

MARCH
1950

Classes



MAINSTREAM

this Issue:

ANTON CLOSE-UP

by

MILLY SALWEN
PHILLIP BONOSKY

✓

FREEDOM AND
RESPONSIBILITY

by

HARLES HUMBOLDT

✓

MOTHER JONES

by

JOSEPH LEEDS

✓

PROBLEMS OF
JEWISH CULTURE

by

MORRIS U. SCHAPPES



POEMS FROM PRISON, by Nazim Hikmet

Let's Wind It Up

We had hoped that with this issue we would be able to announce that *M & M* had gone over the top in its drive for \$10,000 to carry it through 1950. But we are still short of the goal.

This is a last call. It is directed especially to those readers who have not yet responded to our financial appeal. Your contribution, no matter how small—a dollar, or two or three—would spell the difference between concentrating our full energies on deepening, enriching, improving our magazine from issue to issue, and prolonged and distracting worries about meeting bills and placating creditors.

Our February issue, devoted to Negro struggle, history and culture, won enthusiastic comment. It achieved a high point in circulation.

You can help make new advances by sharing with us the burden of keeping *M & M* not merely afloat but in fighting trim.

We take this occasion to thank all those hundreds of readers who responded so quickly and generously to our annual appeal.

To all our other friends we say: Let's wind it up!

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masses & MAINSTREAM

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MILLY SALWEN is the Trenton correspondent of Federated Press.

MORRIS U. SCHAPPES' article is based upon a report which he delivered at a recent conference sponsored by the School for Jewish Studies in New York.

NOTE: With this issue we begin a new department of comment, "Our Time," by the editor, which will appear regularly.

. . .

COVER: Photo of a coal miner by Leo Frankfurt.

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THE CASE OF

Nazim Hikmet

FEW Americans may know that the greatest living poet of Turkey, Nazim Hikmet, has been in prison for the past twelve years. Yet it is in America, above all lands, where this should be known. Were it not for the support given to Nazim's jailers by the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan, the poet would now be free. His fate recalls the murder in 1948 of Turkey's foremost novelist, Sabahattin Ali, victim of police terror in the country described by Truman as the bulwark of democracy in the Middle East.

The twenty-eight-year jail sentence of which the poet is now serving the thirteenth year was handed down by a military-naval court holding star chamber sessions aboard a battleship. There was only one charge: that the police had found some of Nazim Hikmet's poems among Black Sea sailors and Military Academy students. The fact that those poems were available at that time in any book store did not prevent the poet's military judges from convicting him for "spreading communistic ideas in the ranks of the Turkish Army and Navy."

In jail, this great anti-fascist fighter has remained undaunted, keeping the sword of his poetry as sharp as ever. His poems pass from hand to hand. Thousands read them and find inspiration in the fact that in spite of his severe heart ailment and the inhuman prison conditions, Nazim Hikmet cannot be silenced. Some of his poems are published under pseudonyms in various literary magazines. The readers know these poems, with their daring realism, their love of the people and their longing for freedom, could only be Nazim's.

Even Nazim's political enemies would not deny his tremendous contribution to the legacy of Turkish literature. He started his literary career in an era of social turmoil when the world was awakening under the impact of the great October Revolution. Between 1919 and

1922, Turkey was in the grip of its nationalist revolution directed against the Ottoman rulers as well as against foreign imperialism. Nazim Hikmet was only nineteen in 1921 when he escaped from Istanbul, then under Allied occupation, to join the nationalist forces engaged in the war of independence. His escapade took him all over Anatolia. He journeyed mostly on foot, coming into closer contact with the plain Turkish people—peasants, workers and soldiers.

The real turning point in Nazim's life came with his acceptance of Marxism as a philosophy of life. He made his way to the young Soviet state to see socialism in the making. In Moscow he studied literature, sociology and political economy. He met Mayakovsky and was very much influenced by his powerful poetry. Some of his poems written in Moscow were translated into Russian. During this period he wrote a play, *Pyramid*, which was later burned by the Turkish police in a Hitler-style bonfire of Nazim's books.

In 1925 he finally succeeded in re-entering Turkey. He was seized by the police and was thrown into jail in Ankara for three years. From here on, Nazim's life is a succession of heresy trials and jail terms; in between, as it were, he added new volumes to his impressive list of collections of poems, verse novels, plays, topical newspaper poems and socio-political essays.

Nazim Hikmet is a combination of Pushkin and Mayakovsky in the eyes of his countrymen. He is Turkey's national—and people's—poet. While carrying on in the path of Mayakovsky in his ceaseless struggle against sterile old forms, he reached into Turkey's past history and found heroes for his epics among revolutionary leaders of other ages.

Despite the terror in Turkey there is a rising protest against the continued imprisonment of Nazim Hikmet. Fearing that the popular discontent with the Hikmet affair might assume the proportions of an organized popular campaign, a section of the pro-government press including the ultra-respectable *Vatan* has lately been forced to pretend advocacy of his cause, at least from a "legal point of view." It was an irony of *Vatan's* demagoguery that in the course of the ensuing polemic it came out that the law under which Nazim was sentenced had been enacted after his sentence, to fit the heavy penalty! Even one of the judges who participated in the trial had to admit publicly the fact that "the constitutionality of the sentence was questionable."

This case has attracted great attention abroad as well as here in Turkey. A committee was recently formed in Paris to demand the liberation of Nazim Hikmet. Prominent intellectuals in Europe and elsewhere participated in action for his release. Among these are such well-known figures as Louis Aragon, Pablo Picasso, Abbe Boulier, Pietro Nenni, Dr. Hewlett Johnson, Prof. J. D. Bernal and George Lukacs. International democratic organizations have sent vigorous protests to the Turkish government: A petition was also sent to the U.N.E.S.C.O.; a consideration of the case, however, was blocked by the Anglo-American majority. But the fight goes on.

Last December, the Union of Progressive Turkish Youth and the International Committee for the Liberation of Nazim Hikmet issued the following statement:

"Once more the reactionary Turkish government has made clear its determination to get rid of the poet who sings too well the sufferings and the hopes of the Turkish people. The immediate reaction of the authorities to the widespread movement for his liberation was to throw Nazim again into solitary confinement. For several months now, his closest friends and relatives have been unable to hear from him. The Milli Emniyet, the Turkish gestapo, plans to take the life of this great fighter for the cause of peace and to announce, then, either that Nazim Hikmet committed suicide or that he died as a result of the angina pectoris from which he has suffered during the long years wasted in Anatolian jails."

Forceful and speedy action is needed to save him.

—M. N.

We ask our readers to join us in protesting the continued imprisonment of Nazim Hikmet. Letters and telegrams demanding his release should be sent to the Turkish Embassy in Washington—and to Secretary of State Dean Acheson. The life of a great anti-fascist is at stake!

MASSES & MAINSTREAM is proud to present the following group of poems by Nazim Hikmet, translated from the Turkish. The poems, written in prison, are magnificent testimony to the spirit and stature of the poet.—The Editors.

Poems from Prison

by NAZIM HIKMET

ADVICE TO A FELLOW PRISONER

Just because you did not give up your hopes,
for the world, for your country, and for humanity
they either send you to the gallows,
or put you in jail,
for ten years, for fifteen years
or, who cares, for even longer.

Never say,

"I wish I were swinging
at the end of a rope like a flag"

you must keep on living,
perhaps, living is not a pleasure any more,
but it is your duty
to spite the enemy
to live one more day.

In your jail one part of yourself may be all alone
like a stone at the bottom of the well

but the other part of you

should mingle so with the crowds of the world
that in your jail you will tremble

with every rustling leaf forty days distance away from you.

It is sweet but dangerous

to wait for letters,

and to sing sad songs,

to keep awake till morning

with your eyes fixed on the ceiling.

Look at your face whenever you shave

forget your age,
protect yourself from lice
 and from the spring evenings.
And then you should never forget
 how to eat your bread to the last crumb
 and how to laugh heartily.
And who knows,
maybe your woman doesn't love you anymore,
(don't say it is a small matter
to the man in jail
 it is like a young limb broken off the tree).
It is bad to dream about the rose and the garden;
and good to think of the mountains and the seas
I would advise you,
to read and write without any rest,
to take up weaving,
and to cast mirrors.
So it is not impossible to spend
 ten, fifteen years in a cell
 or even more,
 it can be done
Provided under your left breast
that precious gem
the jewelled heart stays bright.

YOUR HANDS AND THEIR LIES

Your hands, solemn like stones;
sad, like tunes sung in prison;
huge, massive, like draft animals;
your hands like the angry faces of hungry children.

Your hands, deft and industrious as bees,
heavy, like breasts full of milk,
valiant as nature,
your hands hiding their friendly softness under rough skins.

This world does not rest on oxen's horns,
this world is carried by your hands.
And men, Oh my men!
they feed you on lies,
while you are starving
while what you need is meat and bread.
And without once eating at a white-clothed table
to your heart's content you leave this world
and its fruit-laden trees.

Oh men, my men!
Especially those of Asia, of Africa,
 of the Near East, the Middle East, the Pacific Islands,
 and those of my country,
who are more than seventy per cent of humanity,
like your hands you are old and musing,
yet like them, curious, enthusiastic and young.

Oh men, my men!
My European, my American,
you are alert, you are daring,
yet forgetful like your hands,
and like your hands you are easy to dupe,
 easy to deceive . . .

Oh men, my men,
if the antennas lie,
if the printing presses lie,
if the posters on the walls lie, and the ad in the paper,
if the bare legs of the girls lie on the white screen,
if the prayer lies,
if the dream lies,
if the lullaby lies,
if the tavern fiddler lies,
if after a hopeless day the moonlight lies at night,
if the words lie,
if the colors lie,
if the voices lie,

if all those who exploit the labor of your hands
and everything and everyone lies,
except your hands
it is to make them pliant like clay
blind as darkness,
stupid as shepherd dogs
(dumb) and to keep them from revolting
and from bringing to an end
the money-grabber's kingdom and his tyranny.
over this transient though wonderful world
where we are for but so short a stay.

ANGINA PECTORIS

If the half of my heart is here, doctor,
The other half is in China
With the army going down towards the Yellow River.
And then every morning, doctor,
Every morning at dawn
My heart is shot in Greece.

And then when the prisoners fall asleep,
When the last steps go away from the infirmary
My heart goes off, doctor,
It goes off to a little wooden house, in Istanbul.
And then for ten years, doctor,
I have had nothing in my hands to offer my people,
Nothing else but an apple,
A red apple my heart.

I watch the night through the bars
And in spite of all these walls lying heavily on my chest
My heart beats with the most distant star.
It is on account of all that, doctor,
And not because of arterio-sclerosis,
Or nicotine or prison
That I have this angina pectoris.

ABOUT DEATH

Won't you sit down my friends,
welcome to you,
I know while I was asleep,
you came into my cell through the window,
 you did not upset the medicine bottle with the long neck,
 nor the red pillbox.

Standing in front of my bed,
with a starlit face,
you are holding each other's hands,
welcome to you my friends.

Isn't that funny,
 I thought you were dead.
And since I don't believe in
 heaven or hell, nor in God,
I was thinking: "Too bad,
I didn't have a chance
to offer my friends even a cigarette."

Isn't that funny
 I thought you were dead.
You came into my cell through the window,
 won't you sit down my friends,
 welcome to you.

Why are you frowning at me,
 Hashim son of Osman?
Isn't that funny,
 weren't you dead, brother?
In the port of Istanbul
 loading coal on a foreign cargo,
 didn't you fall in a hold
 with your basket full of coal?
The winch pulled out your corpse,
 and before quitting time,
 your red blood,
 washed your black head.

Who knows how much you suffered?
Don't stand please sit down;
 I thought you were dead.
You came into my cell through the window,
 with your starlit face,
 welcome to you my friends.

Hello Yakup from Rocky village,
didn't you die too?
Leaving to your children,
 your malaria and starvation,
 on a hot summer day,
weren't you buried in the barren cemetery?
So you did not die.

And you,
 Ahmet Jemil, the writer!
I saw with my own eyes,
 your coffin lowered in the grave.

It even seemed to me,
 that the coffin was a little too short.
Put this bottle down Ahmet Jemil!
You did not give up your bad habits;
 this is medicine, not the raki bottle.
Just to make fifty cents a day,
 and to forget this lonely world,
 how much you used to drink.
I thought you were dead,
standing in front of my bed,
you are holding each other's hands.
Won't you sit down my friends,
 welcome to you.

An old Persian poet says
 Death is just,
it strikes with the same majesty,
 the Shah and the poor man.

Hashim,

Why are you so surprised?
Brother, haven't you ever heard,
of a Shah carrying a basket of coal
and dying in a cargo-ship's hold.

An old Persian poet says

Death is just.

Yakup, the apple of my eye,
how broadly you smiled.

You never smiled like this once
while you were alive;
but let me finish.

An old Persian poet says,

Death is just . . .

Leave that bottle Ahmet Jemil,
your anger is vain.

I know for death to be just,
you say life should be just too.

An old Persian poet . . .

Friends why are you so angry,
why are you leaving me,
my friends where are you going?

TO PAUL ROBESON

They don't let us sing our songs, Robeson,
Eagle singer, Negro brother,
They don't want us to sing our songs.

They are scared Robeson,
Scared of the dawn and of seeing
Scared of hearing and touching.
They are scared of loving
The way our Ferhat* loved.
(Surely you too have a Ferhat, Robeson,
What is his name?)

They are scared of the seed, the earth
The running water and the memory of a friend's hand
Asking no discount, no commission, no interest
A hand which has never paused like a bird in their hands.

They are scared, Negro brother,
Our songs scare them, Robeson.

* A legendary Turkish hero who personifies love of humanity.—Ed.

Trenton Close-up

by MILLY SALWEN

(written with PHILLIP BONOSKY)

Trenton, New Jersey, August 5, 1948. It is past midnight now, a stifling night, but the crowd jammed into the Mercer County Court waits silently. A long murder trial has come to an end. The jury is out. It is not an unusual jury—nine white housewives and three middle-class white men. They have been out now for about eight and a half hours. They have been instructed by Judge Hutchinson, soon to be a member of the Board of Prudential Life Insurance Corporation, to "Ask yourselves then the question: 'Are the defendants . . . entitled to receive the extreme penalty of death?'" The six defendants—six Negro men—sit waiting. It has been a long and gruelling summer for them. A second-hand furniture man, William Horner, had been murdered months ago. Not one of them had been anywhere near the place; they all could prove it. Witnesses could not identify them. Yet here they were in court. If they were freed, the fact itself would be an exposure of Trenton police methods and court procedure; if they were convicted—but they are innocent! They have no reason to expect conviction.

The twelve white jurors file in. "What is the verdict?" asks the judge. "Guilty!" It echoes in the silent courtroom.

At the back of the room, a young Negro woman rises from the stunned silence and screams: "Kill me! There's nothing left in this country. You've taken everything we ever had!"

THOSE who have depended upon the impersonal machinery of justice to grind out a true verdict know again what the Negro people never forget: Jim Crow courts plus all-white juries equal jail terms and legal murder for Negroes. The Communist Party of Trenton issues

a leaflet denouncing the verdict. The Progressive Party issues a petition. The Civil Rights Congress begins to act.

A letter comes to us. It says: "I want to see you. There are lots of things in the case I want to talk to you about. . . ." It is a guarded letter. An appointment is arranged.

It is a cool Saturday night. The moon follows us as we cross State Street, past the marble pillars of the State Capitol. It follows us to Church Street, a narrow treeless street, a long strip of frame houses, molded together by darkness and poverty into an almost indistinguishable gray. It is not easy to find the right number, 247. We look at the paper several times, and finally we are there.

A frail Negro woman, with a face grooved and somber, opens the door. She is Mrs. English, mother of one of the doomed six, Collis. Seven months earlier she had opened the door to another knock. It was the police then and they asked for her son. A slight, boyish fellow, with dark skin and bright eyes, he had inquired: "Reckon I'll come home tonight?" "Leave your fork and take your cigarettes," replied the policeman. He never returned that night or any night. At this moment he sits in the Death House at State Prison.

Mrs. English leads us down a narrow dark hall, through a bare dining room, heated by a pot-bellied stove. In the living room, almost a hallway itself, a bright-eyed solid woman sits on the couch which is crowded with other relatives. She gets up to greet us. "I am Bessie Mitchell," she says, "Collis' sister. Did you get my letter?"

This is the first time we have seen this woman who in the months to follow is to personify both the strength and the struggle of the Trenton Six against their legal lynching.

The others watch silently. We explain briefly that we have indeed come in response to Bessie Mitchell's letter. We tell them that we want to help, that we want to know the full story. They nod and turn to Mrs. Mitchell who begins to talk. She speaks in a breathy urgent voice. She tells us how she had gone to the Civil Liberties Union, to the local office of the N.A.A.C.P. where they told her, "We don't handle murder cases." How she had gone to the F.B.I., to the newspaper *PM* in New York; how she had written to the Governor, had even stopped people on the street to cry: "Listen! It's not the way the papers said!"

But where was Justice when the courts had spoken, the newspapers

had written, the Governor turned a deaf ear? Where could a lone Negro woman go in the United States and cry: "A wrong has been done!" and find ears to listen?

"I'm going to search all over this country for justice," she says passionately, "because I'm not going to let my brother die for something he didn't do!"

She goes on to tell us how the police had arrested the men without warrants, without descriptions. "Why, when the cops said they wanted Collis, he waited all night for them to come!" she said. "He thought they wanted him on a traffic violation. Would a murderer wait for the police?"

Her brother-in-law McKinley Forest had gone down to the jail to see what was keeping Collis when he didn't return for supper. *He* too never returned from jail.

Mrs. Mitchell tells of how she sat in the courtroom to hear Police Captain Delate testify on the way the "confessions" were extracted from five of the six men: "We told him the story . . . we told him what part he took in the crime," and they signed it. She had heard the defendants testify to the long hours of questioning, kept from friends and lawyers, "questioning" that included drugged cigarettes to help the confessions; how statements were dictated for the men to sign—"or something worse will happen to you."

She told how she heard the Prosecution's chief witness, Elizabeth McGuire, common-law wife of the deceased, reluctantly reveal how she had identified the men in court—not from 100, not from twenty pictures—but from exactly six pictures shown to her by the Prosecutor . . . the six arrested men!

She recalls to us how she had sought out a prominent Trenton attorney who told her: "You be very quiet and I'll try to help you . . . see what money you can raise," only to have him tell her when she returned with only \$25, "Your brother is guilty!"

She listened to Prosecuting Attorney Volpe, slick-haired dapper Volpe, posturing before the twelve white jurors, refer to defense witnesses—a Negro slaughterhouse worker, a Jewish butcher, a Negro clothes presser—as "rather comical," and then shout: "Are you going to believe men like Captain Delate, or are you going to believe *these* men?"—and no one on the jury could escape the significance of the heavily underscored reference. . . . Mrs. Mitchell speaks in her soft

urgent voice, as though, having so many things to say, she has to fight to say one thing at a time.

Across the crowded room, yet almost knee-to-knee, Bessie's mother, Emma English, sits lightly on the print-covered couch bed, following the conversation intently. Her eyes turn inward as she remembers. Suddenly she turns to us with a voice of cold fury: "They've got everything in their hands. They've got the truth and won't use it!"

Bessie Mitchell accompanies us to the door. I give her my address. "You know," she says to me looking at it, "I once worked at that house."

I look at her with surprise. "Are you sure?" I stammer, "the very house?"

"Oh, yes," she laughs. "But that was years ago. At the first place I worked," she adds, "when I was eight, they put a box up for me so I could reach the sink to do the dishes. . . . Oh, I remember things. . . . One place I worked, the man set out a dollar bill on the porch to see if I'd take it. Well, I put another dollar bill alongside it. When he saw the two of them, he gave me a look. I told him, 'If you don't trust me I don't trust you'." . . .

We leave that wooden frame house with the peeling paint and crumbling steps that stands almost unidentifiable in the long row of identical houses on Church Street, all occupied by Negroes. How, I wondered, had they decided which door to knock on?

NOVEMBER, 1948.

WE GO WITH Rev. Henry Stewart, a Negro minister, to visit James Thorpe, Sr., father of one of the defendants, James Jr. Bessie Mitchell had told us he wanted to see us.

A tall, strikingly handsome man meets us at the door of 24 Grant Avenue. He is dignified and reserved. A moment after we have started talking his nostrils arch and he asks: "Is there a cigarette in this house?"

I look guiltily at the butt in my fingers.

"I'm sorry," he says, "but nobody smokes in my home."

I look for an ash-tray but find none. I walk outside and crush the butt on the sidewalk and return. He explains: "My religion doesn't allow any smoking or drinking."

We begin to outline what the Civil Rights Congress wants to do.

He listens with a kind of thirst, as though glad to hear what he knew absolutely to be true, coming to him from the outside. He returns to that January 27, and says: "If my boy had done this thing, he should be punished. I would cut myself off from him. He that commits a crime shall be punished," he says with Biblical sonority. He leans forward and looking straight at us, says: "But he couldn't have done it! I was with him every minute that morning." He pauses for a moment and goes on: "James woke up around eight-thirty in the morning, and I drove him over to get his brother's car, and when it wouldn't start, I pushed it all the way home, and we worked on it from ten till after two. . . ." (William Horner had been murdered at a few minutes to eleven in his store on Trenton's busy downtown North Broad Street, three blocks from the police station, with a cop on duty a few doors away.)

"We want you to sign this paper," we say. "It will bring new lawyers to defend your son."

Mr. Thorpe takes the pen we give him. He abruptly lays it down, looks thoughtfully up at us and asks: "Will this get the court lawyers angry?" We have to say yes. He sits very still as we talk, shrinking a little. We sense in him a fear, a lonely helplessness which his grave manner has not wholly overcome. With his boy so near to the chair, would not such action certainly send him there?

We talk, aware that we are against an unspoken obstacle, a congealed fear that only shows itself perhaps in his lowered eyes. Reverend Stewart is saying: "These are the lawyers who failed to save your boy from the Death House. These others are the men who——" And, slowly, but with firm hand, Mr. Thorpe reaches for the pen, and signs.

"Guilty!" The last word has scarcely ceased to echo in the courtroom when each of the six men is handcuffed to a guard and rushed to two waiting cars and taken to the Death Block, deep in the bowels of the State Prison. They have not heard the lawyers file the appeal; they do not know that their sentence is automatically postponed.

On the evening before September 19, the date set for the execution, barbers arrive and shave their heads. Their trousers are slit. They wait. All night. All day. Then, the next evening over the radio, blaring through the loudspeaker between snatches of Love Is

So Terrific, comes the newscasting voice: ". . . convicted slayers . . . Horner Case . . . execution postponed . . . awaiting appeal..."
They live a little longer.

DEATH BLOCK, NEW JERSEY STATE PRISON

SEALED off separately in cells lining one side of the corridor leading to the Death Chamber are the six men. Facing them are two groups of lawyers, and behind them, somewhat tensely watching, are the relatives of five of the six. McKinley Forest, the sixth, is shut off from this decision (his brother had earlier hired a lawyer for him).

The court-appointed lawyers are whispering last-minute advice, trying to persuade the condemned men to keep on with them. Off to one side, unable as yet to speak to the Six, are the new lawyers, among them O. John Rogge, one-time U.S. Assistant Attorney-General; Solomon Golat, a Newark labor lawyer; William Patterson, a Negro himself, executive secretary of the Civil Rights Congress, veteran of the struggle to free the Scottsboro boys and the struggle to save Sacco and Vanzetti.

The condemned men study the lawyers. One of the men had lived for three months in the end cell, next to the door that leads to the electric chair. He had watched men go through that door to die. He himself had sat with shaven head that night and that day, September 19, waiting to go. Nobody, not the warden, not these court-appointed lawyers now busily chattering among themselves in the stone hallway, nobody had told them that their execution had been postponed.

The court lawyers have had their say. Warden George Page jerks his head. "Now, it's your turn."

The prisoners are being asked to switch lawyers. They listen. Patterson speaks. He tells them how a mass organization fights to save men who have been framed. He reviews the Scottsboro case and shows how nine innocent Negro boys were rescued from a Southern death. He tells them of the thousands outside the city, outside the state, who are concerned with their lives, and the thousands more who can be reached. He says: "If you sign with us, we'll all stick together and see that you walk out of this place."

They take a long time. There is muffled conversation between the cells. Patterson looks at them.

"Pass me," says Ralph Cooper. "I need more time. . . ."

They move to the next cell.

"Pass me," McKenzie says.

"Guess I'll stick with the court lawyers, too," says Horace Wilson.

They look now at James Thorpe, Jr. Suddenly, his father leaves the motionless group at the wall and comes to the bars. "You sign, son," he says firmly. James looks into his father's eyes for a moment and nods.

"You!" Collis English says, pointing to Patterson. "I'll go along with you."

They turn back to Ralph Cooper. He moves toward the bars and grips them. "I'll go along with you," he says. Patterson comes forward to grasp his hands.

JANUARY 28, 1949.

WE CROSS State Street, looking one way toward the Federal Building, then across the tracks to City Hall. We look for mobsters, photographers, plainclothesmen, prowl cars. We file tensely into Moose Hall and sit on wooden folding chairs inside the bare meeting room. The back seats fill up first. We say little to each other, waiting. We are among 800 men and women, many of them workers for the city and county, most of them Negroes. We have come to hear Paul Robeson.

"I am coming home to fight this case," he had said. "I am coming home as Paul." He had been born only ten miles away, in Princeton.

"I see friends here tonight," he says. He leans over the podium and looks into our eyes. "I have cousins here tonight," he continues with his powerful voice, hushed now, and so intimate it seems he is speaking to each of us alone. "I have cousins who loved me when I was a boy on the streets of Trenton. It could have been my Paulie in that jail." His voice rings powerfully through the quiet hall. "It could have been me." We reach toward him. "Sure, they ride high, as long as they've got guns and sticks. But they're afraid of what's happening here tonight!" We forget the Trenton *Times* which had warned us away, we forget the police, the mobsters, the threats. We rise cheering. Robeson's voice soars. "We don't know our own strength. We're shaping history here tonight!" . . .

The meeting is over, but we linger. Something has happened—a

crowd had come here, a crowd separate and fearful; now we hold together, feeling a sudden unity, an unexpected strength; we thought that we had brought only our individual courage with us. We find that it is the courage of us all.

Pushing his way through the hall, his old eyes glowing, Thomas Thorpe find us and says exultingly: "I'm a *man* tonight!"

We remember how we had talked a few months ago to this seventy-year-old man, the son of a slave, grandfather of James Thorpe now in jail. He had sat close to the coal-stove in his crowded living room, holding a frayed Bible. He had looked up at us then, an old man, still firm-bodied yet subtly shrunken, a head full of white curls. With a voice absent of anger, he said: "I don't cry. I grieve inside."

Now, here, he says triumphantly: "I was so scared I didn't dare ask my friends to come tonight. I almost didn't come myself. But I'm a *man* tonight!" His grave eyes shine as he threads his way back to the stage to Robeson and swings his old hand out to him.

JUNE 30, 1949.

IT IS A business day for the Supreme Court in Trenton. Docket numbers and legal terminology drone on. Bessie Mitchell sits at a gleaming walnut table, just behind the lawyers. We are at another table close by, listening for *Docket Number A-180, State of New Jersey vs. Ralph Cooper, et al.* We scan the faces of the seven judges, wondering if they would show by any sign what we had come to hear, wondering what kind of men they were. We doodle pencil sketches of them as the court drones on: "Decree granted . . . motion denied. . . ." On and on. Finally, and almost unexpectedly, late now in the morning, Judge Vanderbilt picks up one of the sheets spread before him and in the same disinterested voice intones, "Docket A-180. . . ." We lean forward. Many of the relatives are unaware that this is the moment. Bessie is waiting; she does not recognize the history of her fears and panic in the dry legal phrases that come from the old man.

Reversal! The Court finds Hutchinson's judgment "tainted with error"; it orders a re-trial. Reporters break for the clerk's office to snatch copies of the decision.

Bessie is still sitting, waiting. We go to her and say: "Bessie, we've won!" She crumples slowly to the table, lowers her head on her arms, and cries.

JULY, 1949.

WE FOLLOW Warden Glasco up the iron stairs of the Mercer County Jail, past a bare room with a bed and an infirmary smell, into a tiny closet of a room with only a chair and table to furnish it. From another door, which slides open from the jail corridor, come three men. Two of them we recognize immediately. Jim looks so much like his father, perhaps a softer, larger version, but unmistakably the son of James Thorpe. His empty sleeve is pinned neatly back; the stub hangs like a knee. That one, we think, must be Collis—thin, though his sister is plump. But they have the same large bright eyes, the same flare of the nostril. The third is Ralph Cooper, smiling faintly, somewhat heavier than the police line-up pictures had shown him to be.

They stand self-consciously. We, too, for a moment. The small room is crowded with us. William L. Patterson and O. John Rogge are here, William Reuben of the *National Guardian*, and others. The strangeness quickly disappears. The three men relax. We pull out a thick notebook filled with clippings, photographs, leaflets, radio scripts dealing with their case, and slowly they leaf through it, catching, for the first time, a glimpse of the world-wide scope of their case. Only two of them can read; the third follows the pictures.

Under the single high-barred window, Ralph Cooper props himself against the wall, hugging his knees, his eyes pinned on Patterson as he listens. We tell them how the case has swung around the world: of the delegation to the American Embassy in India, of the protests brought by trade unionists in Manchester to the American Embassy in England, of the time when Rogge boarded a plane in Paris, leaving the World Peace Congress, and was asked by the stewardess: "How are things going in the Trenton case?"

We talk of other things, and once Collis, his sensitive face growing slightly rigid, says: "I was in the end cell. It was closest to the door. . . ." He pauses for awhile, and continues: "I saw four of them go. Four men from Newark. Two of them was colored. I was nearest that door." He stopped again. "I watched them walk in, then they carried them out, right past me." He shivers and says quickly: "Couldn't stand it when they started fooling around, fixing that chair."

We ask them what was the worst of it. We feel uncomfortable asking such a question, but the answer overwhelms us. "It was that September nineteenth—the day we waited to go."

"Didn't you know . . . ?"

"Nobody thought to tell us. They shaved our heads." Ralph snorts and shrugs off the memory. He lifts his head slowly. "I didn't talk for two months," he says, a shadow passing through his eyes.

LATE IN JULY, 1949.

WE WALK into the courtroom where Bessie Mitchell had cried, "Kill me! . . ." It is now some twenty days since the Supreme Court reversed the decision. We want to get the men out on bail. Mrs. English is there; James Thorpe, Sr., is there—but how different now! Mr. Thorpe, whose religion forbade smoking and even voting, had stood on the high-school stage in Union, New Jersey, while a fiery KKK cross burned outside and cried: "It's a frame-up!" Mrs. English, who had one day said, "I was the hurtest person—I cried till I couldn't cry!"—walking now, her heels lifting springily off the ground, takes her seat firmly. They miss nothing. They watch Judge Hutchinson swing in with his robes sweeping, as he sits down with his head lowered, his fingers fumbling with papers; he listens quietly, squirming a little, his red nose ripening as Rogge refers to the Supreme Court opinion which personally reprimanded him for "errors"—like the "error" of sending the men to the Death House by changing a simple "Guilty" verdict to "Guilty of murder in the first degree."

They notice with bitter relish that Volpe is "too busy" to come himself but instead has sent his assistant Frank Lawton, complete with pencil-moustache and striped suit.

Of course the Judge denies the motion for bail. Still he's not the same. The relatives marvel: "He's a different man, a changed man. Last time he kept cutting in on the lawyers, and every time one of them was getting somewhere, Volpe'd object, and he'd sustain the objection. Now he's kind of quiet."

JUST BEFORE CHRISTMAS, 1949.

ALL SIX men now sit in the Mercer County Courtroom. The three represented by the new lawyers had been there three times before. For the others, still represented by court lawyers, this was their first look at the world outside after a year in isolation cells.

We recognize the thoughtful thin-cheeked man as McKinley Forest; Horace Wilson we recognize, too. And then young John McKenzie, his eyes flickering over the people in the court.

They sit waiting for the new lawyers to produce the clincher in the case—a witness who will prove the state's chief witness had lied when she identified them; waiting to hear the Police Department's dissenting report on the case, suppressed till now, brought into the court.

And at this moment, with Volpe's and Hutchinson's case crumbling, and no one knowing who will be pulled down with it, they hear Judge Hutchinson throw the C.R.C. lawyers out of the case. Stunned, they listen to the judge strip them of their chosen lawyers, and then coldly announce their new trial would begin in three weeks.

One of the Six who had not chosen the C.R.C. lawyers, remarks: "I learned a lot this morning." Then Horace Wilson says slowly: "They got us out of the Death House." Both of them ask Rogge and Patterson to defend them, too.

Later, during visiting hours, Collis English says: "I won't trust any lawyer the state puts up to speak for me." James Thorpe, Jr., says: "My lawyers are fighting for my life. I need them." Ralph Cooper says: "What are they trying to do to us?"

Mrs. English, the mother of Collis, turns away from the meshed wire which separates her from her son, and declares: "The Devil comes up on every hand. You got to fight until you die."

As we go to press, the new trial has been postponed indefinitely pending Federal court decision on the defendants' suit against Judge Hutchinson's order depriving them of their chosen counsel. We urge the most energetic support by all our readers to the Civil Rights Congress which is leading the mass movement to free the Trenton Six. For detailed information on what you can do, write to C. R. C. at 205 E. 42 Street, New York 17, N. Y.—THE EDITORS.

N SAFARI WITH HARARI



PROBLEMS OF

Jewish Culture

by MORRIS U. SCHAPPES

WITH anti-Semitism having recently expressed itself in pogrom action, as at Peekskill and Chicago, attention to the Jewish question is seen to be ever more imperative, and there is a growing recognition that this requires attention also to the cultural field. For progressive American Jewish culture is a weapon in the struggle for the survival of the Jewish people.

The material basis for this culture is the Jewish national group in the United States, with its particular problems, institutions and struggles. The six million victims of Hitler's war and the struggle for independence of Israel undoubtedly deepened Jewish consciousness here, but the enduring foundation for this quickened awareness is to be found not in Germany or Israel but in the fact that American capitalism has never allowed the *full* and *equal* integration of the Jewish people in American life.

Jews are part of the American capitalist relations of production but with restrictions in employment. Jews buy their consumer goods from the national market, but with restrictions in housing, use of hotel and resort facilities, and so forth. Jews are educated in American public schools, but with many restrictions in colleges and professional schools, and with the aid of text-books and teachers still too often obsessed by anti-Semitic stereotypes, from Shylock and Fagin to the Jew-who-doesn't-fight-in-our-country's-wars. Jews read in American literature, and meet ignorance of and hostility against the Jews at altogether too many turns in Eliot and Pound, Faulkner and even Thomas Wolfe. And so it goes with all the other aspects of the Jews in American life under imperialism: there is always the *but* that signals the absence of full and equal integration.

There are two types of cultural response to this situation that require examination: the bourgeois-nationalist and the workingclass internationalist approach.

The bourgeois nationalist sees and shows the Jew always in physical, cultural or spiritual isolation from the non-Jew; or, if there is contact, the Jews are always in a hostile relation to non-Jews, or are always and everywhere oppressed by non-Jews. Such nationalism affirms the idea that Jews always have been and always will be apart from and at odds with the remainder of mankind. Holding "the world" (not its minority ruling classes) guilty of persecuting the Jews, these Jewish nationalists consider themselves superior because free from such sin. They avoid finding the cause of anti-Semitism in the kind of society in which a small ruling class divides and disorganizes the majority it exploits and oppresses by diverting popular wrath from itself onto the Jews; instead they regard anti-Semitism as some "eternal" product either of the Jewish character or the non-Jewish character.

Bourgeois nationalists, although expressing only one class, characteristically try to deny the existence of classes and class conflicts in Jewish life, whether in the United States or in Israel, or to minimize the conflicts and keep them from being laid bare. They deny particularly, and seek to prevent the development of, the ties that bind Jew and non-Jew in progressive struggle. Rejecting the fact that there is a Jewish people, living in many lands, with certain ties (historical, psychological, cultural), but without other bonds (territorial, economic, political), they affirm the false theory that there is one single world Jewish "nation," with its base and center in Israel. The nationalists are also strong supporters of religion. Such theories are no threat to imperialism—in fact, they are an aid to it.

THE manifestations of bourgeois nationalism in American Jewish culture are innumerable, but it will be useful to cite a few in order to identify the species.

Take a play recently praised and recommended in the organ of the American Jewish Congress as "one of the most stimulating studies of Jewish life in America ever written" (*Congress Weekly*, December 5, 1949). We are assured that the dramatist "examines religious, metaphysical, and international problems with an equal felicity," that

his "is a triumph of Jewish writing, it is so subtle and yet intense as an unprinted exclamation mark." Published in 1941, *Shenandoah* is by Delmore Schwartz, one of the pillars of the Trotskyite *Partisan Review*. Written in verse, the play tackles the mighty problem of whether a newborn boy whose last name is to be Fish should be given a Jewish name like Jacob or a non-Jewish one like Shenandoah. Fish, a manufacturer, acting on the advice of his lawyer, Kelly, rejects the opinion of the rabbi and an uncle who is a doctor, and resolutely decides on Shenandoah because, "after all, this child is going to live in a world of Kellys!" Delmore Schwartz, expressing himself directly through a Chorus, addresses the infant waiting to be circumcised, telling it of

"How many world-wide powers surround you now,
And what a vicious fate prepares itself
To make of you an alien and a freak!"

Later, reflecting on the circumcision itself, the Chorus speaks:

"How profound
Are all those ancient rites: for with a wound
—What better sign exists—the child is made
A Jew forever! . . .

O the whole of history
Testifies to the chosen people's agony,
—Chosen for wandering and alienation
In every kind of life, in every nation——"

There, in the idea that the Jew is "an alien and a freak . . . in every kind of life, in every nation," is bourgeois-nationalist theory, as unsubtle as a printed exclamation mark. When this was published, the Soviet Union had already amply proved the theory false; since then the East European new democracies have repeated the demonstration. Such a theory is obviously a hindrance to forming a coalition with non-Jews in the crucial struggle against anti-Semitism.

A manifestation of another order is the campaign launched more than a year ago by the Zionist Organization of America for the "Hebraization" of the American Jew. Since the masses of the American Jews have no intention of following Zionist dogma by gathering up to emigrate to Israel, the Zionist leaders are raising huge sums for the Hebraizing of American Jewish education. The manifesto of Daniel

Frisch, president of the Z.O.A., raises the slogan: "Mobilize your forces for the national-religious education of your own children and of the entire younger generation!" The objective is to make Hebrew the second language of American Jews so that they may draw their cultural sustenance from the nationalistic-religious bourgeois culture of Israel. But the American Jews, deeply concerned though they are with the establishment of Israel and its continuing struggle for democracy and for independence from imperialism, can hardly be expected to nourish themselves culturally chiefly by importation. Progressive American Jews, for instance, are looking forward to enjoying some of the products of progressive culture in Israel, in whatever language produced (Hebrew, Yiddish or Yemenite Arabic), just as they have been drawing inspiration from similar achievements in Poland, Rumania and particularly, for so many years, the Soviet Union. But such importations can only supplement, and must not replace, the development of progressive Jewish culture in our own country.

Another nationalist tendency reveals itself in the vain attempt to develop what is conceived of as a full-fledged, separate Jewish *national* culture in the United States, despite the fact that there is no Jewish *nation* here but only a national group. Such a "Jewish national culture" is conceived of as arising only in the Yiddish language. Thus during the last Jewish Book Month, a well-known Yiddish historian reaffirmed the hard-dying theory that works written in Yiddish or Hebrew are Jewish, but anything about Jews written in English is not Jewish or Jewish-American, but "simply" American. This approach would exclude from Jewish culture no less than the majority of the Jews in this country, who today no longer use Yiddish. It would separate not only the Jewish people from the American people as a whole, but even one section, the Yiddish-speaking minority, from the bulk of American Jews. This theory would make of Yiddish a fetish, not a weapon. The weighty word of no less a builder of Jewish culture in Yiddish and English than Moissaye Olgin, editor of the *Morning Freiheit* until his death in 1939, was uttered against this linguistic fetishism, when in February, 1937, he called for "struggle against that type of nationalism which makes a fetish of the Yiddish language and seeks thereby to segregate the Jewish masses from the progressive forces among other peoples, thus weakening the front of struggle against reaction" (M. Olgin, *Cultur un Folk*, 1949).

THE rejection of Yiddish as a fetish simultaneously helps make possible a positive attitude towards Yiddish as a language whose vitality is far from exhausted. The progressive American Jew, whether he speaks the language or not, fights for respect for the Yiddish language. Why? Because the jingoistic American ruling-class mockery of an attack against Yiddish is part of its general program of degrading the Jewish people, a couple of million of whom still know the language. As an instance of the compulsion which is part of bourgeois assimilationism, take the attitude to Yiddish fostered among certain sections of the Jews here during the past three generations. Rabbi Albert I. Gordon, in *Jews in Transition*, a recent sociological study of the Jews of Minneapolis, reports that "there appears to be an emotional bias against the Yiddish language among the children of the immigrants. . . . Often one hears such persons hush up anyone who begins to speak Yiddish or use a Yiddish expression in a public place."

But where did this "emotional bias against Yiddish" come from? It was instilled into them by the dominant class with its theories of Anglo-Saxon cultural and political supremacy, with the bourgeois German Jews acting as a transmission belt for this theory. Therefore, progressive American Jews actively resent the slander and abuse of Yiddish, the burlesque of it in so-called dialect humor, in radio and phonograph parodies of the so-called Yiddish intonation or accent, or in any other form. We fight for the Yiddish classics, for contemporary Yiddish progressive literature. We fight for the right of people to speak Yiddish, in private or in public. We also, however, realize that most American Jews do not know Yiddish and cannot be subjected to abuse as second-rate Jews therefor. Undoubtedly not knowing the language deprives them of certain direct acquaintance with valuable cultural treasures. Teased by translations, some may even be stimulated to study the language. But the most important thing is the people, their survival and their progress, not what language is used. The Jewish people have used and outlived many languages. They have been creative in many languages, and they are creative in English too.

Still other manifestations of bourgeois nationalism in American Jewish culture should be noted. In *Commentary*, the Trotskyite-edited and staffed organ of the American Jewish Committee, editor Elliott E. Cohen recently had an article on "The Intellectuals and the Jewish Community" in which he tries to convince Jewish communal leaders, who hold

the purse-strings, to make more use of certain American Jewish intellectuals. Cohen assures these leaders that these intellectuals are studying hard to make themselves trustworthy. What are they studying? Says Cohen: "One hears of at least four circles of Jewish intellectuals at or near universities that meet regularly for the study of theological works." So apparently the rejection of Marxian social science leads to the rejection of all science and to the study of—theology. Shall we soon be graced by a school of neo-Rambamites to parallel and rival the obscurantism of the neo-Thomists?

But Cohen sees other good qualities in these Jewish intellectuals. In social theory they are against "totalitarianism," a term they mis-apply to socialism, and are devoted to "the development of social-democratic thinking and procedures in the labor-management field." This and similar traits lead Cohen to foresee that "the Jewish intellectual-religious tradition [will] flower in ways that will stand comparison with Spain, Germany, Eastern Europe, and elsewhere." Here religious nationalism, obscurantism and social-democracy are packaged neatly if odiously in a magazine that expresses the merger of a section of the Jewish big bourgeoisie with the Social-Democrats.

Another luminary of *Commentary*, Isaac Rosenfeld, adds a pungent odor to his friend Delmore Schwartz's concept of the Jew as "an alien and a freak." Rosenfeld is addicted to that new opiate of the bourgeois intellectual, the "psychoanalytic interpretation" of history and social reality. To this wit, anti-Semitism is a "symptom of a serious, underlying psycho-sexual disease." The "root" of anti-Semitism Rosenfeld sees "in the popular sexual culture of the Gentiles in the form of a delusion about the sexual superiority of the Jews." Can the separation of Jew and non-Jew go any further than this theory of sexual antagonism between Jew and non-Jew?

IF THESE are some of the manifestations of bourgeois nationalism in American Jewish culture, what is proletarian internationalism? First, it is based upon the working class and its Marxist, internationalist outlook. Marxism teaches that national oppression and anti-Semitism and Jim Crow are not and cannot be in the interests of the workers, who suffer from being diverted from their real class enemies by Jim Crow, anti-Semitism, and oppression of nations and national groups. The advanced working classes of necessity support all move-

ments for national liberation and equality of peoples because they know that their own emancipation depends upon the alliance with these movements. Proletarian internationalism underlines the interconnection, interdependence and common elements of all progressive forces in all nations and peoples, while at the same time encouraging the expression of this progressive content in manifold national forms. Imperialism and monopoly capital are defined and fought as the source of national oppression, Jim Crow and anti-Semitism. Therefore the proletarian internationalist, to fight anti-Semitism, stresses the need for uniting Jew and non-Jew in the struggle; for the abolition of anti-Semitism and the survival of the Jewish people are today in the interest of all progressive mankind.

A progressive American Jewish culture should therefore base itself first upon the working class. Now among the Jews in our country, the middle and lower middle classes are very large and constitute the increasing bulk of the population. But the working class among the Jews is substantial, and is furthermore the main source of progressive theory and practice in the Jewish community. The working class is, after all, the only force that can lead an effective movement for a broad anti-imperialist coalition for peace, prosperity, civil and political rights—and the very survival of the Jews. Therefore more and more attention should be given the Jewish worker as a subject for progressive American Jewish culture.

Some petty-bourgeois writers have developed an imitation of Baudelaire's practice, "*épater le bourgeois*," to smack the bourgeoisie for its vulgarity, coarseness and crudity. Thus the Jerome Weidmans and Norman Katkovs "*épater le bourgeoisie Juifs*," they smack the Jewish bourgeoisie, especially the lower bourgeoisie. Well, the Jewish bourgeoisie may be no lovelier than any other bourgeoisie and its cultural values no higher. But such writers make two interrelated mistakes. They show the unlovely Jewish bourgeoisie in isolation from the unlovely non-Jewish bourgeoisie (which is after all the dominant class), thereby contributing to anti-Semitic stereotypes, for the reader can too readily infer that it is the Jew and not the bourgeois who is unlovely. Secondly, they show the Jewish bourgeoisie as if it were the only class in Jewish life, and tend to omit particularly the progressive Jewish working-class element, thereby also contributing to the anti-Semitic stereotype, which would have it that there are no Jewish

workers. Writers of this type exude a cynicism and contempt for humanity that is the blind alley of the despairing lower-middle-class intellectual.

A survey of the themes of the twenty-six American novels issued in the publishing year 1948-1949 in which Jews write about Jews shows the following thematic materials. Thirteen dealt with phases of the last war: how anti-Semitism hindered the war effort; how anti-Semitism made a Jew feel compelled to out-brave non-Jews; how a Jewish girl helped rear the child of a Negro-American soldier and his German wife; how a German-Jewish refugee doctor got to Macao and did such fine, self-sacrificing work there as to rouse the hostility of the Portuguese rulers of the colony; how refugee Jews suffered in DP camps.

The novels not centered in the war treated these subjects: anti-Semitism in a private academy; residential restrictions and anti-Semitism; anti-Semitism in a small town; a Brownsville boy's renunciation of communism and simultaneous dedication of his life to service of the people (!); a Jewish manager of an Irish-American pugilist; a Jewish delinquent youth; the Maccabee uprising; the adjustment of a Jewish widow to the loss of her husband; Jewish middle-class youth in the depression of the 1930's; a Bronx boy in school, business, and in running a Jewish camp; how a Philadelphia Jewish furrier "passed" as a Baptist in a North Carolina town; Brooklynese Jewish humorous *mores*; the disruption of an intermarriage of a Jew and Gentile in a small town in Connecticut.

If properly treated, virtually all of these themes could result in contributions to *progressive* American Jewish literature; yet exceptional is the novel that actually turned out to be that, either because the author did not have a progressive understanding of the situation presented, or did not convey his progressive insight into his fiction. Conspicuously absent even from the themes, however, is the class-conscious, organized Jewish worker. This gap is glaring not only in literature but even in the writing of history. The American Jewish Historical Society, for example, has published thirty-eight thick volumes since its founding in 1893, but not a single page has been given to the history of the Jewish working class. On the other hand, the social-democratic Yiddish Scientific Institute, unable to ignore Jewish labor, misrepresents that history along bourgeois nationalist as well as social-democratic lines.

TO DEPICT the Jewish workers is not enough; they should be shown objectively, truthfully, and that means from the standpoint of proletarian internationalism. In any medium—fiction, drama, song, dance or the graphic arts—the truthful presentation of the Jewish worker in the United States today requires his being portrayed both in Jewish circles and organizations (fraternal, social, cultural), and in intimate daily contact with non-Jewish workers in the same unions, political parties, tenants councils, unemployed movements, civil rights struggles and peace campaigns. A progressive approach to Jewish life must take into account what is developing as well as what is fading.

The *main* theme can no longer be the immigrant's conflict with and "adjustment" to the new environment of capitalist relations in our country, if only for the reason that today some eighty per cent of the Jewish population is American-born. The drastic curbing of immigration, Jewish as well as Eastern and South European, signalized in the law of 1924, has produced qualitative changes in the life and problems of American Jews. The setting and characters are no longer the same as in those two classics of progressive American Jewish literature, Samuel Ornitz's *Haunch, Paunch and Jowl* (1924) and Michael Gold's *Jews Without Money* (1930). We welcome the grandfathers and fathers of the current generation when we find them in Odets' *Awake and Sing* or in Ben Field's *The Outside Leaf*, for the aged and aging are also contemporary. There is still a great theme, for instance, in the elderly immigrant Jewish men and women workers in the shops today. Their social biography is the untold story of the transformation of a mass of militant workers with socialist ideals and political affiliations into a body saddled with the weight of Social-Democracy in its rankest manifestations of the Dubinsky stripe, with only a militant minority loyal to socialism and the working class.

But the Jewish workers of 1950 include perhaps even in larger number those born in this country and who, becoming workers, did not follow their parents into the same crafts and trades. There is no longer, as there was fifty or even twenty years ago, a single industry in which the Jews constitute a majority of the labor force—not even the garment industry. The Jewish workers are therefore turning up in small numbers in ever more crafts and industries, working alongside a majority of non-Jewish workers in shops and factories, stores and offices, laboratories and technical departments. Their problems on the

job, in their residential communities, in all their social and political relations, are the problems of a new generation in a new setting.

Particularly is the progressive Jewish worker likely to be in active co-operation with Negro workers, in the garment industry, in the distributive and metal trades, in public service, in the maritime, auto and other industries. Consider the triumph of unity at Peekskill—unity of Negro and white, of Jewish and non-Jewish, and especially the unity of Negro and Jew. Memorable is the sentence in the *New York Times* of September 6, 1949, describing Paul Robeson's first press conference after the attack on the second Peekskill concert. When Robeson said, "We Negroes owe a great debt to the Jewish people, who stood there by the hundreds to defend me and all of us yesterday," even the *Times* reporter noted with respect that the "tears started from his [Robeson's] eyes." Where did these Jewish workers and progressive intellectuals come from, if not from the garment unions, Local 65, the U.E., the Office Workers, Public Workers, and others? In such organizations, Jewish workers are learning the importance of Jewish-Negro unity in struggle against reaction.

In Chicago, too, it was Jewish trade unionists who invited Negro fellow-workers to their homes that became the target for a pogrom against the Jews. And then in Stuyvesant Town the wall of Jim Crow was breached by Jewish-Negro unity, when a Jewish trade unionist invited a Negro family to make a long-term visit in his apartment, thereby setting a pattern that should sweep the country, and suggesting a major theme for our cultural workers.

THE Jewish working class is thus the key to and main base of progressive American Jewish culture. Of course, with a proper Marxist approach, any aspect of Jewish life, here or abroad, historical or contemporary, can result in a work of proletarian internationalist meaning, and it is not the intention here to exclude or limit such aspects. But with such a great tradition of Jewish labor struggles, it is startling that contemporary progressive Jewish writers in English have not made more of this fascinating and literally heroic material. We need, instead of Hecht's Jew-in-love and Schulberg's Sammy-on-the-run, the forward-moving images of militant Jewish workers.

There is a tradition in American progressive Yiddish culture of writing and singing as a result of direct experience and long-continued

personal observation. The proletarian Yiddish poets and fiction writers of the period from 1890 to 1920, Morris Winchevsky, David Edelstadt, Joseph Bovshover, Morris Rosenfeld, Leon Kobrin and others, were often themselves hands in the sweatshops, and the poems and sketches they wrote of lives conditioned by the sweatshop were read and sung by the workers in the shops. To this day, many a Yiddish poet and novelist works in a shop and writes evenings, weekends and in slack periods. Even Jewish trade union leaders like Ben Gold and Max Perlow continue to write novels and short stories based on their participation in the lives of the workers who have elected them to leadership.

In Ornitz and Mike Gold this tradition of writing from deep within the human condition one is describing is to a certain extent carried on and helps account for their impact and durability. If there has been a hesitancy, not to speak of resistance, on the part of younger Jewish cultural workers to include the American Jewish scene in their scope, this reluctance may in a measure be due to the fact that their lives seem to them to be lived not in the center of Jewish working-class life but on its periphery. But certainly the creative imagination, consciously guided into contact with and study of the Jewish masses in a particular locale or industry or technical field can solve, as it always has solved, the problem of writing convincingly and effectively about experiences not immediately one's own.

To seem to direct others in the field of culture is a thankless task that may provoke charges of arrogance and busybodying. Yet the progressive Jewish masses are more and more insistent that *their* creators, their sons and daughters gifted with talents that no progressive can regard as merely private, should reflect and artistically illuminate *their* lives, and hearten and inspire them in *their* struggles against reaction and for the survival of the Jewish people. It is not exclusive preoccupation with Jewish life that they require, for that would confine the artist in a ghetto from which the progressive Jews have broken. These Jewish masses demand, however, that they be *included* in the creative sphere of interest of their creative artists. Can any progressive Jewish cultural worker find any reason consistent with his progressivism for not responding to that demand—and with enthusiasm, humility and devotion?

right face

ATOMIC AGE

"MAKE your next vacation trip profitable as well as enjoyable. Take a GEIGER COUNTER along. You may yet win that \$10,000.00 for locating Uranium ores. \$54.50 postpaid. Great Lakes Plastic Chemical Co., Leaf River 1, Illinois."—A classified ad in the *New Republic*.

ONE WORLD

"Chinese Communists seem far removed from the Jersey coast or Pennsylvania's mountain trout streams, but they are mighty close. The Chinese 'people's popular front' can give American fishermen a bad time and seem bent on doing just that. Here's why. Northeast of Canton, China, lies the home of Tonkin which is not the name of a warlord but, rather, the cane from which split bamboo fishing rods are made." From the *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*.

AMERICAN CENTURIONS

1. "This private enterprise system, which in our modern world is so distinctively American, is the only economic system which is stamped with the approval of God."—*Representative William H. Colmer*.
2. "The most liberal thing in the world is to preserve the free enterprise system in the United States. What else has anybody else got to offer?"—*Senator Kenneth Wherry*.

LITTLE RED SCHOOLHOUSE

"If we don't know it, we ought to know that every Federal school lunch to a local child has brought us just one short step into the Stalinist vestibule."—*Heptisax* in the *New York Herald Tribune*.

THE ADMIRABLE ACHESON

"Grace in a diplomat is as important as in an athlete, and Acheson has it to a remarkable degree. He has style, not only in his physical appearance, but in his dress, his manners, his conversation and his ideas. He may be arguing with General Marshall about the advisability (or as he sees it) the necessity of having fish heads in a really good compost pile, but his argument will have zing and polish."—*James Reston* in the *New York Times Magazine*.

The miners called her *MOTHER*

by JOSEPH LEEDS

A QUARTER of a million miners called her mother. When the going got tough, when the bosses raised injunctions, when the militia pointed their bayonets and the city gangsters snickered behind their machine guns, when they came back bloody from the picket lines and found their women murdered in their beds, when their babies were yammering for milk and starvation was hardening their eyes—then they called to her. “For God’s sake, Mother,” they cried, “come and help us!”

And she always came—a small wisp of a woman, old and gray, in a long black dress with a flat black hat. A neat, respectable woman, old enough to be their grandmother. She wore steel spectacles and under her black broadcloth dress she carried a backbone of fine tempered steel. No one could scare her. No one ever broke her. The miners loved her. Her name was Mother Jones.

A Congressman once asked her where she lived. “I live in the United States,” she said, “but I do not know exactly where. My address is wherever there is a fight against oppression. Sometimes I am in Washington, then in Pennsylvania, Arizona, Texas, Minnesota, Colorado. My address is like my shoes; it travels with me.”

“No abiding place?” he asked.

“I abide where there is a fight against wrong.”

In 1867 the Yellow Fever epidemic in Memphis killed her husband and children. For a while she taught convent school. Then she became a dressmaker. She was fifty when she took up the cause of labor and from Arnot, Pennsylvania, to Cripple Creek, Colorado, she became known as Mother Jones. She worked for her “boys” without thought of reward, because they needed her. They had a fight on their hands:

fight against banks, against manufacturers, against bought officialdom, in the era of Jay Gould and Daniel Drew.

In Arnot, Pennsylvania, the strike was going badly. The organizer, Tom Hagerty, called her on the telephone. "Oh, Mother," he said, 'come over quick and help us! The boys are that despondent! They are going back Monday.'

Before Monday, Mother Jones had talked to them. The striker who had put her up for the night was evicted in the morning, but the men were convinced. They stayed out of the mines.

"Then," says Mother Jones, "the company tried to bring in scabs. I told the men to stay home with the children for a change and let the women attend to the scabs. I organized an army of women housekeepers. On a given day they were to bring their mops and brooms and the army would charge the scabs up at the mines. The general manager, the sheriff and the corporation hirelings heard of our plans and were on hand. The day came and the women came with the mops and brooms and pails of water.

"I decided not to go to the drip mouth myself, for I knew they would arrest me and that might rout the army. I selected as leader an Irish woman who had a most picturesque appearance. She had slept late and her husband had told her to hurry up and get into the army. She had grabbed a red petticoat and slipped it over a thick cotton nightgown. She wore a black stocking and a white one. She had tied a little red fringed shawl over her wild red hair. Her face was red and her eyes were mad. I looked at her and felt that she could raise a rumpus.

"I said, 'You lead the army up to the drip mouth. Take that tin dishpan you have with you and your hammer, and when the scabs and the mules come up, begin to hammer and howl. Then all of you hammer and howl and be ready to chase the scabs with your mops and brooms. Don't be afraid of anyone.'

"Up the mountainside, yelling and hollering, she led the women, and when the mules came up with the scabs and the coal, she began beating on the dishpan and hollering and all the army joined in with her. The sheriff tapped her on the shoulder.

"'My dear lady,' said he, 'remember the mules. Don't frighten them.'

"She took the old tin pan and she hit him with it and she hollered, 'To hell with you and the mules!'

"He fell over and dropped into the creek. Then the mules began to rebel against scabbing. They bucked and kicked the scab drivers and started off for the barn. The scabs started running down hill, followed by the army of women with their mops and pails and brooms.

"A poll parrot in a nearby shack screamed at the superintendent, 'Got hell, did you? Got hell?'

"There was a big doctor in the crowd, a company lap-dog. He had a little satchel in his hand and he said to me impudent-like, 'Mrs. Jones, I have a warrant for you.'

"'All right,' said I. 'Keep it in your pill bag until I come for it. I am going to hold a meeting now.'"

At the time of this incident, which she describes in her autobiography, Mother Jones was sixty-nine.

OF THE West Virginia of her day Mother Jones said: "Medieval West Virginia! With its tent colonies on the bleak hills. With its grim men and women! When I get to the other side, I shall tell God Almighty about West Virginia."

But she didn't wait to get to the other side. She walked into a mining town to hold a meeting one night. It was in the Fairmount district of West Virginia. She found the men gathered in a church. The priest was there too, holding the money the union had paid to rent the hall. It was not the way Mother Jones ran things. She reached over and grabbed the money from the priest's hand, then she swung around and faced the miners.

"Boys," she said, "this is a praying institution. You should not commercialize it. Get up, every one of you, and go out in the open fields."

She had seen enough of company ministers to know that a company church was no place for a union meeting. She said: "Your organization is not a praying institution. It's a fighting institution. It's an educational institution along industrial lines. Pray for the dead and fight like hell for the living." She had a knack of saying things the way miners liked to hear them said and the Fairmount field was organized before she left.

IN 1902 she was in West Virginia again and she saw murder there. She saw union men riddled with bullets while they slept in their beds. She was seventy-two but she went in fighting, organizing.



"My address is like my shoes; it travels with me," said Mother Jones.

She held a great meeting on a mountain side. The superintendent of the mine, playing on the race-hatred theme, sent a Negro lad to spy. Mother Jones took the youth aside and talked with him, long and earnestly, about his people's fight against slavery. And she ended by saying, "Why do you now betray your white brothers who are fighting for industrial freedom?"

"Mother," he said, "I can't make myself scarce but my hearing and my eyesight ain't extra today."

And the blacklist got no new names that day.

She held another meeting and then, late at night, went back to her hotel. Someone knocked at the door. She opened it and twelve miners walked in, crowding her back into the little room. "Mother," they said, "we want to organize." And then the spokesman, a tall, consumptive man, said, "I'm reckoning I'm not going to be mining coal so long in this world and I thought I'd like to die organized."

They had no money to pay for their charter so she paid it for them. Three weeks later they sent her the money and a letter. They had organized 800 men and their spokesman had died—organized.

MOTHER JONES was a born publicity woman. In 1903 she went into Kensington, Pennsylvania—a textile center. Seventy-five thousand workers were on strike and of this number 10,000 were little children, earning three and five dollars a week in the mills, working ten hours a day. Many of them had missing fingers, chopped off in the machinery. All were thin and stooped. All were illiterate. They had no one to present their case. The papers would print nothing because they were owned by the mills.

Mother Jones decided to get her own publicity. She held a great meeting in Philadelphia. She brought the children with her. She told the audience that Philadelphia's mansions were built on the broken bones, the quivering hearts and drooping heads of those children. The audience was shocked and the papers picked it up.

But she didn't leave it there. She gathered a group of the children and took them on a march to New York City. They set out walking—a long procession on the highways, with an old and dusty woman at the head and behind her the straggling line of poor, stunted little mill children.

She browbeat the police. She got free rides on the street cars,

She got free meals from the hotels along the route. Everywhere, she brought the plight of the children before the nation.

At night the marchers camped along the road, cooking their food over fires. In the day-time, they stopped to swim in the streams. And the old lady, watching them, was stirred more by their bony little frames than she had ever been by the riddled bodies of miners or the gaunt, starved faces of miners' wives.

They stopped at Princeton and she told a great crowd of students and professors that the rich used the hands and feet of little children to buy automobiles for their wives and poodles for their daughters to talk French to.

On the outskirts of New York she was refused permission to enter the city. She went over to see the Mayor, Seth Low. He said she could not enter with the children because they were not citizens of New York.

"Oh," she said, "I think we will clear that up, Mr. Mayor. Permit me to call your attention to an incident which took place in this nation just a year ago. A piece of rotten royalty came over here from Germany, called Prince Henry. The Congress of the United States voted \$45,000 to fill that fellow's stomach for three weeks and to entertain him. His brother was getting \$4,000,000 dividends out of the blood of the workers in this country. Was he a citizen of this land? And it was reported, Mr. Mayor, that you and all the officials of New York and the University Club entertained that chap. Was he a citizen of New York?"

"No, Mother," said the mayor, "he was not."

"Did he ever create any wealth for our nation?"

"No, Mother, he did not," said the mayor.

"Well, Mr. Mayor," said the old lady, "these are the little citizens of the nation and they also produce its wealth. Aren't we entitled to enter your city?"

She entered the city and she took it by storm. She held a vast meeting at Twentieth Street and Madison Avenue. She said what she came to say. The nation heard it and Pennsylvania changed its child labor law.

She was old but that episode hardened her for a long fight. She had a terrible, scathing hatred for men who would build their fortunes on the bodies of little children.

RAILWAYMEN loved Mother Jones. She was their own personal charge.

During the Cripple Creek Strike of 1903 she was escorted out of Colorado by militia at the governor's orders. She was given a letter from the governor telling her on no account ever to come back into the state. All night she sat in the station at La Junta, an old woman of seventy-three, without money or food. In the morning the Denver train came along. She went up to the conductor and showed him the governor's letter. He read it carefully.

"Mother," he said, "do you want to go to Denver?"

"I don't want you to lose your job," she said.

"Mother," he repeated, "do you want to go to Denver?"

"Yes," she said.

"Then to hell with the job," said the conductor, "to Denver you go."

And to Denver she went, back into the lion's den. She got a room in a hotel and wrote the governor a letter. She had been composing it all the way down on the train and she wrote it in quiet fury.

"Mr. Governor," she wrote, "you notified your dogs of war to put me out of the state. They complied with your instructions. I hold in my hand a letter that was handed to me by one of them, which says 'under no circumstances return to this state.' I wish to notify you, Governor, that you don't own the state. When it was admitted to the sisterhood of states, my fathers gave me a share of stock on it; and that is all they gave to you. The civil courts are open. If I break a law of state or nation it is the duty of the civil courts to deal with me. That is why my forefathers established those courts to keep dictators and tyrants such as you from interfering with civilians. I am right here in the capital, after being out nine or ten hours, four or five blocks from your office. I want to ask you, Governor, what in Hell are you going to do about it?"

He did nothing and the old lady went on fighting for her class.

MINERS' wives were a joy to Mother Jones. They were strong union women. They led hard, hopeless lives but they would rather have seen their men dead than scab. In strikes they fought alongside their husbands. When the men were beaten the women kept them going and Mother Jones was always there serving them as general—an old lady with hatpins in her hair.

In Greensburg, Pennsylvania, the miners' wives were hooting the scabs one day when the sheriff came along and ran them in for disturbing the peace. Mother Jones told them to take their babies to court. They did and when the judge sentenced them the babies set up a terrific yowling. All the way to jail, ten miles away on the street-car, the kids kept howling and the women singing. Scabs got on the car and the women laid into them, scratching. A friendly motorman, keeping to the letter of the law, held the car doors shut between stations, giving the women time to do a thorough job on the scabs.

Finally they got to the jail. Mother Jones was still with them. She gathered her little army about her and said: "You sing the whole night long. You can spell one another if you get tired and hoarse. Sleep all day and sing all night and don't stop for anyone. Say you're singing to the babies."

They sang. For five nights they sang and all Greensburg unwillingly stayed awake to listen. And on the sixth day they were let out of jail. They just wouldn't stop singing.

THE fearlessness of Mother Jones grew with her age. Her courage took on the quality of folk legend. In West Virginia again—"medieval West Virginia"—it became an inspiring thing.

It was almost sure death for an organizer to go into the territory around Paint and Cabin Creeks. "Old Russia" it was called. The place was full of hired city gunmen. The striking miners had armed themselves to protect their women and children. Labor struggle had turned into dirty, literal war. But Mother Jones went in.

In a nearby incorporated village, off the company property, she held a meeting. A national organizer showed up with a bodyguard given him by the sheriff. He had arranged for the local chairman to introduce him. He told the men to be good and patient and trust to the justice of their cause. There is a name for his type.

In the middle of his speech, Mother Jones stood up and said, "Stop that silly trash!" The men yelled for the national organizer to sit down. They had come to hear Mother Jones. And she came through for them with glory.

"You men," she said, "have come over the mountains, twelve, sixteen miles. Your clothes are thin. Your shoes are out at the toes. Your wives and little ones are cold and hungry! You have been robbed

and enslaved for years! And now Billy Sunday comes to you and tells you to be good and patient and trust to justice! What silly trash to tell to men whose goodness and patience has cried out to a deaf world."

She brought those men hope. They wanted to be organized and she organized them. She did it at night so the spies would not recognize the men. But next day they were all fired and the strike went on, more vicious, more bloody.

The miners asked her to speak at the Red Warrior camp. The only road not on company property, where she could not be arrested for trespassing, was the creek bed. Up this she rode in a buggy and the men who had come to fetch her tramped over the railroad ties a little way above the creek.

Suddenly bullets whistled over their heads. The men scattered for cover. Mother Jones got out of her buggy and ran up to the tracks. The workers were huddled together. Around a short bend in the track the gunmen were grouped over their machine gun. She took it all in quickly. Then she picked up the hem of her long skirt and walked toward the gunmen, unhurried. The miners yelled for her to stop. She kept on walking. "No one is going to get killed," she said. She came up with the gunmen. She put her hand over the muzzle of the machine gun, looked steadily at the thugs and then nodded her head for the miners to pass.

One of the gunmen yelled, "Take your hands off the gun, you hellcat!"

She kept her hand over the muzzle and delivered a short lecture in class consciousness.

"Sir," she said, "my class goes into the mines. They bring out the metal that makes this gun. This is my gun! My class melts the minerals in furnaces and rolls the steel. They dig the coal that feeds furnaces. My class is not fighting you, not you. They are fighting with bare fists and empty stomachs the men who rob them and deprive their children of childhood. It is the hard-earned pay of the working class that your pay comes from. They aren't fighting you."

The same gunman snarled at her, "I'm going to kill every one of them, and you, too."

Still she kept one hand on the gun. With the other she pointed to the hills. "Up there in the mountains," she said, "I have five hundred

miners, marching armed to the meeting. If you start the shooting, they will finish the game."

She kept her hand on the gun. The miners passed by. There were no men in the mountains and there were no guns. But the mountains were full of an old woman's heroism.

DURING a strike in West Virginia she was arrested on a framed-up murder charge. The story of the strike and her arrest was publicized in *Collier's* magazine. Senator Kearns demanded a Congressional inquiry.

The night before the question came up in the Senate, Mother Jones decided to send a telegram. There was a hole in the floor of her prison and one of the soldiers who guarded her was a friend. Their pre-arranged signal was two empty bottles rung against each other. He came crawling under the house and took the telegram. It was addressed to Senator Kearns. He lit a match and read it. Then he looked at Mother Jones and said, "It's fine stuff, Mother."

And it was. Next day Senator Kearns read it before an astonished Senate and press. An old woman's voice reached them out of prison and said: "From out the military prison walls of Pratt, West Virginia, where I have walked over my eighty-fourth milestone in history, I send you the groans and tears and heartaches of men, women and children as I have heard them in this state. From out these prison walls, I plead with you for the honor of the nation, to push that investigation, and the children yet unborn will rise and call you blessed."

Not a word for herself. But she was released and she was again free to do her self-appointed task.

LATER, in the Spring, the miners asked her to speak at a camp in Wineburg. She set out, walking along the railroad track. Again she was stopped by the gunmen. The railroad track was company property. At that time of the year the creek was high and the water ice-cold. The gunmen thought she would never do it. But they didn't know her well.

She took off her shoes, tucked up her skirt and walked the creek to Wineburg. At Wineburg the miners, standing in the creek under the sights of the company machine guns, met her. With their feet



... On that day Mother Jones was eighty-four years old.

in the water, holding their shoes under their arms, they held a meeting and took the obligation to the union.

On that day Mother Jones was eighty-four years old.

HER scorn for bought officialdom was a glorious thing to watch. During the great steel strike of 1919 she went into Duquesne, Pennsylvania, to talk to the strikers. Again she was arrested. In her cell she was visited by a citizens' committee composed of an official, a business man and a preacher. They had come to reform her. They said: "Mother Jones, why don't you use your great gifts and your knowledge of men for something better and higher than agitating?"

She looked over at them from her prison cot. She was eighty-nine years old and they seemed to her like little children playing a foolish game. She told them a story.

"There was a man once," she said, "who had great gifts and a knowledge of men and he agitated against a powerful government that sought to make men serfs, to grind them down. He founded this nation that men might be free. He was a gentleman agitator!"

"Are you referring to George Washington?" said the official.

"I am so," said Mother Jones.

She went on with her story. "And there was a man once who had the gift of a tender heart and he agitated against powerful men, against invested wealth, for the freedom of black men. He agitated against slavery!"

"Are you speaking of Abraham Lincoln?" said the business man.

"I am that," said Mother Jones. "And there was a man once who walked among men, among the poor and the despised and the lowly, and he agitated against the powers of Rome, against the lickspittles of the local pie counter; he agitated for the Kingdom of God!"

Then the preacher looked shocked and said: "Are you speaking of Jesus Christ?"

"I am that," said Mother Jones. "The agitator you nailed to a cross some centuries ago. I did not know that his name was known in the region of steel."

Then the delegation left.

DURING the last years of her long, heroic life, Mother Jones saw fewer and fewer strikes. More and more, illness kept her from

the fight. But at ninety-three she was on hand for the convention of the Farmer-Labor Party. She spoke to them as an old woman who had spent her life in the people's fight, whose faith and hope and courage had not dimmed through years of unbelievable hardship. She said:

"The producer, not the meek, shall inherit the earth. Not today perhaps, nor tomorrow, but over the rim of the years my old eyes can see the coming of another day."



"Are you speaking of Jesus Christ?" asked the preacher.
"I am that!" said Mother Jones.

OUR TIME by Samuel Sillen

*A Note on Project Ex-
The "Human Obstacle" in Art
Who Wants Good Books?*

A Note on Project Ex-

ing to the professional anti-Communists, whose lucrative racket he describes in these measured terms:

"Hordes of shrewd fellows constitutionally averse to labor have been and are now living in Byzantine luxury on the millions poured out by terrified rich men for protection against the communists. These range from plug-uglies hired as bodyguards all the way to Doctors of Philosophy hired to edit handsome and expensive periodicals aimed against communism. The number of ex-advertising men, ex-newspaper men, ex-schoolteachers, and even ex-parsons in this country who toil not, neither do they spin, because shivering millionaires support them handsomely as guardians against communism, is probably much larger than the membership of the American Communist Party."

These high-priced spongers, whose swindle-bill is ultimately footed by the American people, are hired not only as bodyguards but as assassins. For, as Mr. Johnson suggests, "Almost every scheme whose real aim is to handcuff labor and gag effective criticism now wears the mask of anti-communism." There is indeed a menace abroad in the land. It is the anti-Red menace.

Since even a regiment of parasites must have its officers with extra pay and pension, a scramble for status is now taking place. Elbowing to the head of the line are those who certify themselves as ex-Communists. Sensitively attuned to the moral pitch of the times, the renegades have become intensely élite-conscious.

Thus, in *The God That Failed*, a symposium of ex-Communist "con-

fessions," Arthur Koestler brags to the Anglo-American imperialists that "we ex-Communists are the only people on your side who know what it's all about." In the *New York Times*, which of course staunchly endorses him, Stephen Spender demands special passport privileges on the ground that having been a member for a few days he has "inside" knowledge of the British Communist Party. *The New Republic*, in a flamboyant editorial on "The Problem of the Ex-Communist," berates the Stewart Warner Corporation of Chicago for failing to offer special benefits to workers who pledge to leave the Communist Party.

The latest plea for priority comes from James Burnham, who has finally wound up at a post to which all good Trotskyites aspire, namely as official adviser to the State Department. In *The Coming Defeat of Communism* (via the hydrogen bomb, he hopes) Burnham announces with all the confidence of his new appointment that "those who have been communists, or who have at least wanted to be, are the best soldiers in the fight against communism; and they will, and must, have a prominent and even leading part in the conduct of the fight." Burnham warns that the National Association of Manufacturers is "dangerously ignorant" and that ex-men like Michael Quill, Joseph Curran, George S. Counts and Sidney Hook "are better, and immensely more effective, anti-communists than Charles E. Wilson of General Motors or Thomas J. Watson of International Business Machines."

This expert in Project Ex is appalled, he says, by the way in which Communists are "coddled" by the *Saturday Evening Post*, the Foreign Policy Association and Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. The country is in grave danger, he warns, because the big book publishers are "using the resources and ability of business" to spread Communist ideas. And there is, of course, the Red Plot of Eric Johnston. "How strange," sneers Burnham like a hammy prosecuting attorney in the movies, "that Hollywood and Broadway which so readily and easily ground out pro-Soviet movies and plays during the War and immediate post-War period, seem so inhibited in their output of anti-communist productions. . . !"

Is it any wonder that when Burnham appeared before the Un-American Committee in 1948 to advocate outlawing of the Communist Party he was told by ex-Congressman McDowell: "I wish you were a member of this committee." Nor is it surprising that his outright

all for fascism and war was featured in the January *Partisan Review*, whose editors are striving, not without personal calculation, to hike up the rewards for renegacy.

A startling admission is made by one of the penitents in *The God That Failed*. Ignazio Silone writes: "The logic of opposition at all costs has carried many ex-Communists far from their starting-points, in some cases as far as Fascism." The course of Trotsky and Tito shows this "logic" fulfilling itself. A Whittaker Chambers or a Louis Budenz is not, obviously, a "disillusioned Communist" but an eager lickspittle of the fascist forces in American life.

The "logic" is not hard to grasp. For the betrayal is not of a political party simply, but of the party of the working class. These "Ex-Communists" are uniformly ex-supporters (or, more accurately, pretenders to support) of the working class. One of the breast-beaters in *The God That Failed*, Arthur Koestler, long ago declared in a self-portrait entitled *Scum of the Earth* that his previous claim to have been one with the proletariat had been "mere self-deception." Since for Koestler the world always revolves around himself, we may take it that this "self-deception" was really deceit practiced on everybody else. In any case, the hatred of the working class, the embracing of its enemies, is the core of the anti-Sovietism and anti-Communism of these renegades.

IT IS REVEALING that Communism should more and more be treated by bourgeois intellectuals as "a God that failed," and that the language of renegacy should be strewn with theological terms like "oblation of spiritual pride," "conversion," "altar of world revolution," etc. They are now switching to a God that will succeed. *Partisan Review*, for example, is currently featuring symposia on "the new turn" to religion, obviously preparing for a legitimization of its hitherto unblessed liaison with Luce. Burnham's new book is a Catholic Book Club selection. With medieval fervor Koestler has declared that "What we need is an active fraternity of pessimists"—he adds that he means "short-term pessimists," since there undoubtedly will be pie in the sky. Silone, who still claims to be for socialism, writes: "I do not conceive Socialist policy as tied to any particular theory, but to a faith. The more Socialist theories claim to be 'scientific,' the more transitory they are; but Socialist values are permanent." A hundred years after

the Communist Manifesto we are getting a rash of "Faith Socialism" as opposed to Scientific Socialism.

There are those who like to speculate on the psychology of renegacy. "Why do they betray?" such people ask, and summon the language of clinical psychology. Such speculations serve only to weaken the meaning of the betrayal. "In the personal sense," as Lenin wrote, "the difference between a traitor because of weakness and a traitor by premeditation and calculation is very great. In the political sense there is *no* such difference, for politics means the actual fate of millions of people, and to this fate it makes no difference whether millions of workers and poor peasants have been betrayed by traitors from weakness or by traitors for lucre."

Today is specifically an Anglo-American Judas time. An effort is made by Richard Crossman, editor of *The God That Failed*, to suggest that "numberless men of letters" are deserting Communism. This is whistling in the wind when one thinks of the Soviet and Chinese intellectuals and those of the new People's Democracies of Eastern Europe, and of all those other writers who are the greatest spokesmen of their national cultures: Amado of Brazil, Guillén of Cuba, Neruda of Chile, Aragon and Eluard of France, Nexö of Denmark, Anna Seghers and Friedrich Wolf of Germany, and, truly, "numberless" others. Turncoatism in America is an inevitable comment on the bludgeon of imperialism; just as the loyalty of those who will not be bought off from the fight against imperialist war and fascism is a tribute to both their moral and physical courage.

The "Human Obstacle" in Art

WITH regard to the Soviet criticisms of bourgeois modernism in painting, some people have asked: "What is meant by terms like anti-human, anti-democratic, anti-scientific in art?" One way of answering the question is to examine what leading defenders and theoreticians of abstract art have had to say.

First, as to the concept of "anti-human." The human image is considered an "obstacle" by many modernist theoreticians. For example, Willard Huntington Wright in his *Modern Painting* writes: "The subject matter of painting—that is, the recognizable object, the human obstacle—had to be forced out."

And why did the "human obstacle" have to be erased from the canvas? Because: "A picture in order to represent its intensest emotive power must be an abstract presentation expressed entirely in the medium of painting, and that medium is color. . . . So long as painting deals with objective nature it is impure art, for recognizability precludes the highest aesthetic emotion."

Painting, therefore, must not only exclude the human being but objective nature altogether. This position does not flow from a love

You Meet Such Nice People

(Book announcements in the February Retail Bookseller.)

Feb. 2: *The Siege of Innocence*, by Eugene MacCown. Doubleday.

"Bruce . . . meets kleptomaniacs, a dissolute archbishop, homosexuals, a man who lived as a married woman. . . ."

Feb. 9: *Fright*, by George Hopley. Rinehart.

"On his wedding day, Press Marshall chokes a girl who has been blackmailing him. He hides the body, rushes off to be married, and spends the next years in terror."

Feb. 10: *Run, Sheep, Run!* by Gordon Sager. Vanguard.

". . . Mrs. Macy was a Lesbian; Mrs. Richter was a nymphomaniac; Willie was a homosexualist—which all led to emotional disturbances climaxed in a costume party."

Feb. 16: *The First Person*, by Richard Mealand. Doubleday.

"Luke Peters, free-swinging columnist, his life already complicated by the demands of his work, his wife and children, his mistress, gets himself in further difficulty by falling for his beautiful but distant secretary, by befriending a young girl made pregnant by a man who had impersonated him, and by attacking the vain crusading of a rival columnist."

March 1: *The Firebrand*, by George Challis. Harper.

". . . the adventures of Tizo, the red-headed firebrand, who slashes wildly about him with sword and axe in his defense of the Lady Beatrice, her brother Giovanpaolo, and the darling Lord Melrose. Bloody, exciting . . . a selection of the Family Book Club."

of painting but from a hatred of the human image. It rejects not only man but the incomparable masters of painting.

The Soviet attitude toward the "human obstacle" in painting or anything else was once expressed by Maxim Gorky in this way. He addressed the new Soviet man, a plain man but a great one: "Comrade, be steadfast in the knowledge that you are the most necessary man on earth." Not a "human obstacle" but the most necessary man on earth, not only for building socialism but as a subject, and yes, a distinctly recognizable subject for painting.

Second, as to the term "anti-democratic." We turn for clarification to another bourgeois theoretician, the French poet Apollinaire. In his book, *The Cubist Painters*, Apollinaire wrote: "Painting must not address the crowd in the language of the crowd; it must employ its own language, in order to move, dominate and direct the crowd, not in order to be understood."

Clearly, there is expressed here a double contempt for "the crowd." First because it is a crowd with a special sort of crowd-language. Second, because it is so dumb that it is best "dominated" by what is incomprehensible to it. Above all the painter must not paint to be understood.

The Soviet attitude on this question was best expressed by Lenin, who told Clara Zetkin: "Art belongs to the people. It must have its deepest roots in the midst of the working masses. It must be understood and loved by the masses. It must unite the emotions, thoughts and will of these masses, uplift them."

Lenin, of course, also taught Communist artists "not to fall into vulgarization, not to descend to the level of the undeveloped reader, but steadily . . . to raise the level of development."

The Leninist attitude toward art is profoundly democratic; the attitude of contempt for "the crowd" is not only disgustingly snobbish and arrogant in general but peculiarly expressive of imperialism and fascism in particular. It is the artistic equivalent of the monopolist's attitude toward the worker at the bench or in the mine.

Finally, as to "anti-scientific." Here we turn to a theoretician who is also a leading practitioner of bourgeois modernism. Mondrian, in an essay on "A New Realism," wrote: "The expression of pure vitality which reality reveals through the manifestation of dynamic

movement is the real content of art. . . . But a work of art is only 'art' in so far as it establishes life in its unchangeable aspect: as pure vitality. After centuries of culture this fact produced Abstract Art in modern times."

So this is what all the centuries have come to—mysticism parading as "a new realism." Art does not deal with real people, real relationships, real emotions. It deals with "pure vitality" like a perpetual motion machine, with life "unchangeable." We are swept into the vastest irrationalities and the densest metaphysics at once.

The Soviet position on this question was expressed by Zhdanov when he told the first All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers in 1934:

"Comrade Stalin has called our writers engineers of human souls. What does this mean? What duties does the title confer upon you? In the first place, it means knowing life so as to be able to depict it truthfully in works of art, not to depict it in a dead, scholastic way, not simply as 'objective reality,' but to depict reality in its revolutionary development."

To know life scientifically, not as "pure vitality." And to portray life in its revolutionary development, not in its "unchangeable aspect." This is the difference between the Marxist approach and the anti-scientific spirit of bourgeois decadence.

For bourgeois and decadent is what it is. The relation is not accidental. As Zhdanov told the writers sixteen years ago:

"The decadence and disintegration of bourgeois literature, resulting from the collapse and decay of the capitalist system, represent a characteristic trait, a characteristic peculiarity of the state of bourgeois culture and bourgeois literature at the present time. Gone never to return are the times when bourgeois literature, reflecting the victory of the bourgeois system over feudalism, was able to create great works of the period when capitalism was flourishing. Everything is growing stunted—themes, talents, authors, heroes."

After sixteen years we can test the statement and re-affirm its truth as we consider the anti-human, anti-democratic, anti-scientific productions of imperialism.

Who Wants Good Books?

WE GIVE the public what it wants." This is the standard argument of movie and radio producers, as well as book and magazine publishers, when they are accused of peddling low stuff. And with this "box-office-talks" defense (which also seems so highly democratic) they go on corrupting the taste which they claim to be obliging.

It is true that one of the most evil features of capitalism is its systematic debasement of culture. But it is snobbish tommyrot to assume, with the loftier literati, that the public is getting what it really wants. For one thing it has little choice. For another, it is the long-time victim of a millionaire ring of dope operators. The miracle is not the corruption of taste but the healthy core of resistance.

This is an old fight. Let me cite a pamphlet published by an anonymous worker in 1844 entitled *The Elements of Social Disorder; a Plea for the Working Classes in the United States*:

"Writers, at least the mass of them, lay almost the entire blame on the shoulders of the poor, who are in no condition to help themselves, while they become the apologists of the rich who can best pay for their labors. . . ."

While the American workers of 100 years ago were, relatively, "in no condition to help themselves," they did keep pegging away at the need for a literature that would truly reflect their lives. Here is another pamphlet, *An Address Before the Workingmen's Society of Dedham, Mass.*, published in 1831:

"The anti-republican influence of *much of the literature* which is inculcated upon our youth, and rendered fashionable in the 'upper classes' of society, is another most objectionable feature of our social system. . . . It treats the fundamental employments of life, and the mass of mankind, as ignoble, menial and servile; and undoubtedly contributes to increase the aversion of its votaries towards all truly useful and productive pursuits."

I could multiply these examples. You will not find them in history books, for they are part of the buried truths about the thoughtful American worker's traditional feeling about bourgeois culture. They add up to a powerful assertion that it is not the official custodians but the working class that really cares about truthful expression, despite the heavy heritage of browbeating and confusion.

We have, too, the precious testimony of the founders of Scientific Socialism. In 1850, Marx and Engels, in a book review, ridiculed a bourgeois writer who looked upon the proletarians as nothing but a vile, degenerate rabble. They lashed Herr Daumer for treating the class struggle as a contest between "crudeness" and "culture."

Engels had previously noted, in *The Condition of The Working Class in England in 1844*, that working men almost exclusively read the epoch-making products of modern philosophical, political and poetical literature. "The bourgeois," he added, "enslaved by social conditions and the prejudices involved in them, trembles, blesses, and crosses himself before everything which really paves the way for progress; the proletarian has open eyes for it, and studies it with pleasure and success."

The English workers read the great French materialists like Diderot, Helvetius and Holbach in cheap editions. Shelley and Byron "find most of their readers in the proletariat; the bourgeoisie owns only castrated editions, family editions, cut down in accordance with the hypocritical morality of the day." Engels wrote that the proletariat had formed a literature consisting chiefly of journals and pamphlets "far in advance of the whole bourgeois literature in intrinsic worth."

When Karl Marx published *Capital*, the German bourgeois intellectuals at first tried to kill it with silence. Then these guardians of culture were forced to adopt a different tactic because of the upsurge of the labor movement, the activity of the International, the Paris Commune. The "mealy-mouthed babblers of German vulgar economy" were compelled to break their silence. On the other hand, Marx wrote, "The understanding that *Capital* quickly found in wide circles of the German working class is the best reward for my work."

Of course, the supreme refutation of the box-office wisecracks is the Soviet Union, where the working class has fully demonstrated that it is the real advance guard of culture. True, this is because the working class has liberated itself. By controlling the agencies of culture the working class is able to express its values fully for the first time.

But the struggle for such expression goes on under capitalism. It was among the workers that Gorky's *Mother* found its readiest audience ten years before the Socialist Revolution. It is in the working class that American culture must seek its most genuine sources of health.

Freedom and Responsibility

by CHARLES HUMBOLDT

A MAJOR assault against Marxism is being made today in the name of freedom. Liberty is on the tongue of every imperialist, and a crowd of paid and unpaid thinkers accompanies him in full hue and cry. Freedom has become like the unicorn in the old tapestries; it lies panting, surrounded by hunters, and one cannot tell whether they mean to kill or merely to impound it.

The reproach most often directed at the Marxist is that he regards human beings as things or instruments to be used or abused for whatever ends he—or the state—has in mind for them. A Machiavelian materialist, he is obsessed with the idea of manipulation and sees man as no more than a sprig of nature. Sartre, in a lecture delivered in Paris in 1945, reiterates this view that "the effect of all materialism is to treat all men, including the one philosophizing, as objects, that is as an ensemble of determined reactions in no way distinguished from the ensemble of qualities and phenomena which constitute a table or a chair or a stone."

This is a serious accusation, for from it springs the conclusion that Marxists have no ethics, but only expedients. In proving its untruth, I shall examine some of the ideological assumptions from which the attack is launched and then pass to a brief description of the Marxist ideas of freedom and of personal and social responsibility.

It is interesting that Sartre, an atheist even though a shamefaced one, should press the same charge as do the religious opponents of Marxism. The former because we include man in the chain of cause and effect, the latter because we have no place in that relation for God either as Prime Mover or Final Cause. Man, for us, is his own end and the means to it. Sartre's point of view, like that of religion, is ad-

mittedly anti-scientific; its resemblance to the latter becomes even more apparent when we remember that religion attempts to escape its own basic fatalism (the omnipotence of God) by a magical leap into free will. The break, though, is like a convict's who cannot shed his prison clothes. And Sartre's absolute freedom, rigid and unpredictable—does it not seem like a self-enclosed fate, each man his own universe and its god as well? So fatalism and freedom, religion and atheism make their peace. As we shall see later, the Third Force in philosophy performs the same function that Social-Democracy always carries out in politics. It starts as a lion and ends as a lamb.

Sartre's position is characteristic of the present decay of bourgeois philosophy, which in turn reflects the general crisis of capitalism. Threatened not only on its flanks but at its very center by the advance of socialism, the bourgeoisie has been seized by a kind of panic. It frantically seeks new knowledge while denying the obvious conclusions to be drawn from it. Thus, astounding discoveries in physics are coupled with the assertion that causality is a myth. Imposing historical works conclude with the melancholy cry that history has no meaning. Ethical studies proclaim the unconditional freedom and total responsibility of man, with the mocking qualification that there is no real world for man to know. For the bourgeoisie knowledge, like the atom bomb, is a weapon of destruction—and of self-destruction. That is why its philosophy is so closely allied to despair.

But even in dying there is slyness. If we cannot really know or confidently predict anything, then responsibility narrows down to the specific acts of individuals in their interpersonal relations. No one, no class is responsible for the condition of society, but men are held to account for actions that stem directly from that condition. The judge wants to know nothing of the necessity which drives a man to steal. In any case there is no such thing as necessity. In a strike no one but the strikers is responsible for what occurs. There are no causes for strikes, only individuals wilfully acting in them. It is not hard to see what class benefits from such sophistry. This indiscriminate, cruel freedom, divorced from necessity, is actually a total negation of freedom, a naked assertion of class rule based upon power alone. One step more and we arrive at a rationale for fascism: "freedom" has been abused and must therefore be put in charge of an elite whose own license is guaranteed to give them no pangs of conscience, since ethics

is of no concern to them in any case. To round out the irony, it is the Marxist who is accused of having no principles.

All the more then must we maintain and strengthen our understanding of the ethical position based upon dialectical materialism. Our failure to do so not only limits our cultural achievement; it also exposes us to charges we will repudiate indignantly but inconsistently. The commonest of these—and the one most often apparently justified by errors in the fiction and criticism of the Left—is that Marxism maintains society alone to be responsible for the actions of the individual. This theory was one school of liberalism's way of defending the oppressed, its protest against the gross, inhuman forms of bourgeois exploitation. It found its highest literary expression in the great naturalist writers, in such men as Zola and Dreiser. The glamorous façade of capitalist society crumbled under their blows, revealing the crass furniture, the contents of closets, the secret stairs and exits, the cramped servants' rooms, and the masters creeping and darting like disturbed insects. What Dreiser saw finally made him a Communist.

YET liberalism, being within the orbit of bourgeois thought, could not shake off its limiting aspects. It was bound up with mechanical materialism. It regarded existing economic relations as a static expression of society. Besides its concept of society was unhistorical and abstract, a kind of secular substitute for God. Therefore, the most liberalism could do was to call for amelioration of the conditions supposedly created by society in general. Accompanying this plea, naturalism, the literature of conscience, uttered cries of anguish and pity for the helpless victims of social fate. It did not, however, suggest that the victims had the power to change their destiny. Its tragedies had thus always an element of pathos in them.

Because of the initial progressive features of naturalism, some writers on the Left have been inclined to shun a stricter examination of its principles. But the acceptance of liberalism in literature leads to very dubious ethical conclusions. I shall use for example Arnaud d'Usseau's otherwise excellent review of the Chaplin film, *Monsieur Verdoux*, which appeared in the Summer, 1947, issue of *Mainstream*. D'Usseau feels that the moral burden of murder must be placed squarely on society, and that like Hugo, Dickens and Shaw, Chaplin recognizes that the reason one man kills another resides within the structure of society. "He has seen, in Shaw's words, that 'not only does Society

commit more frightful crimes than any individual, king or commoner: it legalizes its crimes, and forges certificates of righteousness for them. . . ." With this blanket designation of society as the criminal, all individual and even class responsibility is made trivial. The way is open for the most cynical apologia. It goes without saying that D'Usseau would find such attempts to dodge responsibility in practice abhorrent to him. Yet he defends Verdoux in his description of him. "Verdoux is not killing for the purposes of power, but because he wishes to provide security and happiness for those who need him, who could not possibly survive without him." He sees Verdoux as a truly tragic figure capable of evoking our profoundest sympathy.

I find it impossible to share this sympathy; furthermore, I do not believe that Chaplin regards his petty-bourgeois murderer as a tragic hero. D'Usseau himself points out the resemblance of *Monsieur Verdoux* to *Candide*. Chaplin's film is a comedy, an intellectual assault on the values of bourgeois society. It does not demand that we feel for Verdoux as one of ourselves. If we think of him seriously as a real person, he appears a repugnant moral imbecile, and we are deprived of the brilliant use Chaplin has made of him as a comic device.

Verdoux did not kill to attain power. But suppose he had. Since only society is the criminal, his murders would not be more reprehensible. Can, then, the crimes of society against the individual excuse the crimes of the individual against humanity? If so, even Hitler and the atom bomb gang are exempted from judgment; unfortunates of their society, they are no more culpable than if they had merely given birth to their victims. Whoever wishes to be comforted by this reflection must be reminded of an old prophecy: "In those days they shall say no more, The fathers have eaten a sour grape, and the children's teeth are set on edge. But every one shall die for his own iniquity; every man that eateth the sour grape, his teeth shall be set on edge."

The liberal position is particularly prone to a type of vulgar romanticism according to which violations of bourgeois law are *per se* viewed as revolts against bourgeois society. Once a victim, the criminal now becomes a hero. In one respect this continues an honorable tradition of bourgeois literature: the robber or even the shrewd article as paragon. In the earlier struggles against feudal and national oppression he proved a powerful rallying symbol, out of which evolved such classical figures as Tyl Eulenspiegel, Sancho Panza and the heroes of the picaresque novel. A still healthy survival of this type is the good

soldier Schweik, forged in the conditions of the Czech struggle against the Austro-Hungarian empire. The predominance of these characters among the more effective exponents of resistance is nevertheless indicative of the limits of the bourgeois perspective. It also suggests the doubts, perhaps vague and almost instinctive, which their creators must have felt as they observed some of the lineament of the then revolutionary class. Tiny seeds of its own destruction were already in the planting.

By the time of Balzac the star of the bourgeoisie was truly in the ascendant and we can see what has happened to the old hero. He is now Vautrin, prince of the galleys, homosexual entrepreneur of thieves and murderers, brilliant enthusiast of crime for the beauty of it. That Balzac uses him to expose the economic and social relations of his time, as Diderot did Rameau's nephew, cannot deceive us into thinking him a hero. Balzac anticipates any such intention when, with tremendous insight, he makes him end his career as an official of the secret police. But then Balzac was a realist.

Liberal confusion on this point grows as capitalism approaches and then enters its imperialist stage. The frustration of the oppressed and the distortion of the oppressor become so marked that it seems as though society were no longer human, composed of individuals singly or in groups and classes, but rather a grim entity hanging over the groaning or bare tables where its subjects sit. If only something could scatter this ghost, and create the illusion of will-power (in which no one believes)! To fish strength out of extreme debility! So the devout wish begins to father its glorious gangsters, slum tigers, charming hoodlums, gentlemen robbers, ruthless, law-scorning but impressive tycoons; with their opposite but inseparable numbers, the Nero Wolfes, Charley Chans and Dick Tracys. Sentimentality and sadism go hand in hand. Exploiter and exploited share credit as true radicals. Finally the aristocrat and the *lumpen* embrace; crimes of passion share honors with crimes without passion, and murders for money with gratuitous murders that free the soul from its stinking surroundings. It is nearer than it looks from Gide's Lafcadio to the SS elite and from them to Peekskill.

THE Marxist will not fall into the snare where liberalism has trapped itself. While recognizing bourgeois law as an expression of the class rule of the bourgeoisie, he will not naively condone every viola-

tion of that law, and certainly not interpret it as a revolutionary gesture. The champions of capitalist order and the captains of a police state would like nothing better than for us to confirm their slander that, as misery is supposed inevitably to breed crime, the working class in general, and the Negro and Puerto Rican people in particular, must express their resentment through anti-social acts. They would enjoy it even more if we equated such individual acts with the organized struggles of the working class. Because Communists will not rise to this bait, they are sometimes curiously referred to as bourgeois moralists by super-revolutionary intellectuals.

Clearly, there is a vast difference between the revolutionary refutation of bourgeois values and the ordinary infringement of laws. That robbing a bank is a heinous crime in the eyes of bankers does not *ipso facto* make it a noble deed in ours. This is not, however, because we proceed from the premises of the bourgeoisie, for whom private property is privately, and sometimes publicly, valued above human life. We do not subscribe to the theses of ruling-class justice according to which commodities have the rights of persons while men are converted into purchaseable and expendable goods. Our quarrel with the criminal is that he accepts and merely appropriates to himself the behavior and advantages of the bourgeoisie; he is the other side of their coin. When he is successful he becomes one of them. If he has been a worker, he is soon separated from his class, to compete in rapacity with the legal criminals of the day, the rent gougers, strike-breakers, profiteers, warmongers and other trash whom some literary critics urge us to set up on the pedestals of fiction. To all of these we oppose the concept of Marxist-Leninist morality with its goal: mankind's liberation through the coming to power of the working class, the achievement of socialism and ultimately communism.

Similarly, we reject the views of those who carry their squabble with society in the abstract over into the period of socialism, who cannot stand the restraints of the workers' state on an impeccable freedom which exists only in their fantasy. Individual defiance of the bourgeois state divorced from the struggle to establish socialism expresses no positive values for us; defiance of the state, once the bourgeois state has been supplanted, becomes an anachronism. It is necessary to reiterate this truism because the Soviet Union and the new democracies are constantly accused of repressing the sacred rights of individuals to plot against them or to raise private standards of behavior against

the collective good. In such choruses of complaint may be heard the voices of the diplomat who is implicated in the plot, of corrupted scholars like Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., and sometimes an ardent convert to the cause of promiscuous sexuality.

Whoever among the liberal intellectuals joins these saints of freedom, usually does so because he has been so overwhelmed by the spectacle of capitalism in decay that he interprets the whole world in terms of frustration. Any organization of society appears oppressive to him (he mistakes the rigid anarchy of imperialism for order, while refusing to see it as a specific form of capitalist misrule). It is significant that his disillusionment with socialism becomes stronger as the class struggle turns sharper and the working class of his own country sustains temporary setbacks; he displaces his fears so that they are directed away from his real enemy. The moodiness of such an intellectual, his flights of exaltation and "cliffs of fall," foreshadow his extravagant demand that the socialist state immediately and unconditionally satisfy his slightest specific needs. The traveler gasping in the desert insists on pineapple sherbet.

OVERESTIMATION of the power of capitalism, lack of belief in the intelligence and capacity for decision and action of the working class and its allies, affect personal behavior just as they give rise to political opportunism. The rationale for capitulation is that the solitary individual cannot bring about changes in society; he must live as best he can until circumstances permit him to show his true colors. When the great day comes, perhaps a little sooner, he will be found standing shoulder to shoulder with those who could not help being more steadfast than he. Nature had made them strong, fanatical; him a little weaker, more reasonable.

Such thinking is particularly prevalent in a country where the rewards for class collaboration are very great and the working class is itself infected with middle-class ideas of success. For example, last year the *Daily Worker* radio columnist noted that certain progressives in the industry had written or contributed to programs that contained unprincipled attacks on the Communist Party, caricatures of the Negro and Jewish people, justification of the bi-partisan foreign policy, and praise of monopoly capitalism for allegedly promoting the interests of the American people. He said that these "intellectuals" were no better

than scabs, and that it was contemptible of them to claim that they had more to lose than ordinary workers if they were blacklisted for refusing to help poison the air. He received several letters protesting the severity of his judgment. The one he printed is characteristic in its self-deception:

"... for progressives, the question is not simply the matter of a job (in itself, however, no small thing); more than that, it is the question of remaining in the industry, and fighting for one's ideas in it through one's political and cultural strength. To be forced into writing or directing a politically degrading program, a program harmful to the working class, must be considered a calculated risk-ing of the individual's use to the working class, comparable to the loss of an important battle in a war."

Calculated is the word. Does one fight for one's ideas by betraying them? Do partisan bands guarantee their recruits that no one will be hurt in skirmishes with the enemy? Who then is to insure ultimate victory? Someone else, someone more impulsive or less valuable. That is what this strategy comes down to. And when does one stop running? When the thousandth Negro has been beaten with the sanction of one's humor? That time is past already. Or when the six millionth Jew has been carted to an oven? Must a man dig his grave to earn his bread?

The progressive intellectual who does not understand his role in the defeat of fascism has not learned the lesson of Germany. Even if he were more vulnerable to discrimination or assault than, say, the auto worker, this would not excuse his evasion of responsibility. The deserter is not acquitted because he was in the infantry rather than behind the lines. Whoever sits tight and keeps his mouth shut is accountable, in some degree, for what he permits his country to become. And the more he knows the more he has to answer for. Otherwise, as in Germany today, the worst monster can plead innocence by association. Were they not all caught in Hitler's web? This one averted his eyes, being afraid; that one, who gave orders, had orders given to him. What could he do, if he were not to be killed? (Long ago, Aristotle said, "But some acts, perhaps, we cannot be forced to do, but ought rather to face death after the most fearful sufferings").

And now they obey instructions to dig up the victims of Dachau because the soil is good for pottery. Opportunism is like a railroad switch. Once it has been thrown, the first act of surrender carries a man only an inch from the main line; but in a few minutes he has swung miles away and is gathering speed.

NEVERTHELESS, the main concern of our ethics is not condemnation but action. Our morality is no whip designed especially for waverers. We emphasize the responsibility of the individual not because we want men to feel guilty, but to get them to act with energy as members or allies of the working class. Absolute, unconditional responsibility is as abstract as absolute, unconditional freedom; applied to concrete situations, it will only paralyze men by making them feel inadequate and unworthy. How then do we reconcile our assertion of individual responsibility with our apparent desire to reduce its force? The contradiction has to be resolved in practice, in the course of the class struggle to which the individual is committed. Responsibility has no meaning unless the individual can fulfill his obligations along with other men. He does not create that possibility, though he may contribute to broadening it. Responsibility, while personal, can only arise in a social setting and increase when the possibilities for realizing it are organized.

Herein lies the ethical significance of trade unions and above all of the leadership of the Communist parties in all countries. Attaining a sense of class solidarity through struggle, material achievement and study, the single worker is prepared, objectively and psychologically, for further effort, for personal sacrifices in behalf of his fellows in the same or other industries and finally in support of the oppressed throughout the world. He returns the spirit imparted to him by his class or party into its fund of confidence so that it can draw to it the best elements of other classes in their common human task: the liberation and progress of all mankind.

Conversely, bureaucratic corruption in the trade union movement, opportunism in a Marxist party, or in much greater degree a major defeat of the working class as in Germany under Hitler, results in widespread demoralization and cultural decay. It is important at such times for the progressive intellectual not to let self-righteousness run away with him. It is easy to blame the working class because it has

not satisfied one's expectations, because it is not noble enough and refuses to be provoked into combat not of its own choosing. Such impatience is generally felt by people who experience the class struggle at second hand and wish to see it mainly as a moral conflict. Sometimes, of course, it merely conceals their hope to find a reason for backing out of the fight. The working class or its party has disappointed them beyond redemption. No shedding of tears or blood, no subsequent victory, not even China, will heal them. The immaculate renegades are the most unprincipled and malevolent.

The pretense that men have absolute freedom of choice should be especially repugnant to the working class which is confronted every day with situations that refute it. Wage slavery, hunger, shameful housing, disruption of their family life through poverty, injustice in the courts, all these do not predispose workers to accept the theory that capitalism has suddenly abolished all restrictions on their ability to make the decisions by which they are judged or judge themselves. Furthermore, they will ask: Whose values are the objects of choice? For the ruling class has made aggression the supreme value, in terms of which all other values and human traits—honesty, kindness, intelligence, loyalty, affection—must be rated and assessed. This standard is imposed, not theoretically, but through the capitalist system. Aggression appears as the catalyst which alone renders effective any combination of human qualities. It says: Without me, what can you do, what is your goodness worth? The devil's advocate wins by smiles and threats. Needless to say, the statistics of successful aggression are not impressive; hundreds stand in the right column, millions in the wrong. So wherever the illusion persists, it produces social decomposition, disintegration of personality, and mass anxiety for which scapegoats must be found. The worst wrecks are those who try hardest to fulfill their moral obligations to the system without having the requisite predatory talent.

SINCE the enemies of the working class cannot sell it a philosophy which is so patently alien to its interests, they must open shop elsewhere. Even then they must remove from their theory of "freedom" any hint of attachment to capitalist values. An apt example is existentialism with its rival exponents, Sartre and the Catholic thinker, Jacques Maritain.

Man is condemned to be free, says Sartre; condemned because he did

not create himself, free because from then on he is responsible for everything he does. Since God does not exist, everything is permissible, there being no values, no human nature, to which we can appeal to justify our conduct. The only real thing is action, which would itself be meaningless if man were not free to choose. His choice, however, depends only upon the values which he, the solitary, forlorn individual, creates for himself by acting. His slogan must therefore be: freedom for freedom's sake. (One might read: action for action's sake.)

But what is the point of making man answerable for everything he does if men have nothing in common, if they are "free for nothing" as one of Sartre's characters reflects? Even in theory, Sartre's responsibility is a mockery. His philosophy of freedom depends on the negation of history, society and the sciences because once we acknowledge the existence of causal relations, or merely observe everyday life, the notion that there are no unfree acts becomes absurd. Moreover, it places an intolerable, fantastic moral burden on the individual which must end either in despair or in contempt for all human values. Freedom is a free-floating fate, a scarecrow to frighten the innocent and amuse the sophisticated.

The wider the circulation of such pure thoughts, the more they must suffer from the blows of common sense. In fact they seem aimed mainly at the contemporary intellectual and to rely on his tendency to treat ideas as things-in-themselves. The hypocrisy ingrained in them sprouts the moment they are put to the test of experience. Should someone offer to "will the freedom of others" by engaging in political action, Sartre will hasten to warn him that since man is free and there is no human nature to depend on, one cannot count on men whom one does not know by relying on human goodness or man's concern for the good of society. "I don't know what will become of the Russian revolution. . . . I've got to limit myself to what I see." Asked to commit himself, the apostle of action puts action in a deep freezer. "In an age like ours, when there are different parties each claiming to be the party of revolution, involvement does not mean joining one of them, but rather trying to clarify concepts in order both to show precisely what the state of affairs is and at the same time to act on the different revolutionary parties."

After the bold blasts of mythical freedom, this sounds like a loss of nerve, a mess of liberal middle-class platitudes. Actually, the refusal

to accept social responsibility is inherent in the very way that responsibility is proclaimed. A philosophy which rejects causality and denies the possibility of prediction has no grounds for choice. It is helpless before the conflicts of society or the problems of revolution, and can only pretend to stand above rival theories and sample them. Its objective function is to turn the intellectual into a bohemian and to prevent his joining forces with a militant working class.

The religious Maritain gives the intellectual even wider range to ruin himself. "Since the evil of the free act is our creation, it is in letting our monsters proliferate to the very end, and allowing the infinite resources of our power of nihilating to develop all forms of degradation and corruption of being, that divine liberty manifests the sublimity of its omnipotence by drawing *from that itself* the higher good which God designs, not for Himself but for us."* The new Pangloss derives his comfort from the worst of all possible situations. Inertia in status quo becomes a mark of spirituality. Now we can understand why Marxists are upbraided for being optimists as well as materialists. They want to abolish a society whose evils have been created for the good of our souls.

Bourgeois freedom, like its philosophy, has reached its final stage, as an inverted reflection of the crisis of capitalism. The business man who sees it as the right to uncontrolled exploitation may still think of it as a good-in-itself. When freedom produces its opposite and even the capitalist is at the mercy of "unforeseen" circumstances, this anarchist at heart will dream of the golden age when there were no government shackles on his liberty. Man (that is, himself) is good by nature and needs no social restraints. So during the Roosevelt administration he was like a drowning man who tries to get a stranglehold on his rescuer. The capitalist, being no philosopher, exhibits a cultural lag.

For the bourgeois thinker the idea of freedom has lost its innocence. He is too familiar with the phenomena of capitalist society to believe that man is inherently good. Man's savagery is more constant in his eyes. Responsibility for one's acts must therefore be tragic, a gratuitous, a *free doom*. Yet both these views have one thing in common. Their concern is with the individual apart from his fellow men. In the first he is above society, its alleged friend, actually its enemy. In

* *Existence and the Existent*, by Jacques Maritain. Pantheon Books. 1948.

the second he is simply alone; society does not exist except as a circle in hell where the damned wander, each engrossed in his private torment. Change the world? It is inside one, clawing at the liver. So with the retreat of freedom to an impotent consciousness we are back to both idealism and absolute mechanical determinism. And these warring lovers are finally married.

DIALECTICAL materialism takes a different stand with respect to freedom and individual responsibility. Being the philosophy of the working class, whose relation to society is productive rather than parasitic, it regards matter as primary to consciousness and economic development as basic to the institutions, thinking and creative activity of people. It does not divorce the question of freedom either from the nature of matter and of consciousness or from the levels of production and the social structure. The interpenetration of these determines the degree of freedom which men attain in any given period or nation. Freedom has not been bestowed upon us; humanity has striven and fights for it continually. Freedom is historical throughout.

The question of individual responsibility must be seen in this light. Responsibility is grounded in freedom and therefore, like freedom, it is relative. The opponents of Marxism claim this means the death of morality. On the contrary, it is the only guarantee of its objective validity. Since consciousness does not exist apart from matter and social life, we must and will make moral demands which are compatible with reality. Ethics abandons its pretense of neutrality and comes to earth, taking sides in that conflict which is the crucible of all values: the class struggle. The innumerable complex circumstances of that struggle and the part which the individual plays in it, according to his situation and capacities, will decide the nature and degree of his responsibility. Freedom is practical throughout.

Above all, Marxism rejects the myth of unique individuality, according to which men are united only in God or by social contract. It is futile to ask whether man is innately good or bad, social or anti-social, aggressive or peace-loving, and to base one's ethics on the answer. Man is not this and that solitary figure, whose spiritual or biological character, unmarked by social relations, lays the basis for the body politic. His psychology—what is called human nature—is itself a product of animal and social evolution and continues to grow out of social

and class relationships. Pure individual freedom is meaningless and the individualist does not demonstrate his ability to be free of his environment, but only his desire to be quit of it. It is with others, through social organization and practice, that we achieve freedom. Freedom is social throughout . . . but that is not all. The consciousness of the individual, representing his position in society, is a refracted consciousness, bent by the life, the interests and the outlook of his class.

Today, whoever is committed to the past or status quo must crush the freedom to which he clings so greedily. So the capitalists as a class can engender nothing but oppression, misery and the physical and spiritual destruction of human beings. That is their famous "destiny." But the working class which holds the future in its hands generates freedom by its labor, its struggles and its perspective. Only the individual who shares the revolutionary consciousness of that class and demonstrates his loyalty to it in action can be said to create freedom through the awareness of his obligation to mankind.

An article by Mr. Humboldt dealing with further aspects of this subject will appear in an early issue.

THE GOOD SAMARITANS

KOREAN AID CHANGE ACCEPTED BY G. O. P.

Special to THE NEW YORK TIMES.

WASHINGTON, Jan. 31 — Republican opposition to extending another \$60,000,000 in economic aid to the Republic of Korea fell away today as a bill was reported by the House Foreign Affairs Committee linking this proposal with continued assistance for the Chinese Nationalist Government in Formosa.

Leaders of the Republican group that led the way in defeating the

POLICE BRUTALITY IN KOREA ASSAILED

Special to THE NEW YORK TIMES.

SEOUL, Korea, Jan. 25 — Some observers here believe the police of South Korea are the chief obstacle to the success of the Government—that they are driving the common people into the arms of the Communists.

Many Americans are horrified by the deaths by torture and wholesale executions of Communists. Yet the police must be viewed within the perspective of Korea.

books in review

Moscow, London, Iran

THE DIPLOMAT, by James Aldridge.
Little, Brown. \$3.75.

COMING upon an honest book now is as unusual as finding an honest man at a congress of pick-pockets. And as for finding a novel, amidst the current avalanche of mystic trivia and small soul-searching, brave in its choice of subject, skillful in its execution, and uncompromising in its presentation of important and unpopular truth, that is so rare as to give the reader a peculiar joy. This is especially so when a talented novelist takes as his subject the fight for world peace.

The Diplomat is the story of a British mission to Moscow under the ineffable Lord Essex. The reader, with his reflexes as thoroughly conditioned as Pavlov's dog, anticipates that since Russians are mentioned abuse is sure to follow. At first when the customary formula is negated, there is only simple surprise. Molotov appears and one waits for the usual barb, the inevitable sneer, but neither arrives. Stalin enters the scene and is actually treated as a human being.

The reader is mystified. He

looks at the novel's jacket again, discovers that the book was published by a sufficiently reputable firm, one would think. Nor does the note on the author, who was a newspaper correspondent in Moscow, explain this disgraceful desertion from formula. Of course Aldridge is an Australian. Perhaps later in the book, the reader concludes, the turn will come, revealing that despite this queer beginning Aldridge has kept a sense of God, Empire and Pentagon.

But that times never comes. And as one follows the efforts of Lord Essex to expel the Russians from Azerbaijan where a native revolt is imperilling British oil wells, the reader is increasingly gratified by more than the strange phenomenon of a novel concerned with actuality; he is, in addition, admiring the writer's competence. The political theme is completely synthesized with form, never degenerating into the extraneous but always necessary for the development of action and character. Sure development and not sloganizing is the propelling force in this novel in which politics is the very heart.

Every character is judged by his relation to the subject of world peace and the efforts of men to

make a world fit for man. Every character advances or deteriorates in ratio to his struggle for the creation of a world whose standards are not confined to profit and the hydrogen bomb.

The main characters are the literate and even subtle Lord Essex, his every virtue a limitation because he is essentially an anachronism and as much a victim of his class as a Mexican hairless is of its breeding; MacGregor, the innocent, scientific Scot, Essex's assistant and antagonist in love and in statecraft; and Kathy Clive, aristocratic, mercurial, unpredictable, who learns sufficiently at last to prefer MacGregor and his world to the past as exemplified by Essex.

The story is essentially one of education, a modern Pilgrim's Progress with MacGregor finally learning enough through exciting struggle ranging from the diplomat's table in Moscow to Parliament in London and the rebelling tribesmen in Azerbaijan to realize that the well-bred exponents of the status quo are entirely willing to plunge the world into catastrophe rather than relinquish their prerogative of profit and exploitation.

The novel begins with the arrival of Essex and MacGregor in Moscow. With pace, deliberate, deft and certain, and with depth of portraiture, Aldridge shows the willful isolation of the British Embassy, proud of its insularity,

insistent that understanding can never be reached with the barbaric Russians, content to hold its communication with the Soviets to payment of a few sleazy spies.

Equally surely, Aldridge shows the correspondents, British and American, their sole function the buttressing of Anglo-American diplomacy, some cynical, some trying to moralize away a prostitution that contributes to war, all regarding themselves as nothing more than an instrument of their country's anti-Soviet policy. Essex uses the press corps in Moscow with contemptuous skill and expects to use the Russians with equal ease. He is certain that he will confound the Muscovites, for how, unless the world itself is changing, could a British aristocrat be bested by a Bolshevik?

The contest of the past and present as exemplified in the diplomatic duel between Essex and Molotov, and later between the British statesman and Vishinsky, has a peculiar fascination. There is real suspense in the thrust and counter-thrust, the statement and rejoinder of the contesting diplomats. The gulf between two worlds is powerfully indicated here by a few suggestive strokes.

The story shifts to the deserts and mountains and tribesmen and revolts of northern Iran where it takes on something of the thriller. Yet its scenes give real poignancy to the resolve of colonial peoples to have done with the imperial-

ism that keeps them starving and diseased. It ends in London with an exciting resolution in which MacGregor exposes the plot of Essex to secure British control of Iranian oil and discredit the Russians even if his maneuver makes for war.

In reading *The Diplomat*, the reader feels as if he had long been wandering in the country of the blind and had suddenly come upon another man with sight. This book, which makes the great issues of world politics its driving force, is so persuasive and gripping that it should be highly useful in the building of a coalition for peace. I urge you not to miss it.

RICHARD O. BOYER

Writer and Society

LITERATURE AND REALITY, by Howard Fast. *International*. \$.75.

HOWARD FAST dedicates his new work to the memory of Ralph Fox and Christopher Caudwell, "who believed that the practice of literature could not be separated from the struggle for man's liberation." This belief is of course at the heart of Fast's own outstanding career as a writer. No walls divide *Freedom Road* from Peekskill, *The American* from the Paris Peace Congress, *Clarkton* from the fight against the Un-American Committee. In

Literature and Reality Fast carries forward this integrated struggle in terms of literary criticism.

It is a challenging, vigorously written study—a much needed force for truth in a literary scene marked by so many evidences of cowardice and corruption. As Fast writes, "Never before in the history of capitalism has the literature of capitalism been so bankrupt." He describes the symptoms of this decadence, searches for its causes, and opposes to it the scientific, creative viewpoint of socialism.

The key argument is that "art can flourish only in relationship to the capacity of the artist to discern the truth, or, in other words, the basic objective reality." The basic reality of our time is the fact that "capitalism is moving off the stage of history, to be replaced with a classless society." The function of capitalist literature is to deny, evade and above all falsify this reality, at the core of which is the Soviet Union, and thus to bolster a dying system which grows ever more inhuman and rotten. This literature, which hypocritically asserts its devotion to "pure art," is motivated and perverted by an anti-artistic principle—that is, a repudiation of the real world. Thus, for example, "Red-baiting, anti-Sovietism, anti-Communism, are the mortal enemies of literature, and indeed of any art, not because they are reactionary positions *per se*, but be-

cause they are positions which, of necessity, deny the existence of the central social reality of our times."

Fast properly focuses on the United States, where this anti-artistic principle operates as the dominant literary mode, and where it threatens, if the Un-Americans have their way, to become the only legal mode. Along with the Marshall Plan, Atlantic Pact and H-bomb, we have seen the more and more explicit cultural reflection of imperialist reaction. For the American writer, as Fast shows, "there is no approach to reality today except in terms of a partisan alignment with the anti-fascist forces."

He draws up a devastating indictment of decay in the work of Ezra Pound, John Dos Passos, George Orwell and their clique in the *Partisan Review* and among the "new critics." He relates this so-called higher level of moral rot to the filth of the capitalist press, film, radio, with their cult of brutality and death. He traces the process of capitulation in John Steinbeck and Vincent Sheean.

To the literature of decay, based on a perversion of reality, Fast sharply opposes the moral and esthetic standards of socialism. "Two qualities," he writes, "pervade Soviet literature, *hope* and *life*. A fervent hope for the future, a fervent belief in the process of living, and from the two, an unlimited perspective for

man's happiness. And for the first time in the history of mankind, this *future* has shed its cheap mystical and idealistic trappings; for the first time, a scientific and materialistic course into the future has been charted."

His contrast between two such war books as W. L. White's *They Were Expendable* and Alexander Bek's *And Not To Die* illuminates the difference of values in two worlds. Fast stresses the distinction between realism and naturalism, noting that the latter is "another side of the formalistic coin," radically opposed to socialist realism. Pointing to great Communist writers like O'Casey, Aragon, Nexo, Neruda, and the many Soviet authors of stature, Fast makes hash of those lackeys of capitalism who dare talk of "artists in uniform."

In sharpening the issue between the literature of death and of life, of obfuscation and reality, and by planting this issue squarely in the class struggle and in the conflict between the camps of peace and war, Fast has done an important service. He has firmly grasped the need at this moment to rip every illusion and fake fascination of decadent bourgeois literature. One wishes that more American writers would so clearly and courageously see the literary issue he poses as a life or death question, an integral part of the struggle against fascism and war.

At the same time the valuable

direction of this study is in places hampered by certain errors of theory and fact. In emphasizing correctly the intimate relation between literature and society, Fast falls into an over-simplified, one-to-one equation when he writes:

"As each new historical era appears, the limits of realism are extended; not only does life itself become richer and broader, but literature deepens and extends itself in every fashion." A comparison of feudal with ancient Greek literature will show this is questionable. Marx noted: "It is well known that certain periods of highest development of art stand in no direct connection with the general development of society, nor with the material basis and the skeleton structure of its organization. Witness the example of the Greeks as compared with the modern nations or even Shakespeare."

Similarly the claim that "Literature has always been a most precise reflection of the society which produced it. . . ." is unfounded. Only in its very highest expressions has literature faithfully reflected society. In literature as a whole the degree of imprecision, of *distorted* reflection, has varied enormously. While decadent bourgeois literature mirrors a fraction of our society—the ruling class and its values—it is by no means a reflection of society as a whole.

The sections on America's lit-

erary past are inadequately thought through, and I think the analysis of Mark Twain is particularly debatable. Fast tends to exaggerate the relative freedom of progressive writers fifty years ago and today. It is not true, for example, that Jack London's *The Iron Heel* had the benefit of "excited and approving reviews." As Philip Foner has pointed out in his essay on London, the book was scorchingly denounced as a "semi-barbaric" threat to what the press called "our civilization." In this connection we should recall the fate of Dreiser.

True, the bourgeoisie has today outdone even its own record of philistinism and brutality. But to understand the real nature of the ruling class and its relation to literature it is necessary to emphasize its long history of persecution, particularly in its half-century long imperialist phase. Related to this is the tendency to describe U.S. imperialism, at least up to the recent past, in terms of "imitating" the British.

The dominating trend of American writing today is reactionary, but the counter-forces, actual and potential, are stronger than Fast suggests in his essay. Despite casualties, a significant number of writers of the Left are carrying on the fight which had to be waged by a small band led by Mike Gold in the 20's. Moreover, there is a large body of anti-fascist writers who, with all kinds of con-

fusions and hesitations no doubt, nevertheless move against the current of reaction. We must resist tendencies to denounce "the American intellectual" or "American culture" without careful differentiation. Patiently, sympathetically, we must seek out and strengthen our allies in this struggle. As a leader in this fight, Fast has again given us in *Literature and Reality* an example of militancy and passionate conviction. He is pointing a road out of the treacherous fog of reactionary propaganda. And characteristically he concludes on a note of affirmation. "Great songs call for great singers, and this is a time for greatness." Here is a challenge which no progressive writer can ignore. SAMUEL SILLEN

Del Vayo's Story

THE LAST OPTIMIST, by Julio Alvarez Del Vayo. *Viking*. \$4.00.

FOR many years Julio Alvarez Del Vayo has stood firm, as he puts it, "against the intimidation to which every independent writer is subjected who refuses to join the anti-Russian and anti-Communist crusade." The former foreign minister of the Spanish republic says, in this fascinating autobiography, that he felt he "was rendering a service to the liberty of the press" by refusing to

surrender to the blackmail of the Right. He was doing more than that. Del Vayo has been able to serve the cause of Spanish freedom and contribute to the fight for a decent world because he has supported the Soviet Union and because he has upheld the unity of Socialists, Communists and all who will fight against fascism.

He has done this despite his frequent criticism of the Soviet Union and his sharp disagreements with communism. A consistent Marxist will take exception to many things in this book. But to be a consistent Marxist one must appreciate the essentially progressive role which a man like Del Vayo plays. Not even in the days when Hitlerism began its terrible march from Germany through Europe was the necessity of working-class and people's unity as vital as it is today. Del Vayo's book is a stirring challenge to all who cherish democracy and peace to act, and to act together, in the shadow of a new armageddon.

The autobiography is the beautifully written story of how a son of a Spanish general and a devout Catholic mother became a militant Socialist. Educated not only in Spain but in Britain and Germany, the young Del Vayo progressed from a feudal childhood into the ferment of a burgeoning democratic revolution, and beyond that to Socialism. This progress went beyond bourgeois democracy

because the Spanish revolution, although still a democratic revolution against feudalism, was on the stage when the modern working class had come forward as the champion of democracy and of socialism.

Del Vayo learned that the real leadership of this struggle for democracy and freedom could not rest in the hands of intellectuals and the middle class, but only with the working class. One of the most stirring descriptions in the book is a tribute to the revolt of the Asturian miners, an epic in the Spanish revolution.

As a student in Germany in 1913 Del Vayo came in contact with the Socialist movement and was attracted to its left-wing, represented by Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg. He saw the signs of the coming betrayal by right-wing Social-Democracy in its reliance on parliamentary action and pure and simple trade unionism.

Del Vayo participated in some of the historic anti-war demonstrations led by Liebknecht and Luxemburg during the war; nevertheless his position on World War I is at variance with the Marxist viewpoint. Del Vayo recognized the revolutionary character of the struggle conducted by the German left Socialists against their own aggressive ruling class. But he failed to see that in a war which was being fought for pelf and plunder by both sides, the Social-

ists on the allied side of the imperialist conflict also had to conduct an anti-war and socialist struggle.

After finishing his studies, Del Vayo became a journalist, serving as foreign correspondent and political writer for most of his adult life. The spirit of reporting what is happening in the world becomes entwined with his constant participation in the struggle to change the world. He reported the revolution that failed in Spain in 1930 and fought in the revolution that overthrew the monarchy in 1931. Then he became the republic's first ambassador to Mexico.

This book doesn't deal exhaustively with the period of the Spanish war itself; Del Vayo wrote about it in an earlier book, *Freedom's Battle*. He devotes his chapter on the war to demolishing the slanders about the Spanish gold which was deposited in the Soviet state bank, the artistic treasures and other wealth of Spain saved from Franco's hands and the charges that Premier Juan Negrin was a Communist "puppet."

Part of the republic's gold reserve was deposited in the Soviet Union, Del Vayo writes, because "The City and Wall Street had declared war on the Spanish Republic. There was nothing for it but to make use of the only state bank—that of Soviet Russia—disposed to grant facilities and guarantees when requested to serve as intermediary for the conversion

of gold currencies." He shows that both the Spanish and Soviet governments were scrupulously correct in handling these funds.

Del Vayo charges that some of the wealth represented in other securities and art objects, was used by the right-wing Spanish Socialist Indalecio Prieto "to promote divisions among the republicans, to finance schisms in the Socialist Party, and to attempt a deal with the monarchists at the expense of the Republic."

You can call Del Vayo a humanitarian and libertarian; but his love for mankind is balanced by hatred for the enemies of mankind. He remembers telling Stefan Zweig: "Anti-fascist struggle, constant hate of fascism, is today the most humanitarian activity." At the present time Del Vayo sees "the alliance of Vatican reaction and American capitalism" standing in the way of Spanish freedom and the victory of the Left in Europe.

Travelling in liberated Eastern Europe after the war Del Vayo was impressed with the democratic path Czechoslovakia was taking to socialism. He failed to see how the reactionary alliance, which he himself saw originating in our own country, was using the forces of the old regime in Czechoslovakia and the other new democracies to undermine them from within. The revolution in Czechoslovakia and in the other new democracies was saved through the ruth-

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less suppression of reaction. Del Vayo has reservations about these events, but they don't blind him to the achievements of the new democracies and of the Soviet Union.

Del Vayo relates a most revealing story about an interview he had with Jan Masaryk, then the foreign minister in the Gottwald government. Masaryk told Del Vayo of Tito's visit to Czechoslovakia in 1946, when "the Marshal asked that a commercial treaty be signed within twenty-four hours and told how he [Masaryk] had imparted a lesson on the way to deal with independent states, however friendly they might be. And Masaryk warned me prophetically that one day Tito would clash with the Russians."

While there are times when Del Vayo betrays illusions about the possibilities of progress from the present administration in Washington, there's one lesson he tries to impart about the political facts of the world situation today:

"Those who like to complicate the Russian issue and delight businessmen's clubs by lecturing on the enigma of the East should learn one simple fact: Russia wants peace. . . . Everything I saw and heard in 1946 convinced me that the Russian leaders wanted peace and the Russian people wanted peace."

Del Vayo is a fighter for peace. One contribution to peace he makes with tireless zeal in his fight for "the final victory of the

Spanish people." How bitter he must feel about the rapprochement between Acheson and Franco! But in his own words, "the battle for Spain is still going on."

JOSEPH CLARK

Poetry of Greece

MODERN GREEK POETRY, translated and edited by Rae Dalven. *Gaer Associates*. \$3.50.

THIS anthology offers the reader an insight into the richness of the world's poetry, the poetry of nations, so easily lost in the lordly atmosphere of Anglo-American literature. The poetry of modern Greece has been so completely isolated from our loud and provincial contemporary American culture that the anthology prepared by Miss Dalven is as surprising as a bottled message pulled from the sea.

The poetry covers a period of some 200 years. The various texts reveal the struggle of a nation for its life; a struggle which takes place against several varieties of conquistadors and imperialists from the 400-year-rule of the Turks to the Nazi occupation. Beyond this last period where the poets record their victories and their wounds there is no message. The United States today dominates Greece and a new time of darkness has fallen on the land.

Poets of great value and stature are revealed in the translations. Angelos Sikelianos, for example, has much of the feeling of Pablo Neruda in his work:

"Our earth has fattened enough
from human flesh

Fat and fertile, let us not allow
our earth

to harden from this deep blood
bath

richer, deeper than any first
rain.

Tomorrow each one of us must
go out with twelve pairs of
oxen,

to till this blood-drenched
soil. . . .

For the laurel to blossom on it
and become a tree of life,
and our Vine to spread to the
ends of the earth. . . ."

(March of the Spirit)

C. P. Cavafy (1868-1933) demonstrates a wonderful sense of irony in poems like "Awaiting the Barbarians," which deals with the ruling class of a nation preparing to sell out to an "invader" at its gates. Cavafy shows them preening, strutting, polishing speeches to welcome the "enemy"; but the "enemy" does not come. The poem concludes:

"Some messengers returned from
the border,
they say barbarians no longer
exist.

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Now what shall we do without any barbarians?

Those people provided some sort of solution."

Many other poets and texts in the anthology underscore the value of Miss Dalven's selections. The introductory essay is highly informative. Unfortunately the essay fails to deal with Miss Dalven's reasons for her selections or organization in the anthology. Some generalizations are faulty. For example, when Miss Dalven speaks of the Klephts (who led the rebellion against the Turks) and the Greek liberation fighters of today, she churns them both up with the qualities of the Robin Hood legend.

On the whole, the translations are of a high order and the power of the poets comes through with force and conviction. In some cases where a poem depends for its emotion and meaning on its use of Greek lingual music the translations fail, but these examples are few. *Modern Greek Poetry* is a valuable work which explains in its own way that Mr. Truman

is wasting General Van Fleet's efforts in a land where the people do not think in any terms except those of freedom.

MILTON BLAU

The Longshoremen

THE BIG STRIKE, by Mike Quin.
Olema Publishers (Olema, Calif.)
\$1.00.

"THE BIG STRIKE" is the story of the West Coast longshore strike of 1934 and of the San Francisco General Strike which electrified the nation and gave new confidence to labor. Although the late Mike Quin wrote this book thirteen years ago, its timeliness for today is apparent in every line.

The victorious battle of the rank-and-file longshoremen led by Harry Bridges showed the way to all labor after more than two decades of the open-shop American Plan and browbeating from sell-out labor officials. Above all, the strike at that time showed that despite the treachery of the A. F. of L. bureaucrats, the workers could fight and win.

The longshoremen won against what appeared to be unbeatable odds—violence from goons, back-door deals by their paid officials, calumny in the press, double-dealing by government agencies.



For their top official, the workers were saddled with "King" Joe Ryan, president of the International Longshoremen's Association. But every contract and deal negotiated by Ryan was overwhelmingly repudiated by the rank and file—repudiated for the most part by "voting with their feet" since Ryan refused to recognize their right to have the final say on agreements.

Some may say at this point: But neither do men like C.I.O. president Philip Murray permit their members to have the final say on their conditions. But that's just the point for today of *The Big Strike*. For the conditions under which the longshoremen fought in '34, preceding by more than two years the formation of the C.I.O., were at least as tough as the conditions under which the rank and file must fight these days.

In a postscript to Mike Quin's rousing narrative, Harry Bridges concludes:

"We cannot afford to forget that the phony labor leaders of 1934 who marched across the pages of *The Big Strike* may be dead or gone, reformed or missing, but there are always new ones anxious to take their places in this seemingly endless drama. And if any dues-payer asks, 'When will it end? When can I knock off?', the only answer is, 'Brother, not until we win all the way.'"

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All For One Price

by WARREN MILLER

HAVING missed the preview of *The Inspector General*, and having a tempered admiration for Danny Kaye and an untempered admiration for Gogol, I, rather recklessly, went one day to the Strand Thetare to see this film. The picture had already begun and, to see the beginning, I found it necessary, to sit through: (1) a newsreel, (2) a cartoon, (3) a travelogue, (4) a short feature about cowboys, and (5) a stage show. Here is my report.

The Inspector General (the movie) has in it an inspector general; from here on it parts company with Gogol's *Inspector General* (the play). One remembers the play as a marvelously funny and, at the same time, quite ruthless exposure of the corruption and inefficiency of Czarist officials. The movie has no social intentions and cannot, therefore, be satire; instead, it is a poorly done farce.

Danny Kaye is offered two occasions for doing "specialty numbers" that have no organic connection to the movie, nor are they up to what one expects of him. The point of the movie, although

it is absurd to talk of it in these terms, is that innocence triumphs over guile—when the innocents become guileful. Mr. Kaye relies on laughs by giving himself a name like Farfel—it is, he explains, a kind of soup.

The travelogue was concerned with a resort town in Mexico and it must have been sponsored by the Tourist Bureau of Acapulco. It was made clear that the only reason for the existence of the people of Mexico is to make life comfortable for visiting North Americans. The hotel has all modern conveniences: a swimming pool with blue water, and servants with dark skins. Excitement? Fun? Heavens, yes! You see, you go out in a launch and catch large turtles; then you bring them back to the hotel, paint numbers on their backs, throw them into the swimming pool and have turtle races. You may place bets on your favorite and, if you feel up to it, you may cheer. If you don't feel quite up to it, you can, no doubt, hire a small boy to do it for you. It makes you want to pack up and *just go*.

In the newsreel I saw Perle

Mesta giving a party for American occupation forces in Luxembourg; an Air Force crash test; and a new kind of helicopter that was, of course, called the "flivver of the future."

The short feature, or featurette, took place in a bunkhouse. These cowboys were apparently unsatisfied with working conditions. But it's all straightened out and it takes only twenty minutes. To make sure that no one misses the point, it is stated quite explicitly by the "hero": The grass isn't always greener on the other side of the fence; be satisfied with your lot; make the best of what you have. It is a kind of *Passing of the Third Floor Back* with western accents.

The stage show was a heady mixture of song, dance and laughter. The song was provided by Vaughan Monroe whose diction makes it rather difficult for those in the balcony to understand the lyrics. This is perhaps just as well. Of his first song, I could catch only the phrase "clippity clop"—something to do with the Old West, doubtless. Mr. Monroe rested while a harmonica player rendered a light classic and favored the audience with a one-man imitation of Spike Jones' band.

A young woman sang. Her diction was rather better. The lyrics went something like this: "You told a lie, I believed you—now look watcha done to my heart."

She was accompanied by a mixed chorus of eight voices who chanted the following refrain: "Whatch done, watcha done, watcha done, my baby." Simple, but moving. She sang next "Toot-toot-tootsie, goodbye," in a most expressive manner; when she said "Tut, tut, tootsie," she wagged her forefinger at the audience, and when she sang "Toot-toot-tootsie, goodbye," she waved farewell.

There was, of course, a comedian. He said: "I'm wearing a seersucker suit. You know what a seersucker suit is?" And without waiting for an answer, he told us: A seersucker suit is one that is sold by Sear's and bought by suckers. Then he did imitations of Churchill, a farmer, several movie actors, two popular singers, and Harry Truman. They were all remarkably alike.

There was a lady tap dancer in a short skirt, and a member of the band sang two numbers: "My hot tamale in Mexico went Chile on me," and a song about roosters and hens called, "I ain't gonna take it settin' down."

Mr. Monroe, fully recovered from his exertions, returned now for the Big Number; this was a Novelty Song called, I believe, "Yip-yip-yippeay." Mr. Monroe wore a large hat, an old shirt and two pistols. During the course of the song he kills the eight members of the chorus to show how tough a cowboy he is. "I killed fourteen in a row," he states with

simple pride. At one point in this massacre, the comedian returns; he is dressed as an American Indian, i.e., he wears an old blanket and a few feathers. Deliriously funny. Mr. Monroe asks: "Are you a real Indian?" The comedian replies: "Who do you think I am—Eleanor Roosevelt?" The song continued for several more exhilarating verses, and then the stage show ended. Mr. Monroe proved that he had hidden reserves of irony by wishing the audience "a long and happy life."

The color cartoon was Bugs



Bunny. It was well made, intelligent, truly funny, and perhaps the best thing to come out of Hollywood since the last Bugs Bunny cartoon was made.

The audience, at least that part of it in the balcony, was made up of boys and girls of high school age. The boys pretended to be hardened veterans of battles they'd only heard about—nearly all wore an old field-jacket, an olive drab shirt, or some other article of

army issue. The girls looked very young. Many carried text books, as if they'd started out with good intentions, or maybe it was merely to fool parents. The students laughed on occasion, but never with great enthusiasm; they accepted it like prisoners eating an institutional lunch: you don't like it, but you can't go out for a better one.

The stage-show is not for export—although the songs, recorded, may be—its vulgarity and perverted sense of values is exclusively for the education of American youth. But the films—the technicolor trivia, the chauvinism, the idea that it is, somehow, un-Christian (not to say inhuman) to be dissatisfied with your "lot"—these are exportable and like adulterated food will be canned and shipped to "our partners" in Western Europe.

If the French and Italian people are disturbed about the flood of comic books and Coca Cola, wait until they see what Hollywood and the State Department have scheduled for them in the coming months: *Prince of Foxes*, *Samson and Delilah*, *White Heat*, *Whirlpool*—and all those many others Eric Johnston must have had in mind when he said, recently, that "the American motion picture industry, truly, has become the world's greatest exporter of ideas—American ideas, of freedom and democracy. . . ."

The Whitney Disaster

by WILLIAM THOR BURGER

THE Whitney Annual has long been the yardstick of American painting. This year it measures disaster for American art. The 1930's saw the emergence of a group of artists whose strength and purpose flowed from their attachment to the people and their struggles. The 1940's witnessed a sweeping victory for formalism. This year at the Whitney the 161 canvases look like a one-man show of an aging but competent abstract painter, some few of whose earlier works are included out of sentiment.

Once these exhibitions had their own sturdy look of independence. Regional and social painters were exhibited at the Whitney, while the School of Paris and its derivatives were the province of the Museum of Modern Art. Now, long before actual building has begun, the Whitney has moved over into the backyard of the Museum of Modern Art, which in its turn stands in the backyard of Rockefeller Center. The present debacle may be blamed in part on the closely knit monopoly of taste which has thus

been achieved (by men who cannot even find room for a single Negro painter), but responsibility must also be borne by those artists who have surrendered to this new esthetic order of the day.

The key to which the show is tuned is set in the entrance gallery. Grouped with John Marin, one of the forebears of American formalism, are canvases by Adolph Gottlieb, Emerson Woelffer, Willem de Kooning, Theodore Stamos, Manfred Schwartz and Jackson Pollock. Marin's "Sea with Boats—Gray, Green and Red" emphasizes by comparison the emptiness of the others, for he at least captures the swirl and torsion of the sea. But what can be said for the gray and white commas of De Kooning, the muted blottings of Stamos, or the dripping puddles of Pollock? To be sure their choice of the palest of lavenders, puces and gamboges is most exquisite, nor can one deny the playfulness of their textural variations, or the niceness of their surface patterns. But what has this to do with anything other than interior decoration? Behind

this formal manipulation is an intellectual retreat into the realm of the irrational, the obscure and the egocentric, which stems from such sources as Kandinsky, Klee, Picasso and Mondrian, but which has now become flaccid and boneless.

The old guard of American painters concerned with the social scene, the Marshes, Bentsons, Hoppers, with whom the Whitney grew to prominence, have been cast out, and in their places are the young recruits of formalism like John Sennhauser and Perle Fine. On the whole it is hardly a net gain.

What are the implications of this change, and why has this group been chosen for honors by the manipulators of American culture? John Sennhauser's "Synchromic No. 4, Staccato" may be taken as a sort of average. It is an abstract painting which consists of monochromatic quadrangles scattered over a gray surface, among which move branching, ribbon-like shapes. The abruptly stopping forms, directions and colors are, as the artist informs us, staccato. Other paintings in the show may be less definite in shape, more subtle in kinesthetic overtones, more recognizable as symbols, or closer to existing natural forms, but they all have to a greater or lesser degree the characteristics of the Sennhauser. These artists are concerned with their own emotions and sensations rath-

er than those which are common to others.

First, these emotions and sensations arise out of an inactive contemplation of themselves. Their paintings are dehumanized and denatured by their lack of concern with the particular and the individual. They are anti-materialistic in their pretensions to capture eternal ideas free of the human context in which they arise, and their disregard of the material world. In general they are deeply pessimistic. They are explicitly irrational in the numerous and ludicrous programs which they propound, which claim everything from contact with the Karma of the Universe to a patronizing concern with the esthetic education of the masses. And lastly, and perhaps most importantly, they fail to accept the social responsibility to communicate.

It is the greater pity that this decadent, bourgeois mode of thought has made deep inroads among once social painters. Pressure to follow the pace setters has led many an artist to separate himself from the only context in which he has strength. Take Louis Guglielmi, for example, a brilliant product of the Thirties who used to deal with his own New York background in pathos filled canvases. His content was then clear, his voice harsh and proud. "New York 21," his Whitney offering, retains the outward form of the city, but he now

paints according to a recent statement which tells us, "For me a city landscape is an exercise in the abstract construction of forms, shapes, patterns, and the rhythm of the angular." In the process he has become a dry husk of his former self.

Casualties in this ideological battle include Mitchell Siporin, Edward Millman and Gregorio Prestipino, to name only a few of those who have to some extent deserted the area of their greatest talent for the fashion of the moment. At moments the whole exhibition has the appearance of a game of musical chairs, as the artists change styles. Ruellan adopts a Kuniyoshi manner of earlier years, while Kuniyoshi, to his credit, takes over a recent theme of Ben Shahn.

Shahn himself, who remains our most important painter, has gone back to something reminiscent of the School of Paris. Here, incidentally, the manner in which selection distorts and directs the course of contemporary art becomes very clear. Of the paintings exhibited in Shahn's last show, from which the Whitney "Anatomical Man" comes, more than half dealt with working-class and political themes in a clear and moving fashion. None of these was chosen by the museum; instead from among the remaining abstract and surrealist experiments they chose to honor the most cryptic and irrational.

Against the sweep of the main current two groups stand out. Perhaps it is only an illusion that here are the best painters, but here are the most interesting paintings. They are, on the one hand, a group of neo-romantics and magic-realists who use the power of reality for pessimistic and exotic ends; and, on the other, there is a group of social satirists who attack specific evils in the world, but for the most part avoid the moving effect of reality.

Of the neo-romantics and magic-realists one can say that at least they are conscious of the material world and the social problems that face humanity. Their acceptance of defeat is in the final analysis but a reflection of bourgeois pessimism. It is the despair and delight in despair which poison the otherwise effective social themes of the neo-romantics, typically represented here by Eugene Berman, George Tooker and Walter Murch.

The social satirists, though they may not be as meticulous in their rendering of reality, are at least clearer and sharper in their understanding. It must be said, however, that in comparison to other years, the work seen here treats of smaller themes with somewhat dulled means. Nonetheless, Philip Evergood's "Dusk in the Garden," which mocks the rickety dignity attached to the ownership of a house in the city, is a fine painting. Jack Levine's

"Act of Legislature," in spite of its outspoken political intention, loses its force through over-generalization and paint brilliance. A lack of clarity also gets in the way of Anthony Toney's "Monster," which is still an impressive picture when compared to other formalist works in the show. The violence of attack in Alton Picken's "Carnival" leaves the spectator breathless, but undeniably puzzled as to just what is being attacked. Perhaps the most successful is "Greek Landscape" by James Grunbaum, a newcomer working in the manner of Shahn. Huddled starvelings in Greece are thrown in contrast with the tall old columns of the classic order and tiny figures of the "New Order." Robert Gwathmey, Joe Lasker and Erika Weis eke out the short roster of those who are at least concerned with the real world.

How has it come about that those American artists, who once comprised a thriving school of social art, have in many cases surrendered to the voluntary muteness of formalist painting? The artists themselves, in many cases at the Whitney, are politically progressive. Quite against the will or the consciousness of the individual artists concerned, American painting stands as the classic expression of the effect of an aggressive, imperialistic, in-

creasingly reactionary society on its artists. Given the choice between peace and war, socialism and capitalism, rule of the F.B.I. and democracy, the artists have almost unanimously chosen "Art," in a kind of mass esthetic euthanasia.

That group of artists that the bourgeoisie are unable to bribe into the production of open bourgeois propaganda, as in commercial art, are encouraged to work in cryptic and personal manners. The artist neutralized is better than the artist who attacks the bourgeoisie. By the stick and the carrot, by the threats of Dondero and the gallery exhibition, by inclusion in and exclusion from the Whitney, the artist is coerced or conned into silence on important issues. For a bone of praise in the commercial press, many an artist is throwing away his own most valuable weapon of defense, his best means of making his choice as citizen more effective.

In the face of the evidence at the Whitney, the one hope for American artists—and fortunately some are already beginning to realize it—is to call a halt, to re-evaluate the nature of formalism, and to work out the principles upon which a school of social realism may arise. For the American masses, for themselves and their future as artists, they must speak now, if ever they are to speak.

ELIOT'S COCKTAIL

by ISIDOR SCHNEIDER

ON T. S. ELIOT'S *The Cocktail Party* the New York critics played it safe. Judgment upon the sterility of its thinking and the inhumanity of its emotions was evaded by alleging depths too profound for common understanding.

Since the meanings were transparent what were the critics so coy about? Was it that they chose *not* to understand? For, by admitting that they understood, they would have had to admit things that would have made reaction's leading intellect sound like an ass. They would have had to admit that he had committed the literary "sin" for which they always hoot down the Left, the use of art for propaganda. They would have had to disclose that Mr. Eliot's propaganda shakes down to a plug for Catholic obfuscation; and if they had chosen to give an *understanding report* they would have disclosed that plug to be on no loftier intellectual level than that of Clare Luce or Louis Budenz.

(In England, perhaps, a distinction might be made. There Mr.

Eliot's propaganda might be claimed for the Established Church of which, along with royalty and British imperialism, Mr. Eliot has announced himself a public advocate. Here, however, the distinction will not be made. The play will be taken as another literary tribute to the Catholic Church. And considering the Catholic hierarchy's service in the reactionary cause I don't think that will trouble Mr. Eliot.)

The critical pieces ranged from clear collaboration in putting over a piece of reactionary propaganda to servile awe before a supreme example of snob-cult success. For is not Eliot the darling of the salons, including that salon of salons, the literary section of the Nobel Prize Committee?

And so we heard shallow and mannered poetry-drama rhetoric praised as "eloquence," "beauty," "majesty" and what not; devices as obvious as builder's scaffolding described as subtle construction; nonsense praised as wisdom; mean-spirited misanthropy hailed as deep feeling; and some of the hollowest and ugliest symbols, in

lieu of people, that I have ever seen on the stage bowed to as fine characterization!

The Cocktail Party concerns itself with the sins and redemption of a group of middle-class people gathered together, as the play begins, at the home of Lavinia and Edward Chamberlayne. It is not a very easy party, the hostess being away and the host having learned, only that morning, that his wife has left him. He invents a sick aunt to account for her absence and carries on, as best he can, among the few guests whom he has been unable to warn off. When, finally, the party breaks up he unburdens himself to the last guest, a stranger whom he assumes to be an acquaintance of Lavinia's. The stranger gives counsel with the suavity and moral arrogance of what he is subsequently revealed to be, a priest—a priest in the guise of a psychiatrist.

Such credibility as this opening scene has, the bit of humanity it concedes to a suffering and bewildered man, is destroyed by the four snobbishly jeering and silly scenes that follow. What they amount to is a dissection, principally of the Chamberlaynes but also of two of the guests, Edward's mistress Celia and Lavinia's novelist-lover Peter Quilp. After a scene in which Edward parts from Celia and another in which he is reunited with his wife, the dissection of the Chamberlaynes

reaches its climax in a third scene, in the psychiatrist-priest's office, complete with couch.

The dissection unbares the Chamberlaynes to each other as unloving and unloveable, mere run-of-God's-mill creatures whose salvation is to acknowledge their original sin, their paltriness, and to forgive themselves and each other, presumably as their Eliot-God professes to forgive them. Edward's Celia, for some reason private to Mr. Eliot—it is not communicated in the text—comes through the dissection somewhat better. She is granted nobility of soul and is given special treatment accordingly. And in an anticlimax in the final scene, another cocktail party at the Chamberlaynes, Lavinia's novelist-lover's dissection is completed. His penance-salvation is to admit and be reconciled to being a literary hack.

Only for the suddenly and inexplicably ennobled Celia is there a different destiny than self-contempt. For her there is, first, what the psychiatrist-priest calls a sanatorium, i.e., a convent; and, after that preparation, a mission and martyrdom. The martyrdom of which we hear in the final scene is a nice sadistic one which Mr. Eliot, through his psychiatrist-priest, assures us provided Celia with ineffable masochistic bliss. Her martyrdom is to be crucified, then eaten alive by ants beside whose hill the cross is set up.

How edified our critics were by this product of Mr. Eliot's poetic imagination.

If we cut to the core of Mr. Eliot's thinking, what do we get? The "civilized" Mr. Eliot makes no better sense than a priest of Moloch or a tribal butcher-priest gouging out the heart of a chosen youth. In that Eliot-priest concept, excellence in a human being tags him for the sacrificial knife. Incidentally, Celia's martyrdom is, of course, at the hands of "natives" stirred up by radical agitators. As if our civilized imperialist Europeans and Americans have shown themselves incapable of inflicting martyrdom!

And if this were not silly and repulsive enough, we have another fanciful disposition of characters. The two most repellent people in the play, a scandal-mongering old woman and a meddler who sticks his nose in everybody's affairs, are assigned to the priest as his assistants in salvation. Their duty, it appears, is to steer fellow lost middle-class souls to the psychiatrist-priest's den. Apparently lower-class people do not qualify for Mr. Eliot's salvation. Presumably they are slaves who must not be forced to recognize their slavery; that might be dangerous! After the psychiatrist-priest has dismissed the Chamberlaynes and Celia with a sign of the cross and a "Go in peace!" and a "God be with you!" this salvation crew comes cosily together for a liba-

tion in sherry and for prayers composed by Mr. Eliot. I should think really religious people would find these prayers rather blasphemous; they certainly blasphemed poetry and reason!

Summing up we have one fair scene, the first, which is effective because the human dilemma of a man abandoned by his wife is real enough and because the cocktail chatter does disclose middle-class shallowness and fear of life. Of this Mr. Eliot has made literary use before and it is real enough for the self-imprisoned and self-poisoned circle that is Mr. Eliot's human range. But how utterly false it is projected beyond that range! And how infantile his conclusions! Humanity is loathsome and its salvation is to admit its loathsomeness or, if one is superior to it, to run from it into death. The gospel according to reaction's apostle!

It is this corrupt and sick thing that the critics have cried up. I think that the public will prove of sounder mental health than these guides. I recall, with satisfaction, the futility of another recent attempt to help put over a piece of reactionary propaganda. *The Traitor*. I doubt that the public will take any more readily to the poisonous brew served at *The Cocktail Party*.

I HAVE little space left for more than brief notations on some others of recent plays. I am

glad to report that the off-Broadway theatre has again moved in to provide some balance. At the Hudson Guild Theatre a new company, Theatre Today, put on *The Plough and the Stars*, Sean O'Casey's understanding and poetic play about the Easter Rebellion. Under the resourceful and discerning direction of Al Saxe, whom Broadway is crazy to leave off Broadway, this fine young company gave a vigorous and flavorful production with Sy Travers' performance of Fluther Good as its culminating point.

New York City Center productions continue to be hampered by the bad acoustics and proportions

of its auditorium. To overcome it the actors have to shout all their lines and exaggerate every expression and gesture beyond the reach of nuance. This was particularly to the disadvantage of the opening production, Goldsmith's *She Stoops To Conquer*, whose over-elaborate eighteenth-century diction did not survive the necessary bellowing. *The Corn Is Green*, an indifferent play, fared better. Shaw, hardest of dramatists, fared best in a production, well directed by Maurice Evans, of his play about the American Revolution, *The Devil's Disciple*.

Shaw, indeed, is so good a playwright, that he survives almost any handling. He was certainly manhandled in the Cecil Hardwicke production of *Caesar and Cleopatra*. Shaw intended the play, as his prologue makes explicit, as a satire on British imperialism through a parable of its ancient counterpart, the Roman Empire. But Hardwicke omitted the prologue and abandoned the intention as far as he could. Instead he served up a mixture of Greek tragedy, "oriental" mysticism and Broadway bedroom farce through which Hardwicke strutted and mugged, with the other players following his lead, except Lilli Palmer whose *Cleopatra* was the sole natural and credible performance. With her help the vital Shaw broke through and some of the play's quality could be felt.

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