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COVER: *The photo of Paul Robeson is by Bert Salwen.*

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NEGRO CULTURE:

Heritage and Weapon

by DOXEY A. WILKERSON

NEGRO culture emerges from and develops as an expression of the struggles of the Negro people for freedom from oppression. It reflects, therefore, the problems and achievements of the developing national liberation movement from whose womb it springs.

Negro culture is also a vital factor in the further development of the Negro's struggle for freedom. Expressing fully the reciprocal relationship between all art and society, it operates as a social force helping to shape the consciousness of Negroes and other Americans, and to move them to social action.

Approached in terms of this frame of reference, Negro culture is seen to have significance, not only in the field of "esthetics," taken in isolation, but also in the wider realm of political struggle. It is from this point of view that the present discussion proceeds.

No attempt is made here to trace the historic development of Negro culture, or to survey the cultural achievements of the Negro people at the present time, or to make technical evaluations of the contributions of Negroes to different fields of culture. Rather, the sole purpose of this discussion is to interpret Negro culture as a social phenomenon which emerges from, and reacts upon, the freedom struggles of the Negro people.

CONCEPT OF NEGRO CULTURE

BROADLY conceived, the term "culture" is to be equated with the term "civilization." It comprehends the entirety of the superstructure which a society has developed on the basis of its prevailing mode of production, on the economic foundation which under-girds and decisively influences the totality of social being. Thus, a people's gov-

ernmental forms, law, science, history, modes of dress, language, recreation, religion, morality and arts—all may properly be conceived as constituting their culture.

More narrowly conceived, the term "culture" is commonly equated with the "arts," that segment of the social superstructure which includes a people's literature, theatre, music, painting, sculpture and the dance. It is in this more limited sense that the term "culture" is used in this discussion.

What, then, is the meaning of "Negro culture"?

There are Negro spokesmen who deny that there is any such thing as Negro culture. They hold that Negroes are, first of all, Americans, and that the Negro artist's creations are simply a part of American culture.[1]

The editors of *The Negro Caravan,* for example, partially reflect this point of view in their negation of the concept, "Negro literature." In apparent contradiction to the title and the admirable contents of their anthology, they assert:

> "The editors consider Negro writers to be American writers, and literature by American Negroes to be a segment of American literature. . . .
>
> The chief cause for objection to the term is that 'Negro literature' is too easily placed by certain critics, white and Negro, in an alcove apart. The next step is a double standard of judgment which is dangerous for the future of Negro writers."[2]

This and similar denials of the concept of Negro culture cannot be validated on the grounds that the Negro's art creations have a definite interrelation with the whole body of American culture. True, there are such interrelations. Just as the Negro people are an interacting segment of American economic and political life, affected by and in turn helping to shape the whole, so the Negro arts constitute an interacting segment of American culture, greatly influenced by trends in American cultural life and in turn helping to enrich and to shape the development of American culture. It may properly be said of all the Negro arts what

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[1] Not long ago the writer received an invitation from the N.A.A.C.P. chapter at one of the New York colleges to lecture on the subject: "Is There a Negro Culture?"

[2] Sterling Brown, Arthur P. Davis and Ulysses Lee, *The Negro Caravan,* New York: The Dryden Press, 1941, p. 7.

Gloster says of Negro novels and short stories: they "are really part and parcel of the main body of American authorship . . . inextricable patterns in the warp and woof of the American literary fabric."[3]

But to say this alone is to ignore the most essential characteristic of Negro culture. The Negro arts defy adequate and fundamental understanding unless they are viewed as the expression of a *distinct people* within the general population of the United States, reflecting their *special* relations to the society as a whole, giving expression to their *special* memories, traditions and aspirations. Only in relation to the development of Negro Americans as an increasingly organized, self-conscious political entity within the American scene does the concept of Negro culture take on full meaning.

THE African homelands from which the original Negro Americans were torn by the slave trade had attained an advanced stage of cultural development prior to the European invasions. On the basis of an economy which included agriculture, the domestication of animals, gold and silver mining, cotton-weaving and the smelting of iron, there had emerged a notable development of the arts.

There was a rich and poetic folk-lore, and in some places a written literature. There was music, both instrumental and vocal. There was the dance. There were rock painting, wood and metal sculpture, ivory and bone carving, weaving, pottery, skillful surface decoration in line and color—in fact, as Alain Locke has pointed out, "everything in the category of the European fine arts except easel painting on canvas, marble sculpture and engraving and etching. . . ." Moreover, it is the verdict of modern artists and critics that, "of the many types of primitive art now known but then yet to be discovered, that of the Negro in Africa was by all odds the greatest and the most sophisticated."[4]

This African cultural development was sharply arrested by the infamous "trade in men." Over a period of four centuries, "mankind in Africa became goods—became merchandise"[5] and many millions of

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[3] Hugh M. Gloster, *Negro Voices in American Fiction,* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1948, p. viii.

[4] Alain Locke, *Negro Art—Past and Present,* Washington, D. C.: Association in Negro Folk Education, 1936, pp. 1-2.
See also: W. E. B. Du Bois, *Black Folk—Then and Now,* New York: Henry Holdt and Co., 1939, Chapter VI, "The Culture of Africa," pp. 92-125.

[5] W. E. B. Du Bois, *op. cit.,* p. 128.

Africans were uprooted from their native cultures and brought to the alien shores of the western hemisphere. They came from peoples of West and South Africa and the interior, with widely varying languages, customs, habits and forms of artistic expression. In their new homes, under the oppressive and degrading conditions of slavery, this African cultural heritage has in very large measure been lost.[6]

The concept of Negro culture—certainly in relation to its later development—cannot, therefore, be interpreted simply in terms of African survivals on the American scene. There are some such survivals; and they are reflected in Negro art, especially during its early development in America. But such African survivals by no means provide an adequate base for understanding the nature of Negro culture. The validity and meaning of that concept must be sought primarily in the experiences and development of the Negro people within the United States.

On these shores the former diverse African peoples acquired a new and common language—English. They were settled chiefly in a common geographical area—the South, especially in the expanding "Black Belt" area. They became an integral part of a common economic life—chiefly cotton culture based on slavery and geared to the insatiable commodity market of a developing world capitalism.

From the beginning these African "immigrants" and their progeny have, in varying degree, occupied somewhat the position of "alien Americans." Inextricably bound up with the economic and political developments of the nation, they have never been able to share fully in the national life. This basic fact has had a profound impact upon the consciousness of Negroes.

It was not merely as Americans but *as Negro Americans* that the slaves fought back in a multitude of ways against the oppression to which they were subjected. It was not merely as Americans, but *as Negroes*—viewed and treated as a special group by the rest of the nation, that they fought for and helped to win their freedom in the Civil War. It was *as Negro freedmen,* not merely "some more Ameri-

[6] There are certain able American scholars—notably Dr. Lorenzo D. Turner and Dr. Melville Herskovits—who report the discovery of extensive African cultural survivals in American Negro life. However, it seems that even those vestiges which they are able to uncover after diligent research serve but to emphasize the overwhelming fact that the American Negro has, for all practical purposes, been severed from most all of the African cultural heritage.

cans," that they forged an effective political coalition with the Southern poor whites during Reconstruction to develop, over a brief decade, the only structure of democratic state government the South has ever known. It was *as Negroes* that the recently liberated segment of the American population—no longer needed as an ally by an industrial bourgeoisie now moving toward its reactionary, imperialist stage of development—was pushed "back toward slavery" during the counter-revolution after 1876. And it is as a *special* population group—with special problems, aspirations and goals—that Negroes have continued their struggles for liberation from Jim Crow oppression during the twentieth century.

THE Negro's struggle for freedom over a period of three centuries has been carried forward, of necessity, through a varied succession of special organizational forms. Among them are the many local conspiracies of rebellious slaves, the Underground Railroad, the numerous Negro People's Conventions—before and after the Civil War, the Niagara Movement, the Garvey Movement, the National Negro Congress, and of major current significance, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. Today there is an extensive network of Negro organizations, local and national—religious, fraternal, labor, professional, business, youth, women, civil liberty—all of which are, in one way or another, preoccupied with the struggle for Negro liberation. Of special importance in this regard is the Negro press, whose history extends over more than a century, and whose readers now include several millions.[7]

In the course of this long development, Negro Americans have come to share a heightened group consciousness. Despite certain escapist tendencies to avoid even the use of the term "Negro," the immense majority of Negroes think of themselves *as Negroes.* They experience common forms of oppression in Jim Crow America; they share common sentiments and aspirations; they organize and struggle — as Negroes—for those democratic rights which they, as a special group,

[7] See, for example: (1) Bella Gross, *The History and Development of the Negro People's Convention Movement in the United States from 1817 to 1840;* (2) Herbert Aptheker, *The Negro in the Abolitionist Movement,* also *Negro Slave Revolts;* (3) James Allen, *Reconstruction—Battle for Democracy,* Chapter 5; (4) Harry Haywood, *Negro Liberation,* Chapter VII; (5) Doxey A. Wilkerson, "The Negro Press," *Journal of Negro Education,* Fall, 1947.

have always been denied. The once diverse African peoples and their progeny, through centuries of common experience in America, have been welded into a distinct political entity, increasingly organized, characterized by greater unity than any other sizable American minority, and with a strong sense of "belongingness." In short, there has been developed in America a new people, an oppressed people—*the Negro people*—with organizational forms and a group consciousness peculiarly its own.

It was inevitable that this people, with its special memories and sentiments and aspirations, should develop its own body of esthetic expression. This it has done in rich abundance—and the product is properly conceived as Negro culture.

Note this typical plaint of the unknown creators of Negro folk music, commonly separated from their loved ones and universally oppressed by the alien and hostile environment of the slave South:

Sometimes I feel like a motherless chile,
Sometimes I feel like a motherless chile,
Sometimes I feel like a motherless chile,
Far, far a-way from home,
A long, long ways from home.

The concluding verse of a similarly characteristic slave lament jolts the modern listener with its spiritual note of triumph:

Nobody knows de trouble I see,
Nobody knows but Jesus,
Nobody knows de trouble I see,
Glory, Hallelujah!

A people in slavery, yearning for freedom and seeking some basis for confidence in its attainment, sang:

Didn't my Lord deliver Daniel?
An' why not every man?
He delivered Daniel from the lion's den,
Jonah from the belly of the whale;
An' the Hebrew chillun from the fiery furnace,
An' why not every man?

Deprived in this world of the most elementary material needs of life, Negro folk artists of the early nineteenth century envisioned a happier day ahead. They sang:

I got shoes,
You got shoes,
All God's chillun got shoes;
When I get to heav'n, I'm goin' to put on my shoes,
I'm goin' to walk all over God's heav'n,
Heav'n, heav'n;
Everybody talkin' 'bout heav'n ain't goin' dar,
Heav'n, heav'n,
I'm goin' to walk all over God's heav'n.

Running through a great number of the spirituals is this dual note of complaint against the burdens of slavery and defiant confidence in ultimate liberation. Beneath an all-pervading cloak of religious imagery, some of these songs conveyed a message of struggle not difficult to discern in an era of the Underground Railroad and recurring slave revolts—"Steal Away to Jesus," "Go Down Moses," "The Old Ark's A Movering," "Swing Low Sweet Chariot," "Somebody's Knocking At Your Door," "O It's Goin' To Be a Mighty Day." Other songs expressed even more openly their challenge to the slave power—"Children We Shall Be Free," "Before I'd Be a Slave I'd Be Buried in My Grave," "Walk Together Children, Don't You Get Weary."

The Negro spirituals are clearly the art creations of a particular people with a very special relationship to the society of which they were a part. Their pre-dominating form—the "call and response" chant form—is unquestionably African in origin; and their language and religious imagery are common to many other groups of Americans. But neither Africans nor white Americans could possibly have created the spirituals. They grow out of and give expression to the struggles and sentiments and aspirations of Negroes under the specific conditions of slavery in the United States. They are cultural manifestations of the consciousness of a developing people, the Negro people. They are a great body of Negro culture.

So it is with other important bodies of Negro music—the work songs, the blues, and more recently jazz—the latter of which Sidney

Finkelstein characterizes as "the most important and lasting body of music yet produced in the United States."[8] None of these is mere "American music"; all are distinctly Negro music, reflecting the special group consciousness of this particular people. They are a part of Negro culture. Thus it is, for example, that Finkelstein correctly interprets the Negro's jazz as "A People's Music," as:

> ". . . . a fresh and new musical creation, telling us of the emotional and social life, the sadness, anger and vitality of the Negro people who were brought here as slaves, who through their labor created so great a part of American civilization and American culture."[9]

THE validity of the concept of Negro culture here advanced is attested by the work of Negro artists in all fields.

Decorating the front wall of the library at Talladega College is a magnificent mural by Hale Woodruff, depicting the revolt of the slaves on the trader, *Amistad*. It speaks eloquently, especially in its Alabama setting, of the historic and continuing struggles of a people for liberation from oppression.

Richmond Barthe's "The Blackberry Woman," "Mask of Black Boy," "African Dancer," "Mother and Son" and hosts of other works are really more than the creations of a talented Negro sculptor; they are the expression, through him, of the dignity and grace, the joy and sorrow of a whole people.

In his bitter and satiric prose-poem, "A Litany at Atlanta (Done at Atlanta, in the Day of Death, 1906)", W. E. B. Du Bois articulates the angry protest of the Negro people at one of the massacres so common in that day of resurgent Bourbon triumph:

> Behold this maimed and broken thing; dear God, it was an humble black man who toiled and sweat to save a bit from the pittance paid him. They told him: *Work and Rise.* He worked. Did this man sin? Nay, but some one told how some one said another did—one whom he had never seen nor known. Yet for

[8] Sidney Finkelstein, *Jazz: A People's Music,* New York: The Citadel Press, 1948, p. 11.

[9] *Ibid.,* p. 20.

that man's crime this man lieth maimed and murdered, his wife naked to shame, his children, to poverty and evil.

Hear us, O Heavenly Father! . . .[10]

Most of the notable fiction by Negro authors—from Charles W. Chesnutt's tales in *The Conjure Woman* (1899) and his first novel, *The House Behind the Cedars* (1900), on up to Richard Wright's *Native Son* and Ann Petry's *The Street*—inevitably varied in form and merit, is preoccupied with the experiences and sentiments and struggles of the Negro people. As Gloster puts it: ". . . American Negro fiction mirrors the *life and thought*" of the Negro people in the United States.[11]

So it is with Negro dramatists. To cite one example: Theodore Ward's *Big White Fog* helps much to illuminate the Garvey Movement; and his *Our Lan'* recounts the fierce struggle of the Negro freedmen for land during and after the Civil War, with more than a hint of the similar and greater struggles for land that still lie ahead.

The notable biographical and autobiographical works of Negro writers—Frederick Douglass, Booker T. Washington, James Weldon Johnson and many others—are, in essence, the interpretations of selected segments of Negro life and history through the consciousness of important participants.

So it is with Negro actors. A Charles Gilpin in *The Emperor Jones,* Ethel Waters in *Mamba's Daughters,* Canada Lee in *On Whitman Avenue,* Gordon Heath in *Deep Are the Roots*—many of the Negro players in Federal Theatre productions, the famous cast of *Porgy and Bess,* and Paul Robeson in several great roles, including Shakespeare's *Othello*—all bring into their interpretations a quality and meaning that could emerge only from the experiences and sentiments of the Negro people.

The dances of Pearl Primus reinterpret much of the African cultural heritage; and those of Katherine Dunham reflect the influence of the

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[10] For the complete "A Litany at Atlanta," along with an admirable selection of other works by Negro poets and by white poets about Negroes, see: Langston Hughes and Arna Bontemps, *The Poetry of the Negro: 1746-1949,* Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1949; see also, *The Negro Caravan, op. cit.*

[11] Hugh Morris Gloster, *Negro Voices in American Fiction, op. cit.,* p. 254.

Caribbean area. But both Primus and Dunham—as is true of the more recently emerging Janet Collins—are in large measure communicating through the different dance idioms (primitive, folk, jazz, modern and ballet) the varying moods and feelings and aspirations of the oppressed Negro people in the United States. When Primus does "Strange Fruit," for example, her audience senses all the horror of lynch terror and the bitterness of the people toward whom it is directed; the plight of the Negro share cropper lives poignantly in her "Hard Time Blues," done to Josh White's recording. Similarly, few if any modern dancers can so ably express the dual note of lament and confidence characteristic of the spirituals as is done in Janet Collins' interpretations of "Nobody Knows de Trouble I See" and "Didn't My Lord Deliver Daniel?"

It should be noted that, objectively, a great deal of the work of Negro artists is not at all concerned with expressing the consciousness of the Negro people. Into this category would fall much of the poetry and other writings of William Stanley Braithwaite and other Negro authors, many paintings, a considerable body of essays, some sculpture, a great deal of modern music, and some novels—such as the recent *Country Place,* by Ann Petry, and *Knock On Any Door,* by Willard Motley. Such artistic creations as these are here excluded, perhaps arbitrarily, from the scope of Negro culture.[12]

In such poems as "To John Keats, Poet, At Spring Time," Countee Cullen is the sensitive and gifted lyricist who happens also to be a Negro. But there is also the Cullen, poet of an oppressed people, who wrote such well-known poems of protest as "For A Lady I Know," and "Incident"—the Cullen who with characteristic irony cries out:

I doubt not God is good,
well-meaning, kind . . .
Yet do I marvel at this curious thing:
To make a poet black, and bid him sing!

It is very definitely as a *poet of the Negro people*—not merely an "American poet"—that Sterling Brown, in "Old Lem," lays bare the

[12] It would be fruitful to discuss further the validity of this limitation—that is, whether the concept "Negro culture" should also embrace the creations of Negro artists on non-Negro themes. There arises also the question whether certain works by white artists on Negro liberation themes (*e.g.,* Howard Fast's *Freedom Road*) might not properly be classed as Negro culture. Space does not permit an analysis of these issues here.

exploitative roots of the plantation system and its accompanying sanctions, a planter-dominated government and lynch terror:

"They got the judges
They got the lawyers
They got the jury-rolls
They got the law
They don't come by ones
They got the sheriffs
They got the deputies
They don't come by twos
They got the shotguns
They got the rope
We git the justice
In the end
And they come by tens . . ."

It is only as one who shares fully and deeply the indignities heaped upon an oppressed people—but who shares also their inherent dignity and pride and defiant confidence—that Langston Hughes can proclaim:

. . . Tomorrow,
I'll sit at the table
When company comes.
Nobody'll dare
Say to me,
"Eat in the kitchen,"
Then.

Those white Americans who deny the concept of Negro culture due to their ignorance or their failure to appreciate its rich abundance are but reflecting the characteristic chauvinism which permeates our Jim Crow society. Those Negroes who deny the existence of a Negro culture because they distort the struggle for equality into a misguided struggle for "identity" are but engaging in vacuous escapism.

There is, indeed, a *Negro culture.* It is a phenomenon qualitatively different from mere "American culture." It consists of the expression through various art forms of the special consciousness which long years of common experience have developed among the Negro people of the United States.

Negro culture is illustrative of what Stalin's famous definition of a nation characterizes as "a historically evolved, stable community of . . .

psychological make-up manifested in a community of culture."[13] It is a national culture whose origin and forms and content are to be understood as reflecting the emergence and development of an oppressed people, struggling for national liberation. It will flourish increasingly as the people from whom it springs move progressively toward their historic goal of freedom.

Just as Negro culture emerged historically as the art expressions of the developing Negro people, so must the solution of the big problems which confront its further development proceed as an integral part of the national liberation struggles of the Negro people. Chief among those cultural problems are what might be termed (1) the struggle for literacy, and (2) the struggle for content.

THE STRUGGLE FOR LITERACY

AN ARTIST must command the "language" of his particular medium—whether it be the written word, expressive bodily movement, form and color on canvas, melodic form, or some other—if he would give precise and full expression to the ideas and sentiments he seeks to convey. Historically, the common people everywhere have been shut off in large measure from this technical discipline in the arts, with consequent limitations in the forms of their artistic expression; and only under socialism in the Soviet Union is this state of affairs being decisively reversed. In America, the Negro people have been especially barred, by the conditions of their special oppression, from access to those cultural skills so essential for the fullest development of their art.

Locke has pointed out that the dominant arts in Africa were the decorative and craft arts—sculpture, metal working and weaving; whereas the Negro's chief arts in America have been song, dance, music, and later poetry. Underlying this shift in emphasis is the early Negro American's loss of his ancestral cultural skills in the oppressive environment of slavery.

> "We will never know and cannot estimate how much technical African skill was blotted out in America. The hardships of cotton and rice-field labor, the crudities of the hoe, the axe and the plow reduced the typical Negro hand to a gnarled stump, incapable of fine craftsmanship even if materials, patterns and artistic incentives had

[13] Joseph Stalin, *Marxism and the National Question,* New York: International Publishers, 1942, p. 12.

been available. . . . Stripped of all else, the Negro's own body became his prime and only artistic instrument; dance, pantomime and song were the solace for his pent-up emotions."[14]

Thus, the first struggle of the Negro for cultural realization in America was for literacy in the arts. This remains a basic line of struggle for the further development of Negro culture today.

The Negro's big cultural achievements during the nineteenth century were in folk poetry and music—the spirituals and the blues. They were socially created, continuously modified through improvisation, originally unwritten, and passed on by word of mouth. There were no significant folk developments in painting or sculpture, nor could there be under the material conditions of slavery.

These early art forms, despite their great qualities, necessarily limited the range of cultural expression available to the Negro people. Certain technical skills were essential before the Negro artist could express his message through written poetry, fiction, the drama, higher forms of musical composition and the graphic arts.

A great step forward was taken when the Negro people began to achieve mastery over the written word. It came through struggle—for clandestine learning in defiance of the slave codes, for free public schools during Reconstruction, for a revival in Negro education during the second decade of the twentieth century; and the struggle continues as one of major importance today.

It is no mere coincidence that the only notable eighteenth-century slave-poets—Jupiter Hammon on Long Island and Phillis Wheatley in Boston—had the encouragement and aid of benevolent masters in their acquisition of learning; or that the renowned late nineteenth-century poet, Paul Laurence Dunbar, was born and educated in Cleveland.

The first great out-pouring of Negro literary creations above the folk level—often termed the "Renaissance of Negro Art," or the period of the "New Negro"—came during the 1920's. It coincided with the first flourishing development of the Negro press—and for the same reasons.

World War I and its aftermath set into motion a whole series of major developments among the Negro people—new and educative experiences in the armed forces; the great migrations to Northern

[14] Alain Locke, *Negro Art—Past and Present, op. cit.*, pp. 3-4.

industrial centers, with the accompanying establishment of a mass Negro proletariat and a crucial bloc of Negro voters; growing struggles for improved conditions in the South; strong protests against the wave of postwar "race riots" and sharply increasing Jim Crow oppression; the Garvey Movement, with its proud and assertive Negro nationalism; and, with it all, the learning to read and write of many hundreds of thousands of formerly illiterate Negro men and women and children.

Here were developments which sharply advanced the liberation struggles of the Negro people, and thereby provided the necessary base for both an emerging Negro press and a notable renaissance in Negro culture. An increasingly self-conscious and militant Negro people had urgent things to say; and their growing command over the language afforded the technical means of expression.

But the Negro's battle for mastery of the written word is far from won. The Sixteenth Census of the United States reports that (in 1940) nearly 650,000 Negro adults 25 years old and over (10 percent of the total) had no formal schooling whatever; that approximately 3,700,000 (57 percent) had four years of schooling or less; and that only about 1,000,000 (15 percent) had one year of high school education or more.

It is clear that the emergence of the many cultural spokesmen of which the Negro people are capable—together with the development of a mass audience especially interested in what they have to say—is in large measure dependent upon major progress in the expansion of educational opportunities for Negroes. And this, of course, will come only through continuing struggle by the Negro people and their progressive allies.

THE Negro's struggle for cultural literacy is by no means confined to the quest for command of the written word. There are special and even more difficult "languages" to be mastered in the various fields of art; and the Jim Crow barriers which stand in the way are truly formidable.

A vast amount of accumulated knowledge and practiced craftsmanship were required to produce the great singers Marian Anderson and Paul Robeson, or composer William Grant Still, or conductor Dean Dixon, or composer-conductor Edward "Duke" Ellington, or painter Aaron Douglass, or others who have achieved greatness in the dance, the graphic arts, music, fiction, poetry, drama, theatre and other fields of

culture. Many thousands of potentially great Negro artists are struggling to acquire mastery of this technical discipline; but the odds against them are terrific.

When, through such fortunate circumstance as philanthropic patronage or otherwise, a talented Negro artist manages truly to master the language of his art and rises to the very top, he is generally welcomed and acclaimed by the elite rulers of the American cultural world—unless, of course, he is a Paul Robeson who insists on using his great art to fight the battles of his people. The illusion is thus created that the Jim Crow bars are down in the fields of art.

Nothing is farther from the truth. Between the fortunate few at the top and the multitude of able young Negro artists struggling to emerge is a vast chasm which is filled with ideological and structural barriers. There is, first of all, the widespread poverty among the Negro people, born of discrimination in employment. The general struggle for jobs for Negro workers is essential, therefore, as a means for laying the economic foundations upon which much extended technical mastery in the arts can be developed.

There is also the patronizing praise which rulers of the cultural world readily express for the Negro's achievements in the "folk arts," with the implication, of course, that aspiring Negro artists would do well to stay "in their place." In the theatre, for example—with few notable exceptions during recent years—Negro dancers included in a company (if any) are generally called upon to do the Charleston or some similarly "appropriate" steps, or Negro actors to play the stereotype roles of an Uncle Tom or Aunt Jemima.

There are widespread barriers against the employment of Negroes in all of the various fields of art, and hence against their having any opportunity to develop practiced craftsmanship. For example, the New York conference of the Cultural Division of the National Negro Congress reported in 1947 the following results of a survey on Negro employment in selected art fields:

1. THEATRE: In 92 plays in three years with 147 parts, 11 parts have been for Negroes.
2. RADIO: Of 30,000 employees, 200 are Negroes—and many of them hold menial jobs.
3. SCREEN: In 500 films recently produced, 11 Negroes were employed—10 of them as Uncle Toms or Aunt Jemimas.

4. PUBLISHING: Of 2,000 books published last year, 28 were written by Negroes or dealt with Negro themes.
5. NIGHT CLUBS: Of 400 in New York, 386 discriminate against Negro performers, and 397 against Negro customers.

This deliberate and wholesale exclusion of Negro artists from employment opportunities is especially serious on those secondary, preparatory levels where the thorough development of previously acquired skills is of tremendous importance for one who would rise to the top. A Negro writer rarely has the opportunity to develop his abilities through employment on a daily newspaper or first-rate magazine. An emerging Negro artist almost never gains employment with one of the vast advertising agencies where he might perfect his skills. A Negro who has learned to play the piano or violin seldom gets a chance further to develop his abilities in the pit of a legitimate theatre and never in a major symphony or opera organization.

The short-lived Federal art and theatre and music projects of the "New Deal" were doing much to open up new channels for the development of technical mastery by young Negro artists—and many of the recognized performers of today won their spurs through W.P.A. The Wallace Youth Caravans of recent months are another wholesome and much needed development to this end. The program of the Committee for the Negro in the Arts—including the arrangement of auditions for young artists, the struggle against job discrimination in cultural fields, scholarship grants, and the presentation of outstanding "new" artists in Town Hall concerts—is making an important contribution. So likewise are various organized campaigns to break anti-Negro barriers on the concert stage and in the legitimate theatre—notably Actors Equity's ban on Jim Crow performances at the National Theatre in Washington, D.C.

The special obstacles which bar Negro artists from most all paths leading up to the top are part and parcel, of course, of the over-all system of special oppression to which the Negro people are subjected by the imperialist rulers of the American economy, and hence of the highly commercialized world of culture. These cultural barriers also have a more particular significance. The Negro artist is especially dangerous to the Jim Crow system of super-exploitation because he is prone to give effective expression to precisely those ideas and sentiments which serve to strengthen the liberation struggles of the Negro people.

To bar the path of technical growth for the Negro artist is to help keep the Negro people "in their place." By this same token, to launch new and large-scale struggles for the attainment of cultural literacy by the Negro people is to strengthen the whole Negro liberation movement, and thereby the struggle against imperialist reaction in the entire nation. This is an important aspect of the anti-fascist struggle which the labor-progressive forces of our country have yet to tackle in a serious way.

THE STRUGGLE FOR CONTENT

MASTERY of the tools of cultural expression, although fundamental to progress, by no means assures the development of a great Negro art. Indeed, along with developing technical progress there arise hosts of new problems with which the folk artist is but little concerned. Most basic among these problems are those associated with the struggle for valid contact.

Art is inexorably social, both in the origins and in its effects. It is a means of communicating ideas and emotions by the artist to other men through his particular cultural medium. It is necessarily partisan. In a society whose dominant characteristic is the class struggle, the artist necessarily takes sides, choosing to express certain ideas and to reject certain others. The highest goal of art is to express, and thereby to advance, true human values—that is, the values cherished by the immense majority of working people everywhere.

A great Negro people's culture, therefore, must have a solid core of realism. It must reflect honestly and understandingly the experiences and consciousness of the Negro people, and the values for which they struggle. It must interpret the aspirations and struggles of the Negro people in relation to those of working people generally, in the United States and throughout the world. The development of such a content for Negro culture is fraught with many hazards.

Most fundamental in this regard is the fact that the avenues of cultural expression in the United States are so completely commercialized, with effective controls in the hands of precisely that finance-capitalist class which is the mainstay of Jim Crow oppression. For them, the general criterion of what art to allow is immediate cash receipts; and with Negro art there is the further incentive to maintain and strengthen the ideology of white supermacy which helps protect their multi-billion dollar system of super-exploitation.

Thus it is that the movies have virtually no roles for Negro actors outside the traditional stereotypes—that even a Lena Horne gets rough treatment for refusing to compromise the inherent dignity of her people for a profit-mad and sterile cinema. Thus it is that that superb and fighting people's artist, Paul Robeson, acclaimed throughout the world, is now barred from the concert stage in the United States. Thus it is that "Rochester" and "Bojangles" and others willing to fit into compromising roles are assiduously cultivated. Thus it is that "Amos 'n Andy" continue to poison the radio channels with their grotesque caricatures of the Negro people.

Honest dramatic portrayals of Negro life rarely find a place on Broadway. Among the 889 identifiable characters analyzed in a two-year sampling of short stories published by eight leading "slick" magazines, only sixteen are Negroes—chiefly menials, racketeers, thieves, gamblers and shady night-club proprietors. In every field of culture—with few and now dwindling exceptions—there are strong barriers against the presentation of Negro art creations and Negro artists unless they adhere pretty closely to the finance-capital "line" of Negro inferiority.

THE impact of this state of affairs on the content of Negro art is devastating. The Negro artist must eat; and he is under tremendous pressure to prostitute his art to the end of physical survival. Many have done just that.

The great "Duke" Ellington can tear up a contract with producers who reject certain of his compositions on the grounds that they constitute "white man's music." The incomparable Paul Robeson can book as many concerts as he can fulfill in Europe. But most sincere Negro artists face a very hard choice when they realize, as one Broadway producer was frank to tell a Negro dancer who shied away from a stereotype role: "You've got to decide whether your need of a job is as great as your racial pride." All too often they decide to take the job.

Not unrelated to this pervading insistence upon Jim Crowism in cultural content is the tendency of many Negro artists to escape into cosmopolitanism and formalism. On the one hand, they deliberately avoid Negro themes, rationalizing on the irrelevant premise that they want to produce art "as good as any other." On the other hand, they seek refuge in the "art-for-art's-sake" avoidance of any realistic themes

whatever, travelling down the fruitless and meaningless road toward non-objective "beauty" and "delight."

It is clear that progressives should fight for the *right* of Negro artists to master any cultural discipline and to deal with any subject matter, including non-Negro themes. But it is also clear that progressives must sharply criticize Negro or any other artists who succumb to the decadent and irrational tendencies so generally characteristic of culture in our moribund capitalist civilization.

The Negro artist is, first of all, a Negro. He lives in a Jim Crow society. He is part of an oppressed people; and his own consciousness is profoundly shaped by the experiences of that people in their struggle for liberation from oppression. Let him try to isolate himself from the social foundations that are his very being and his art will inevitably reveal the distortions of any other uprooted thing.

There is not, and could not be, any valid principle which would restrict the Negro artist to Negro themes. But the Negro artist who aspires to be "as good as any other" (or even better!) would do well to understand that the high road to his goal lies, not in self-negation, but in the full and honest interpretation of his own consciousness—through expression of those memories, ideas, sentiments and aspirations which constitute the special psychological make-up of the Negro people.

Still another obstacle to the development of valid content in Negro culture lies in the impoverishment of the potential Negro audience. The Negro novelists and poets and dramatists want to be read; but few of their own people can afford to purchase their works for from $2.50 to $6.00. The Negro dancers and musicians and actors want to be seen and heard; but few Negro families can afford the admission fee to the concert hall or legitimate theatre—and in much of the nation they would be kept out even if they had the fee. The Negro painter wants his work to be seen and enjoyed; but his own people are at work when the galleries are open, and but few can afford to purchase his canvases for their homes.

Consciously or not, every artist addresses his creations to an audience. The general impoverishment of the Negro people robs the Negro artist of precisely that tremendous audience most likely to appreciate valid content in Negro culture. The Negro artist, therefore, must address himself largely to an "alien" audience; and this fact is not with-

out considerable influence on the genuineness of what he tries to say.

The class position and orientation of the Negro artist is another factor which significantly affects the content of Negro culture. Negroes are, overwhelmingly, a working-class people; hence a valid Negro culture must reflect this basic fact. On the other hand, most Negro artists are of the middle class and cherish petty-bourgeois values; hence their creations very often do not reflect honestly and understandingly the experiences and consciousness of the Negro people, and the values for which they struggle.

Illustrative in this regard is Richard Wright. Even in *Native Son* Wright revealed a tendency to see the problems of the Negro people as deeply rooted in unfathomable psychological mysteries, not basically in the class struggle. Further, under the cloak of "naturalism," he selected from the life of his own people precisely those images which give the reader an intense feeling of horror and revulsion. This tendency is still more evident in *Black Boy*. The critics of the bourgeois press, of course, were delighted at what they called his "objectivity," his alleged kinship with Dostoyevsky and Faulkner. But it should be clear that Wright greatly distorted the true character and aspirations and struggles of the Negro people. Moreover, the subsequent degeneration of his once great powers reveals how self-destructive is the path that leads a Negro artist away from his own people.

The problem of developing working-class content in Negro culture is also reflected by the absence of any major work of fiction based on the Negro industrial worker. A mass Negro proletariat was established over three decades ago; and many hundreds of thousands of Negro workers have entered the trade unions since the middle 1930's. But there has not yet appeared a significant novel primarily concerned with interpreting the Negro people's relations to the American labor movement. One hopes that the skill, understanding and class consciousness which Willard Motley demonstrates in *Knock On Any Door* will be turned also to the production of fiction which interprets the experiences of the Negro proletariat.

Finally, the struggle for valid content in Negro culture requires much more widespread information and theoretical understanding of Negro life and history than now obtains among the people in general.

In a discussion of Theodore Ward's *Our Lan'* during its run on Broadway several years ago, a leading Negro minister, unimpressed with the play, commented to this effect: "We ought to get away from

all that past history about slavery; the Civil War ended more than eighty years ago." He simply did not know that the Southern land question which the Civil War and Reconstruction left unsolved—and which the drama so effectively interprets—is one of the fundamental bases of Negro oppression today. Such ignorance and attendant attitudes probably had much to do with causing *Our Lan'* to fold after an all too brief run. They also help explain why there appear so very few cultural creations which afford basic theoretical insight into the Negro question.

The tremendously vital and significant history of the Negro people remains a closed book to most Americans, including the Negro people themselves. It is not taught in the schools; and most efforts to deal with it through cultural media tend to yield such gross lies and distortions as are recorded in the film, *Birth of a Nation,* and the novel, *Gone With the Wind.*

The profit-seeking roots of Negro oppression today and the national character of the Negro liberation movement are, likewise, not understood by most Americans, including the Negro people. White chauvinism is widespread and virulent. Idealist notions that "prejudice" somehow is the "cause" of Negro discrimination, and Utopian illusions about the liberation of the Negro people through "gradual reform"—these about sum up the predominating pattern of so-called "advanced" thought on the Negro question in our country today.

An abiding structure of authentic Negro culture cannot be built on such rotten ideological foundations. A truly great and enduring Negro culture can be developed only by a corps of Negro artists who have a firm theoretical grasp upon the historic and present relations of the Negro people to American society. Thus the struggle for widespread ideological clarity on the Negro question is basic to the struggle for valid content in Negro culture. Here, again, is an area in which the labor-progressive movement has taken only the initial steps essential for the development of a struggle of sufficient proportions to affect the thinking of the broad mass of people.

NEGRO CULTURE AS A SOCIAL FORCE

THE main problems of Negro culture—to develop technical mastery and valid content—are but reflections, of course, of the over-all problem of the Negro people: to achieve economic, political and social

freedom, recognized dignity, and full cultural expression through liberation from national oppression. As the Negro liberation movement grows in unity and strength, as it forges closer bonds with its labor-progressive allies, as it effects new and progressive changes in the objective conditions and relations of the Negro people in American society—as these developments proceed, there will come corresponding progressive achievements in the struggle for literacy and content in the Negro arts.

But Negro culture is much more than a mere reflection of the liberation struggles of an oppressed people; it is a social force which can do much to advance the freedom struggles of which it is an integral part. The Negro artist is an educator of the Negro people; and in a different but most important way, he is an educator of the entire American people.

As is true of all culture, Negro cultural creations are a form of persuasion. The artist tries to get his audience to accept his interpretation of reality. To the extent that he succeeds, he helps to shape the consciousness of men and to influence their role in social action. And this social role of the Negro artist is no inconsequential thing—whether he functions in the service of the imperialist warmakers and exploiters, or in the service of the Negro people and their working-class allies.

Lenin once wrote: "Art must unite the feeling, thought and will of a people, uplift them." There could be no more valid role for Negro culture. The Negro artist who uses his talents consciously to advance the liberation struggles of the Negro people is contributing not only to his own freedom, but also to his self-realization as an artist. The creators of Negro culture must fight to play this role; and the progressive organizations of the people, both Negro and white, must back them up in this struggle.

Paul Robeson continues to demonstrate to the world the potential power of Negro culture as a progressive social force—in the fight against lynch terror and for Negro jobs, in the struggle for a strong and united working class, in the fight for peace, for the liberation of colonial peoples and for socialism. It is a major responsibility of progressives to struggle for the fullest expression of this power—to help release Negro culture from the fetters of Jim Crow oppression, and thus to advance the freedom and security of the Negro people and of all Americans.

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ON SAFARI WITH HARARI

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I Meet a Maccabean

by A. B. MAGIL

THE door of the inner room opened and a young man came out. He wore an open khaki shirt, khaki pants and ankle puttees.

"That's Yigal," said the plump Palmach girl.

I walked over and handed him the note—the precious note signed with a name that carried authority. Colonel Yigal Alon, commander-in-chief of the Palmach, smiled and held out his hand.

"I've been trying to get to you for weeks," I said. "I wanted to spend a little time with a Jewish general."

He smiled again. "Jewish, yes, but general?" He made a deprecatory gesture. Technically he was right—the highest rank in the Israeli army was colonel, with the exception of the Chief-of-Staff, who was a brigadier. But an Israeli colonel had the responsibilities of a major- or lieutenant-general in another army. This whole business of rank was new; it wasn't popular with the Palmach, the superb assault troops of what had been the Haganah and was now the Defense Army of Israel. Until recently all the officers were simply called commanders as they had been in the illegal Haganah days.

"Let's eat," Yigal said. Rank or no rank, everybody called him Yigal. It was after two of a hot mid-July day. I had been waiting nearly three hours after hitch-hiking on the rear seat of a courier's motorcycle from Tel Aviv to this former Arab village of Yazur, now headquarters of the Palmach staff. We went to the mess-hall where officers and men ate together.

This Yigal was no conventional military man: he was relaxed, informal, humorous. Sitting opposite him, I looked into a wide intelligent face with a high forehead from which light-brown wavy hair sloped back. He had blue eyes, a firm chin, powerful neck and shoulders. He looked more like the kid from Genosar *kibbutz* (communal farm) in the Jordan Valley than like the conqueror of eastern

Galilee, Safad, Lydda and Ramle. He was twenty-nine years old and had won the greatest Jewish military victories since Judas Maccabeus.

We spoke in Yiddish. Though a *sabra*—a native-born Palestinian—Yigal spoke Yiddish well. "I picked it up in Poland when I was there last year," he said. But he must also have heard it as a child on his father's farm in Kfar Tabor where he was born and which, appropriately enough, was also the birthplace of Hashomer, the first Jewish self-defense organization in modern Palestine. We talked about Colonel David Michael Marcus, the American officer who gave his life for Israel. Marcus had worked closely with the Palmach, had greatly admired its fighting qualities. When the Arab fortress of Safad in Galilee was captured by a corporal's guard of Yigal's youngsters, Marcus was bowled over. He said he would have needed 30,000 men to do the job. "A fine soldier," Yigal said of Marcus. "We learned from him—but he also learned from us."

After lunch Yigal went back into the conference room and I waited again. At last he came out. "There won't be anything doing today. Suppose you go back to Tel Aviv and return tomorrow afternoon at two. We'll try to cook up something interesting." I picked up my knapsack and we walked out together toward the road. "You can go back with Galili," Yigal said.

I turned my head a little. A few paces in front of us was the barrel-chested figure of Israel Galili, former commander-in-chief of the Haganah, whom Prime Minister and Defense Minister Ben Gurion had kicked upstairs to the post of Assistant Defense Minister. Galili had become the center of a controversy over the social character of the army. And the Palmach, which had largely been created by the left Zionist forces, had become the bugbear of Ben Gurion and the British-trained officers with whom he surrounded himself. Was the army to continue the democratic traditions of the Haganah and the Palmach, or should it be molded in the image of the capitalists whose policies dominated the government of Israel? Galili, a member, like Yigal, of the United Workers Party (Mapam), a left Zionist socialist group, represented the progressive forces who wanted an army in keeping with the character of this people's war.

Galili got into a shiny 1948 Chrysler and I took the seat beside him. "You're having troubles these days," I said. "Yes, I am." But that's all he would say.

THE next day I thumbed my way back to Yazur. Yigal was again in conference. Tacked to the wall was a Hebrew leaflet entitled "Negbagrad," issued by the staff of the southern front. Only a little over a month earlier, at the beginning of the first truce, I visited Negba, the communal farm thirty miles south of Tel Aviv, whose defense against the Egyptian invaders had become an epic of the Jewish liberation war. I had seen the tragedy and glory of Negba, the ruins of buildings and the grandeur of people. And now it was being called Negbagrad.

I asked a soldier to translate the leaflet for me. One paragraph read: "Our hearts are firm and we are confident that those who began by holding fast in the Stalingrad manner will quickly and surely end the struggle in the manner of Stalingrad."

In a postscript the staff of the southern front announced that they were naming three artillery pieces Abraham, Isaiah and Chaim after men of Negba who had fallen in action. "With our guns we shall avenge their blood!"

When Yigal finally emerged, Artzi was with him—little Yehuda Artzi, the military correspondent attached to the Palmach, whom I knew well. "We're leaving soon," said Artzi; but it took another couple of hours before we broke camp. Yigal and Artzi were the last to leave, and the three of us piled into the rear seat of a car with our gear. Two Palmach boys were in front. Yigal was in high spirits. He kept ribbing Artzi, a shy little man who spoke in a near-whisper.

We drove through Ramle, the key Arab town which Yigal's forces had captured a few days earlier in a brilliant encircling operation. The place was almost deserted. On the road we came across Arab refugees, mostly women, many with children in their arms. They were fleeing from Ramle, where to no one knew, least of all the refugees themselves. It was a cruel sight. None of us said anything.

After driving about fifteen miles we came to an abandoned Arab village. It looked better than most, had a number of handsome stone houses. We arrived at a one-story, two-room building in the midst of an orchard of plum trees. There we were welcomed by a youthful Palmach group under the command of Morris, a lad who had come from South Africa years ago. They were part of that gallant band, the Palmach of some 5,000 trained soldiers, who in the early days had borne the brunt of the Arab assaults and enabled the Jews to mobilize their forces and prepare the counter-blows.

After putting their gear in one of the rooms, Yigal, Artzi, Morris

and Yitzchak Rabin walked out together. Yitzchak was Yigal's second in command, a tall man of twenty-seven. Yigal asked me to come along. We got into a jeep, Yigal riding jauntily astride the hood. All of them wore revolvers slung from bullet belts; Yigal and Yitzchak also carried field glasses. "We're planning to attack Latrun," Artzi whispered to me.

Latrun! That bone in the throat of Israel! The town which commanded the road between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. Its seizure by Abdullah's and Bevin's Arab Legion had cut off Jerusalem from the Jewish state. The Israelis had made three costly attempts to capture Latrun, but each time had failed.

WE DROVE about a half mile, skirting road-mines on the way, till we came to a spot that looked almost like a picnic ground. There were three or four tables and several soldiers—home guards, not Palmach men—eating bread and tomatoes. We sat down at one of the tables under a eucalyptus tree. A few feet to our left was an oblong-shaped Arab school-house. Before us stretched a wide green plain leading to a water tower and a police station—one of those familiar yellowish buildings which the British had strewn prodigally throughout the country. We were in the village of El Quebab, and facing us, only two miles away, was Latrun.

We were surrounded by history. Seven miles directly southeast was Sar'a, the Biblical Zorah, where Samson was born. About the same distance northeast was the site of Modin, home of the Maccabeans. And east of us lay what once was Emmaus, where Judah the Maccabee won his greatest victory. The annihilation of the Syrians at Emmaus opened the road to Jerusalem. And now, more than two thousand years later, a new Maccabean army was seeking to open that road again.

Yigal and Yitzchak looked through the field glasses—looked and talked and looked again. Then I took them and saw, in addition to the water tower and police station, a monastery lying to the right and a hill leading to the town of Latrun proper. When we returned to the staff headquarters, Artzi outlined the battle plan for me. During the night strategic villages and heights commanding the approaches to Latrun were to be taken by other Palmach units. The next day, Friday, a strong striking force, including armor, was to be concentrated here in El Quebab to make the direct assault.

When it was almost dark Yigal, Artzi and I went back to the place

near the schoolhouse, this time on foot. The home guards were gone. We sat down at a table and others soon joined us in twos and threes. In the darkness somebody passed around freshly picked plums. The moon climbed up the sky. For long periods no one spoke. Then suddenly I became aware that the place was swarming with people. I heard the dull metallic sound of a shovel and saw in the darkness men digging slit trenches. Gravediggers, I thought.

The schoolhouse was white in the moonlight. It was built on a stone platform and some of us moved over and sat down on the edge, letting our legs swing free. New arrivals came and I recognized Michael Bengal, the husky, youthful military commander of the Tel Aviv area. He introduced me to several other officers from Tel Aviv. At eleven o'clock Palmach girls arrived and began handing out hard-boiled eggs, bread and butter, tomatoes and tea.

Toward midnight the digging ceased. I looked around for Yigal and Artzi. "They're up on the roof," somebody said. A ladder stood against the school building. I climbed up to the roof and joined them. A few feet away a radio man was jabbering instructions in Hebrew code. We were in communication with the forces that were fighting their way along the flanks of Latrun. Occasionally Yigal would take the earphones and ask to speak to someone.

In the distance to our left, directly northeast of Latrun, the darkness was suddenly lit up by a shell-flare. Then another and another, yellow, green, red. The battle for the hills was on. "Tabenkin's boys are moving," Artzi said to me. A Palmach brigade under Lieutenant-Colonel Joseph Tabenkin was attacking two hills overlooking the road from Latrun to the Arab military base of Ramallah. Tabenkin, son of Yitzchak Tabenkin, one of the leaders of the United Workers Party and founder of the largest collective farm organization in the country, was the officer who had supervised the work on the secret road—the "Burma road"—which the Israelis had built to bypass Latrun and link up Tel Aviv with Jerusalem.

That road was one of the miracles of the war. Amos, a young Palmach officer, conceived the idea of the road. He walked at night all the way from Bab el Wad to Tel Aviv, about twenty-five miles, groping his way over mule-paths and camel-paths, climbing rocky hills and stumbling through desolate wadis, to prove it could be done. Yigal and Colonel Marcus then made the trip by jeep. They fought for build-

ing the new road despite the objections of other members of the General Staff. Finally Yigal went to Ben Gurion and convinced him. A week before the first truce the job was started, hundreds of men, soldiers and civilians, working at night while shells flew over their heads from Arab guns only two miles away. When the first truce came, Jerusalem was no longer cut off from the rest of Israel.

Now Tabenkin's boys were doing a different kind of job. For four hours the battle raged while we watched from the distant rooftop, seeing only fiery arrows streak through the air. When it began to get light, we climbed down. Some of us wrapped ourselves in blankets and sprawled in the trenches to get some sleep. I was groggy with fatigue, but couldn't sleep. In front of me lay Artzi, snoring peacefully. The flies finally got the better of me and I climbed out. At the end of the trench lay a figure completely wrapped in a blanket. He began to stir and suddenly pulled himself up out of the blanket. It was Yigal. "Tired?" I asked. "Me? I had a good nap. Got to get to work now."

DURING the night Israeli forces had captured Salbit, Bir Main and Burj, each about a mile from the Latrun-Ramallah road. But the two vital hills commanding the road—we had watched the bitter battle for those hills—had not been taken. The Palmach troops had managed to seize one, but were forced back when the Arabs brought up reinforcements. The failure to capture the hills forced a change in the plan. The attack on Latrun would come not Friday but Saturday.

All day Friday and part of Saturday there were conferences at the staff building and a coming and going from and to Tel Aviv. Michael Bengal came, and Galili, and Colonel Yigal Yadin, the tall, suave, thirty-two-year-old Chief of Operations of the Israeli army, who had been trained to be an archaeologist like his father, Prof. E. L. Sukenik of the Hebrew University. I walked in and out of the room where the conferences were being held. Nobody paid any attention to me. I don't know whether they trusted me—or my ignorance of Hebrew.

We went to sleep early Friday night. There were no regular sleeping quarters and most of us stretched out on mattresses under the trees. Saturday afternoon Yigal and the staff members went off in a jeep for a couple of hours. While they were gone a young man arrived whose new Israeli army uniform contrasted with the nondescript attire of the Palmach boys and girls. He turned out to be a South African Jew

who had fought as a lieutenant in the British army in World War II and was now fighting for Israel. He was a tank commander and he had come with his tank and its crew to take part in the battle for Latrun.

The attack had been postponed till Sunday. It was evident that something besides the failure to capture those two hills had gone wrong. Where was the promised striking force? Sunday was deadline day. At seven P.M. the new truce imposed by the United Nations under American and British pressure would begin.

Sunday morning a Palmach girl went around with a pencil and sheet of paper, asking each of us his home address and the name of his next of kin. About ten o'clock Colonel Yitzchak Sadeh arrived. He was the creator of the Palmach—a grand figure of a man, fifty-eight years of youthful vigor, with a spade-shaped beard and twinkling eyes behind tortoise-shell glasses. He went into conference with Yigal and Yitzchak Rabin. Only a couple of weeks earlier, during the first truce, together with two French colleagues I had spent a delightful afternoon at Sadeh's apartment on Rothschild Boulevard in Tel Aviv. He told us then that he was organizing a "special" brigade. When the fighting resumed, it materialized as the Eighth Brigade—tanks and armored vehicles, the first of its kind in the Israeli army. Under Sadeh's command it captured Lydda airport almost without firing a shot. The Eighth Brigade was part of Yigal's army. Sadeh, the Palmach's first commander-in-chief and Yigal's mentor, was now taking orders from the man whom he affectionately called "my son."

Late Sunday afternoon everybody began moving toward the schoolhouse. Yigal, Yitzchak Rabin and the other staff members, wearing steel helmets, sat together at a table under the drooping eucalyptus trees. Yigal kidded his colleagues and seemed completely at ease. Infantrymen clambered into the slit trenches behind sandbags. The solitary tank, a twenty-eight ton job, snarled down the road, followed by five armored cars and four half-tracks. Hardly impressive. And this handful of infantrymen—what could they do?

The tank had only eighteen shells for its seventy-five-millimeter gun —eighteen shells that had been fished out of the sea at Haifa where the British had dumped them before leaving. At five minutes to six the tank and armored vehicles started moving across the green plain toward Latrun. In a trench near the schoolhouse was the South African lieuten

ant, shouting instructions to the tank by radio. I squatted in another trench, but soon Artzi and I found a spot that gave us a better view, a kind of level enclave behind a barricade of sandbags.

THERE was a kind of pageantry in the scene that unfolded before us. In the brilliant sunlight a rich carpet of green rolled gently toward Latrun. It seemed as if a trumpet would sound from the hills and there would come forth, resplendent on chargers, knight crusaders to race across the plain. Instead, the elephantine tank and its retinue of armor began to move forward. As they dwindled in the distance, Israeli artillery, nested in the hills, opened fire. The Arab guns replied, concentrating on the approaching armor, though occasionally they sent a shell in our direction. The Jewish artillery was getting the range and I saw two direct hits on the police station. The tank's guns too were blazing with good effect. But the gunnery of the famed Arab Legion was wild, and only one armored car was put out of action. Yigal was watching it all closely through field glasses. For a few minutes he slid over to our enclave to get the view from that point.

Suddenly the tank ceased firing and stood still. The South African lieutenant couldn't make out what was wrong. He called frantically to the tank to keep on. But the tank, followed by the armored vehicles, turned around and lumbered back. We soon learned what had happened. One of the water-logged shells had got stuck in the breech of the gun. It wouldn't come out either way.

The crew worked like mad to extract the shell—a delicate operation. Finally they got it out. The tank went back alone. There followed a duel of big guns, with the Israeli artillery pounding away. But precious time had been lost and only a few minutes remained till the truce deadline. The South African lieutenant began pleading with Yigal to send the infantry behind the tank. Yigal shook his head: it would be murder. At seven o'clock he ordered the tank to return.

One tank using defective shells, five armored cars, four halftracks, a couple of score of infantry and some artillery had been unable to beat the truce and take Latrun. But Israeli forces stood east, northeast, south and west, and the Latrun-Ramallah road was within range of their gunfire.

Everyone was scattering in all directions. In a doorway I saw Yigal

talking earnestly to Galili. On the highway the tank and the armored vehicles were blocking traffic, the men out on the road, seemingly undecided what to do next. I saw the South African lieutenant getting into a jeep. "Where are you going?" I asked. "Back to Tel Aviv." I climbed in with him. All the way to the capital the lieutenant fumed and railed. "That Yigal. No guts. We could have taken Latrun. All this talk about the Palmach. The Eighth Brigade that captured Lydda—do you know who they are? Kids off the streets of Tel Aviv. Not one of them in the Palmach. No Sadeh didn't do it. There were real military men behind that operation. Palmach! Who ever heard of them?"

As I was leaving Israel last October the Negev exploded in the sharp fighting which in two powerful thrusts drove the Egyptians out of all of Palestine except for a small coastal pocket. It was the greatest victory of the war. Artzi had told me that Yigal was going south. This must be Yigal, I thought when the fighting started. But as usual the Israeli authorities did not disclose the identity of the military commander. Some American newspapers began mentioning the name of the other Yigal—Yigal Yadin, Chief of Operations—as the commander of the Negev fighting.

Months passed and there arrived in this country an Israeli army delegation. Among them was Major Yeruchem Cohen, the Palmach's chief intelligence officer. He had not been with us at El Quebab because he had been loaned to Sadeh's Eighth Brigade. I looked him up.

"Where's Yigal?" I asked.

"Three weeks ago," he replied, "we bathed in the Gulf of Aqaba." (This is at the extreme southern tip of Palestine.)

"What's Sadeh doing?"

"With the Eighth Brigade in the Negev."

"And Yitzchak?"

"He's Yigal's chief of operations. Some brain that boy's got."

"Do you know a South African tank commander?"

"Sure, he's with the Eighth Brigade too."

"Tell me, did Yigal do the job in the Negev?"

"Who else could do it?"

The Intentions of the Poet

by MILTON BLAU

1

This year is the minefield
Hidden in the orchard
Where a cow stands not moving
And a gnat, trembling, does not leap
Upon his passion
But sucks that blade of hope
Swayed on the breath of heaven
For if the earth goes up
Hurling its black flesh
Upon the tortured seasons
Even the gnat shall be judged.

2

In the sunlight, his pink nose burning
On the dry wind, the mole whimpers like a priest
From whom the marks of Christ have vanished:
Let no thing move. Let no thing stir.
Let no man cross the field of his days.
Let perish all like grass on a burned prairie
Where the bloody sun never leaves his noon.

The difference between peace and death disappears.

3

The mole can no longer conceive a poem
And can achieve alone the empty glory
Of prayers and madness and little prizes.
The bomb which he mistakes for destiny
Knights him only temporarily then leaves him
With a boney crown. Good night, No Prophet,
I am crossing over. The gnat may leap or stay.

4

I am not the poet who counts his words for beads
Nor the one who whimpers for the world's end
Nor the one who explodes it nor that other
Who casts it like a mote into the eye of God.
I am the one uncut from his class
Who goes with the engineers
Trained and led by Marx and Lenin
Across every field loaded against the future
Where the smile of peace is not of stone
But moves on the lips of youth and women.

5

Peace not death—
No bells of warning
No madman's leap
No workers' trial
No woman's tears
No Negro's wounds.

Peace not death—
No more iron morning
Of imperialism rising
No Ford guillotines
Snapping in the shops
No more blood
On the oil slick of invasion

Peace not death—
(*the endless differences*)
The weaving heart
Industrious on the day's loom
The dynamos of love
Electrifying cities
And on May Day
A contingent of poets
Singing onto the Square.

6

This year is the minefield
Planted by retreating armies.
The engineers are crossing over
The thin green cover of death.
I go with them. The distance is short;
Our science is sure.
Already I am thinking:
One day I will write about roses
Whose beauty invades a classless air.
Or about a child, dark or fair,
Who comes to live upon the earth
And has before him all his manhood.

FOUR WOODCUTS
by
LEOPOLDO MENDEZ

UNEMPLOYED

MONOPOLIST

FLOOD

PEASANT

Where Is God?

A Story by RASHID JAHAN

DURGA seemed always to be a victim of misfortune. She had been left a widow, in utter poverty, with four children to bring up. Hard labor she never shrank from, but all she knew was sewing and that brought in, with difficulty, only five or six rupees a month. Every morning she was up before sunrise for her devotions. "O God, don't forget these children!" she would beseech. "Punish me for my sins, but spare these innocent little ones!"

But there was no result—no change for the better in her condition. She toiled on, sewing late into the night by the dim light of one tiny oil wick. She went to the temple faithfully, to perform whatever acts of devotion she could. But her children continued to be ill. Poor little things, they were skin and bones, like famine waifs. Durga herself had a chronic cough.

All day long her eyes were glued to her sewing. She exerted herself to the utmost in order to have a little money to put by for emergencies. But the *baniya's** account went on growing—it was impossible to get through the month without asking him for credit.

Her husband had been a merchant's petty clerk, and while he lived they had been able to manage. But his illness was so severe that it had consumed whatever they had saved. Durga was bereft at once of both husband and money; she had nothing left.

No, her husband had left her something—a memory. It was the memory of his last gasping breath, and his bier being carried out of sight, and later the feasting of *pandits*** in the courtyard—she could still see them as they sat there, each clad only in his white loin-cloth and sacred thread.***

* Here, a grain merchant, who is also a money-lender. Also the name of a caste of business men and money-lenders.

** Hindu priests, Brahmins by caste.

*** The thread, worn across one shoulder, with which every male Brahmin is invested at the age of about twelve. After that he is never without it.

Whenever she saw a *pandit* after that she trembled. They seemed to her like vultures waiting to swoop down on a dead body. She recalled the day of her husband's death. While she was beside herself with grief and fears for the future, they sat greedily waiting to be fed. They intended to finish everything, it seemed, so that nothing would be left for her and her children. She gave them more than she could afford, and yet they went away unsatisfied and displeased.

She knew that the *pandits* were far superior to her and that it was a religious duty to serve them. She knew, too, that to hate them was a sin; but she couldn't help it. Whenever she saw one of them, in his sacred thread and loin-cloth, she felt that after devouring her house he was on his way to set upon some other unfortunate's house and pick it clean. This thought would sweep over her like a wave of madness. She knew it was sinful and kept it shut up in her heart. It was to atone for this sin that she gave a pice* or two extra to the *pandits* in the temple.

Durga's son Indar was ten years old and went to the municipal school near by. All her hopes were centered in him. While her hands were busy with sewing her head was full of dreams of Indar. Sometimes she saw him as a shopkeeper, sometimes a clerk like his father. He would earn enough to bring her miseries to an end. He would marry, too, and have children. They would all look after her in her old age. These fantasies were Durga's source of happiness and hope.

Whenever a Brahmin mendicant's call broke in on these beautiful dreams, Durga shuddered and saw Indar dead and their little courtyard crowded with Brahmins feeding. She would get up and go out into the street, trying vainly to throw off this madness. Nothing but the sight of Indar's face, when he came in, could relieve her. She would throw her arms round him and begin to weep. He would stroke her head and soothe her as if she were a child. "Don't cry, Mother dear," he would say. "When I grow big I'll work for you and you mustn't do anything. You must just sit on your bed and rest."

ONE day Indar came back from school shaking with fever. Durga put him to bed at once and covered him with whatever warm things were handy. Then she sat beside him and took him in her arms.

* A copper coin. Sixty-four pice make one rupee, which is equivalent to about one third of a dollar.

At last she realized that nothing would be accomplished by her just sitting there holding him, so she left him in the care of one of the other children and set off for the *vaid's** house. At the bend of the alley she met three Brahmins coming along together. At sight of them her heart stood still. She blocked their way, asking wildly, "O Brother, why are you coming here? He is still alive." Her voice rose to a scream, but they brushed past her and walked on.

When she came to herself she went to the *vaid's* house. The *vaid* gave her some pills for the child to swallow with warm water and told her to keep a fire going in the room.

By evening Indar's fever had gone up, and he found it difficult even to swallow water. He lay still, with his eyes closed. To assure herself that he was alive Durga roused him every little while by asking, "Wouldn't you like something to eat, dear? Tell me." He would open his eyes and then close them again without speaking, and Durga understood that he was too weak to talk. She hurried off to call the *vaid.* He changed the medicine and told her there was no need to be frightened. After he had gone she gave Indar a little milk, putting it into his mouth drop by drop. The three little girls began to cry for food, but Durga couldn't bring herself to cook anything for them. She quickly brought them something from the bazaar and they ate it and fell asleep.

All night the mother sat sleepless by her son's cot. At times he would groan; at others he would open his blood-shot eyes and stare at the roof. It was obvious that he was growing steadily worse.

As soon as morning dawned Durga hurried to the temple on the bank of the Ganges and prostrated herself before the image, pleading for her son's life. When she consulted the *pandit* he said the boy was surely possessed by an evil spirit, against which the *vaid* was helpless. She had better show the child to a sorcerer. So, between the *vaid's* medicines and the sorcerer's magic the whole day slipped by, and it was now almost twenty-four hours since Indar had last opened his eyes.

Durga had no money left. She had borrowed four rupees from the *baniya* that morning but she had had to give it all away to the *pandit* and the sorcerer. In the evening the *vaid* came, without being called, to see how Indar was. At sight of the child's condition he was greatly

* A physician, usually a Hindu, who practices only Indian medicine.

troubled. Indar was now completely unconscious and lay with eyes half open and nostrils dilating. He made no response when Durga called to him and shook him.

"Go and call a doctor at once," said the *vaid,* "or the child will be dead in a few hours."

Now where was Durga to get money for a doctor? She suddenly remembered her husband's employer. He was a very rich man and pious, too. He had built several temples and shrines. That very grand temple on the bank of the Ganges had been built by him. People came great distances to offer their prayers to God there.

Whenever Durga had come to him in the past he had made a wry face and said, "Look here, my good woman, it's true your husband was my servant and I paid him his wages, but did he leave a pot of money with me to hand out to you every little while?"

So she had given up going to him for anything. But today in her distress over Indar's condition she forgot her shame and fell at the *Lalla-ji's** feet. In spite of all her pleading he utterly refused to help her. Durga then turned to his wife, who was standing near him, and begged help for her children, striving in vain to rouse maternal sympathy in her.

"Why do you try to copy us rich people?" came the cold response. "There's no need to call the doctor to your house. Why don't you take your child to the hospital?"

As Durga stood up and turned away, racking her brain as to where she should go next for money, Sumutra, the kitchen maid, quietly put a loan of two rupees into her hand.

It was late now but Durga ran to the doctor's house, woke him and took him home with her. He looked at Indar, turned him from side to side and felt his body. "He has meningitis," he said gravely. "Take him to the municipal hospital at once. You've delayed too long already, but it's just possible they can do something."

Durga had heard of meningitis before. In her locality there had been three or four deaths from it. So the doctor's diagnosis was like a knell in her ears. She just stood still, paralyzed with fear.

The doctor had taken his fee in advance, so she didn't even know

* *Lalla* is a familiar name given to Hindu business men. *Ji* is an honorific suffix.

when he left. Coming to herself, she saw that Indar's body was rigid and his breath seemed to be stuck in his throat. Every second he was growing worse. Durga sank to the floor and sat with her back against the cot, staring blankly at the wall.

She was sure now that Indar was going to die. All courage and hope had left her at the doctor's pronouncement—meningitis! It was as if it had squeezed the vitality out of her body, leaving her hands and feet utterly dead. She sat pressed close to the cot, her eyes fixed helplessly on the opposite wall.

It was dark in the hut and the little girls began to cry and fret for

something to eat, but their mother seemed unable to get up and attend to them. She was watching all her hopes for the future die with this one precious little life. There were no other thoughts in her head. She just sat there, helplessly watching.

The moon rose and lightened the darkness in the hut. The little girls gradually stopped crying and fell asleep wherever they happened to be lying.

Indar was breathing noisily now. The sound seemed to fill the hut. The little girls slept uneasily. Disturbed by bad dreams, one of them screamed; another woke through hunger, cried, and fell asleep again. Durga felt as if she had been sitting for a lifetime with her back against the side of the cot, staring at the wall. Now Indar's breathing was becoming slower and less noisy, and the interval between breaths was uneven. He was dying, but his mother had not the courage to turn and watch him die. His breath was coming in gasps now. Durga was no longer numb. She realized that soon even those gasps would be silenced. She sat wide-eyed and tense with her ears straining to catch the slightest change, just as a hunter sits hidden in the bushes, his last cartridge gone, fearing at any moment the tiger's spring.

She heard a gasp—another—one more—and still another, but weaker this time. She strained her ears, wondering whether there would be another. No sound came.

She stood up with a wild shriek, "He's dead! My child is dead!" and rushed out of the house.

IN THE darkness before the dawn many people were on their way to the Ganges for ceremonial bathing. Durga ran amongst them crying, "Dead! My child is dead!"

An old man stopped her to ask, "Mother, who are you? When did your child die?"

She only screamed the louder and ran on.

Another man caught hold of her and soon a crowd gathered around, all questioning her at once. The sight of so many people brought her to her senses a little. "Hai!" she cried. "My darling fell ill yesterday and today he is dead."

"To each his own *karma,*" answered someone philosophically. "If one sins in this life he must pay for it in the next, and if—"

"Karma!" broke in Durga, distracted again. "Have I committed such

dreadful sins that I deserve to have both husband and child snatched from me?"

"No, no, I didn't mean you in particular. I was merely speaking of the world in general. *Karma* is at the bottom of the whole thing; or else how could one explain our daily misfortunes?" The speaker turned away as he spoke.

"*Karma! Karma!* Tell me what I did. Tell me! Tell me!" Durga demanded of one after another. To escape her they hurried towards the river but she ran after them. There was a big religious fair on. Hundreds of Untouchables had come to gain salvation. In the midst of the crowd stood a *pandit,* clad only in a white loin-cloth, who was giving the people cow's urine to drink. No one dared touch such a god—they would only fall devoutly at his feet. When Durga caught sight of him—a Brahmin—her eyes started from her head. To her distraught imagination he appeared to be devouring her Indar's flesh. She stood rooted to the spot, staring at his face with madness in her eyes.

Someone nearby asked, "Who is he?"

"Pandit Harcharan Mohan," came the reply. "He is dispensing salvation to the Untouchables."

"*Karma, karma,*" murmured Durga. Then, clutching the hand of the person beside her, with her eyes still on the fearsome *pandit* she asked in a whisper, "Can he wipe out *karma,* too?"

"No," answered the other, jerking her hand out of Durga's grasp. "How can that be wiped out?"

"Do you know who he is?" went on Durga. "He is devouring my child. See—he is eating him! Stop, murderer! Was one not enough to fill your stomach? Since yesterday you've been prowling round my house." She leaped at the *pandit.* "Murdered my darling, you did!" she shrieked as she struck him.

The bowl of cow's urine went rolling and salvation was forgotten while the *pandit* tried to protect his body.

The crowd rushed between them and many hurled abuse at Durga. Others said, "Let her go—she's crazy. She's just been rushing about screaming, 'My child is dead,' and now she's fighting with the *pandit-ji.*"

The *pandit-ji* himself now stepped forward and with a show of

magnanimity said, "Yes, she seems crazy. In the name of God let her go."

"God—God," repeated Durga, making an effort to collect her thoughts. "God can wipe out *karma.* Where is God?"

A babel of answers came from the crowd but Durga heard one voice say clearly, "In the temple."

SHE rushed away, bare-headed and dishevelled, to the great temple on the river bank. The *pandit* there tried to prevent her entering so unceremoniously, while at the same time he was trying to keep away from the contamination of her touch. But she pushed him aside and entered. The women worshipping inside drew away from her. Among them was the haughty merchant's wife. She peremptorily ordered Durga out but Durga said boldly, "I have come to my God. Why should I go away?"

"Put her out, *Pandit-ji,* or I'll complain of you to my husband," threatened the merchant's wife. She spoke with authority, for this was her husband's temple. "You've become a great devotee, have you?" she taunted Durga. "Where has *your* God appeared from, I'd like to know, you worthless beggar?"

"So this is *your* God, is it?" replied Durga. "Then I wish you joy of him. I don't want your rich man's God." And, turning on the *pandit* in a rage, she demanded, "Where is the God of the poor? Tell me that!"

"Mother," replied the *pandit* coaxingly, "this is everybody's God, rich and poor. He is for all and all are His. But do step outside now."

"You base-born liar!" shouted Durga. "This God belongs to the rich. Where is *my* God? Tell me!"

This *pandit,* too, was half naked, wearing only a white loin cloth. Durga glared at him. Then, with a leap, she snatched up one of the small idols and shook it menacingly above her head. "Now come to my house again and I'll not give you food—I'll give you this!"

The *pandit* rushed at her, but with a shriek she threw down the idol and danced on the broken pieces. "Here is the God of the merchants, the God of the rich!" she taunted him.

The worshippers caught hold of her and beat her and began to drag her off to the police. But her wild laughter and the madness in her eyes made them realize that she was not in her right mind, and they

contented themselves with beating her again and turning her out of the temple.

The beating sobered Durga somewhat. However, her mind did not run so much on her dead child as on the determination to find her God that very day. She went from temple to temple, asking every *pandit* to direct her to where God was. Some gave her no answer, others rebuked her and turned her out, and some got rid of her with coaxing words.

Wandering from place to place throughout the city, Durga found her way into a mosque. There she saw a large number of people assembled. She watched in silence as the whole group stood up, or bowed, or sat down simultaneously. At last they all got up and began to go away. An old bearded man, surprised to see a strange woman there, came up to her and asked who she was.

"I'm looking for my God," she said. "Can you tell me where he is?"

"I know nothing about *your* God," he answered; "mine is Allah, who is everywhere."

Durga looked all around eagerly and then asked, "Which is He?"

"Allah cares for everybody," said the old man impressively. "He made the world. He feeds you and me and everyone. He is the Master of all, rich and poor, and in His presence all are equal."

At this Durga burst out laughing. "Then why did He make some rich and some poor?" she asked.

"It is His will," replied the old man, frowning.

"Your head is in the clouds, old man," laughed Durga. "If you don't want to tell me the way to God, don't. But why lie about it?" With that she was off without waiting for an answer, laughing to herself as she continued on her quest.

By evening she was worn out with wandering, but still she would not rest. She came to a place where a bell was ringing and men and women were hurrying to church. She went in with them and sat down on the front bench. A man dressed in black was standing on a platform preaching—

"Wealth is a part of God's blessings to His people. The rich are His stewards, His means of helping the poor. For this the poor should thank God and not allow envy for the rich to enter their hearts. . . ."

At the words "God" and "the poor" Durga's frenzy rose again. To

her distraught mind the man in black seemed a *pandit* in disguise, and she could hold herself in no longer. In the midst of the sermon she cried out, "Don't think you can disguise yourself from me, you cheat! I'll not let you live a day longer!" And she sprang forward.

People got up and took hold of her but she fought them off. In the struggle she fell and struck her head on the corner of a bench.

"WHERE is the God of the poor?" called out Durga as she regained consciousness.

"Don't shake, or you'll get poked," warned the young doctor, steadying his needle to give Durga an injection, while a white-uniformed nurse gripped her arm.

The doctor gave Durga a friendly smile, so she asked him in a whisper, "Who is the God of the poor?"

"The hands of the poor," replied the doctor, as he withdrew his needle and turned to the next patient.

Durga held up her hands and looked at them for a long time.

(Translated from the Urdu by K. C. Nasreen.)

Foster's World View

by James S. Allen

THE focus of William Z. Foster's new book* is the two-fold process of the decline of capitalism and the rise of socialism. During almost a half century of continuous working-class leadership, he has seen these trends mature to the present position in which socialism moves toward preponderance on a world scale. As a result of this historic process, which is the meaning of our times, he suggests the possibility in the not so distant future of America for a time becoming an island of capitalism in the world sea of socialism.

This is only a suggestion, for Foster does not indulge in fancy or speculation. If he makes it at all it is to show that a possibility may exist in America, under such circumstances, to make the turn toward socialism without violent revolution, since reaction will have been hopelessly shut in and confronted with overwhelmingly superior forces.

These are bold and confident thoughts in the midst of the present reactionary storm in America. For teaching and advocating the ideas contained in this book, the Communist Party has been placed on the dock at Foley Square. In the very act of indicting the Communist leaders, and along with them the entire body of Marxist-Leninist theory, the Government has demonstrated the truth traditionally held by Marxists and expounded anew by Foster—that capitalism is the most violent social system of all times, using every form of violence from imprisonment to lynching and war to hold back social progress.

Foster can view this latest outrage from the vantage point of decades of struggle against reaction and his own progression as a Marxist leader. Without in the least diverting attention from the real dangers of fascism and war that are being nourished by American imperialism,

* THE TWILIGHT OF WORLD CAPITALISM, by William Z. Foster. International Publishers. 35¢.

he has a steady and calm confidence in the socialist outcome. Foster's great virtue as a leader is that he has never lost that intimate connection with the working class and his devotion to its historic aim of socialism, which he acquired as a youth and which he constantly matured to a deeper understanding of the dynamics of social change. It was this basically that kept him at an even keel throughout the period of the war, when Browder was leading the Party toward repudiation of the basic Marxist principles, and enabled him to discern the real aims of American monopoly capital in the war and for the postwar period.

It is this congenital identity with the working class and its socialist aim that brings such intensity to Foster's hatred of capitalism and its financial oligarchy, and also keeps vibrant his deep confidence in the workers and the people. This is the bedrock of his political leadership, which has developed not only as a result of decades of front-line working-class activity, but of constant first-hand observation and voracious reading. His new book again shows his extremely inquisitive mind, ranging over many fields, and attempting to summarize in pungent strokes the central developments from the time of Marx and Engels to the present. He is always digging for more information, seeking to round out his knowledge and sharpen his analysis, never satisfied that he has achieved finality.

This quality prevented Foster from stagnating at any point, from being left behind by a new turn of events, and kept him always in the forefront of progressive thought in America and of the working-class movement. This book reveals Foster as always striving to think creatively, impatient of dogmatism that at times attaches itself to Marxism, although it has no place there, and retards its development. It shows him as striving always to extract the new and define it, without detaching himself from the solid base of continuing reality. For him nothing is finally closed; therefore we find him going over old ground again and again in the light of new experience. Foster never grows old, for the essence of his thinking is dynamic, always seeking a fresh approach to old questions and a correct approach to new ones.

Nor does *The Twilight of Capitalism* reveal Foster as an elder statesman, although he has accumulated much wisdom. He is very much an active participant in the struggle. This is a fighting book, lacking the end-of-active-life quality of memoirs, which Foster will not write,

WILLIAM Z. FOSTER

for he will never reach the point where he says this is the end. He dedicates his book to his great-grandson, who he is certain will live in a Communist America, but he is also certain that there will be new and great progress toward socialism in his own lifetime.

ONE theme running through the entire book is that the same corroding forces, born out of capitalism itself, which have already brought capitalism in Western Europe to an advanced stage of decay, are also bringing about the decline of the last great capitalist power. In his lifetime, Foster has witnessed the rapid growth of productive forces in the United States, including the most recent technological innovations, such as radar and atomic energy. He does not underestimate the physical strength thus acquired by the United States in terms of its great productive machine and the productiveness of its workers, nor does he underestimate the immense potential for aggressive war which these present.

But he also recognizes the underlying instability resulting from the growth of our technology. As he puts it, "the United States has at once become the most developed and the most unstable economic system in the world." He finds that the capitalist class of the United States is the most frightened and the most desperate, and that our nation is now the most disturbed and most anxious. There is a general feeling, he writes, "that we are living on the edge of a volcano." He warns of the new economic crisis that has already begun, and finds nothing in the offing, whether it be government "pump-priming" in the Keynesian or New Deal style, or the present scale of war preparations that can avoid this catastrophe. He scoffs at the idea that American capitalism can ever turn progressive, whether this idea comes from Browder or Eric Johnston, for the monopoly-ridden system is rotten at the heart.

He thus makes the point, so often emphasized by him, that the United States is not exceptional in the sense of having developed a peculiar type of capitalism devoid of the contradictions that afflict the system in other countries. Foster could never make that mistake. Nor does he make the mistake of confusing the theory of exceptionalism, which has so often played havoc in our progressive movement, with the constant need to study the specific and concrete conditions prevailing in the United States. For he recognizes how the laws of capitalist development can be and often are modified by the specific historic

development of each country, and how the movement for socialism must solve the concrete problems within the framework of particular conditions.

His own life and activities are an outstanding example of this. His work may be characterized as a constant effort to understand the cause for the political backwardness of the American working class, and to improve its political understanding. To this task he applied himself systematically over many years, not only as a great practical leader of some of the outstanding trade-union struggles of our history but as a constant student of the American development, which he compared with developments in other countries observed at first hand in many trips abroad.

One of his earlier books, *Misleaders of Labor,* which remains a classic of incisive analysis, was the first comprehensive effort on the part of anyone in America to study the trade-union bureaucracy, expose the source of its corruption and its clinging to capitalism. Among the many penetrating observations made by Foster in his new book is the conclusion that the main barrier to the development of a socialist ideology in the American working class has been the opportunism born of the relatively higher standard of living enjoyed by the American workers and the continuing economic expansion of the United States when other big capitalist countries were already in decline. This is the base of the present reactionary leadership of the trade unions and their support of the aggressive imperialist program.

BETTER than any other working-class leader, Foster knows both the good and the bad points of the American labor movement, and he neither idealizes it nor succumbs to its weaknesses. He is a balanced and realistic thinker. He has much to say in his new book on the "low grade leadership" with which the unions are afflicted, and addresses a few well-chosen words of advice to Murray on the boundless ambitions of Walter Reuther. But he bases his optimism with respect to the labor movement on more fundamental processes, such as the growing economic crisis with its great forthcoming political repercussions. He believes that the trade unions are now suffering from a real crisis of leadership which will break out in full force as the crisis becomes more acute, and as the workers clamor for militant leadership in de-

fense of their economic positions. As the United States falls more and more into decline, Foster is confident that the workers will advance ideologically to the socialist perspective, move politically to the organization of a broad people's party, and develop a genuine economic and political policy, in the process getting rid of the conservative, reformist and Social-Democratic misleaders.

In this sense he holds also that the American working class is no exception. During his lifetime, as he summarizes it in his book, he has seen the decline of once powerful capitalist countries, the rise of world socialism, the degeneration of Social-Democracy in many countries, the decline of religion, the tremendous growth of the Communist movement, and in the United States the leap forward of the Negro people and the growth of industrial unionism in the mass production industries, of which he was a pioneer.

The advent of socialist man and woman in the Soviet Union, to which he devotes an entire chapter, fills him with even greater confidence in humanity, for he sees this new personality as a great victory of the people, the main aim and the highest achievement of socialism. He compares the great joy of life among the people even in the poorest countries that are making the turn to socialism with the United States, which "for all its wealth, is one of the unhappiest, most worried of countries."

In the Communist Party Foster finds the synthesis of all he has been striving for throughout his lifetime—the synthesis of theory, organization and program of action. Among the most dynamic features of Communist political life he cites the practice of self-criticism—the process by which both Communist leaders and the Party membership must constantly prove and cleanse themselves, and the lack of which leads either to the stagnation of the Party or to the necessary discarding of those leaders incapable of examining their mistakes objectively.

Drawing upon his own personal experience, Foster has many words of advice, although he rarely presumes to give it explicitly. He became a Socialist in 1900, but he was "later to find out that it would still take me many years to learn the basic significance of socialism and to get rid of the complicated mess of ideological confusion that is customarily drilled into the minds of the workers, mine included, in order to make them into passive objects of capitalist exploitation." Later,

he speaks of his "gradual development as a Communist," after joining the Party in 1921, and adds: "Since joining the Communist Party it has been a never-ending effort on my part, with such diligence and self-criticism as I can command, to master the revolutionary principles of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin, and to apply them effectively in the American class struggle."

FOSTER is always conscious of the progression of life and of his own development, never hiding the fact that he is growing, nor ever creating the impression that he had achieved the very pinnacle of Marxist wisdom. In his book he states with typical modesty that if he had his choice he would live the same life over again, but with the hope that he would be able to avoid the many political mistakes he had made.

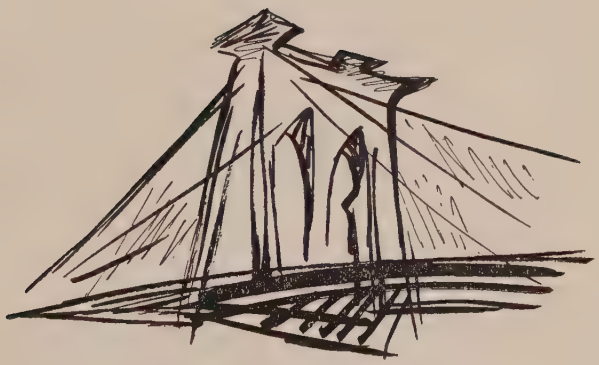
He brings this same approach to bear on the problem of building the Party which he views as now passing through the "long and difficult school of preparation," since both the leaders and the Party "are the product of many years of hard struggle and ideological development." Foster illustrates this in his own person. He represents many years of evolution of the American working-class movement, the fusion of a half century of experience in the struggle for socialism and of constant study and observation at home and abroad.

In his own evolution as a Communist, while having gone politically far ahead of the American workers, he has not lost contact with the core of the American working class. In his book he displays how sensitive he is to every current bit of propaganda which has a special appeal to the American worker, and instantaneously combats it. Tho book is as American as Valley Forge, or the town of Staunton, Massachusetts, where Foster was born, and which raised the flag of rebellion—*red,* Foster recalls—in the revolution against the British Crown. The language strikes home anywhere in the United States. He has a virile and dynamic style, which is expressed in the incisive literary sketches of his *Pages From a Worker's Life,* and in the pungency and clarity of his political writings.

The Chinese Communists, for whom Foster expresses great admiration, have a saying: Study in order to learn. It is a favorite expression of Mao Tse-tung when he gathers with others to solve a problem.

Throughout his life, Foster has practiced this rule. It expresses the vital, fresh approach which Foster has always sought to cultivate, and which we need to solve the many problems, some of them new and unprecedented, that now face us along the path to socialism in the last great capitalist country.

Foster advises the young Communists and progressives to find time for basic reading and study. His entire life—the rich observations and conclusions resulting from many decades of intense leadership and study which Foster presents in his new book—is a call, which cannot pass unheeded, to "study in order to learn" how to take the next step towards socialism.



LIFE WITH *STANISLAVSKY*

by ALEXANDER SEREBROV

IN 1901 the Art Theatre was experiencing the early springtime of its life. A performance was not a theatrical production but a divine service. Enthusiasm took the place of discipline. To be late for a rehearsal was a sin. It was easier to die than miss a performance.

The theatre was considered "a co-operative of equals in the name of Art," and it was called "The Popular Theatre." So far as we were concerned there were no rich people among us, and no poor ones, no acknowledged great talent, nor anyone without ability. The millionaire Savva Morozov would fix electric wires. Titov, the stage mechanic, would discuss and criticize the staging of plays. Today's completely unknown actor might turn into a famous personage on the morrow. The extras were tried in important and responsible roles, and the well-known actors took part in mass scenes together with the extras. In the intermissions V. I. Nemirovich-Danchenko would come to our dressing rooms and talk to us about the theatre, its history and its problems. The famous actress Samarova would sew buttons on our costumes.

The soul, the conscience, the heart and the leader of the theatre was Stanislavsky.

Stanislavsky was loved, feared and adored, and was considered slightly crazy. He was teased and his faults and peculiarities laughingly imitated. Behind his back he was called "Kostya," but nobody ever dared be rude to him or try clapping him on the shoulder. He was taller than anyone else—in every shade of that word's meaning. He spoke hesitatingly, and would terminate a sentence in the most unexpected places. His gallantry was like that of a French melodrama and his absentmindedness often reached anecdotal proportions. When annoyed he would stretch his thick lips and half shut his eyes, assuming an air of exaggerated politeness. When angry, he would merely drum

with two fingers on the table: "Bad . . . very bad . . . No good at all! . . ."

He would cajole and nag at an actor who did not do justice to his part, for he envisioned the work of a director as an endless rehearsal. A performance, so far as he was concerned, was an unpleasant necessity, a means of getting funds for further rehearsals, a concession to the actors, who—much as it is to be regretted—cannot get along without a public. Of course, that applied equally to him, as an actor.

He was never satisfied with any of his own productions; they always seemed to him unfinished. The average rehearsal time for any of his productions was a year at the very least. He and Kregg worked on *Hamlet* for four years, and he could scarcely be prevailed upon to open the play. He wanted some more polishing.

A rehearsal began like the performance of a symphony orchestra: a minute's quiet . . . complete absorption . . . flexing of muscles . . . then the beginning. All goes well. Stanislavsky sticks out his lips, smiles more or less. He beats time with his pencil. . . . Someone makes a mistake. He rings the bell lightly . . . takes off his pince-nez and pushes them into the side pocket of his jacket. He comes down to the stage.

"Olga Leonardovna, you are playing to the public. . . . Try to play to your partner. . . . Try it only with gestures, without words. . . . So. . . . Now use your own words. . . . So. . . . Very good! . . . Now take the text of the play. . . . Mmmmmm. . . . Mmmmmm. . . . Again the whole scene from the very beginning!"

At times he would shut his eyes and simply listen. "Ivan Mikhailovich, don't click your teeth—make it smoother! . . . Vasili Ivanovich, don't drawl the sounds, you are not in the opera. . . . So-o. . . . So . . . a little louder . . . louder . . . hold your breath for a second . . . there is a pause here . . . Jealousy . . . tears . . . I do not see the tears! . . . [His eyes are shut tight.] Again from the very beginning—"

He would forget time, and he could go on rehearsing and explaining without end. The actors would be dropping with fatigue, but they never dared say anything. Often they would enlist the help of the house manager who would come into the theatre and announce: "The public will be arriving soon for the performance!" Stanislavsky would then drag the poor actors into his office and continue the rehearsal there until late at night. In the morning the costume director would find him sound asleep on his little sofa, covered with his top coat.

Evil tongues had it that he cracked the whip over us like an animal

trainer, but that was not true. "It is difficult with him, but impossible without him," they said in the theatre. He could bring an actor to the point of utter exhaustion, to hysteria, to tears, while striving for perfection in some expression. "I do not believe it! . . . It is not so. . . . It does not ring true!" he would insist, drumming a quick staccato with two fingers.

Once the actor Pavlov was taking the part of an angry man. No matter how much he tried, the director was not satisfied. Using offensive and jibing asides, Stanislavsky managed to drive Pavlov into a furious rage. "Don't you dare make a fool of me!" yelled the actor like someone demented, and he ran off the stage.

"Now, that is good! . . . Superb! . . . That is the way you should act it!" Stanislavsky yelled after him smiling broadly.

When he rehearsed *Julius Caesar* the company worked for a long time over producing a storm. Stanislavsky, for training purposes, called to the rehearsal everyone who was taking part in the play. They all had to portray fear of the storm. Many were very good but some were poor. The theatre's fireman, in his helmet, was standing at his post near the water faucet. He had not moved, and did not do a thing. He stood as usual like a stone statue.

"That is magnificent!" Stanislavsky called out to him. "You were better than anyone else! . . . It is just the way a Roman centurion would have behaved during a storm. . . . Thank you, Feodor Ivanovich." The fireman's name happened to be Pavel Nikiforovich.

THE fantastic stage props that Stanislavsky invented were limitless. Out of ten inventions, eight he would eliminate himself, the ninth would be changed on the advice of Nemirovich-Danchenko, and only the tenth would remain on the stage. While rehearsing *The Children of the Sun* he built a stable on the stage although the author had no mention of such a thing in the script. Into the stable he put a live horse, expecting the horse to brush off flies with its tail. He tried in this way to create the mood of a hot summer day in a provincial town. The horse was expected to stand impassively brushing off the flies. Stanislavsky got on the stage and graphically showed how a talented horse should swish its tail on a hot summer day. The assistant director was in a stew; he was not able to make the horse wave its tail *a la* Stanislavsky. Then Stakhovich, an adjutant to the Grand Duke Sergei and a

great devotee of the theatre, helped out by learning to buzz like a gadfly. Stanislavsky was enchanted with the result. The horse's tail worked like a pendulum and the stage really gave the atmosphere of a sweltering day.

"Thank you! . . . Thank you, my friends," said Stanislavsky, crossing his arms over his chest and bowing low to the adjutant Stakhovich and to the horse.

"You do not object to the horse, I hope?" Stanislavsky courteously inquired of the author, who happened to come unexpectedly to the rehearsal.

"As far as I am concerned it could be a giraffe . . . as long as it is not in the way!" replied Gorky gloomily.

Stanislavsky chewed his clenched fist, walked out to the corridor, and on returning to the pit ordered the removal of the horse, the stable and Stakhovich's buzzing. It was obvious, though, that he did it with great reluctance. At that time the relationship between Gorky and Stanislavsky was not at all a close one. They came to know each other much later, at Capri. The writer Gorky preferred the writer Nemirovich-Danchenko. The theatrical arts meant less to Gorky than literature.

At times Stanislavsky would fall into a fit of depression about his creative work: the actors who only yesterday were his pets no longer pleased him. The play he had chosen, the decors he had decided upon were all wrong. The stage was too narrow and crowded, the lighting was bad and the workers inept. He would become irritable and unreasonable. The stage then resembled the tower of Babel. The usual inventions, one worse than the other, obstructed the action of the play. The scenic designers were given problems that could not be solved; the frightened actors and actresses darted back and forth before the footlights, having no idea what was wanted of them.

"What are you doing? . . . What kind of play are you putting on?" Stanislavsky would yell from the darkened pit. "This . . . this . . . The Devil knows what is going on! . . . I cannot . . . work . . . in this madhouse!" Then having played havoc with himself and the cast, he would rush out of the theatre and disappear for several days.

In the aisle, between the eighth and the ninth rows of seats, Nemirovich-Danchenko would materialize behind the director's table. Smoothing his luxurious whiskers with the gesture of a minister of state, he

would try to quiet the actors, give the necessary directions, and the rehearsal would continue without further difficulties. Days later, the crisis over, Stanislavsky would return to the theatre—fresh, jolly, invariably correct, and as ever full of new ideas for staging.

He was more strict with himself than with anyone else. Each new part was a source of terrific suffering for him. He never acted to gain favor with the public. Each part had to solve a different problem which he had set for himself. To direct oneself was difficult so he would avidly listen to remarks from the cast. Although a man of tremendous ego, he was never offended when anyone corrected him. Together with his wife, Lilina, he labored for a long time on Turgenev's play *The Provincial.* He took the part of Count Lyubin. When Nemirovich-Danchenko came to watch one of the last rehearsals, Stanislavsky asked with anxiety, "Well, what do you think? . . . How is it going?"

Nemirovich-Danchenko, combing his beard, looked at the ceiling for a long time. "Almost brilliant!"

Stanislavsky narrowed his eyes with pleasure.

"But there is one thing," continued Nemirovich-Danchenko, also narrowing his eyes, "but I do not think it is important. . . . Hardly worth while. . . ."

"Nonsense . . . No, no, . . . please! . . . Please! . . ."

"Konstantin Sergeyevich, you noticed perhaps that Turgenev called his play *The Provincial?* What do you think he meant to convey by it?"

Then followed ten minutes of analysis at the end of which the whole project was in ruins. The play was misunderstood, and consequently the roles were misunderstood as well.

"Do you see, Maryusia," Stanislavsky confided to his wife, "I always told you that we are bad actors."

"Oh, Kostya, how can you say such things? . . . You never told me anything of the kind! . . ."

THE springtime period of the Art Theatre ended with the first opening in St. Petersburg; popular recognition was won. Then harvest time arrived. Year in and year out external success increased, but year in and year out the inner strength of the theatre was sapped. The bourgeoisie took it to its heart. Chekhov died. . . . Gorky left the theatre. . . . The stage was filled with plays of Chirikov, Surguch and Yartsev. . . . Ibsen did not go over. The theatre stopped in its traces.

Gazing at the grim and forbidding Bay of Finland, Stanislavsky thought over the disturbing problem all by himself. Inwardly he saw new possibilities in the field of the theatre. . . . But he was a Columbus without seamen. The theatre was grounded on the positions already won. Stanislavsky tried to lead it to new dangers but his co-workers failed to understand him. When the cast was invited for an evening of experimentation, only three old friends showed up. For fifteen years he had experimented and tried out all possible avenues of development —those that were known before his time and those that he himself had evolved. He shuttled between the naturalism of Meiningentz and the mysticism of Maeterlinck, from the lyricism of Chekhov to Gorky's outcasts, from the cubes and boxes of Kregg to the artistry of Dobuzhinsky, from Hauptmann symbolism to the fine craftsmanship of Ostrovsky, then to a text-book of psychology by Ribaud until he finally decided on realism.

In 1911 he met Gorky on the island of Capri. One day they both watched a puppet show, last reminder of the *comedia dell' arte,* and Stanislavsky immediately thought of a plan for theatre improvisation. Gorky promised to write the libretto for it.

"We have over-trained our actors; it is time to unlimber them," Stanislavsky argued. "The text of the play . . . Decors . . . Ensemble . . . all these things are secondary . . . the most important thing in the theatre is the actor . . . the sincerity and strength of his emotions. . . . This cannot be taught. One can only help to bring it out. . . . It is impossible not to love 'man.' . . . It is what humanity is aiming at. . . . The theatre aims at 'man' on the stage—at the great actor. . . . In Rome I saw the torso of Hercules of Belvedere. . . . Michaelangelo said of the sculptor: 'This man knew more than nature knew.' . . . Magnificent! . . . It is the truest thing ever said about art. . . . Do you follow me?"

Stanislavsky's appearances in new roles at the Art Theatre were becoming rarer as time went on. He was becoming less the actor and more the experimenter and researcher. Risking his personal success as an actor, he would turn his parts into opportunities for experimentation.

"I did not act, I merely went through a series of my own experiments before the eyes of the audience."

In the diversity of his enthusiasms he sought a unifying principle.

He aimed to clarify to himself and to others those foundations of realism on which is built the special world of the theatre. He was collecting the material for his "System." With the devotion of a fanatic he preached the newly-found truths to all his comrades on the stage, but he found little sympathy. His former students were growing old. He needed young, pliant acting material in order to continue his researches and experiments. One after another new experimental groups were organized: four different studios on Povarskaya, the Habima Group, the studio connected with the Bolshoi Theatre.

At last, approaching old age kept him tied to his home where he toiled stubbornly over his book. "The theatrical art, or more correctly, the art of the actor is dying," Stanislavsky wrote to Gorky in 1933. "One after another the great talents are disappearing from the boards, as well as the great theatrical technicians, leaving behind them merely the memories of their contemporaries and a few wretched photographs in the Bakhrushin museum. This is why I decided, and am forcing myself to record and describe my experiments."

IN 1937 the Academia Publishing house approached Stanislavsky about acquiring the manuscript of his book *The Self-Training of the Actor,* (published in the U. S. as *The Actor Prepares*). I was chosen to make the arrangements. For the first time in many years I again met Stanislavsky. He was still the same: tall, extremely polite and full of vitality. The absence of a mustache and his high bald forehead made him look more than ever like a pastor. When the time came for discussion of the fee for his book, Stanislavsky raised his ante three times. Each time the publishers agreed to his conditions, but the contract was not signed. On the fourth occasion I went back to see him, and happened to meet his secretary on the way.

"You are wasting your time," she told me smilingly. "Konstantin Sergeyevich will not sign the contract while you continue raising his fees every time he increases his demands. He thinks like a trader: if you do not refuse him, it just means that the fee for the manuscript has not reach the ceiling."

So this time I absolutely refused to raise the fee. Stanislavsky was delighted at my firm stand and immediately signed the contract. "I will not give you the manuscript right now," he said, signing a receipt for the money advanced to him. "In the shape it is now, it will do more

harm than good. . . . A director from Baku came to see me some days ago and he was telling me that he was producing plays there according to my system. I was simply horrified at what he said. . . . People do not understand that art is not a system. . . . If that were so, then every clod and nincompoop reading my book would consider himself an actor; every fool, a stage director. . . . Art is also intuition. . . . I wonder why I forgot to mention that in my book. It will have to be rewritten. . . . I shall have to add and fill in. . . . [He did do this by adding a chapter, "The Subconscious."] Then there is the matter of politics, too. . . . They all tell me that now it is impossible to do anything without politics. . . .What do they mean by politics in the theatre? . . . I . . . I do not quite understand. . . . I remember playing Stockmann, and I was never conscious of politics. Yet the result was a great political demonstration. . . . I played Satin with a politically conscious approach, and the result? . . . Simply awful. . . . Can you perhaps explain this to me? . . . You are, probably, a Communist?"

"It is not for me to teach you, Konstantin Sergeyevich!"

"Why not? . . . Everyone can teach, if he knows how. . . . If you will allow me, I should like to read to you a few things from my book. . . ."

AN OLD hunchbacked woman entered the room. She reminded one of a witch in an opera. With her entrance the whole room became almost one hundred years older. The table sprouted a tea set, decorated with flowers. The old china could easily have been used by Pushkin. Instead of Stanislavsky, another man was sitting in the old well-worn chair. This man was a silver-haired Moscow savant, slightly flabby, in a bright colored old dressing gown, his knees covered with a warm coverlet. . . . Shading his eyes with a screened Empire candleholder, he talked at times, and at times read in a soft voice.

"Pushkin said that the truth of passion, the plausibility of feeling in given circumstances, are the very things our intellect demands from a playwright. To the words of Pushkin I can only add that this is exactly what our brain requires from a dramatic actor. True passion cannot be evoked artificially. You can only direct the attention of the artist to the supposed conditions, and only then will the passionate feelings arise of themselves naturally. . . . My favorite teacher, Shchepkin, once wrote to the actor Shumsky: 'You may act a role weakly, sometimes more or less satisfactorily, but you will always portray it

right!' To portray a thing right—that is what my system teaches an actor. . . . The great Salvini said: 'The actor lives, he cries, and laughs on the stage. But whether crying or laughing, he observes his laughter and his tears! . . . This equilibrium is art.' I too speak of it in my books but I put it in different words. The actor on the stage must keep himself in a state of inner self-consciousness. At times the actor may lose it. He should then correct it, if he possesses enough psychotechniques. . . . My system is a life-line to the drowning actor. . . . Ostrovsky thought so too. . . ."

Stanislavsky did not exactly read. He acted out conversations with people who, as he knew, thought the way he did. Calling off their names, he moved his eyes each time, as though he were looking for the man whose name he mentioned, and finding him turned to get his opinion on the subject. To Pushkin he spoke reverently; to Salvini deferentially; to Shchepkin, with a friendly smile. His acting was such that it began to seem to me as if the people he mentioned were truly there. The dark room, the antique furniture, the utter quiet, his superb showmanship, all added to the illusion that each one of them was there unseen merely because of the darkness.

"As to politics in the theatre, I think this way. Political passions are the same as other passions. . . . And to express them, one should be able to use the same techniques, with simplicity and sincerity. . . . It is necessary for the actor to be imbued with these passions and thoughts for politics to become a component part of his consciousness. Without this nothing will be accomplished. It is not enough to give stage directions. A new kind of training for social thinking would be necessary. At any rate that is how it seems to me."

And he raised his finger upward, as if he were attracting into the room another person who would agree with him. The hunchbacked old woman returned to fetch the tea things and turned on the electric lights. It was difficult to believe that except for the three of us there was no one else in the room.

right face

CALCULATED RISK

"Asked if the casting of Robert Taylor as a Red might not attract some movie-goers to the cause of communism, Hollywood-producer Arthur Hornblow replied: 'That is a risk democracy must run'."—*From the New York* Herald Tribune.

A MATTER OF TIMING

"His broadcasts were disgusting. I remember at least one in which he approved the massacre of the East European Jews and 'warned' the American Jews that their turn was coming presently. . . . None of this is a reason against giving {Ezra} Pound the Bollingen Prize. There are times when such a thing might be undesirable—it would have been undesirable when the Jews were actually being killed in the gas vans, for instance—but I do not think this is one of them."—George Orwell in the *Partisan Review.*

ATLANTIC (PEACE) PACT SIGNER

"The moral ravages which, even within those countries it does not dominate, have been wrought by Communism through the captious idea of banishing wars and of establishing peace—an idea which is accepted by simple-minded people or by those who have compromised themselves—are already so great that they may cause the West to vacillate."—*Dr. Oliveira Salazar, prime minister of Portugal, at a Conference of the National Union.*

NATCH

"The policy of both the Socialist and his enemy the Capitalist would work out identically as regards the white and colored population. The former is committed to the non-recognition of race discrimination, the latter is the natural protector of all colored people, because they work for less money."—Wyndham Lewis in *America and Cosmic Man,* (Doubleday).

The Good Old Times

A Story by MARTIN ABZUG

I FIGHT my way through stacks of boxes, piece-goods and sundry stuff which is piled up in the hall toward the sign marked "Freight." It is on a large gate which looks like one end of a chicken coop and which divides the workers in the shop from the garbage and the salesmen. It seems like an hour before somebody has time to look through the wire at me.

"Hey, who buys your buttons?"

"What kind of buttons?" he wants to know, high-class like, as if they have a buyer for every kind of button.

"Your covered ones."

"Sidney," the guy gasps and runs away under twenty dresses.

"Sidney? Who's Sidney?" I cry out to the boxes, to the garbage to the gate, but nobody answers. Suddenly there is a sign of humanity in the form of two guys pushing a rack between them and almost taking my leg off with it. I jump aside, aware that my life depends on it. They tear the gate open and push past.

"Who's Sidney?" I call out after them.

"Me," one of them grunts, without looking back.

"Can I see you a minute?"

He half turns, leaving the rack to the other guy, and pulls his right hand across his upper lip, under his nose. He is about eighteen and wears his hair in a fluff at the widow's peak.

"What about?"

"I want to show you my line."

"Of what?"

He starts to walk away because he's already spent too much time conversing with me. I talk fast.

"Covered buttons. Best line. Best service. Take a look?"

"I don't need a thing. I'll call ya."

"How can you do that when you don't even know who I am?"

"Gimme your card."

I lunge at him with my card, which he sticks into his pocket. I know I can't stop here; he will throw away the card or pick his teeth with it.

"Look Sidney, I've been calling on this account for three months and I haven't been able to get to first base. Gimme a break, will ya?"

"To tell you the honest truth, I don't buy them any more. You better see the boss."

With that he disappears. So the guy has finally admitted that he is not the buyer. Why didn't he say so in the first place instead of fencing with me? Now I have to start all over again and try to see the boss. This place looks harder than the White House to crack.

IT SEEMS that I'm in luck, though. A man comes out from somewhere on the right and disappears behind a door marked "Gents." He must be the boss, I figure, even if he is pretty young, because he's the only one in the joint who's walking instead of running. Sure enough, as soon as he emerges from the john he catches my eye and comes toward the gate, probably to get rid of me. I talk to him through the gate, wondering which one is the prisoner.

"Yes sir. Can I help you?"

A gentleman, at least. He speaks.

"Sidney told me to see you. I have a fine line of covered buttons I'm sure you could use."

"Open up," he says. "I'll take a look."

The number two dream of every salesman. Number one is to get the order.

Finally the gate opens for me. We're both free, and he gazes down at my sample card.

"Aren't they nice?"

"They're all right," he says. "The only thing is, we don't need anything right now."

Rule number one of good salesmanship: change the subject.

"Tell me the truth, Mr. . . . Mr. . . ."

"Nelson. Len Nelson."

"Glad to know you. Tell me, Mr. Nelson," I implore him earnestly, "how is business?"

"Chop suey," he says.

"What do you mean?"

"We're working."

A gentleman, this boss. He refers to himself as "We." A real organizer.

"In other words, things are pretty good with you?"

"I wouldn't say that. In fact things are pretty tough. The war, she is over."

I don't need history lessons, at least not from him, so I get back to the point.

"I wish you'd try me on those buttons, Mr. Nelson. I'd even take a sample order just to show you how nice they come through."

He smiles pleasantly. "You want to know the truth? I don't even buy them."

With that he shuts the gate and proceeds to disappear. This is too much.

"For God's sake, who does buy the buttons here?" I cry out, not caring at all about the disgust in my voice.

"Sidney," he calls back.

"I just saw him and he says that he doesn't buy. . . ."

I do not hear his answer and decide to wait. I have to get to the bottom of this, come hell or my sales manager. I wait for what feels like another two hours before Sidney and his assistant come back towards me with the empty rack and this time they are fairly flying. They tear the gate open and take off. I just manage to grab Sidney by the arm but he is so busy that he doesn't even have the time to get sore.

"Can I see you for a second?"

"Didn't I just talk to you?"

I start all over again, patiently, assuming that it has all been one big mistake.

"Yeah, but I'd like to show you some of my samples."

"I tell you I don't buy them! The boss does."

This kid is sure slippery. He is worse than Fisheye, one of my other customers. I always thought Fisheye was bad but he has nothing on this guy.

"Say, what are you giving me, anyway? I just spoke to the boss and he said you're the buyer. What is this?"

He finally takes time off to get angry. He shows his teeth, trying to look like Bogart.

"What are you, a wise guy? What are you tryin' to do, give me an argument?"

I back down. There is no sense in antagonizing the boy. After all, he may be the button buyer some day!

"I mean it, Sidney. I just saw Mr. Nelson himself."

He laughs rather shrilly. "Nelson? He's not the boss. He just works here, in the showroom."

And he runs off after the rack, laughing and leaving me embarrassed and disgusted with myself. Now the whole thing is a challenge; I will not leave until I see the proper party. I start in all over again. I watch people rushing past, girls, men, order pickers, shipping clerks. They must be making a million dollars in this place, I figure. Here I am, unable to get myself a sample order for fifty cents. I'm even unable to get anybody to say a few free words to me.

"Hey!" I holler. "Hey! Where's somebody?"

I see people, hear voices, but nobody pays any attention. Desperately I let my sample bag slip to the floor, seize the chicken-wire with all ten fingers and start to shake it. One shake, two shakes—still no attention. I rattle the wire gate until there is a high loud ringing and my ears are almost splitting.

I have to stop, out of sheer exhaustion. Finally I see a face, a young pink face sticking out from behind a high stack of dress boxes. The face turns away from me.

"Hey, Mike! There's a guy in the back who wants to see ya."

Now Mike comes at me. He is probably the official receptionist for the freight door, the guy who's in charge of the rear, the person I should have seen all along. He is pudgy and stolid and bowlegged. He comes slowly, tentatively, as if he does not even see me. He looks at me blankly, as he would at a shipment that has to be checked, with his mind wide open.

"Yeah? What can I do you for, Mac?"

Finally! It's apparent that I've found somebody around here who knows something.

"Will you open this thing up? I want to talk to you."

"Go ahead and talk. I can hear you."

"Look, Mike," I say confidentially. "I've been shunted from one guy to another for the last hour. What plays?"

"I got no time to waltz with you, Mac. What do you want?"

"I just want to have a word with the man who buys your covered buttons."

Mike opens a pair of meaty palms outward.

"He ain't here."

I know my mouth is open, that I'm looking very dumb. I wouldn't be surprised if I'm drooling. Luckily the gate is closed and Mike can't see me too well.

"Where is he?" I gasp.

"Down in Lakewood."

I lose control of myself completely.

"Lakewood!" I holler. "Why the hell isn't he in Florida?"

I hear him laugh hoarsely, with something like vindictiveness, as if he were getting even.

"No more Florida for him! We're back to the good old times. . . ."

I stagger away blindly, full of rage, hating with all my remaining strength the speeding boys and their speeding racks, the chicken-wire gate, the garbage piled up helter-skelter next to it; hating pleasant Nelson and silly Sidney, hating bowlegged Mike and the terrible truth of his final words.

letter from abroad

Tokyo

BY THEIR applause, so tremendous that it visibly moved the veteran actors themselves, the thousands who crowded Kyoritsu Hall to see the May Day Eve cultural festival gave success to an experiment: a first attempt to revitalize a classical Kabuki drama by giving it a meaning for the people of today. In the *Narukami* revised and staged by Zenshin-za (Advance Theatre), the heroine is not a beauty of the court but a peasant girl, who for the sake of the villagers pits her charm and wit against the magical powers of a malignant priest. Drastic changes in the lines and action were unnecessary, however, since, like all the Kabuki plays, it was originally a popular drama. Kabuki developed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as a reaction against the aristocratic Noh plays, but gradually its sharp characterizations of the various classes were blunted and it too became a medium for the glorification of feudalism.

So few workers have been able to afford to see Kabuki in recent years, and so seemingly overpowering has been the competition of the movies, that Zenshin-za feared that the form might have lost its hold on the people. The reception of *Narukami* showed that the ancient music of Kabuki, its falsetto recitations and stylized acting, its colorful costumes and vigorous clowning, are still loved. Skillful adaptation may do for Kabuki what has been done for the traditional opera in the Liberated Areas of China.

The somewhat chilly reviews of *Narukami* by certain professional critics were expected, for Zenshin-za, long acclaimed for its plays and films, lost its artistry in their eyes when early in March seventy-eight of its eighty-two adult members joined the Communist Party in a group. Since that event Zenshin-za has been the butt of many jibes from the Right, but it has also found that it has a sure audience wherever there are trade unions or popular organizations.

The mass joining of the Party seemed abrupt to many outsiders, but actually it was preceded by many months of discussion and by almost two decades of experience. Led by Nakamura Ganemon and Kawarasaki Chojuro (who plays the priest in *Narukami*), a group of rebels from the monopoly-controlled, tradition-ridden Kabuki troupes organized Zenshin-za in 1931. The rebels could obtain no capital from banks or patrons, but their pooled funds lasted till they gained their first successes. By 1937 the troupe was prosperous enough to buy land on the outskirts of Tokyo and begin to build the community where it still works and lives: a well-appointed rehearsal theatre flanked by homes and gardens.

During its pre-war decade Zenshin-za occasionally produced a foreign play, such as Eugene O'Neill's *Ah, Wilderness!* or Elmer Rice's *Street Scene,* but for the most part it clung to Kabuki and Matatabi-mono, a type of play about the traveling gamblers of the Tokugawa period. Perhaps its finest work, however, was done in its sixteen films, all of which were historical dramas set in feudal times. In these films Zenshin-za sought to expose the irrationality and cruelty of the Samurai code and to show how people actually lived under feudalism. *Shinsen Gumi,* for example, one of the best pre-war Japanese films, characterizes as barbarous assassins a famous band of Samurai usually portrayed as exemplifiers of self-sacrificing loyalty.

Kawarasaki Chojuro was a pupil of the great liberal actor, Ichikawa Sadanji, a leader of the New Drama Movement of thirty years ago, and accompanied him and thirty-eight others to Moscow in 1928. The group was welcomed warmly and was impressed by the vigor of Soviet drama, and Kawarasaki says that the visit began his conversion to Marxism. During its first years Zenshin-za produced a few left-wing plays, part of the proceeds from which went to the illegal Communist Party, and such proletarian dramatists as Murayama Tomayoshi helped the troupe to get started.

As THE militarist-capitalist reaction intensified, however, Zenshin-za grew aloof from the struggling left-wing and liberal dramatic groups. The Proletarian Drama League was suppressed in 1934 and the last vaguely liberal troupes went under in 1940, but Zenshin-za survived even the war. During the middle and late Thirties it ignored the issues of the day and restricted itself to saying what it could about

feudalism in its films. When the Pacific War began, it took refuge in *Genroku Chushingura,* a long sequence of Kabuki plays. It staged and filmed these for two years, and then yielded to the Information Bureau and staged *Sinking the Unsinkable,* dealing with the battleship Prince of Wales. It made excuses to avoid filming this play, but later made a movie of a somewhat less offensive story about Japanese emigrant farmers in Manchuria. During these years the troupe sought an escape in the fervent collection of fine handicrafts and costumes and in the study of Japanese architecture, gardening and arts. To indicate non-conformance in a minor way, the males declined to wear the austere National Defense Clothes and instead garbed themselves in kimonos and white socks, the latter being a traditional symbol of sophistication. As the war went on, however, the troupe became increasingly critical of its opportunism, and in the summer of 1944, when the bombings began, it left Tokyo for the countryside of Nagano Prefecture and ceased major activity.

During the first postwar year Zenshin-za was attached to the Imperial Theatre in Tokyo and, excited by the liberal atmosphere which then existed, performed in quick succession the best foreign plays it could lay its hands on: Jean Richard Bloch's *Toulon,* John Drinkwater's *Abraham Lincoln* and Lillian Hellman's *Watch on the Rhine.* These productions brought the troupe an award from the newspaper *Asahi* for having contributed the most to the democratization of the Japanese stage, but both for financial and artistic reasons it was dissatisfied. It obtained a bare livelihood from the bureaucratic management of the Imperial Theatre, and it recalled the greater satisfaction it had gained from performing Kabuki before town and village audiences during its stay in Nagano. It quit the Imperial Theatre, therefore, and, dividing itself into several groups, began to travel, performing in local theatres, factories and schools. This intimate contact with the people eventually led almost all into the Communist Party.

Zenshin-za is organized according to the principle of democratic centralism; its executive committee is elected periodically at meetings of the membership. Members have their own homes in the community, but in many ways live like one family. They take many of their meals together, and the forty children, who have a troupe of their own and whom many visitors describe as the happiest children in Japan, are cared for communally. In contrast to the traditional Kabuki

troupes, in which the leading actors treat the others like servants, freedom of criticism is encouraged by every possible means. After rehearsing, the troupe holds a discussion, and a bit player may, and does, criticize those in the leading roles.

ZENSHIN-ZA is now divided into four groups. The group which produced *Narukami* is performing *Midsummer Night's Dream* this summer in the Tokyo area, while the second is in Osaka, engaged in a Japanese dramatization of *Les Miserables.* Another is taking *Ali Baba* on tour, and the fourth, known as the New Culture Group, is working on adaptations of Kabuki. The children's group, which danced before half a million people on May Day, is also professionally busy.

Like every cultural enterprise in Japan today, Zenshin-za faces the general problem of operating in a semi-colonial society. In the increasingly depressed economy fewer and fewer people can afford to see plays, admission to which is made extraordinarily expensive by the 150 per cent state tax on entertainment. An influx of Hollywood films, and of such American magazines as *True Story* and *True Romance* has taken place, and American censorship of progressive thought and art, direct and indirect, has grown more restrictive than ever.

Zenshin-za has met the economic problem by relying on the support of popular organizations, principally the trade unions and the schools. Partly to avoid censorship, it has leaned heavily on Shakespeare. Even if censorship did not exist, Shakespeare would have a place in the troupe's repertoire, for its greatness has surmounted translation and everywhere it has been received enthusiastically. Zenshin-za plans to produce *The Taming of the Shrew, Romeo and Juliet, Othello* and *King Lear,* as well as more adaptations of Kabuki and certain Japanese plays.

—HUGH DEANE

books in review

Maggot-of-the-Month

NINETEEN EIGHTY-FOUR, by George Orwell. *Harcourt, Brace. $3.00.*

LIKE his previous diatribe against the human race, *Animal Farm,* George Orwell's new book has received an ovation in the capitalist press. The gush of comparisons with Swift and Dostoyevsky has washed away the few remaining pebbles of literary probity. Not even the robots of Orwell's dyspeptic vision of the world in 1984 seem as solidly regimented as the freedom-shouters who chose it for the Book-of-the-Month Club, serialized it in *Reader's Digest,* illustrated it in eight pages of *Life,* and wrote pious homilies on it in *Partisan Review* and the New York *Times.* Indeed the response is far more significant than the book itself; it demonstrates that Orwell's sickness is epidemic.

The premise of the fable is that capitalism has ceased to exist in 1984; and the moral is that if capitalism departs the world will go to pot. The earth is divided into three "socialist" areas, Oceania, Eurasia and Eastasia, which unlike the good old days of free enterprise are in perpetual warfare. The hero, Winston Smith, lives on Airstrip One (England) and balks at the power-crazed regime. He is nabbed by the Thought Police, tortured with fiendish devices, and finally he wins the privilege of being shot when he learns to love the invisible dictator.

Orwell's nightmare is also inhabited by the "proles," who constitute a mere 85 per cent of Oceania and who are described with fear and loathing as ignorant, servile, brutish. A critic of Orwell's earlier novel in the *Saturday Review of Literature* expressed a profound insight when he noted: "The message of *Animal Farm* seems to be . . . *that people are no damn good.*"

"People are no damn good"—that is precisely the message of this plodding tale as well. For Orwell, life is a dunghill, and after a while the "animals" look "from pig to man, and from man to pig, and from pig to man again; but already it was impossible to say which was which."

As a piece of fiction this is threadbare stuff with a tasteless sex angle which has been rhapsodically interpreted by Mark Schorer in the New York *Times* as a "new discovery of the beauty of love between man and woman." This new discovery is well illustrated by the following scene in which Winston Smith makes love to Julia, a fellow-rebel against the dictatorial regime:

"'Listen. The more men you've had, the more I love you. Do you understand that?'

"'Yes, perfectly.'

"'I hate purity, I hate goodness. I don't want any virtue to exist anywhere. I want everyone to be corrupt to the bones.'

"'Well, then, I ought to suit you, dear. I'm corrupt to the bones.'

"'You like doing this? I don't mean simply me; I mean the thing in itself?'

"'I adore it.'

"That was above all what he wanted to hear. Not merely the love of one person, but the animal instinct, the simple undifferentiated desire: that was the force that would tear the Party to pieces."

According to *Life* magazine, this is "one of the most furtive and pathetic little love affairs in all literature."

Or consider this: Orwell's hero, who is supposed to awaken what the reviewers call "compassion," is interviewed by a man whom he believes to be the leader of the underground resistance to the tyrannical regime:

"'You are prepared to cheat, to forge, to blackmail, to corrupt the minds of children, to distribute habit-forming drugs, to encourage prostitution, to disseminate venereal diseases —to do anything which is likely to cause demoralization and weaken the power of the Party?'

"'Yes.'

"'If, for example, it would somehow serve our interests to throw sulphuric acid in a child's face—are you prepared to do that?'

"'Yes.'"

The author of this cynical rot is quite a hero himself. He served for five years in the Indian Imperial Police, an excellent training center for dealing with the "proles." He was later associated with the Trotskyites in Spain, serving in the P.O.U.M. and he freely concedes that when this organization of treason to the Spanish Republic was "accused of profascist activities I defended them to the best of my ability." During World War II he busied himself with defamation of the Soviet Union.

And now, as Lionel Trilling approvingly notes in *The New Yorker,* Orwell "marks a turn in thought." What is the significance of this turn? The literary mouthpieces of imperialism have discovered that the crude anti-Sovietism of a Kravchenko is not enough; the system of class oppression must be directly upheld and *any* belief in change and progress must be frightened out of people.

Like Trilling, the editorial writers of *Life* have shrewdly seized upon Orwell's generalized attack on the "welfare state" to

attack not only the Soviet Union but Wallace and the British Laborites. "Many readers in England," says *Life,* "will find that his book reinforces a growing suspicion that some of the British Laborites revel in austerity and would love to preserve it—just as the more fervent New Dealers in the U.S. often seemed to have the secret hope that the depression mentality of the '30s, source of their power and excuse for their experiments, would never end."

In short, Orwell's novel coincides perfectly with the propaganda of the National Association of Manufacturers, and it is being greeted for exactly the same reasons that Frederick Hayek's *The Road to Serfdom* was hailed a few years back.

The bourgeoisie, in its younger days, could find spokesmen who painted rosy visions of the future. In its decay, surrounded by burgeoning socialism, it is capable only of hate-filled, dehumanized anti-Utopias. Confidence has given way to the nihilistic literature of the graveyard. Now that Ezra Pound has been given a government award and George Orwell has become a best-seller we would seem to have reached bottom. But there is a hideous ingenuity in the perversions of a dying capitalism, and it will keep probing for new depths of rottenness which the maggots will find "brilliant and morally invigorating."

SAMUEL SILLEN

Foundry's Flare

LEAVES IN THE WIND, by Gwyn Thomas. *Little, Brown. $3.00.*

IN THIS novel Gwyn Thomas leaves his coal miners, his dark philosophers and the "voters" and takes a leap back into the 1830's to tell a story about men and women who lived in the shadow of the foundries of the England that was being shackled by the ironmasters.

This story is the most daring he has attempted so far. It vibrates with the clash between the iron workers and their employers, the landed gentry, the soldiers who are their redcoated fists. *Leaves in the Wind* introduces us to numerous characters drawn from both sides in the struggle. And at the same time the novel carries with it much of the charm of *Venus and the Voters* and *The Dark Philosophers* and many of its passages sparkle with Thomas' turns of speech, his wit and humor, his insights and his understanding of the "wheels of force."

Leaves in the Wind is told by a harpist, a wandering minstrel who opens the shutters of the story as he drifts into the town of Moonlea in quest of an old friend, John Simon Adams. Adams is a leader of the revolt against the horrible conditions prevailing in the foundries. This harpist is a poetic and symbolic figure, torn between his longing to get away from the fight and his sympathy for the people. The description of his indecision has a contemporary ring. He is also a device whereby the author is able to give us a picture of the ruling class.

He comes into a country seething with resentment against the owners of the foundries. He is caught in a flare which lights up one of the grimmest pages in the history of the industrialization of England. The harpist is jailed on a trumped-up charge of murder, John Simon Adams is hanged, scores of workers are cut down, and terror sweeps across the country.

The story ends with the release of the harpist and his departure from the iron country.

Obviously here is rich cover for the novelist. Unfortunately, Thomas does not quarter it successfully and does not start out the full-bodied men and women his theme demands. His chief characters are vague and windy, their behavior erratic and unconvincing. There are fine passages where some of the minor figures perch and let go, and you see them flash before you with the scent of the figures in Thomas' earlier novels. As for the harpist, and Adams, and his sweetheart Katherine, there the novelist has given us the outlines of fine people but he has not put flesh and marrow into them.

In Gwyn Thomas' first two novels talk carried the day. The four

"dark" philosophers held us with their wry and penetrating comments on man and that bitter clove, the world. It was enough for them to begin and end on a wall or in a confectionery shop; this was their action in the main and was enough. But *Leaves in the Wind* is an historical novel of revolt. Action is demanded by its theme, and plotting on the part of the novelist so that the plotting of the enraged workers has more head and body to it. And Thomas is not the master of plot, action and character to the degree that he is of comment and dialogue.

I cannot agree with him when he says that in this novel he has laid aside the "discursive leisureliness and subjectivity of the 'voters.'" These are the very qualities which put his characters on stilts and drag the story. He is lyrical where he should be dramatic, and mother wit is no substitute for mother action.

Gwyn Thomas appears to be one of the very few contemporary English novelists who have something to say. He comes to grips with the central problems facing his people. A master of an incisive plangent prose, wise and tender and full of an earthy humor, he shows that he is definitely on a hard bold road which should put his great gifts to their fullest use and help him solve every one of his problems as an artist.

BEN FIELD

Democracy Limited

PATTERNS OF ANTI-DEMOCRATIC THOUGHT, by David Spitz. *Macmillan. $4.50.*

THE author of this survey of recent expression of American political thinking uses the work of Lawrence Dennis when discussing fascists; when discussing racists he uses the work of Madison Grant; when discussing various facets of the aristocratic school of thought he uses the work of E. M. Sait, George Santayana, Irving Babbitt and Ralph A. Cram; and when discussing Communists he uses the work of—James Burnham!

This passes for scholarship in today's academic circles. The ostentatious luggage for this learned voyage consists of over 600 reference notes. Here one will find cited repeatedly Aristotle, Pareto, Michels, Sorokin, Machiavelli, Dewey, Croce, Spengler, Neibuhr, Toynbee and Spencer; Marx appears but once, and then is not quoted but paraphrased — and paraphrased incorrectly so as to equate Marxism with economic determinism!

This travesty on scholarship befits the shallowness of analysis. In a work allegedly exploring anti-democratic thought, Dr. Spitz finds it opportune in these times to include that of communism, but he admits that this concept "is not approached as a systematic body of anti-democratic thought"; rather, it is approached, as we have seen, by the somewhat circuitous route of James Burnham's pathological thinking.

And the author's consideration of anti-democratic writing is adversely affected by this same shallowness. He announces at the outset that he employs the word "'democracy' only in a political sense," and by this it is immediately apparent that he means to equate democracy with the American social order. Dr. Spitz is not so obtuse as to present that social order as the quintessence of democratic perfection: he pays lip service to certain "flaws"—as the status of the Negro people—but these are presented as unseemly tears in an essentially healthy, and democratic, fabric. Above all, since Dr. Spitz restricts himself to political phenomena, capitalism itself is *assumed* to be a fixed part of the American democratic pattern.

It follows from this that the nub of present-day anti-democratic thinking—its crux, base and origin — namely, monopoly capitalism, does not enter at all in the author's exposition; indeed, the word "imperialism" nowhere appears in the volume. It is not strange, then, that Dr. Spitz finds no room for the seminal reactionary outpourings of such early expounders of American imperialism as Admiral Mahan, Albert Beveridge, Josiah Strong and Theodore Roosevelt together with their latter-day disciples like Wil

liam Bullitt and Henry Luce.

It follows, too, that not only is Dr. Spitz's democracy a very limited concept, but it is also essentially a static one. Since his definition ignores the socio-economic and historic reality behind the American two-party system and simply assumes the immortal character of our present class-divided order, his analysis can envisage no real change.

This is why to Dr. Spitz, as to all reformists from William Harlan Hale to Max Lerner, politics to be "democratic" must be indecisive. They postulate a Diogenes-like game with two teams—Democrats and Republicans (and occasional mavericks inclining towards one or the other)—seeking something the players call the good or the true. The point of the game, however, is that its essence is the search, not the seizure. On the sidelines the spectators may comment upon the tactics of the players; bold spectators may even criticize those tactics, but never the strategy. The spectators have one additional duty—to pay the price of admission.

In the course of his exposition, Dr. Spitz pauses at one point to remark that nakedly anti-democratic "protestations have been unusually prolific" in present-day America. Had he asked himself why this was so, the question might have forced him to probe more deeply into his definition of democracy.

Dr. Spitz might have paused, too, at this riddle: How does it happen that the haters of democracy like Burnham, Santayana and Sait are honored, comfortable and undisturbed while partisans of the Left (from whom Dr. Spitz was unable to cite a single anti-democratic word) are vilified, tormented and prosecuted by the effective rulers of the United States—the author's epitome of a democratic state?

The riddle's solution lies in a more realistic definition of democracy, one which would square with the most decisive fact today for an American—namely, the fact that the present government of the United States is the focal-point of world reaction.

HERBERT APTHEKER

films

Trading Punches

by WARREN MILLER

JOHN STRACHEY, with an insight that might embarrass him now, once characterized the Hollywood penchant for fist and gun as "pre-fascist violence." Since the war's end it has been abundantly clear that Hollywood was to be an arm of the State Department. A stock-pile diplomacy required and received films of violence, dehumanization, the surrender of intellect to brute force.

It has been said, in defense of Hollywood, that violence has always been a part of our films, that it came in with the Western, is part of our frontier psychology. But the gun-play of the Western has nothing in common with the elements of brutality and sadism that infect today's films. The Western's hero, his concept of "law and order," was in the direct line of the Populist tradition. The violence of the film today is for the sake of violence. The show of brutality, repeated often enough, can innure an audience to the reality of it.

The cycle of prize-fight films that began a year ago with *Body and Soul* is a vivid expression of this tendency. The fight-films are not criticisms of a system that has made a business of what was once a sport, a business that deals in human beings, that corrupts and destroys. They are content to be "realistic"; that is, to limit their statement to a "Well, here it is. We may not like it but here it is. Brutality and corruption we shall always have with us."

The Set-Up and *Champion* are the two most recent of these films. They are well above the average of Hollywood movies for two reasons. Prize-fights, perhaps more than any other sport, can be *rendered* by the camera; indeed, the staged fight, effectively photographed and with an imaginative sound track, is usually more exciting than the fight seen from a seat three city blocks distant. Second, these films attempt to make a statement, even so mild a one as "here it is."

The attempt to render reality forces the script-writer to create situations that are immediately acceptable as probable; and he must write dialogue that actors can

speak and still give the sense of being morally responsible for their words. To understand this, one has only to see Robert Ryan's stiff performance in the absurd *Caught,* and his marvelous portrayal of a second-rate aging fighter in *The Set-Up.*

Set-Up is the better film. Without the sentimentality and its Hollywood "touches" it might have had the bare, ritualistic quality of a Hemingway story. It is more successful than *Champion* because it compromises less with reality, and because it is more filmically knowing.

Champion claims to be adapted from the Lardner short story. It is a claim that won't hold up. For Lardner, the word champion, in terms of his story, held a terrible irony. His bitter criticism of the "fight game" is implicit in the irony. The script-writer excised the irony and, as a result, destroyed the meaning. All that remains is a slickly done portrait of a good guy who becomes a heel.

Even this might have been interesting, but we have to take the fighter's deterioration on faith. Like the bull fight in *Carmen,* it takes place off-screen; at the end we are presented with the corrupt corpse. But we never really know how he got that way, even though certain steps in the process of corruption are shown. What was in him? What forces played on him to make him so susceptible to corruption? He loved his brother, was devoted to his manager; how could he throw them aside so easily? Evidently the film's producers don't know either, but it doesn't bother them.

In the ads, they call him a heel; but he is a hero, a Hollywood hero. At one point he cries: "It's like any other business—only here the blood shows." Being a Hollywood hero, he submits, he "goes along" with things as they are. Only his death is in the heroic mold, but it is robbed of any stature because it is meaningless. He died only to satisfy the ridiculous Hollywood code. The "business" will carry on as before.

In the beginning of the film he is shown as the defender of his crippled brother. (Lardner has him beat up the brother. When the mother protests, Midge knocks her down and gallantly cries: "You ain't hurt, Ma. You're lucky I didn't land good.") When he is

told he must throw a fight before he can meet the champion, he resists—even smashes a lamp. (Lardner writes: " 'What do you think I am, a crook? Me lay down for fifty bucks. Not me.' 'Seventy-five, then,' said Tracy's manager. The market closed on eighty. . . . And the next night Midge was stopped in the second round by a terrific slap on the forearm.")

In the story, his clothes "screamed for attention"; in the film he dresses like an English instructor at a "good" school, or like Gene Tunney. And this seemingly simple matter of the fidelity of dress to characterization provides an illuminating insight into an aspect of the Hollywood mentality.

Mark Robson, who directed *Home of the Brave,* directed this. It provides further evidence of his talent. His work, technically, is often admirable; with a script less episodic and more honest he might have produced a brilliant film. Surprisingly, the fight scenes are the dreariest sequences in the film: the ancient device of superimposing the round number is used, and there is the inevitable shot between the referee's legs.

Much more effective is the scene where Midge is beat up by thugs in the empty arena, and his death in the dressing-room. But we are given no sense of the meaninglessness, the human waste, of such an act, of such a life. That's the way things are and the more things change the more poor we shall always have with us because you can't change human nature, now can you? No, the producer says, you can't; it's tough, I know, but there it is; I regret it as much as you do. Mr. Kramer also produced *Home of the Brave.*

All of this applies, though less severely, to *The Set-Up.* Less severely because it is more faithful to the physical details that add up to a feeling of reality. Ryan has a thirty-five cent haircut, and wears the top *two* buttons of his shirt open, not the *sportif* one-button.

Ryan fights in the tank towns with the has-beens who are going out and the newcomers coming up. The dressing-room filled with fighters is like the ante-room to a slaughter house. A man enters from time to time and shouts, "Next." But in nearly every sequence there are pulp-magazine touches that vitiate the carefully constructed reality: the punchy fighter, the young guy who reads the Bible, the blind man in the audience.

Despite these defects, the depiction of brutality is stronger and coarser than in *Champion;* but again there is no feeling of implied criticism. To reveal is not the same thing as to denounce. Kracauer, in his history of the German film, *From Caligari to Hitler,* remarks that the German war-films, while revealing the hor-

rors of war, were not pleas for peace. "The German militarists," he writes, "did not have to fear the German pacifists." It is an unhappy parallel.

What gives this picture its particular interest and what startled all the critics is its virtuoso handling, the originality of its method. The picture takes place in continuous time; it is the story of ninety minutes in a man's life told in ninety minutes. This means that the dissolve and the fade, those abused devices, cannot be used; it has to be done in straight cuts; any other method implies the passage of time. Before becoming a director, Robert Wise had been an editor (he edited *Citizen Kane*).

It is an editor's film. The use of the straight cut gives a feeling of movement, not only from scene to scene but within a scene; it is a feeling a film must have if it is to be successful. By this means, also, the episodic trap of so many Hollywood films is avoided. It is a dexterous, highly skillful performance. The fight scenes are possibly the best that have ever been filmed: by shooting directly into the lights (it's against the rules in Hollywood), a newsreel quality is effected.

The scenes of brutality and sadism, too, have that spontaneous, unstaged, camera-eye quality. It is one thing Hollywood does better than anyone else.

theatre

PEOPLE'S DRAMA

by ISIDOR SCHNEIDER

THE theater event of the past month was the opening of The People's Drama season. In a former church nave, which adroit carpentering has transformed into a stage and auditorium, an attempt is being made to establish a social theatre in New York, an attempt that deserves—and promises—success.

The People's Drama is a group of mainly professional actors, directors and technicians whose aims are succinctly expressed in its name. The group brings to these aims youth, energy and devotion.. With considerable ingenuity they are meeting the challenges of a makeshift stage and properties. Their ambitious program includes John Wexley's *They Shall Not Die* with which they have started their season, Garcia Lorca's *Yerma,* Theodore Ward's *Whole Hog Or Nothing,* Ben Bengal's *Plant In the Sun,* and Bertolt Brecht's *The Private Life of the Master Race.*

Their opening production, *They Shall Not Die,* was generally a satisfying one. Except for a tendency to over-accents in the portrayal of sheriffs, deputies, prosecutors and other minions of Dixie law (at times to the point of caricature), the performance was spirited and effective. The directing was particularly good in the off-stage effects—sounds of the mob outside the jail, of courtroom spectators placed in the balcony, of the guffaws in the jury room, and the procession of jurymen and witnesses through the theatre aisle.

The play itself stands up surprisingly well under the fifteen years or so that have passed since its original production. It is as compelling today as it was in 1933 when it became one of the weapons that helped save the Scottsboro boys from a legal lynching.

The immediacy and effectiveness of the play, however, is due to an external condition: the continued oppression of the Negro people in America. In its revival today its becomes a weapon once more against an analogous frame-up, that of the Trenton Six.

A shortcoming of *They Shall Not Die* is its over-literal method: parts of it sound like transcripts from stenographic records of the Scottsboro trial. Neverthe-

less, it is vigorous, convincing and moving.

Its effectiveness strengthens an impression gained from another play, *Wedding in Japan,* reported in last month's issue, which had a similar theme—a court-martial frameup of a Negro G.I. in Japan. It is my impression that a thesis play (or novel) may benefit from another approach than the prevalent emphasis upon characterization. In both these plays, for example, the depiction of character is an incidental rather than a primary consideration; yet they give a strong and credible feeling of life.

Now a thesis play aims to expose a social injustice or a social conflict. The characters through whom the situation is dramatized are also conditioned by it; and it is best that their dimensions and development do not extend beyond the frame of the situation.

Judging from these two plays and from memories of others, keeping the development of the characters within that frame makes for concentration and unity. Where the focus is upon character development rather than upon situation, the character contradictions bring ambiguities into the situation that frequently act to disintegrate the play.

In both *They Shall Not Die* and *Wedding in Japan* characters are developed only to the degree necessary to make their role in the situation convincing. If either of the plays were to be judged primarily by the subtlety or richness of their characterization they would be seriously underrated. It is true that the auditor leaves such plays without any strong memory of personalities; but he leaves it with a strong awareness of injustice and the urgency of the fight against it.

Thus the *degree* of characterization in a play that is built upon a situation illustrative of social injustice, or social conflict, may be a more important problem to the writer than methods of characterization.

TO THE People's Drama group may be added several other off-Broadway groups who are making this summer theatre season in New York richer than most months of the regular season have proved to be. In another church on West 13th Street, The Lemonade Opera opened a new season of "little opera" with a production of Haydn's *Man in the Moon;* Off-Broadway, whose offerings are shown at the Cherry Lane Theatre, opened with Gertrude Stein's *Yes Is For A Very Young Man;* Studio Seven, reported to be a Yale Drama Student group put on Lorca's *The Shoemaker's Prodigious Wife* at the Provincetown Playhouse, with Strindberg's one-acter, *The Stronger One,* as curtain raiser. And in one of the concert halls in Carnegie Hall, a new group, We Present, is putting on

Sean O'Casey's *The Silver Tassie,* in a production by Al Saxe who recently directed the Jefferson School student players in their remarkable performance of Albert Maltz's *The Rehearsal.* And there will probably be other groups to take notice of.

Off-Broadway productions, with their usually young casts and young ideas, put an ingenuity and spontaneity into their performances that constitute at its best a theatre quality seldom present in more commercial productions. At its worst it runs over into forgivable excess.

This quality was not at its best in the Lemonade Opera's opening where an over-ambitious production cluttered the tiny stage with more props, choreography and other stage fuss than it could comfortably hold; and an over-energetic performance underlined the silliness of a banal libretto while it over-powered its principal attraction, the Haydn music.

Nor was it at its best in Studio Seven's production of Lorca's *The Shoemaker's Prodigious Wife.* I hope my opinion of Lorca will be changed by the People's Drama's coming production of his *Yerma,* the most directly social-conscious of his plays. Having seen the Studio Seven production and a recent New Stages production of his *Blood Wedding,* I have become somewhat dubious over the playability of the Lorca dramas.

Before continuing, I should get it down that both Lorca productions were, nevertheless, far more interesting and worth seeing than the run-of-the-mill productions of the Broadway season. But neither satisfied one's expectations of a writer who has been generally thought of as the savior of poetic drama in our time.

The New Stages production seemed stylized to the point of tableau; the Studio Seven production was strenuous to the point of farce. It may be that Lorca requires a special directing hand not yet forthcoming; or that his poetry is essentially untranslatable; or that Lorca springs so organically from his native culture that, without the rich associations it has in the original, it comes out thin in other cultural adaptations; and what are nuances, in the original, merely seem whimsical in translation. At any rate, these two productions did not fulfill large anticipations.

letters

On Simon McKeever

To *M & M*:

I QUIT my work for the moment to shout, in high dudgeon, my protests against the disgraceful critical behavior of Phillip Bonosky in his review (*M&M,* June) of Albert Maltz's *The Journey of Simon McKeever.*

Bonosky quotes from the dream sequence of McKeever. He does not even note that it is a sequence, but refers only to the climactic scene with Mary. The entire dream is of a battle against cynicism, despair, frustration and the scene with Mary is but an expression of victory, personal victory, societal victory. This is a song expertly sung. But Bonosky kisses it off, even dropping some parts of this single scene, because they would contradict and confound the point he is determined to make.

Commenting on this same dream, Bonosky says, "Thus on this false, poeticized philosophic note . . . Simon McKeever's journey ends." Now, really! Simon's dream doesn't end his journey, symbolically, philosophically, dramatically. As a matter of cold, printed fact it marks the beginning of the last leg of his trek.

Bonosky says, "All along the way, McKeever reads Havelock Ellis' *Dance of Life.*" A bald untruth. He does not open the book until he has completed the first half of his journey. He took it with him, thinking it to be a light novel. He finds that it is no such thing. He looks into it. He finds two quotes which interest him. The rest of the book is a mish-mash. He looks over the chapter titles and finds none on "The Art of Earning a Living."

Bonosky says that, having read *Dance of Life,* which he didn't do in the first place, McKeever finds a mission: "and, disgusted, McKeever promises himself that he will undertake an ambitious and resounding project." The *Dance of Life* thing occurs on page 174. But McKeever's social motivation is expressed 136 pages earlier (page 38) when he says, "There's a book I want to fix up." Maltz projects several times this motivation for the journey and for the cure-search. To make *The Dance of Life* incident responsible for Simon's ambition is to make Maltz out to be a mystic. This he is not. It makes McKeever out to be a mere child of circumstance . . . and this he is not.

Bonosky says, "Simon McKeever's journey ends: ends in the self-delusion that he will write a book for which he has neither the insight nor the ability nor the time to attempt." Maltz gives 80,000 words to prove this is not self-delusion. He never says, as Bonosky does, that Simon is going to "write a book." He is going to collect an anthology. The entire final scene is given to the attainment

of the physical properties for this task and to Simon McKeever's shrewd bargaining to achieve his end. The above quote from Bonosky robs the Maltz work of its vigor and insight and hope.

CHARLES GLENN

Van Nuys, Calif.

To *M&M*:

I CAN'T understand how the Albert Maltz who wrote *Underground Stream* and *The Cross and the Arrow* (and such splendid stories as "Man On the Road" and "The Happiest Man in the World") could have journeyed into nowhere with Simon McKeever.

I was greatly disappointed in his new novel. Mr. Bonosky's insistence that "the writer's own consciousness must place his people, *even in their unconsciousness,* in the *real* frame of life" is more important now than ever before.

The Journey of Simon McKeever is not set in the real America each of us knows. Not the Wall Street-dominated America which dictates that Albert Maltz's novel shall not be filmed because of the author's progressive views. Not the country of the Un-American Committee, "Red" trials, spy-scares, atom-bomb diplomacy, Taft-Hartley, loyalty probes and oaths, and bold new plans for world rule—the postwar U.S.A. Rather, it seems to me to be located in that never-never, timeless void upon which the latter-day Steinbeck has staked a prior claim. (There is of course a radical difference between Steinbeck's and Maltz's attitude toward people.)

Yes, Man is magnificent!—not only because he can love his fellow men but because he can hate the forces which oppress, cripple and exploit mankind from the cradle to the grave. And fight them. And defeat them. The enemies of Albert Maltz the writer are the enemies of Simon McKeever the character. *They* are the ones who cannot find the funds to increase the miserable old-age pensions although they can and did find billions to send to Chiang Kai-shek. One cannot truly love Simon McKeever without hating and indicting those who are responsible for his inadequate diet, lack of medical care—for sentencing him to an old folks' home after a lifetime of labor. I could see no glimmer of such hatred in the book.

The great bourgeois humanists like Dickens and Hugo did more than exalt the "lowly." They challenged, accused and denounced the mighty. In a limited way, true—but with *passion.* Surely it is not asking too much of a progressive writer—100 years later, when the world balance is already tipped on the side of socialism—to do as much today.

Neruda can speak *to* us, but American writers must speak *for* us. Albert Maltz is one of those who can.

R. F. MILES

Chicago

To *M&M*:

The Journey of Simon McKeever was a positive work that brought the plight of the pensioners with

their penniless existence to the people. McKeever had guts, confidence and dignity, and imbued the beaten down pensioners with hope and purpose.

I am a machine operator in General Electric, and a former pipe fitter, seaman and printer to boot. Through my eyes, McKeever's journey to Los Angeles was sheer guts. And the people who helped and hurt McKeever on his journey were drawn in clear and true class lines. The Coughlinite mentality of Malone in the scene under the bridge, and the arrogant cop in L.A. and McKeever's fortitude in the face of such scum shows a real MAN.

To scoff at McKeever's literary goal is to underestimate the intelligence and strength of the working class and its ability to grasp culture. Please McKeever, hurry up and compile that anthology of the Common Man, for some of our critics are badly in need of your instruction.

N. M.

Bridgeport

To *M&M*:

I HAVE just finished reading Albert Maltz's *The Journey of Simon McKeever.* And almost immediately on picking up your June issue, I read Bonosky's review of the book. Here are my reactions: McKeever had my full, wholehearted sympathy. Straining and striving from early childhood in his native Ireland, snatching here and there for a bit of a stray sunray to warm his life and give it sig-

nificance as he matured in our land of opportunity, and yet! And yet! in the end, crippled, alone, poor and desolate. How grateful he was to that nurse in the clinic for her kind words and interest. How tragically he held on to the hopes which the flighty, grateful patient of the Los Angeles doctor credited with the ability to cure "arthuretees"!

Crippling pains victimize rich no less than the poor; but, the former can enjoy the comforts of a home, love and have means to buy adequate attention. Is it necessary in a book of this caliber to quote chapter and verse from *Das Kapital?* Is it not effective enough, by innuendo to expose the rottenness of our civilization when, after years of service, men and women are thrown out on the refuse pile? If I had never been exposed to communism, I think the book under discussion could well make me aware of the need to fight for a better, saner world.

Phillip Bonosky's review is scholarly, but I must insist that because of the tree, Mr. Bonosky has lost the beauty and meaning of the forest.

EVA ROBIN

New York

From India

To *M&M*:

WE HAVE great pleasure in enclosing here two cover pages of our magazine, *Sada Jug* (Our Era), a monthly devoted to theoretical articles in Marxism. The language is Punjabi and the journal is exclusively meant for East Punjab.

The design for June has been reproduced from your March issue ("Revenge," by Chen Yin-chiao) while that for May is from *New Masses* (an illustration for a poem by Pablo Neruda).

We acknowledge the assistance we have received from you and wish to express our thanks for same. In case you can help us by sending us a few more drawings, sketches and pictures of this type (masses in action, etc.), please do let us know. Ours is a magazine for a small area and such help will be extremely valuable.

DEV RAJ CHANANA
Managing Editor

Delhi, India

More Gardner

To *M&M*:

MY FEELING is that the content of every issue has been an improvement over preceding ones and I am particularly pleased with the high caliber of the fiction and art. How about another article by Virginia Gardner? Her warm and accurate reporting is greatly missed by those of us she left behind in the East.

N. L.

Arlington, Va.

We are happy to report that Miss Gardner is preparing a piece for us which is scheduled to appear in an early issue.—The Editors.