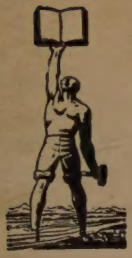

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ESTERDAY AND TOMORROW

MARTIN CARTER

I COME FROM THE NIGGER YARD

come from the nigger yard of yesterday
aping from the oppressor's hate
d the scorn of myself;
om the agony of the dark hut in the shadows
d the hurt of things;
om the long days of cruelty and the long nights of pain
wn to the wide streets of tomorrow, of the next day
aping, leaping, who cannot see will hear.

the nigger yard I was naked like the new born
ked like a stone or a star.
was a cradle of blind days rocking in time
rn like the skin from the back of a slave.
was an aching floor on which I crept
my hands and my knees
arching the dust for the trace of a root
the mark of a leaf or the shape of a flower.

was me always walking with bare feet,
eeting strange faces like those in dreams or fever
nen the whole world turns upside down
d no one knows which is the sky or the land
nich heart is his among the torn and wounded
nich face is his among the strange and terrible
lking about, groaning between the wind.

The distinguished Negro poet, Martin Carter, an executive of the People's ogressive Party of British Guiana and secretary of that country's Peace Committee, s appeared several times before in *Mainstream* and its predecessor. Accabreh, whom the second poem is addressed, was the leader in 1763 of the greatest ve revolt in the history of Guiana, then a Dutch colony.

And there was always sad music somewhere in the land
like a bugle and a drum between the houses
voices of women singing far away
pauses of silence, then a flood of sound.
But these were things like ghosts or spirits of wind.
It was only a big world spinning outside
and men, born in agony, torn in torture, twisted and broken like a leaf
and the uncomfortable morning, the beds of hunger stained and sordid
like this world, big and cruel, spinning outside.

Sitting sometimes in the twilight near the forest
where all the light is gone and every bird
I notice a tiny star neighbouring a leaf
a little drop of light a piece of glass
straining over heaven tiny bright
like a spark seed in the density of gloom.
O it was the heart like this tiny star near to the sorrows
straining against the whole world and the long twilight
spark of man's dream conquering the night
moving in darkness stubborn and fierce
till leaves of sunset change from green to blue
and shadows grow like giants everywhere.

So was I born again stubborn and fierce
screaming in a slum.
It was a city and a coffin space for home
a river running prisons hospitals
men drunk and dying judges full of scorn
priests and parsons fooling God with words
and me like a dog tangled in rags
spotted with sores powdered with dust
screaming with hunger angry with life and men.

It was a child born from a mother full of her blood
wearing her features bleeding her life in clots.
It was pain lasting from hours to months and to years
weaving a pattern telling a tale leaving a mark
on the face and the brow.
Until there came the iron days cast in a foundry
where men make hammers things that cannot break
and anvils heavy hard and cold as ice.

And so again I became one of the ten thousands
one of the uncountable miseries owning the land.
When the moon rose up only the whores would dance
the brazen jazz of music throbbed and groaned
asking the night air strange and rhythmic questions.
It was the husk and the seed challenging fire
birth and the grave challenging life.

Until today in the middle of the tumult
when the land changes and the world is all convulsed
when different voices join to say the same
and different hearts beat out in unison
where on the aching floor of where I live
the shifting earth is twisting into shape
I take again my nigger life my scorn
and fling it in the face of those who hate me.
It is me the nigger boy changing to manhood
linking my fingers welding my flesh to freedom.

I come from the nigger yard of yesterday
leaping from the oppressor's hate
and the scorn of myself.
I come to the world with scars upon my soul
wounds on my body fury in my hands.
I turn to the histories of men and the lives of the peoples
I examine the shower of sparks the wealth of the dreams
I am pleased with the glories and sad with the sorrows
rich with the riches poor with the loss.
From the nigger yard of yesterday I come with my burden
To the world of tomorrow I come with my strength.

ANCESTOR ACCABREH

Was ancestor Accabreh
was ancestor himself
He said no more the grey chimney no more
his head touch the sky.

Was ancestor Accabreh.
He said no more the grey chimney no more
no more the cold wind no more no more.

He said, when I come back
O green shelter of long grass
hide me forever and ever.

He said, O woman face of earth
when I come back
let me lie down
kiss me to sleep.

He said when I come back
in the green shelter of darkness
let me lie down in peace.

Then he turned around
and he called them.
He pointed to the red sun
and said that is the field.
And the white birds over yonder
that is the chimney.
And the terrible cloud up there
that is our life
Not now but tonight
tonight in the darkness.

Then Accabreh sat down
and they sat down around him
and he told them
he said, when we go the night will divide
like the sea for Moses.

And all chanted
like the sea for Moses
like the sea for Moses.

But suddenly night fell down from the green roof
and earth rose up like a young woman
and took off her clothes
to go to sleep.
And Accabreh murmured
O woman face of earth moving side to side
O green shelter of long grass hide me forever and ever.

Then Accabreh rose up and crept softly through the jungle.
He walked with his bare feet on the bed of Wikki
on the cold bed of Wikki the black creek.
And all of them crouched down behind him
and crept softly over the bed of Wikki the black creek.
And the wall of the jungle
and the green wall of the night
opened for them, for all of them.

The great rough cayman with red eyes
and the shy agouti and the wild tapir
plunged in the scowl of the jungle
and dived in the soft banks of Wikki the black creek.

And down in the dark tunnel went Accabreh
down the dark tunnel of his time.
And behind him crept all of them
down the long tunnel of the dark.

Down in the tunnel
there is no star in the roof to follow
but only the sound of a foot like a drum.

Then they came to a hill of white sand
and searched the green darkness of the world
and the white moon was cold with rain
but nothing shifted in the green dream below them.

Then down in the jungle went again
and over the calm brow of the woman face of earth.
And when they came to the voiceless wail of freedom
Accabreh spoke and they listened to him.
He said, I come I come in the manner of a man
I shake darkness from my brow
with the fires of rebellion.

And night opened like a gate for him
and he went into the darkness of his doom.
And he took the parcel of night in his hands
and he loosened the knots that bound it
and held it up against the useless stars
and broke it into pieces
and scattered the lumps in the burning wall of his life.

But those who engender the bleak night
they caught him they caught him
and tied a chain around his hands and feet
and took him to the far white god of grief.
But there was no darkness on his brow
only a laugh of scorn deep in his mouth.

When Accabreh laughed
his scorn was like thunder.
And when he cried
his tears were like rain.

Was ancestor Accabreh
ancestor himself.
At the door of his death
he looked far away
his heart it was beating
like high wind on fire.

Was ancestor Accabreh
His laughter is scorn
He stand up like a palm tree
His head touch the sky.

Then they took him and broke him on a wheel.
But before he died he laughed.
He said, O green shelter of long grass
O woman face of earth moving side to side
be naked for my children as for me
Accabreh! Accabreh!

A PUERTO RICAN IN NEW YORK

JESUS COLON

I

LUCIA AND HER SOUL

LUCIA was a smiling, chubby-faced, young Puerto Rican woman living in a furnished room alongside the house in which we lived. She as divorced, and her great dream was to bring her two children to e States.

Lucia lived alone with her canary, her glass bowl of little five-and-n-cent goldfish on top of a 19th century marble mantelpiece, and a nall victrola on which she played the latest mambos and cha-cha-chas ter she came home from the job in the laundry-plant.

Luis was a mechanic living a couple of blocks down the same street. the time he passed by on his way back from work, Lucia was in her om, by the window, her ear glued to the victrola her eyes watching e passersby on the sidewalk one floor below.

Whenever Luis passed he would stop for half a minute, and upon tracting Lucia's attention would do one or two steps in rhythm with natever music was being played on her victrola. The first few days, ucia made believe she was not even looking, though everybody knew e observed Luis' short dance routine out of the corner of her eye.

Finally one day, Lucia decided to look at Luis' 6:15 to 6:16 P.M. ne minute dance spree, directly and frankly. Luis always managed to ing something new to his dancing. One day, after Luis finished his inute of dancing Lucia applauded—and that was that!

Jesús Colón is a Puerto Rican writer who has been active for the last 38 years an organizer, lecturer, and journalist among his people in New York. (These w number more than half a million.) He is at present a columnist for the ew York *Daily Worker*. Some of the sketches which appear here are reproduced permission of that paper. Others are published for the first time.

Next day when Lucia was waiting, with her latest cha-cha-cha hit bursting through the window and into the street, Luis started to dance as he always did. But when he finished instead of going on to his home, he engaged Lucia in conversation—he on the sidewalk, Lucia sitting by the window. The conversation was nothing. . . . What is your name? What town do you come from in Puerto Rico? (It happened to be a town near the mountains where Luis was born.) Where do you work? Do you like it here? Are you. . . . Well just an ordinary conversation . . . nothing. . . . Lucia answered affably to all of Luis' questions.

At 6:15 P.M. sharp the next day Luis was coming from work. Lucia's victrola was playing the latest mambos. This time, Luis, instead of dancing the usual one minute, continued dancing, leaving the sidewalk, dancing his way into the hallway in Lucia's building. Next thing, we saw Lucia and Luis dancing together in her room.

Luis danced no longer on the sidewalk. It seems as if Lucia had added him to her canary, the small bowl of five-and-ten goldfish and her victrola. The way Lucia explained it to the curious in the neighborhood was that Luis was young and a hard worker and that he had promised to bring her two children over from Puerto Rico. To which many an old Puerto Rican woman answered her with the old Puerto Rican saying: "Palabras son palabras." ("Words are words.") But Lucia was happy. Very happy . . . with her canary, her gold fish, her small victrola . . . and her Luis.

Luis paid the rent. She paid for the food. Luis bought her some dresses and sent some things to Lucia's children in Puerto Rico. When they stepped out on a Saturday night they looked exactly like a young married couple out for a good time.

Lucia had been in the United States over a year and a half. Her family brought her up in a deeply religious environment in Puerto Rico. One of her constant worries was that in all these long months she had been here, she had not gone to church once. One day, when she did not go to work, she went to the nearest Catholic church in her neighborhood. The minute she was inside the church all the half-forgotten experiences of her religious childhood came to mind. The industrial worker from the laundry plant was replaced momentarily by the small town girl. She went around and around devoutly looking at the familiar figures of some of the saints and tried to recall in her limited knowledge of Catholic sainthood, and to memorize the faces and figures of others that she was sure she had seen for the first time.

Instinctively Lucia went to the confessional. There were two persons waiting in line. She joined the line. When her turn came and after the more or less customary questions were asked her, the priest asked: "Are you married?" "I am living with a man, a very good man. We love each

other," Lucia replied. "But are you married to him? Have you been joined in holy matrimony by our Catholic Church?" "No, we just live together as man and wife," Lucia replied. "This is a great sin. You are living in sin. As a good Catholic you ought to dissolve this unholy union of the flesh, immediately." Lucia came out of the church confused and bewildered. What was she going to tell Luis?

Lucia acted moody for many days. Her church visits became regular. She went early in the morning or after she finished work at the laundry. She was not as talkative as before; the victrola was not heard as often. It seemed that the priest was reminding her to get rid of her "sin" at every confession period. One evening, Lucia came right to the point. "Luis, you must leave me at once unless you marry me tomorrow." "What is this?" "You must leave at once. Take with you all your belongings unless you marry me by the Catholic Church." "And why?" "Because we are living in sin. Because we are living for the flesh and not the soul. The American priest ordered me to do it immediately, if I want to save my soul." Luis smiled wryly. "So that's the reason for your moody and touchy feeling the past few days. Let me tell you something, Lucia. Up in the high mountains where I was born, I had a father and a mother. Besides me they had eleven more children. All alive. My father and my mother lived together in happiness, close to fifty years, until mother died. They never got married. Most of my brothers and sisters still live in the mountains—with some man, or some woman. None of them could afford the luxury of a long trip to town and the five dollars plus they had to give to the priest. They are all living happily as far as this part of their life is concerned. I know we are living in another country. But, if my father and mother lived in happiness together for close to fifty years without being married I don't see why I have to do so. That is the way I feel about it. I will bring your children to the States. I will raise them as my own. I will live with you for life; but I will not marry." "In that case, you will have to leave. I don't want to live in sin." These were Lucia's final words.

Winter came. Lucia was seldom seen or her victrola heard. When seen, she was either going to work or coming from Church. Some nights as the snow fell, she was seen sitting by the window, reading novenas and religious books. Her innate happy and laughing nature so given to singing, dancing and bantering, was as if bridled by some supernatural power. Lucia was patently making a terrific effort to live the "good life."

But, every winter is followed by the spring . . . and in spring everything is born again. The earth with all its resourcefulness seemed to come out of its winter stupor. Trees and flowers bloomed. All seemed reborn.

Summer followed spring. Anyone living in this great city knows how hot New York can be during the summer. Windows must be opened. And, Lucia's window was opened with the rest of them.

Luis never failed to pass by at the same hour, 6:15. One day he saw Lucia sitting by her window. Though her victrola was not playing he did a one minute dancing routine as if Lucia's victrola was blaring away with one of the noisiest cha cha chas. Lucia was not very impressed. Luis continued his old 6:15-6:16 routine—without music for two or three weeks. Towards the last few days Luis was conscious of Lucia's observing him through the corner of her eye. One day, hear, hear!—Lucia's victrola was playing as Luis passed by at 6:15. She was at the window. Luis went into a new dance routine. He was dancing from head to foot. And his eyes saw when Lucia's hands applauded.

Luis went up the familiar hallway and stairs to Lucia's furnished room. The door was wide open. Luis took Lucia in his arms dancing away until the cha-cha-cha record repeated itself twice. Only then did Luis have time to say: "I love you." "I love you too, more than anything else," Lucia answered.

Luis brought Lucia's two children from Puerto Rico. Some Saturday evenings when a friendly neighbor looked after her children, Lucia and Luis dressed in their Sunday best went out. And they looked like a newly-married couple out for a very good time.

II

THE VISITOR

WE MET on 14th St. After so many years without seeing her, I had forgotten her name. All that I was sure of was that she had a baby daughter whom she brought to meetings years ago when she was very active in one of the fraternal organizations in Harlem.

I wanted to say Hello—Goodbye, as I was late for a class at school. But, she insisted on talking about the good old days when we had Puerto Rican progressive organizations in Harlem with ladies' auxiliaries—or Women's Committees—of 40 and 50 members. How things had changed! I assured her with all the conviction that I could muster in my voice that those days would come again . . . bigger and better.

To change the subject I asked, "And how is the little baby daughter?" "Oh, you should see her now! She is a nice looking young lady; and can she dance! I mean *dance*." And she emphasized this last word before she

ung herself into a more detailed description of her daughter's dancing
ilities.

"I wish you could come to our place and see her dance, one of these
enings. Perhaps a few evenings. In order to really appreciate her, you
ust see her dance more than once." Then she added, "Will you come
ext Friday? I really want you to tell me whether she has talent." After
e had elevated me to the category of judge of dancing, I could have
ly one answer to her invitation: "Yes!"

They lived in one of the worst slum areas in the East Bronx. The
ilding was at least 100 years old. . . . one of those buildings that are
affront to the beautiful art of architecture. The wooden stairs were
psided and dirty. As your feet pressed down on the steps, all kinds
rickety-rackety sounds came from inside the boards which seemed
be strenuously opposed to being awakened from the sleep of centuries.

As you entered the apartment you came into a short dark hall that
nnected the entrance with the kitchen. At the left there was the bath-
om and at the right, a bedroom. The farthest end of the kitchen led
u into the parlor.

The baby daughter who used to whimper and cry at about 9 p.m.
the dot when her mother took her to meetings, had grown into a
ung lady of harmonious beauty. She was brown-skinned, statuesque,
aceful in her movements and lithe in her steps. She had a wistful
ile that enveloped her face revealing a warm healthy personality. She
nconsciously danced as she walked around the parlor. We talked for a
hile.

Finally I reminded myself that I came not to talk but to see her dance.
asked her if she would dance for me. As she started to walk towards
e victrola her mother said: "You'd better close the door between the
tchen and the parlor, so that *she* cannot come in."

Perhaps the mother wanted me not to be disturbed by the presence
anybody else . . . a neighbor, a friend, another member of the family,
thought to myself. And I relaxed in a deep old chair ready to enjoy
suffer for the next 15 minutes, the dancing of the young lady.

After carefully closing the door between the kitchen and the parlor,
e daughter placed a longplaying record of selections of ballet music
the victrola.

She danced to one of them. As she kept herself in the position of
e last note, she seemed to ask with her half-opened eyes and with the
o dimples in her cheeks: "How do you like it?" Instead of answering
r I asked in return: "And where did you learn all that?" She answered
th just one word: "Television."

Other evenings followed during which the daughter exhibited her

skill in the many variations of the Spanish and Latin American dance This young dancer really had talent. I told the mother so. She took i as if my judgment came from the mouth of Jose Limon, or John Martin

One evening the girl was interpreting the Waltz of the Flowers a I was sitting in the soft old chair that by now had been unofficially as signed to me whenever I came.

The mother was reclining on the sofa enjoying the sylph-like move ments of her daughter as she softly and gracefully let her body flo through the air.

On this particular evening the door between the kitchen and th parlor had been left ajar. Little by little emerging from the silence o the darkened kitchen, the outline of an animal the size of a small ca began to be distinguishable.

First I could only notice the snout with which the animal was tryin to push himself through the door opening. Then "her" body started t come forward.

I noticed then that it was not a cat at all, but a tremendously bi rat with long grimy black-brown hair and two bead-like eyes peerin at you from under two bushy eyebrows.

Its steps were sure, as if walking on familiar ground. Mother an daughter must have noticed the gesture of revulsion on my face.

Suddenly they saw that the kitchen door was open. They looke around and saw the rat leisurely promenading through the legs of th sofa and the chairs in the parlor.

I instinctively took off one of my loafer shoes and aiming it at th rat's head let go with all the power in my arm. But I am not a Rube Gomez, nor a Don Newcombe! The rat looked at me disdainfully for few seconds and then continued on its way as unconcerned as before.

It was the mother who got the rat out of the parlor. By the way sh reacted it seemed that she had done it before. She took a heavy stic that stood unnoticed in one of the corners and sometimes hitting, some times pushing the rat, she finally forced it out of the parlor into th kitchen where we all followed her until the rat disappeared through great big hole in the wall near the kitchen sink.

"I have been telling the landlord to fix that hole for the last thre months. I have been holding the rent until he fixes it. Come."

And with this, she led me back into the parlor closing the doo securely after us.

III

EASY JOB, GOOD WAGES

THIS happened early in 1919. We were both out of work, my brother and I. He got up earlier to look for a job. When I woke up, he was already gone. So I dressed, went out and bought a copy of the *New York World* and turned its pages until I got to the "Help Wanted Unskilled" section of the paper. After much reading and re-reading the same columns, my attention was held by a small advertisement. It read: "Easy job. Good wages. No experience necessary." This was followed by a number and street on the West Side of lower Manhattan. It sounded like the job I was looking for. Easy job. Good wages. Those four words revolved in my brain as I was traveling toward the address indicated in the advertisement. Easy job. Good wages. Easy job. Good wages. Easy. . . .

The place consisted of a small front office and a large loft on the floor of which I noticed a series of large galvanized tubs half filled with water out of which I noticed the necks of many bottles in various sizes and shapes. Around these tubs there were a number of workers, male and female, sitting on small wooden benches. All had their hands in the water of the tub, the left hand holding a bottle and with the thumb nail of the right hand scratching the labels.

The foreman found a vacant stool for me around one of the tubs of water had somewhat softened the transparent mucilage used to attach the instead of the thumb nail to take off the old labels from the bottles. I was expertly informed that knives or razors would scratch the glass thus depreciating the value of the bottles when they were to be sold.

I sat down and started to use my thumb nail on one bottle. The water had somewhat softened the transparent mucelage used to attach the label to the bottle. But the softening did not work out uniformly somehow. There were always pieces of label that for some obscure reason remained affixed to the bottles. It was on those pieces of labels tenaciously fastened to the bottles that my right hand thumb nail had to work overtime. As the minutes passed I noticed that the coldness of the water started to pass from my hand to my body giving me intermittent body shivers that I tried to conceal with the greatest of efforts from those sitting beside me. My hands became deadly clean and tiny little wrinkles started to show, especially at the tip of my fingers. Sometimes I stopped a few seconds from scratching the bottles, to open and close my fists in rapid movements in order to bring blood to my hands. But almost as soon as I placed them in the water they became deathly pale again.

But these were minor details compared with what was happening

to the thumb of my right hand. From a delicate boyish thumb, it wa growing by the minute into a full blown tomato colored finger. It wa the only part of my right hand remaining blood red. I started to loo at the other workers' thumbs. I noticed that these particular finger on their right hands were unusually developed with a thick layer of corn like surface at the top of their right thumbs. The nails on their smal fingers looked coarser and smaller than on the other fingers—thumb an nail having become one and the same thing—a primitive unnatura human instrument especially developed to detach hard pieces of label from wet bottles immersed in galvanized tubs.

After a couple of hours I had a feeling that my thumb nail wa going to leave my finger and jump into the cold water in the tub. A numb pain at first imperceptibly began to be felt by me coming from m right thumb. Then I began to feel such pain as if coming from a finge bigger than all of my body.

After three hours of this I decided to quit fast. I told the foreman so showing him my swollen finger. He figured I had earned 69 cent at 23 cents an hour.

Early in the evening I met my brother in our furnished room. W started to exchange experiences of our job hunting for the day. "Yo know what?" my brother started. "Early in the morning I went to wor where they take labels off old bottles—with your right hand thum nail. . . . Somewhere on the West Side of Lower Manhattan. I onl stayed a couple of hours. 'Easy job . . . Good wages . . .' they said. Th person who wrote that ad must have had a great sense of humor." An we both had a hearty long laugh that evening when I told my brothe that I also went to work to that same place later in the day.

Now when I see Ads reading, "Easy job. Good wages," I just smil an ancient, tired, knowing smile.

IV

THE MOTHER, THE YOUNGER DAUGHTER, MYSELF . . . AND ALL OF US

I WAS drinking a cup of coffee in one of those new places where th counter is built like a curving long line of conga dancers. Th high stools follow the wavey contours of the counter, making little bay of tall seats where the patrons seat themselves, placing their feet in sort of iron stirrup.

That day every stool was taken but one, on my right side, and an other, three stools further to my left.

A mother and her young daughter about nine years old, came in, evidently to have a snack.

"You sit by the gentleman," meaning me . . . the mother said to her young daughter, pointing to the unoccupied stool on my right. "I will be sitting over there," the mother added, pointing to the other empty stool three seats to my left.

"I won't sit beside no nigger," said the child.

And the mother, myself, and all of us never said a word.

V

IT HAPPENED ONE WINTER'S NIGHT

I STILL remember that snowy night during the Christmas holidays many more years ago than I care to remember.

There was a friend way out in Long Island whose Christmas celebrations—Puerto Rican style—were justly famous.

I asked a mutual friend—an automobile mechanic—who had a car, if he would like to drive to this friend's house.

It was a really dark, cold snowy night. Nevertheless he agreed to drive. It was rough going.

I did not know how to drive. He had to go very carefully and slowly as you could hardly see about half a dozen feet beyond the front of the car.

New snow was coming down upon the petrified one already in the streets for days, making white multiformed whirlwinds that eventually came to rest upon the glistening snow covered pavements.

As we came into the Grand Central Parkway where there was hardly an auto to be seen on such a night, my friend who was doing all the driving started to talk.

"It would be a very nice thing to be like you, Jesús. To be able to get up and talk, just like that"—and he accompanied his words with a quick snap of his fingers. Talk about Greece and Rome . . . and Russia. Or about music, or poetry or . . . and he seemed to be looking for more representative words to express the various fields of knowledge in which he thought I was at home.

Flattery is an alluring and poisonous thing. I knew I did not deserve one-fifth of all the honeyed words that I was hearing. Yet I did not stop him. I did not stop him because, no matter how safe you think you are from this kind of sickness, there always remains something

of the old upbringing, of the previous ways of looking at life and at yourself. That is if you are human.

It is a sickness one must never stop fighting.

I also did not stop him because I recognized in the words of my mechanic friend the unspoiled and innocent respect for another worker like myself who, he thought, had acquired in his spare moments a certain amount of erudition.

It seemed to me that it happened to be his real and honest opinion, unfortunately not based on real and concrete facts.

I felt like telling him that all the learning, so called, that I had was acquired listening to the tobacco workers from outside one of the tobacco factory windows when I was a boy in my hometown in Puerto Rico.

That this was followed by an unorganized, if abundant, reading at public libraries and by a few hundred pamphlets, and outlines published by Haldeman-Julius and such others, plus a few books, pamphlets and periodicals of serious reading in the social sciences.

I wanted to tell him what a hodge-podge, what a Spanish omelet of half-baked ideas about everything I still had surrounding what I hoped was clear Marxist thinking. But I remained quiet.

My automobile mechanic friend continued driving and speaking in the same vein for a few more minutes.

We left Grand Central Parkway and started south until we reached Hempstead Turnpike. Suddenly the car started to shake backward and forward, first with a lot of noise then less noisily until it came to a full stop.

"What happened?" I asked my friend.

"Something must have gone wrong out there," he answered, pointing to the motor in front of the car. Then he added: "I must get out and see what it's all about."

He took a flashlight from the small compartment on the right underneath the windshield and after looking for the tools he thought were to be needed from the car trunk, he came to the front and started to look inside the motor part.

While I was holding the flashlight as he was fixing what was wrong, I remained deeply in thought.

I knew it was useless for me to try to be of any real help to my mechanic friend. I did not know the first thing about cars. I imagined myself driving an automobile in a night such as that when, all of a sudden, the car should stop on me. Dead in the middle of nowhere. What would I do? Where should I start? I, who did not know the difference between a crankshaft and a spark plug. Shivers went over my body just to think of it.

After a few seconds of shaking off the snow that had accumulated on his clothes, my friend bounded into his seat back of the steering wheel and closed the door after him. I came through the other front door sitting myself beside him.

"Everything is OK now. Real nasty out there, was it not?" my friend said.

The car started easily and smoothly, then a little faster until we were again happily on our way. After a little silence my friend was geting ready to start speaking again.

"As I was saying. . . ."

This time I cut him short, by introducing a new theme in the ensuing conversation.

VI

LITTLE THINGS ARE BIG

IT WAS very late at night on the eve of Memorial Day. She came into the subway at the 34th Street Pennsylvania Station. I am still trying to remember how she managed to push herself in with a baby in her right arm, a valise on her left hand and two children, a boy and a girl about three and five years old, trailing after her. She was a nice looking white lady in her early twenties.

At Nevins St., Brooklyn, we saw her preparing to get off at the next station—Atlantic Ave.—which happened to be the place where I too had to get off. Just as it was a problem for her to get on, it was going to be a problem for her to get off the subway with two small children to be taken care of, a baby on her right arm and a medium-sized valise on her left hand.

And there I was, also preparing to get off at Atlantic Avenue, with no bundles to take care of—not even the customary book under my arm without which I feel that I am not completely dressed.

As the train was entering the Atlantic Ave. station, some white man stood from his seat and helped her out, placing the children into the long deserted platform. There were only two adult persons in that silent subway station besides the two children and the baby. They were the youngish looking lady and myself.

The white man who helped her within the passenger car went back to his seat and continued riding to his destination. So, as life would have it, the lady, the two children and myself were the only ones on that long platform some time after midnight on the eve of last Memorial Day.

I could perceive the steep, long concrete stairs going down into the Long Island Railroad or into the street. Should I offer my help as the American white man did at the subway door, placing the two children outside the subway car? Should I take care of the girl and the boy, take them by their hands until they reached the end of the steep long concrete stairs of the Atlantic Ave. station?

Courtesy is a characteristic of the Puerto Rican. And here I was—a Puerto Rican—hours after midnight, two white children and a white lady with a baby in her arms palpably needing somebody to help her at least until she descended the long concrete stairs.

But how could I, a Negro and a Puerto Rican, approach this white lady who very likely might have preconceived prejudices against Negroes and everybody with foreign accents, in a deserted subway station very late at night?

What would she say? What would be the first reaction of this white American woman, perhaps coming from a small town with a valise, two children and a baby in her right arm? Would she say: Yes, of course, you may help me. Or would she think that I was just trying to get too familiar? Or would she think worse than that perhaps? What would I do if she let out a scream as I went toward her to offer my help?

Was I misjudging her? So many slanders are written every day in the daily press against the Negroes and Puerto Ricans. I hesitated for a long, long minute. The ancestral manners that the most illiterate Puerto Rican passes from father to son were struggling inside me. Here was I, way past midnight, face to face with a situation that could very well explode into an outburst of prejudices and chauvinistic conditioning of the divide-and-rule policy of present-day society.

It was a long minute. I pushed on by her as if I saw nothing. As if I was insensitive to her need. Like a rude animal walking on two legs I just moved on half running by the long subway platform leaving the children and the valise and her with the baby in her arm. I took the steps of the long concrete stairs in two's until I reached the street above and the cold air slapped my warm face.

This is what racism and prejudice and chauvinism and official artificial divisions can do to people and to a nation!

Perhaps the lady was not prejudiced after all. Or not prejudiced enough to scream at the coming of a Negro toward her in a solitary subway station a few hours past midnight.

If you were not that prejudiced, I failed you, dear lady. I know that there is a chance in a million that you will read these lines. I am willing to take that millionth chance. If you were not that prejudiced, I failed you, lady, I failed you, children, I failed myself to myself.

I buried my courtesy early on Memorial Day morning. But here is a promise that I make to myself here and now: if I am ever faced with an occasion like that again, I am going to offer my help regardless of how the offer is going to be received.

Then I will have my courtesy with me again.

THREE MAINSTREAM FORUMS

1. Friday, January 25, 1957

Bertolt Brecht—Plays, Poems, Novels

Speakers: Frederic Ewen, Eve Merriam,
Dr. Annette Rubinstein

2. Friday, February 15, 1957

To Be Announced

3. Friday, March 15, 1957

Freedom of Choice—What Does It Mean?

Speakers: Dr. Corliss Lamont
Dr. Howard Selsam

GREAT NORTHERN HOTEL—118 W. 57th St.

8:30 P.M. *Contribution*: *One Dollar*

JOHN STRACHEY AND THE SYSTEM

CELESTE STRACK

MARXISTS of varied persuasions are currently re-examining many basic issues against the background of the last twenty years of working class experience, and with a questioning eye as to the future course of events. The direction of capitalist economic development, the possibilities of preventing World War III, problems of state-monopoly relationships, new potentials in the path to socialism, the outlook for renewed unity of the socialist movement, questions affecting relations between socialist states will figure prominently in the great debate. In this context, John Strachey's new book, *Contemporary Capitalism*,* will be a stimulating addition to the discussion. It is the first of a "projected series of studies on the principles of democratic socialism" by this spokesman for at least one sector of the British Labor Party, which he also represents as a Member of Parliament.

A very few years ago Marxists would have made short shrift of this work as typical revisionism. (Maurice Dobb in his brief review observes that twenty years ago it would have been dubbed "typically centrist" and left at that. For the United States, this pushes the date too far back.) Today's events, painful and positive alike, are forcing the Communist-oriented Left to recognize that the arguments of other socialists must be examined on their merit; that their criticisms of Communists—and Strachey has not a few—must be looked into objectively; and that we can search for points of agreement while discussing our differences. The issues of yesteryear must be re-argued evidently, but under much altered conditions, which give rise also to fresh conclusions.

Mr. Strachey's central proposition is that the twentieth century has signalized the growth and interplay of two divergent tendencies: one, the development of capitalism into its latest stage in which it "threatens to turn upon what was once its own political counterpart . . . democracy," and the other, the transformation of democracy along lines of greater "diffusion of power" in which the majority of the people can exercise more and more influence both in politics and over the economy

* *Contemporary Capitalism*, by John Strachey, Random House, New York, 1956, ($5.00).

itself. For the last half-century, democracy has been able to modify the economic processes of present-day capitalism, Mr. Strachey holds; its task from here on is to "bit and bridle" modern capitalism, to transform it piece by piece, and "in the end out of existence."

Mr. Strachey limits the applicability of this thesis, it must immediately be added, to that small minority of peoples located in the British Isles, North America, Northwest Europe, and Australia, since in his judgement only they possess the two essentials for such a democratic transformation of capitalism, namely, a highly developed industrial society and "effective" democracy. India is added, in a footnote, as a special possible exception.

For the rest of the world, Mr. Strachey appears to admit that the classical Marxist-Leninist analysis may still be valid. But since the countries with which he is here concerned represent the most advanced economies of the non-communist world, Strachey concludes that "to overlook the special characteristics of such societies is an error of the first magnitude. It is indeed the error of errors which the Leninists have committed ever since the founding of the Communist International in 1921."

ONE is tempted to run ahead at once to the politics of Mr. Strachey's argument, for example, to his conception of "effective" democracy. His preliminary discussion of what a basic democratic social transformation involves seems to boil down to reliance on the British technique of the "loyal opposition" in which opposition must never be "total," and on the other hand, "the government of the day shall not, for its part, do anything irrevocably to injure its opponents." It seems almost superfluous to ask, "In such a case, how ever get to socialism?" even disregarding the experience of Labor Party governments with this approach after World Wars I and II.

A broad area of agreement is surely possible in the struggle to restrict the political dominance of big business, to prevent its untrammelled utilization of the state for its own anti-democratic class objectives, and to extend the political influence of labor and the people. There can be wide unity, too, among all socialist tendencies in the fight for economic measures benefiting the majority of the people, and aimed at limiting monopoly capital's exploitation of the entire economy. We may even be able to agree that, broadly speaking, this is the path along which we can move towards the achievement of socialism.

But this leaves open a number of vital questions, on which there may be considerable divergence of viewpoint. For example, in this setting how are we to assess the role of the state? Strachey criticizes

Marxists for holding that the state is "nothing but the instrument of the great capitalists"—although he simultaneously differs with Keynes' assumption that the state could be "controlled presumably by disinterested economists." He argues that ". . . in the conditions of contemporary democracy the State and its vast powers are rather prizes for which all sorts of interests are struggling and competing."

I think Mr. Strachey's approach blurs, and in fact denies, what is still the class *essence* of the state in this country, as in Great Britain and Western Europe. At the same time, it would be absolutely dogmatic to hold that government policies in these countries, including the United States, are determined solely by monopoly capital. Obviously popular pressure plays an important *and even an increasing role.* The conflict between rival sections of the capitalist class, including competing centers of finance capital, is also a significant element in determining specific government measures. But this has not altered the fundamental class control of the state, in my view. Yet Strachey is raising genuinely new problems.

From a theoretical and eventually a practical standpoint the question does arise: what happens to the class character of the state in the event a government representing an anti-monopoly coalition is elected? This question arose, though in a different historical setting, at the time of the Spanish Civil War in connection with the People's Front Government. The coming to office of an anti-monopoly government would open up certain new possibilities and necessities in connection with the state. These would have to do with the ability of the coalition to limit, and ultimately to end, monopoly domination of the state apparatus, even within the framework of the continued existence for a period of a capitalist economy. The most difficult problems would probably arise with the extension of popular democratic control from the legislative arena into the decisive areas of state power, i.e. the whole vast executive apparatus, and especially the military forces and police power. This might take place under conditions short of the socialist transformation of the country, although from a historic viewpoint such a development would help immeasurably in paving the way to socialism. It would of course, involve extremely sharp class struggles. It is Strachey's merit that he poses these problems anew, though it is my impression that he blurs over the realities of such a struggle, and views the extension of popular control over the state as a far more gradual process.

BUT this takes us rather afield from the main substance of the present volume which deals primarily with economic aspects of Mr. Strachey's thesis. His opening chapters are devoted to a brief exposition

of the rise of modern capitalism, followed by a critical but friendly estimate of Marxist economic theory. The possibility of a further transformation of capitalism by democracy is then elaborated, including the contribution of John Maynard Keynes, whom Mr. Strachey regards as having made "the greatest single contribution to the technique of democratic transition" (to socialism) even though he himself was "bound by capitalism."

There is nothing essentially new in Strachey's description of the economic features of "latest stage capitalism" as he prefers to call it, nor would I differ with most of it, except perhaps with his relative emphasis on certain points. He traces the transformation of competition into monopoly or quasi-monopoly (oligopoly), and points out the accompanying growth of the state's role in the economy. He concludes from this that modern capitalism is more easily subjected to control and regulation than its earlier version. This is a crucial issue. It is an arguable point to which we will return. Also. after tracing the formulation of the labor theory of value by the classical economists, a theory which he considers still to be a "fruitful hypothesis" compared to the marginal utility and equilibrium viewpoint, he criticizes the continued employment of it by Marxists. He declares it unnecessary to an analysis of modern capitalist development. (Hyman Lumer subjects Strachey's position on this point to considerable, and I think effective, criticism in the November issue of the monthly *Political Affairs* and I shall not try to cover that ground here). Strachey considers Marx' "supreme achievement" to have been his singling out of the "particular act of exchange" which takes place within the factory gates (this, of course, is the sale of labor-power for wages, out of which arises capitalist exploitation, i.e., the production of surplus value). But Marx erred, Strachey claims, in advancing a subsistence theory of wages according to which the downward pressures of capitalism would hold workers' income to a subsistence level.

Strachey argues that such admitted downward pressures have been countered by two factors which Marx did not take into account: first, rising productivity of labor, and second, economic and political struggles of the workers, or more broadly the growth of democracy. Both of these, he argues, have resulted in substantially increased real wages especially in Great Britain and the United States. Mr. Strachey concludes that Marx could have avoided this error if he had presented the law of wages as a "tendency which truly exists in the system but which may assert itself or be overridden."

It is clear that Strachey is posing issues confronting not only the socialist movement in general but the American Left in particular. One

is therefore bound to compare his views with the theoretical propositions being widely discussed by American Communists today, including the possibility that the working-class and its allies can, in some countries at least, curb the power of monopoly and open the road to a peaceful, constitutional transition to socialism. How much agreement is there between these two views? Where do the differences lie? (It should be noted that his book predates the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union to which he refers in a footnote as possibly beginning "a new and far more hopeful period.")

I think Mr. Strachey is wrong in ascribing a subsistence theory of wages to Marx. The whole of *Value, Price, and Profit* is devoted to a polemic against the Lassallean "iron law of wages" as Mr. Strachey is, of course, aware. However, he claims that Marx' opposition to the Lassalleans simply took the form of insisting that the workers could force exceptions to the law or temporarily arrest its operation. This is an inadequate treatment of Marx' position, to say the least.

Marx specifically pointed out that there are peculiar features which enter into the value of labor power, as against the value of all other commodities. He stated that two elements make up its value, one the physical, which constitutes "the necessaries absolutely indispensable for living and multiplying" (this itself being elastic); the other, a historical or social element determined by the "traditional standard of life" in a given country. Hence the value of labor-power is not a fixed, but a variable quantity. Moreover, Marx goes on to say that the actual level of wages at any given time will be determined by the relationship of forces in the class struggle. He makes the point that while "the general tendency of capitalistic production is not to raise but to sink the general standard of wages," the task of the working class is to resist this trend, although it should not exaggerate the scope of the victories possible under capitalism.

Conceptually, therefore, Marxian wage theory does not preclude substantial rises in real wages; the more so, when a particular country with especially favorable conditions is under consideration—as is indeed the case in point, since Mr. Strachey is discussing primarily Great Britain and the United States. In his practical estimates, it is true, Marx did not anticipate the long drawn out character of the struggle for socialism in Europe and Britain, expecting rather a more rapid sharpening of economic and political conflicts to the point of socialist revolution. But this does not prove his general theory of wages to be incorrect.

THIS brings us to the next and closely related theoretical question discussed by Mr. Strachey, the general law of capitalist accumulation, which he refers to as the law of ever-increasing misery. In this

country it is usually called the law of absolute (and relative impoverishment of the working class. As a law it is invalidated, Strachey holds, by the last one hundred years of British experience. He refers to estimates of other economists which indicate that real wages doubled during the century, a development running directly counter to absolute impoverishment. At the same time, he carefully notes that this lengthy period saw no real change in the relative position of British workers vis-a-vis the capitalist class. The proportional distribution of the national income remained, roughly speaking, about the same up to World War II. The only detectable change has occurred since 1939, a short span of fifteen years in which a slight redistribution in favor of the majority of the people has taken place (about 10 percent more of total personal income flowing to them today than in 1939).

In the case of the United States, Strachey holds it to be self-evident that a large increase in real wages has taken place over the same 100 year span, and that there has been no relative impoverishment, though no real economic data are given.

But, says Strachey—here he gives no quarter to the apologists for capitalism—although the economic polarization envisaged by Marx has not taken place, "it has taken the whole vast social reform movement of the past hundred years to prevent it" and merely "to hold the position constant." Left to itself, capitalism would have brought a sharp deterioration in the relative position of the mass of the people, and probably of their absolute position as well. He therefore concludes that "Marx would have been right if he had diagnosed an innate tendency instead of an irreversible law. . . ."

Here too I think Mr. Strachey does Marx something of an injustice. In *Capital* Marx concentrated upon an analysis of the economic laws of capitalist development which he deliberately abstracted from their total social setting. But he and Engels were most emphatically not economic determinists. They understood that a complex interplay of economic, political, and ideological forces takes place, in which the working of even basic economic laws is affected by the influence of other factors. Indeed the sentence which directly follows Marx' formulation of the "absolute general law of capitalist accumulation" is, *"Like all other laws, it is modified in its workings by many circumstances the analysis of which does not concern us here."* (Marx, *Capital,* Volume I, International Publishers.)

Moreover, Marx did not visualize the operation of this law in terms of wages alone. He observed specifically that ". . . in proportion as capital accumulates, the lot of the labourer, be his payment high or low, must grow worse." (Ibid, p. 661.) Here Marx was referring to the total effects

of capital accumulation on the conditions of labor—the growth of unemployment, alienation of mental and physical labor, degradation of craft skills, effects upon family life, and so forth. Of course he could not specifically foresee the immensely broader and more devastating consequences of capitalism—two great world wars and the threat of atomic destruction hanging over mankind—but these certainly fortify his general conception of capitalism's historical tendencies.

Having made these points, however, I must say that Mr. Strachey's criticism can be levelled much more fairly against present day interpretations of this law, which have, to my mind unsuccessfully, attempted to prove the validity of absolute impoverishment in the United States (an even more obvious case than Great Britain). There have been specific periods, of course, in which absolute impoverishment has taken place, notably during major depressions. But from a long term historical standpoint, say the last fifty to one hundred years, I think it improbable that a real case can be made for the absolute impoverishment of American workers.

I do not deny that in some important respects their lot has worsened absolutely: there is today a greater basic insecurity (on all fronts) which is reflected, for example, in the rising incidence of mental disease and other illnesses associated with present day social tensions. Similarly, two workers to a family are more and more becoming a necessity if a decent standard of living is to be maintained, with all the additional problems this creates in the sphere of family life. But if we take as criteria the standard of living of the majority of the workers, I believe an objective historical study would show improvement over the long haul.

The position is different, in my opinion, with reference to relative impoverishment. Here I think Mr. Strachey would be proved wrong in his assertion that American workers have held their position with reference to their share of the output of industry or the national product. Victor Perlo's study, *The Income "Revolution"* and earlier work by the Labor Research Association point in the opposite direction, and these could be buttressed by further work on national income and taxation statistics.

THERE are, of course, important political implications in such a discussion of the law of capitalist accumulation. Marxists have traditionally held that this is the law which makes the socialist reconstruction of society inevitable. And it is still argued by many that, if this law does not operate, if absolute impoverishment does not take place, then why the need for socialism?

It is begging the question to answer that, although the law has been retarded or overridden by special circumstances in some countries up to now, it may subsequently assert itself. That, indeed, is one possibility, especially if one believes that these special conditions have arisen mainly from the privileged position of major imperialist powers (the United States and Great Britain) and from peculiarities of national development (the United States especially). But surely a more thorough examination of this question is in order for Marxists in this country. It is one of the important specific areas in which the application and interpretation of Marxism on the basis of our national experience is required. This is, in general, the big unresolved problem of the whole socialist movement here, and most particularly of its Communist sector. The Communist Party has twice burned its fingers in efforts at a solution which misfired; but this hasn't removed the necessity for a correct solution. For the more general issue facing the international movement is: *must* absolute impoverishment take place as a condition for the achievement of socialism?

History may provide a fresh answer, arising from a world situation which has changed greatly from the one in which Marx, or even Lenin, outlined the road to socialism. As the balance of power shifts more and more to the socialist camp, together with the working class and democratic forces within the capitalist world, these forces may prove able to restrict the power of monopoly capital on the foreign and domestic fronts. Some absolute *improvement* in the economic and social conditions of the masses of the people in capitalist countries may be achieved (possibly even in countries where a real degree of impoverishment has up to now taken place). This would be brought about through sharp economic and political struggles to insure peaceful coexistence, to protect and extend democracy, and progressively to weaken the entrenched positions of big business. Yet just such successes may prove to be a prelude to the socialist transformation of society in a number of countries, which in such a case could be brought about without the passage of humanity through fresh catastrophes. It is not that the fundamental economic laws of capitalism would have yet been rooted out; but the growing weight of working class and popular struggle would constitute an expanding counter force to their full operation.

Very pertinent to this new outlook is a consideration of Strachey's conception of the democratic transformation of present day capitalism, which he views as operating primarily through growing governmental control of the economy.

I would agree with his starting point, which is that capitalism has become less stable, and that out of this has arisen the economic and

political necessity for government intervention in the economy. As he puts it, ". . . latest stage capitalism no longer possesses in itself those inherent powers of readjustment and recovery which the sheer *élan* of nineteenth-century profit-making provided." I would also agree that in the purely *technical* sense, monopoly capitalism is more adaptable to government control (Lenin pointed this out in *The Threatening Catastrophe* written in 1917).

But I would differ with his implication that the content of government regulation in the western democracies has up to now been essentially democratic, as well as with his conclusion that "socialization of investment" is now "beginning to provide an alternative motivation to production" based on "undiluted private profit-making."

The history of government intervention in the present day economy of the United States certainly would not bear out either of these claims. Most government measures have been directed toward strengthening monopoly capital, not toward curbing it; toward augmenting private profit, not toward providing an "alternative motivation."

This has been painfully obvious in the post-war decade in the United States when government policy has been characterized by massive application of the "trickle down" variant of Keynesian spending, with its results written in the highest level of corporate profits ever attained. (See, for example, the study of *Monopoly in America,* by Walter Adams and Horace M. Gray). Although there has been major reliance on military expenditures, a variety of other bonanzas to big business have also been supplied. True, concessions have been made to labor and the people: the broadening of social security coverage, retention of farm price supports, raising of the legal minimum wage, and a few others. These are tributes to the changes which occurred in the political understanding and organization of labor and its allies since the Thirties. But they do not constitute the main trend of the decade.

For World War II, the dominance of big business in the crucial areas of government regulation and its lush results have been recorded in official documents like the report of the Smaller War Plants Corporation, *Economic Concentration and World War II,* and in popular sketches such as Bruce Catton's *Warlords of Washington.*

The New Deal represents a more complex situation. There was then a heavier weighting towards reforms; but even at that time the essentials of government intervention were directed quite frankly toward bolstering the capitalist system. The New Deal period does indicate the potential for important democratic gains, given a fighting alliance of labor and other strata of the people. But it certainly did not add up to "socialization of investment" in even a rudimentary way.

More advanced reforms have been won in Great Britain in the field of social security, health insurance, housing and the like, despite the relatively high level of post-war military spending which Strachey cordially supports. There was also the nationalization of additional industries during the Labor Party regime. But I question to what degree, even under the Labor Party, one could speak of "socialization of investment" even in the nationalized industries. For the most part what was "socialized" was the economic burden of outmoded plant, while control remained safely in the hands of its previous owners. Robert Brady, who made an exhaustive study of the post-war Labor Party economic measures, strongly points up this fact in *Crisis in Britain.*

A major difficulty with this conception of "socialized investment" is its implication that the capitalists, in order to preserve the capitalist system, are compelled to introduce measures which constitute a sort of piecemeal introduction of socialism, contrary to their own desires and even, so to speak, behind their own backs. This distorts the real content of even the most liberal Keynesian program. It is true that capitalism has resorted, of necessity, to increasing the scale of government intervention in order to preserve itself. It is also true that labor and its allies play a big role in determining the specific nature of these measures at any given time. But to encroach upon the economic power of monopoly capital in any serious way it is necessary to go beyond the whole range of measures ordinarily advocated by the Keynesians. One must deal a little more bluntly with certain questions which even Keynesian socialists like Mr. Strachey seem to handle a little too politely.*

One must ask: can the economic dominance of big business actually be limited short of socialism? If so, how? What industries should be nationalized now or in the future, and—most important—upon what terms? To what extent is it feasible to demand and possible to win a more democratic and pro-labor type of regulation of other industries by government commissions (bearing in mind the sad history of such "regulation" in the United States). What about that peculiar product of the American scene, the anti-trust laws? Can anything be done to convert them into an instrument for clipping the wings of monopoly power, or are they essentially a device for side-tracking the struggle?

Such questions go beyond the purely Keynesian framework of reference. Many Keynesians in the United States and Great Britain would doubtless admit them to be legitimate problems. While we cannot expect

* I do not attempt here to review other criticisms of Keynesian economic theory. Keynes undoubtedly came far closer to the realities of capitalism today than did the *laissez faire* economists. But even his analysis of the cause of economic crises and Keynesian claims that they can be prevented through government intervention can be subjected to certain legitimate criticisms.

Mr. Strachey to elaborate their application here, it would be interesting to hear his views on the British variants, especially in the light of his emphasis on the need to "bit and bridle" present day capitalism. Mr. Strachey suggests that this omission will be overcome in a subsequent volume when he several times refers to the necessity of overcoming "a specific economic stumbling block" to democratic control of capitalism during the first half of the century. But definition of this obstacle, and the means of removing it, are left to a subsequent volume. So the culmination of the discussion must be postponed, as far as Strachey's views are concerned. In the meantime, however, exploration of these newly urgent problems by the whole socialist movement will undoubtedly continue. Strachey's discussion of democracy and the new roads to socialism is a challenge to American Marxists.

SPAIN IS NOT LOST

MAX LEON

IT RAINED on the Puerta del Sol. The drizzle falling on Madrid added its sadness to the strange impression I felt on my arrival in Spain. I was the first Communist journalist to visit the other side of the Pyrenees in the seventeen years since the end of the war. From the very first days, I was called to the Ministry of Information and reminded that my visit in Spain had only UNESCO as its purpose, and that all other subjects were forbidden me. Nevertheless, it was impossible to place a blind-fold over the eyes of a journalist who each day traveled from his hotel to the Council's meeting place, who dined and supped in the restaurants, went to the movies and theater, and accompanied the delegates to Seville and Cordova, to Toledo and Escurial, to the bull fights and to the Andalusian spectacles.

I will simply tell what I saw and heard, what was told to me with lips and eyes, a laugh and a sigh.

And I shall begin with Madrid, since it was at the very heart of the capital that the bus from the airdrome left me.

The proudest, most sumptuous buildings had spread over their facades the names of banks. Banco . . . Banco . . . Banco . . . from one view, the string of banks is interrupted by the emblem of the Falange—arrows and yoke—which designates any fascist organization. Are we really in Madrid? There are, it is true, the double decker buses, the ridiculous headgear of the Guardia Civil, the multitude of armed policemen, the posters announcing the bull fights. But especially the blind, those thousands of blind people. Ten at a corner; one by a restaurant door; another at the exit of a movie, another two, three, five, ten at a subway entrance. Each with his cry. A hopeless litany, an obsessed cry: "Lottery today, today, today, drawing today . . . I've got one left . . . today . . . cigarettes . . . matches. Drawing today . . . I've got one left. . . ."

Crowds in front of shop windows; 200 pesetas for a pair of shoes which seem of good quality; 3 pesetas for an attractive cake; 12 pesetas, a pack of Chesterfields; 6 pesetas a pack of Spanish cigarettes.

Consciously or not one compares it with one's salary, one's purchasing power. Most of the workers and employees of Madrid earn between 20 and 30 pesetas a day, often less.

The crowds on the large boulevards are lustreless, the clothes and shoes for the most part mediocre. Nevertheless there is assembled here what the capital and all of Spain consider the well-to-do, the professional people, functionaries of the state and Franco organizations, the very lovely world of the nobility, the traffic from the Yankee occupation, the tourists. The best placed functionaries ride in American cars, traveling in tightly closed circles, and at times descending into the night clubs to amuse themselves.

Taking the subway, one discovers another world. There is the jostling at the ticket windows of people thronging to work, or in a hurry to catch some sleep.

I get off at Puerta del Sol (Sun) station. There is no door to the sun here; the name of the place is only an allusion to an ancient edifice of bygone centuries. Now it is sad, as it was once gay and literary, once the rendezvous of the liveliest minds. Today three boys pass, three young people who suddenly clap their hands to the beat of a fandango, listening to the singing of their hearts, and they splash with sunlight all who cross their path.

Through twisting alleys, we arrive at the Plaza Mayor. We are thoroughly impregnated with frying odors escaping from cheap bistros, and by the hollow cries directed at you by men and women selling anything, but mostly flints for cigarette lighters. Fearing the police, they avoid showing their wares. They walk up and down, their hands dug into their pockets, repeating their aggressive call, like possessed melancholics.

Plaza Mayor: There are the benches for those who no longer have the courage to attempt a livelihood from the sale of lighter flints, or who no longer have the necessary "capital."

On the left bank, at the foot of a support under the bridge are six or seven children, one of whom is very young—three years at the most —as beautiful as he is ragged. The biggest wears a vest, the pockets of which are overflowing with rotten oranges. The immense vest falls to his feet. He is the heart of the group, the altar toward which stretch imploring hands. He distributes the manna. Everyone receives some, biting in without peeling, spitting out the waste. Cries are heard coming from the bridge to the bank; "Save me one!" "Give me one!" Below, the biggest one stuffs back into his pockets what remains. And the youngest returns to his splashing in the mud, trying to make a dam with his feet.

We are still in Madrid, the Carabanchales district to the right and Arganzuela to the left. Left or right, mud dominates. Muddy paths leading to rows of workers' shanties, separated from the street by three yards

of garden; to factories and churches, to cafe-restaurants of five white wooden tables where workers bring their dinner. I entered there, because from the street I heard music. It was the radio.

A worker was seated next to me. He smoked, but neither drank nor ate. Further away, two young workers began with a bean soup, drinking their wine from a Coca-Cola bottle furnished with a spout like those on cans of lighter fluid. They were finishing their meal with some fried fish when a worker in blue garb arrived. He pulled out a stool and joined them at the table. He spoke very little to his friends, ate nothing, drank nothing, bought a cigarette from the owner and listened distractedly to the news coming over the radio.

Suddenly the radio began to shout—it was either the beginning or the end of a program—"Arriba España! Viva Franco!" The two young workers each ordered a cigarette from the owner. The rain began falling again, and I didn't know where the abandoned children of the bridge had taken shelter.

I walked until evening, and on following days too, in the workers' districts, between the small ramshackle houses, between large buildings, colored by drying laundry, in which each driveway opens upon a courtyard which is in itself a slum universe of crowded families, kitchen odors, squalling children. At times, the terrain was nondescript, tin villages, a small colony of miniature houses like brick boxes, or masonry of bleached lime denuded of furniture.

That same evening, I saw for the first time—at the movies—the "Cuevas," the caves where thousands of families are living. Later, I saw them with my own eyes, in the neighborhood of the Plaza de Toros in Madrid, and on the road to Granada, 50 miles from the capital; at Guardia (where the tourist guides say scientifically "troglodyte dwellings"), and also at Seville and Carmona. Natural caves and caves dug by men in the hills, they serve as homes for those who do not have even the pieces of boxes or sheet metal from which the tin cities are constructed. The only material at their disposal is found in the garbage heaps and serves as beds and tables. The crumbling walls are supported by planks on which images of the Virgin and the infant Jesus are pinned. A rare sheet is stretched over cactus, drying. While the earthquakes last April demolished hundreds of homes in the region of Granada, the poor in the "Cuevas" were killed instantly. The Spanish government, called together in Seville by Franco, set aside allotments for relocating the casualties of the caves and destroyed homes. But there remain thousands of men, women, and children in these holes in the earth, these caverns of ancient history seventeen years after the victory of the Caudillo.

But Spain is not only made of caverns. The traveler is impressed by

the large number of buildings under construction. Almost everywhere in the capital new facades with large bay windows are going up. It is quite rare to see machines on the scaffolding. Workers carry the bricks slung over their shoulders, the sand in baskets, and the cement in a multitude of buckets. (The operation is done in two motions; the worker fills a dozen buckets which he groups together at the foot of his scaffold, then he climbs back on the planks and, as he does not always have a pulley at his disposal, he swings a rope with a hook attached on a loop and raises them himself by the strength of his arms, ten times in succession. Somewhat like the fishing game at a country fair; somewhat . . .).

Thus, with archaic methods, the Spanish are building many of their homes. But for whom? Everywhere signs are posted on new walls: "Beautiful apartments for sale, inquire at . . ."

Sometimes they may be rented. But the discrimination is implacable, for the average rent of a new apartment runs as high as 600, 800, or 1,000 pesetas a month more than the average monthly wage of the Madrid worker.

How ridiculous was the question I so often posed to taxi cab drivers, to employees, to ordinary people: How to leave the slums and get into the new buildings when one's earnings do not suffice?

The proprietor of a cafe near the Midi railroad station summarized the situation this way, without cynicism, rather with bitterness:

"There are those who live facing the street and those who live facing the courtyards. I'm of the first, I can pay 300 pesetas a month rent. That waiter, over there, has a brother who lives in a slum and who pays more than 30 pesetas.

"Thirty pesetas, that's not much? It's already too much when it's paying to prolong the torture of the day, the torture of the night. . . . It's too much because the entire month's pay is still not enough to pay for bread, oil, beans, soap, electricity, and the subway."

But let's be done with impressions gleaned from chance conversations. Here are some of the figures for wages and salaries. The highest paid metal workers—roughly $1.04 a day. Primary school teacher—$42.00 a month. And so on.

These typical figures tell much less than the emaciated faces, the sad, dark-circled eyes, the shapeless clothes. And what tragic reality in that half-rotten orange treasured by the eyes of the children.

But more terrible than a hungry child, is the man whose child is hungry and who cannot cry out, or who can, and risks prison or the firing squad. For years there reigned a calm in the streets, and in the

factories. Yet today, it is by menace and the recalling of the bloody civil war and the "red dictatorship" that millions of Spaniards are kept under silence, even the functionaries, businessmen, falangists and members of organizations directed by the falangists.

Fear is distributed. The fear is especially amongst Franco leaders and it grows in proportion as the workers free themselves from them.

The Barcelona strikes in 1951 (300,000 workers) shook the Caudillo's throne. The student demonstrations of Madrid in February last year and the April strikes in Bilboa, Pamplona, and Barcelona produced a veritable terror in certain official circles.

I was in Madrid when dozens of thousands of workers were on strike in the north. Not a word in the press nor on the radio. But everyone knew.

Finally, a week after the beginning of the movement there appeared on the fourth page of the Madrid a short paragraph indicating that the Minister of Information and Tourism had received the newsmen in his office and stated to them:

"The Minister of Work has informed the Council of Ministers of an inadequate supply of workers."

The word "strike" is carefully avoided in the press as if it were endowed with a supernatural power. But the incidents continue:

The workers of a shoe factory line up at the pay windows. This will be the first time since the government has allotted them increases. The first worker opens his envelope. Twenty or so of his companions are watching his every gesture. Slowly he counts the bills.

"It's as clear as spring water," he says, almost shouting. "You want to hear how much that raise comes to? Seven pesetas a week!"

Two or three take their envelopes. The others watch and wait. Same observations. A discussion begins among the workers.

"Let's refuse to touch that money. It's a real farce."

They leave without taking their envelopes from the cashier.

In a town to the north work resumes after another "inadequate supply of workers" has been suppressed. The atmosphere is electric. The entire morning is spent in secret meetings and discussions. Armed police and secret service agents are sent to all the factories.

"What's all this about? Why have you stopped?" shouts an inspector to a group of workers at one plant.

"Listen, we're striking against the government, that's what! Because it's responsible for the high cost of living and our low salaries."

At their factory doors, in the midst of their workers, many bosses are saying they are sympathetic to the movement and encourage the strikers. Some expedite matters even more. They close their own shops,

crying: "On strike! On strike! Let's rid ourselves of this shame once and for all!" (Many important businesses are affected by the economic policies of the government.) The smaller shops close, too.

In the center of town, workers, women, shopkeepers and employees form lively groups in which Franco and his men are referred to in unprintable terms. Sometimes a Civil Guard approaches, rarely with the intention of dispersing the group; frequently he joins them in their attacks upon the government. One of them says: "They're giving us a raise. Some raise. A hundred pesos a month. Imagine how much meat that's going to pay for." Meanwhile, members of the Falange march with posters denouncing Franco, the Falange and the government.

It is the fifth day of "an inadequate supply of workers" in another factory. During the day the union delegate calls a meeting of all factory delegates, but doesn't dare appear himself. He sends a representative who relays the order for all workers to return to the job and present their demands to Madrid only through the union.

"But we already did that and you know what happened. . . ."

The orator tries to insist. His voice is drowned by the cries of impatient delegates. The meeting is broken up by boos and whistles.

Armed police are sent to the factory. An officer gives the order: "Get to work." The workers refuse.

"Use your rifle butts!"

The police strike out. The workers manage to disperse without entering the factory. The few who are forced in leave by the back door. Later in the day the workers hear that the students of the town have come out in their support.

When I left Spain after some weeks, I no longer saw only the faces of misery and sadness. I searched Spain, passionately, I had been disconcerted at first by the cosmopolitanism of Madrid. I suffered from the crying misery, from that distrust—fear of informers—that sterilizes contacts and conversations in the streets, in the restaurants and in the theater.

The truth came in scraps. One did not need to search for it in the workers' shanties nor in front of resplendent church doors where you enter passing in front of the outstretched hands of children leaning on crutches.

Spain is also the hallucinatory beauty of art collections at the Prado, the Goya, Velasquez, Murillo and Ribera rooms. . . .

The audacity of a fifteen year old torero raising extraordinary "Olés" from the arena. . . .

The ruins of Alcazar, at Toledo, bloody battleground of the war, where visiting is controlled by an old Franco army man, and where the children of the "conquered and conquerors" come together to play.

It is the furrow of laughs and mockeries behind a rare Falangist in uniform. It is the rustle of leaflets distributed furtively in the subway. . . .

The precautions taken to listen to Radio Moscow. . . .

The functionaries of the Falangist unions who are beginning to talk like workers.

The governor of Bilboa who received the delegates elected by the strikers.

The young, born and raised under Franco who are asking themselves what a Republic is like.

Franco who says: "We shall begin the crusade again."

And Franco who is afraid,

Franco who had two crutches, the army and the Falange.

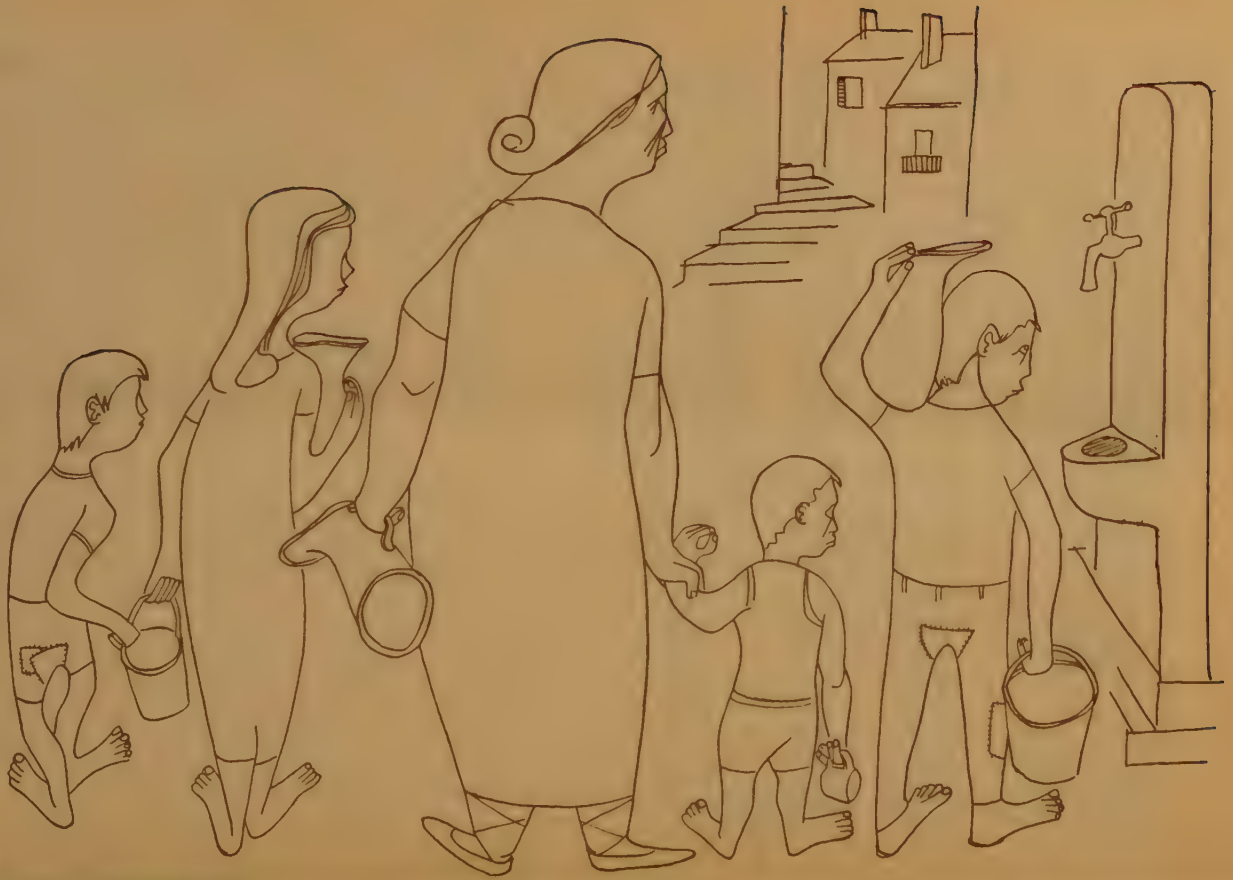
Franco who is watching the Falange rot and the army turn its back to him.

All this, this too is Spain, Spain torn and boiling under the varnish and tinsel. It is the struggle of the Spain of yesterday and of today against the Spain of tomorrow.

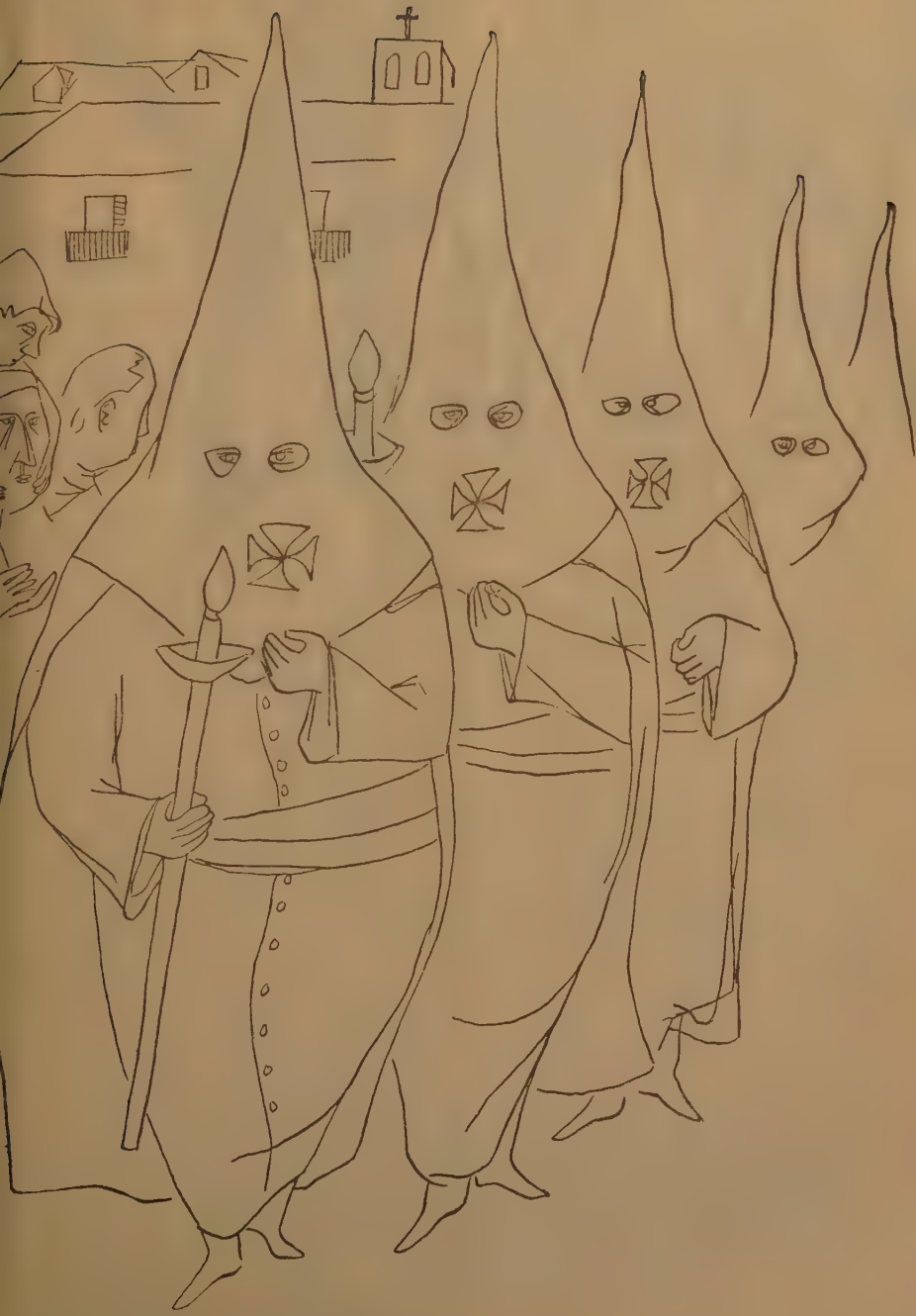
(*Translated from the French by Alex Martin*)

SEEN IN SPAIN

Three Drawings by Chips



TOWN FOUNTAIN



GOOD FRIDAY PROCESSION

PROMENADE

RiGhT FaCe

The Ad Man's Burden

Madison Avenue, to phrase its key defenses with a flourish, serves as alarm clock for America's sleeping desires. It quarterbacks our way of life, operates as custodian of our enthusiasms, and keeps those dollars in streamlined circulation. It accepts the heavy responsibility for who we are and for the shape of our collective personality in the world at large.—The *New York Times* Sunday Magazine.

Blessed Tranquility

Screen star Robert Mitchum: "I lead a quiet life. I don't go out with anybody. Friends come to my house and play records. And if anybody gets in the way, he gets a punch in the nose."—*Look.*

Alienation of Affections

The Gulf Oil Corporation said today that it would file damage suits if any of the oil maps stolen from its headquarters here were used in drilling for oil and gas.

"No large or reputable oil company would touch these maps," a Gulf spokesman said. "It is almost akin to stealing another man's wife."—*AP* dispatch.

Just the Girls For You

Puerto Rican debutantes are lovely to look at, delightful to know—and extraordinarily interesting to talk to.

They speak Spanish and English. They can quote from Cervantes and Whitman. They can discuss Velasquez and they read the *New York Times.* Not many years from now, they'll be teaching their children the finer aspects of both cultures.—Ad for the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico in the *Atlantic.*

PEKING LETTER

CHANG CHI-CHING

PICK UP any newspaper or magazine in China these days and you will read clashes between different views in literature, art and science.

What is the real value of the poems of Li Yu? He was a tenth-century emperor who lost his kingdom while he revelled in music, dance and women. His early verses were about the gay life and loves of the court. His later ones, written in captivity, were full of yearning for his native land. One school of thought denies hotly that Li Yu has anything to say to the Chinese people of today. What is there in common, they ask, between the joys and woes of a feudal ruler and those of the working folk? And Li Yu's later poems, they argue, were only the sighs of a monarch who had lost his domain.

The other side takes the opposite view. No one can dispute, they say, that Li Yu's poems are beautiful and moving. They have inspired patriotism in generations of readers. The love poems breathe genuine feeling. Just because the feudal system provided princes with harems, there is no reason to assume that such men had no real personal attachments. Two or three years ago, very few people would have said publicly that poems written by a dissolute emperor were anything but "feudal culture" to be swept away.

This debate involves two questions. What is the proper attitude, in our socialist society with its Marxist historical-materialist ideas, toward the classics of China's past? What is the relationship between the ideas of an author and the artistic value of his work?

Chang Chi-ching is editor-in-chief of the *Kwangming Daily* in Peking. From 1940 to 1949, he was successively associate editor, chief editor and director of the *Shansi-Suiyuan Daily* in the revolutionary base in those provinces. From 1949 to 1954 he was director of the *Hsinhua Daily* in Chungking.

Another argument concerns the Chinese traditional style in painting. In 1953, Ai Ching, a leading Chinese poet, wrote an "obituary" on this kind of art in the influential *Wen Yi Pao* (Literature and Arts Journal). Traditional painting, he said, was too uniform and limited in subject matter and technique. It had nothing new to say, and needed to be reformed. Though many readers wrote in their disagreement with this view, the *Wen Yi Pao* gave them no space. In the meantime the old style (called *kuo hua,* or "national painting") had begun to die. Few art students took it up. *Kuo hua* artists got very small fees.

Today, *kuo hua* has many public defenders. They point out that, though expressing its theme in simple lines, *kuo hua* calls for ability to analyze a subject deeply and understand its essence. This does not make it backward; it is a national achievement that should go on living. Recently, an institute to teach the traditional style was opened. A special national gallery shows such works, and prices for paintings have gone up.

New are the studies made of the *No-wu* (demon-exorcising) dance in Kiangsi province, which originated in primitive worship, and of Taoist ritual music in Soochow. People used to think that it was "progressive" to see only superstition in these media. They failed to appreciate the age-long artistic tradition embodied in them and the light they shed on our ancient society. Of course, demon-exorcising is useless today, but the artistic and historical value is another thing.

In science, dogmatic preconceptions are being blown away by free, hard-hitting exchanges of ideas based on fact. There is a resounding debate between geneticists of the Michurin outlook and those of the Mendel-Morgan school, once not given a fair hearing or amount of research facilities. The issue is whether acquired characteristics (in plants and animals) can be transmitted by inheritance. It has obvious practical significance for agriculture and stockbreeding. Now that the wrong, arbitrary labelling of Michurinism as "Marxist" and Mendel-Morganism as "bourgeois" has been abandoned, it is possible to argue their merits in deliberate scientific fashion, carefully examining the results obtained by each.

Historians are debating various versions of the development of Chinese society, ancient and modern: how did the Chinese (Han) people originate? When did slavery end and feudalism begin in China? What were the real origins of Chinese capitalism? What is the correct way to divide recent Chinese history into periods? The Communist Party has announced that it will produce no "authorized" version of its own history;

instead it will publish material from its records. Professional historians, both Party and non-Party, can do the writing.

The struggle for independent thinking and the direct study of realities has been a feature of the Chinese revolutionary movement for at least twenty years. After the liberation, a vast number of people new to Marxism began eagerly to learn it. Some study group leaders tended to cite authorities instead of analyzing on the basis of facts. So there was a certain recrudescence of the wrongful confusion of Marxism with dogmatism and quotation-mongering. This threatened to dam up creative thinking and the proper use of knowledge. And, as before, it was the Party that applied the corrective.

Last January, Chou En-lai reported to a meeting of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party on plans for China to reach the most advanced world standards in science and technology. To achieve this, he pointed out, it was necessary to remove all obstacles to creative thought and work, so that every qualified intellectual in the country would be encouraged to contribute fully of his or her knowledge.

On May 2, 1956, Chairman Mao Tse-tung issued the call: "Let flowers of all kinds bloom together, let diverse schools of thought contend." On May 26, Lu Ting-yi, another member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, explained the policy further to a large body of China's leading intellectuals. Among these were hundreds of scientists and scholars assembled in Peking to draft a 12-year programme for the development of natural and social sciences. Lu advised his hearers to "study Marxism-Leninism and learn better ways of applying it to the conditions in China." But, he said, "idealists opposed to Marxism-Leninism can voice their ideas too—they have every right to say what they like . . . the way to take is that of free discussions, a battle of ideas, a battle of theories. We are not afraid to accept the challenge. . . . We combat the idealism of the bourgeoisie through free discussion."

Besides learning from the experience of the Soviet Union and other socialist countries, said Lu Ting-yi, "we should be eager to establish wider contacts with academic circles in every country in the world . . . we should study the classics of the capitalist world, idealist theories and all." The slogan, "Let diverse schools of thought contend," he recalled, was an old one in China. It was first used to describe the earliest great flowering of Chinese thought more than 2,000 years ago, when the country produced philosophers like Confucius, Laotze and Mencius, and many famous poets, jurists, historians, strategists, astronomers and mathematicians.

wars." Chinese intellectuals today are better off. They have the opportunity and desire to build a strong, industrialized, socialist country, so that there will be "ever greater emphasis on the integration of theory and practice."

Theory itself should never be allowed to stagnate, he warned.

> Over the past few years, intent on solving actual problems of industrial construction as they arose, we leaned too heavily on applied technique and neglected theoretical study. Such a tendency must be dropped. More and more very real problems will crop up which we will simply have to solve. To solve them effectively, we must have an ever-better body of theory to guide us.

Intrinsically, there is nothing new in these policies. The slogan of "let flowers of every kind bloom" (applying to artistic forms and media) was outlined, in other words, by Chairman Mao Tse-tung in his famous Yenan Talks on Literature and Art in 1942. Because active encouragement and material facilities have long been given to every form of the Chinese drama, the flowers of China's theatre bloom not only for her own people. They have spread to the rest of the world, delighting millions.

"Let diverse schools contend," which applies to the sciences and the humanities, is the same as the freedom of speech, publication, and religious faith written into China's Constitution. The issue was really one of the relative positions of other schools and Marxism-Leninism.

THIS question and many others were brought up last year, when academic groups and people's organizations considered the scope of their discussions. One view was that to open the door to non-Marxist views would only confuse people. The prestige of Marxism and the admiration in which it is held are extremely high because of its proved advantages. It was on the basis of Marxism-Leninism that we won our revolution and are successfully building a socialist society. Hence many people thought that if they gave voice to reservations and disagreements with the Marxist outlook, this would mean opposing the course the country has taken, of which they approved wholeheartedly.

In a recent article published in the Peking *People's Daily,* Prof. Cheng Hsin of Peking University, a follower of Kant in philosophy, spoke of the mistake of automatically "linking idealist philosophy and ideas with reactionary politics." It stemmed from a misunderstanding of the previous sharp public exposure of the use of idealism as a political

weapon by Hu Shih and Hu Feng, active enemies of socialism. Prof. Cheng made the point that a man's philosophy and his political stand are not the same thing. Here is how he described the situation:

> In recent years, the victories scored in China in every field have brought about changes in the look of the land and the hearts of the people. . . . We feel younger, with an indescribable energy and sense of responsibility. . . . Our idealist philosophy, hidden deep within us, exists side by side with our political enthusiasm like two cliffs facing each other, two rivers running in different directions from the same source.

Naturally, it is the desire of every person to reconcile his philosophy with the things of which he approves in action. Without open contention, people like Prof. Cheng could not argue things out in the way they wished.

Some intellectuals, on the other hand, confined their reading to a few Marxist-Leninist works. In the sciences, they consulted only those published in the U.S.S.R. Building engineers in Wuhan, which has stiflingly hot summers, constructed houses according to specifications used in the Soviet Union, where the chief problem through most of the year is to keep in the warmth. Parrot-minded people applied the epithet of "idealist" to critics of the scientist T. D. Lysenko when his ideas held sway in Soviet biology. When Lysenko was criticized in the U.S.S.R., they cried down anyone who still thought he was right in many things.

"People are dogmatists in scientific research because they are too lazy to think," Lu Ting-yi said. "They fob us off with quotations in place of hard work."

Now, facilities are being provided for every kind of useful research. Scientific journals and books are being brought in from all countries and translated into Chinese on a large scale. Publishers and editors are urged to print varying views on scientific subjects, and to do so promptly.

Still another question was how far contention should go in the universities. Should not teachers keep their disagreement to themselves until one side or another was conclusively proved right? Was it right to expound un-Marxist theories to young students, unequipped for correct analysis?

The answer has now been given. Courses on the philosophies of Kant, Hegel and Bertrand Russell, all of which are the opposite of Marxist materialism, have been set up in the main universities. In preparation are courses on classical Greek philosophy and modern idealist schools like positivism and neo-positivism. China's juridical faculties will teach Roman law and examine capitalist legal theories. This does not mean we accept the assumptions of idealist or bourgeois schools of

thought. It does mean that we intend to study and analyze the works of these schools, discuss them freely and critically, and absorb their useful and rational elements. This will broaden and stimulate our scholarship.

The book-work and class hours required of university students are being reduced to give them time for independent reading and thinking. Marxists are confident that, in open contention with other types of outlook, their viewpoint will win, be enriched and strengthened and attract more adherents.

Communication

CONCERNING EDWARD KARDELJ'S ARTICLE

WILLIAM Z. FOSTER

IN *Mainstream* (December-January issues), Edward Kardelj, Vice-President of Yugoslavia, has an extended article, entitled "Socialist Democracy: Our Path." The article was prepared as a speech to a group of Social Democratic leaders in Oslo, Norway, in September 1954, the year following the death of Stalin and just prior to the reconciliation between the erstwhile quarreling Soviet and Yugoslav governments as a result of the frank admissions of certain important errors on the part of the Soviet leaders in their relations with Yugoslavia.

Dr. Kardelj's article deals with many important questions—chief among them being, first, an extensive exposition of the Yugoslav system of socialism; second, a sharp and prolonged attack upon "Stalinism," and third, an attempt to indicate the road to socialism for the workers in the various countries of the world, notably in the capitalist west.

As for the first of these points, the one relating directly to Yugoslavia, I shall have little to say. The system, with its workers' councils and consumers' councils, is highly decentralized and localized in its approach to socialist problems generally. Possibly it may serve a country of Yugoslavia's size and state of economic and political development. Indeed, Dr. Kardelj cites many socialist successes in his country, but there are some big gaps in the picture he presents—especially regarding the key peasant question, which he does not deal with at all. But when Dr. Kardelj puts forth the decentralized Yugoslav system as the one to be applied also in big industrialized countries, then one must take direct issue with him. While he says, "We by no means regard the socialist and democratic forms we have evolved in Yugoslavia as automatically suited for all and sundry," nevertheless this is the burden of his argument.

William Z. Foster is chairman of the Communist Party of the United States.

DR. KARDELJ directs his main fire against "Stalinism." By this term, however, obviously he does not mean simply the bureaucratic distortions that Stalin introduced into the Soviet system, but rather the whole system itself. Kardelj is therefore, in reality, firing into certain basic aspects of Marxism-Leninism, although he does not put it into so many words.

The Soviet system cannot, however, be thus encompassed within the term of "Stalinism." This is because the basic structure of this system was worked out under Lenin's leadership and it very definitely bears his imprint. Lenin developed such elementary features of the USSR as the structure of the State and the Communist Party, of the trade unions, of the economic organs, and of various other key institutions. He also outlined the relationship of the various mass bodies with the state proper. Stalin deeply bureaucratized this whole system in his later years, but, as the resolution of the Central Committee of the C.P.S.U. says (*New Times,* July 5, 1956), "Despite all the evil which the Stalin personality cult caused the Party and the people, it could not and did not alter the nature of our social system." Kardelj is, therefore, fighting not only Stalinist bureaucracy, but the Leninist concept and the reality, in general, of a centralized state in a Socialist country.

Dr. Kardelj sees little or no real role for the State in a socialist regime, even in this transition period. He says, "We assert that the revolution shall not only substitute one state apparatus for another but that, simultaneously, it should also inaugurate the process of the withering away of the state as the instrument of authority generally." He modifies this drastic formulation somewhat as he also says: "The withering away of the state can occur only when socialism no longer needs the state to lean upon." But he indicates, at most, only a very short productive life span for the state born in the revolution. He asserts that, "Centralization of power in the hands of the state, based upon the nationalization of industry, can play a progressive role and earn the support of the masses only under special circumstances and for but a brief period."

Dr. Kardelj greatly overestimates the speed of the withering away of the socialist state. But his conclusions are refuted by the experience of the socialist revolution in all countries where it has taken place. In the U.S.S.R. the working class for the 39 years of the Revolution has had to maintain a centralized state as a life-and-death proposition. Without such a state the Revolution would surely have been defeated and overthrown. But with this state (and despite the Stalin bureaucracy of later years) the workers have been able to make tremendous socialist achievements in every field, as the whole bourgeois world has been compelled grudgingly to admit. They are rapidly "overtaking and surpassing" capitalism in all spheres.

People's China also feels the indispensability of a strong socialist state under present world conditions. Mao Tse-tung (*On the People's Democratic Rule,* p. 8) says: "We are asked: 'Don't you want to destroy state power?' Yes, that is so, but not just now. We cannot destroy state power at present. Because imperialism still exists, because Chinese reactionaries still exist, and because classes still exist in our country. Our task today is to strengthen the apparatus of the people's state, which means in the main, the people's army, the people's police, and the people's courts, national defense, and defense of the interests of the people." Significantly, People's China is now following the basic lessons of the Russian Revolution. Mao Tse-tung, in the above pamphlet, states that, "The Communist Party of the Soviet Union is our best teacher, from whom we must learn." This is socialist realism.* It is also plain that, in the face of imperialist intrigues, the people's democracies of Eastern Europe are at the present time having a sharp lesson on the need for a strong state.

There are three basic reasons why, particularly under present conditions, a socialist regime requires a strong state. The first of these is the imperative need to repress and hold in check the powerful counter-revolutionary forces of the given countries. The second basic reason for the centralized socialist state is to repel the constant war threat from the armed and hostile outside capitalist world, which has been such a pronounced world factor ever since the U.S.S.R. was born in November 1917. Nor will this double need for a state of the socialist workers disappear until (after how many years?) capitalism has lost its power to wage war against socialism, both domestically and on a world scale. The third elementary reason for a centralized state in socialist regimes is the need for a strong, nationally organized industry, capable, at once, of developing the very highest economic efficiency and also of being quickly mobilized for national defense.

DEMOCRACY is the very essence of socialism. To the workers it is indispensable for the realization of economic, political, and social justice. Socialist democracy must soar far above bourgeois democracy which, together with its working class exploitation and oppression is literally saturated with bureaucracy throughout its every fibre—in its government, its industries, its schools, its churches, etc. Workers' organizations functioning under capitalism—trade unions, political parties, cooperatives, etc.—are also heavily infected with the corrosive and parasitic disease of bureaucratism. As a result of the Stalin cult revelations

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* Although this pamphlet was written in July 1949, these lessons are still pertinent.

the Communist world is now having a dramatic lesson in the indispensability of socialist democracy.

It is in the very nature of the present world situation that the workers in the socialist countries have had to develop their democratic institutions within the framework of strong, centralized, even militarized, states. This imperative, however, does not present the workers with a hopeless problem, as Dr. Kardelj would have us believe. The dictatorship of the proletariat, even in the necessarily centralized forms of today, does not imply bureaucratism. The basic answer to this serious question of bureaucracy under socialism is to be found in the principle of democratic-centralism, as developed in theory and practice by Lenin. The substance of this system is that the workers, imperatively requiring both centralization and democracy, must learn how to combine effectively the two element so as to insure both efficiency and democracy.

It was upon this general principle that Lenin laid the foundations of the Soviet system. Democratic-centralism applies not only to the organization of the Communist Party itself, but also to the structure of the socialist state, of the industries, the trade unions, and other major mass institutions. Lenin, on the one hand, sought to avoid a crippling over-centralization, and on the other, a paralyzing decentralization. The famous dispute over the trade union question in 1920 illustrates Lenin's system. At that time Trotsky wanted to make the trade unions organic parts of the state; but Lenin, while supporting close working relations between the unions and the state, insisted that the unions nevertheless retain an autonomous status. At the same time, Lenin stressed that the workers would necessarily have to fight ceaselessly against bureaucracy, not only in the trade unions but in the state and in all other socialist institutions.

The basic error of the Stalin regime, especially in its later stages, was that it departed radically from the democratic-centralist principles as formulated in theory and practice by Lenin. It over-emphasized centralism at the expense of democracy, with the seriously negative results that we have seen—the creation of a huge bureaucratic machine, the cruel repression of legitimate dissent, the stifling of popular initiative in many spheres, the semi-deification of Stalin, the establishment of dictatorial controls over science and art, the cultivation of dogmatic rigidity in Leninist theory, and related undemocratic practices.

IT IS of the very greatest importance to understand just how the Stalin abuses developed. Bourgeois spokesmen are declaring that such undemocratic procedures are inherent in the very nature of socialism, while some others, spokesmen for the workers, like Kardelj, are implying that the trouble originated in Lenin's principle of democratic-centralism. But

neither is correct. The real answer is to be found in a distortion of democratic-centralism, which was facilitated and cultivated by the extreme economic, political, and military pressures upon the USSR, generated by the conditions of capitalist encirclement, under which that country has had to function ever since its birth in 1917. The general result has been that the Soviet people have carried out, under the relentless pressures of the world situation, a whole series of the most urgent drives, demanding the utmost mobilization and discipline—to industrialize the country at top speed, to wage all-out war against invading fascist forces, to resist with all their strength the threatened third world war by American imperialism, etc., etc. All these problems were intensified by the industrial backwardness of Russia and the lack of democratic traditions among its people. Under such extreme conditions, Stalin's dictatorial methods could and did flourish. They also tended to reflect themselves in Communist parties throughout the world. The Central Committee of the C.P.S.U. summed up the situation as follows (*New Times*, July 5, 1956):

> In carrying out the colossal tasks involved in building a socialist society in one country, the Soviet people and the Communist Party had to surmount incredible difficulties and obstacles. Our country had, in the shortest possible historical time, and without any outside economic assistance whatever, to eliminate age-old backwardness and rebuild the entire economy on new, socialist principles. This complex international and internal situation required iron discipline, constantly growing vigilance, the strictest centralization of leadership, which was bound to have an unfavorable effect on the development of certain democratic forms. Our country, locked in bitter struggle against the entire world of imperialism, was constrained to introduce some restrictions of democracy, justified by the logic of our people's struggle for socialism in conditions of capitalist encirclement. But even at that time, the Party and people regarded these restrictions as temporary, to be repealed as the Soviet state became stronger and democratic and socialist forces throughout the world developed. Our people consciously accepted these temporary sacrifices, knowing that every passing day brought continued progress for the Soviet socialist system.

Unfortunately, however, the general course of events did not facilitate the lifting of the restrictions on democracy that had been instituted nationally in the name of a greater driving power and a stronger discipline. Indeed, the last dozen years of Stalin's term, including the all-out struggle to win World War II and the tremendous peace effort to check the war drive of American imperialism during the cold war, led to the imposition of even more "restrictions upon democracy," including Stalin's gross excesses. It was not until after the death of Stalin in 1953, which considerably relaxed his bureaucratic regime, and after the holding of the Geneva "summit" conference of 1955, which substantially eased the

war danger, that the Communist Party found it possible to put Soviet socialism on a more democratic basis. This line is now being carried out energetically by the present leadership of the C.P.S.U. Communist parties in all parts of the world, breaking with their previous harmful policy of idealizing Soviet socialism, are following a similar course in their respective spheres. The whole development, however, is not without serious problems, as is very plainly to be seen in the changing relationships between the USSR and the East European people's democracies.

The wave of democratization now going on throughout the socialist world basically reflects, in general, the growing strength of world socialism and the growing decline of world capitalism. And in particular, it signifies a substantial weakening of the imperialist policies of aggression and encirclement against the socialist countries. Basically this democratization is proceeding with new applications of the fundamental principles of Lenin's democratic-centralism, in accordance with the changed situation. This means that the needful new Communist unities and disciplines will be achieved upon a higher, more democratic basis—including improved living standards, better civil liberties, more effective workers' controls and democratization of the state and industry, increased theoretical flexibility, a rewrite of hitherto distorted Soviet political and military history, more autonomy of the peoples within the socialist states, and an increasingly vigorous struggle against bureaucratism in all its forms. Short of being checked by a new and grave war danger, the socialist countries are now embarked upon what may well become an unprecedented democratic upsurge.

This added stress upon popular action will involve, doubtless, the development of many new forms of socialist democracy—economic, political, and otherwise—and already this major development is getting under way in all the socialist countries and Communist parties. On the other hand, together with the fight against bureaucracy, it will also involve struggle against extremist and negative tendencies, such as Kardelj's over-stress upon decentralization and localization, and against the growth of "national Communist" tendencies in the People's Democracies of Eastern Europe, as opposed to the necessary new cooperative forms in the relationships among these countries with the Soviet Union. All this development, in a historical sense, represents a long stride in the general direction of the "withering away" of the socialist state, but not in the premature sense foreseen by Kardelj.

IN LINE with his criticism of various important aspects of Marxism-Leninism, Kardelj, who has no word of criticism for Social Democracy, either directly or by implication, condemns the road to socialism

being followed by Communists in other countries than Yugoslavia. He polemizes against an alleged "dogma which seeks to impose the pattern of the October Revolution on all countries," and he states, "It is wrong of us to go on inventing economic and political patterns, to which all other countries must conform."

But such criticism has little relation to the modern communist movement. With considerable justice it could have been leveled against these parties up until a couple of decades ago, but since 1935 there has been a growing radical change in this respect. The Seventh Congress of the Comintern of that year, with its historic people's front policy, definitely began to open up new paths to socialism. The establishment of the people's democracies in Eastern Europe following World War II, with their multi-party governments which are modified forms of the proletarian dictatorship, was another advance in revolutionary strategy. The Chinese people's revolution with its worker-peasant relations, also hammered out its own special road to socialism. And practically every Communist Party in the world now proclaims its own specific national road to Socialism. The XXth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in February of last year, put its stamp of approval upon this flexibility in developing the socialist program of Marxism-Leninism in the various lands in accordance with the changing national and world situations. Granted that there is still much dogmatism remaining in Communist thought and practice following the Stalin period, there is no basis for Kardelj's assertions about trying "to impose the pattern of the October Revolution" indiscriminately.

Dr. Kardelj is equally wrong in placing the question of the parliamentary road to Socialism as though it were something foreign to Marxism-Leninism. The fact is, of course, as remarked above, that the Communist parties in the western capitalist countries have been increasingly orientating upon this basis ever since the Seventh Comintern Congress. The French and Spanish people's fronts of the same period, in which parliamentary victories played a vital role, were long steps in this general direction. So too, were the post-war people's democracies of Eastern Europe. The Italian and French Communist parties have long had policies essentially based upon the parliamentary perspective, and the C.P.U.S.A. worked out in 1949 its conception of the parliamentary road to socialism in the United States. The XXth Congress of the C.P.S.U., also in accord with this trend, declared that, "In a number of capitalist countries" the working class and its allies are "in a position to defeat the reactionary, anti-popular forces, to win a solid majority in parliament and turn it from an organ of bourgeois democracy into a genuine instrument of the people's will." (*Resolution*, p. 13)

IN HIS article, Dr. Kardelj paints a picture of western capitalism automatically growing over into socialism. Thus he states that, in addition o the Communist-led revolutions in various countries, "similarly, gradual volution towards socialism through the classical democracy has become historical fact in a number of countries." Referring to Social Democratic activities, he says, "With the development of socialist relationships, herefore, we must assume that the mechanism of classical bourgeois emocracy as we know it will gradually transform itself into a system of ore direct democracy based upon the self-government of man in all the pheres of social life."

Such a picture is obviously a false one. Bourgeois democracy never ransform itself" in a direction favorable to the workers. It is transormed by the workers' conscious struggle. The whole history of the orld labor movement illustrates this elementary fact. Nor, in any case, as capitalism, even under such pressure as the Social Democrats have een able to generate, ever "transformed itself" into socialism. The Right ocial Democrats have been in power in almost every country in Europe, ut they have established socialism nowhere. The situations in Great ritain and Scandinavia, their show places of achievement, are very far ndeed from socialism. The only socialism in the world is that in the ountries led by Communists.

If the capitalist world now offers increased opportunities for the orkers to secure socialism along parliamentary lines, this is because, n the one hand, there has been a gigantic increase in the strength of he world's democratic and socialist forces during recent years, particularly n the communist-led countries of Socialism, and on the other hand, profound weakening of the power of the world capitalist system. This asic change in the relationship of international class forces is making possible for the workers and their allies to develop and to hold the emocratic processes intact, as against real or potential capitalist violence, o as to enable them to achieve socialism along parliamentary channels nd in a relatively peaceful manner. The XXth Congress correctly analyzed he situation as follows:

> The Congress underlines that the more favorable conditions for the victory of Socialism in other countries have become possible thanks only to the fact that Socialism has triumphed in the Soviet Union and that it is winning victories in the People's Democracies. The triumph of revolutionary Marxism-Leninism and the consistent and resolute struggle against the ideology of reformism, opportunism, was the necessary condition for this victory. (*Resolution,* p. 13.)

Dr. Kardelj is correct in stressing the vital importance and the growing possibility of establishing international socialist unity. This fact, however, all Communists are quite aware of, and they also understand the changing international conditions that are increasing the opportunities for such unity. Moreover, it is safe to forecast that the decisive initiative in establishing world unity will be taken by the Communists. It was they who took the lead during the great People's Front movements of the middle 1930's, in the establishment of socialist unity in the people's democracies of the middle 1940's, and in the setting up of the great World Federation of Trade Unions at the end of World War II. They are already actively proposing the merging of the two great world federations of labor. All this is in line with the vanguard role of the Communist parties.

But it would be absurd to conclude from all this that the perspective ahead will be one of calm, struggle-less evolution. Dying world capitalism will use every weapon at its disposal to check advancing world socialism. If a world war is to be averted and the peaceful coexistence of the nations assured, this can be done only through the vigilance and strength of the peace-loving forces internationally. And by the same token, if civil war in the various countries is to be prevented and an orderly parliamentary advance secured, when socialism becomes the immediate issue in the capitalist countries, this will be accomplished primarily through the strength and activity of the working class and its allies, basically led by Marxist-Leninists.

No less than before, the workers will need the guidance of a flexible, fighting, and clear-sighted Marxism-Leninism. The cue to the working class from the present world situation, therefore, is not to discard Marxism-Leninism and to slip backward towards Social Democracy, but to strengthen their Marxism-Leninism and to make it even more adaptable to every complex national and international situation. This is precisely what they are doing in the world-wide tactical and theoretical discussion that is now taking place in the Communist Parties all over the world.

books in review

The Corrupt Innocent

A SEASON OF FEAR, by Abraham Polonsky. Cameron Associates. $3.50.

IN THIS, his second novel, the author of *The World Above* penetrates the murky climate of loyalty oaths and informers and the effects of this corroding element on the integrity of a typical American. *A Season of Fear* tells the story of personable Charlie Hare, a successful civil engineer whose routine signing of a loyalty oath changes the inner and outer quality of his life from wholesomeness to corrupt confusion. It is in this sense that the book typifies the reaction of many Americans during the bleak period when conformity was cut into the American mind with the whip of fear. Abraham Polonsky has narrated Charlie Hare's story swiftly, skillfully, dramatically and with the same rare gift for reproducing the texture of physical sensation he displayed so strikingly in *The World Above.*

Charlie Hare signs a loyalty oath along with his department colleagues. Only one man does not sign—but Hare's uneasiness begins to develop. There is an inquiry about his nonexistent brother. A neighbor, Strom, a refugee college professor, is under suspicion, reported as owning books by Marx and Lenin. In a few hours Hare's uneasiness has flowered so grossly that, remembering his wife's dead brother's Marxist library, he spends a nightmare day tearing and burning up the incriminating evidence stored in his cellar. Slowly Hare comes to the realization that the disintegrating fear seeping into his life has a real source in his evil friend Pickett who is an informer. Hare struggles for life on two levels—the physical and moral—when he saves himself and allows Pickett to drown in the final scene in the book (though the question of how much choice was exercised by Hare in the finality of Pickett's death is not clear). But in the confrontation with his wife who wants desperately to believe, in spite of their mutual hatred of Pickett, that he would have tried to save him, Hare says, "No, no. I wouldn't save him. I wouldn't." At the end, alone, Hare asks himself, "Who had transformed his life, himself or others?" But he emerges with an ambiguous resolution: "He could think of only one thing, to hold on with all his strength to where he was, to cling to this point beyond which he would not be pushed, admitting and knowing what had happened because that was the beginning, to hold on while life changed

again as change it must, and bending his head between his hands he sat there in an unfathomable silence and waited."

In a witty opening scene, Sorenson, an independent-minded colleague talks to Hare of the loyalty oath they are about to sign: "My mind belongs to God and me and no one, theological, political, economical, has the right to ask me what's in it. I have a basic and fundamental morality. You have. We could never violate it. . . . How naive we both are!"

"Naive?"

"Innocent. We think morality is a question of majority vote."

"Well," Charlie said slowly, "morality is something that people have together, isn't it?"

"Yes," Sorenson replied, "that's when it's comfortable and right. But just you wait until it's right and uncomfortable."

But Charlie Hare never does reach the "right and uncomfortable" stance. He is uncomfortable enough, but not from a position of strength. Hare capitulates. Unlike Carl in *The World Above* Hare does not fight for a point of view. Indeed he has never developed one—apart from the vague bundle of decent attitudes we are asked to assume are his. He is uncomfortable when he does not back up his colleague Hamner's refusal to sign the loyalty oath, but he doesn't sign Hamner's petition for reinstatement. The books he fears and destroys are essentially meaningless to him. "The words Communism and capitalism flamed everywhere on the page. He turned here and there in the book and these two words like a forked tongue leapt to his eyes. . . . He read on without reading, his brain tuned to the dozen or so expressions that were the symbols of this vast conflict, feeling the atmosphere of his spirit as the very ground of conflict, and yet all the while aware that he was now the innocent victim of it all. It had nothing to do with him, and yet he was here in this cellar over this open trunk . . . and deeply involved, for this was his home and the books were in it. . . . The reaction he had to the words was not one of knowledge or experience, of interest, even of curiosity. His relation to them was the relation he had with the tone of his environment. . . ."

It is no weakness of the author that the ideas which give substance to those two flaming words Communism and capitalism are not filtered through the consciousness of the hero. It is a deliberately chosen limitation, dressing the character in what was surely felt to be a costume more typical of the average American. At the same time there is every artistic effort to enrich the hero in depth. It is this problem, the need to create a living character within an artificially restricted framework which accounts for some of the novel's ambiguity, and particularly for the melodrama of the final scene. Complexity in Hare is often depicted in a see-saw manner, so that he will move from one scene to the next, showing first one view of himself and then another, instead of appearing as a man of contrasts so woven and mixed that he emerges a whole surprising human being rather than a puzzling one. Sometimes incidents in the book strike as arbitrary excursions: the girl in slacks at the bar, the dead kitten on the highway, even the symbolic affair with Pickett's wife. It is not that the incidents in themselves are not realistically compelling—they are indeed masterfully described—but that their place in the design of the book as a whole is blurred.

uch blurring is an impediment to ader identification with Hare. Instead f surprising, it arouses suspicion. Thus ne reads with a grain of salt the beautiully rendered account of Hare's relaonship with his wife. Can this be the ame man and woman we met in earlier cenes? It is a pity, since the effect is o rob one of the most telling sections f the book of its full impact. Some of is same feeling dulls the edge of the nal scene. Afloat in the Pacific, Hare nd Pickett are not the larger-than-life mbols they are evidently intended to e. Unfortunately they remain artisticly contrived puppets, symbolizing only ie author's failure to blow real life to them.

Nevertheless Mr. Polonsky has wrestl-l with his problems with all the skill his command, and since the skill is nsiderable, so are the results.

HELEN DAVIS

'en Years of *Jewish Life*

EWISH LIFE" ANTHOLOGY, 1946-1956. Jewish Life. Cloth $2.50; paper $1.50.

PERHAPS NOWHERE else will you find a story by I. L. Peretz and e poetry of Morris Winchevsky, Mor- Rosenfeld, David Edelshtadt, Joseph ovshover and Abraham Reisin in such esh translation.

The Yiddish poets and writers are eet and tender. They wrote for an dience which read Yiddish only—a mparatively small group in America. ey knew who these people were and ked to them from the bottom of their arts. Literature flowed out of them—iters enthralled by their readers, ders spellbound by their writers—enchanted group.

Those are happy artists who know to whom they are talking. It is no wonder that Yiddish writers were the favorite sons of their folk. They were passionately loved and their work reflects it.

The inclusion of these Yiddish writers in *Jewish Life Anthology* 1946-1956 makes for a unique book and provides extraordinary moments of warmth and happiness.

The element of joy one gets from reading has diminished in our day and there is almost no happiness to be derived from fiction or poetry except as a lapse from electronic clamor. Pleasure in reading is almost gone, because, as a rule, it is rarely provided by those who write.

But in this anthology are to be found works of modern American authors which do give pleasure and of whom some mention must be made here. I refer especially to Yuri Suhl's "But He Looked So Young" and Tiba G. Willner's "Thousand Dollars," although it is quite true that it would be difficult to find what one might call a poor story in the collection. But these two in particular seem to contain the writers' own joy in story-telling which does delight the reader.

It is not to disparage some of the others who tackled, perhaps, more "important" themes, but only to wonder if there was always enough passion within the writer to handle them. This criticism cannot be made, for example, of the Yiddish writer Abraham Reisin's "His Brother's Bullets" in which the personality of the author pervades and personalizes a very telling story which turns out to be an indictment of war.

Although the Jewish-American writer's contribution to this anthology is one which largely furthers knowledge

of the Jewish urban worker, no small feat, there is a tendency among some of the Americans to be intelligent and correct, rather than warm. Their writing is sometimes harsh and rasping, often without humor, inspired by lofty themes but not always itself inspiring.

A writer does not have to be "correct" but he must have a story which he craves to tell. Rather than being the sort of person who carefully picks a theme to write about, he ought to be one who leaves himself free to be catapulted into a position where he *has* to speak. Rather than writing the definitive story on a chosen subject he ought sooner to be content to tell a little at a time—"in minutely organized particulars," says William Blake. It is remarkable, though, how many good writers one finds here: the tender poet, Aaron Kramer, Yuri Suhl, Tiba G. Willner, Ben Field, Leo Bilander, Louis Lerman and Michael Gold, to mention only a few.

The most extraordinary single piece in the collection, perhaps, is Emanuel Ringelblum's "Diary of the Warsaw Ghetto," translated by Max Rosenfeld. Ringelblum was killed by the Nazis. During the occupation, he was the leader of a project in the Warsaw Ghetto to collect diaries and documents which were dug up after the war.

The excerpt printed here is an angry account of infamy by certain Jews. Fearful and grief-stricken is the story it tells of Jews without courage—in particular the Jewish Ghetto police, who did the Nazi's dirty work of seizing Jews and packing them into the wagons which conducted them to their death camps.

"How was it possible that Jews would drag women and children, the aged and the sick, through the streets, knowing full well that they were leading them to the slaughter?" he cries. "Whence this cruelty in 'our' Jews? When had we nurtured so many hundreds of cutthroats, who seized children in the streets and hurled them upon the wagons?"

It may be wondered why, in the midst of death, deportations, and the slaughter of his people, Ringelblum took time to write such things and leave such a painful inheritance.

One might regret this legacy he left. But one *must* not. For from this diary one gets far more than excoriation of the detestable Jewish police. One gets in particular Ringelblum's concepts, undisturbed by the inhumanity of the leadership under which he lived. It is a chance to be grateful for the undistorted mind which wrote these things for us. For in his bitter account, he shows justice and injustice. He plays a contrast, of the ignominy of some against the clear purity of his own burdened heart. We can hardly ask more from any piece of writing.

Intelligently edited and arranged this anthology is an unusual collection of Jewish writing available to us in the years 1946-1956. It takes us from the time of the first large immigration through the First and Second World Wars, through the agony of Nazism and the birth of Israel up through the death of the Rosenbergs to the present. One would have been satisfied to see a greater variety of American life than is brought us here. It still remains for the American-Jewish writer to give this to us.

Though the magazine *Jewish Life* is only ten years old, it is already distinguished for the erudition of its articles some of which are included in this anthology. "Excommunication of Has

dism" by Kalman Marmor and essays / Morris U. Schappes, Ruth Rubin, ouis Harap are excellent examples. As e those of the two Negro writers, aul Robeson and the distinguished holar, W. E. B. Du Bois.

This anthology marking ten years *Jewish Life's* existence is informative, n be read aloud and referred to, and , although it has just arrived, already eeded. RUTH STEINBERG

angston as Traveler

WONDER AS I WANDER—AN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL JOURNEY, by Langston Hughes. Rhinehart and Co. $6.50.

SINCE the publication in the Mid-'Twenties of his best-seller book poems, *The Weary Blues,* Langston ughes has earned an enormous repu-tion as a Negro writer in the folk iom. Novels, short stories, poems, etches, plays and travel books have scaded from his typewriter, all of em revealing an essentially earthy ality of Negro life. In *I Wonder As Wander* Hughes sums up his experi-ces and impressions from the time nen he wrote "mostly because, when felt bad, writing kept me from feeling orse . . . put my emotions into ex-ior form" to the fall of the Spanish epublic. And in doing so he has nieved a work of charm, suffused with rare, uninhibited honesty and good ll, unblemished by personal ax-grind-g and the erosion of vagrant political nds.

Hughes is frankly a "Negro writer" ose work dates to the "Harlem naissance" of the 1920's. Barred be-use of his race from jobs with big blishers, from Hollywood and the offices of the slick magazines, he settled down to doing what he most wanted to do. As he puts it: "I wanted to write seriously and as well as I knew about the Negro people, and to make *that* kind of writing earn me a living."

Hughes succeeded, first through the support of patrons, and later, when rich patrons' tastes became jaded, by taking his poems to the people, touring southern Negro college campuses, and by his own prodigious literary production. He gives the reader a peek at the process of his own development in the book under review.

We go with Hughes to Cuba, Haiti, Mexico and across the southern United States. In Mexico, where his father, an attorney, had become an extensive landowner, he learned Spanish and was introduced to Spanish literature. It was his reading of Cervantes' Don Quixote, he informs us, that gave him the inspiration for the character Jesse B. Semple, through whose eyes Hughes later gave readers revealing insights into American Negro life.

But perhaps the most engaging of Hughes' travel sketches are those concerning his experiences in Spain and the Soviet Union. To the Soviet Union where he had gone with a Negro group to write a scenario for a film on Negro life, he brought the vision and perception of an American Negro. The film was cancelled, causing the disillusionment of many of those with whom he came, but Hughes stayed on to visit the Soviet East. In Tashkent, Samarkand, Bokhara and other towns in an area newly freed from Czarism, Hughes had some of his most hilarious—and interesting—associations. He covers such items as love making among the Tartars, Christmas with American Negroes in Uzbekistan, and reflections on the

similarity of the Czarist segregation from which these Asian people had been freed and the kind he had experienced in the United States. Hughes' utter goodwill permits him to understand the sensibilities of the displaced Russian aristocrats while his sympathies for the ascendant brown Asians under socialism remain firm.

Hughes met the young reporter, Arthur Koestler, in Soviet Asia. Koestler was continually complaining about the dirt and wondering why the revolution had to come to this land and not to nice clean Germany. Hughes' memory of the American South caused him to take a different view from Koestler's. For one thing, Hughes concluded, even if dirty these people had power and were not jimcrowed as they had been under the Czar.

With a literary deftness, Hughes separates the red tape and burocracy, of which he complained goodnaturedly, from the advances made by the people he came in contact with. He could not say with Koestler: "What a hell of a place to have a revolution!" Hughes gives his readers a revealing glimpse of the Soviet Union during the early 1930's and then moves on to other adventures in Korea, Japan and China.

Writing of Spain where he served as a correspondent during the Civil War, Hughes reminds us of the continuing tragedy of that fascist-ruled country. And his memoirs contain the record of the American Negroes who fought on the loyalist side in addition to pen portraits of other Americans including Ernest Hemingway, Lillian Hellman and an anonymous lady who nearly lost her life at Madrid because she wanted to see the front.

From Harlem to Havana, Port au Prince, Mexico City, Moscow, Tashkent, Tokyo, Shanghai, San Francisco and points south, Langston Hughes travelled and remembered that he was the son of the oppressed. And no matter what city or country he visited there is no mistaking what side he was on.

And the greatness and one-ness of humanity shine through every page. To this reviewer, the book was a rewarding experience.

ABNER BERRY

Negro Panorama

A PICTORIAL HISTORY OF THE NEGRO IN AMERICA, by Langston Hughes and Milton Meltzer. Crown Publishers, N. Y. $5.95.

I THINK the most dramatic feature in the record of our nation, is the history of the American Negro people. Its exciting quality makes the idea of Langston Hughes and Milton Meltzer—to portray that history visually, with a minimum of text—particularly apt. On the whole, they have realized their vision well and produced an excellent gift-volume of permanent value.

The scope of the book encompasses the Africa of pre-Columbus days to those immediately following the Supreme Court's desegregation decision of 1954. Many of the hundreds of illustrations are exceedingly scarce; all are of great interest and the quality of reproduction throughout is very high.

The general attitude of the volume is sharply anti-racist; its political orientation is New Dealish. As one might expect from a volume of illustrations, the work is descriptive, not analytical, and its overall approach strives for sim

plicity, and once in a while falls into simplification.

Factual errors are sprinkled through the text—thus, slaves from Georgia and South Carolina did fight as soldiers in the Revolution, the Negroes brought to Virginia in 1619 were not sold as slaves, etc.—but their number is not extraordinary, and generally they are not very serious. The absence of any real concern with cause produces somewhat more serious errors of omission and commission. For example, in discussing the era of the Populist movement, one reads: "Whites of all parties decided to keep the franchise lily-white and to fight their political battles among themselves," ignoring imperialism, ignoring class-divisions among the whites, which made their reactions much more complex than this sentence would suggest, etc.

No doubt the form of the work dictates this kind of superficiality, but its presence must be pointed out, nevertheless. Yet the volume does convey an overall sense of achievement in the face of extraordinary odds, some feeling of the constant struggle by the Negro people, and a general impression of noteworthy contributions in all areas by Negro men and women. In regard to the latter, there is, too, less of an atmosphere that the book is a record of "distinguished" Negroes, and more that it is one of a mass accomplishment than is generally true with works of this kind; that, of course, is all to the good.

Two-thirds of the volume is devoted to the period up to and including Reconstruction. This reviewer would have preferred a contrary arrangement, with most of the space devoted to the last seventy or eighty years, but then historical writing as a whole still suffers from this unbalance, and one must not blame Messrs. Hughes and Meltzer for a failing that marks the historical guild as a whole, up to the present.

Related to this disproportion is the volume's underplaying of the Left, and particularly the impact of socialist and communist thinking and organizations upon the history of the Negro people. The fact is that since the founding of the NAACP (in which Socialists played an outstanding part), through the struggles of the New Deal era, and to World War II, the Marxist ingredient was a major feature in American Negro life and thought and organizational activity. To ignore this, as the present book does, is to misrepresent history. Connected with this is a picture of Negro life today that is prettified. For example: "As citizens of the U.S., Negroes are Americans and their way of life is much the same as that of other Americans." At the same time, the impact upon other Americans of the policy of second-class citizenship is obscured.

But we repeat, the work is distinctly anti-racist and its message is directed towards the elimination of Jim Crow. This, plus of course, the frequently fascinating pictures makes the volume enjoyable.

HERBERT APTHEKER

Negro Culture

THE NEGRO IN AMERICAN CULTURE, by Margaret Just Butcher. Alfred Knopf. $4.50.

IN HER *The Negro in American Culture,* Dr. Margaret Just Butcher has written a timely and valuable assessment of contributions by Negro

artists to American life and of the use of materials based on Negro folk expression and experience by other American creative workers.

Dr. Butcher, who was at the center of the struggle for integrated schools in Washington, D. C. relates her book directly to the social changes in the position of the Negro. As a member of the Washington Board of Education and an official of the NAACP, she became nationally known as a spokesman for racial integration following the Supreme Court decision in 1954. The long history of separation of the races in education, she believes, has contributed much to the sense of separateness —to what she calls "cultural chauvinism."

It is her thesis that Negro cultural contributions to American culture have been through the folk arts, but that eventually in a truly democratic America that Negro artists will regard color as only a "biological or aesthetic accident," that Negro culture will disappear as such. The author feels that this is the natural result of the complete democratic freedom for which she works. But it seems to me that the Negroes have a distinct contribution to make to a dynamic American culture, whether their literature is a protest literature or not. Dr. Butcher feels however that Negro artists will make their best contribution to American culture when their propagandistic intent can no longer be discerned beneath artistic covering.

Her book is a scholarly, well-rounded work, based, Dr. Butcher says, on materials left by the late Dr. Alain Locke who during the twenties made popular the conception of a "Negro renaissance" in art and literature. Locke wrote extensively and lectured on the subject here and abroad and was preparing a book on the Negro in American culture when death overtook him in 1955. The book surveys the field from the first anonymous anti-slavery pamphlet written by a Negro freeman in 1789 to the more recent work of Richard Wright, Gwendolyn Brooks, William Faulkner, Sterling Brown and Lillian Smith.

There will be some disappointment for those who may have hoped to find in this book, based on materials gathered by Alain Locke, the scope and insight of his "New Negro." Locke's book, was an interpretation as well as a chronicle, and helped to forge into a conscious movement the various efforts of Negro writers during the 20's and 30's. Its interpretations of the works of Negro artists greatly enriched the readers' understanding of the social background from which they came.

While Mrs. Butcher's book is the most thorough up-to-date account of the contributions of Negro writers and artists it adds only facts to the work done by Dr. Locke on Negro culture, and falls short in philosophical and sociological concepts.

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