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1949

# masses & MAINSTREAM

*n this Issue:*

lerbert Aptheker

Lloyd L. Brown

Israel Epstein

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Jacob Lawrence

Max March

Carl Offord

Samuel Sillen

Gwyn Thomas

*W. E. B. DU BOIS*

TORM OVER LYSENKO *by Louis Aragon*

**731** means DANGER to *Masses & Mainstream* in the month of February, 1949. Because 731 subscriptions to *M & M* expire with this issue. Failure to renew promptly, at a time when the magazine needs the fullest support of its readers, would be a serious blow to *M & M*. This appeal is addressed particularly to the 731. But it is also directed to all *M & M* readers. We urge you to subscribe yourself, and to help gain new readers for *M & M*.

And to those who have not yet made a contribution to *M & M's* annual financial drive: please don't put off the help we need so much today. Forward your contribution now.

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—The Editors.

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# masses & MAINSTREAM



## *February, 1949*



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# *AMONG THE CONTRIBUTORS*

WALTER BERNSTEIN, author of *Keep Your Head Down,* was a staff correspondent during the war for *Yank,* the Army weekly.

ALVAH BESSIE, author of *Men in Battle* and *Bread and a Stone,* is one of the Hollywood Ten.

ISRAEL EPSTEIN is the author of *The Unfinished Revolution in China.*

MILLARD LAMPELL is the author of *The Long Way Home* and *The Lonesome Train,* which has just been given its 100th concert performance in Prague. His novel, *The Hero,* will be published by Messner in the Spring.

JACOB LAWRENCE has illustrated Langston Hughes' new volume of poetry, *One-Way Ticket,* which is reviewed in this issue.

MAX MARCH is a music teacher and critic.

CARL OFFORD, a Negro writer, author of the noxel, *The White Face,* served in the E.T.O. during the war.

WINTHROP PALMER is an associate editor of *Voices,* a poetry quarterly published in Brattleboro, Vermont.

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*Cover:* The portrait of W. E. B. Du Bois is by Bill Morris. This month marks the 81st birthday of the eminent Negro leader. Dr. Du Bois is now Vice-Chairman of the Council on African Affairs.

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# MY PEOPLE *and* MY PARTY

*by* LLOYD L. BROWN

THERE were not many Negroes in the state where I was born and raised. Although Minnesota is proud that it was first to answer Lincoln's call for volunteers to crush the slaveholders' rebellion, my people—railroaders, stockyard workers, waiters and domestics—were not beyond the reach of the long, cruel arm of Jim Crow. It stretched up the great river's valley through which the old folks had come as fugitives; it touched our lives and marked us off for insult and discrimination.

So when Casey wrote the poem about me and tacked it up on the classroom bulletin board, that was nothing new. The poem began with the jingle—I'd heard it from the first grade—*"God made a nigger, and he made him in the night . . ."* But now I was sixteen, big enough to act for myself. To hell with the school. I went to my room and started packing my suitcase to go home.

Someone told the teacher, and he rushed to find me. He was young—in his early twenties—and he was terribly upset. "You can't leave," he insisted. "We'll fight this thing, we'll take it up with the class. You've got to stay to see it through, to help us. You got to. . . ."

I stayed, and the class put Casey on trial. The teacher acted as the prosecutor, and everyone talked about what had happened. Then they voted their verdict: Casey was to be expelled.

That was something new; and that was because it was a different kind of school from the public and parochial schools I had attended. It was organized by the Young Communist League to teach Marxism-Leninism. That was twenty years ago, and I have stayed with that school ever since. And with the teacher-prosecutor who is now teacher-defendant, Gil Green.

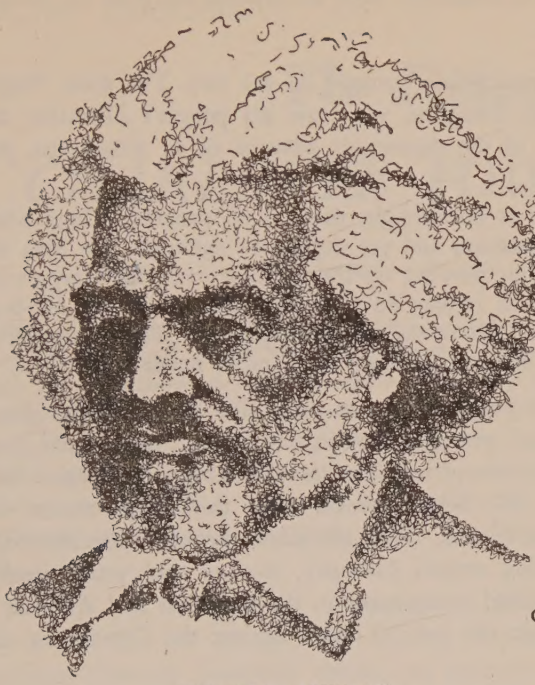
Together with eleven other leaders of the Communist Party, Gil is

charged with teaching Marxism-Leninism; and together with them he faces ten years' imprisonment for advocating socialism, for fighting to expel Jim Crow from every school and everything else in America. That two of the leading Communists indicted by the government, Henry Winston and Ben Davis, are Negroes simply underlines the fact that now, in our day, my people's fight for freedom is bound up with the cause of socialism and the party which leads toward it.

Negro History Week, which comes this month, reminds us that at all times the Negro people's fight for liberation has been bound up with that of all progressive Americans. Now it is the Smith Act that serves as the basis for repression. One hundred years ago it was the Fugitive Slave Law. The Negro and white Abolitionists (who were called communists, levellers, atheists, radicals) and the black slaves fought against that law, resisted it, defied it, went to jail—and opened jails—in opposition to it. They led the struggle which finally destroyed the Fugitive Slave Law and the economic system it was meant to preserve.

Because that history—that phase of American history called Negro history—is either suppressed or distorted, and because its meaning and lessons continue till today, Negro History Week was founded twenty-four years ago by Dr. Carter G. Woodson and other Negro historians associated with him. But it is more than a week, it is a *movement* that together with and part of the Negro people's struggles grows in volume and scope through the months and years. All Americans who truly love their country and its people must be eternally grateful to Dr. Woodson and to Dr. W. E. B. Du Bois whose *History of the Suppression of the African Slave Trade* established scientific scholarship in this field more than fifty years ago. Others follow in the path blazed by them, among them white men like my co-worker on this magazine, Herbert Aptheker, who wrote:

> "He who knows the history of the Negro people will face the future with supreme confidence. For this history proves that, let the despoilers of humanity do what they will, the integrity, the aspirations and the struggles of the mass of mankind continue and endure. . . . It is a duty and necessity to resurrect and to treasure the precious heritage that the Negro people have bestowed upon America. This can serve as a weapon of incalculable power in our present critical period. . . ."



George Orban

FREDERICK DOUGLASS

And powerful weapons are needed today when the ruling class of our country is directing its reactionary blows against the Negro people and the working class at home, as well as against the peoples of the world. The same class which freed the lynchers of Isaiah Nixon (he dared to vote in Georgia) refused to lift a finger in New York to find the men who attempted to kill Bob Thompson—another one of the Twelve. Rankin the Negro-hater is Rankin the Red-baiter.

Nixon was killed—but more Negroes voted in Georgia last year than at any time since Reconstruction. The Communists are attacked on the streets and in the courts—but more Americans voted for a Communist last year than ever before. Negro history attests that iron shackles, bloodhounds and slave laws have not halted the march of the Negro people toward freedom and equality. All history—yes and the history on today's front-page—proves that jails, Red-hunters and anti-Communist laws cannot halt humanity's march towards the true democ-

racy which is socialism. Not in Europe or Asia or Africa—or in America.

BUT this march is a struggle all the way. The great Negro leader, Frederick Douglass, who saw his people's liberation movement to be a part of the democratic advance of all Americans, put it this way:

> "If there is no struggle, there is no progress. Those who profess to favor freedom, and yet depreciate agitation, are men who want crops without plowing up the ground. . . . This struggle may be a moral one; or it may be a physical one; or it may be both moral and physical; *but it must be a struggle.* . . . Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did, and it never will."

Among my people there are those like Walter White who "depreciate agitation," who take part in Red-baiting, who would counterpose the Negro liberation struggle to the Communist movement. But against him are the 480 Negro leaders from thirty-eight states—educators, artists, actors, editors, trade unionists, writers, businessmen, churchmen (including several bishops), women and youth leaders—who recently published a statement to the President and Attorney General demanding that the judicial attack against the Communist leaders be halted.

From that classroom incident until now, all my experience has proved that it is the Communists who are the best fighters for the rights of the Negro people. I am only one of the thousands of Negro Communists who have taken part in the battles with our white comrades—for Scottsboro, for Angelo Herndon (and let us remember that he, a Negro Communist, was sentenced under a law forbidding uprisings by chattel slaves), for anti-lynching legislation, against Jim Crow, for equal rights. Future historians will mark the fact that in our times the only American political party which criticizes itself for shortcomings on the Negro question is the only party which expels white chauvinists from its ranks and promotes Negroes to the highest posts of leadership. Show me another such party!

The defense of the Communist Party and the precious truth that it teaches—Marxism-Leninism—and the liberation movement of my people are one and inseparable. A Negro preacher-steelworker who joined our ranks in Youngstown once told us: "I say, free the Communists and free the people." We can all say Amen to that.

*AMERICAN DOCUMENT*

# *The Testimony of*
# *CHARLOTTE FOWLER*

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*In March, 1871, President Grant informed Congress that violence and terror in the South made life and property insecure and interfered with the collection of revenue and the delivery of mail. As a result a joint Congressional committee was appointed the next month to investigate conditions at first hand. The testimony given this committee filled thirteen huge volumes, from one of which is extracted the following statement. It is typical of the contents of these volumes and illuminates the centuries-long struggles of the Negro people for liberation.*

Spartanburgh, South Carolina
July 6, 1871

CHARLOTTE FOWLER (colored) sworn and examined:

*By the Chairman*: Where do you live?

*A.* On Mr. Moore's premises.

*Q.* Do you know in what township?

*A.* No, sir; my son does.

*Q.* Is it in this county?

*A.* No, sir; I did live in Spartanburgh County with my husband, before the old man was killed; but now I live with my son.

*Q.* How long ago is it since your husband was killed?

*A.* It was the first of May.

*Q.* What was his name?

*A.* Wallace Fowler.

*Q.* Tell how he was killed.

*A.* The night he was killed—I was taken sick on Wednesday morning, and I laid on my bed Wednesday and Thursday. I didn't eat a mouthful; I couldn't do it, I was so sick; so he went out working on his farm. We still had a little grandchild living with me—my daughter's child. He had two little children living with him on the farm,

but still that little child staid with me. He kept coming backward and forward to the house to see how I gon on and what he could do for me. I never ate nothing until Thursday night. When he came home he cooked something for me to eat, and said: 'Old woman, if you don't eat something you will die.' Says I: 'I can't eat.' Says he: 'Then I will eat, and feed the little baby.' That is the grandchild he meant. I says: 'You take that little child and sleep in the bed; I think I have got the fever, and I don't want you to get it.' He said, 'No, I don't want to get the fever, for I have got too much to do.' He got up and pulled off his clothes, and got in bed. He came and called to the grandchild, Tody—she is Sophia—and he says: 'Tody, when you are ready to come to bed, come, and grandmother will open your frock, and you can go to bed.' So he laid there for about a half an hour, and then I heard the dogs. I was only by myself now, for the children was all abed. Then I got up and went into my room to my bed. I reckon I did not lay in bed a half an hour before I heard somebody by the door; it was not one person, but two—ram! ram! ram! at the door. Immediately I was going to call him to open the door; but he heard it as quick as lightning, and he said to them: 'Gentlemen, do not break the door down! I will open the door'; and just as he said that they said: 'God damn you, I have got you now.' I was awake and I started and got out of bed, and fell down on the floor. I was very much scared. The little child followed its grandfather to the door—you know in the night it is hard to direct a child. When he said, 'God damn you, I have got you now,' and he said, 'Don't you run,' and just then I heard the report of a pistol, and they shot him down; and this little child ran back to me before I could get out, and says, 'Oh, grandma, they have killed my poor grandpappy.' He was such an old gentleman that I thought they just shot over him to scare him; but sure enough, as quick as I got to the door, I raised my right hand and said, 'Gentlemen, you have killed a poor, innocent man.' My poor old man! Says he, 'Shut up.' I never saw but two of them, for, by that time, the others had vanished.

*Q.* How did you know there were any others there?

*A.* The little boy that was there when they shot his grandpappy ran into the house; he was there, and when they started I heard the horses' feet going from the gate. I was then a-hallooing and screaming. After they shot the old man, they came back in the house—'Chup! Chup! Chup! Make a light.' I said, 'I am not able to make up a light;

I have been sick two days.' I called to the little girl, 'Is there any light there?' She says, 'No.' But the mantel was there, where I could reach it, where they put the splinters, and I said, 'Light that splinter'; and she lit the splinter. He said, 'Hand it here'; and she handed it to him; and then he says, 'March before me, march before me.' That was done in the middle of my room. He says, 'Hand me up your arms'—that is, the guns. Says I, 'There isn't any here, sir.' Says he, 'Hand me up that pistol.' I says, 'There is none here; the old man had none in slavery, and had none in all his freedom, and everybody on the settlement knows it.' When he told me about the light he put that pistol up to my face—so—and says, 'If you don't come here I will get you light out of this.' He did that when I was a poor woman by myself.

*Q.* Did these men have masks on?

*A.* Only the one that shot him.

*Q.* What kind of a mask?

*A.* It was all around the eyes. It was black; and the other part was white and red; and he had horns on his head. He came in the house after he killed the old man and told me about the light, and I made the little girl make a light; he took the light from her and looked over the old man. Another man came out of the gate, and looked down at the old man and dropped a chip of fire on him, and burnt through his shirt—burnt his breast. They had shot him through the head, and every time he breathed his brains would come out.

*Q.* Was the old man dead when the fire was thrown on him?

*A.* He did not die until Friday between one and two o'clock; but he couldn't speak a word. He was just bleeding, and his brains and blood came out over his eyes.

*Q.* Did your old man belong to any party?

*A.* Yes, sir.

*Q.* What party?

*A.* The radicals.

*Q.* How long did he belong to them?

*A.* Ever since they started the voting.

*Q.* Was he a pretty strong radical?

*A.* Yes, sir; a pretty strong radical.

*Q.* Did he work for that party?

*A.* Yes, sir.

*Q.* Did he vote at the last election?

*A.* Yes, sir.

• •

# The Negro Woman

*by* HERBERT APTHEKER

HAVING been ruled throughout its life by the bourgeoisie, the United States has had its history interpreted, almost entirely, by servitors and members of that class. The result has been that a signal area of neglect in that history has been the aspirations and struggles of the plain people and most particularly of the working class. In addition this capitalist class, having had as one of the bulwarks of its rule the super-exploitation of some ten to twenty per cent (varying in different epochs) of those plain people—the Negro people—has seen to it that *their* history is "super-neglected." And this same ruling class, being responsible for the perpetuation of the especially oppressed position of the female half of humanity has seen to it that, by and large, the history of women has comprised the history of coiffures and costumes and little else.

Given this situation it is not difficult to comprehend the state of historical investigation into the past of the Negro woman, falling as she does into each area of neglect—that of the working class, the female sex and the Negro people. This article represents an attempt to suggest something of the riches waiting here to be mined and that must be mined if the struggle against bourgeois history and the class it upholds is to succeed. We shall concentrate on the highlights of the history of the mass of Negro women. Problems which arise from class differentiation among Negro women, and various psychological phenomena require separate extended treatment.

AS THE minute hand moved past midnight of December 31, 1862, marking the moment when Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation was to take effect, an aged Negro woman said to 300 fellow fugitive slaves assembled half a mile north of Willard's Hotel in Washington:

> "Once the time was that I cried all night. What's the matter? What's the matter? Matter enough. The next morning my child

was to be sold, and she was sold, and I never expect to see her no more till the day of judgment. Now, no more that! no more that! no more that! With my hands against my breast I was going to my work, when the overseer used to whip me along. Now, no more that! no more that! When I think what the Lord's done for us, and brought us thro' the troubles, I feel that I ought go into his service. We are free now, bless the Lord! (*Amens everywhere.*) They can't sell my child anymore, bless the Lord! (*Glory! glory! everywhere.*) No more that! no more that! no more that, now! (*Glory!*) President Lincoln has shut the gate! That's what's the matter! (*Amen, Amen*)."

When two and a half more years of blood-shedding made real the promise of that Proclamation, time itself seemed to stand on tip-toe, straining to see the future. In the great houses of the South—the few still occupied—were despair and fear; in the slave hovels were ecstasy and wonder. Some of the Negroes sat stone-still, chewing on the wonder of it; some went shouting down the roads, needing to share the joy; some wept as though they'd never stop, as though their eyes were dams broken by the gathered gall of two hundred and fifty years of bondage.

None was so moved as the Negro woman. To her, as to the man, liberation promised the end of beatings and hunger and illiteracy, of auctions and hunting dogs. But to her, to the Negro woman slave, it promised the end of a triple enslavement and it promised the end of terrible indignities. Slavery had stolen the Negro man's labor and tried to extinguish his humanity; but from the Negro woman it also robbed *womanhood*—with the Negro man generally powerless to intervene.

The base of the Negro slave woman's super-exploitation was her position as a *slave worker.* Reared upon this was the denial of her elementary rights as a mother and as a woman. This it was that made possible the most loathsome facet of American history: not only (only!) the enslavement of an entire people, but stemming out of this, the social pattern—in the nineteenth century, not in the pre-feudal past—of what amounted to the legalized rape of the womanhood of an oppressed people.

No wonder the Negro woman so often urged haste in slave plottings. Virginia, 1812: "She said they could not rise too soon for her,

as she had rather be in hell than where she was." Mississippi, 1835: "She wished to God it was all over and done with; that she was tired of waiting on *white folks*."

It is from the torrents of such torment that a Harriet Tubman found the strength to go secretly into the South nineteen different times and lead out three hundred slaves; and then to shoulder a rifle for thirty months as a scout for the Union Army. One may better understand now a Margaret Garner, fugitive slave, who, when trapped near Cincinnati, killed her own daughter and tried to kill herself. She rejoiced that the girl was dead—"now she would never know what a woman suffers as a slave"—and pleaded to be tried for murder. "I will go singing to the gallows rather than be returned to slavery."

NEGRO women not only endured these unique conditions in American history; they also occupied a quite special situation which helped mold their history and that of the Negro people generally.

Up to the end of chattel slavery the American Negro's social status was inherited from the mother, not the father. A child of a slave mother was a slave; of a free Negro woman, a free person. During slavery there was no marriage *per se* and therefore whatever household existed revolved completely about the woman, and it was the female, not the male, who provided what little degree of stability existed for the pre-Civil War Southern Negro's home. In terms, too, of direct productive activity, the Negro female slave was as important as the male and frequently was evaluated—in monetary terms—as highly as the male (sometimes more highly). Reinforcing this matriarchal bent was the social organization of West Africa, major source of imported slaves, where the position of women, based upon active participation in property control, was relatively higher than that of the European woman.*

Since emancipation and as a manifestation of the Negro's superexploitation, the proportion of Negro women who have been employed workers has always been much higher than that of the white, and this prevails into the present day notwithstanding the recent enormous influx of white women into industry. Thus, in 1940, while two in every eight white women were in the labor force, two

* Of interest here are the revolts in Nigeria in 1929-1930 and 1947, organized and led by women—with women suffering almost all the casualties.

in every five Negro women were in this category. And during the past two decades the decisive character of the shift in the employment of the Negro woman (as of the man) has been from the rural to the urban area, with Negro women generally confined to the lowest paying jobs.

It is then not surprising that Negroes pioneered in the general struggle for women's rights. A Negro man, James McCrummell of Philadelphia, was the first presiding officer of that city's "Female Anti-Slavery Society." The only man to associate himself publicly with the pioneer Seneca Falls Women's Rights Convention in 1848 was Frederick Douglass. And twenty-one years before that convention the first Negro newspaper, *Freedom's Journal* (August 10, 1827) published a plea for women's rights from a Negro woman signing herself, Matilda. She deplored the "ignorance that blinds men's eyes," insisted that "we women have minds that are capable and deserving of culture," and declared that while "it is necessary to possess a knowledge of cookery," yet "something more is requisite."

In the struggle for women's rights no one could be more effective than the woman most oppressed and most closely identified with the working class. No more effective pronouncement for the rights of women has been made than that uttered in Akron, Ohio, in 1852 by Sojourner Truth. She was attending a Women's Rights Convention and had listened to sundry males decry the movement as ill-advised and absurd because of the weakness of women, the delicacy of women, etc. "What's all this here talkin' about?" demanded Sojourner Truth. "That man over there says that women need to be helped into carriages, and lifted over ditches, and to have the best place everywhere. Nobody ever helped *me* into carriages, or over mud puddles, or give *me* any-best place! And arn't *I* a woman?

"Look at me. Look at my arm [She bares her arm and demonstrates her muscles]. I have plowed and planted and gathered into barns and no man could head me—and arn't I a woman?

"I have born'd five children and seen 'em mos' all sold off into slavery, and when I cried out with mother's grief, none but Jesus heard. . . . And arn't *I* a woman?"

A minister had bolstered his arguments against women's rights by referring to the difficulties one woman had brought upon the world by devouring an apple. For him Sojourner saved her concluding re-

marks: "If the first woman God ever made was strong enough to turn the world upside down, all alone—these together ought to be able to turn it back and get it rightside up again; and now they is asking to do it, the men better let 'em."

In the Negro people's struggles during Reconstruction to make real their freedom and to enhance the liberties of all Americans, Negro women were the most militant fighters. Here are the words of a Louisiana contemporary: "These women have followed their husbands and brothers and all who had a vote, from morning to night, around the parishes demanding that they should vote the Republican ticket. . . . They have been very active since 1868 in all the political movements; they form a large number in all the political assemblages, and they have evidenced a deep interest in all that pertains to politics." The efforts to increase the economic and political rights of women which marked the much-maligned Reconstruction legislatures were the natural results of this activity.

In the post-Reconstruction period Negro women again were in the forefront. Thus, the Committee of Five Hundred Women formed in 1878 under the leadership of Mrs. Mary Jane Nelson, fought for complete economic, political and social equality for *all* Negro people, men and women alike. The remarkable mass exodus movement of 1879-1880, when about 65,000 Negroes simultaneously, and as a result of years of planning, left the Mississippi-Alabama-Louisiana area for the freer soil of Kansas, Iowa and Indiana was led and participated in, to a major degree, by Negro women.

It was a Negro woman from Virginia—and the heroine's name deserves recording, it was Mrs. Violet Keeling—who, in 1884, while living in the South, engaged in the following public conversation with Zebulon B. Vance, leader of the Southern wing of the Democratic Party, then Senator from North Carolina and formerly Confederate Governor of the same state. Mrs. Keeling's husband had just been murdered for political activity and she had put the blame on the Senator's party. Whereupon the following questions and answers ensued:

> Are any of the colored people in your country Democratic? *I don't know. I don't have nothing to do with that sort.*
>
> I ask if any of them are Democrats? *I am telling you just what I know; I don't have nothing to do with that sort.*
>
> Well, are any of them Democrats? *Sir?*

You heard the question. *No sir; I didn't heard.*

You don't speak to a Democrat? *No, sir; I don't allow him to come in my house.*

Why do you have such a dislike to a colored man that votes the Democratic ticket? *I will tell you as near as I know . . . I don't wish to see a colored man sell himself when he can do without. Of course, we all have to live, and I always like to have a man live even if he works for twenty-five cents a day, but I don't want to see him sell himself.*

Now, when you find a white man voting with the colored people, don't you think he sold himself? *I will tell you what I think of him. I think he is a man who has a judgment of his own head and knows what he is doing.*

Are not the white people down there good friends to the colored people? *Yes, friends to them; rather kill them.*

The remarkable Ida B. Wells, who as editor of the Memphis *Free Press* walked the streets of her city with two pistols on her hips (to keep her press free, as she put it) and was finally forcibly driven from her home in 1892, was largely responsible for bringing the crime of lynching before the attention of the nation. Her studies first exposed the lie that lynching protected Southern white womanhood (she demonstrated that only twenty-five per cent of the male victims were even *accused* of rape) and showed lynching to be what it is—a barbaric device of the ruling class to maintain its position. She personally broadcast this message throughout the nation for some twenty years before World War I despite every attempt to silence her.

DURING the 1890's, too, were created the organizations which resulted, in 1896, in the formation of the National Association of Colored Women, the longest lived of all national Negro groups. Under the leadership of women like Mrs. Mary Church Terrell and Mrs. Josephine S. Yates this group served as the most advanced champion of the Negro people until the formation of the Niagara Movement in 1905. The Niagara Movement itself, as well as its broader successor, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, formed five years later, drew much of its strength from the active participation of Negro women.

Throughout these years Negro women frequently led the way, not only in organizational groundwork but also in militant resistance to

oppression. The Associated Press, for example, in reporting the development of opposition to the mobs which ravaged Atlanta for several days in the summer of 1906 declared: "In the fighting the Negro women were the most warlike, urging resistance to the mob, and themselves fighting like Amazons."* Similar testimony has appeared since, most notably in the veritable war that gripped the nation's capital in 1919 with the white hoodlums and police acknowledging defeat— and steering clear of the ghetto—after three days and nights of bloodshed.

Union activities of Negro agricultural workers from the days of the great cotton pickers' strike of 1890 (and what a story is there!—still waiting to be told) to the heroic struggles of Arkansas Negroes in 1919 and the sharecroppers' strikes of the 1930's were led by Negro women. In factories, Negro women were outstanding in the pre-C.I.O. days, playing key roles in winning industrial union recognition in several great strikes. Particularly notable was the role of Negro women in strikes against several food-processing plants in St. Louis in 1933 resulting in the recognition of the Food Workers' Industrial Union, and in garment factories of Chicago the same year leading to recognition of the Needle Trades Workers' Industrial Union. The spark-plugs in the union organizing drive launched a few years ago in the South were the Negro women, as this writer saw for himself, in Winston-Salem, Memphis, Charleston. . . .

TODAY, before our own eyes, the striking fact of the greatly developed militance and political maturity of the Negro people (putting them in the forefront of the American progressive battle) has owed very much to the Negro woman. Thus, for example, were one to nominate the single person who had made the greatest contribution toward the continuing fight against the lily-white Democratic party in South Carolina he would undoubtedly select the irrepressible Mrs. Modjeska Simkins of Columbia.

Again, no segment of the American population has been more ardent and more influential supporters of the new Progressive party than Negro women, led by people like Mrs. Ada B. Jackson, Congressional candidate from Brooklyn; Frances Williams, candidate for

* One is reminded of the remarks of the suppressors of the Paris Commune: "Had the French nation consisted of women alone, what a terrible nation it would have been."

Assembly from Los Angeles; Mrs. Charlotta A. Bass, editor of the splendid *California Eagle;* Shirley Graham, who introduced the party's platform in a magnificent address at the Philadelphia convention, and Moranda Smith, the dynamic International Vice-President of the Food and Tobacco Workers Union, C.I.O.

The quality of the leadership offered the Negro people and all women, as well as the Communist Party, by Claudia Jones has been certified by the great eagerness of the government to deport her.

The Negro woman's militant history is characteristic of her sisters of other nationalities. The liberation armies of today in China, Greece and Israel are filled with splendid female fighters whose courage and skill has won the admiration of all progressive humanity. These women fight not only against national and class humiliation, but in a profound and unique sense as women they fight, too, against personal humiliation and outrage. The Chinese peasant woman of Tsitsihar who told Anna Louise Strong, "if I could get my hands on that —— Chiang, I'd bite his throat in two with my own teeth," was expressing the desire to pay off the Shanghai gangster the very special debt of hatred his feudal-fascist regime has earned from women.

For its own liberation the American working class must have—must earn—the devotion of its staunchest ally, the Negro people. Conversely the freedom of the Negro people requires the liberation of the working class. Similarly while the Negro woman is triply oppressed, the Negro man remains shackled. The position of the Negro woman is thus seen as a pivotal one in all democratic struggles. Appreciation of this central fact should provoke the special study and special effort that it deserves.

THEY BROKE CHAINS

*Four drawings by*

JACOB LAWRENCE


SLAVE TRADE


SLAVE REBELLION


UNDERGROUND RAILROAD


HARRIET TUBMAN

# *Storm Over Lysenko*

*by* LOUIS ARAGON

*This article is from an essay published in a special issue of the French magazine,* Europe, *devoted to the biology discussion in the Soviet Union. In our next issue we will present an article which will examine the specific scientific aspects of the Lysenko controversy.*—The Editors.

WHAT will we remember of the summer of 1948? In terms of the weather it was no doubt "a funny summer" . . . but from other points of view as well. There was war, then a truce, in Jerusalem. There was fighting in Malaya and Indo-China. Berlin was tense, blockaded on the west and fed by the air-lift of the Western Powers, whose representatives were negotiating at Moscow . . . At Belgrade, the Danube Conference was held under curious conditions brought about by the break of the European Communist parties with Tito and his group . . . In Greece, the army of General Markos fought heroically and against great odds.

But in the midst of all this—with its many new historic situations—one thing occurred which adds much to the strangeness of that summer.

At Moscow, while the entire world press told of existing wars and of the terrible threat of atomic warfare, which the possessors of the atom bomb make no bones about preparing against the Soviet Union, the leading newspaper of that country, *Pravda,* printed in millions of copies daily for hundreds of millions of men and women, devoted a large portion of its issues from August 4 to August 12, 1948, to the session of the Soviet Academy of Agricultural Sciences which had opened on July 31. Eighteen of the forty-four pages of the paper on those days were completely given over to that meeting. Thus, no single event—neither Berlin, nor the Belgrade Conference, nor the

anti-Soviet incidents in Washington—occupied in the Soviet press a space comparable to that given to the discussion of *The Science of Biology Today.** The debate, opened by the report of Trofim Lysenko, was between the representatives of classical genetics and those of the Michurin school. The printed texts run to more than 500 pages.

Never, in any country or at any moment in human history, did a scientific discussion enjoy such publicity. It was closely followed by millions of men and women. Such an undertaking is unthinkable in France. No newspaper would risk it. It would not have enough readers: I mean, it would not find a sufficient reading-public to warrant such a publishing venture. That kind of reading-public does not exist in France. Whatever the tenor of the discussion, its publication under such conditions implies the recognition of a fact: in the U.S.S.R. there has been created an "intelligentsia" of a new type, formed of *millions* of readers interested in a discussion of biology among scientists, and capable of following it.

What is more, the participation in that discussion of hundreds of scientists and practical workers, linking the Academy of Agricultural Sciences with the mass of collective farmers (just prior to World War II there were more than 200,000 collective farms in the U.S.S.R.), the scope of the discussion, and the mass of new biological data brought forward, give that session of the Academy a new and surprising character which rounds out the publicity given it in the press. For the first time, the work of an entire people has been linked with scientific research; and in this work numerous scientists of a new type have arisen, Marxist scientists who strive equally to explain the world and to change it by achieving a unity of theory and practice.

I AM not a scientist. Hence, were I to meddle in a debate among biologists, I would only draw comments to which I cannot reply. But even granting that I am unable to judge the heart of the matter from the little data I possess, it is no less true that this debate can be seen in various lights. It goes beyond biology and is occurring under conditions in which, without being a geneticist, one may find food for thought.

As I said, at this session the classical theory of genetics, represented

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by Professors S. Alikhanian, B. M. Zavadovsky, V. S. Nemtchinov, I. I. Schmalhausen, A. R. Zhebrak, P. M. Zhukovsky and others, clashed with the Michurinian theory, represented by Trofim Lysenko, President of the Soviet Academy of Agricultural Sciences. What, in broad terms, was the subject of the discussion?

Classical genetics, generally associated with the work of Mendel, Weismann and Morgan, is based on the principle of the existence in animal and plant organisms of two different substances, irreducible one into another: one, which constitutes the living body, is called the somatoplasm or *soma.* It is perishable, does not have the property of reproducing itself, and modifications of it have no effect on heredity. The other, germ plasm or *germen,* which is found in the chromosomes of the nuclei, is the sole origin of the offspring of the organism in question; it alone has the property of transmitting the life and hereditary characters of the species in question. The hereditary substance is formed of genes (located in the chromosomes); it is immutable and eternal, and the characters it transmits are independent of the environment in which the organism in question lives. Hence, it cannot reflect modifications in that environment. At most, certain violent agents or mutational substances (such as X-rays or colchicine) may *free* the genes and give them the possibility of evolving more rapidly, yet without modifying the immutable characters of heredity. The *mutations* that can be provoked are nevertheless uncontrollable, and develop in a direction independent of the experimenter.

The Michurinists, on the other hand, claim that the *hereditary substance* is a myth, without at the same time denying either the existence or the role of the chromosomes. But they assert that the entire substance of the living organism, including what geneticists have called the soma or perishable body, is capable of giving rise to other organisms; that hereditary characters are modifiable under the influence of modifications in the environment, and from the very first generation on; that the individual's acquired characters are transmissible and controllable for the recreation of new species, provided that the descendants of these individuals live in conditions which have determined the modifications in questions—modifications which are essentially modifications in the exchange of substances between the organism in question and its environment. As a result, one may produce such modifications by changing the environment; one may

control them in the species and create new species at will. That is to say, one may guide heredity: for example, in a direction favorable to the given conditions of culture, and favorable to humanity.

Without taking sides between these two schools, a layman may be permitted to point out that the first theory rules out the possibility of man's modifying the course of species and guiding living nature; while the second asserts that man has the power to modify the course of species and can guide heredity.

As YOU may know, in the summer of 1948, intellectuals from many nations gathered at Wroclaw, Poland (formerly Breslau in Germany), with a view to ascertaining how, as defenders of culture, they could work for the maintenance of peace, which was clearly in danger. It goes without saying that such a gathering was the kind of thing against which the newspapers of Vichy sneered for four whole years; for at that time, it was almost an axiom of the journalistic world that nothing was more ridiculous than the way intellectuals meddled in questions of war and peace. I did not doubt that, whatever was discussed during the sessions at Wroclaw, it would not be accorded the courteous treatment given before 1939 to the solemn discussions of Pontigny, in which many French friends of the Nazi Otto Abetz were interested; or in our own day, to the meetings of well-bred persons from which intellectuals "tainted" with leftism are carefully excluded.

Yet I did not expect the British Broadcasting Corporation to comment upon the Wroclaw Congress as it did. In the course of a French-language broadcast, the commentator, after stressing that the Wroclaw Congress had a special point on its agenda, *the free discussion of ideas,* stopped talking about Wroclaw and mentioned the congress held at the beginning of August at the Agricultural Academy in Moscow as an example of the *little* freedom one could expect on the part of *one* country whose intellectuals were present at Wroclaw. That kind of reasoning is obviously quite vicious. For even if we assume (and it is a purely gratuitous assumption) that the discussion on biology in the U.S.S.R. is an example of the absence of freedom in discussing ideas, why choose that example? Why not choose instead, for instance, the example of the House Committee on Un-American Activities of Messrs. Thomas and Rankin which, according to President Truman

himself, has created such an atmosphere of suspicion in the United States that forty per cent of the scientists refuse to continue their scientific researches in the field of the atom? And if such an argument were advanced, the BBC commentator would be right, wouldn't he, if he said there was no logical connection between that fact and the tenor of any speech made by a United States citizen, as for example at the Wroclaw Congress. . . .?

But what is interesting is that the discussion on biology in the U.S.S.R. was just the one chosen as the example of non-discussion of ideas. Forgetting Wroclaw, the radio commentator gave full vent to the indignation aroused in him by the Moscow discussion (or non-discussion), which he probably knew only by the flimsiest hearsay. The essence of his remarks was that Lysenko found himself in agreement with his government (which, as you know, is considered a frightful thing in England and the United States, two countries noted for the outstanding independence of their intellectuals); that in the U.S.S.R. only pro-government tendencies are allowed; and that since this occurred in the field of science, it was really a return to the Middle Ages. Further, according to the BBC man, Professor Orbelli (not Professor Schmalhausen, or Zhebrak, or Zhukovsky, or Zavadovsky, no: Professor Orbelli was singled out by the BBC) was a new Galileo.

There is every reason to believe that the very name of Professor Orbelli sounded quite new in the resonant mouth of the indignant commentator. I remember what happened two years ago: two Soviet writers were criticized by Andrei Zhdanov. Not only the BBC but also the press of forty nations specializing in anti-Soviet agitation played up these writers, whose names they could hardly spell, and coupled them with André Chénier; and they became the favorite authors of an amazing number of people who knew nothing at all about their works. Well, anyhow, our Professor Orbelli now becomes a modern Galileo. I would have preferred Schmalhausen . . . but let's leave it at Orbelli.

This discovery by the BBC was soon widely taken up. The Socialist daily *Le Populaire* carried a version of Charles Dumas, which was limited to the question of the Middle Ages. For, of course, everyone knows that in the Middle Ages scientific discussions were falsified by the participation of the people in those discussions. In *Combat*, Maurice Daumas resumed the Galileo argument in one of the articles

that paper devoted to the Moscow discussion, to which I shall later return, and which were written after reading a single article by Jean Champenois which appeared in *Les Lettres Françaises.*

I should like to dwell a moment on the Galileo argument. Galileo, I mean the symbolic Galileo, is cited for having insisted that the earth moved. In 1633, that is, long after the end of the Middle Ages, he was condemned after a twenty-day trial by the Inquisition and forced to join the ranks of the "scientists" of those days who insisted, together with the Church, that the earth did not move. Now as a matter of fact, the scientists of our day are for the most part advocates of the Mendel-Weismann-Morgan theory which Lysenko rejects. They have on their side great social institutions, quite as effective as the power of the Church in the seventeenth century. Without awaiting the scientific data of the Moscow discussion, the London BBC and the big Paris newspapers, one of them the official organ of the French Socialist party, immediately condemned the ideas of Lysenko. It is true that, on the other hand, Lysenko is approved by Stalin, who is a materialist philosopher, as anyone can find out by reading his works, and by a very large number of men and women who have witnessed his experiments, collaborated in their practical application and attested to their usefulness for the Soviet people.

Let us suppose that Galileo was born in the present-day U.S.S.R., and that the theory of the rotation of the earth was a modern discovery. It would be enough for a materialist like Stalin to say he was in agreement with Galileo for the BBC, the *Populaire, Combat* and *tutti quanti* to consider that Galileo was not Galileo, and to call Galileo any random Orbelli they might pick out who believed like his colleagues throughout the world that the earth did not rotate.

Please don't be angry! I didn't invoke the example of Galileo in the first place. I am simply making use of it to show that to anyone who has nothing to do with science, the mere fact of approval by the Communist Party in the U.S.S.R., by Stalin, and by the collective-farmers should not be a warrant to compare Lysenko to the Inquisition Court which tried Galileo. That Court did not appear before Galileo with scientific discoveries and experiments, applied on the scale of a vast country, and demonstrating that the earth did not rotate. On the contrary, Lysenko appeared before his colleagues of the Soviet Agricultural Academy with a new theory, contradicting not only the theory held by the scientists of the other countries, but the *only one* studied

in the schools of higher education and the textbooks on genetics used in the U.S.S.R. And he appeared before them, basing his remarks on twenty years of work and experiments, which have completely transformed agriculture on one-sixth of the earth's surface.

THEN, in *Combat,* Maurice Laval began a forum-discussion in French scientific circles on the Mendel-Lysenko controversy as it was outlined in the article by Jean Champenois published in *Les Lettres Françaises.* The series began with an introduction by Maurice Laval. Then followed four articles, one by Jean Rostand, one by Maurice Daumas, one by Marcel Prenant and one by Dr. Jacques Monod, with a summary by the paper.

To be sure, the publication of such a forum-discussion may be judged from two very different points of view: that of the scientists themselves who, lacking precise documentation, without knowing the documents under discussion, could only be cautious in their judgments; and the point of view of the paper, which acted quite properly in wishing to inform its readers as quickly as possible. Hence one must take into account the reticences one finds in the four replies published by *Combat,* and perhaps refrain from saddling the authors with the responsibility for the way these replies were presented—their headings, subheads, etc. Nor can Maurice Laval himself be held responsible for those things. Everyone knows how a newspaper is made up, and it is really futile to complain about it. News-gathering has its laws and its perspectives: newspapers are like ephemerids, May flies, who from the printing press to the wastepaper basket, flutter their wings as best they can in order to glow for a brief space. Nevertheless, one heading *Combat* did not invent: it was taken from Jean Rostand's statement: *You cannot overthrow a scientific theory the way you overthrow a cabinet.* Likewise with respect to Dr. Jacques Monod's phrase: *Lysenko's victory has nothing scientific about it.*

It is true that a scientific theory is not overthrown like a cabinet. Apparently the advocates of Mendelianism in France think that if they show that this was what was done in the U.S.S.R. against their theory, they thereby prove that it was not overthrown. That is to say, they think that people in the U.S.S.R. do not know that a scientific theory cannot be overthrown like a cabinet and hence believe they have overthrown a theory.

Daumas is aroused when he reads in the article by Jean Champenois

that "a definitive, irrevocable choice between two radically different conceptions was made at Moscow." He asserts that "science is not in the habit of allowing itself to be imprisoned in such dilemmas." Nevertheless, the day did come when science had to choose between the theory of evolution and a radically different theory. And Daumas well knows, since he cites the example for polemical purposes, that one fine day the Copernican system triumphed, radically triumphed, over the Ptolemaic system. Science, insofar as I can judge without pretending to any qualifications in the matter, is not in the habit of allowing itself to be imprisoned once and for all in a system discovered by scientists, however great they may be. And it is when a new, different, at times partially different, often radically different, system is created, that it frees itself of an outlived system and goes forward. If that is the case in the discussion opened by Lysenko, all the declarations of principles on the habits of science will turn against those who utter them. Imagine, moreover, if the *choice* had been made in the opposite direction, that is, in favor of Mendelianism against Lysenko. Would Maurice Daumas get aroused? That is a measure of the *scientific* character of his appraisal.

As we have seen, the discussion at Moscow has been likened to the trial of Galileo. That is why Daumas states that it is "probable" that the Mendelians did not have the right to speak during the debate. But *Pravda* printed speeches by Professors Zhebrak, Alikhanian, J. Poliakov, D. Kislovsky, Nemtchinov, Zhukovsky, J. A. Rapoport, Schmalhausen and Zavadovsky; these remarks were made, not in a court, but in the Academy to which these professors belong; they were published in the paper, not as crime-news, but in the official report of the discussion, in millions of copies of *Pravda.* They were supported by applause by at least a portion of those attending and participating in the session. Each one of the speeches ends with the term: "Applause." I was not present when Galileo was tried in 1633. But Maurice Daumas seems to know a lot about the trial of Galileo: can he tell us if that trial went off in a like manner; if Galileo was allowed to speak freely; if, like the Mendelians at Moscow, he was allowed to attack his opponents personally; if he was applauded; if the Inquisition gave to his theories a column alongside its own theories; not the publicity of *Pravda,* but any publicity at all?

Maurice Daumas no doubt can give me pointers insofar as the theme of the discussion—Mendelianism and Michurinism—is con-


Saul Steinberg

cerned. But he should not have allowed an unworthy fellow like myself to remind him that if the true is not always probable, the probable is not always true. And if to him "the great sadness of our time" is not that another war is possible, or the experiments of Nazi science, or Auschwitz, or the extermination of 6,000,000 Jews, or racial discrimination in the United States, etc., but that an "undertaking" like the discussion at the Moscow Academy of Agricultural Sciences, brought to the attention of an entire people and passionately followed by them, is possible, then please let me say that his sadness may be true, but that it is completely improbable.

"COMBAT'S" series of articles was at that point when Maurice Laval received some comments from Marcel Prenant. Laval thanked the latter for his scientific moderation and caution, remarking that Prenant's observations express "a point of view markedly different from those previously furnished him." And indeed they were!

After having pinned down certain anti-Soviet inaccuracies and insinuations, Prenant went to the heart of the matter. But I prefer to let his words speak for him:

> "1. Lysenko, contrary to the words put in his mouth, does not deny the existence of chromosomes and of genes as bearers of hereditary characters, nor does he deny the correspondence between modifications in the entire organism and modifications in the genes; he therefore respects the basic principle of classical genetics.
>
> "2. He vigorously assails Weismann's exaggerations of Mendelianism and the mutation-theory, which sought to treat the *germen,* or ensemble of genital cells, as independent of the *soma,* that is, the mortal rest of the body. This is useful, not only from the scientific point of view, but also from the political point of view, for Weismannism has as its immediate corollary a racist philosophy. But that criticism is far from new, and our own French geneticists who take the trouble to reflect on modern experimental results, have for a long time agreed with that point of view.
>
> "3. The really new point seems to be the following: up to now, experimental interventions made by geneticists (by irradiation, for example), permitted us to increase the percentage of mutations but not to obtain a determined transformation. Michurin and Lysenko claim that by proper procedures, such as brusque changes in temperature, they have obtained, in certain cases, the hereditary

fixation of characters acquired under the influence of the environment, hence known in advance. There is nothing outlandish in that, and all the practical work of the two great agronomists leads one to think that they are right on that point. Moreover, I do not agree with Jean Rostand when he speaks of 'a few deviant facts'; and I believe, on the contrary, that once this question is further clarified, we will see that it means a real revolution in biology, a revolution which is in no wise a return to Lamarckism, since the latter held that acquired characters were automatically inherited.

"That Lysenko's texts are often obscure, that at times he appeals, in a way that jars our habits, to the argument from authority by quoting Marx, Engels, Darwin and Timiryazev—all that is possible.

But it cannot outweigh the fact that today a whole people is profiting from the work of Michurin and Lysenko. Who among our vehement critics has obtained comparable results?"

But *Combat* could not leave the final word with such an appraisal. The next day it found in Dr. Jacques Monod the man whose conclusions would jibe with its own. (Marcel Prenant had pointed out that in the United States Darwinism was banned in several states, and this seemed to him to resemble the Dark Ages far more than a scientific discussion such as the one at Moscow with its vast audience.) Dr. Monod's conclusion was: "The ban against the Mendelian scientists in the U.S.S.R. and the anathemas hurled in the U.S.A. against Darwinism spring from a state of mind that must be condemned, in whatever form it may be cloaked."

Thus speaks the voice of the "third force"!

"The important and difficult thing in this affair is not to decide whether, from the scientific point of view, Lysenko is right or wrong. The issue is quickly settled. But. . . ."

That is how the article begins. We can only congratulate Dr. Jacques Monod that it is not difficult for him to decide, from the scientific point of view, whether Lysenko is right or wrong. But it is perhaps difficult for him to convince us ignorant mortals that that is not the *important thing*. For we laymen are inclined to think that if Lysenko is right, from the scientific point of view, things are not exactly the same as if he were wrong.

Dr. Monod acknowledges a certain number of facts: Russian geneticists, despite Lysenko's years of efforts, continued to cultivate their science (that is, Mendelianism) and to ignore the theories of

the Michurinian school. Lysenko was powerless in the face of them. The Central Committee and Stalin had to be called in to tip the scales. Dr. Monod affirms this. But nobody doubts it; nobody hides it. The people who think that Lysenko is right, and who attach importance to the views of Stalin and the Central Committee, feel very good about the support from the latter.

But Dr. Monod asks himself: "By what means, by what enticements has Lysenko been able to win over the highest authorities of the régime, to persuade them to assure him of victory, and to force his opponents to resign or to recant? One cannot admit that it is solely the result of a police intrigue or a political deal. Moreover, none of the great political interests of the régime is at stake in this affair. . . ."

". . . If the highest authorities," the Doctor continues, "have sided with Lysenko, it is because, as incredible as it may seem, they have found that he was right. It is because his arguments, which strike us as absurd, were to them irrefutable. . . ."

Well, well. I don't know if you are like me, but Dr. Monod's amazement at realizing that if Stalin and the Central Committee have backed Lysenko it is because they think he is right, and not as a result of some mysterious *enticements, some police intrigue or political deal*—this amazement fills me with delight. Ignorant mortal that I am, I had never imagined anything else!

Dr. Monod's conclusion is that we are in the presence of a "grotesque and lamentable affair" which proves the fatal decay "into which socialist thought has fallen in the U.S.S.R." For, of course, it is decay of socialist thought when the leaders of a country support the theories of a man who, they are convinced, is right and whose arguments—O horrors!—are *to them irrefutable!*

ONE further point: the accusation of "politicalizing the chromosomes," as Jean Rostand wittily formulated it, and as has been raised here and there against Lysenko. In the main, people criticize Lysenko, as in fact they could criticize the other Michurinian scientists if they had read them, of drawing general conclusions in the field of politics, and of condemning Mendelianism because of the political, not biological, implications it seems to have in racism and Nazism.

When all is said and done, I must confess that the taste for "pure

species," which the Mendelians in the Soviet Union have carried to such an extent that they have torn up the rye from one field because it was too close to the field of a different species, so as to avoid a kind of cross-breeding, and that they have done this without bothering overmuch whether the uprooted rye was of a useful quality—I must say that that resembles a little what we have seen in another domain. The same is true of the sacrifice of species of sheep or horses, on the pretext that they are only variants of alien species, cross-bred with local species. Moreover, it is clear that the Malthusian theory of population and its extension to the field of biology lead to the pseudo-scientific justification of war as a method of *natural selection* (and in the work of Dubinin, a Soviet Mendelian, that was the name given to the destruction of the *drosophila* fruit-flies at Voronezh, as a result of the German invasion). It is clear that once this theory is extended to the field of biology, it defines a kind of vital space which is not unrelated to the Hitlerite concept of *Lebensraum.* It is clear that the acceptance of the principle of the "hereditary substance," immutable and once and for all given, may serve to justify the idea of a master race, etc.

In all this, one may accuse Malthus, Gobineau, Vacher de la Pouge, Goebbels, Arthur Rosenberg—but not Michurin or Lysenko.

The conception of Michurin and Lysenko, asserting the influence of environment on the heredity of living organisms, the inheritance of acquired characters, the possibility of controlling heredity and creating new species that will be useful to man, is a conception which does not permit any of the above metaphors in the field of sociology. It establishes the independence of biology with regard to sociology; it puts an end to long-standing ambiguities, notably Darwin's merging of Malthusianism with his materialist scientific theory of evolution.

It is this principle to which, as we shall see, Lysenko returns stubbornly time and again. In fact, at the basis of Lysenko's theory there is the negation of the principle of Hobbes: *Homo homini lupus* (man is a wolf to man), which, according to Lysenko, is not valid in biology. By denying struggle *within species,* Lysenko once and for all rids biology of the rank weeds of sociology and of politics (in the sense in which his critics understand it).

But of course he is forced to note that in opposition to the purely biological Michurinian science, there stands the Mendelian-Morgan conception of biology, mingled with Malthusian principles, allowing

of sociological metaphors and basing itself on them. Therefore he formally accuses his critics of themselves mingling sociology with biology and of "politicalizing" the chromosomes.

At the end of an interesting interview, which appeared in the Moscow *Literary Gazette* for October 18, 1947, Lysenko answered a question put to him as follows: "Bourgeois biological science, by its very essence and because it is bourgeois, could not and cannot make a discovery the basic principle of which it does not recognize. . . ." On another occasion, one of his Mendelian-Morganist opponents in the Soviet Union, Professor Sokolov, had in the course of a lecture cast discredit on Lysenko's work. The latter replied in the following terms: "I did not take part in that lecture and do not know what was said there; but I know that rivalry within species is still held in our country, for example, by Professor P. M. Zhukovsky. It is obvious that Professor Sokolov shares this point of view. I attribute that to traces of bourgeois thinking. There is no rivalry within species in nature; there is no need to imagine it in science."

That is to say, it is the bourgeois-sociological character of science which in fact prevents the creation of a purely scientific biology, which prevents bourgeois scientists from making certain discoveries, *the basic principle of which they cannot accept for sociological reasons.* In the Soviet Union, the vigorous struggle waged by the "national" Mendelians against the Michurinians cannot be considered by Lysenko and the Michurinians as a scientific, *biological* struggle within the species of biologists; but it is naturally looked upon as a sociological struggle on the part of scientists who are under the sociological influence of the bourgeoisie (even by the sole intermediary of *bourgeois* science, which is mixed with sociological metaphors)—that is, as a result of traces of bourgeois influence in the U.S.S.R.

That is why, in the eyes of Lysenko, the Michurinians, the Soviet collective-farmers, the Bolshevik Party, its Central Committee and Stalin, Lysenko's victory is indeed, as Dr. Jacques Monod acknowledges with amazement, a victory of science, a scientific victory, *a striking refusal to politicalize the chromosomes.*

IN A SOCIETY in which the introduction of sociological elements prevents scientists from recognizing the basic principle of a discovery and also prevents them from making that discovery, can one

speak of the *free discussion of ideas?* That is how everything I have written above leads me to formulate the question and to reply to the rash outburst of the BBC commentator, who thought he would make the delegates to the Wroclaw Congress look ridiculous by hurling at them, as an example of non-discussion of ideas, the discussion at the Soviet Academy of Agricultural Sciences.

The general hue-and-cry raised by a discussion which, based on the innumerable experiments of an entire people together with its scientists, experiments in the course of which not only new plant and animal species have been created but also scientists of a new type, and a peasant "intelligentsia" of millions of men and women who form the human basis for a new science—the general hue-and-cry raised by this discussion in the *bourgeois* scientific world can only be explained by the very character of that discussion and what it reveals, the basic principle of which *bourgeois* science cannot accept because it is bourgeois. This discussion and what it reveals calls into question bourgeois science at its very core: the men who with all their talents and even genius are still scientists of the bourgeoisie; the manner in which these scientists are recruited; the way in which their science is developed; their *a priori* scorn of practical workers; their belief in the development of science without any links with the people; the dogma profoundly rooted in them of the individual character of discoveries. Yet here, in the name of free discussion of ideas, these are the principles we are told we cannot call into question or discuss.

This hue-and-cry is not only scientific in character. It is sociological, political in character. It expresses, to the extent that it is not scientific, even in men who are sincerely convinced that they are not anti-Soviet, the anti-Sovietism of the society to which they belong, in which they have been molded. And I understand their tragic situation. But after all, this general hue-and-cry is strictly speaking a non-scientific obstacle to the discussion of ideas in the field of biology. Men of science whose sincerity I do not doubt join with propagandists of the bourgeoisie in shouting: Surrender to Mendel, Weismann, Morgan and classical genetics! So I think I may say to them—I think anyone may say to them—with all the respect due the first group and all the bluntness the second group deserves: Where is the *free discussion of ideas* about which you shout so much if it must stop as if by command before the taboos of Malthusian-Mendelian "science"?

And what authorizes you, when in the Soviet Union innumerable men are convinced that the truth is different from the way in which you see it, to retort by denying the existence of the discussion of ideas? And how can you dare maintain that the free discussion of ideas would have been preserved if the Soviet Union had continued officially to teach a theory which up to then had been official but which, in the eyes of a people, as a result of the practical work of twenty years and not a political debate of several days, had been found untenable? Yet you assert that freedom of discussion is destroyed by the recognition of an opposing theory which a people considers verified in practice on a sixth of the earth's surface!

I was not able to go to Wroclaw. But, I confess, my reaction was quite different from that of the BBC man. After studying the enlightening data of the Soviet discussion on biology, and after seeing it create such a storm of hastily concocted slanders, I was all the more convinced of its rightness. Yes, there was need for intellectuals to come together and to seek in common for means with which to defend the principle of the free discussion of ideas; to compare, as was done at Wroclaw, their experiences, their knowledge and their good will. If we allow the discussion on *The Science of Biology Today,* with whatever new contribution it makes to science and humanity both inside and outside the U.S.S.R., to be drowned in the clamor of voices which are scarcely impartial voices, its results may for a long time be scientifically and humanly lost to the majority of mankind. Bring forward, if you will and can, facts which deny its conclusions —no scientific debate is ever closed. But first of all, acquaint yourself with the facts you deny by heart, in your dogmatism which has nothing scientific about it. For behind that dogmatism is only hidden a master you do not acknowledge—it is called the bourgeoisie.

Imbued with a truth which to you has once and for all been established, are you not ashamed to condemn the new truth which others believe they have just established, without knowing the facts on which it is based? How can you place the defense of a given theory, classical genetics, higher than the fertile principle of doubt and discussion without which there is no science and which is higher than science itself? And where is your freedom, if science is not unity of theory and practice?

So here is an example in answer to those who ask themselves what

good a gathering like the Wroclaw Congress can do. From it must arise a permanent organization which will perpetuate its spirit. Yes, the delegates at Wroclaw placed on their agenda *the free discussion of ideas.* And it was indeed urgent at a time when Pablo Neruda is hunted in his native Chile, when Howard Fast awaits prison in the United States, when American scientists desert the laboratories in order not to be suspected of treason, when—at the foot of the Parthenon—descendants of Heraclitus and Praxiteles are among the executed hostages, and when the man who has developed branched wheat and grain species that can live in polar regions is accused for *that very reason* of "politicalizing the chromosomes"!

(*Translated from the French by Joseph M. Bernstein.*)

H. W. H.

# *The Green Green Grass and a Gun*

*A Story by* CARL OFFORD

IT WAS after five and the Caribbean sun was wearing off cool. The large native man jogged easily down the broad asphalt road that tumbled toward the beach and the sea, hemmed in on both sides by trim lawns and trim white-painted bungalows and barracks of the American oil people and American soldiers. The native man wore an old black suit which was spotted with oil from the American machine shop, and when he neared the American sentry box which was painted white and looked very trim on the trim green green grass he began to search in the pockets of his grimy blue shirt for the American pass.

Inside the sentry box the American soldier looked up from a letter he was writing and through the diamond-shaped cutout in the wall he saw the native. He frowned.

He was a very young soldier, still pudgy-faced and soft-haired, and soft-handed too, for he'd gone straight into uniform from his Colorado college. He'd been writing on a sheet of white paper clipped to an Army clipboard. He was annoyed at seeing the native for it meant leaving off his letter and going outside to challenge him for his pass. And this challenging for a pass was a piece of stupidity anyhow, thought the young soldier. In the first place any native coming through knew he should have a pass and therefore had a pass. In the second place very few natives come through the area. He cursed softly because he hated to break off the letter when he'd just about got clear in his mind what he'd write and say about the ailing sister of the Hartwells back there in Colorado. And dammit, deep down in himself he hated nonsense, and stopping men in broad daylight for passes was what he considered nonsense. If it were nighttime it would make more sense, he thought. He could at least see some point to it

if it were nighttime for perhaps there was something to the recent talk of the Colonel on the changing attitude of the native people. He himself was aware of the peculiar change for it was a thing that came to life and breathed on the air the moment a soldier walked into a rum shop or stopped at a stall in the village marketplace. It was not a thing that ever sounded itself in words but only in a bristling silence and a swift chilling of the air. But did that lend any more sense to stopping a man in high daytime for a doggone pass?

He fought with himself as to whether he should stop writing his letter and challenge the native man. The Hartwells had been neighbors and the oldest girl, two years his senior, had been sick and ailing all his life it seemed, having the most unusual hemorrhages. But all of the other Hartwells were healthy and some of them were even robust, like his girl, Jeanne, his Jeanne. She had been his Jeanne since a long time back and he never missed writing a single day, and after some hard thought he always found a new bunch of kind, little cheerful words to say about the ailing sister. And now, just when he'd sweated out a new string of kind little words for today the native appeared, and even while he debated with himself as to what he should do the string of words went slipping out of his mind. He cursed to himself, fine and soft like wispy smoke in the barrel of a gun, and put aside the clipboard and took down his carbine from the nail on the wall of the sentry box and went out.

THE NATIVE man stopped before him and continued to search in the pockets of his work shirt for the American pass.

"Come on, dig it up," the young soldier said impatiently, and angrily, though his anger was not so much against the native as against having to tear away from writing his letter. Now he'd have to think up a fresh string of words for the ailing Hartwell girl.

"I'm looking," the native man said very quietly, his eyes seeming to turn inward in bewilderment at not finding the pass in his shirt pockets.

"Go on, go on," the young soldier said, and he jerked his head in signal to the native to pass on without bothering about the pass. But the native man did not seem to catch on.

"What?" he murmured, and he kept on digging in his pockets, his hands moving from his shirt to the pockets of his black jacket, and

then to the pockets of his trousers. The young soldier looked cautiously about to see if an officer was around watching, or perhaps the corporal of the guard. He knew he was sticking his neck out when he allowed a native to go by without showing his pass.

"I know I have it," the native said, searching through his pockets over and over. "I have it somewhere. I ought to have it."

"Well, goddammit, find it then!" The young soldier swore with the meaningless ease of soldier-talk, but, too, he was becoming excited. The fact that the guy stood there searching for the pass and not understanding his signal was upsetting. "Hey!" he said. "Look in your pants and pull out sump'n. Just show me some kind of paper, I don't give a damn what it is. Flash it and go on about your business, will you?" He spoke in a low tone and through a twist of his mouth.

But still the native didn't catch on. Undoubtedly, the strange American accent from the twisted mouth was in itself unintelligible. "Give me a minute," he said. "I've got it somewhere."

The young soldier stepped back and said: "Now get to hell out of here! Goddam, I try to give you a break and you don't grab it. Now you got to go on back."

The native man smiled a little, apparently not understanding the soldier. He seemed absorbed in his search for the American pass, his large hands groping from one pocket to the next. He shook his head slowly. "I don't understand it. It should be right here." He tapped the left pocket of his work shirt. "I always keep it here."

"Maybe you didn't hear me. You got to go back," said the young soldier. He had cooled a bit now but the fact was, the black man simply had to go back. There could be nothing but that now. The black man had stood there searching for the pass for too long a time; the damn fool should have been gone wherever the hell he was going a long time ago. He had told him to go through but the damn fool had stood there searching his pockets and advertising himself to the whole damn world.

"Go back?" The native man turned and glanced at the steep hill he had just descended.

"That's what I said. And I don't want any argument either. What's the idea of trying to get by without a pass anyhow?" He was becoming angry again. It was odd, the way his anger rose and fell, like a seesaw, brought on and drawn off by factors mysterious even to him-

self. Maybe the answer was in the way the black man looked at him. Maybe it was in his desire to get back to the letter on the clipboard. Maybe it was his plain and simple yearning to be home in Colorado and out of the Army instead of killing time in the heat down here.

But now the native seemed tensed and coldly serious. He turned again and looked up the steep hill, then he said stiffly, "If you call the Head Office you'll find out I have the privilege to be owner of a pass."

"Maybe you've got a dozen passes," the young soldier said. "That cuts no ice with me right now. Now you got to go back, that's all there is to it. And don't hold me up. I've got sump'n to do."

"Oh, I see," the native man said, and nodded heavily, his eyes fixed on the young soldier. "You-all have some brass nerve," he said. "Some brass nerve. You're telling me I can't walk on this road? I just want to get to the beach. I'm not going into your fancy bungalows. I'm going to the open beach."

ALARM swelled quickly in the eyes of the young, pudgy-faced soldier. The native's manner was not right. The young soldier thought back and remembered clearly that he had loaded his carbine when he started out on duty. Remembering that helped somehow to bolster his confidence, though he hoped it would not come to his actually having to use the gun. "Listen, bud." His voice cracked a little. "I don't want to get rough with you but I got my orders. I can't let you through and that's all there is to it. If you had my job here you wouldn't be letting me through either. You'd be doing your job."

"I work in the machine shop," the native man said. "You could check that with the Head Office. My name is Bruce Gordon."

"Don't make any difference now." The young soldier shook his head. "Too late now. You've got to get back, that's all."

"It's not fair," the native man said. "I'll have to go all the way around the woods to get to the beach. That's not fair. Right now I'm almost there."

"I know, I know. . . .But you got to have a pass or no dice. You know that. Ain't my rules. I'm doing a job. I'm a soldier. You'd be doing the same if you had my job here."

"Don't say *here*," the native man said. "Say if I had your job in America. Think of that. Would you like me to stand on your American

street with a gun? And tell you to get to hell back? Answer me that."

The young soldier stared at the black man and said nothing. He wanted to burst out, but nothing came. What could he say? Remind the native that he was a hell of a lot better off now than he ever was? That under the Americans they had more jobs than ever before?

"My brother's on the beach," the native man said, his voice a squeezed whisper. "I have to meet him and it's getting late."

"Talk can't help you now. Doesn't mean a damn right now. You got to get to hell back up there like I said. Go on. I'm busy." The young soldier tightened his grip on the carbine and stepped forward.

The native man didn't move. He stared at the young soldier and at the carbine in the softening sunlight. "Look now," he said. "You don't have to push me around, you know. I've been working hard all day and I'm not in any mood to be pushed around."

"What do you mean?" The voice rose high and strident and the hands gripping the carbine became rigid. "I said to get to hell out of here." He was becoming more and more frightened and nervous. He was not actually afraid of something happening to him but afraid of what he might have to do.

The native man persisted. "Before you curse at me, let me ask you one thing. This is my own land. I don't belong anywhere else. I belong here. But what are you-all doing here? Don't you know the war is over?"

"Goddam!" the young soldier said, and brought the carbine up, his hands and face stiff and very white. "Get out by the time I count three," he warned, his voice trembling, his hands beginning to shake. "We'll be around here as long as we goddam please! Get that? Now, get to hell out of here! Beat it! One! Two! . . ."

The native man backed, his frightened eyes moving from the muzzle of the gun to the tight-drawn face. From farther down the hill the corporal of the guard called.

"What's going on up there?"

"Nothing," the young soldier yelled back. "Just a smart bastard."

The native man kept backing. He stumbled and almost fell, then he turned his back on the young soldier with the carbine and hurried up the steep asphalt road.

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# *Writers and the American Century*

*by* SAMUEL SILLEN

WHEN the late Wendell Willkie reported after his world trip that our reservoir of good will was leaking, many newspapers questioned his loyalty to America. I hesitate to imagine what would happen were he alive to testify that today the reservoir looks more like a sieve. For it has become a bit risky to express doubt that the world longs for an American Century. This new article of faith finds typical statement in a recent New York *Times* article by Henry Steele Commager: "The peoples of the Old World and of the New acknowledge that America will direct, if she does not control, the course of world history in the second half of the twentieth century. Outside Russia and her satellites few look upon this prospect with misgivings."

Whether Professor Commager bases his jubilant tidings on the current gestures of love for American imperialism in China, Indonesia, Israel, Greece, I do not know. It is tempting to comment with some lines of Edwin Arlington Robinson:

> "Down to our nose's very end
> We see, and are invincible,—
> Too vigilant to comprehend
> The scope of what we cannot sell."

But I am more concerned with the implication of Commager's article that nobody in the United States has or rightfully should have "misgivings" about the Wall Street rulers of our country controlling world history, including our own, for the next fifty years. More specifically I am concerned here with the bearing of the American Century thesis on our literature. For it not only has a bearing but is in fact the key to understanding the most serious literary issue in America today.

That issue may be stated simply. It is whether writers are to reveal

the truth of American social relations in the critical spirit of our great tradition, or whether they are to glamorize, falsify, evade in the spirit of sycophants? Is American writing to be, as it was with Whitman and Melville and Dreiser, a challenge to bourgeois values, or is it to be a soporific for "misgivings" here and abroad?

The urgency of this issue is well understood by the American Century architects—indeed, better understood by them, I would say, than by the writers they seek to harness or crush. Witness Mr. Forrestal's rceommendation to the Hoover Commission that a federal agency be set up for briefing writers and artists on how to conduct the "battle of ideas." With the American Century goes a platform for American literature, as readers of the Luce publications know. For at least three years *Life* and *Fortune* in particular have repeatedly featured editorials and articles advancing the new line, including a notoriously obtuse series on the culture of the West by Whittaker Chambers.

The clearest definition of the program was given in the November, 1948, issue of *Fortune,* which carried an article by John Chamberlain on "The Businessman in Fiction." Chamberlain, who was for many years the book reviewer of the New York *Times,* initially made his way with a Depression-period book entitled *Farewell to Reform.* After a brief sojourn left-of-center, he became the leading spokesman for Luce in the literary field.

Chamberlain complains that the businessman has been misunderstood and mistreated in American literature, victimized by inconsiderate novelists like Dreiser, London, Sinclair, Steinbeck, Lewis. Equally condemned are the works of younger writers—Norman Mailer's *Naked and the Dead* along with Arthur Miller's *All My Sons,* both critical of capitalist values, and what is even more aggravating, both enormously popular. Of the dozens of novels he mentions, Chamberlain praises only two: Booth Tarkington's happily forgotten *The Plutocrat* and *The Fountainhead* by Ayn Rand, who testified along with Adolph Menjou as an expert at the Hollywood hearings.

Several kinds of clubs can be used against writers—the political club of the Un-American Committee, the economic club of Eric Johnston, the ideological club of Chamberlain. The last wants writers to understand that tycoons aren't tycoons any more; they are Marshall Planners, epic in their boldness, heartwarming in their charity. He

wants the recalcitrant novelists to unload their neuroses elsewhere, for they are merely "pursuing a Freudian quarrel with their fathers, most of whom happen to be businessmen." He wants them to teach gratitude to capitalism, "the least bloody system the world has ever known." (Even Chamberlain can't pretend that it's not just a little bloody.)

Such an article in the Twenties or Thirties would have been hooted down the streets; today it is greeted by J. Donald Adams of the *Times* as "important to the health and continuing vigor of American fiction." The article is only one of a whole series of directives. An editorial in *Life* uses brass knuckles on Norman Mailer for carrying on the "literary slumming" of Dreiser, Norris and Stephen Crane. A lead editorial in *Fortune* over a year ago rebuked writers for failing to come up with a Virgil to celebrate the glories of capitalism; it went on to recommend a study of the writings of Churchill and Trotsky.

The meaning of this frenzy is clear. On the one hand, the imperialists are trying to present themselves to the American people and to the rest of the world as benefactors. On the other hand, these same men have been pictured in *The Gilded Age,* in *The Financier,* in *The Octopus,* in *The Iron Heel, The Grapes of Wrath, The Little Foxes,* as power-hungry, corrupt, aggressively selfish, and with the moral scruples of the jungle. The simple fact is that the robber barons and their descendants cannot point to a single noteworthy work of art in which they are presented in a flattering light. Our truly serious novels have been uniformly critical of the bourgeoisie, whether in James or Howells, Sherwood Anderson or Thomas Wolfe.

THE phenomenon of critical realism in our literature has been vividly described by Vernon Louis Parrington in his *Main Currents in American Thought.* Parrington noted:

> "Evidently some hidden cesspool was fouling American life, and as the inquisitive plumbers [the critical realists] tested the household drains they came upon the source of the infection—not one cesspool, but many, under every city hall and beneath every state capitol—dug secretly by politicians in the pay of respectable business men. It was these cesspools that were poisoning the national household, and there could be no health in America till they were filled in and no others dug. It was a dramatic discovery and when

the corruption of American politics was laid on the threshold of business—like a bastard on the doorsteps of the father—a tremendous disturbance resulted."

Now these writers, including Parrington himself, clearly had "misgivings" about bourgeois rule. Moreover, they insisted on communicating their discontents to the American people and to the world at large. Indeed, the most vital works of our literary heritage, in expressing democratic striving, have perforce come into collision with capitalist pretenses, even when the socialist alternative was not embraced or even explicitly rejected. When Thoreau wrote in *Walden* that the principal object of American capitalism "is not that mankind may be well and honestly clad, but, unquestionably, that corporations may be enriched," he was not helping to pile up a usable prelude to the American Century. The truth is that a Thoreau would have a maddening time getting published today—imagine a contemporary equivalent of his *A Plea for Captain John Brown*—and a Parrington would have a most precarious hold on his university post.

For inevitably, scholars and critics are being pressed to interpret the facts of our literary past away from the "misgivings" to which they give rise. This is of course not a totally new pressure on the part of publishers or college deans; but it does show a much greater consciousness and intensity. This is not to say that the pressure to blunt and distort the progressive features of our history must always be externally applied. A recent group of literary studies will illustrate my point. For example, Emery Neff, a colleague of Professor Commager's at Columbia, has just published a biography of Edwin Arlington Robinson.* Very much in Commager's vein, Neff concludes that "the threat of the extinction of humanism as a result of the Second World War, by turning Europeans to America for its support, is probably increasing the number of serious readers who seek in American literature what binds men together." Here again we are assured that the world is turning to us as its spiritual leader.

Yet what will the reader seeking a world bulwark of humanism in our society find as he studies Neff's biography and Robinson's work? We are told that the poet lived in a fiercely hostile milieu, rejected by the leading commercial publishers; we are reminded of

* EDWARD ARLINGTON ROBINSON, by Emery Neff. *William Sloane Associates.* $3.50.

his humiliating years of privation and anxiety, how he had to depend on the charity of friends to pay his rent and on free lunches in saloons to keep alive, how he hated the job of spying on workers ten hours a day as a time-clocker in the New York subway for $2.00. We learn that for months Robinson could not get back the rejected manuscript of his *Captain Craig* because a member of the publishing firm left it in a brothel. Robinson developed a tortured sense of life as a "rat-trap," Neff tells us.

Was this life, this tragic life of the poet in capitalist society, without effect on his art? Neff has to admit, despite his under-critical enthusiasm, that "It is our fault that the world must see him as a maimed giant." The fact is that instead of finding in Robinson "what binds men together," one finds the reflection of a social system that drives men apart, images of unutterable loneliness and suffering, the fated tragedy of each separate human being, as well as direct attacks on our society as in the passage from Robinson I quoted earlier. *Our* fault. But has the bourgeoisie stopped maiming giants, and can we now point to the poets who flourish in our humanistic society?

OR TAKE another new biography, a study of Theodore Dreiser by Robert H. Elias, a teacher at Cornell.* Here too we find a rather ironic tension set up by the contradiction between the facts and the author's desires. While this is for the most part a sympathetic and painstaking portrait, Elias pays a minimum of attention to the world in which the novelist struggled and grew. At the end of Dreiser's life, the biographer must deal with a fact which he evidently finds embarrassing. For Dreiser, after years of active association with the Communist movement, joined the Communist Party. Elias assumes the burden of defending Dreiser against his critics. The novelist, he says, was "simply making a gesture in behalf of the creative force and its total world" when he joined the Communist Party. He joined because "Earl Browder, whom Dreiser regarded as something of a bookworm, was being ousted in favor of William Z. Foster, whom Dreiser had known for many years as a kind of saint, a man of sweet disposition." Dreiser had a "different reading of slogans," and so on.

In effect, then, Dreiser is to be forgiven for he knew not what he did. But the novelist had a rather different estimate of the meaning

* THEODORE DREISER: APOSTLE OF NATURE, by Robert H. Elias. *Knopf.* $4.00.

MAN AND HAYLOADER, *by Antonio Frasconi*

of his act. In his letter of application to William Z. Foster, he wrote:

> "This request is rooted in convictions that I have long held and that have been strengthened and deepened by the years. . . . These historic years have deepened my conviction that widespread membership in the Communist movement will greatly strengthen the American people, together with the anti-fascist forces throughout the world, in completely stamping out fascism and achieving new heights of world democracy, economic progress and free culture. . . . The logic of my life and work leads me therefore to apply for membership in the Communist Party."

Dreiser, clearly, did not share his biographer's feeling that his membership in the Communist Party needed defense or explaining away. On the contrary, it was capitalism that could no longer justify its existence. The whole logic of his experience as an artist in America led him to identify himself with the twelve Communist leaders who are today facing trial. But does anyone suppose that readiness or refusal to accept this fact has no significance for biographical and critical evaluation? Dreiser, hounded throughout his life by bourgeois philistinism, censored, suppressed, scorned and starved by the official custodians of our culture, cannot be deeply understood by a "non-partisan" observer who assumes he stands outside the class struggle.

THIS above-the-battle attitude at a time when American literature is itself a battleground is what drains the critical vitality of the three-volume *Literary History of the United States,* recently edited by a group of leading scholars.* This is the most ambitious collective effort to survey the field since the *Cambridge History of American Literature* was published during World War I. The sheer statistics of production are imposing. Four editors and three associates head a list of fifty-five contributors. One year was given over to preliminary conferences, three years to writing, two more to editing and publishing. The bibliography alone occupies a volume of over 800 pages.

The intention is stated in a preface: "Each generation should produce at least one literary history of the United States, for each genera-

* LITERARY HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES. Editors: Robert E. Spiller, Willard Thorp, Thomas H. Johnson, Henry Seidel Canby. Associates: Howard Mumford Jones, Dixon Wecter, Stanley T. Williams. *Macmillan.* $20.

tion must define the past in its own terms." But it is precisely in its redefinitions that the work proves to be disappointing. For not only do most of the individual essays reveal an eclectic taste and outlook, but the combination of fifty-five different pens produces, despite the editors' attempt at continuity, the impression of a collection of essays rather than a history unified by a common set of values, a critical frame. Thus, Joseph Wood Krutch's two chapters on modern drama are substantially rewrites of his books. Are we to take as the judgment of a "generation" his preference for Maxwell Anderson over Lillian Hellman, his irritation with playwrights who want to change the world, his astonishing verdict that fantasy and symbolism have given "creative vitality" to the theatre of the middle Forties?

Or, far more serious, are we to take as the opinion of a generation that in a work of this scope there is no place for so much as a passing reference to Frederick Douglass, an acknowledgment of his existence? Or that neither Negro writing nor the Negro people in America merit a chapter in this work of eighty-one chapters? This sort of redefinition goes back to the Confederacy.

On the many subjects and authors treated, the work shows varying merit, ranging from such useful essays as Willard Thorp's on Melville and F. O. Matthiessen's on Poe to the notably poor sections on Dreiser by Robert E. Spiller, on the Philosopher-Statesmen of the Republic by Vivienne Koch, on the period between world wars by Allan Nevins.

Disappointing as literary criticism and as historical redefinition, this study is nevertheless rich in materials, and these point unmistakably to the theme I have been developing here. The literary record of the past hundred years constantly repeats the story of alienation and disenchantment. How many writers have had occasion to echo the dilemma of Melville: "What I feel most moved to write, that is banned—it will not pay. Yet altogether write the other way I cannot."

Thoreau was able to publish only two books during his lifetime, the first with his own money earned by pencil making; the second, *Walden,* in an edition of no more than 2,000. And Whitman, unable to find a publisher for *Leaves of Grass* in 1855, set up the type himself for the 1,000 copies, of which, he later told Horace Traubel, none was actually sold. And Poe, to make a living, turned from poetry to fiction (as the disillusioned Melville abandoned fiction for poetry);

in America, said Poe, "more than in any other region upon the face of the globe, to be poor is to be despised"; when Harper's turned down his collection of short stories on the ground there would be no "market" for them, Poe turned to a Philadelphia printer who agreed to issue it on condition that as publisher he take all the profits. And Vachel Lindsay peddling his poems for two cents a piece to shopkeepers on Third Avenue, doing a little better with public recitations which he bitterly called "Higher Vaudeville," confiding to his diary "If I cannot beat the system I can die protesting"—he died a suicide.

And with this freedom from want, how much freedom from fear? *Sister Carrie* stored in a publisher's basement for years and its author later dragged through the courts; *Uncle Tom's Cabin* rejected by a Boston publisher because it might hurt his Southern market; *The Century* magazine stopping presses on Howell's *The Rise of Silas Lapham* because it contained a reference to dynamite in connection with labor troubles.

TO SURVEY the evidence is to be reminded once again of the heavy odds of entrenched privilege and smugness against which our best writers had to contend. But "the other way" they would not take, the easy and profitable way of flattering the slaveholders, robber barons and imperialists. When they did shift from their earlier radicalism, as did Lowell and Hamlin Garland, the heart went out of their work. No writer with genuine democratic feeling, no writer with serious artistic purpose, has ever agreed to glorify capitalist relations in America. None ever will. "The scholar or critic," wrote Emerson, "defending the cause of slavery, of arbitrary government, of monopoly, of the oppressor is a traitor to his profession. He is not company for clean people." Those are good honest words to remember in the face of the American Century crusade.

# Barefoot Blues

*by* LANGSTON HUGHES

Papa, don't you see my shoes?
Papa, don't you see my shoes?
What you want
Yo' little boy to do,
Keep on goin' round
Feelin' blue?
Walkin' with them barefoot blues.

Papa, don't you see my feet?
Looky, don't you see my feet?
How you want
Yo' sugar-lump to walk,
Pattin' leather
On the street?

Papa, is yo' money gone?
Tell me, is yo' money gone?
I'm as cold
As cold can be!
What you gonna do
'Bout these shoes and me?
Papa, is your money gone?

# THE MUSIC OF
# Silvestre Revueltas

*by* MAX MARCH

WHEN Silvestre Revueltas, the Mexican composer, died eight years ago at the age of forty-one, he was both a legendary figure and a familiar presence not only in the Conservatory, but in the streets, cafes and market-places of Mexico City.

He was respectfully known as "Maestro" even to the cafe waiter and the casual stroller in the street. They knew him as a *good* man, and he was a good man in the widest sense of the word. He was a warm friend to many people; he was interested in laborers and artisans, and he responded keenly to the work of poets and painters. He was a creative artist who was happy among orchestral musicians and popular *mariachi* players. He was a thoughtful Communist with a clear hope for the future. A love for people compelled his composition. Communication nourished his life, and its thwarting was his tragedy.

Revueltas was generally credited with having founded and firmly established a new Mexican musical idiom, and he was widely recognized as the true interpreter of present-day Mexico. Nevertheless, his works were only rarely performed at public concerts. Such concerts of his own works as he conducted himself got little publicity, and were therefore poorly attended. Because he was not aggressive or shrewd enough to know how to press for his own advantage, he was a public figure without the profits of his prestige.

Revueltas had been composer, violinist, conductor and teacher in Mexico City from about 1928. Despite so many public activities, surprisingly little is known about the decisive events of his life. There are discrepancies as to dates and details in all the published allusions to him. Even the music is only tentatively catalogued, for it is likely that some existing compositions have not yet been found. Nor are the known works satisfactorily listed, for Revueltas often wrote more than a single version of a composition. None of his principal works has

been published anywhere. Manuscript scores are the only source of reference.*

His music is virtually unknown in the United States, although Revueltas was no stranger here, having spent about ten years studying violin and composition in Texas and Chicago, and conducting orchestras in Southern cities. Between 1924 and 1926, he gave violin recitals in Mexico, then returned to the United States. When he finally settled in Mexico City in 1928, he brought back a great deal of composed music. Shortly thereafter, possibly as a result of his association with Carlos Chávez, the character of his composition underwent a total transformation. Facile student composition ceased abruptly; the identifiable composer's personality emerged at once, clear-cut and full-blown.

Mexican music, having declared its independence late, developed by leaps. It was not until after the Revolution of 1910 that Mexican melody even achieved status as serious material for composers. At that time (as in the celebrated *Canciones mexicanas* of Manuel M. Ponce) it was only shaped to fit the over-ripe forms of nineteenth century European musical thinking. In the following decade, it was Chávez who became the most effective propagandizer for a Mexican music that, while adopting the technical procedures of up-to-to-date modernism, would retain its native flavor. Chávez was a young man, of the same age as Revueltas; in 1928, he already was a man of great influence, Mexico's best-known composer as well as conductor of the *Orquesta Sinfonica de México.*

Chávez's preoccupation with primitive scales and instruments was often more than matched by his avid interest in the newest technical trends in European music. At times his music followed some parochial European fashion so closely as to have only limited interest. His abstract music, severely objective and *a la mode* in the Twenties, appealed to Revueltas. The latter's Three Pieces for Violin and Piano and three String Quartets of about 1930 seem to reflect the influence of Chávez's dissonant formalism, his Mexican melodies that gradually are distorted out of recognition, and his experiments with persistent, percussive rhythms. Revueltas's Quartets combine both folk-like and

* Among the works mentioned in this piece, the following manuscript scores were made available through the courtesy of Edward B. Marks Music Corporation of New York: Second Quartet (*Magueyes*) (1931); *Colorines* (1932); *Janizio* (1936); *Música para Charlar* (1938).

abstract material. Like every composer of quartets, he tried to write counterpoint, but the results are rather academic. Yet the title of Revueltas's Second Quartet—*Magueyes*—begins a series of evocative titles that are an essential guide to the understanding of the composer's character, despite his disavowal of programmatic signficance. (*Magueyes* are the plants from which the drink, pulque, is made; they are blue-green and thorny, and are grown on otherwise barren soil.)

After these experiments in abstract music, Revueltas rejected Chávez's musical thinking and the philosophical sources from which it sprang. From that point on, he established and developed a new direction for Mexican music. Chávez's idealism, his backward-looking absorption with primitive musical culture, which he believed the acme of Mexican music, led him, haunted as he was by a fetish of "purity" and of an unchanging Mexican character, to an attempt to evoke the past and reconstruct its quality. At the same time, his technical sophistication, sure as it was, failed to separate itself sufficiently from the sectarian European schools on which it was founded.

REVUELTAS was not an erudite or sentimental artist-spectator of Mexican life. His interest in the Mexico of his day was that of an active participant in its stir and movement. He stood in a living relationship with its people and culture. It was the changing aspects of Mexico, the interacting and forward-pressing phenomena of Mexican life which engrossed him. Primitive cultures held him insofar as they survived in the present day, and he was fascinated by the mixture of cultures of modern Mexico. Sense impressions are the signs which point to the deep wells of his personality—impressions of people mainly, personalities, children, crowds and their noises; animals, games, speech, gestures, shouting; streets, roadways, landscapes, plants, colors, popular music, folkways. The great Spanish poet, Rafael Alberti, wrote: "All that powerful, barbaric throbbing of the pyramids, the mountains, the vast heavens, and immense flowers, the eternal past, the grave and hopeful present, are expressed in his music with admirable wisdom and exactness."

Revueltas's music, however, is never descriptive. Revueltas disclaimed any program in his compositions, writing, "The name doesn't mean anything," and "I am a musician with technique and without inspiration." As a matter of fact, although the titles of the orchestral compositions *Magueyes*, *Ventanas* ("Windows"), *Cuauhnahuac* (the ancient

*Leopoldo Mendez*

name for Cuernavaca), *Colorines* (trees, from whose deep-colored red and black fruit the Indian women make necklaces), may have underlying memories of particular landscapes or events; yet in each composition the impressions are so thoroughly explored as suggestive cores of emotion (the impressions in themselves have no independent value for Revueltas) that the final communication into which they cohere is likely to echo his concern with "the shameless cry of the poor, helpless vendor," his own remark on his work, *Esquinas* ("Corners").

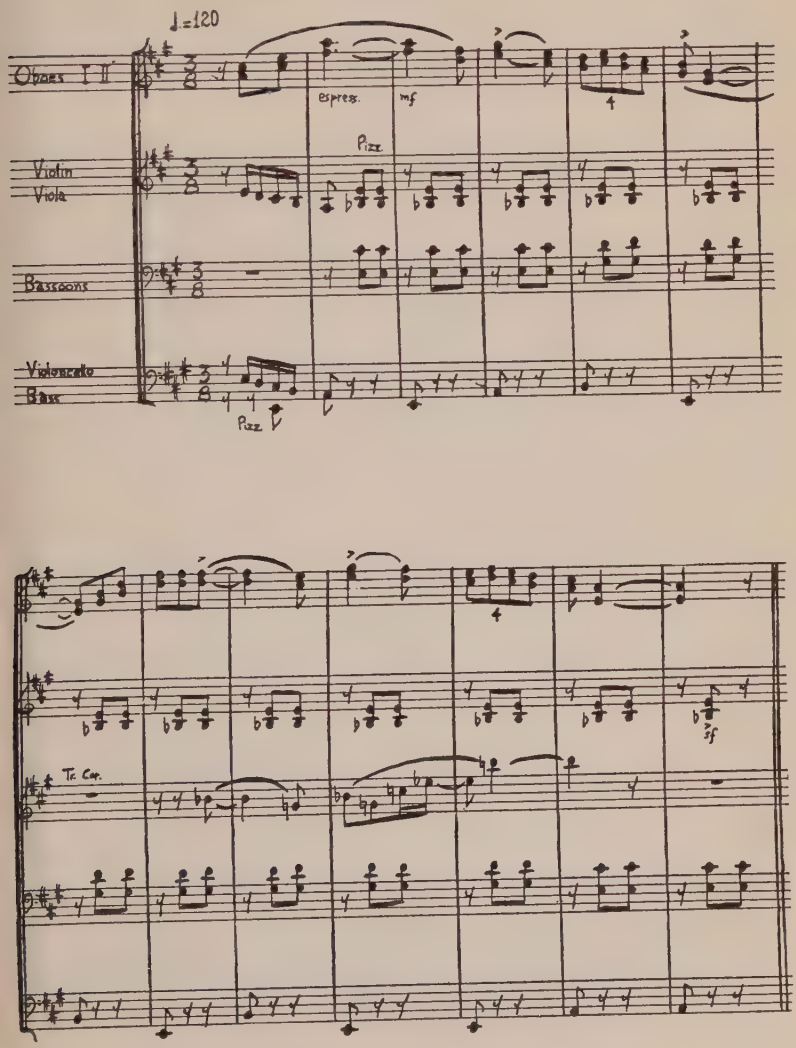
*Colorines* is a transitional work, standing between the String Quartets, on the one hand, and *Janizio* and *Homenaje a García Lorca* on the other. It is in a free form, inclining even to looseness, and introduces vivid bits of material which are treated with impressionist technique. There are folkish melodies and some polyrhythms, but generally speaking, it is not an unconventional piece.

By the middle Thirties, Revueltas's works were displaying a new, deep-felt seriousness and poignancy. This makes itself strongly evident in the music to the Paul Strand film, *Redes* ("The Wave"), produced in 1935. The orchestral works, *Janizio* (the name of a fishermen's island on Lake Patzcuaro) and *Homenaje a García Lorca* ("Homage to Garcia Lorca"), were both written in 1936. By now the function of the sense impression as vehicle for human feelings is clear in all these works. The expression of the sadness and dignity of the common man in *Redes,* the lyricism and humor of *Janizio,* the bitterness and optimism of *Homenaje a García Lorca,* issuing basically from popular material, showed for the first time the full range of Revueltas's musical personality.

*Janizio,* one of the composer's few works written for full orchestra, established the structural and technical elements that were to mark all Revueltas's subsequent works. In this composition, the music is harmonic rather than contrapuntal. But it is harmonic in a unique way. A demarcation of melody and accompaniment is always perceptible. Although specific harmonic changes are expected from the diatonic nature of his melodies, Revueltas adopts a characteristic rhythmic figure for his accompaniment, and maintains it, without change, in the one fixed harmony as an ostinato (continuous repetition of a melodic figure). In general, his accompanying figures to a folk-like tune are always ostinati—rhythmic and harmonic as well as melodic. The usual development of thematic material characterized by

counterpoint is missing. Instead, a harmonic complexity is heightened by the introduction of polytonality (the simultaneous use of different keys in different parts of the musical fabric). The melody, as such, persists, and the polytonality is heard as a greater complexity of accompaniment.

This is a simple example from *Janizio*:



*Homenaje a García Lorca* similarly has no contrapuntal development of thematic material. Its development is likewise emotional, in the sense that it aims at creating differing effects by means of ostinati and increased harmonic complexity. The form, too, is very loose. In this piece, as elsewhere, Revueltas shows his fondness for writing melodies of the popular *corrido* type (derived from the classical Spanish *romance*) whose thirds continue their course without affecting the ostinato accompaniment. It is worth noting that the muted trumpet, a favorite solo instrument of Mexican music, states the greater number of melodies.

As has already been suggested, Revueltas did not use authentic folk melodies, but he did use their characteristic elements. His themes were built on the melodic-rhythmical-harmonic patterns of folk and popular melody of the streets, dances and fiestas. Revueltas's melodic sense in itself was vigorous, penetrating and vivid, a gift less frequently possessed than others by composers in any era. His melodic gift was like the Russian Prokofiev's, a resemblance that becomes more noticeable in the Mexican composer's film music.

*Redes* is a film occasionally shown here. *Ferrocarriles de Bajo California* ("Railways of Lower California," 1938), with a score of beautifully lucid sonorities, *corrido* melodies, muted trumpet solos, and pervasive, almost impressionistic, ostinati accompaniments, has been seen in Spanish-language film houses in New York. A version of this music for concert performance, called *Música para Charlar* ("Chat Music"), was performed two seasons ago, probably for the first time, by the Kansas City Philharmonic Orchestra under Kurtz. Other films with scores by Revueltas are: *Vamos con Pancho Villa* ("Let's Join Pancho Villa," 1936); *El Indio* ("The Indian," 1938); *La Noche de los Mayas* ("Mayan Night") and *Bajo el Signo de la Muerte* ("The Sign of Death," 1939); *Los de Abajo* ("The Under-Dog," 1940).

Along with Revueltas's sparkling melodic invention is a novel orchestration that does not proceed according to the principles of Berlioz and Rimsky-Korsakov. It is always original, exploring new resources and discovering new effects. Revueltas found his most favorable medium in a small orchestra of peculiar instrumental combinations. He liked high woodwinds; in the small orchestra of *Homenaje a García Lorca* he used a piccolo and an E flat clarinet. He even wrote pieces for high winds alone. He most frequently used

brass, percussion and high woodwinds in opposition and interaction. Horn, trumpet, trombone and tuba, consistently used as melodic voices, were given difficult, virtuoso parts. On the whole, Revueltas preferred sounds to be on the crisp, almost piercing side, rarely lush tones.

There is no doubt that compositions for small orchestra were more expedient for Revueltas—they could always have informal performances. To some extent, however, his penchant for the small orchestra medium is connected with the scope of his music, while, in turn, the miniature character and sketchiness of the music may be due to the absence of development sections. Such a limitation cannot ultimately be disregarded, even when the listener is overwhelmed by the composer's extraordinary flow of spontaneous melody.

If in his lifetime Revueltas fell short of real scope, he avoided the usual, warping preoccupation with form or style. Not unlike a Bartok or a Prokofiev, who, themselves never relaxing from experiment and innovation, produced works with the scope of the masterpieces of the nineteenth century, Revueltas always had something to say, and said it directly, without worrying self-consciously about the means. His premature death cut short his increasing control of larger forms. Indeed his last works suggest original structural forms with their new areas of sensibility.

IN 1937, Revueltas left for Spain, to help in the cultural activities of the Loyalist government. There he directed concerts at which he had an opportunity to introduce his own works. A composition of that period, *Canto de Guerra de los Frentes Leales* ("Battle Song of the Loyalist Front"), is scored for the unusual combination of three trumpets, three trombones, two tubas, percussion and piano.

After his return to Mexico, Revueltas composed a number of settings to poetic texts, achieving a new concentration of the distinguishing elements of his personality—his sense for poetry, his musical eloquence and his humanity. With a feeling that matches the poet's own for the rhythm, inflection, color and texture of speech, his settings of poems by Lorca, Nicolás Guillén, Langston Hughes and others, give the human voice dignity, both words and tune moving together on the same plane of expression.

Already in 1936, Revueltas had written an orchestral homage to

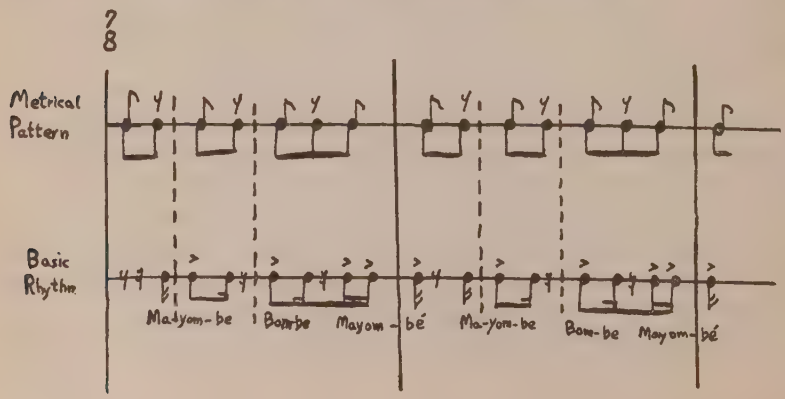
the Spanish poet Lorca. The *Homenaje a García Lorca* was the outpouring of a man not only moved by Lorca's tragic death, not only wholeheartedly responsive to the magic of the poems, but above all, profoundly warmed by Lorca's humanity. Now, Revueltas in his *Siete Canciones* ("Seven Songs") set to music Lorca's children's poems. Here was a sphere of experience that Revueltas particularly loved, and the music enhanced the poet's tenderness, humor and irony; Revueltas's own lyricism could mirror that of the verses in *Canción de Cuna* ("Cradle Song"):

> *Sleep, marigold, for the horse does not want to drink,*
> *Sleep, rosebush, for the horse is beginning to cry.*

It may be that the works for which we honor Revueltas were preliminary to another stage of composition, of which *Sensemayá* (1938) was a harbinger. *Sensemayá,* based on the work of the great Cuban Negro poet, Nicolás Guillén, appeared in two versions: one was a setting of Guillén's poem for voice and small orchestra; the other was scored for large orchestra alone. The musical nucleus of the latter version was given in the rhythm of the first line of Guillén's poem, the onomatopoeic incantation:

*Mayombe—bombe—mayombé!*

This rhythm of seven syllables (the first syllable is an upbeat), contained in a 7/8 metrical pattern, serves as basic rhythm for the composition, with all subsidiary rhythms deriving from it:



There are at least fifteen independent, simultaneous rhythms in this composition.*

While this composition is only a four-minute work, it demonstrates an unprecedented awareness of the problems of form in the well-knit treatment of thematic materials and in the contrapuntal elaboration. What is most remarkable is that, despite the elimination of the text, the rhythmic patterns are quite vocal; and for all the concern with formal organization, the melody still retains its customary spontaneity.

Revueltas's setting of Guillén's work caused the Cuban poet, José Mancisidor, to write: "The heart of Revueltas has been able to interpret and give form to the suffering of the Negro oppressed by centuries of misery. But the bitterness that penetrates it is different; it is made hopeful by a future cleared of shadows." Although there is as yet no appreciable sign of Revueltas's influence upon other composers, that influence is felt in every living current of musical feeling in Latin America, pervading the "grave and hopeful present" of younger composers.

Pablo Neruda's moving elegy, *Oratorio menor en la muerte de Silvestre Revueltas* ("Short Oratorio on the Death of Silvestre Revueltas"), mourns the loss of the musician and the man, fusing his music-making and his humanity. Its pervading tone, however, is the sense of glory, the prophetic perception of the hope for the future embodied in Revueltas's double role as lover of humanity and creative artist.

> . . . Your cathedral heart covers us with cathedral at
> this moment, like a sky,
> and your large and grand song, your lava tenderness
> fills every height like a burning figure . . .
>
> But the light we see is another light from today on,
> the street we cross a new street,
> the hand we touch, from today on has your force,
> all things take strength in your rest
> and your purity will go up from the stones
> to show us the clearness of hope. . . .

* *Sensemayá* was recently recorded by an orchestra under Stokowski (Victor). This is the first recording of any work by Revueltas.

# A LITTLE CIVILITY COSTS NOTHING

*A Story by* GWYN THOMAS

WHEN the curtain ran back on the seventh episode of the pageant that Garf Llewellyn put on at the Library and Institute, "The Journey Forward: Man and Mind Unfold," we saw Sylvanus Evans, a fair-haired young voter from Khartoum Row, lying in the middle of the stage. Garf had put a lot of deep thinking into his pageant which had for its range the whole lurch of living things from the courage of the first amoeba to the sickened hopes of the bomb-crazed multitudes in our own century. The mental going had been heavy. There were a lot of voters already out for the count and in no mood for anything deeper than a final hymn and a slow walk home. But even some of these leaned forward and murmured their interest when they saw that Sylvanus was wearing scarlet satin breeches. They were recognized without difficulty. They were the very breeches which one of the sweetest tenors in Meadow Prospect, Cynddylan Fisher, had worn when he took the chief part in that opera *Il Trovatore.* The audience had been glad to see him dead at the end, although they enjoyed his every note, for Cynddylan has a way of climbing with fierce clonking strides up to his top register and he puts too much of a strain on any bit of cloth that happens to be nearer his body than usual.

The breeches looked a lot better on Sylvanus who had had no chance of getting very fat so far, but there were a lot of people in the hall, remembering how cozy Cynddylan had looked before the music struck up and the fabric tightened, who said confidently that it would be very different when he started to sing. They felt sure that these scarlet trousers meant a relaxed mood on Garf Llewellyn's part, that Garf was now sorry to have loaded them with so much heavy material about the trouble man was having shedding his moral tail and that he was now going to give them something short and simple to sweeten their palates before the Chairman's Address.

"In trousers of that sort," someone said, "it'll be a song, an old-fashioned song, like 'Passing By.' Sylvanus has just the voice for that."

Most of the muttering came from a body of elderly voters grouped around that subtle and reactionary performer, Redvers Rees the Rent, who served as collector, bailiff and apologist for the leading landlord in Meadow Prospect, that grim element Meirion Randall the Reaper. Redvers agreed with the bored and uneasy voters who were sitting around him that Garf should now leaven the analytical lump with a few simple lyrics and folk dances. But he added that Garf was such a chronic militant that the evening would be rounded off by having the whole audience, led by those rebels who were sitting in the front rows shouting "Hear Hear" everytime Garf had made a reference to the agonized hops made by man from age to age, march around Meadow Prospect Square demanding an end of everything.

This made the elderly voters nervous, for they had come into the Institute only for a quiet and not too thoughtful rest. One of them, that leading musician and exponent of the head-voice, Mathew Sewell the Sotto, kept giving Sylvanus Evans the pitch so that a start could be made with the song and the whole pageant led into shallower and less fractious waters. But Sylvanus, for all that he was wearing the breeches of Cynddylan Fisher and more or less openly showing the stitches around the spot where Cynddylan had come right through during "A quella pira," a high and tempestuous item, was not going to sing.

Garf appeared once more at the side of the stage with the fat copy book from which he read the narrative that made sense to the voters, of man's ascent from not being there at all to a stirring consciousness of being out flat. There was a groan from Redvers Rees that was taken up at once by the people around him and, as promptly, that whole band of boys led by Eddie Wedlock and Milton Nicholas who had come down from Windy Way to give Garf encouragement, rose up and stared at the groaners with a contempt that felled their complaints in their tracks. Eddie Wedlock slipped over to Redvers Rees and cautioned him that his campaign of stirring up malice in the minds of those crotchetty and diehard elements who found Garf giving them the earache was likely to end with Redvers being dropped into the nearest deep brook in a shroud of writs, rent books and selected pages from Malthus and Ricardo, Redvers' favorite comedians.

"And as for you voters," said Eddie, sweeping his hand around to take in all those who had been taking their orders from Redvers, "be glad that mankind, at intervals in the long job of dishing out weekly installments to Redvers Rees and all his bloody ancestors has gone to the trouble of furnishing all the material used by Garf and those boys up on the stage in these fine sketches. It's been a grievous road, tree-newts, lizards, apes, ape-men, emperors, pimps, landlords and the Public Assistance Committee. The surface has been pure clay, slippery and treacherous with pity, pain and drenching tears. So unless you obscurantists want to be hung out of the widow and shaken, you'd better lean forward and get a headfull of the inspiration that we boys in the front are getting from this pageant."

Then there was silence and Garf was free to begin.

"THE French Revolution," said Garf. "The first of the great volcanoes that spat up the particular load of hot rubble that we are trying to finger into a liveable world. This character is an aristocrat, waiting for the tumbril. A clean sweep is being made of those who are considered spoiled by too long an experience of privilege and self-esteem to play a sane and wholesome part in the new world which takes equality as its aim."

Sylvanus began humming "Sur le Pont d'Avignon" and snapped his fingers. The elderly voters hearing the notes began to smile and looked to Mathew Sewell for his views on Sylvanus' effort. Mathew said that if this was "Passing By," Sylvanus was taking it too fast. Mathew sang the first few bars of "Passing By" at dirge tempo in a voice so high it was an octave to the right of the piano. Mathew saw Eddie Wedlock's head bob into sight and he fell silent.

Sylvanus sniffed at his hands, which were manacled, in the manner of a snuff-taker and said as he looked around the dungeon, "No place for a gentleman, this. My lace is filthy and the smell is of the dead. I wish they'd hurry and have done with me."

"No lack of courage, you see," read Garf from the copy book. "Some of these aristocrats went to the guillotine with an urbane smile. For this they have been idolized and their class revered, vindicated. This seems to imply that our rescue parties who go down into flooded or exploded pits weep bitterly with fright and have to be pushed. For myself, I think working hard for two or three hundred years sup-

porting a pack of satin-breeched weasels is a high price to pay for a few charming smiles in the face of death. Dying with a lofty sense of human dignity is truly noble only when you have lived from birth in contempt and obscurity and when your death is no more than a gray piece in a general pattern of sickening indignity."

Sylvanus was now on his feet peering rather excitedly through a chink in the door.

"That jailer," he muttered. "His face strikes a chord. Where have I seen him before?" He beat his head violently against the wooden frame. "God, God, I feel my life hangs upon remembering, upon recalling that face. Now I have it! It is Jacques, le bon Jacques, the son of our old coachman at the old chateau." In a restrained but fervently excited voice he called, "Jacques, Jacques."

The door was unlocked and in came Jacques with heavy tread. It was Merlin Davies who had been a big success in Episode Two as a brutal apeman who studies the prospectus of evolution and gentility and elects to remain hairy. Merlin looked very much the same in this except that he was less stooped and was carrying a bunch of keys.

"What is it?" asked Merlin, obviously in no mood to be even civil with the prisoner.

"Look hard at me and tell me. Is your name Jacques?"

"It is."

"Don't you remember me?"

"You are Prisoner 36. You came in yesterday and you will go out to die tomorrow and that will not make me sad."

"Come, come, Jacques. This isn't the Jacques that once I knew."

"Any more of that patronizing tone, prisoner, and you will have these keys across your head."

"Think back, man, think back. You are from Narbonne, no?"

"I was born there."

"On the estate of the Duke of Narbonne?"

"A doddering old fornicator. My father was his coachman and witnessed his antics. Even in the coach there were antics. He was small but wiry, that Duke. Pity we didn't have him in here."

"He is dead, Jacques, and I am his son."

"Then you are the dog who seduced my sister."

"God, I'd forgotten that," said Sylvanus in a disturbed aside. "Don't strike a manacled man, Jacques."

MERLIN let fall the bunch of keys with which he had been on the point of beating Sylvanus.

"I will tell you about that, Jacques. I loved your sister. I wished to marry her but my father found me another bride. I love your sister still. Do you not remember, Jacques, the days when we played in the orchard together, you, I and little Amelie, your sister?"

"Only until your good mother decided that our rough tongues might infect you and had us forbidden to speak to you. That night you ran away with Amelie. I could have bitten you to death. I felt just like the sort of wild beast you always thought I was."

Merlin bared his teeth and brought his head closer to Sylvanus' face. The ripples of self-defensive cunning passed so swiftly and clearly across Sylvanus' features that even boys like Mathew Sewell forgot about Cynddylan Fisher and began to take an interest.

"Do you know where Amelie is now?" asked Sylvanus with such smooth, assured duplicity in his voice that Eddie Wedlock down the front could be heard to say that it was now all up with such a simple-witted prolie as Merlin. He said Jacques was clearly no union organizer.

"We have heard nothing of her. When you took her away for your fickle pleasure she might as well have died, like her mother who grieved herself away or my father who sat on the Duke's carriage all dressed up even when there was nowhere to go in it, just to take his mind off the smart of his slashed pride."

"Then I have great news for you, Jacques. Amelie is alive and well. She is waiting for me at Coblenz, on the frontier, holding in trust the wealth I managed to get out of France. I was on my way to marry her and make amends for my youthful folly when I was arrested."

"You lie. You've lived by lies. I'll laugh to see you dead."

"By God's name, Jacques, I say the truth. If you make no move to save me now you condemn not only me but Amelie."

"You can die. She would still be dead for us, even if she still breathed; nothing will ever grow in the places she left desolate. I can feel the deceit come out from you in hot waves. I can see the contempt shine in your eyes as you think you lead honest Jacques by the nose."

"She would hate you if she knew you had let me go to the knife. I am the man she loves, Jacques, her whole happiness. Would that we were still the same innocent lads who romped beneath the pear trees

at Narbonne without thought of all this nightmare of terror and class spite. You would have understood then. And that money, Jacques, Amelie gets none of it without me. There's a lot there, Jacques. Plenty for you, for your old father and for us. Plenty to be spent and enjoyed for years after this bit of bloody folly has passed, plenty to sweeten and help forget old wounds."

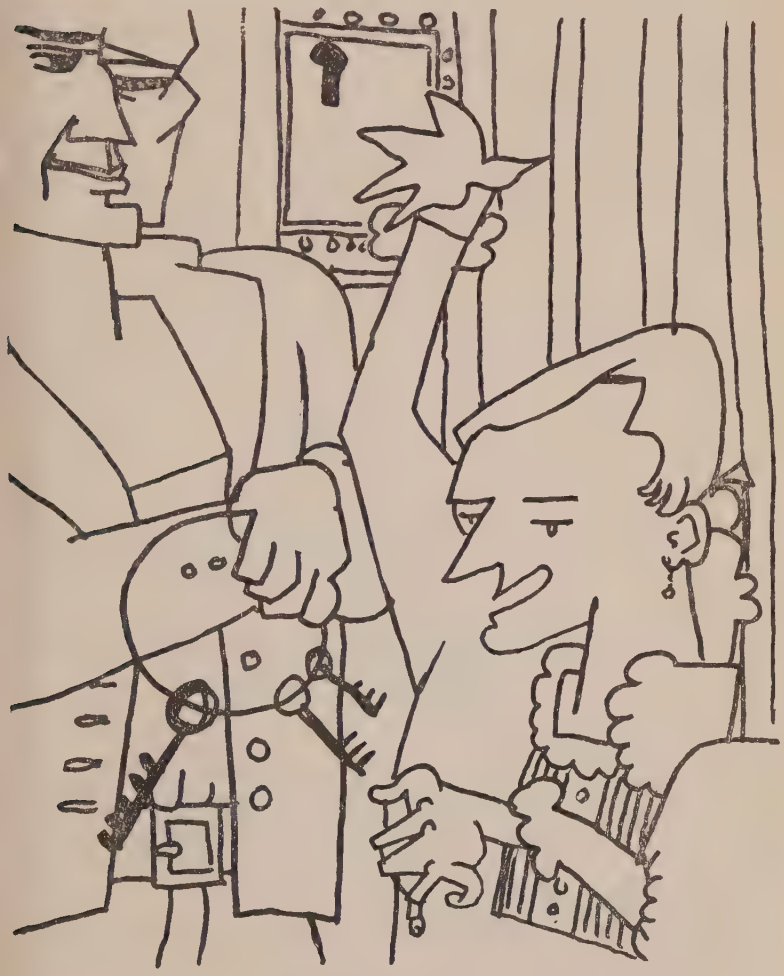


*Illustration by Phyllis Skolnik*

Jacques hesitated, rubbing his chin. "Well, perhaps, for Amelie's sake, only for her sake. . . ."

"Of course, Jacques, of course. You'll not regret it. I'm a changed man. The old arrogance and pride, all are gone. Amelie's love has meant more to me than you will ever know." Sylvanus' tone changed abruptly. It became full of decision and command. "Now then, to business. Get these manacles off my hands quickly and try to understand the following simple instructions."

Jacques backed away from him, shaking his head from side to side like one recovering from a spell.

"What's the matter now?"

"No please," said Merlin in a soft musing voice.

"What are you talking about, man?"

"No please. The way you said that about the manacles and the instructions, it was like a cold wind from the past. Even when you're pleading for your life, you can't say please, can you? It's become quite a big thing with us, that please. It's the great wall between us and the dogs we were before. There's been no change in you. Fifty Amelies, all praying loud as hell, flat at my feet, would not make me see even the promise of a comrade in you. Let her wait. You are too ripe a plum for the people to miss. The only real cure for those who can't help looking down at others is a few seconds of looking down at the basket."

"OH SHREWD, shrewd," said Eddie Wedlock jubilantly. "That's it, Merlin boy. Stick to fundamentals. Don't be fooled by the frilly napkins."

"Well, I'll be damned," tut-tutted Redvers Rees. "Of all the silly bloody quibbles. A typical Red, that Merlin Davies."

"All this fuss over one ridiculous word," said Sylvanus. "What an outrageous lout you are."

"In days when the whole of man's life is changing, citizen, there is nothing that is really ridiculous or little. I am sorry for Amelie but my whole religion is being touchy and unreasonable about people like you."

"May her grief be on your head!"

"It always has been on my head." He slouched through the door and

locked it. Sylvanus resumed his sitting position. He began to chuckle in a refined manner.

"What is amusing?" asked Jacques.

"The inscrutable fitness of things which becomes really iridescent when you are waiting for the next tumbril."

"I don't follow."

"You follow instinct, not words. And a deep true instinct it was that made you close that door on me. Amelie died three years ago, six months after I brought her to Paris. She had a gray and dismal death, Jacques, not half as spectacular or satisfying as mine."

"So you see," said Garf, "civilization is in the main an enlarged impulse toward genuine politeness. Never be masterly and brusque, especially to the boy with the keys."

"Write that out in big letters for Redvers Rees, Garf," said Eddie.

## LOVE IN APT. 5B

Her father, business-executive-at-his-desk,
Head up, arms down, dead level,
Eyes, two pistol-holes in a white mask,
Is framed in silver on the end table.

Their radio cabinet recites the weather,
Brahms' Second, Tchaikovsky's Fourth,
The bassinet, a gift from his mother,
Smells of talcum, mock orange and the Old South.

He buries the mean day in Four Roses,
Snores on the crimson couch after dinner,
She reads what anthropology discloses,
And pummels her legs; they should be thinner.

WINTHROP PALMER.

ISN'T *GOTT MIT UNS?*

"When the side with better arms can lose, as in China, or merely hold its own, as in Greece, there is a clear sign that the machine gun, the tank and the airplane have their limitations."—From an editorial in the New York *Herald Tribune.*

*ATTENTION BROADWAY*

"HAMBURG, Germany—*Hjalmar Schacht, former Nazi economic boss, disclosed last night that he wrote an operetta about the love of an American GI for a fraulein. He wrote it while he was being tried for war crimes at Nuernberg, where he was cleared.*"—United Press dispatch.

*THE-TROUBLE-WITH-THE-WORLD DEPT.*

"HARPENDEN, England.—The trouble with the world, said Lord Hampden, in an address here today, is that Premier Joseph V. Stalin was never a Boy Scout. "The gentlemen who live in the Kremlin have not been brought up as Boy Scouts," he observed at a Scout conference. "If they had, we might have a chance of coming to an agreement."—*Relayed by the Associated Press.*

*CRITERIA*

*"Mr. Yoshida is conceded to be personally as honest by Western standards as any politician hereabouts is apt to be. He is even as honest as the two Communist leaders, Kyuichi Tokuda and Sanzo Nosaka. . . ."*—A report from Tokyo by Allen Raymond.

*WARMEST GREETINGS*

A New York City Health Department inspector reported that a sign posted over the mailbox in an apartment building at 103 West 89th Street read: "For the next three days, over the holidays, there will be no heat furnished. Merry Christmas to all!"

WE INVITE READERS' CONTRIBUTIONS TO THIS DEPARTMENT. ORIGINAL CLIPPINGS ARE REQUESTED WITH EACH ITEM.

# books in review

## China Through Blinders

THE UNITED STATES AND CHINA, by John King Fairbank. *Harvard University Press.* $3.75.

CHINA: THE LAND AND THE PEOPLE, by Gerald F. Winfield. *William Sloane Associates.* $5.00.

CHANGING CHINA, by Harrison Forman. *Crown.* $4.00.

IN THE year 1948 the century-old anti-feudal, anti-imperialist revolution in China entered its climactic and victorious phase. In so doing it unfroze the social glaciers that have held back the development of 450 million people in China, set an example of liberation for many more in the feudal and colonial world, and shifted the balance of social and political forces throughout the globe.

The three main books on China published by U.S. writers last year do not illuminate these vast changes. On the contrary, the one thing they have in common is that they approach them with eyes tight shut, though the point at which the blinders are put on varies with each author. It would seem that books with such titles, appearing at such a time, should interpret and generalize the copious and often excellent reporting of Chinese events by U.S. correspondents and other observers during and immediately after World War II. In fact, none of them does this. Adaptation by all three authors to the current political climate in the U.S. itself, rather than the shifts in China which are their subject, results in a blurring instead of a clarification of previously sketched outlines.

*The United States and China,* by Prof. John King Fairbank who heads the China Regional Studies program at Harvard, is the most comprehensive and important of these works. Published in the American Foreign Policy Library series under the general editorship of Sumner Welles, it illuminates the views and glaring inconsistencies of the "liberal opposition" to the Truman Doctrine within the lower ranks and immediate vicinity of the State Department. Since this broader treatment includes most of the errors expressed much more crudely in Winfield's *China: The Land and the People,* we shall return to it at greater length.

By contrast with the ambitious scope of the first two books, Harrison Forman's volume is an al-

manac-type guide to two Chinas, the pre-war China under Kuomintang rule and the non-existent postwar China projected by Kuomintang and American planners. Forman, in 1945, produced a good wartime account of an earlier phase of the real new China now coming into being. On the professional lecture platform, he has continued to play an honorable and rather courageous part in driving home some valid points of the situation. But in *Changing China* he obliges the present demands of the U.S. book market by simply omitting that phase of his own, and China's, experience —which happens to be the only one making sense today.

Winfield, a Rockefeller-grant research biologist who worked in the missionary Cheeloo University in Shantung and later for a period as both a U.S. and United Nations official, has graphic if sensationalized chapters on technical phases of Chinese agriculture and village life. He parts company with reality, however, as soon as he enlarges on the social aspects. With a zeal ill-advised for a specialist in one field entering unknown territory, he flings violent thunderbolts at the Chinese Communist land reform as a demagogic measure to gain power which is actually bound to decrease food production because it divides more efficient large farms into small ones. (It doesn't; it only confirms peasants in the debt-free ownership of plots they have hitherto tilled as tenants or under great debt burdens, *enlarging* those that are too tiny.)

Developing his argument to the conclusion that the Kuomintang, despite its admitted oppression and corruption, prepares no such oppression and therefore deserves support, Winfield says further that small-peasant disadvantages must be overcome by cooperative tillage as well as mechanical aids. That is true. What is more, Winfield himself admits later that the Communist-organized "labor exchange" system is China's only present working example of cooperative tillage on a mass scale. We may leave him to get out of that particular box as best he can.

Winfield's ideas of how to industrialize without rocking the social boat in China (the Confucian family system which has already been rotting for decades) are also worth recording. Stability in the factory, he believes, can be achieved by preferential hiring of workers with families who will live on the premises. "Make the worker and his entire family a part of a total social organization based on the company. With the company thus assuming for the whole group responsibility formerly assumed by the large family, they [certain Chinese industrialists] are seeking to build up the same sense of loyalty." Surely some million-dollar foundation should make Winfield another grant for that one, in social sciences instead of parasitology—or

perhaps parasitology will cover it.

Finally Winfield leaps flat-footed into the Malthusian population theory, which died quietly in its British birthplace many, many years ago but has now reappeared as one of the *rationales* of the American Century. Fairbank also is infected with this atavism, but in a more genteel form; the point with him being that all reformist and revolutionary efforts may prove "tragically vain" if babies keep on coming faster than resources expand.

Winfield's indecently acute case is more instructive because it reveals the sterilization-and-gas-chamber direction of Malthus' latter-day disciples. A public health man by training, he betrays both his profession and his humanity by repeating again and again that medical science in China, in order to avoid premature interference with "natural population checks," must relegate the battle against epidemic diseases "to a minor role. . . . These diseases must not be controlled too soon. . . . It will require courage [and] not be easy to create and operate a medical philosophy that emphasizes prevention of births more than the saving of lives." Later, however, Winfield relents to the point of admitting that selected "better type" groups might both be cured when ill and allowed to have as many offspring as they might wish. Harking back to the original Malthusians, the Master Class replaces the Master Race.

Fairbank, who is neither ignorant of history nor one-sided in his approach, develops many strong criticisms of the present U.S. intervention in support of Chinese feudal reaction. Sumner Welles, in his preface, associates himself with Fairbank's dictum that "the Chinese revolution is fundamentally a matter for the Chinese people themselves." In spite of this, however, both Welles and Fairbank look forward to a new type of intervention, in support of a hoped-for future Chinese counter-revolution. Welles makes this transition by insisting that Communists everywhere are "in the last analysis subservient to the authority centralized in Moscow"—which returns to the view of China as a "U.S.-Soviet battlefield" which Welles himself deplores in the first instance. Fairbank does the same thing by developing the idea that intervention is unjustified but "counter-intervention" is all right:

> "If Russia, for example, intervenes in the Chinese scene so as to keep the Chinese people from choosing freely their own institutions, then the United States has the right to intervene in China to offset this Russian intervention. This is the idea of holding the ring, so that the Chinese people can make a free choice of their future. It is a logical corollary to the doctrine of self-determination."

This in itself sounds reasonable enough on a power-politics plane, though we can imagine what would be said here if the U.S.S.R. took the same "right" to "counter-intervene" today when the U.S., by Fairbank's own admission, has been engaged precisely in "keeping the Chinese people from choosing freely." But that is not all. Fairbank warns further that Russian "intervention" in China may be "not . . . by material means but rather by ideas." Therefore it is "suicidal for us to counter-intervene in support of Chinese independence and integrity on the plane of politics or military force alone."

If words mean what they mean, this implies that both military and political "counter-intervention" to ideas are permissible, but not enough. The objective of the U.S., Fairbank implies, should not be to stop the already unstoppable anti-feudal process, but to halt the development of Marxist solutions beyond that point. This ideological preparation for aid to counter-revolution after the Communist military victory, forms the main conclusion of the book.

When Fairbank considers the origins and course of American policy in China he assumes, though withholding approval, an inevitable massive "expansion" which consolidates the interests and attitudes of all Americans without exception. While this leads him to a correct estimation of such holy shibboleths as the Open Door policy as expansionist rather than altruistic, it leaves no ground for opposition to such policies by any social group in America. Most conveniently, Fairbank assumes class analysis as a valid and necessary method for seeking Chinese motivations but discards it as superfluous in examining U.S. actions.

Fairbank gives the Chinese Communists full credit for economic, political and social reforms and states clearly why the people rallied to them. But he also takes great pains to show that Marxism, the Chinese Communists' main weapon, is mere sterile "dogma," and that this applies particularly to the definitions of feudalism and imperialism which have determined their basic policy. Fairbank's chief difficulty then becomes to show how such a wrongheaded philosophy can produce such effective and even appealing results. He solves it only by endowing Chinese Communist leaders with a mysteriously unerring instinct, deriving from some magical source within themselves, for finding the right "gimmick" in any situation.

Thus the clever Communists took advantage of the "opportunity" to push democratic practices when the Kuomintang neglected to do so. In North China they rode "with the tide and on the crest of the wave," in a much more skillful manner than the poor old Kuomintang could do. They also did not fear to create an

"anomaly" in Marxism by using the peasantry as the main force fighting for revolutionary change. (This is no anomaly at all for Marxists who have said since Lenin that feudal and colonial rule can only be ended by organizing this force, but that the organization must come from proletarian Marxist leadership as occurred in China.) Even stock-exchange terminology is summoned. Fairbank says that "in the promotion of peasant rebellion the Chinese Communists now have a virtual monopoly in a rising market."

The possibility that the Chinese Communists may have in Marxism a scientific guide to the problems they face should seem more plausible, even to a completely unsympathetic and pragmatic scholar, unconscious of personal ideology, than the idea that they always gamble and invariably win which violates the simple law of averages. Fairbank, a student of history, cultures and civilizations who uses some Marxist concepts, does not examine them for a moment. This is iron self-control indeed. Or rather, and more seriously, it is a reflection of the thought-control which stifles free inquiry in America today. Either denounce Marxism without careful examination or suffer the Mundt-Rankin consequences of playing with fire. That is the alternative.

With the end-product of his analysis fitted into this Procrustean

bed, it is no surprise that some of Fairbank's final recommendations have the same ring of utter unreality as those which Forman and Winfield projected after far less study and labor. Since the Communists have that unfortunate "virtual monopoly of peasant rebellion," Fairbank proposes that the U.S. try its hand at encouraging non-rebellious peasant reforms, which he sketches in a chapter on Chinese reconstruction. Without entering on the details of this scheme one may ask at once: Who is to do it? The Kuomintang cannot, as Fairbank says its history proves, and furthermore will not be around long enough to try. The U.S. can hardly make the attempt without projecting unprecedented intervention of the type Fairbank attacks as hopeless, including holding "reform" areas militarily against peasants who have already rebelled. As for the Communists, they already have their own peasant program to which Fairbank concedes both success and popular support. What, and where, is the point of all this today?

The plight of such American writing on China proves that liberals who saw facts clearly in World War II can no longer afford to look, and conservative analysts certainly cannot answer the demands of a Chinese maxim quoted approvingly by Fairbank: "Know yourself and know your enemy, and in a hundred battles gain a hundred victories." Only American progressives who "know themselves and know their enemies" can today in their country advance the serious study of China. Not only can, one should say, but *must.* For failure to do so will leave the American people prey to blindness and mounting confusion about a vital part of the inter-related processes going on both here and abroad.

ISRAEL EPSTEIN

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## Hughes and Guillén

ONE-WAY TICKET, by Langston Hughes. Illustrated by Jacob Lawrence. *Knopf.* $2.75.

THE POETRY OF THE NEGRO, 1746-1949, edited by Langston Hughes and Arna Bontemps. *Doubleday.* $5.00.

CUBA LIBRE, by Nicolás Guillén. Translated by Langston Hughes and Ben Frederic Carruthers. *Anderson & Ritchie. Limited Edition.*

LANGSTON HUGHES occupies a rather special place in American life. Poet, novelist, playwright—he has become half artist, half institution. Over the years he has earned many and mixed honors: awards, grants, scholarships and fellowships—and persecution by the American Legion and other reactionary groups which are conducting a campaign to force cancellation of his lectures.

Hughes' verses continue to glow with pride and respect, and a wry cutting edge. And yet, in *One-Way Ticket* (his seventh volume of verse) there is something

lacking—some sweep and intensity—the exploding anger, the exultance, the moving passion which would lift his work above the middle realm where it has circled for twenty-five years. The verses glow, but they do not burn.

There is something subtly disturbing in these latest poems. There is just the slightest edge of isolation—a sense of Hughes as a solitary onlooker watching the scene from his own hill. At its worst, this leads to painting a scene that is picturesque and "quaint," reminiscent of the gaudy Twenties when Van Vechten was discovering the "New Negro" and Hughes was writing *Jazzonia*:

"In a Harlem cabaret
Six long-headed jazzers play.
A dancing girl whose eyes are bold
Lifts high a dress of silken gold."

Now, more than twenty years later, the speakeasy has become a juice joint, and Hughes is on the bandstand tooting the same saxophone:

"There is a gin mill on the avenue
Where singing black boys dance and play each night . . .

Play your guitars, grinning night-dark boys,
And let your songs drift through the swinging doors."

The opening section of *One-Way Ticket* comprises a dozen short poems dealing with "The Life And Times of Alberta K. Johnson," a Harlem domestic worker. These deftly trace the familiar pattern: playing the numbers, visiting the fortune teller, flashing rebellion at the white madam, mourning the long-gone man. The verses have a simple dignity and the clear rhythms of street-corner talk, of the old ballads. By themselves, they are well-made. But a whole volume in this tempo—and a *seventh* volume at that—shows little indication that Hughes is still on the high crags he reached in "Let America Be America Again" and "Song To A Negro Wash-Woman." There is something missing from the Harlem of *One-Way Ticket*—the garbage, the ominous cops prowling the darkness, the outrage, the growing power of organization uniting an oppressed people. In other words, the poetic realization of experiences out of which are distilled such lines as:

"A man comes home from work:
Knowing all things
Belong to the man
Who becomes
Men."

It is as an anthologist (along with Arna Bontemps) that Langston Hughes comes to bat for the second time this season with *The Poetry of the Negro, 1746-1949.* This is an extensive collection of Negro poets from the Revolutionary War writings of Lucy

Terry, Jupiter Hammon, Phillis Wheatley, down to the all-too-infrequently published work of exciting contemporaries like Waring Cuney, Robert E. Hayden and Margaret Walker. There is also a section of tributary poems by non-Negroes. (It is not always remembered that the greatest American poets chose themes from Negro life—Whitman, Longfellow, Whittier, Lowell, Melville, Hart Crane and others.) There is, among these, Kay Boyle's incandescent Scottsboro poem, "A Communication to Nancy Cunard." Failure to set down the dates of the poems is an unfortunate omission, yet a little investigation at the back of the book among the appended biographies will establish the era of the writer.

The third book with Hughes' name on the title page (this time as translator, with Ben Frederic Carruthers) is *Cuba Libre,* a volume of poems of the great Cuban, Nicolás Guillén. I use the word "great" in its most profound and uncorrupted sense. Guillén rises like a giant on the Southern peaks, standing in the range of cloud and fire with Lorca and Neruda. His poems grow out of the cane fields and the filthy peasant huts, gnarled, glistening with sweat and struggle, alive with explosive imagery. Some, like "Wake For Papa Montero," combine the classic ancestral tradition of the Spanish ballad with the African drumbeat. Yet the work swings the wide arc to the hard, machete rhythms of the cane-knife, the iron beat echoing American Negro tie-laying chants:

"The sun bakes your skin and
limb,
and nothing's in your cart,
your coughing brings up blood
and phlegm,
your coughing brings up blood
and phlegm,
thirty cents a day's your part!
Chop it with the cane-knife,
chop!"

Guillén's songs are savage with protest against the overseers, the American plantation owners and their soldiers, the slumming tourists:

"Who sent for you?
Spend your money,
Drink your likker,
Buy your souvenirs—
but you can't buy me,
not me,
not me!

"Though I am just a poor
Negro,
I know when things don't
go right.
Oh, but I know a mechanic to
make things right
To make things go right!
Who sent for you?
When you get back to New
York
send me some poor folks,
poor like me,
poor like me,
like me!"

It is ironic that Guillén's poems, when finally published here, should come out in an expensive, limited edition! Here is a poet whose songs deserve to be printed on penny paper and passed from hand to hand in the cotton and sugar-cane fields of Louisiana and Mississippi. For he has caught in his poems that moment of heartbeat which unites the working people of the earth.

MILLARD LAMPELL

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## Love Without Roots

AN ACT OF LOVE, by Ira Wolfert. *Simon & Schuster. $3.95.*

ONE of the important American novels of the past twenty years is *Tucker's People,* a bold and enormously talented examination of the effects of monopoly capitalism, told in terms of the Harlem numbers racket. It was written by Ira Wolfert, who later went on to become a Pulitzer Prize-winning war reporter. His dispatches from the Pacific and another generally underrated book, *American Guerrilla in the Philippines,* established him as a major talent. That is why his new novel is something of an event; and that is why, for me, it is something of a disappointment.

*An Act of Love* deals seriously with a basic theme; it has stretches of magnificent writing; it has the uncommon virtues of compassion and intelligence. But the theme, for the most part, is not presented in the context of a real society, and the writing is frequently mired in involved psychological probings that are too often not rewarding enough to justify their turgidity. The narrative writing is superb. The analysis of the ordinary actions of the characters, as they seek communication with each other, is tedious, often commonplace, and curiously old-fashioned.

The story deals with Lieutenant Harry Brunner, a young Jewish Navy pilot, who is washed up on a small Pacific island after his cruiser has been sunk. He is first picked up by natives who nurse him back to health, and then goes to live with an American expatriate planter, his wife and his young daughter, who live unmolested on the side of the island not occupied by the Japanese. The planter, Andersen, wishes no part of the war. He is willing to make peace either with the Japanese or the Americans, provided he is left alone. His daughter Julia falls in love with Harry; the balance of the book, told against an invasion of the island by the Americans, is the story of how Harry comes to manhood through an acceptance of life, and only then is able to release the love he feels for Julia.

Wolfert is here concerned with the inability of people in our society to permit love to grow, be-

cause of their anxieties, fears and "animalism." But he deals with the problem almost entirely in generalities. The corruption of love and decency and courage in our society is very real, but it is the result of concrete forces working on people in a specific manner. It is, as Wolfert showed in *Tucker's People,* the result of the way capitalism works.

In his present book, Wolfert shows an almost total disregard for the individual as a product of a specific environment. He deals with Man, his animal self as contrasted with his spiritual self (an arbitrary and untrue dichotomy), and he deals with Man in a context of actions divorced from the social roots of these actions. As a result, his novel seems suspended in space. While many of the psychological observations are brilliant, they also seem inconclusive. There is little explanation of action except in terms of characters acting in relation to themselves. Consequently, not even the war seems to have any reason beyond indiscriminate destruction.

Wolfert also does not utilize a fact which Norman Mailer recognized so well in *The Naked and the Dead*: that men reacted in the war in terms of what they were in civilian life. The war acted as catalyst, not as determinant; but in *An Act of Love,* there is little real connection between the war and the society that produced the war; and therefore little connection between the individuals in the war and the determination of their actions, which, in order to have validity, can only be fully understood in a real social context.

Wolfert remains an exceedingly fine writer. There is a sixty-page description of the sinking of a cruiser that ranks among the best war writing I have seen. His handling of the land combat is equally good. His people seem to me less successful. Andersen, the planter, is handled with sympathy and understanding, the result being a human picture of what is really a fairly despicable man. Harry Brunner seems less convincing; by the end of the book one still knows very little about him in terms of what made him what he was and what he became.

The recognition that man in the capitalist world, through lack of understanding, isolates himself in self-made caves, emerging only to war upon other men—this recognition is important. Equally important is the parallel recognition that the reasons for this, as well as the solution, lie in an understanding of the concrete social relations between men. Wolfert has recognized one without the other, which gives his book importance, but not the profundity it might well have otherwise achieved.

WALTER BERNSTEIN

## More than Murder

FOR US THE LIVING, by Haakon Chevalier. *Knopf.* $3.50.

THERE is something about this first novel by Haakon Chevalier, whose previous distinction lay in the translation of other men's work, which makes it possible to say that he has reopened an old, rich vein in progressive American letters and pioneered a new one. *For Us The Living* is in the tradition of Frank Norris and the early Sinclair, but it is something different and something more. Different in the sense that it is not content to "expose" the contraditions in American life—it integrates them. More in the sense that it goes beyond indignation and protest into the field of illumination and the springs of progressive action.

Chevalier has chosen to use a device for his lengthy narrative—the unravelling of a mystery. The mystery is: Who killed Steve Callahan? But where the usual mystery story takes place in terms of individuals who might have been motivated to kill, the mystery of Callahan's death lies in the realm of social forces, class relations.

For the murder of Steve Callahan, manager of the vast Regan Ranch in the San Joaquin Valley, three separate individuals went to trial between 1929 and 1941: his widow, Germaine; her lover and second husband, Larry Hellman; and Angelo Parenti, a militant organizer of agricultural labor on the ranch. Yet none of these people is the murderer. While the unravelling of the thread is as exciting and suspenseful as the best work in its field, it is secondary to the novelist's purpose which is the exposure of the fabric of California (and American) society within the period outlined—the Depression to Pearl Harbor.

Many people are touched, changed or destroyed by the death of this relatively unimportant individual. There is a page-boy in a San Francisco hotel; an ingeniously portrayed labor spy; the young widow and her second husband; Professor K. G. Morgan, Larry Hellman's mentor; and Nathaniel Quigley, captain of industry; Mexican fieldhands and professors and students at the great university near San Francisco. More important: the relationships which exist between all these people are profoundly understood by the author; and their relationships, in turn, to the source of wealth of the Valley, are ably exposed.

There is only one aspect of this brilliant story which might be called into question, and it is difficult to explain when one appreciates how much has been accomplished on every other level. That is what might be called the author's emotional relationship to his characters. These people—of many classes and divergent political philosophies—are immediately recognizable types and individ-

uals. Yet most of them lack a dimension that would lift them (and the reader) from the plane of recognition to a complete emotional identification.

In trying to account for this lack in what is otherwise an outstanding book, it is possible to note again the story device Chevalier has employed. The unravelling of the mystery takes place so ingeniously, so subtly, on so many levels of conscious and unconscious thought, that within it may lie the explanation of why Chevalier's characters take on some of the attributes of the chess-men who play an important part in the mystery itself.

As a reader, one becomes so engrossed in the working out of the pattern that he can too readily forget the suffering of the people. Chevalier himself may have become so involved in the intricacies of his complex plot that he did not succeed in infusing his people with the warmth and passion he devotes to his ideas. Nevertheless, I believe that *For Us The Living* signalizes the appearance of an exciting new talent.

ALVAH BESSIE

## People Under Socialism

PEOPLE COME FIRST, by Jessica Smith. *International.* $2.50.

FOLLOWING the American Revolution, foreign visitors often issued reports on the new nation. "Every English traveller turned critic," says Parrington, "and on his return home published a volume of truculent disparagement of ways and things American. For the most part those volumes were a defense of Toryism by the easy method of attacking democracy. . . ."

Similarly, Americans in our generation have visited and reported on the Soviet Union, whose people, following their revolution, have moved beyond us in extending democracy and in freeing human beings for creativity. And these reports, too, have often been mirrors of the writers' own political atrophy, rather than windows through which readers could view a new civilization.

Accordingly the publication of a book which is an honest picture of Soviet life is a matter of signal interest, especially when the book is as able and clear as Jessica Smith's *People Come First.* Miss Smith has long been a student of the U.S.S.R., and has been editor of *Soviet Russia Today* since 1936. In an era when American business has dangled particularly toothsome carrots before writers while at the same time threatening them with uncommonly persuasive clubs, she has maintained a continuous and understanding contact with the Soviet people—or rather peoples.

Buoyant affection for them animates Miss Smith's whole account of her latest visit that began after V-J Day. Enthusiasm there is in abundance, but it is the facts in

the book, gathered to an impressive extent from interviews with Soviet citizens, which bring the reader about as close as words can to the texture and movement of life under socialism.

For instance, Miss Smith goes to the chairman of the Soviet Lawyers' Union, Mariana Sabilla, for data on the much discussed divorce laws. Then she observes divorce proceedings in court. And for a picture of the children orphaned by the Nazi invaders, she turns to the ebullient Markushova, director of the Rostov Children's Home. Then she talks with children there and elsewhere—lots of them. And she does not omit her observation that not all such homes were administered with the resourcefulness Markushova showed in scrounging supplies and support for her institutions.

Scores of such interviews with carefully individualized factory workers, collective farm women, mayors, war heroes, seamen, scholars, make it clear that one universal element in Soviet life is the desire for peace and for friendly relations with the United States. Almost as universal is curiosity about all things American. One almost wonders how the myth of the "iron curtain" persists as Miss Smith reveals the really astonishing knowledge about America possessed by everyone from Leningrad librarians to Ukrainian school children. Likewise she found everywhere the liveliest ex-

pressions of gratitude for American help during the war.

To be sure, along with the gratitude, she heard expressions of unwilling doubt and alarm which followed the changes in American foreign policy after the death of Roosevelt. Of the already growing anti-Soviet propaganda in the U.S., Miss Smith says, "I. found any mention of it and any questioning of America's desire to continue the Roosevelt policy rather embarrassing to the Russians. They wanted to believe the best of our country, and their longing for peace was so great that they found it hard to imagine we could seriously entertain policies that might lead to another war."

What the Soviet war experience had been, she saw in Leningrad, already shaking off the outward signs of its ghastly siege, but still scarred—as were its heroic people. She saw the awful need for, and the beginnings of, reconstruction in Stalingrad. Along with evidence of "the ennobling effect of the war on the Soviet people," she also observed everywhere the war's great human cost. Nearly every family she visited, and she visited many, had lost at least one member. There were the armless, the legless, the blind. Also the moral casualties are not overlooked—those upon whom the war had had a brutalizing, rather than an ennobling effect.

The struggle to overcome losses of all kinds makes up much of the content of the book, and concerning certain aspects of this struggle, Miss Smith's material is particularly rich. There is a whole chapter, for instance, on Soviet women, which brings up to date the author's earlier book, *Women in Soviet Russia.* Another chapter deals with education and gives not only observations of classrooms, but much data on curricula and the development of Soviet educational theories and practices. Still another chapter deals with the structure, functioning and manifold importance of Soviet trade unions.

Appearing in the midst of the super-heat of the cold war, this book certainly will not make an easy unity in any reader's mind with tales of Soviet "aggression" along America's new borders—in Greece, or Iran, or Berlin, or Korea. Nor does the book's inescapable testimony to the Soviet people's great interest in culture harmonize with slanders about "regimentation"—or about a division of interest between the Soviet citizens and their government. Indeed the book makes altogether credible the enormous capacities of the Soviet people for heroism and labor and joy. They are the result of life in a country where "people come first."

FRANKLIN FOLSOM

# films

## *Nakhimov and Pudovkin*

*by* WARREN MILLER

"ADMIRAL NAKHIMOV," Pudovkin's latest film, opened at the Stanley in November and ran for only a few weeks. It was treated by the reviewers in the commercial press with the same amount of thought that is usually expended on a Betty Grable movie. Few of them showed any awareness of Pudovkin's stature and his tremendous contribution to film making.

Pudovkin's work must be judged by critical standards that he in large part created, and in the light of theories he first articulated. His *Film Technique,* published in England in 1929, contains nearly everything of value that has yet been said about the film. It is concerned with those basic problems of editing and rhythm, sight and sound, which will be of concern to the film maker and esthetician whether the screen be silent, talking or three-dimensional. The book's influence is, unfortunately, more apparent among those who write of the film than it is on the film makers themselves; and, as we shall see, Pudovkin, in his latest work, is no exception to this.

The story of *Admiral Nakhimov* is the struggle of a naval officer for the acceptance of his ideas by a corrupt government; the Crimean War is the historical setting. The film opens with a storm at sea. The Black Sea Fleet is returning from maneuvers; the ships put in at Sevastopol and we see Nakhimov ashore, having tea with a group of officers. It is in this scene that the first indication of the coming war is heard, that we learn of the conflict between Nakhimov's strategy and that of Prince Menshikov. Nakhimov's plan is a daring one: to take the Bosphorous before the Turks and British move to it. Menshikov, speaking for the czar, prefers a plan of "watchful waiting"; he orders the fleet out on maneuvers.

It is while the fleet is at sea that war is declared and Nakhimov carries through a successful attack against a Turkish fleet in the harbor at Sinop. But with the formation of a combined Turk-French-British fleet, the Russian officers can do nothing but concede to Menshikov's order to sink their ships at the mouth of the

harbor at Sevastopol. The ships are sunk and the battle continues on land with Nakhimov in command. The film ends with the battle for Sevastopol undecided and Nakhimov dead, killed by a stray bullet.

Throughout the film we witness the heroism of the Russian officers and men; indeed, parts of the film are literally songs of patriotism and courage. The valor of the Russian people is the film's underlying theme. Of equal significance, and made with the directness of a manifesto, is the film's statement: that the heroism and patriotism displayed during the Crimean War in the defense of Russia will be made again should the Western nations attack the Soviet Union. This particular historical situation, the provocation of one of Russia's neighbors by Britain and France, has a contemporaneity that gives it point and makes it much more than an artful recreation of history.

It is a legitimate filmic theme; but the screen play, as written by Lubovsky, is lacking in those filmic qualities which Pudovkin, as theorist, so rightly demands. In *Film Technique,* Pudovkin clearly defines the nature of these filmic qualities. He writes:

"The scenario writer must always bear in mind the fact that every sentence that he writes will have to appear plastically upon the screen in some visible form. Consequently, it is not the words he writes that are important, but the externally expressed plastic images that he describes in these words . . . the word is replaced by the plastic image." Pudovkin defines the role of the director as a man who must find the "plastic images" that will give visual expression to the abstract theme; and he points out that the scenarist "usually . . . gives the director the detached content of the image and not its concrete form." This, he believes, is the result of their "having graduated from the literary field" where the word alone is the beginning and end.

In film, the word by itself is deplored; action described by dialogue alone is better left to the stage, whose province it is. What the film demands is *co-expressibility* (the term is Erwin Panofsky's): what we hear must be fused with what we see; the script can have no value in itself.

Lubovsky's script is, like a novel, episodic; and, like a stage play, full of speeches and meanings which defy cinematic expression. It is significant that the film achieves effectiveness only in those two sequences where there is almost no dialogue; that is, in the first sequence, the storm at sea, which has about it the lyrical quality we remember from Pudovkin's earlier films, particularly *Mother;* and in the last scene, the death of Nakhimov.

For the rest, with the exception

of the battle scenes, the film is made up of talk-pieces. They are what Pudovkin has caustically termed "living photography." These photographed talk-pieces include the officers' tea where Nakhimov expounds his theory of warfare; the conference of the Russian fleet officers and the conference of the Turkish officers before the battle; the scene between Louis Napoleon and his advisers; the scene between the French and English generals. These sequences reminded me of *tableaux vivants* with sound added. The mobility of the camera, the film's capacity to compress time and to draw it out, is never fully utilized.

Pudovkin was one of the first film makers to understand what the introduction of sound to the silent screen could mean. He saw at once that it would be "false to consider sound merely as a mechanical device enabling us to enhance the naturalness of the image." One of his examples of "primitive sound effects" is, unhappily, a perfect description of, say, the scene of the interchange between the French and English generals, or the Turkish admiral addressing his officers.

The best use of sound occurs in the scene of the meeting of Nakhimov and Prince Menshikov. They are at a palace ball; downstairs the dancing goes on, while in a room upstairs the two men talk of war. As they discuss strategy and intelligence reports we hear the music of a waltz. Again, in the last sequence, when Nakhimov falls, a chorus of voices rises briefly in a lament and the slow beat of a drum begins and is carried through the following scenes, finally ceasing when Nakhimov dies. These two examples are practical expressions of a theoretical idea Pudovkin put forth soon after the introduction of the sound film when he wrote: "Now in sound film we can, within the same strip of celluloid, not only edit different points in space, but can cut into association with the image selected sounds that reveal and heighten the character of each. . . ."

It must be said, too, that Lubovsky frequently loses sight of his theme and allows his script to become involved with actions that are, I think, far removed from the theme. At least two of the sequences, and part of another, are concerned with naval strategy —unnecessarily and, in any case, in far too great detail. At times the movie is no more than a "living photograph" of a handbook of naval strategy. These scenes are meant, of course, to be more than mere illustration. Even as they stand now, their meaning, their significance in terms of the defense of the Soviet Union in the event of war, is clear enough. But the effectiveness of these scenes is often diffused and weakened because of Lubovsky's treatment.

The Soviet film critic Popov, writing on the shortcomings of some of the screen writers, made a charge that seems to me applicable here: "Often, writers resort to a simple illustration of a problem instead of probing it deeply through the medium of art. . . ."

On the whole this charge is pertinent, too, when applied to the way Lubovsky uses history—that is, as a kind of panoramic backdrop in front of which the characters play out their parts. We seldom see history as an operative force, shaping the mold of men's characters; they are static figures and it is only through the brilliance of the actors' talents that the breath of life is forced into them. A major weakness of the film is that it does not even attempt to show how two men so divergent in character as Nakhimov and Menshikov can develop out of what is presumably the same milieu. Without an understanding of the social background we can accept the character of Nakhimov only on faith; we cannot, for example, explain his democratic attitude toward the sailors nor understand how it came about.

This does not, by any means, imply that the final responsibility is anyone's but Pudovkin's. For it was the director who chose and approved the filmically weak script. In a brilliant article on Pudovkin written in 1933, Harry Alan Potamkin reported that his scenarists have had an overwhelming influence on Pudovkin, and that on the basis of a not very good script Pudovkin at one time repudiated his book, *Film Technique,* and all the theories, now classic, he had set forth therein. Pudovkin has again been seduced by a graduate from the "literary field."

Besides the lyrical opening sequence and the moving final sequence there are, within the *tableaux vivants* themselves, touches that reveal the master's hand. For example, the cutting and the use of sound prior to the battle at Sinop: the roll on the drums taken up by the bare feet of the sailors on the deck. The satiric portrait of Louis Napoleon, achieved not by the script writer, but by two seemingly simple cuts: the melodramatic gesture, close-up, of the hand pointing down, followed by the low-angle mock heroic profile-shot of Napoleon's head—it has the comedic exaggeration of a Daumier cartoon. The sinking of the ships, the masts protruding from the water like the tops of buildings in an inundated city. And, finally, during the land defense of Sevastopol, the shots of the laborers throwing down the picks and shovels and taking up rifles. But these touches are all too brief, all too infrequent; brilliant as they are they cannot overcome the script writer's heavy hand.

# *THE MADWOMAN*

*by* ISIDOR SCHNEIDER

UP TO the last days of 1948 the current theatre season might have passed without a play of any real distinction by which to remember it. Then came an importation, Jean Giraudoux's *The Madwoman of Chaillot,* and deposited quite a glowing memory.

Before turning to it, however, it is necessary to comment on the staleness and weariness on Broadway these last months, making this season, until the Madwoman shook it up, one of the flattest I can recall. The plays have been thin and timorous; they have had small emotional and even smaller intellectual reach. Even the substitute adventurousness of revivals was lacking. The depression fears, creating desperation in the box offices, and the stifling airs blown from the ubiquitous "investigations" have had their effect on the theatre as upon other areas of culture.

This becomes clearer when one considers the few plays that made any pretension to being serious drama or high comedy. Putting aside Sartre's *Red Gloves* and Tennessee Williams' *Summer and Smoke,* already dealt with in previous issues, they are Maxwell Anderson's *Anne of the Thousand Days,* Robert Morley's and Noel Langley's *Edward, My Son;* and the three Theatre Guild productions, Van Druten's comedy, *Make Way for Lucia*; Robert McEnroe's comedy, *The Silver Whistle*; and Dorothy Heyward's historical tragedy, *Set My People Free.*

Let us start with these last three since the Theatre Guild is the Broadway institution to which America is supposed to turn with some confidence for its serious theatre. The two comedies proved to be trivial. In his *Make Way for Lucia,* a dramatization of the English drawing-room and garden-party wars recorded by the late E. F. Benson, the usually deft Van Druten became heavy footed. His lines too frequently gave the effect of a ballet butterfly coming down on her heels with a thump. Perhaps social satire was intended; if so it proved too great a weight for Benson's frail fabric.

The other Theatre Guild comedy, *The Silver Whistle,* though a little easier to sit through per-

haps, because of its unashamed slapstick, was intellectually even lighter weight. For me its chief significance is the measure it affords of the excellence of *The Madwoman of Chaillot.* For the action in both is sprung on the same (and old) device, the testing of the "normal" and the "respectable" life by the experience of the abnormal and the disreputable—in the case of *The Silver Whistle,* a tramp, in the Giraudoux play, a madwoman. Where the insights offered by the first never got beyond the ribs, in the second they reach deep into the heart and the mind.

The third Guild effort, Dorothy Heyward's *Set My People Free,* was one of the saddest failures I can remember; a great theme fumbled and a great piece of acting by Juano Hernandez wasted. The exciting theme — the Denmark Vesey insurrection in Charleston —was muffed in the dramatization when Mrs. Heyward sought to overlay the conflict of slave and master with the currently fashionable soul conflict of vacillators and "sensitive" renegades. This shifted the action from the clear field of the insurrection to the ambiguity of a house slave's divided loyalties; and it shifted the major role from the heroic figure of Denmark Vesey to the pallid figure of George Wilson. History is a better dramatist than most of its adapters, and this play is a chastening demonstration of that truth. It is a demonstration,

too, of the pitfalls that await the playwright intrigued by the Koestlerian inner conflicts of the non-heroes. Epics belong to heroes.

The only play, until The Madwoman came along, with enough social content to be visible rather than deduced, was *Edward, My Son.* It shows the influence of Priestley in its trick of making the issues of the play a puzzle for the audience to solve. It tells a story with a moral: how a multimillionaire got his start by a

fraud he resorted to in order to raise money for an operation for his son; and how, using the boy's upbringing as an excuse, he continued the frauds to his unending profit. And so the rapacity of capitalist fortune making is made clear. Nevertheless the play is felt more as parable than as life; and the artificer's hand is too much in evidence.

As for *Anne of the Thousand Days,* a dramatization of the marriage of Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn, I found it "good theatre," nothing more. The play (the text of which is published by William Sloane Associates, New York, $2.75) is in free verse; but richer actual poetry was to be found in Williams' *Summer and Smoke* and Giraudoux's *The Madwoman of Chaillot* which are, formally, in prose. Anderson's play is a historical drama, but it takes little from the history from which it derives the social and political conflicts of which Anne Boleyn's tragedy was a reflection. The Anderson drama brings neither psychological nor historical insights. It is merely a sad love story relieved, at one level, by pageantry, and at another by bawdry.

Since these were Broadway's most ambitious offerings one can understand the excitement aroused by the appearance of so distinguished a play as *The Madwoman of Chaillot,* a fantasy, allegory or fable, as you will, but more real than most literary realism because it is a distillation out of reality made by a perceptive and feeling mind. The world of contemporary reality and respectability—the capitalist world—is represented by a promoter, a stockbroker and an oil prospector. The promoter issues stocks first and decides later what the newly capitalized company is to undertake; the broker disseminates the rumors that precipitate the buying and selling waves which float new profits into the promoter's and broker's tills; and the oil prospector seeks nothing less than the destruction of Paris. He is convinced that the city rests on a lake of oil. And what is the infinite deposit of human labor and genius that built up Paris in comparison! Promoter and Stockbroker join him in a plot against the four million Parisians and everybody else in France and the world to whom Paris is precious and necessary.

As they conspire at their cave table, the beauty and pathos of life impinge upon them and they shoo them off, calling furiously to waiters and the police to rid them of the pests. Beauty comes in the form of a street musician, a juggler, a flower girl; but nothing is sweet or lovely enough to divert them from the ravishing fragrance of oil. Joy comes to their faces only when the prospector detects a trace of oil adulterating his glass of water.

The madwoman of Chaillot overhears the plot and takes alarm. She determines to save Paris and the world from these ravishers of

beauty and joy and honest labor, who pimp upon all the processes of production, who put the squeeze on everything made and marketed. She lays a trap for them, baiting it with kerosene, and sends them down into the sewers of Paris to hunt for their lake of oil; and with them go journalists and courtesans, the men and women of "influence."

This is done after a council of war convened by the madwoman of Chaillot with her two cronies, the madwomen of two other quarters of Paris. From this scene Giraudoux wrings a touching humor that never offends because it is accompanied by deep and sympathetic understanding. And the destroyers are sent to their doom after a trial that is a subtle burlesque of bourgeois justice, a trial in which the bourgeoisie is judged and condemned.

*The Madwoman of Chaillot* is not, certainly, an exhaustive or precise social analysis; but it is remarkable for its range, for the sensitive skill which makes characters take on a symbolic life without sacrifice of their human life; and for the sharpness with which the unreason of capitalism is made evident. It is further distinguished by first-rate acting by Martita Hunt, Estelle Winwood, Nydia Westman, John Carradine and Vladimir Sokoloff; and by the remarkable Berard settings, brought over from Paris. It ranks among the best plays Broadway has put on view in years.

# letters

## More About Norris

*To M&M:*

MANY thanks for the article on "Dooley, Twain and Imperialism" in the December number. Sillen's well-documented, vigorous analysis cracks quite a bit of crust from our literary history—a crust daily thickened by well-paid and dead-fingered pontiffs of criticism.

Permit me to add a brief note about Frank Norris who wrote powerful novels exposing the 1900 California railroad monopolies (*The Octopus*) and Chicago wheat speculators (*The Pit*). In line with your article, let us see the effect of American imperialism on Norris—specifically, the period of the Spanish-American War of 1898.

Two of Norris' basic characteristics are revealed in this period of his writing activity. First, his tendency to be overwhelmed by "hot adventure" and "sensational drama." This plus his one-sided adulation of Zola and Rudyard Kipling (dangerous combination in itself!), weakened his sharp denunciation of capitalism in *The Octopus* and *The Pit*. Second, his sincere good sense would eventually win out over superdramatics. From his thinking there filtered out a more objective understanding of social problems.

In 1898, Norris fell victim to the war virus spread by Hearst & Co. S. S. McClure, the big publisher of the day, whipped up a huge staff to cover the Spanish-American War. His magazine's circulation doubled as a result of his good "business sense." Norris was hired as a war correspondent as was Stephen Crane, author of *The Red Badge of Courage*.

Two brief selections illustrate Norris' contradictions.

After witnessing the surrender of the Spanish army, Norris on horseback entered the captured city of Santiago. He wrote:

"There was no thought of humanitarian principles then. The war was not a 'crusade,' we were not fighting for Cubans, it was not for disinterested motives that we were there, sabred and revolvered and carbined.

"Santiago was ours—was ours, ours, by the sword we had acquired, we, Americans, with no one to help—and the Anglo-Saxon blood of us, the blood of the race that has fought its way out of a swamp in Friesland, westward, the race whose blood instinct is the acquiring of land, went galloping through our veins to the beat of our horses' hoofs.

. . . We rode on there . . . triumphant, arrogant, conquerors."

In the very moment when the face of imperialist war is unmasked, Norris is overwhelmed by the "drama" of racist exultation. (It should be noted in that period the science of heredity was comparatively young and popularly misunderstood. Zola himself weakened his cycle of novels with a similar misconception about "blood.") The split-second love of shock and excitement paralyzed for the moment Norris' understanding of his world.

And three months later the more basic side of Norris' thinking is revealed in a letter to a friend:

"I've been down with fever ever since leaving Santiago. . . . I need a rest very badly . . . and a good opportunity to forget a good many things I had to see during war. Now that I can stand off and as it were get a perspective . . . the whole business seems nothing but a hideous blur of mud and blood.

"There is precious little glory in war . . . when you try to recall the [Santiago] campaign, it's only the horrors that come to you. . . . I have seen men that were shot in the throat stretched out in the sun . . . who had been for 48 hours without . . . attention. I have seen a woman of seventy trying to carry on her back another of ninety-two. . . . I was the first to find, in one of the abandoned houses, the body of a little girl . . . who had been raped and then knifed to death. . . .

"I want to get these things out of my mind. . . ."

This is necessarily a small-ranged and incomplete glance at Frank Norris. Yours for continuing the fine beginning of your article by further studies in our very rich and democratically significant literary heritage.

ALFRED LEVINSON

Chicago

## Cover Photos

To *M&M*:

THE January cover photograph of the Spanish refugee mother and her children was very effective in its beauty and human appeal. However, I hope that this does not mean that you will discontinue the use of drawings and woodcuts: Harari's attack on the Marshall Plan (December) was excellent and hard-hitting. . . . Enclosed is $5.00 for your fund drive.

JAMES STROTHERS

Boston

*We are happy that with our new stock we are able to use photographic art on our covers, such as the one referred to and the one in this issue. We will continue to use other art forms as well, including half-tone reproductions of paintings. Thanks.*—The Editors.

# TOMORROW'S CHINA

## *by ANNA LOUISE STRONG*

*Anna Louise Strong is the only foreign correspondent to have penetrated the Liberated Areas of China, including Manchuria, shortly after it fell under Communist control.* Tomorrow's China *is based on a year's stay, from July, 1947, to July, 1948, in these newly liberated areas.*

*By jeep, donkey and airplane, this indomitable reporter has visited places hardly to be found on maps. She has interviewed not only leaders like Mao Tse-tung and Chou En-lai, but spoken to workers, peasants, factory managers, doctors, intellectuals, and hundreds of others. Her on-the-spot description of the agrarian reform, how Mao-Tse-tung's military principles are applied in the fighting against Chiang Kai-shek's armies, Chinese attitudes to the Marshall Pan and U.S. intervention, and the developments leading to the establishment of a new democratic all-China government, throws a brilliant searchlight on the China of today. Published by Committee for a Democratic Far Eastern Policy.*

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