MASSES & MAINSTREAM

LETTER TO A COMMUNIST

MILTON HOWARD

THE DARK OF THE TIME

MERIDEL LE SUEUR

A HATFULL OF PLAYS

ROBERT MAC AUSLAND

SIMON DE BEAUVOIR AND FREEDOM

"TIMON"

REPLY TO EUGENE LYONS

HOWARD FAST

UGUST, 1956 *35 cents*

Vol. 9, No. 7

MASSES & *Mainstream*

MASSES & MAINSTREAM *is published monthly by Masses & Mainstream, Inc., 832 Broadway, New York 3, N. Y. Subscription rate $4 a year; foreign and Canada, $4.75 a year. Single copies 35c; outside the U.S.A., 50c. Re-entered as second class matter February 25, 1948, at the Post Office at New York, N. Y., under the Act of March 3, 1879.* Copyright 1956, *by Masses & Mainstream, Inc.*

August, 1956

PRINTED IN U.S.A.

Letter to a Friend

By MILTON HOWARD

DEAR JOE: You have written me a brief letter on the recent dramatic political events which have slashed through many former illusions. You say that you feel somewhat lost because the "old guideposts are gone." You say that you want these guideposts back, but that you don't seem to see how to do that, and you ask me what my thinking has been. Well, here are some of my thoughts for a starter so we can keep on talking about them together.

We are still reeling from the impact of Khrushchev's speech. It was hard to listen to the cries from the lonely prison cells, to read of the ravages of cruelty and mania. Most painful, perhaps, was the feeling of helplessness as we watched these imprisoned Communists, unwavering in their devotion to the cause of Socialism even as they were being taken off to die amid false disgrace and unjustified dishonor. They wrote letters to their executioners warning them of the need for more vigilance against the evil which had invaded the body of Socialism.

Their last words were highly responsible political acts. They went down with their political vision undefiled and unyielding.

They were right, of course, even though it never occurred to them that it was Stalin, so single-mindedly leading the battle for socialist industry, who was also their executioner. I doubt that it would have made any difference to their socialist staunchness even if they had known it. Their agony would have been greater, even as ours is. But their eyes had seen clearly to those truths of society which are leading to Socialism an human freedom, and these truths could not be destroyed even by those who were dooming them in the name of Socialism. You will notice in their letters to the Party's leadership they did not spit upon human life, nor on themselves, nor on man's political will and vision. They did not whine about the hopelessness of human hope, nor the brutalities of all political power. No one could give them lessons in disillusion, for they had been through that and gone beyond. *"Tell me what you believe,"* Goethe had told one of his sickly-suffering friends, *"for I have enough doubts of my own."*

IT WAS, I think, a just retort, for in the end no man can escape responsibility, and responsibility is affirmation, action, purpose, even though some affirmations are refuted and some actions frustrated at a specific moment of history. Despair is not the essence of the human drama, even if tragedy, suffering and struggle are part of its essence.

You say that you feel lost because the landmarks are gone. This is true and not true. For if many of the old landmarks are gone, the compass is still there for the charting of new and truer ones. We could not, of course, discover without shock that our first view of the first socialist revolution had been shot through with misconceptions based on ignorance, and also perhaps on a noble but naive view of the actualities of the price which was being paid by the first socialist country. I marvel at the people who, reading Khrushchev's revelations about Stalin's later development, can comfort themselves easily with wise saws about having to break eggs to make an omelette. This view is too far removed, I think, from human experience and from scientific Socialism to suit me.

To think this way, it seems to me, is to strengthen those who play history and human morality off against each other, those who say that all of history's necessities are contemptible when seen in the light of man's essence. These are the people who say—and how loudly their voices have been growing of late just as humanity is developing the possibilities for a great act of will leading to a new society—that man's salvation lies outside of history and even in defiance of it. For if "breaking omelettes" can so easily become the excuse for any action at all and any time, is not the argument of the protagonists of a highly moral passivity strengthened?

I think that this is a religious view of history, even if it is a "socialist-religious" view. For it means that we cannot make choices at all, since there is a "necessity" even in our worst choices. Necessity there is indeed. But there are choices, too, as to how these necessities shall be brought to fruition. Man makes his own history, albeit he does not make it merely out of his desires, nor out of the whole cloth, as Marx put it.

It is crucial, I think, to make this distinction between the necessities of history, amid which and through which man exercises his will and makes moral decisions, and the grisly Calvinism which sees history as a fatalism. Surely, we don't think that Marxian necessity and Calvinistic fatalism are twins?

IT TURNS out, though, that Stalin thought so, and that he even ended by considering his crimes to be social necessities. There was enormous necessity in the forced march to socialist industrialization. Stalin's

strength was that he saw it so keenly. Without it, would there have been a People's China or anything of that great turning point in history which we can now perceive as a new stage of prolonged co-existence, a situation containing such great potentialities for human advance? But was there the same necessity in the concentration of power, both in state and party, in the crushing of people, in the quasi-religious mania and its terrible consequences? Stalin's Calvinism merged itself with a real historic necessity which it fulfilled and betrayed at the same time. For while Stalin swore to uphold Lenin's behests, he also in his own way betrayed them, and the betrayal and the fulfillment were presented as a unity. That was where the crimes and the tragedies began, and where the enemies of Socialism were to draw blood in their novels and their books.

BUT you might ask—and the haters of Socialism eagerly assert it—was there not an inevitable relationship between the betrayal and the fulfillment? Was not one imbedded in the other? Were not the crimes inherent in the task itself? I think you will grant now that the danger of unbridled power, of power over the people and not through them, was far greater in the first socialist country than we had imagined. In fact, I think you will grant that the entire problem of how to keep power dispersed, how to prevent tyranny in the use of power, is far more difficult and complex a question than we had dreamed of. The anarchists' criticism of all power as such was far from being sheer foolishness, though it was one-sided. The warnings of such Marxists as Rosa Luxembourg ("an eagle," Lenin said of her in admiration) of just such dangers of centralized power, even in a socialist society, take on a new importance; that whole debate on power and freedom of these clashing Marxists in the '20s has a new relevance.

Of course, in the Soviet Union the problem of guaranteeing a genuine socialist superstructure of humanistic freedom on a socialist base was complicated by the unique fact that they had to start from nothing and first had to build this economic base amid the constant danger of attack. And this means that the general possibility of a centralization of arbitrary power—*which is always present in any centralization of economic power*—was far more imminent in the first socialist country than we had imagined. But this is very different, I think, from the conclusion that the congealing of social freedom into a semi-military social formation was an inevitability even under these difficult and unique circumstances.

Thus Walter Lippmann, assuming the judicious tone of indulgent forgiveness, concludes in a recent column that, given the backwardness

of Russia, it became a necessity for Stalin to whip the Soviet peoples into the industrial advance they needed (or which he arbitrarily decided they needed, as Socialism's enemies assert). But this "defense" is a subtle attack. For it assumes that Stalin's way of grappling with all the necessities of socialist construction was the only possible way. It assumes that the course of socialist development in this first socialist state was what Lenin had previsioned for it, that it was Socialism itself (they will not even grant that socialism will be different in each country) which created Stalin's arbitrary power, and that it will always do the same wherever it exists. Lippmann wants us to believe, under the guise of necessity, that terrorism and Socialism are logically intertwined.

HIS argument is a sophistry even on his own assumptions. If it was a "necessity" to "whip" the Soviet peoples into a "forced march" of industrialization because a backward Russia faced a hostile encirclement, how does it follow that future socialist governments will have to pursue the same course? Notice how easily Lippmann assumes that the immerse and constant efforts of the West to intervene and prevent Socialist construction were a "necessity." Thus, the workers and peasants of the first socialist state have had to endure not only the backbreaking burdens of "forced march" labor; they also had to endure the gibes of those in the Western countries who were forcing them into their desperate labors, and the reproaches of those classes which failed to end the encirclement by creating socialist governments of their own. "See how hard they have to work, and for so little," jeered the militarists who were compelling the Soviet peoples to rush the building of their defense against the assault which finally did come with such brutality. "Why do you not have more freedom in your beleaguered fortress?" asked some who were rarely seen acting to provide freedom for the Soviet people to work out their own destiny.

BUT even from a new study of the first socialist transformation in the world we learn that within the harsh necessities imposed on it by its moral-sounding enemies, the socialist development was seen differently by Lenin than it later came to be seen by Stalin. There was another way, just as soundly based on necessity, but different in its approach to democracy, freedom, and power. We are beginning to realize that we have been reared on a Stalinist version of the first socialist revolution, and not on a genuine history of it in all its complexities and contradictions.

For example, did you know that Lenin believed as early as 1923 that the new working class government had consolidated its power sufficiently to begin to plan to go over to a relaxation of the repressiveness imposed on it by civil war and intervention? Did you know, furthermore, that in the final years of his life, Lenin was alarmed at the rapidly developing centralized power within the party he had done so much to create, and that he sought to halt this dangerous trend by proposing to enlarge the central committee to one or even two hundred members?

We know how far-sighted was Lenin's fear of Stalin's lust for power, and how vainly he adjured the party "to find some way to remove Stalin." But we did not know—and still do not know fully—how many of Lenin's keenest ideas, in letters, memos, and articles, on the rising problems of freedom and power were suppressed during Lenin's final days and soon after. (See the Soviet journal, *Problems of History,* March, 1956.) We do not know—though I am sure we shall—the ful record of how Stalin turned all political critics, dissenters, and even devoted party people on whom his suspicion fell, into traitors. Thus, the real history of the struggle against Trotskyism, the Bukharin group, and the other defendants in the Moscow trials of the 1930's is still unknown to us. What would you say is the meaning of the following words in the above-cited historical journal:

"Anti-Leninist deviations of the Trotskyites, the Right and nationalist deviations were looked upon in a shallow manner as the act of agents of foreign intelligence."

In a shallow manner! A remarkable understatement, is it not?

WE ARE finding out that Lenin never expected or desired that the party would merge with the government; he did not subscribe to, and would not have supported Stalin's theory that the class struggle within the country would increase with the advance of socialist construction. Surely, Lenin had no illusions about the dangers of encirclement, yet he was turning to the need for moving over from "war communism" to a fuller democratic socialism. He apparently saw that the new situation required fewer—not more—political curbs.

What is so impressive as we start to re-study this history with clearer insight is how Lenin never hesitated to discard his ideas the moment they began to clash with reality or truth. He was not only alarmed at the centralization of unbridled power in party and government but he also began to see that the form and content of many other parties in the

Third International he had helped create were "too Russian." In my opinion, he would have gone much farther had he lived, for though this International with its "21 points" defining conditions for admission had been based on an estimate of post-World War I that proved wrong, it was not dissolved until some years later.

The claim in the 1920's that "Bolshevism is a model for all" was a dangerously ambiguous one, but it was never intended, even in its inflated form, to mean that the provisional and historically-conditioned answers which Lenin and his followers gave to their problems were anything but that. That goes for such questions as party forms, problems of alliances, attitudes toward non-Marxist groups, democracy, power, forms of people's government, degree and rate of nationalization, farm collectivization, etc. Every single one of these questions must have a different answer in different countries and different times. That is how Marxist thought has viewed the issue. Only after Lenin's death did many of Lenin's local solutions become hardened into something he did not himself call "Marxism-Leninism." Lenin won immortality by refusing to accept as a "guidepost" Kautsky's memorized formulae taken from Marx and Engels about the "necessity" for Socialism to arise first in a Western industrialized country. But even Lenin's answers bear the mark of their epoch, which their triumph helped to create.

WHAT is immortal in scientific Socialism is its historical-materialist method, its confirmed estimate of the relations between the private owners of the industries and their hired workers, of the clash of class interests, of the objective and inevitable contradiction between modern production and the private ownership of that production, of the social necessity for replacing the private ownership (and hence private governmental domination) of the industries with a new basis—social ownership and hence a new social system, a greater democracy, abolition of poverty and insecurity, with the new class guiding the nation's political life. But from this generalized socialist outlook cannot be deduced in advance the party forms, the governmental forms, or any of a hundred other problems of real social change. These can only be arrived at in response to the specific social situation seen in its context of ceaseless change.

The Marxian analysis of imperialism and monopoly made by Lenin is being fulfilled all around us as we read of the shifts in world relations coming from Asia, Africa, from China, India, and the Middle East. But

did anyone think that Lenin's estimates would be good in all details for all the succeeding phases of this era? They are already being altered, and will alter still further, no doubt, as the successful prolongation of peaceful coexistence (not without contradictions, tensions) brings new problems, new relations, now possibilities, new necessities and new contradictions. Far from having all the answers, we do not even have all the questions.

See how history surprises us all the time! Three years ago, the Communists of Asia were convinced that "China's way is the only way." They are not convinced of this any longer, not in India, anymore than Tito's way was Stalin's way or Lenin's way, though the Socialist goal is the same. With what difficulty did Mao succeed finally in changing the disastrous dogma that the Chinese people must make the cities their main battlefield, since this was a revolution led by the working class and were not the workers in the cities? Nor did Mao follow Stalin's mechanically generalized idea that "the main blow" must be aimed at the progressive but non-Communist groupings, an idea useful for a single moment at a single stage in a revolution of a certain country.

It is the scientific method of thought, the change from "subjective politics" to "objective politics" which we are learning the hard way as the new situations face us.

In a way, you might call it a new stage in the constant unfolding of Marxian thought, the Marxism of the generation which has achieved the possibility of prolonged co-existence, constitutional transitions to Socialism by an immense piling up of popular demand, and the growing preponderance of the socialist sector. The Communist movement, despite the gibes of some, has a moral basis of sacrifice, courage, and disinterested devotion to the people's cause; it has a moral capital in the courage of its war-challenging, McCarthy-defying members and leadership. But it cannot rest with this, as it obviously does not intend to do.

OUR national American experience has been more complex than we have grasped. That this national experience was going to defy all the blueprints, old Frederick Engels seemed to sense keenly. He even wrote wryly, as he saw the obstinacy of the German-American Marxists' blueprint mentality, that *"sectarianism cannot be prevented in America for years to come."* (*Letters to Americans,* International Publishers, page 142.) What did he mean by that? My guess is that he was thinking of the very

special way in which social life and social contradictions move in the United States where the democratic heritage and habit of thought are a significant part of the governmental system, so that the people feel their power to make whatever changes they feel necessary though Constitutional means. He was musing, I guess, on the much greater possibilities for class fluidity, the shortage of labor, the free land, all matters he discussed at length. But there was much more to the very special development of the American nation than even he could foresee. For this was not only the country of swift violence against labor, and the country which in the 1929 crash triggered the world economic crisis; it is also the country of the extraordinarily high, though unstable, standard of living and other similar social phenomena. If there is a lack of socialist consciousness among the American working class (which still has limited social aims), surely the cause cannot be only in the lack of "good socialist propaganda," cannot be only in what we have been used to calling "the subjective factor."

It seems that the tough nut Engels was trying his teeth on—*what is the most effective form of organization and activity for Americans with a Marxist outlook*—is still very much with us, even as a good many of his reproaches to the generation of immigrant German Socialists in the 1880-1890's would seem to have much of their relevance. It is an odd and thought-provoking thing to see how accurately Marxian thought has estimated the general course of American national development (concentration of capital, rise of monopoly power, expansionism), and yet how it has misjudged so many of the particular phases of that development.

Even the best Marxist thinkers have been miscalculating the actual course of the *forms* in which the people would make their will and their interests felt. Marx and Engels figured that after the Civil War, and especially after the great strikes of the last decades of the nineteenth century, that there would arise a labor party. The political representatives of Big Capital were able to prevent that by manoeuvers, concessions, or other means. Even Lenin thought that the Progressives of the Theodore Roosevelt days heralded this long-awaited political development. Our own generation has had its own experience with this problem. I do not mean to exhaust this subject or make any prophecies about it or judge it. I merely wish to point out to you how much more complicated the actual course of our history has been than was envisaged in many a socialist blueprint, past and present.

And yet how vigorously have the people made their imprint on our

nations' history, often amid great difficulties and in the face of open violence on a large scale.

Witness the big social movements following the American Revolution, during the Jackson era, the anti-slavery struggle, the rise of the modern trade unions, the New Deal social reforms and such things as TVA, as well as the gains of labor in the post-war decade, the defeat of the Pentagon's system of universal military training, the halting of the Korean War, and their resistance to the domination of the United States by McCarthyites. The Populist movements, the Christian Social Reform movements, the Socialist electoral struggles led by Eugene Debs, and the immense Negro people's movement, are all part of this American panorama in which the forms of the social movement were so varied, so pragmatic, and most often under the influence of a "wrong" theory. And, after all this, while there is still a feeble socialist consciousness, there is a most determined belief in their power to make the government act when social need compels action.

WHEN you think of the new problems—the doubling of national output since 1938, the rise of a broader layer of middle income groups, the unprecedented post-war boom, the possible effects of East-West trade on the economic cycle, not to speak of atomic energy, the H-bomb, and automation—how else than with a scientifically objective and boldly advancing Marxian thought can you tackle all this? How else than by dropping blueprints, both of platform and organization, however hoary or classical, can you hope to make Marxism relevant in terms of millions of Americans whom it can educate and inspire? So we had better start from the beginning, looking at everything again with clear eyes, without apologies and without self-abasement either.

Do you think, for example, that the projected new united parties of Socialism will only be "Marxist-Leninist"? Then they would only be a continuation of the present. But the situation is creating the need for something different, the unity (not all at once, to be sure) of all socialist workers under a single party. Clearly, this will not be the kind of party Lenin created for the highly specialized problems he and his generation faced, though it will be an anti-capitalist party, with groupings within it.

But the point is that the relationship of the Marxian socialist trend of thought within the American people's social movements will again have to be, it seems to me, for a fairly long time something like the "*ferment within the whole,*" of which Engels spoke so often. This is for

the United States, of course, where this particular solution is dictated by our country's actual history up to now, by the present democratic forms in which the conflicts of class interests are expressed, by the present relationship of the socialist-minded minority to the very much larger labor and people's movements. It does not seem likely to me that the necessity for the governmental measures leading to the socialization of the main industrial giants will be seen by the people on the basis of an intolerable mass poverty and deprivation. Our fellow-Americans have seen enough of the possibilities of abundance for all not to surrender themselves helplessly ever again to the crisis miseries of the Thirties. Certainly, this is true in the ranks of the organized industrial workers.

I think, therefore, that Marxian Socialism in our country will be most effective if, while necessarily critical of the claims of capitalism to have provided full democracy, it will be developed as not only the expression of the brotherhood which binds workingmen of all countries in common interests, but also as a further expression of the democratic national development in which the popular aims have always been more and more democracy, more and more economic security, leisure, and individual freedom. The problems that will come to the fore out of the contradictions produced by the enormous productivity of automation industry, and the private monopoly of that industry, are bound to force the issues of socialization, in one form or another, to the center of American politics.

The expectation of constantly rising living standards is rooted among the people, and rightly so; how to achieve this expectation, how to abolish the insecurity which underlies the majority of American families (and not only the working class but the small merchant, farmer, and middle class), how to keep the country advancing along the lines of guaranteeing that modern abundance will be increasingly available to all—that is where Marxian socialism has a tremendous contribution to make to the nation. Because the social development in the United States, both now and in the years to come, is bound to be very different in form (the essential conflict of the billionaires and reaction against the people is always there) from every other country in the world.

Does it not follow that the forms of Marxian socialist education, influence and political activity are bound to have not too much resemblance to the solutions worked out by Marxian socialists in other lands? I think that such is the case. I think that is what Engels meant when he so fervently rapped the German immigrant Marxists who tried in vain to

slap their ready-made answers on the American development, who gave tests in theory to all popular movements and flunked them for not being German-socialist in form and content.

How fervently he criticized those who would "push" history on the basis of their blueprints or their wishes solely. *"As in England,"* he wrote of America, *"all the preaching is of no use until the actual necessity exists."* (page 154). Marx and Engels proclaimed very early this combination of objective politics and the creative role of socialist thought and activity: *"We do not present ourselves to the world as doctrinaires with a new principle, saying 'Here is the truth, bow down before it.' . . . we relate our criticism to the criticism of politics . . . to the real conflicts with which we identify ourselves."*

There is a new and a very old guide-post for your comfort. "Without vision, the people perish." True, true. But without the people, the visions perish, too. Let me know what you think so we can go forward together.

With best wishes,

MILTON HOWARD

A CHANGE OF NAME

BEGINNING WITH OUR SEPTEMBER ISSUE, the name of *Masses and Mainstream* will be changed to *Mainstream.* The former name grew out of the need some ten years ago to merge the politico-cultural weekly, *New Masses* with the literary quarterly, *Mainstream.* It was felt then that, despite the obvious awkwardness of the joint name, it was useful in emphasizing the continuity of tradition of the two publications.

However, we now find that new readers and those coming upon the magazine by chance are puzzled by the name with whose background they are unfamiliar. We are making every effort to reach a wider audience and the simpler name makes this easier. We shall, of course, pursue the same policy as we have before, and try to supply our readers with the best available to us in social and critical thinking, as well as creative writing.—THE EDITORS

The Dark of the Time

By MERIDEL LE SUEUR

Does the eagle know what is in the pit?
or will you ask the mole? —William Blake

OUR people in America are in deep anguish. They are in the dark of Capitalism. The assassin passes through your hands daily as the the product you make passes into the chaos of a market you never know. The people suffer under capitalism in a different way than a colonial people, for the masks are cunning and the naked wars of aggression are hidden under the words of democracy, and you are delivered into the death of wars against people you do not hate, and made guilty by Nagasakis and Hiroshimas you did not plan.

An abyss seems to have opened between the intellectual cosmopolites of culture, and the people, hungry for word and meaning. In the city you hear the words of contempt for our people. You even hear that our people have so many "things"—so many televisions, bathrooms, etc. Returning to the hinterland, I told this to a man who travels the Dakotas and he laughed bitterly. "The thing about capitalist 'things,' commodities, is that they are not permanent. They are an illusion, you never have them —not even the toilet—now in one whole section of Dakota the outhouse has returned—not that it ever left the majority of farmhouses—but now it is gone! The killing of the REA has thrown a whole community back to oil lamps, hand milking, outhouses! Everybody knows you never own anything under capitalism—it passes through your hands and one month's backpayment on the installment and whisk—it is gone . . . gone with the mortgage!"

Hurt myself by the "big city" mechanical "idea" of America, the pawn-moving feeling of some organization, I took a bus and fell down the dark flux of all on the move, the young reluctant warriors, in the stinking stations of the poor, the young mothers again following, Negro and white mothers with the hanging pelvis, the torn feet, the swollen veins, all night with the children swarming upon them, like all of us on the dark, gutted, eroded American earth outside the windows; and fragrant strong as that earth and as beautiful.

Wounded from the city, return—return to the dust of earth, to the angry lean men and the risen dust of wrecked men and women, descend among the gentle, waiters, movers; the angry boys, green down on their lips, going to far bases they hate; the young prostitutes clubbed by the billies of southern cops; workers going to other plants; a generation in anxiety moving to the burst of birth; old members of the Wilson brigade, of the first world war, half dead and crazy; dry leaf bitter faces of the lost and damned from depression and war, mute and terrible testimony to the splendid "working of capitalism"; peddlers of every shoddy lust, living off the good body like maggots and lice, and all moving underneath, all is anguish and moving and the great culture of the underground common to our people emerging in the night like rich herbal emanations.

2

After I had slept, looking out at the hills and the moon riding over and the warm sense of people like myself, we stopped at a small village and a mother got on with a young child and two older ones, a boy of seventeen maybe and a girl heavily rouged and pockmarked. The mother and the little girl took the seat in front of me and the child looked out the window at the village as we pulled out and I could see the tear magnifying the eye for the leaving of the familiar village, for the journey and the joy of seeing her father who was on a construction job in Chicago and whom, with a fine contempt for space, they were going to visit. Nancy Hanks I am sure had a body like this, ill nourished, thin yet strong, gaunt, a little tall, black hair, blue snapping eyes, the weight and burden strained through a sharp militant humor. She drew the child down to sleep, with utter warm authority, gentle, no coercion anger or tension. I could see her large knotted hand bear the child down.

She told me later she had ten girls and two boys, five at home, yet she was glad—a very good life. Work is good, a very good life with hard work, it is good not to have enough. You have to scratch. We get by. Her body was like a great poem to read. She gave it without stint, like the fields, fragrant, bearing you up, and the gentle emanation of forgiveness from her, of strength, a curious signal of resistance organized in her eyes.

I returned to the haven of woman, land, the great beloved woman of my country.

3

IN THE long night, plunging south, a land unfamiliar to me, but whose aroma rises to my nostrils, whose people, invasion thin, drift out of the night into the bus, alight in wide lonely landscapes, or little lanes dark under the trees, and disappear taking some of me with them, a crying ghost following their asking as they turn at the bus gate. . . . I hear behind me two boys I have not seen, their voices light and terrible, emitting words of horror—one is going to Cincinnati on a book deal, forty five a week and expenses for two weeks, he doesn't intend to sell any books, after two weeks he will skip, got the job by shining up to the boss's wife, could have had her too ,but he's already running from one alimony and an angry gal whose car he stole and all he wants is to keep running.

The other one is a sailor and says he would like just a plain old job. Nothing in a job, the other one says, you can work all your life and where are you? I done everything, from driving a cattle truck to a racket in Tammany. Nothin' in it. Make a haul, that's the only hope. Some kind of a haul. I'll make mine yet. The sailor says, the only thing I care about is a sweet fast car. I don't give a hoot in hell for my life. I don't even know where I'm goin' now. Just takin' off without a parachute. I want to just ride fast and straight into hell. I don't want to take no one with me, understand? I respect the lives of other people. I'll never shoot anybody. I never said this before but I'll never see you again but it's the truth, I'll never shoot at anybody. But I don't give ten cents for my own life. Not one cent. Just like to drive straight and fast in one of these new babies, straight into hell!

4

I WAS never in Washington, D. C. before. I looked at it from the best vantage point, from midnight, way down below, seen by mole, bat and night owl, in rendezvous with those who have something to say, who do not speak on the podium or broadcast, or who even try for the sixty four dollar question or are queen for a day. Besides, after midnight there is no chance for any of this—Colgates is not going to call your number, or the mail man bring you a message showing you are chosen from the nation to represent what? After midnight it is all over, so

sitting in the lysol-smelling bus station, the small rest room marked "colored," and the awful smell of antiseptic that permeates all official buildings.

I went downstairs, and outside the rest rooms there were eight telephone booths, four on each side, and from each booth there stuck out a pair of worker's legs, in work shoes bent and battered, and from the booths there came a strange talk. I had to listen a long time to catch any of it. They were all Negroes come to this rendezvous after work in the late night, or early morning. I saw no face, only the battered shoes, one white from concrete, broken battered feet of workers who work on their feet. I listened amazed, there was much laughter but no face appeared. The feet crossed or uncrossed. Someone was telling a story but it was stopped by a kind of choral laughter and repetition. It's as if they were slightly distended in the mouth into a beautiful rhythm, the rhythm I could hear but the words must be caught in the net of the beauty of the voice and this gentle chant, and reiteration of the theme on a chorale of laughter. I could see the huge brown and black hands resting on the high knobbed knees. I could not stand there and watch. There was a bench in the rest room where I could hear the strange speech. It went on rising obviously to some climax. I could catch a word here and there, the farmer . . . stealin' . . . Yes sir he was sore put—and then at the end the whole was suddenly revealed and I felt a rich delight suddenly as if I could run in and speak to all of them for the teller on a whiff of laughter, a pouf of laughter, said quite disinctly: "And then Br'r Rabbit said to the bossman—do what you like boss man, do anything you like, but don't don't don't throw me into the briar patch . . ." And on a great descending He! he! he! the laughter joined, flew like sharp birds, the feet pounded, hands clapped. . . .

The cop descended upon them with gruff voice, drove them out. I could hear them walking out and I had the feeling I would find the booths full of dead clubbed birds.

5

UPON the earth through the vent of the cities, the people move in the dark of the American time. It is like a descent into the South through the Virginia mountains, where we see no town for a day and a sign says, Nancy Hanks was born behind that spur of mountain, and

we glide into the deep tall night, into the brawny calloused hand of our mother, into her herbal, rank and strong odors. Like the mother of twelve she leans over us, covers us, her hair of night falling over our burnt asphalt faces.

At Louisville we descended into hell. It is One A.M. and Friday night and hundreds of soldiers are trying to get back to Fort Knox. The segregated rest room is one fifth the size of the white. It is full of soldiers, also women and children.

The large area of a lunch room is full of soldiers trying to sober up on black coffee, or trying to get another bottle from the many old men and sharpers who are bootlegging bottles at three times their price. Small fights spring up. Old men slither on the stools beside the soldiers making deals, offering them anything from heroin, girls, to a ticket for the Kentucky Derby. More circumspect bookies circulate offering sure bets, talking into the ears of the sleepy dazed soldiers. No one is allowed to sleep. The civil police come along and punch them brutally—wake up bud. . . . For professional sleepers. Old men come in to get warm. The cops search their pockets, ask them to show a ticket, and having none they are plucked up by the nape of the neck and booted out. One worker becomes confused and cries to the cop—I have a job. I have worked all my life. I can't remember. I have a job, it's just the name. You don't work not for a man any longer—it is a company and I can't remember. . . . He was thrown out.

Above on a balcony the military police looked down upon the writhing mass, pointing out every beggar below, or sleeper. There were Negro and White MP's. They came down swiftly at any ruckus and used their clubs, they were armed with every kind of weapon.

I BOUGHT a ticket for Elizabethtown, Kentucky, where Nancy Hanks gave birth to Abe Lincoln. The turmoil of the station had come to a boil. A young Negro, very severe, sat bolt upright, and a peddler of bets for the Derby, a slick thimble rig, with the sharp face of the devil himself, stood behind him, set upon him, and a crowd had gathered as he baited him. A man's a man I always say, the pitch man said—it makes no difference to me what color a man is. He winked hugely, there was laughter. Leave him alone, a white soldier said, and swore at him roundly. He kept on—my best friends—still and all—there's a place for everyone, keep their places. The Negro soldier whirled, but before

he could strike, the swift movement of many people out of a prepared coil sprang at the same time to hold him back, to snatch the peddler and move him towards the door and from the balcony came the running feet of the MP's, Negro and white, who laid about them.

The poisonous boil burst with foul pus out of everyone. The sound of the police wagon, the shouts of the people in the station, the defense of the Negro soldier, the drunken curses now of the peddler, his foul racism loosed naked, as the police half jerked his clothes off, lifted him, and, along with others, threw them into the wagon. . . . The Negro soldier was taken off to the military. The bus was now stirred like a foul slimy pool, violence broke out, people became sick, the girls shouted and tried to pull soldiers with them and then the bus came and everyone was herded into it and with a jerk, we started south toward Fort Knox and Elizabethtown. . . .

It took an hour to unload the buses, some had to be carried out, others cajoled to return, some were weeping. They were so young. The bus driver, a young tender fellow, helped them all, gave them fantasies to live on, held them up, whispered in their ears, slapped them on the back. The last one gave me a big wink . . . goodbye, he said, we go to save the world! He stumbled and skidded for his balance, turned and made a derisive jesture, half despair, half in satire of himself.

6

I WAS going to Elizabethtown in the dawn and I was startled deeply for the earth was red, gashed, as if seeped in blood, man-red in the dawn that flooded the tipped spring moon which seemed to pour a blood light over us. I remember I heard the earth was red here but it is startling to see it, red earth out of which came Abe, from the red dawn of Nancy Hanks too.

It was before seven when I got to a tiny bus station at Elizabethtown. There was a taxi driver who had a Yankee accent. He told me Lincoln Park and Sinking Springs was about ten miles away. I walked down the village around the square and the court house in the center of the square, a big old house probably Tom Lincoln worked on, the cemetery spreading back on the hill.

It wasn't seven yet. I stopped in the morning restaurant where workers got their lunches and had breakfast. It was full of men. There was a young girl, a young boy at the counter and a Negro woman doing the

cooking back in the kitchen. Do you know anything about Nancy Hanks? I asked the young girl who was half crazy with all the young construction workers ribbing her and eyeing her. I don't think she lives here, she said. I just about know everybody here. She shouted to the Negro woman—You know Nancy Hanks? No, she shouted back. I said, she was Abraham Lincoln's mother. There was a silence. No one laughed. The boy said, She's daid. Yes, she is, I said. He said after awhile—say, on the corner of the bank there is a thing there written about how Nancy Hanks got married to Tom Lincoln right there where the bank is.

I walked up there and sure enough it was so, a plaque on the cornerstone of the bank. I went up to the cemetery and talked to the grave digger, who knew everyone buried there, and showed me the graves mostly of the merchants, the bankers, the promoters. . . . He didn't see why he had such a job, took a man's place seventeen years ago and still at it, although the price of a grave had gone up considerable. The children began to go to school. I watched the Negro children go one way and the white children another. I said—how soon will the desegregation be here? He shouted—never. He said Elizabethtown had so many of those bastards now since the fort and construction work and there was no place for them and they would never have it. He was very cold and practically drove me out of the grave and disappeared, throwing up the dirt angrily.

I went out into the street now coming alive and I asked a number of people and they all clammed up and looked at me coldly. By the time I got back to the square a car was following me. And as I walked, in every window faces followed me and I felt a terrible animosity. I had no way of getting out of town.

I went back to the bus station and got the Yankee taxi driver to drive me out to Sinking Springs. The country looked very very poor, scraggly scrub stands, little poor farms, thickets, the earth red. There is a park well kept and on the high hill above Sinking Springs. The spring, as it was then, is, amazingly, a Greek temple with wide steps going up to the pillars and supporting architecture of a European world, and inside, guarded, within the foreign marble, stands the original log cabin where, in the small corner, Nancy Hanks gave birth to Abraham Lincoln.

No word is made of her. There is the door and the leather hinge, and the fire place and the wood glowing, the same logs, the helve of the axe showing in the wood, from the energy of Tom Lincoln, and the half open

door seems to beckon you into the bare small rectangle, within the seed shadow, the hearth, fire, the door entrance, exit, wood and womb.

But here the woman unnamed, the cabin of her agony within the edifice of governing man, the thoughts of sages, all male, engraved around the solemn marble; around the wild unknown woman, hidden in the thought of man, bitted within an old dead idea, yet wild and strong she is yet in the body of all women. As I run down the steps I can see Sinking Springs just as it was, still discharging from the cave wall, still emerging fresh from the bought world, cold and fresh from underground. I put my hand in the deep water from deep down.

7

WHEN I came across Kansas City to the crack train going north I felt I had entered another country. The clean, fat, groomed people had just gotten off the California special train from their vacations in winter; their faces bore another history and they were very annoyed because for some reason the train was an hour late. It was hot, the dust storms were standing below us in the sky covering Iowa, Kansas. They had come through it, and now the dust stood in the air like a venomed ghost. They were angry, for we did not know till later why the train was late.

The train is full of young hot soldiers returning home for their last furlough before going—where? They do not know. Many of them have slept in the depot. Some have not slept. A young blonde boy sits beside me and he sleeps instantly, his fair face flushed, his big paws crossed over his loins and his long head falls on my shoulder. I timidly stroke his cheek. He seems hardly older than my grandson David and the same coloring.

For some reason there is no way to cool the train. It is unbearably hot. My soldier woke with blue eyes like David's, his cropped poll and red mouth, and he wanted to know why it was so hot and fell instantly into sleep again. I lay his head gently on the pillow and manage to get by his incredible mileage of long sleeping legs to the rear of the car where the soldiers have opened the half window in the vestibule and brought out the rest room chairs. I do not know then why the conductor is so tender to them, allows them privileges, looks at them like a grieving father.

It was the middle of the flushed hot afternoon, with the Iowa corn half a foot green, the tender light on the fields. The train stopped at a small town. It was the complaint of the tourists that the train was supposed to be a through train but it kept stopping. Only those standing in the vestibule leaning out of the half window, saw why. The train had stopped, and in the midst of our joking we suddenly saw a young woman, her golden hair in a pony tail, run by, but her face was anguished, her mouth open as if screaming. We leaned out to see towards what she was running . . . and we saw four workers lifting a coffin from the baggage car to the waiting hearse and some friends held the young woman, whose eyes seemed distended, and in our eyes was reflected a coffin. One of the soldiers has dropped his hand on my shoulder and it is gripped hard. Korea! he says. Another boy begins to curse.

The train moves on. A woman comes out fanning herself—what makes the train stop? I paid for a ticket on the fast train. They'll hear from me! The boys are silent. She goes back. Now they pass around a bottle. When the train stops they are silent, when it starts they talk too loud. We are catching up on time, another woman says. Oh yes, the cursing one says, don't lose any time, get all the time you pay for. May they choke on their own fat! he curses.

We count how often the train stops—each stop a coffin, running crying women, the afternoon darkens for us. The boy is still sleeping. He might be the boy in the casket. So long, so heavy in sleep bolt upright, so beautiful. Inside the coffin the rot they have returned, the torn loins of the builders, planters, begetters. In our nostrils the dust of the afternoon, our agony, led into slaughters we do not dream, misled by leaders, our constant blind struggle, receiving the new dead sons quietly, revenge born between our teeth.

We are nearing St. Paul. The last stop, the swearing soldier leaned out and screamed—don't open it, for God's sake, don't open it, don't expect to find him there! We all hold him. He becomes very quiet, stands with his back to us looking out the window. We go along the deep mother valley of the Mississippi. One of the soldiers says, Boy, it's Saturday night. They'll be whoopin' it up on seven corners, roll back earth and take me home. This is Saturday night. Maybe the last, so let'er go! let 'er go! The other soldier says—home! return, return he says, there's where we went on Sunday for a picnic, the fishing hole, the orchards, the prairies, the haying . . . the green corn knee-high by Fourth of July. Oh

God's country this is, let me return. . . . Bring me back, that's all I ask. Receive me, furrow. Plow deep for me, Indian valley, bring me home around the world. Oh! he cries, this country! Oh my country. There ain't nothin' better, look at that river, the crappies, the bull heads, Oh, let me come back to you, roll me back earth, around the world, roll me backward earth and roll me home!

He keeps his face to the darkening land for he is crying.

At the station in St. Paul a hearse is waiting.

8

LET us all return.

It is the people who give birth to us, to all culture, who by their labors create all material and spiritual values.

No art can develop until it penetrates deeply into the life of the people.

The source of American culture lies in the historic movement of our people, and the artist must become voice, messenger, awakener, sparking the inflammable silence, reflecting back the courage and the beauty. He must return really to the people, partisan and alive, with warmth, abundance, excess, confidence, without reservations, or cold and merely reasonable bread, or craftiness, writing one thing, believing another, the superior person, even superior in theoretic knowledge, an ideological giant, but bereft of heart and humility.

Capitalism is a world of ruins really, junk piles of machines, men, women, bowls of dust, floods, erosions, masks to cover rapacity and in this sling and wound the people carry their young, in the shades of their grief, in the thin shadow of their hunger, hope and crops in their hands, in the dark of the machine, only they have the future in their hands.

Only they.

A Hatful of Plays

By ROBERT MAC AUSLAND

This is the second and concluding part of Mr. MacAusland's survey of the recent Broadway theatre season. The first installment appeared in our June issue—The Editors.

"THE ENERGY of a nation which runs an Empire is concentrated on imperial affairs. It has no time for great art."

The statement is the late Max Beerbohm's. As dramatic critic for the British *Saturday Review* (he had succeeded Shaw in the post) he was commenting at length on a book by W. L. Courtney called *The Idea of Tragedy*. The Boer War was going on, and in his book Mr. Courtney sought to link his theme to the chauvinistic sentiments of the day. It was his contention the war had evoked in Englishmen those ideas and passions which make for great art. Beerbohm disagreed. England was not fighting for its national existence; the war in Africa was a necessary incident in its imperial policy, but no more than that; to speak of so unequal a struggle producing the spirit which makes for great art clearly was wishful thinking.

Historical analogies are risky, and never can be pressed too far. It seems to me, however, that Beerbohm's generalization about the relation of English imperialism to English art is one that can be made about the imperialist drive in our country and the effect it has had on our culture in the last ten years. Certainly it is an observation that holds true when we consider what has happened in the American theatre. Before continuing our discussion of the Broadway season just past it might be useful to see exactly what has happened.

AFTER World War II, the United States found itself first among the imperialist countries of the world. Consequently vast changes began to take place in our national life. These changes were most apparent in Washington where the majority of government posts were soon occupied by men drawn from the business or military world. These men rapidly discovered they could work very well together, and why not? The difference between making a dollar and making war was not a big one. They also

learned they had one thing above all else in common: a profound hatred of any ideas that did not square with their program for world domination. This hatred expressed itself dramatically in McCarthyism. McCarthy as a political figure is dead, but his name remains a symbol of the gutter tactics used by venal politicians to smear decent citizens. His name also remains a symbol of what can happen to a country when the economically precarious and morally bankrupt policies of a ruling class remain basically unchallenged.

As our national life began to change, so did the Broadway theatre. Considered small potatoes compared to Hollywood and the radio and television industry, it was not subject to direct investigation until late in the day. But that did not matter. With but a few honorable exceptions it surrendered to the prevailing climate. Individuals once outspoken about civic issues fell silent. Organizations devoted to social progress dwindled and disappeared. To its credit, the theatre resisted any attempts to introduce an organized blacklist. Its trade unions stood firm, and so did the majority of producers, while the critics ignored the dossiers of so-called subversives sent to them by self-appointed patriots. Thus it was that those who no longer could get jobs in the mass media could still, for the most part, find work on Broadway. That the blacklisted were grateful for such work, and that Broadway was proud of its independence revealed how much times had changed.

ANOTHER indication of this change was the difference in the plays that began to appear. Before and during World War II, from 1935 to 1945, the majority of plays on Broadway reflected a social and moral concern, and our playwrights had what might be termed "a sense of history." What had happened, of course, was that they had responded to two profound events: the Great Depression and the rise of Hitler. The Depression with its poverty and unemployment had caused them to examine the nature of American society, while the rise of Hitler had forced them to think about the world at large. The subject matter of these plays was social injustice, anti-Semitism, poverty, exploitation, racial discrimination, civil liberties, Nazism, liberty, war, peace. Not that the playwrights were in agreement as to the solutions for these ills; their varied political convictions made that impossible. And not that they were in agreement how best to express their thinking. Some found they had to go back in history,

while others felt obliged to place their work in a foreign setting. Indeed, about all they did agree upon was that an author was a man who was a part of his time and must have a defined social attitude toward it.

Following the end of World War II, that is from 1945 to the present, we began to have plays of an entirely different character. Gone was the "sense of history"; gone were the social and moral concerns of the previous decade. Our national life had contracted, and so, apparently, had our theatre.

For example, the play dramatizing a political dilemma vanished almost completely; or when it did appear, with but few exceptions it uncritically supported the officially approved thinking. Sharing the convictions of the playwrights, the reviewers praised the content of these plays. At the same time, they were forced to admit that such plays had neither depth nor complexity. They wondered why, and conveniently attributed the limitations to the authors. They did not realize or were unwilling to admit, the reason for the limitations. Historically, there was no tradition the author could draw upon. Morally, what point of view could he have that would not be fundamentally jingoistic?

FIRST we had a revival of the genre play. American dramatic literature possesses a number of plays which fall into this classification, and several are works of a very high order. (I am thinking of two very different plays: *The Show Off* by George Kelly, and *Awake and Sing* by Clifford Odets.) To be successful however, this type of play cannot exist in a social vacuum. There must be throughout an implicit social attitude. It is this which gives such plays their design and richness of texture. But in the last decade, the genre play also has lost size because the playwrights using this form have concentrated exclusively on the personal. Accepting without protest the fact that life in the United States has diminished, they have made it seem even smaller by presenting only a slice of it.

Then we had the so-called "pure-sex" play. Nobody is against sex; Lord no. Also, a "broad" may have as much relationship to her time as a queen, and those who think it unreasonable to demand a social attitude of plays in this category might recall *Born Yesterday,* and, before that, *Lysistrata.* A play is many things, but one thing it is not is a series of dirty jokes. As George Jean Nathan has pointed out, the unrelieved vulgarity on the Broadway stage in recent years would bring a blush to the cheek of the most seasoned burlesque fan.

FINALLY, we had the dramas of aberration, plays whose chief components were alcoholism, homosexuality, incest or madness, and whose leading characters were suffering from some profound phychical disorder. These plays were serious. Talent and imagination went into the writing of them, and often they are moving. But they all had one thing in common: the social framework was no more than suggested, and society had apparently nothing whatever to do with the leading character's difficulties.

And now to return to our discussion of the Broadway season just past. The plays with foreign themes were by authors who still consider their characters in terms of society at large, while those written by American playwrights on American themes continued to fall pretty much into the category of the last decade. We are still getting the narrow genre play, the "pure sex" play, or the plays dealing with aberrations. The political plays, such as they are, continue to reflect the most primitive thinking. It would be pointless to discuss them all, so I will comment only on those given the most attention by the critics.

LET US begin with the genre play. With the exception of William Inge, the dramatists who have written this type of play have come from television where an accurate ear, an awareness of the minor frustration of daily life, and a talent for choosing the single situation that will dramatize those frustrations have given them a respectable reputation. Perhaps the most successful of these is Paddy Chayefsky. *Marty,* originally a television play, was made into a motion picture, won all sorts of prizes, and became extremely popular at the box-office. Later a publisher thought well enough of it and five other Chayefsky television plays to bring them out in book form. And now we have him represented on Broadway with *Middle of the Night,* which has been given a first class production. Joshua Logan, past master of the slicks, has never been slicker; Jo Mielziner's sets are what one expects from one of Broadway's best designers; and Edward G. Robinson heads an expensive cast.

Unfortunately, none of these things can disguise the fact that the play is a three-act soap opera.

The setting is West End Avenue in New York City, and the story is of a love affair between a garment manufacturer and a pretty receptionist who works in his office. The manufacturer is a widower, lonely, and worried; as Chayefsky has him so delicately put it, he is going through a change of life. The girl is unhappy for another reason. She is married, but when we

first meet her she has just left her husband. Why? Well, one can only quote Chayefsky again: her husband is merely interested in the physical side of marriage. Obviously the manufacturer and the young girl are ready for each other; and just as obviously they fall in love; or I guess that's what they do. For still they are not happy. Still there is something to worry about. The manufacturer is aged fifty-three, the young girl is twenty-four. Dare two people whose ages are so disparate fall in love? Can they look forward to a long married life together, or must they settle for a few good years? What will their friends say? Can they be sexually compatible? And, God help us, just in case we might think we're not witnessing a soap opera, in one scene there is a television set on stage and a telecast of a complete Rheingold commercial.

I've been told I'm wrong about Chayefsky, that I don't understand what he's about, that he's interested in dramatizing the commonplace, and that it is something he does very well. People like what he writes. They recognize themselves. They can identify. To which I can only agree, and add that the same goes for soap opera, for otherwise would the soap companies sponsor it for these many years?

I will add further that the theatre is not radio nor television nor a Miss Lonelyhearts column nor a Court of Domestic Relations nor a place where one should listen to a discussion of ideas best found in *Ideal Marriage* or *The Male Sex Hormone.* "Pop, how's your sex life?" the daughter asks the manufacturer at one point. This gets a laugh. So does the mother when she asks the young girl: "Is everything all right in the bed?" This subtle theme is reiterated when the manufacturer comes out of the bedroom after having made love to the young girl, and says to her mournfully, "Yes, it was all right," and then plunges into a lengthy consideration of the sex problems of a man his age.

WHEN a television writer graduates to the stage one looks for a qualitative change in his work. Freed from censorship restrictions, his talent should now begin to expand. In Chayefsky's case, the restrictions of television were a blessing. Given an hour, he was not required to explore his material too deeply; his dialogue, if explicit, at least did not offend by its vulgarity. I have seen poor plays before, but none that left me quite so depressed. If an author is going to concern himself with commonplace he should at least have more than a commonplace attitude toward his characters. And his characters should end with a little more

than they had at the beginning. In *Middle of the Night* the man and the girl get married, and I suppose Chayefsky would contend that now they have each other, which is more than they had before. I would say they had less.

DURING the past season Broadway's preoccupation with the disturbed was resumed in *A Hatful of Rain* by Michael Gazzo. It was Gazzo's first play, and despite reservations the critics praised it. They admitted the play was crude in spots, curiously lopsided in construction, but that these things did not matter as much as they might because of the author's compassion for his characters and the humor and warmth of his dialogue. Audiences apparently shared this view for the play has had a good run and promises to have a longer one.

The setting of *A Hatful of Rain* is a bedroom, kitchen and hall in a lower East Side walk-up, and the problem it presents is that of a young man who has become a victim of drug addiction. Like many addicts, he needs more money than he can afford to pay for "the stuff." He is aided by his brother, and when this help is no longer forthcoming, he considers robbery. But, he is unable to go through with his plan, and makes an effort to rid himself of the habit. He fails, and at the end of the play consents to his wife's calling the police so that he can undergo medical treatment.

The play has been well-produced. Gorelik's set is excellent, and the actors help hide many of the play's deficiencies. This is especially true of Shelley Winters who plays the part of the understanding wife. We have had several such wives in the past decade—*Come Back, Little Sheba, The Country Girl,* etc.—and by now there are several very large rubber stamps to be shunned by the actress playing such a role. Miss Winters avoids them very well. She is never a nag, at the same time, she is never so sympathetic that she seems foolish. I cannot imagine another actress who could have handled her part so beautifully.

My objection to *A Hatful of Rain* is the objection I have to a number of plays of this type. The author is very much in earnest about his concern for his central character; at the same time he is careful to limit his exploration of his dilemma. There is no doubt our world is a sick one. It is only necessary to look at the statistics to realize that the number of emotionally and mentally disturbed has increased enormously. And why not? Breakdowns are caused by pressures, inside and out, with

which the individual is unable to cope, and in recent years those pressures have become unbearable. They must, it seems to me, in a society where great wealth is contrasted with poverty or insecurity, where capitalism does all it can to rob us of our hold on reality, and where the future is dominated by the hydrogen bomb. But what has happened is that our playwrights have ignored the social framework almost completely.

We are left with a procession of pitiful effects whose causes are not even implicit, or a garland of happy solutions which everyone knows will wither the moment the curtain is lowered. If things end badly, we have only the pathetic, not tragic, consolation that for *this* individual they could not have ended differently. If they turn out well, it is by the miraculous intervention of a *deus ex machina,* or the equally miraculous transformation of a destroyer into a rescuer.

A Hatful of Rain concludes with the wife's discovering her husband's addiction and calling the police. Even if we consider this "hopeful" outcome on its lowest sociological level, it should be obvious that the Law is expected to undo a situation for which it is responsible, since if addiction were not legally a crime its victim would not have to resort to criminals, protected by the police, to satisfy his need. Perhaps Gazzo could not speak so frankly; the police department is not overdisposed to grant licenses to plays which put its members in a bad light. In any case, not even the most naive adult believes that "the force" is an adequate representative of the community of mankind.

ARTHUR Miller possesses qualities rare in our theatre today, and any season which gives us a work by him is enriched thereby. He has passion; he is deeply concerned with the complexity of human relationships and while other playwrights with these attributes have fallen silent or become fashionable, he continues to try to illuminate, and be implicitly critical of, our society. Perhaps most important, he is aware that if a playwright is to develop he must be ready to use new dramatic forms. This past season he gave us two one-act plays under the title of the second, *A View From the Bridge.* The majority of the critics did not like them. Respectful of Miller's gifts they showed curious hostility to these works. Atkinson's summary dismissal of the first was insulting; Watts, in discussing the second, suggested that Miller leave such themes to Tennessee Williams who, he felt, does it better. On the Left, as usually happens with a Miller play, there was excited enthusiasm or vigorously

expressed disappointment. Some were as much baffled as others were stirred one way or the other.

In a *Memory of Two Mondays*—the first of the two plays—Miller returns to the Depression years and gives us a nostalgic potrait of a group of men and women working in a Brooklyn warehouse. An old man, carousing with a shopmate, is remorseful over his neglect of his wife as he worries about her health; her death comes when he is off on a drunken bout. A second character drinks and is helped by the solidarity of his fellows to escape the wrath of his boss. A third has romantic dreams of love but is inhibited by prudery. Still another, a young worker, plans to leave for college where he will go on to "higher" things. He regrets breaking away from this warm life of friendship and affection which common work creates, and fears he is leaving behind friends who will decay within a prison—a prison built by economic necessity.

I admired Miller's willingness to return to the Depression years for his setting; the memory is no more popular on Broadway than it is in Wall Street. I also admired the affection and sympathy Miller obviously has for his characters. I do not agree with those crtiics who saw them as trivial.

YET for me the play did not fulfill the promise of its material. There have been many plays with such a form as this: plays in which a group of people have been depicted as developing an understanding and sympathy for one another under the stress of events or an event. In *A Memory of Two Mondays* we are shown the people, but we are not shown the events. They are reported to us, so that the depiction remains a static one. At the end, I felt I had been given colorful notes for a play, but no play.

The second of the two plays, *A View From the Bridge,* is also set in Brooklyn, this time on the Red Hook waterfront. Its hero is a longshoreman, and the story is of his tormenting sexual desire for his wife's niece. He tries to suppress the desire, at the same time as he grows increasingly jealous of his wife's cousin, a young Italian immigrant who is in the United States illegally and who plans to marry the niece. When he can get rid of him in no other way, he betrays the young Italian and his brother to the Federal police. The community and family are numbed with horror by this deed, and the longshoreman is killed in a scuffle with one of his victims.

Of the two plays, Miller obviously intended the second to be the more important, and there are many admirable things in it. Miller's language is excellent. Without recourse to strained locutions or dialect he gives us the flavor of both American and Italian speech as it is spoken by those who live and work on the waterfront. Many of the scenes are constructed with the economy and passion which makes Miller's writing so compelling. I also admired what it seemed to me he was attempting: to present the audience with a modern concept of tragedy. To my mind he failed, but the failure was infinitely more interesting than most of the so-called successes of recent years.

Why the failure? Aware that audiences today are very much preoccupied with the problem of sexual frustration, Miller sought to dramatize certain of its psychological and social aspects. But in the play the psychological and social strands of the tragedy are not fully woven together. One keeps hoping for some growth of consciousness in the protagonist that would raise him above the level of a wounded animal and permit him to understand something of his motives and, finally, of his crime. To compensate for this absence of an essential component of tragedy—what in fact distinguishes it from even the highest pathos—Miller introduces the figure of the lawyer to whom Eddie goes for advice. His is the function of the Chorus in what Miller obviously intends to be an adaptation of ancient Greek tragedy. (Miller's theory of tragedy and what I believe to be his somewhat naive conception of Greek society and theatre are most interesting and worthy of a discussion which space forbids in a simple review.) I feel that this symbol of the consciousness of a human community cannot replace the self-realization of the great traditional tragic figures. However, Miller's understanding of the drama's need to rise above the level of individual puling makes him one of the few affirmative forces in the theatre today.

One incidental, but called-for observation. There has been much discussion on the Left as to whether *A View From the Bridge* is or is not a play about an informer. The issue is, I believe, a narrow one. If the play were simply that, then one could find little praise for its structure, to which the sexual theme is so central. On the other hand, the act of informing is the crime which separates the protagonist from his fellow men. Would it be frivolous to ask: is there an issue at all? This is not, however, to overlook Miller's contribution in taking it for granted that informing is a crime.

DURING the season there were two political plays, both anti-Communist. The first was *The Great Sebastians* by Howard Lindsday and Russel Crouse. Several years ago the same team wrote another anti-Communist play, *The Prescott Proposals* in which they tried to say something about the suicide of Jan Masaryk. It was a dull charade, and did not do well. In *The Great Sebastians* they returned to the subject of Masaryk's suicide, and this time I'm sure they felt they had a much more "sure-fire" approach. They would provide a vehicle for the Lunts in which the two celebrated stars would play a couple of mind-readers. This idea was a happy one; the rest of the play was not. It was fun to watch the Lunts perform their telepathy act; vaudeville of this sort always is, but vaudeville and something as serious as suicide don't go together, especially when the story is as foolish as this one.

I attended the second play, *Time Limit,* by Henry Denker and Ralph Berkey, with some reluctance, fairly certain that I would see a dramatization of an army publicity handout. I was not disappointed. The action, set against the background of the Korea war, embraces the efforts of an officer attached to the Army's legal staff to determine why another, trusted, officer with a hitherto exemplary record should consent to indoctrinate his fellow prisoners with the ideology of his captors. Amid news release trappings of hellish physical conditions, "brainwashing," and the like, we are given the compelling reason; if our officer had not cooperated, the enemy was prepared to ignore the rules of the Geneva convention and execute the prisoners. He would then be saddled with responsibility for their deaths.

Now it is certainly the privilege of authors to play the light of imagination upon a given fact. Is it, however, their right to use their craft to embellish a lie? In none of the published versions of the cases of those American officers who were alleged to have compromised their code of honor in confessing or bending to the will of their captors was it ever stated that they were confronted with the alternative here given as the cause of their moral capitulation. It was evident, from the equivocal character of the newspaper stories, that they could not be gotten to agree to such an account. The playwrights therefore produced what could not be supplied either by reality nor even by an unverified admission, since the latter was not forthcoming. Their moral drama of a "breaking point" is placed in the setting of a Hearst cartoon, with an accordingly subtle depiction of stainless Americans and indelibly vicious Chinese and Koreans.

But here comes the irony. Having established their mythical breaking point—mythical because they have invented the facts to justify it—the authors are now compelled to defend it against the demands of military authority which exacts blind obedience and pardons no weakness. (In this situation the rule is presumably "name, rank and serial number.") At the end of the play the officer who has conducted the judicial investigation agrees to take on the defense, himself believing that his client's defection was qualified by mitigating circumstances. He thereby places himself in opposition to his colleague in Wouk's *The Caine Mutiny Court Martial.* The latter knows the facts but upholds the values which are reduced to absurdity by the facts. The advocate of *Time Limit* uses the fictions of the military but gags at their values. In either case, fact—presumed or real—and ethic are not happy with one another.

It is evident that one must look outside the traditional circles of honor to find heroes for whom fact and moral grandeur were at one. Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, subjected to as much if not more pressure than the defendant of *Time Limit* is said to have been, did not break at the admissible "point." Could it be because their values never swerved from the fact of their innocence? And that they had greater conviction and more truth on their side than Denker and Berkey had in their play?

SINCE my beginning this article, *Waiting for Godot* by Samuel Beckett has opened and closed on Broadway. Beckett is an Irishman who lives in Paris and writes in French. His present work has received international acclaim. In Paris, Anouilh greeted it as the greatest play since Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author,* and it ran for almost a year. In London, after opening in an art theatre, it was hailed as a masterpiece and its subsequent popularity enabled it to move to the West End. In New York, though the engagement was a limited one, it was the subject of more controversy than any other play of the season.

The majority of the critics liked the play, but couldn't say why, finding most of it obscure, whereupon a number of literary and art critics devoted columns to explaining its meaning. Those on the Left who saw the play joined in the controversy; some judged it a masterpiece, others found it decadent, pretentious, stale. I did not think it a masterpiece, but I enjoyed it very much. It not only reminded me of the Pirandello play, but also of *Him* by E. E. Cummings: one of those plays that is not only a play, but a conundrum wherein the author plays tricks with time, keeps

juxtaposing illusions with reality and develops his central idea as a mathematician might develop an equation or a composer a theme.

BECKETT characterizes his play as a "tragicomedy in two acts," and his theme, as I understand it, is the end of European civilization. His main characters are two tramps, Estragon and Vladimir, and the action, such as it is, is epitomized by the tmitle: they are waiting for Godot. While they wait, Pozzo, a man of wealth, and Lucky, his wretched attendant, come along the road and the tramps make their acquaintance. Pozzo is sadistic in his treatment of Lucky, and yet is dependent upon him; Lucky not only serves him, but also engages in what passes for thinking. This dependency is symbolized by a thick rope binding them together, though one end is tied around Lucky's neck and the other is in Pozzo's hand. The representation of the historical master-slave relationship in all its aspects is unmistakable; Pharaoh and fellah, king and jester, modern intellectual and patron or capitalist. The tramps are intrigued by Lucky, especially when it is explained to them that he knows the meaning of life. And what is that meaning? It is revealed in an almost endless frenzied speech in double talk, mocking our cultural tradition. Disappointed, the tramps let Pozzo and Lucky continue along the road and resume their vigil. Presently a young boy appears and tells them that Godot will not come that evening, but surely tomorrow.

The second act takes place the following day, the same time, and the same place. The tramps again meet, and again continue to wait for Godot. But now they are growing impatient. How long will they have to wait? They quarrel, make up, become depressed, try to cheer each other up. They begin to realize they may have to wait indefinitely; indeed, their waiting is perhaps no more than the deferred hope that is so much a part of every life on this earth. Presently Pozzo and Lucky return, and now Pozzo is blind. His authirity is gone, h eis as wretched and forsaken as Lucky. Pozzo asks the tramps to help him, to have pity. At first they ignore his pleas, but then they relent; they have never liked the Pozzos of this world, but they have little talent for revenge. Before Pozzo and Lucky again go on their way the tramps ask Pozzo to make Lucky sing, and it is then they learn that not only is Pozzo blind, but Lucky now is dumb. After they go, the tramps continue to wait for Godot, only to have the young boy appear again and tell them that Mr. Godot will

not come that day, but will surely come on the morrow.

The play is pessimistic, but it is not depressing. Beckett believes that European civilization is at the end of the road, but he is not ready to write off Man. The two tramps, wonderfully played by Bert Lahr and E. G. Marshall, will continue to wait—in William Faulkner's words, they "will prevail." And helping them will be their humor which I found altogether delightful. It was ribald, touching, and as disrespectful as a limerick on a gravestone.

I found I liked the play for another reason quite independent of its many merits. While disagreeing with its point of view, I was glad to have it because, like *The Chalk Garden, Tiger at the Gates,* and *Red Roses For Me,* the author was saying something about the society in which his characters were trying to survive.

Which brings me back to the theme of this piece. Since Geneva, the war party in our country has been given a number of set-backs. Changes, too, have occurred in the political climate here at home. For many the blinders are being removed, and they are again beginning to see themselves as citizens in a society whose direction they can shape. Perhaps in a year, or another two years, this change will begin to reflect itself in our theatre. If it does, then we will no longer need so many importations to give us an exciting theatre season.

THE TROUBLED MANDARINS

By TIMON

"DESPAIR is my business," wrote Kafka in a tragic letter he never dared send to his father. How could he? Wasn't his father precisely his despair? Wasn't his state derived from the complex of authority and dependence, of rebellion and helplessness, in which life had placed his will? So there he see-sawed and could find no act of liberation while he wrote a marvellous prose whose endlessly qualified banality aptly mirrored the fallen condition in which Existentialists say men live their ambiguous and chattering lives. This half-mad and morally tormented Jew from Prague became for a paralyzed generation of liberal intelligentsia the symbol of their inability to work out the dilemma between authority and personal liberty, between social commitment and intellectual freedom. Communists, however, and other active radicals felt themselves immune from such agonies of vacillation. *They* had no conundrums in *their* faith. They did not, like Achilles, hang back forever in suffering and hope, always on the verge of catching the tortoise and never quite able to pass the last infinitely small and yet infinitely divisible bit of volition. But one day a fresh wind blew from Moscow. There were deliberate leaks and hints (a form of therapy more suitable in psychoanalysis than political science). There were painful indications that despair was everybody's business.

And it was about time. There may be two systems but there is only one humanity.

Traveller, take word to the men of Lakedaímon:
We who lie buried here did what they told us to do.

---

* Timon is the pen-name of a prominent progressive writer who because of the threat of blacklisting cannot sign his name.

We are publishing his article as one reaction to the problems raised by recent political events. We invite our readers to discuss its analysis and implications.—*The Editors.*

IT IS with a fragment of this world community that Simone de Beauvoir deals in her new novel, *The Mandarins.*** The climate in which her characters pursue their destinies is close to a reality which many of us have known, and this more than her art is the particular fascination the novel seems to have worked on its reviewers. This kind of intellectual ferment brutalized by politics was characteristic of our generation. It took different forms in different countries. In the United States it led to one kind of conformity; in the Soviet Union to another; but in Paris it was known as the 'gala' days of Existentialism.

> (Sartre), Camus and the Existentialists had become historical characters, willy-nilly. They had spoken to excess of *commitment*s now they were committed. More than ever before French political tendencies sought an outlet for expression through certain writers. The notion of the literary man, of the uncommitted writer, had disappeared from the French intellectual landscape. What Mauriac was doing for Christian Democracy and Aragon for the Communists, the non-Marxist left expected Sartre and Camus to do, especially after Malraux had become the spokesman for the Gaullist Rassemblement. . . .
>
> Sartre and his friends did indeed essay a "Rassemblement Démocratique Révolutionnaire," but the experiment turned out badly, and the mass meetings in the Salle Wagram were too much like a slightly expanded Saint-Germain-des-Pres. The Rassemblement came to an end. Disagreements arose concerning the concrete steps to be taken with regard to the concentration camps in the U.S.S.R. A divergency of view between Sartre and Camus led to a rupture. . . .
>
> (Yacques Guicharnaud, Yale French Studies, 1955)

And so one by one the virtues painfully acquired during the German Occupation began to fall away, the illusions of a common integrity, of honor, pride, friendship, loyalty, morality, the ideals of simplicity, clarity and art. Peace opened up the old wounds, and anarchists, liberals, Communists, existentialists, collaborators, prepared to survive, divided up once more into left and right, separated by class and character, by weakness and strength, by disposition and accident.

Into what had the daring and breathless unity of the Resistance disappeared? Where now was the lyricism of death and degradation, the discoveries of the mind, of a philosophy which celebrated the existence of man as it despaired of his hopes? The bourgeois boys and girls had fallen in love with desperate actions and desperate thoughts. "Our earliest existentialist apprenticeship was spent, in the main, in reading Kafka,

** *The Mandarins* by Simone de Beauvoir. The World Publishing Co. $6.00.

Sartre's *Nausea* and *The Stranger* by Albert Camus. In those works we found (more readily than in Pascal, for we were infidels) the great metaphors that rendered intelligible for us our own lot, made up of solitude and of a complex of slavery and freedom." (Guicharnaud).

Unlike the workaday Communists who had already known bitter struggle in the Thirties, the young middle class intellectuals had been suckling at the tradition of enlightenment and illusion provided by some of the best schools in Europe. These bright children did not know the difference between the imaginative comprehension of man's fate and the dirty job of killing. With their country lost and the German in occupation they endured a state of troubled anxiety as day by day they went about the ordinary existence of mechanical survival. Their anxiety, indefinite, free-flowing, generalized, was literally what Heidegger (the German father of Sartre's existentialism) philosophically had called *angst.* When these pupils in the café finally forced themselves to face the necessity of dealing with death, when they forced themselves into an authentic state of existence, they escaped the banality of their universe, the chattering and ambiguity in which man swims like an anesthesized fish, and found an answer in terror, the headiest of all narcotics.

What a romance with anguish! Yet it was a practical way of coming to grips with the nipping teeth of the Occupation. This philosophy of despair and action brought liberty, personal, daring, heroic, romantic. And in this liberty they could endure the crying dead of Oradour and Buchenwald, the firing squads, the bombed cities, and even the atomic demolitions which arrived as a bonus for their own new freedom.

BUT PEACE collapsed the unity, and comrades became enemies. People had survived, and survival is after all a form of progress. Were they wiser? To begin again after much defeat is the ultimate in animal sagacity. But surviving and beginning were not enough in the world of the cold war. What after all is an authentic state in the daily morass of mixed motives, when the revolution you desire seems to be indifferent to the humanism ou love, when every choice seems self-defeating? Where does one turn with a horizon bounded by Stalin's Russia, McCarthy's America, Algeria, Korea, Africa, any place?

It is on these facts that Mlle. de Beauvoir has founded her fiction, altering where she had to to emphasize her main questions: it is possible to have a Left, independent of but not hostile to the Communists? Are

intellectual freedom and social commitment incompatible? Can a man be an honest writer and a politician at the same time? Is the Western European tradition of humanism basic to socialism, or irrelevant to it?

These questions have arisen sharply in the last months and have now generated what seems to me to be real crisis among all Marxists. They give *The Mandarins* the added flavor of journalism.

2.

THE WORLD of post-war French journalism is the center around which the novel modulates.

Robert Dubreuilh (read Sartre) is the practical and spiritual leader of the new independent Left. He is a man of sixty, a famous writer known for the role he has played in progressive poltics as well as for his command of moral theory. He is married to Anne (for whom I suppose we might read Simone de Beauvoir.) Their relation is based on utmost freedom and mutual respect, a kind of godly father and understanding daughter compact in which each practices adultery on an unrefreshing and random basis. It is proof of their personal liberty and mutual reasonableness. It is also, no doubt, a cause of their daughter's total unhappiness.

The actual physical characteristics of Robert seem to be taken from André Gide as do certain qualities of his mind, and there is a rightness about the choice, for Gide, too, was an important disturber of young intellectuals. (It would be interesting now to read his two books on the U.S.S.R. and to reconsider the Communist attack on his veracity.) The difference between Robert Dubreuilh and Sartre is that the real man says that he is not as deeply committed to political action as his literary heir. A reporter from Le Monde asked him, "Do you feel of one mind with the character of Dubreuilh whom Mlle. Beauvoir invented, or perhaps modelled on you, in *Les Mandarins?*" Sartre reply was, "Yes, and no . . . as so often happens . . . he has gone much further than I."

The third main character in the novel is Henri Perron, a man in his thirties, an admirer, almost a disciple of Robert. Perron (read Camus) is the leader of a band of young *actives* and partly owns a newspaper created during the underground days and now a center of the non-Communist Left. Robert wants the paper to become the organ of his new political party (read Rassemblement Democratique Revolutionnaire).

USING these three characters as centers (with Anne playing the role of an observing intelligence as well as an actor in the plot) the author develops parallel structures of failure in their lives. This wonderful effect of simultaneously knowing and not really knowing what actually happened, of suspecting what might have occurred, gives the novel a suspense which is certainly unliterary, inveigling us to proceed with gossip where the story loses aesthetic momentum. Despite the brisk and constant flow of conversation the fact that the novel does not really succeed in transforming its materials into literature becomes an incentive for us to guess who really said what in actual life and who slept with whom. The febrile air, dry, with above normal temperature, is captured along with the yawning abysses of boredom and circular dialogue. But this effect, I believe, is intentional. It means to ape what the Existentialists call the normal unauthentic life. Being there in everyday existence is to be there in a generalized anxiety, without any point of reference, living in a language made up of the ceaseless chatter of those who are with us. All the while we are involved in caring about our consciousness, our being, not sure, in doubt, floating along. Instead of generating this as an aesthetic state, Mlle. de Beauvoir and all the existentialist writers seem to reproduce it as a psychological analogue. This is the public world in which each one of us endures. It does not make the dramatic world we expect from literature although it frequently makes a violent one. And so the writing of these modern *philosophes* always contains extraordinary scenes of brutality which read somehow with utter passivity, and even a novel like *The Mandarins* has its quota of sexual and physical brutality that always appears arbitrary and therefore without shock.

Henry and his newspaper soon come within the orbit of Robert's new party, but the younger man is dissatisfied with his role there, for joining a party independent of the Communists also means that a certain freedom is lost. Henri is more and more exasperated by a political struggle which he no longer enjoys. He wants to disappear into his private life and write those books which seem relevant to his rediscovery of peace instead of grinding out the political opinions which daily life absorbs in endless new problems. He finds the occasion to break with Robert over the choice of publishing or not publishing a disclosure of the so-called Russian 'concentration' camps. Robert who believes in their existence feels they are not central to the Socialist state. He deplores them. On the other hand to publish the article would be to declare war on the Communists. "They'd have the right to consider us as traitors."

Henri feels that principle overrides the practical political fact that the Communists wont like it.

> He didn't want the Communists to see him as an enemy, and more important, he would have liked to hide from himself the fact that in Russia too something was rotten. . . ." A communist would have the right to choose silence," he thought. "His positions have been stated, and, even when he lies, he is not in a way deceiving anyone. But I, who profess independence, if I use my credit to stifle the truth, I'm a swindler. I'm not a Communist precisely because I want to be free to say the things that Communists don't want to say and can't say. . . ."

Sartre's own position on this matter is of some interest since it is far less adamant than Robert's and yet equally strong and clear on the side of the future as he sees it. The reporter from *Le Monde* asked:

> Q: Imagine, Monsieur, that the same problem confronting (Robert) Dubreuilh in Les Mandarins confronted you today. . . . Would you hesitate, if you were accused of the truth of these accounts, to deal with them?
>
> A: . . . if I were convinced of the truth of these new facts, even if revealing them might embarrass the Communist Party, I would reveal them. . . . But I insist that, to have the right to criticize a movement as important as the Communist movement, one must work with it. . . .

IN THE NOVEL, Henri Perron influenced by a lie told by a professional anti-Communist who sounds a lot like Koestler, breaks with Robert Dubreuilh and publishes the articles on the Soviet camps. His purpose is twofold, the principle of journalistic truthfulness and his intention to bring pressure on the Soviet Union to change its inhuman policies. Equally compelling is the fact that he feels a little unhappy and uncomfortable (like so many American liberals) because he is being called pro-Communist and worse. Open enmity breaks out between the two friends and what follows is the destruction of the new political party and the taking over of the newspaper by anti-Communists and rightists whom Robert had introduced into this political nest with the dishonest candor of the cuckoo bird.

Dubreuilh retires from political action. He begins to doubt the very humanism which brought him, as it brought so many bourgeois intellectuals, to the Left. He doubts the private morality under which he lives, the standards of conduct which he believes traditional and necessary for the freedom of mind and art. He doubts the efficacy of writing as a

reasonable mode of behavior and influence in a world which obviously rejects his values. In a conversation with his wife, Anne, Robert says:

> "Do you want to know what I really think?"
>
> "Naturally."
>
> "An intellectual no longer has any role to play. . . . Why do I write? Because man does not live by bread alone and because I believe in the need for that added element. I write to capture all the things action ignores—the truths of the moment, the individual, the immediate. Up to now, I thought that that task went hand in hand with the revolution. But no; it hinders it. . . ."
>
> "You've always avoided that misunderstanding."
>
> "But things have changed," Robert said. "You see, today the revolution is in the hands of the Communists and of them alone. There is no longer any place for the values we used to defend. Maybe one day we'll find them again; let us hope so. But if we stubbornly insist on maintaining them right now, we serve the cause of counter-revolution."

HENRI who is much less of a philosopher and more of a poet struggles longer and more deviously. The circle of young men around him splits for and against, and even into indifference. In general they follow their class origins. One or two continue on with the one action that gave them a feeling of being utterly truthful and authentic: they carry on terrorism against former collaborators. The Communists, especially Henri's closest friends, those whom he served with in the Resistance, those whose dangers and daring he shared, attack him violently. They know his past and use even the most insignificant events, of no importance, to show that Henri is now a class enemy. The Right does the same, for Henri will not attack the Communists and share the rightist fervor for American foreign policy. He twists and turns, trying to find a personal method of adjustment, of writing, of thinking, of living. He tastes the delights of irresponsibility (a form of freedom the way seeing double is a form of variety), gourmandizing with sensuality, socializing with parasites and ultimately with collaborators. He finds love in the simple but cunning mind and elaborately pleasureable body of a young woman offered by her mother along with the money and a theatre for a play he has written. To save mother and daughter from blackmail because of their collaborationist past, he lies and saves the life of a murderous German agent. Henri lives in himself now. He faces nothing, only the problem of writing, and yet what is there to write about except that which has been lived and longed for?

The two men, master and pupil, are reunited by their common failure. Robert is convinced that their party, their paper and their principles had no real role to play in a world dominated by the struggle between capitalism and communism. He and Henri were of no account and history can only absorb them in its anonymity and inevitability. But Mlle. de Beauvoir permits herself an ironic touch. When the Communists need a non-Communist to serve on a committee with them, they approach Henri and not Robert. Robert, they feel, has been compromised by being too close to them. He is no longer useful. Henri accepts because he feels no anger toward the Communists. Their actions, like his own, seem beyond alteration and will. Of course, this same irony in another form has been visited upon Sartre who can hardly speak for peace or Sobell without being considered no better than the most ardent Communist, and he now enjoys all the drawbacks of party membership without the advantages, such as they may be.

PARALLELING the political actions is Mlle. de Beauvoir's deep concern with the violent and destructive relation between the sexes.

The central love affair is a transatlantic passion involving Anne Dubreuilh and a Chicago novelist. In it the wife duplicates the husband's political phases. She finds it impossible to be possessed or to possess and be independent at the same time. Man's individual nature is such that he cannot possess another creature, only his own self, and even that cannot really be found in all the joy and anguish of love, for true freedom is the freedom found in the facing of death, the ultimate nothing and the liberation that comes from its recognition. So Anne, trembling with quiet desperation on the verge of middle age, longing for a giving and a taking that will pluck her from the nerveless entropy of her professional and domestic banality, attaches herself to this American, revolves through every orbit of desire and parting, challenges the decay of time with hope, and in the end realizes that she cannot really have this man as one can perhaps have nothing in the universe but the state of one's own consciousness, one's own being hovering over extinction.

In a long passage toward the end of the book Anne contemplates suicide. She survives the temptation and it seems like a triumph to her, but to me it has all the aspects of mere repetition. I find it hard to catch the exact value such scenes seem to have for the author except as examples of the theory of the so-called authentic states. This makes them illustra-

tions rather than propelled and cumulative actions which illuminate the destiny of her characters.

Matching Anne is her contrary, Paula, the old and soon to be abandoned mistress of Henri. This woman has planned her whole life as a total grant to her lover until her very existence, her least word, the very perfume and color that infatuated have now become nauseous to him. By yielding her last molecule of independent being to him she finally enslaves him in her own slavery. He revolts and leaves her. She goes mad. A short course of psychiatric treatment restores her to the living where she floats around, insulated and useless, armored with Freudian clichés against the death that is in her.

Total freedom in love as in politics, the author seems to say, like total commitment dies of inanition.

These fictions which Mlle. de Beauvoir has woven of the facts press the meanings more clearly to their polarities. She raises her central questions in every aspect of this long novel, the philosophic ones as well as the practical political ones. She is rigorously honest and does not propose answers where she can find none. Her system of thought tends, I believe, to exaggerate contraries, but then all motion is through contraries. Inevitably her questions like her examples lead into areas which now after many years are becoming habitable to Marxists, questions of art, humanism, intellectual and personal freedom.

The great surge of criticism and debate which recent months have seen point to long hidden and deeply disturbing dissatisfactions with the leading communist parties of the world. The fact that a speech in Moscow can touch off so long and explosive a train of reactions indicates that the suppressed elements of creative force, of anger, of long self-control have been numerous. I do not know what answers people in different countries will come up with and I do not know that these problems can be solved. In terms of Mlle. de Beauvoir's book I would like to pursue one single question: why do Robert Dubreuilh and Henri Perron refuse to join the party that they believe with all their hearts holds the key to man's future?

THE IDEA in history is that man has a significant social destiny. For it Communists have sacrificed their fortunes, their happiness and their lives. They have gambled with an idea that can be tested in reality and thus differentiated it from other notions of human perfectability.

What the Communists have in effect said is that by abolishing the private ownership of the means of production they can liberate the full potential of each human being. This is not a dream of Paradise which exists in the untestable hereafter but a leap into the dark of the now of politics. The great religious and the great economies of the world are thus challenged not only in their everyday workings but in their ideals.

Now why is it that men like Robert Dubreuilh and Henri Perron, committed to socialism, cannot join the Communist party of France although they recognize it as the only means of effecting their hopes? Why must they try by beginning and end by beginning again to form a Left independent of but not hostile to the Communists? (Both Robert and Henri are convinced that an anti-Communist Left is only another instrument against socialism.) Simone de Beauvoir says in effect that neither personal morality, nor intellectual freedom, nor scientific truth, not artistic integrity have been permitted to play any independent role where they have conflicted with the Communist praty line. The Communists are simply indifferent to these human needs and where men have persisted in expressing them both men and the needs have been suppressed.

In recent times I have seen the argument that these freedoms are illusory. Freedom, it is said, is the recognition of necessity, and the necessity of the party line (equated with history) in which the Communists finds full expression of his daily life, *is his freedom.* This is the argument of the infallibility of an absolute science. But one is forced no wonder what kind of infallible science is this whose wavering lines are so often wrong. I have heard the answer that it is the men who are fallible, not the science. Such reasons and such arguments can only be satisfactory to men who do not live in the difficult and exciting world of our times. It is the reasoning of monkish types isolated from everything but their own power to command. We have seen them before in history and they are not worth much.

The truth is that if there are doubts and difficulties in existence only intellectual freedom can let nature enter with its fresh and various circumstances. Is there no room in the general commitments to political action for the artist and the scientist to investigate and utter those truths they see about them, to find forms that preserve their meanings and celebrations that elaborate the necessities and existence of the human spirit? Only yesterday the House Un-American Activities Committee in

Washington wanted to know if Arthur Miller thought artists had special privileges. He had refused to be an informer. This very question, although on another aspect of personal morality and artistic freedom, has been asked again and again by the Communist party leadership. Some years ago when Albert Maltz rather gently raised the question of the intellectual's and the artist's need to be free to experiment and investigate the truths around him, it was the forerunner of this very magazine that led the attack against him; and just as the House Committee is not merely content to attack those it thinks wrong but demands recantation and personal abasement, so it was with Maltz at the hands of his friends. Tyranny is always the same even if it wears the mask of Socialism. There was Hemingway on Marty. I'm sure that each reader can supply his own examples.

THE ROLE of the artist is not to worry about the political sensitivities of people, but to stimulate them into new areas of experiment and expression. A real work of art is a very great discovery made through a complex process of creation. It is a process in which one kind of reality is transformed into another and so the product always contains more than the artist can conceive at any stage therein. And very often many generations pass before, under different social conditions, elements of the work heretofore concealed in their effects come to light. So Donne spoke for the poets of the Twenties and Stendhal for the Resistance of the Forties. Each work of art is a crucial experiment in human living for the artists as well as his audience.

Now a work of art, like a fundamental discovery in science. is not really about those things with which practical politics, tactical lines, etc., is concerned. The tendency in social commitment is conformity, as in the United States and in the Soviet Union. Yet if people are offended because their cherished illusions are shaken or their covering faiths outraged, well, that is the very point of literature, that is the very motion of a truthful life, to be shaken up, to be disturbed, to be awakened, even from a dream of the American or Soviet Paradise. There is no idea, no theory, no way of life that cannot be reshaped, illuminated and made more human by being subject to the imagination and criticism of the artist. In art as in science nothing is sacred. Many a man who marches under the banner of progress is basically a conservative, quick to take offense when his particular illusion about history or politics is doubted.

The question which moral men and women must face is whether or not they have an absolute duty toward the state or some political party. Kierkergaard quotes a passage full of terror from Luke: "If any man cometh unto me and hateth not his own father and mother and wife and children and brethren and sisters, yea, and his own life also he cannot be my disciple." Mlle. de Beauvoir considers the Communists as people of this nature, given over and totally committed, so that when they are accused of being without principle it is indeed the very principle of Luke which they are living.

Is this true? Is this what Communism means, this absolutism of the soul based on an infallible truth which cannot be questioned? Is it true as Henri says that Communists by reason of their commitment cannot utter certain truths? Is it true what Robert says: that man's oldest and dearly bought humanities are alien to socialism?

But who if not Marx and Engels preached that only through Socialism could intellectual freedom and personal liberty come to its legitimate and universal birth? Yet these new reports that come as self-criticism every day from the Socialist countries, what do they signify? Even the most pathetic, that there is a quota on Jews holding positions in the Soviet Union. Even the most incredible, that trials were arranged and confessions forced. Even the most laughable, that science was changed and works of art altered. Even the most bewildering, that for twenty years men in power and control knew all this and dared not speak. If the leaders dare not speak, when can the followers?

It is not the cult of personality which has caused this crisis in Marxism. It has been the repudiation of the cult of the human as opposed to every abstraction of myth, religion and state. It is always in the name of an abstraction that everything sensitive and delicious in life is crushed, that the dead become more important than the living, and the survival of theory more important than the existence of people. Actual freedom in actual motion is always abolished in the name of a higher liberty, states rights, or the sanctity of individual contracts.

It was Socialism that first offered a universal practical idea to fulfill the humanist need and it was the Communists who gave their lives at home and abroad to create the political conditions for the experiment. Has it failed? Is it succeeding? It is too soon to say but not too soon to speak. That Socialism as a political economy may soon exist everywhere seems probable now and it is no joke when witty members of our State

Department ask: *Can Capitalism exist in one country alone?*

Actually the questions raised by Mlle. de Beauvoir are not ones for the non-Communist at all, at least not exclusively, since he cannot answer them. They are the responsibility of the individual Communist Party members in every country, socialist or not. It is they who must decide what is going to happen. If this present crisis among Marxists should end merely in a shakeup which perpetuates the mentality and fears of inflexible men who have created the situation, then Socialism may indeed come to this world as other societies have come, bringing enough happiness and enough pain, but not the promise and the intellectual spirit which was its challenge to every political economy before it. Necessity will force the Soviet Union as it will force the United States to do what has to be done, but men must be prepared to live at every moment beyond that necessity if they propose to create the conditions of a thoroughly human existence.

books in review

Ballad of the Beaten

A WALK ON THE WILD SIDE, by Nelson Algren. Farrar, Straus and Cudahy. $4.50.

THE first thing to know about the new novel by Nelson Algren is that it is about America. This may seem self-evident; the location is New Orleans and all the characters are American; but you might not know it from the reviews the book has received. Like many books that deal critically (in this case, savagely), with American life, *A Walk on the Wild Side* was received as though, really, it dealt with life on some other planet. Certain of its low types might be recognized as indigenous fauna, if you lifted the rug up far enough, but, after all, they are only the freaks of our society and without any real social meaning.

But it is Algren's contention that the outcasts who people his work are the salt of the American earth and it is only by standing on their backs that the rest of us are able to reach the particular trough in which we feed. To point this out, he has written what is actually a ballad, a long story-song about one Dove Linkhorn, a boy who "came of a shambling race. That gander-necked clan from which Calhoun and Jackson sprang. Jesse James' and Jeff Davis' people. Lincoln's people. Forest solitaries spare and swart, left landless as ever in sandland and Hooverville now the time of the forests had passed. Whites called them "white trash" and Ne groes 'po buckra.'"

Algren calls them the chosen people. They are lost, but in their lostness is their salvation. To him, they have solved the problem of how to survive in a ruthless acquisitive society and still retain your soul. The answer is to renounce acquisition, to become *lumpen,* whether by choice or from the weight of the society pushing down from above.

As illustration, Algren follows the career of young Linkhorn from Texas to New Orleans and back again. The time is the hopeless Thirties, during the depression, and, as in many ballads, what Algren is really singing is a passion play, the lonesome story of a boy whose only equipment was his sexual prowess and his mother wit, who was eternally innocent and without greed, and who for h

troubles ended up blind and broke. It is a good American story and the jobs that Dove holds are in the sound American tradition, from selling nonexistent coffee pots to exhibiting for prurient voyeurs in a whore house. Each of these picturesque incidents is a stanza in the ballad. Each of them apostrophies one or more of Dove's natural attributes, and they are all a paean to his indestructibility, even at the end when, his eyes beaten out in a senseless fight with a legless man, Dove taps his way back to the Mexican woman who has been his first love.

And what Algren means by this is summed up by Dove near the end, when with his infinite patience he is waiting to be released from jail. "I feel like I been everywhere God got and," Dove thinks, "yet all I found was people with hard ways to go . . . All I found was two kinds of people. Them that would rather live on the loser's side of the street with the other losers than to win off by themselves; and them who want to be one of the winners even though the only way left for them to win was over them who have already been whipped. . . Yet I wouldn't trade off the worst of the lot for the best of the other kind. I think they were the real salt of the earth."

The feeling is true enough; the notion is deepfelt and true; and still the novel fails to satisfy. Part of the reason is technical. The limits of the book seem arbitrary. As in a ballad, the story could be twice as long or half as long. The point about Dove and the world is made at the beginning and merely stated and restated for the rest of the book. There is no real progression, no development in Dove or anyone else. His tragedy at the end is horrifying, but without the stature that Algren intends. In this respect, *A Walk on the Wild Side* is reminiscent of a novel called *A Cool Million* by Nathanael West. In that bitter book, West was writing a Horatio Alger story in reverse. His hero came to the big city full of all the American virtues and was destroyed by inches. First he lost an arm, then a leg, then he had to have a plate put in his skull, then he was blinded; finally, almost totally artificial, he was killed altogether in a way that set him up as martyr for an American fascist movement.

Like Algren, West was writing out of a fierce and genuine emotion. But in both books, the events are repetitious. The movement is mechanical and both endings are ironic without being tragic. In West's story, there was no attempt at characterization. The style was a deliberate parody and no one was expected to come alive. But Algren writes of people and, if his book fails, it is because his people have failed to carry and illuminate his point. Most of them do come alive. They are carefully observed and written with love. They have no

size, but that is not Algren's fault. He has tried to create them as large as he thinks they are; they are simply not that big. That they are considered bums does not, in itself, make them big. Also, after a while, they are not even interesting; not because they are at the bottom of the social scale, but because their behavior is so predictable, even in its violence and eccentricities. They seem to possess only the most elementary volition and so act without surprise or revelation. The rut they are in may seem picaresque, but it is still a rut; in his attempt to prove that it is really a four-lane highway full of curves, Algren creates a great deal of very fancy language. But since the people do not really move, the language turns in on itself and becomes just windy.

The idea that whores, pimps, beggars and bums are interesting is very often a delusion, as is the idea that their professions give their lives a kind of ipso facto profundity. Yet these are Algren's ideas and he has written this book to prove them. But he really sees no further than they do. In getting down with them, he seems to have lost his own perspective, and with it the ability to make them meaningful or even interesting. He is mired with them, and with this book his identification seems to have become complete, leaving little or no room for the artist's extension. And, like them, he sees the world as composed only of the bums and the great, undifferentiated, exploiting mass pressing down on them. He is heedless of all those who make up the majority of the world, who are neither the exploiters nor the passively exploited, who, if they do not fight directly against their exploitation, at least work and work hard and suffer and struggle, whose struggles make the earth move, who do all of the building and most of the dying, and on whose backs the world is really built. Certainly, it is Algren's right to create what he finds significant, but it becomes a fatal omission when he cannot even recognize the existence of ordinary people. For his outcasts come from them; they are only the poor relatives, the side of the family nobody talks about. But they are not better because they are low and they are not low because they are better.

Some years ago, in an Army library, I picked up Algren's first novel, *Never Come Morning,* about a Polish boy in Chicago who wanted to be a fighter, and read it with mounting wonder and excitement at an American writer who was so good and true and had so much feeling and so much art. Later, I read *The Man With the Golden Arm,* which moved me, but also seemed a retreat from the earlier book, perhaps more artfully written it had essentially the same theme of betrayal and expiation and self-destruction, although with the aspirations more specialized and less real

That is so disturbing about *A Walk the Wild Side* is that it seems a eater retreat. It is static and over- own, it is sentimental, and it is dull. a day when our literary giants are erman Wouk and Sloan Wilson, is more than ordinarily upsetting to id a writer of Algren's gifts not eeting even the standards he has set r himself.

WALTER BERNSTEIN.

Half-Hearted Search

N SEARCH OF HERESY, by John W. Aldridge. McGraw-Hill. $4.00.

PURSUING heresy in the literary world of America today is, as r. Aldridge reports it, not a happy cupation. Wherever he looked he und an ice age of conformity and tle else—hardly a crack of dissent, breath of creative independence. the end of the Forties, the author lls us, the freeze which had begun ter the last world war was virtually mplete: the modern literary move- ent had been "absorbed into the uni- rsities, where its massive indigna- on had cooled down to small fastidi- s tics experienced by undergradu- e students in the damp undercaves libraries, and where its great semi- l ideas had been frozen and crys- ized into churchly authoritarian gma."

Literature, in another metaphor, had been taken over by professors who "enjoyed all the benefits of creative calomel without any of the dangers," men who wrote nothing themselves but who had been taught by writers to teach others how to write. *How* to write, that was the important thing—not how to translate any experience of real life into literature, or even how to derive inspiration and craft enlightenment directly from the works of great masters who did make use of experience. Thus, Aldridge explains, instead of reading Henry James the "young avant-gardist" now reads Percy Lubbock on *The Ambassadors* and then attempts to apply James-via-Lubbock to his own work. If he comes any nearer a creative source, apparently, he may burn his fingers off. Or his fate might be still more tragic: he might be considered "vulgar."

There are other ways of conformism. One described in *The Search For Heresy* is that of the *Partisan Review,* which partially distinguishes itself from the university-sponsored *Sewanee* and *Kenyon Reviews* by promoting a sort of "intellectual anti-intellectualism" that inspires its *litterateurs* to discover the value of "mass egalitarian culture" and to "claim ownership of more used cars, ranch-style houses, and television sets than the average citizen would find quite decent." Then there are the big publishing houses, manufacturing

books in an inflationary situation of quick turnover and sales that leaves little room for discrimination between good and bad. In such an atmosphere any genuine creativity goes unhonored if not unnoticed. The novel that does get "discovered" is as quickly forgotten—except of course for the fabulously promoted "best sellers," which are not apt to be novels of dissent but, rather, such pink-ribboned packages of conformity as *Marjorie Morningstar.*

As Aldridge views it, the spirit of heresy, dissent, and creative independence in American novelists of this decade is slight in any case. They have, he feels, little to dissent *from,* since "present-day conformism is not morally or ethically based but rather emphasizes passive and amoral qualities—comfort, security, peace of mind—which do not represent a dogma nor suggest a heresy." And he devotes a section of his book to a discussion of Lionel Trilling's thesis that modern novels suffer from our society's lack of "manners"—not etiquette manners but "those restraining and defining forms, structures, rituals, patterns and convention of conduct" (roughly, rigid forms of class distinctions, religious authority, and moral laws) which are held to provide the ingredients or at least the background of dramatic life. Another chapter goes into the problem of novels in the "other-directed" culture described by David Riesman who, while completely misunderstanding the real causes of what he describes, has drawn a chilling picture that checks only too well with one's own observations of a large section of America's middle class in its most passive and amoral aspects.

Merely to search for heresy in these circumstances begins to seem almost violently heretical. More than one reviewer has attacked Aldridge's report as an absurd exaggeration, and another has deplored his "bad manners" in taking issue with certain critics. Their annoyance is not likely to be lessened by the fact that the author is himself a university professor, who apparently isn't gentlemanly enough to choke himself with the old school tie. But quarrels over etiquette only evade the point. The literary situation, if it is accurately portrayed in this book, is sufficiently dismaying to rule out undignified squabbles among critics in favor of some long thinking by all concerned. Nor is it any comfort to the real dissenters, whom Aldridge either failed to discover or purposely overlooked, to find that while they have suffered from isolation they have also escaped some peculiar horrors. For novelists and critics of the Left, it is more important to realize the opportunities we have missed in failing to provide creative and critical nourishment in anything like the amount and quality needed to sustain the innocent victims of what Aldridge calls "perni-

ous academia"—or even enough to
romote our own growth.

Aldridge's book regrettably does
ot offer sustenance either. It pro-
ides the fresh air of expose and
rotest. But there are stale currents
the freshness, some perhaps from
ne "damp undercaves of libraries,"
hers from less direct sources of con-
rmist contagion. The author seems
us least convincing, and certainly
ast appealing, when he himself joins
a fashion, like attacking the his-
rical method of criticism as repre-
nting "a kind of epicurean YMCA
or those who have aspired and
iled to win membership in the in-
rnational fraternity of taste." This
it of snobbishness isn't typical but
ere is too often a suggestion of su-
eriority and occasionally of sourness
the tone. Stimulating questions
e raised in a stimulating way, but
premonition of the dead end makes
self felt almost from the beginning.
o say that the writer in present-day
meric has nothing to dissent from
ecause the values hostile to the crea-
ve spirit have not been embodied
dogma is merely to open a subject
at Aldridge apparently regards as
ttled. Similarly, there is much more
be said on the question of "man-
rs" and the novel than either Ald-
lge or Trilling seems to be aware

The trouble with this search for heresy is that it doesn't search far enough. Not only are these things in American life to dissent from, but the dissent exists; and not only is it dissent from but dissent *for,* dissent with a goal. How could it be otherwise in any society of many groups of people with opposing interests, values and aspirations? We may agree with Aldridge that the 1950's present problems of material, form, and perspective more difficult than those of the Twenties or Thirties . We needn't agree that their solution can only be indicated by a vague hope that some "younger people" (Mr. Aldridge is thirty-two) will emerge from somewhere to form an audience which will force the reviewers to recognize real creativity when it does appear. Judging by the author's own testimony, the younger people of today are hardly being instructed toward such a role. Novelists and critics themselves have a job to do without waiting for a possible audience of the future. It will be done better if, as Mr .Aldridge says, they resist attempts to infect them with the bleak and slightly smug defeatism that visits people who have been taught Criticism on a grand scale before they have learned to live, learned to write, or even learned to read.

BARBARA GILES.

Reply to Eugene Lyons

By HOWARD FAST

The following letter by Howard Fast was written in reply to an Open Letter to Howard Fast by Eugene Lyons, which appears in the New Leader, *July 9. Lyons, whose attacks on the Soviet Union and on progressive Americans, are well known, urged Fast to "throw off the Communist weights from your heart and mind . . . to break out of the closed world of Communist alibis for unlimited horror." He wrote this Open Letter to the noted American novelist as a comment on Fast's Daily Worker column of June 12 in which the latter stated his views on the "secret" speech of N. Khrushchev on the crimes of Joseph Stalin delivered to the delegates at the February 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. In that column, Fast said that he knew of many social facts about the Soviet Union, such as "the fact that Jewish culture had been wiped out . . . that Jews were forbidden to leave Russia . . . that the death penalty existed . . . that there were prisons . . . that writers and artists and scientists were intimidated." But "I accepted this as a necessity of Socialism," he wrote, and then concluded with the following pledge on the basis of which Eugene Lyons invited him to join him: "Never again will I remain silent when I can recognize injustice, regardless of how that injustice may be wrapped inn the dirty linen of expediency or necessity." This Reply has already appeared in the* Daily Worker *and* New Leader.—The Editors

Dear Mr. Lyons:

In your open letter to me, you repeat a number of things that I have said, in the Daily Worker, mind you, and then you note other grave and sorrowful injustices perpetrated by the Soviet leadership. You remind me that I did not speak when I might have spoken—something I know only too well and too bitterly, and also a matter concerning which I have already written. You raise an eyebrow at my characterization of McCarthy as an evil man and an enemy of what is best in America, and the implication is there that perhaps since I was mistaken about Stalin, I could also be mistaken—inversely—about McCarthy.

You invoke the image of Whitttaker Chambers—surely not to elicit my admiration—and refer to his struggles for his own soul. Well, we all have souls, but I have yet to admit that one can be saved through infamy.

Finally, you ask me to throw off the burden I carried, clear my conscience, and "rejoin the world of free men." Since you do not define that world, I can only presume that you mean the area of commercial success, where, free from the current blacklist, one can dip into

ıe big money—write for national maga-
ınes, for television, even for Hollywood.
ou lay out no blueprint of how one
ınters this blessed abode, but recent his-
ry is fruitful with examples. There
re many avenues. One can become a
rofessional informer for the F.B.I., or
ne can become an amateur informer
or the Committee on Un-American Activ-
ies. One can write a book detailing the
yrotechnics of one's struggle for one's
ul, or about how the Communists duped
im, or the whole inside dope on the
red network."

Or one can take a more dignified path
ward the big money, and declare one's
nlightenment" directly through the
reat mass media; the fruits of repentance
re bountiful.

CONSCIENCE indeed, Mr. Lyons! Stalin and those who share his guilt etrayed democracy, betrayed socialism—etrayed the best hopes of mankind, the oblest dreams, the whole shining future f this tormented, confused and harried ıce of beings to which we both belong. Iaving seen that, having wept over it, aving experienced my own agony, my wn sense of personal betrayal, having worn an oath with myself that I will ever again remain silent while evil and upid men profane the best of man's ope, what would you have me do? I ink it is plain enough in your letter, only by implication.

You would have me turn upon all ıose who have stood at my side during ıe darkest days this country ever knew, ss my beliefs in humanism and socialist emocracy into the wastebasket, name ames, accuse, write books about the evil that deceived me—and, of course, cept the very agreeable financial re-ards that go with the process.

Conscience indeed, Mr. Lyons! I have carried no burden of the sort you mean. Yes, there were evil things that I did not know and there was evidence that I closed my eyes to. That, I do not deny But if I did not know, blame my own stupidity and blame me, not others, not devils, not a mysterious "force," and remember that I am not the only one who closed his eyes to evidence. The New Leader has a less than perfect record in that respect.

This I do know—that where I recognized wrong, I faced it and fought it as best I could. I fought injustice. I fought against the shackles that were clamped on the tongues and minds of Americans these ten years past. I fought for equality, for freedom of speech, for the Bill of Rights. I was ever silent where injustice was being done, and I never weighed my speech or silence against the cost.

IN ALL these fights, I was never alone. Thousands of men and women of the most diverse opinions were with me. I took strength from them and their idealism—and a great many of them were not Communists, and some of them had as much distaste for Communists as you have.

Will they also be eligible for "freedom," providing they turn their backs on suffering and injustice, and hear no cry of agony, no whimper of pain, no moan of hunger?

What is this, Lyons? Does the struggle for freedom, for the hope and dignity of man end because Stalin was a tyrant, because Soviet Socialism did not come a-borning as we would have liked? Have there truly been no changes? I think you are insensitive, Mr. Lyons, and that too much of the world is passing you by.

There is a change in the Sovite Union, a profound change.

Listen to what Paul A Baran, professor of economics at a large Western university, and surely no Communist, has to say concerning that change. I quote him from the current issue of the Monthly Review:

"This points to another reason for the generally prevailing belief that terror and compulsion need not reappear in Soviet life. It is the breathtaking change that has taken place in the structure of Soviet society in the course of the last thirty years. For the country is dominated now by a new generation which, tempered by the struggle for industrialization and hardened by the ordeals of the war, is unique in its moral strength, its patriotism, and the level of its knowledge and insight. This generation that is now everywhere in the driver's seat displays in every aspect of national life its craving for education, for opportunity for unhampered development, for freedom, and for justice. This generation reads voraciously the best in the world's literature, overflows the universities, concentrates on the most difficult areas of science, mobs lecture halls and responds with spontaneous ovation to the Comedie Francaise, to David Oistrakh, to Emil Gilels, to Porgy and Bess, and to a good paper on the 'Relation of Dialectical Logic to Formal Logic.' . . . This generation is impatient with the 'oldtimers' who fill their books and articles with stale citations, who have lost the ability of thinking for themselves, who cover their intellectual indolence by reference to authority. The mental frame of reference of Soviet youth was not drawn by the OGPU; it was drawn by the writings of Marx and Engels, of Pushkin and Tolstoy, of Shakespeare and Goethe, that were printed and reprinted in the Soviet Union in millions of copies. Its ideas were not shaped by Stalin's hangmen, assassinating innocent people, nor were they formed by comic books extolling rape and murder. Its ideas were molded in schools and youth organizations where socialism, humanism, and devotion to the common weal never ceased to be the content of education.

"It is here where the fundamental difference lies betwen the fascist despotism of a Hitler or a Franco and the no less repulsive oriental tyranny of a Stalin. The difference is the *content* of the historical development that those dictatorships were able to enforce If in the case of Hitler it was the unleashing of the most destructive, most bloody war in human history, if in the case of Franco it is continual misery and degradation of a great people—in the case of Stalin it is the creation of all the prerequisites for the development of a prosperous and free society."

I QUOTE at such length, not only because I admire Mr. Baran's cogent thinking, not only because he speaks with authority and a first hand contemporary knowledge which neither you nor I possess, but because his observations took place while he was on a mission for our government—a fact which should underline his objectivity.

This is change, Mr. Lyons, the most basic change imaginable; but it is something else as well. It is the life force of Socialism, the humanism and brotherhood of Socialism; and to me that is no "cover-word," Mr. Lyons. I know what Socialism means, in my case, not from Stalin, but from the ancient Jewish prophets, from the Testament, from the four Gospels of Jesus Christ, from the teachings of that most beloved master, Thomas Jefferson, from the wisdom and with of my own literary mentor, George

rnard Shaw, and from the scientifis
ialist theory of Marx and Engels.
They were my teachers, and they
ght well; and from them I learned that
n was made to love, not to hate, to
e in peace and brotherhood, not in war
l degradation, to cherish human life,
to have contempt for it. From them
earned of the pride of mankind and
ultimate and inevitably glory of
nkind. From them I learned that a
ie would come, inevitably, when man
uld no longer exploit man, and when
edom and justice would come into its
l own. From these teachers, who loved
n and watched him with pity and
giveness these three thousand years,
earned that life on this earth can have
nity and beauty and meaning. I learned
t man would someday be the noble
ng that God or nature or whatever
ce brought him into being destined
n to be—and I learned from them that
mind of man would be the brightest
r in all this farflung universe.

I LEARNED from them the meaning of Socialism, and out of that teaching, came to understand that this rich and itful country of ours, with all its good l patient people, could become like a den, a wonderland of all the earth, oviding we used it wisely and well. is is what Socialism means to me, otherhood, love, reason, work with nity, and leisure made precious and varding, enough for all and nowhere nt and privation To me, Socialism ans full production in every area of economy and the fullest and most ative use of every soul in this land. means growth, maturity and com- nal wisdom. It means the fruition of democracy, the doing away with jails l slums and gas chambers. It means schools and hospitals and great research centers. It means the flowering of our culture, the offering of the best in art to all of the people. It means conservation and construction and peace. It means the ownership by all of the people of all the means of production, and it also means, thereby, the sanctity of the family, the home, the cherishing of the very old and the very young. It means freedom of religion and speech and thought—but more than we have ever known. But above all, it means the happiness of our country—and it means peace for all the brotherhood of man.

I have disdained to hide my thoughts. For almost a quarter of a century I have written them down, for all the world to see, and I used no cover-words.

I know very little about you, Mr. Lyons, when all is said and done, probably a good deal less than you know about me; for I never desired to enter the nasty business of name-calling, raking out the past, and trying to prove who was right and who was wrong. Frankly, I didn't give a damn. The past is done; my own life and work and dreams are of the future A long time ago, you went through the experience you relate in your letter, but the world did not sit still for the generation since then. I might say to you, Mr. Lyons, isn't it high time you looked about you? Like myself, you might find that a refusal to face all the facts can only be hurtful and destructive in the end.

I DO NOT defend the Communist Party, Mr. Lyons. Today, it is more important to judge it fairly and objectively than to attack it or defend it. It set itself high tasks and noble purposes, and if it fell short, failed, made many tragic errors, and now finds itself isolated and

troubled, this in itself is history's definition and reward. But I will say this—that the role of American Communism was never coupled with dishonor and I wonder whether you and your associates can say as much? Accuse Communists of stupidity, rigidity, of a failure to measure up to the needs of the times—but do not accuse them ever of cowardice, dishonor, or an unwillingness to fight in a cause because of the dangers involved. The role they played was signed, not only with their honor but very often with their lives—in Spain, in World War II, and here at home. They did not lessen the best tradition of America.

Mr. Lyons, I do say this to you. Show me a fact, show me proof, show me reality, and I will accept it. Can you answer the same? Will you re-examine the evidence in the cheap and tawdry frame-up of American communists and non-communist radicals that began ten years ago? Will you have the courage to say that these men and women never conspired to overthrow the government of the United States by forced and violence? You know that as well as I do, and so do your colleagues. Will you state publicly that there is a difference between pig-headedness and treason? Perhaps there are other definitions and boundaries to the world of free men than yours.

I don't raise this to provoke or anger you; I raise it because today and tomorrow, the people of good will in this land must join together to defend it, to cherish it, and to guard the gains of the past that made America a fine thing in the eyes of mankind. It was not the American Communists and radicals who built among the people of the world distrust, fear, and so often hatred of America. It was the atom kings who did that, the madmen who knew only one future and one goal—war! It is not the American Communists who are steadily exploding hydrogen bombs in the Pacific, poisoning the atmosphere and the future too; it is not the American Left who nourish the malignant dope racket, who print the torrents of vicious comic books and sex magazines, who build bombers instead of schools, who kill children with defective vaccines, who nurture hatred of the Negro people, who debase our culture, who are attempting to match the wickedness of a Stalin with a less bloody type of terror and intimidation.

Shall I give up the struggle against the one because the other is exposed and indicted? Shall I join the efforts to drive America toward the past because the Soviet Union is moving toward the future? And because there is more freedom here than in Russia, shall I strive to reverse the situation? Does that make sense, Mr. Lyons?

AS YOU say in your letter to me no one dictated the column you refer to. I wrote it because I was angry, heart-sick, and filled with contempt and disgust for what wicked and cowardly men had done to a splendid cause—and also angry at myself that I kept silent when I should have spoken out. But no one forced me to keep silent. I take no orders from the Communist Party; I take no orders from the remlin. The only virtue I can claim is honesty—so far as any man can make such a claim and attempt to live by it.

You see, Mr. Lyons, there is nothing sacred about the Communist Party; if its time is finished, it will go, and perhaps others in the future will judge it better than you or I could. But there is something deeply sacred about man's age-long struggle against oppression and

ong. That must not be betrayed, must
t be hampered—because it is the liv-
soul of mankind, his common hope
the future, his legacy to his children
H their children and their children's
ldren.

There is my answer to you—written,
nope, not less sincerely than your ad-
ess to me. I have said a lot of things
t I would have hesitated to say under
ier circumstances, but I think they are just as well said I could not answer you without saying them. I have no desire for you to take them personally, for I do not know you personally, only by reputation. I also wish to thank you for offering me this opportunity for argument, for out of such frank and public argument, many things are clarified and sometimes even new truths arrived at.

Sincerely yours,
HOWARD FAST

Cruelty

He crawled on his belly to me
As I have crawled before fate,
And his brown eyes' humility
Mirrored the weak life I hate.

The day had gone hard with me,
And my hand held a log . . .
How can I tell the jury
I struck at myself, not the dog?

FRED COGSWELL.

Patriotism

Hide the books, glove the thoughts,
Hoist the flag, knot its rope;
HERE COMES, here comes, oh lump in the throat,
Our true blue, red-blooded, bright white hope.

MAY MATHEW.

Letters

Editors, M&M:

When I saw on the cover of your June issue "Broadway Pros and Cons," I was thrilled that M&M had an article on the theatre. After I read the article, I wasn't so sure.

To begin with, I feel that the tone of Mr. MacAusland's article was unnecessarily snide and facetious, and the general tenor brooked no controversy with his conclusions. And what conclusions!

On the first page, he asks "why this sudden bounty?" (of good plays this season). "Is it wholly chance," he asks "or does it represent the beginning of a renaissance in our theatre?" And he answers that he believes it to be mostly chance. In way of explanation he finishes a rather long paragraph by stating, generally, that the better plays were either foreign, American adaptations of foreign plays, or revivals of classics. "The serious American plays . . . lacked style or were poorly thought out; the less serious were innocuous when they were not downright vulgar."

He feels that critics and audience are not willing to consider a serious, contemporary American theme. And this is the end of his answer to "why this sudden bounty?"

On such an important question, is it not right that there should be a thoroughgoing examination of both hypotheses? Is it necessary to dismiss the possibility of a renaissance in the U. S. theater simply because there was no really outstanding American play this season? Is it only chance that there were such thought-provoking and well-staged and well-acted productions from overseas that picked *this* particular season to open? And that they were so successful?

On the unwillingness of critics and audiences to face up to contemporary American themes, while I do not wholly challenge the writer's position, I do feel that it becomes questionable in the light of successful plays of seasons not too many years past, the most outstanding coming to mind being *Death of a Salesman, The Crucible* and *Inherit the Wind.* The first had a rather long run, and the second a respectable run, if memory serves correctly, and it would be hard to accept the argument that *The Crucible* does not deal with a contemporary theme. The theater-goer would have to be rather a nincompoop not to see its present-day application.

So much for that question.

As we proceed further into Mr. MacAusland's article, we find great praise heaped upon *The Chalk Garden.* Not having seen it, it is hard for me to make any judgments, except to note that Mr. MacAusland is the only one who has seen fit, of all the people I know or heard of who saw it, to praise it so unstintingly and apparently uncritically.

Then he proceeds, club in hand, from *The Chalk Garden* to savagely beat *The Lark* to death in three strokes. And in this little review, I think, is the epitome the characterization, of the whole article. "Miss Harris' performance reminded me of an exceptional high school effort; . . ." After that, one is tempted to ask what high school Mr. MacAusland went to.

The writer is revolted by the onion-eating scene with the captain. I think that this scene lent an earthiness to the play,

mbol, if you will, of the popular support Joan in this early battle for national eration. He feels that Miss Harris did much screaming and jumping about, t she and the other actors were one-nensional. It must certainly be a larger nension to go from a frightened school-l to a wheelding, then cunning beggar, a warrior and thence by turns to a eswoman, a political prisoner, and ally a martyr.

Then we find out that the only reason write another play about Joan was ause she means something deeply per-al to the author. Even if we are will-to accept this ground, Mr. Mac-sland claims that he "could not make out from what I saw at the Longacre eatre."

After which he says that "I found uchon a sentimental fool who appar-ly didn't want to execute Joan because too, was about to die. Warwick, from I could gather, admired Joan because rode a horse so well. The Inquisitor d so many theological grievances against I could not make out which heresy n was expected to admit to, to save life."

He neglects the young priest, who de-ded Joan at the risk of his own life. characterizations and reasoning are shallow that I wonder why they ap-r in M&M, or indeed in any serious ural publication, with the possible eption of a high school newspaper... As for more proper characterizations conclusions, I don't feel that it is essary for me to make them, since is merely a letter and not intended be a critical article in opposition to MacAusland's.

, too, was impressed by *Tiger At the es,* although perhaps not for all the e reasons as Mr. MacAusland. I won't rrel with him too much about it, because he is certainly entitled to valid critical opinions. But here again, his arrogantly assertive attitude is both destructive and annoying. And in none of the plays does he say much about the good acting, which, in many ways, was the prettiest stripe on the tiger's back.

Redgrave, as Hector, was magnificent, and if, as is probably true, we have come to accept a magnificent performance from Redgrave as almost a matter of course, I still feel that it should be mentioned. As a matter of fact, the acting in "Tiger" was so consistently good, from the bit parts on up, that I was amazed. Ditto the direction. Stage business was limited to essentials. There was no scene-stealing, up-staging or other practices which are so abhorrent in most plays. And how can one pass *Tiger at the Gates* without mentioning the sets; the scrims and tableaux which preceded each act, the layout of the sets, and the imaginativeness of their simplicity, which let an imaginative audience work a bit with its minds, yet did not detract by necessitating concentration.

Julie Harris—not to get too far back on a worn track—was excellent. Boris Karloff was competent—which is saying no little thing in the theatre. Christopher Plummer was very admirable as Warwick, and his part seemed to me something greater than that of a steeplechase fancier.

Others might be mentioned: Siobhan McKenna, Kevin McCarthy, etc. Issue might be taken with Mr. MacAusland's characterization of *Red Roses for Me.* But again, this is a letter, and not a review.

I wrote it because I felt strongly about Mr. MacAusland's offhand treatment of the plays and the players. I don't see how he can characterize artists and productions in such a cavalier fashion. Was he trying to show how much vitriol he could concentrate in a 9-page article? Was he trying to take all the worst aspects of

bourgeois literary and dramatic criticism and show how they can be applied in a progressive cultural magazine? Was he trying to pontificate his own ideas on the theater? Or was he trying to make a clear analysis of the past Broadway season?

Obviously, he has not succeeded in the last. He was wrong in approach, conception, manner and execution. It is good that an article on contemporary theater appeared, yet is there such a paucity of competent reviewers, and writers in general, that we must submit to stuff of this sort?

Incidentally, although I am speaking for myself in this letter, I know that I am not alone in many of my opinions. Here's hoping that we'll see more *and better* dramatic criticism in M&M in the future. Let me conclude by saying that I think M&M is in general an excellent magazine and that it fills an important cultural need.

Sincerely,
Dr. G.

Editors, M&M:

Enclosed find two dollars for your drive.

A note of dissent with John Bothwell's curious review of *The Quiet American.* I am puzzled by what I feel is a certain snobbishness on the part of the reviewer, as though he is settling a private war with Greene . . . all of which has nothing to do with the book in review. For example, about half of the review is taken up by a pointless argument as to whether Greene is a 'great' writer, or not. Then there is some would-be clever lines about whether to take the book seriously, and that Mr. Greene still belongs to the capitalist world, etc., etc.

From all this it would be hard to learn that *The Quiet American* is an angry, anti-imperialist novel—a best seller at a time when no other anti-imperialistic books are appearing. I also think the reviewer is wrong when he says that Greene wants th colonies left in the hands of the profe sional soldiers and diplomts, etc. I neve got that from the book. It is true that th main character in the book is cynical, tha the American character is set up as a unbelievable simpleton, that the Viet Nar woman involved acts as a complete spe tator. However, Greene does have anothe Viet Nam character who plays an activ role, and by the end of the book the cyn ical main character takes a very definit stand with the progressives of Viet Nam

It isn't important as to whether this i a 'great' book, nor am I concerned wit the contents of the rest of Greene's novel I think this should be must reading fo every progressive writer in the USA While most of our writers are so bus dotting every i and crossing every t i their epics, which result largely in the either being never written, or unpublish able—in a commercial sense—Mr. Green has written a simple, moving, and strongl anti-imperialistic book. I give Mr. Green a big E, not only for effort, but fo excellence.

Paddy D.

Editors, M&M:

James Bothwell's review of Grahar Greene's *The Quiet American* is the stupid est, narrowest, most dishonest most harm ful piece I have read in all my years peregrinating the pages of *Masses an Mainstream, New Masses* and *Masses.*

Dishonest, because to hit Greene, h identifies an author with his characte stupid, because he is bound to be foun out—anyone who opens the book can se that to do so is the height of idiocy in spi of any alleged 'world-weary voice' in com mon; narrow, because every step towar realism on the part of every creature ar ist is to be encouraged, and it *is* a ste forward to move from introspective searc ings about guilt in personal relationshi

problems of conscience in relation to sufferings and strivings of a whole ple, and that step Greene has made in book whatsoever Bothwell may say, mful, because precisely at the moment task of the Left of all hues and tinges o work and learn tolerance and how to reciate or at least work and communi- with one another.

o anyone not blinded by injured chau- sm it would be apparent that the Eng- newspaperman who despises and even- lly murders the young American, er indeed from sexual vanity than for ons of moral compunction with which verbosely toys, is as deliberately and more ruthlessly exposed in the novel n is the object of his snob contempt. y on a earth should Bothwell imagine, pretend, that the sentence he quotes ut English colonial sophistication based experience comparing favorably with erican naivete based on scholasticism, esents the views of the author rather n those of his personage whose mood character they so aptly fit? Manalive! ene was writing a novel, not an auto- graphy! Greene's hero is neither mur- r nor victim, but the *people,* whose vidual faces he does not yet dare nor himself able to distinguish, but whose ity, hopes, sufferings, claim to respect, seething indignation at being made sport of both these intriguers and their clamors from the background of every e and situation. If we of the Left have yet learned that this sort of advance rd humanism on the part of a man acreative past like Greene's deserves ause, defense and alliance, it is about we did.

don IVOR MONTAGU

ors, M&M:

ddy D. speaks of the "very definite l" taken by the Englishman, but fails to tell us what it was. Montagu, handily, provides the answer. The Englishman "murders the young American . . . from sexual vanity," not for any "reasons of moral compunction."

Mr. D. sees this "definite stand" as something to be praised; Montagu, as Greene's way of deliberately and ruthlessly exposing the character of the Englishman.

This situation ought to be dealt with in some detail because it will, I think, reveal a great deal about the novel and even something about Montagu's letter. The Englishman does not with his own hand kill the young American. He arranges to meet him at a certain place, tells the progressives about it, and in effect turns him over to them. They kill him, this "unbelievable simpleton," as Paddy D. accurately describes him. They kill him and dump his body into the river. An heroic fight for national liberation is seen in this novel only in the form of a terrorist act.

Montagu would have us believe that this is none of Greene's doing, just as the Englishman's statement about the superiority of British imperialism is not Greene's view. Manalive, to use Montagu's expression of exasperation, Greene has *not* written an autobiography (who said he had?) but he *is* the author of this novel and is therefore responsible for what his characters say. This does not mean he must agree with everything his characters say; that, on the face of it, is absurd. But when he does not agree, it is his responsibility to indicate it in some way. *Nowhere in this novel is there any indication that Greene disagrees or disapproves of his hero; no where in this novel does Greene show or even hint that he is denouncing both the American and the Englishman.* Indeed, at the novel's end we find the American dead and the Englishman rewarded with the woman of his choice, his opium pipes, and a last minute

reversal from his wife in England that permits him to get a divorce. Or have I, blinded by my injured national pride, missed some subtle irony here? Perhaps this is Greene's cunning way of punishing the hero with whom he (so secretly!) disagrees.

It would be nice to think, as Montagu does, that this is so; but it requires a degree of wishful thinking I seem not to be capable of.

To return for a moment to D's letter. He claims not to be concerned with Greene's earlier novels. Why not? I am very much concerned that Greene permits the reissue of old novels containing vicious anti-semitic slanders (*Orient Express*) and the vile anti-communism of *The Third Man*. This part of his "creative past" does not seem to bother him at all; unlike Sartre, he has made no move to withdraw these books.

But more than that, he has in the past few months allowed to appear on the London stage a dramatic adaptation of one o his ugliest books: *The Power and th Glory*. In this novel he reduces the Mex ican revolution and its fighters to pries killers and church-burners. Now he per mits it to be revived for the stage where i will, probably, be seen by as many peopl as his new novel has had readers. Are we I wonder, to extend our "tolerance" t this too? And is the dramatization of thi novel to be considered part of Greene' "advance towards humanism"?

I altogether agree with Montagu that w who are of the Left must learn to b tolerant, to work and communicate wit one another. I hope he does not conside his bad-tempered letter a good example o this resolve.

For myself, I write this letter not wit anger but with a feeling of sadness tha so much energy and time has been exper ded on a novel so mediocre and so soo to be forgotten.

JAMES BOTHWEL