. And he would undoubtedly be able to thumb a ride some time soon, with all this traffic.

He felt quite strong. He was really experiencing that strange exaltation which sometimes accompanies great exhaustion and is indeed one of its symptoms. In his mind he kept picturing his return home. . . . His father would come to meet him. With his usual polite smile, he would begin in the usual smooth tones (which he used even in talking to beggars): "The *Pan* wanderer will be so good as to excuse me, but I have nothing to. . . ." And then he would recognize his son, and cry out: "Holy Virgin, Queen of Poland! It's

Fabiusz!" And then all of them would come running—Mamma, and Irena, and that boy Richard, and Doctor Jan, and Aunt Casimira, and the workers from the slaughterhouse; there would be laughter, and tears, and a hot bath with pine needles, and endless questions, and clean sheets, and a *Te Deum,* and a cold suckling pig in aspic, and then a wonderfully warm bed in his own home. . . .

Fabiusz strode on and on, his head bent into the howling wind. It was a strange kind of wind, which came from different directions: sometimes it would blast his face, then his back, then buffet him from the side. But it hampered his progress, no matter from which side it blew. In the fields to both sides of the road it whirled up the snow, and Fabiusz was afraid that if he stopped he would be frozen to death. He kept on stolidly. His legs felt cold and hard as ice, but there was a burning flame in his head.

Then something very disagreeable happened: the pieces of linen a Russian soldier had given him the night before to wrap his feet in, instead of socks, wore through completely, and his soles began to smart terribly. Yet he did not lose courage. He was treading on familiar soil, the soil he had known from childhood. Everything around him—the wind, the crunching snow underfoot, the darkening blue sky, the fat gray and black crows—all this was his own Poland, free at last.

Darkness fell. There were even more cars and trucks, now. They came in endless long columns, two and even three abreast. From time to time headlights would be switched on for a second, and one could see the snowflakes swirling in the beams of light. Fabiusz had to get off the highway and walk along its side, ankle deep in the snow. Sometimes he would stumble and fall, then pick himself up and plod eastwards again. He could catch the hum of soldiers' voices from beneath the canvas hoods, as the great trucks rushed past him. The roar of the engines blended into what sounded like the continuous neighing of countless horses. Had Fabiusz not been so exhausted, he might have caught the significance of the mighty westward flow of men and weapons, and perhaps his adventurous spirit would have urged him to join it. But his exhausted brain was a blank.

There was only one thought in his burning head: not to stop. For to stop meant death. And on and on he went, blood oozing through his tattered shoes, to freeze immediately into crimson icicles, which cut painfully into the flesh of his chafed feet.

At times it seemed to him that he had been walking along this road for

days and days, through this endless snow, past the onrushing hot and rumbling machines. And then it would seem to him that he had only just started out, that he was still full of strength, that his feet did not hurt in the least. But at such moments he would suddenly realize with a shock that he was lying stretched out full length in the snow. And he would stagger to his feet again, and plod on.

Suddenly a terrible fear would grip his heart. It seemed to him that he was standing still, and only the trucks were moving as they rushed past him, standing there at the edge of the road. He would have to look down at his feet steadily for a few seconds, until he would convince himself his legs were really moving. To convince himself completely, he would look back over his shoulder: he could see the tracks he left in the snow—real fresh foot-tracks. And reassured, he would plod on further, eastwards, toward his home. . . .

At length he was halted by a patrol. They were Polish soldiers. While one of them examined his documents, the other one held him up, otherwise he would have fallen.

"You'll freeze to death, friend. Here—come into our guardhouse and get warm a bit. . . . What? How far to Syedlez? Why, you're there—this is it!"

"Saved. . . ." muttered Fabiusz.

He staggered through the streets to his father's house. The thought that he was saved gave him fresh strength. He shook the gate violently. The metallic clang of the old bars was familiar to him. He knocked at the gate again and again. Squeals came from the yard—his father must be slaughtering pigs. He liked to do it late at night. Then a dog began to bark.

"Topsy! Topsy!" called Fabiusz.

It seemed to him he was yelling at the top of his voice. In reality he was merely whispering. He tried to knock on the gate again—it was getting difficult, now. His hands would not obey him. He had to take a rest, to muster his strength, then try again.

Finally he heard footsteps in the yard. And then a voice came through the gate—a so familiar voice, soft, deep, with polite intonation. . . .

Tears of joy rolled down Fabiusz's cheeks. His swollen tongue tried to form the words: "Papa, this is Fabiusz . . . Your Fabiusz. . . ." But instead of words, all that came from his lips was an inarticulate groan.

Behind the gate his father coughed politely, and then suavely informed him that he already had had the great pleasure and honor of contributing

a certain sum towards patriotic needs only yesterday, a fact proved by a signed receipt in due form in his possession, and that for the purpose of financial negotiations it would be better for the *panie* terrorists to come when they were sober, and anyway it would be better for them to return tomorrow, but that now he had the honor of respectfully greeting them and wishing them a good night, and would they please excuse him. Probably he even made a bow, behind his solid gate. And then Fabiusz heard his receding footsteps, and his polite little coughs fading away in the distance.

Fabiusz understood that he was very close to death now. He tried to knock on the gates a couple of times more, then gathered up his last strength and staggered over to the other side of the street. There stood the house of his rich maiden aunt, Casimira Barkovski. Everybody knew she spent part of the night in prayer. There was a chapel in her house, and she always had her own private chaplain living with her, usually not too advanced in years.

Fabiusz could hardly knock on the wicket. The feeble noise he made was drowned in the sound of a "Te Deum laudamus," sung by a powerful duet; a man and a woman were joining their voices in a melody of angelic purity and sweetness. He tried to rattle the wicket, cursed, groaned. But all the answer he could get was "Te Deum laudamus." They could not hear him.

He dragged himself along the street, knocking at every gate. He knew everybody who lived here—they were all relatives or friends. Here, surrounded by a garden, was the house belonging to *Pan* Penksna—an old gentleman with the beaming pink face of a child and a silvery little pointed goatee, who owned the shop with articles of religion, which always smelled so sweetly of dried cypress wood. Here was the house of *Pan* Marcinek, the old legionnaire—yes, the two alabaster lions on each side of the entrance were still there, with their grease-stained backs, where urchins kept sitting on them. How the *Pan* Captain would swear at them, showing his crimson face with the long walrus mustache at the window! That was how schoolboys learnt bad language. . . . And this was the house of *Pan* Zvolinski—the father of Joszi and Zosya. . . . Fabiusz had fallen in love with Zosya, and proposed to her at the New Year's Eve ball at the Ursuline Sistership. And then came the houses of the Brzesinskis, the Senkovskis, the Sbijinskis, the Tachalskis. In most of them nobody even replied to Fabiusz. In others, voices from behind locked doors assured him that the money would be paid tomorrow, without fail. In one house someone threatened to turn the dogs loose on him. . . .

The wind had died down. The snow had ceased to fall. And even the moon was shining. Everything around glittered in the moonlight. Suddenly Fabiusz saw a sight no one had seen in Europe for five years: in the midst of the darkness, the windows of a large house lit up in a blaze of light. Gleaming squares shone on the snow. And he could even catch the strains of faint music—flutes and violins, playing a weird, delicate melody.

A wild thought flashed through his reeling brain: the war must be over, the Germans had surrendered! And someone was giving a ball here, to celebrate the end of the war. He glanced at the other houses—all were dark: evidently the inhabitants hadn't heard the good news yet.

He shuffled over to the illuminated house. He was so weak that he fell several times in the slush left by passing cars. But each time he got to his feet again and came closer to those shining windows.

When he reached the middle of the street, the light suddenly disappeared. In front of him was a blackened, bare ruin, with fallen-in roof and holes in the walls. The moon! That was it—of course, the moon had done it. . . . The moonbeams had filled the burnt-out house through the gaping roof, spilling out through the empty windows. They had filled everything with their magic glitter. And there was no music anymore, only the low howling of the wind through the ruins. Fabiusz turned towards the moon, shook his trembling fist at it. The moon hid behind the clouds, snow began to fall, everything became misty again.

And yet in the darkness Fabiusz made out a figure. It towered above him, black against the dark sky—that sky which even in the darkest night is still a shade lighter than the earth. There was something vaguely familiar in the outline of the figure: the sloping shoulders, the slightly bent head, the flow of heavy robes around the voluminous body. And Fabiusz recognized it with a start: of course—the Madonna! *Madonna Viatoria,* protectress of wanderers, the merciful mother of the crossways!

Fabiusz had become used to seeing her there, in that spot, since childhood. The Kind Virgin had always been good to him, in those days. He had no trouble in obtaining victories in street fights from her, or generous presents from his parents on his namesday—Saint Sylvester day. And she had always helped him to keep his boyish transgressions secret—a theft of sausages from his father's shop, a couple of windowpanes broken by lucky shots from his air-rifle.

Later, when he grew up, Fabiusz had somewhat disdained the Madonna.

But perhaps she had not forgotten him yet? After all, he had not perished in all these years of wandering, had not been killed by a Fascist bullet, had not succumbed under the rubber clubs of the Nazi guards, and had made his way back to his native town. But here the protection of the Holy Virgin seemed to be abandoning him. Having reached his father's house, he was dying almost at its threshold. His frozen chest could only breathe with difficulty now.

He dragged himself to the statue's pedestal. He laid his head on the Madonna's feet, and began to mutter a prayer. It was not a prayer learnt from a prayer-book. No, he used his own words, he prayed as he used to in his childhood, when he believed so firmly.

"Dost Thou remember me, O Holy Mother? It is I, Thy Fabiusz. See, I have returned. They did not recognize me. They would not let me in, to share their warmth. But Thou canst warm me, with Thy heavenly fire! *Salvum fac Fabium!* But if it be not necessary that I live, then I shall die here, at Thy holy feet. Forgive me, O Queen of Heaven! I have nothing to offer Thee. I have no money. I bring Thee the only thing I have: my life. But I have very little of it left. . . . Only a very little of it, now. . . . Take it. . . ."

Thus he muttered on and on, his lips glued to the feet of the Madonna of the Crossroads, a wanderer about to embark on a very distant voyage.

And suddenly he felt a tremor go through the feet of the Heavenly Mother. Yes, they moved—as though in an effort to escape from his clutching arms. In superstitious awe, he looked up.

He saw a miracle: the statue was slowly bending down toward him. A reverent fear chilled his heart. Could he be dead already? But no, it was impossible. Everything around him was just the same as always. It could not be that in the other world there was the same dirty snow on the road, the same stench of gasoline in the air, and the same squealing of pigs from the yard across the highway. "No—I'm still alive," thought Fabiusz. Two tears of relief and awe rolled from his eyes, and immediately froze on his eyelids.

The miracle continued. The Madonna threw back her stone mantle, and Fabiusz felt himself picked up by two arms of superhuman strength and carried away. It seemed to him that he was flying over the earth, somewhere high up in the sky. Then he dimly saw the gates of his father's house

swing open before the Madonna, as though she possessed an invisible key to them. . . .

Fabiusz realized he was in a large, bright room. He glanced around him, and recognized the old nursery he knew so well. The stone Madonna was coming toward him, as though floating above the floor. It was strange to see Her here, amongst the so familiar furnishings of the room—the chairs, the washstands. She seemed almost a living being—he could almost see the veins under the thin skin of her face. Only the golden halo around her head betrayed her holiness. It seemed to him that she was surrounded by a bevy of other heavenly creatures—evidently angels who formed her seraphic suite. They seemed to exchange low words in an unknown melodious tongue—and this did not seem strange to Fabiusz, for how could he be expected to understand the language of angels. . . .

When he came to, the next morning, Fabiusz found himself surrounded by his entire family. Doctor Jan Kopacz, his face puckered up in an attempt to look important, was counting his pulse. The room was full of relatives and friends. All had been anxiously waiting for him to regain consciousness. Nobody could understand how he had come there. And there was nobody to ask about it, because the traffic regulators of the 15th Motor Transport Division had moved out during the night so quickly that they had no time to warn anyone in the house. It was the unforgettable day of January 15, 1945, when the entire Byelorussian Front moved forward in the all-out advance to the Oder.

Seeing that Fabiusz had opened his eyes, *Pan* Adam burst into tears. All rushed to the young lad's bed. In a feeble voice, he told them of what he had been through. When he told them about the Red Army soldier who had given him the pieces of linen to wrap his feet in, the sausage king cried that he would have a mass said for the health of the unknown kind-hearted Russian. The description of how he had so unsuccessfully knocked at his father's gate caused a fresh outburst of tears among his audience.

"Old fool that I am!" cried *Pan* Adam, beating his breast. "But tell me, my *kochannye,* who opened the gate and brought you here?"

A tremor ran over Fabiusz's features. Everybody in the room fell silent.

"She did!" said Fabiusz at last—and pointed through the window.

All of them turned their heads to see what he was pointing at. They saw the statue of the Madonna of the Crossroads. She stood there as she had always stood. A sugary coat of snow covered her benevolently bent head,

and sinless little birds hopped about on her, leaving little crosses marked in the white covering. And the only thing that was new about the Madonna was that she was alone. For the first time in many days red-cheeked Corporal Sapozhkova did not stand at her side, clad in her canvas coat and waving her signal flags.

And Fabiusz told his astounded family of the miracle. There was a reverent silence in the room, which lasted for several minutes. Then a sort of religious exaltation grasped the audience. *Pan* Barkovski declared that the miracle was no chance occurrence, but a reward to the Barkovski family for their virtues, of which the highest were their patriotic ardor and the high commercial integrity of the firm. Aunt Casimira exclaimed she would let the Holy See hear of the miracle; her companion, a tall young priest, said he felt sure the Vatican would recognize the authenticity of the Divine Intervention, in the name of the Glory of The Almighty, the Salvation of Souls, and the Furthering of Faith. Old *Pan* Penksna declared he would have the most skilled carvers make small images of the Madonna of the Crossroads out of ivory, a good stock of which he had been hiding for better times.

Only Doctor Jan Kopacz remained silent. Then he coughed discreetly and muttered:

"I think, *panovye,* that I can explain this in a more, so to speak. . . ."

But under the icy stare of the sausage king, he broke off abruptly and said nothing further. Then he went out to the dining room, hastily gulped down two glasses of *vodka,* and made his way upstairs, to the room which the Major and I occupied, to pour out his scepticism of a free-thinker before us —his "Soviet comrades."

We left that night with the advancing army. On January 17, in an armored car, we crossed the ice of the Vistula into liberated Warsaw. There, amidst the ruins of Saksonskaya Square, standing on a pile of rubble, was Corporal Tatyana Sapozhkova, regulating the dense, muddled stream of traffic with her usual ability.

We were to see her often again, all along the line of our advance—in Lodz, in Kutno, in burning Posen. And later, in the spring, on the other bank of the Oder, amidst the unimaginable ruins of Kustrin, in Frankfurt, in Landsberg, in Malsdorf. And, the last time, we caught a glance of her on May 2, in Berlin.

Her familiar statuesque figure towered above the Alexanderplatz square, and hundreds of tattered Germans stood around on the sidewalks, staring

at her with wondering eyes, watching the powerful gestures of her hands, in which she clutched the signal flags, as she deftly directed columns of army trucks along the bombed-out streets of the German capital.

At that same moment, hundreds of miles away, under a low-hanging, eternally gray sky, a crowd of reverent inhabitants, standing around the Madonna of the Crossroads, were celebrating the miracle which had been granted to the virtuous firm of the local sausage king.

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