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CHAIN REACTION IN GERMANY

EDITH ANDERSON

Berlin

THE RECENT warning of the eighteen West German atomic scientists that they would not aid in making atomic weapons, struck the politicians of the Adenauer government like a small H-bomb. Its reverberations among the German people, east and west of the zonal-border, continue to spread powerfully like a chain reaction. I do not know what your papers are telling you; but Americans should know that the entire nation is showing its deep emotions on this subject in a way that Adenauer could not have foreseen.

What is the background of this unprecedented political act by that least political, most aristocratic of all academic groups, the physicists?

Late last year, some of the leading atomic scientists in West Germany wrote to Franz-Josef Strauss, the Minister of Defense, expressing their uneasiness at reports that the West German Wehrmacht might be armed with atomic weapons and warning that they would make a public protest if such a step were taken. Strauss invited the scientists to Bonn for a conference where he assured them no step would be taken that could give them grounds for anxiety.

But about three months ago after atomic maneuvers had been held, the British air marshal, the Earl of Bandon, told Dutch journalists that atomic weapons were already being stored on West German territory. The West German press made quite a hullabaloo about it. Sections of the DGB, the West German trade union federation, protested. The Earl was transferred in disgrace to service in North Africa. Adenauer apparently decided that the best defense was offense. He told a press conference on April 5 that the West German Wehrmacht would be armed with "tactical" atomic weapons which, he assured them, were "nothing more than a further development of artillery."

As Professor Carl Friedrich von Weizsaecker, one of the eighteen, expressed it, "When we read that we hit the ceiling. We said to ourselves, something has to be done about this.." On April 12th they pub-

lished their sensational appeal which thrilled all of Germany. Perhaps there would be no Goetterdaemmerung, no Weltuntergang!

Underestimating the effect of the appeal on the West German population, Adenauer next day administered an insolent public rebuke to the scientists. He wrote, "To judge this declaration one must have knowledge which these gentlemen do not possess. For they did not come to me." Speaking at the Rhineland party congress of the Christian Democrats on the same day he called the appeal a threat to peace and "unrealistic." It could not be supported, he said, because it would mean the dissolution of NATO. Regarding their assertion that West Germany could best serve itself and world peace if it did not possess atomic weapons, Adenauer said this "was not a question of science" and could be decided upon by his government alone.

BUT NOBODY was buying that anymore, not even Adenauer's Minister For Atomic Energy, Siegfried Balke, who immediately made a public statement dissociating himself from the rebuke to the scientists. Adenauer's press chief, von Eckardt, managed to make Adenauer see that a different tactic was necessary, and thus there came to be staged the love feast at the Palais Schaumburg, Adenauer's White House. The Chancellor invited six of the eighteen signers to talk matters over with him and representatives of the Foreign Office. Present also to lend their authority were Generals Heusinger and Speidel who served under Hitler and are now high muchamucks in NATO. The Minister For Atomic Energy was demonstratively not invited. Later he said to the press that he would not cooperate with any military utilization of atomic energy, and would return to private life after the elections.

The five scientists who responded were Otto Hahn, Walther Gerlach, Max von Laue, Wolfgang Riezler, and Friedrich von Weizsaecker. Werner Heisenberg, Nobel Prizewinner, director of the Max Planck Physics Institute in Goettingen and member of thirteen scientific academies (a German record) stayed away. According to the "Spiegel," Heisenberg has been so irritated by Bonn's a mic policies, even in regard to peaceful utilization of atomic energy, that he "had Bonn informed that he was sick and besides he had an appointment with the Bavarian prime minister Hoegner."

At the conference, General Heusinger tried to persuade these five brilliant men, two of whom are over 75 (Hahn and von Laue), that their objection to atomic weapons was like the initial antipathy to machine guns in World War I; one wonders whom he thought he was talking to. Speidel solemnly argued that "the feeling that one does not

ave the best of all possible weapons kills the morale of the troops." rauss accused the scientists of not having stuck to a "gentleman's greement" allegedly made when he talked to them in January. He aimed that the physicists had agreed not to take any public step without lling him first. He is reported by the *Sueddeutsche Zeitung* in Munich have become so angry that he contradicted violently, turned pale, and embled all over. Shades of Hitler! Von Weizsaecker, who by the way the son of Von Ribbentrop's former assistant foreign secretary, merely marked that it was senseless to expect others to disarm "if we do not it ourselves." Asked by the *Sueddeutsche Zeitung* whether the scien-sts at the conference could speak for all their colleagues, he said, "We nnot speak for all of them; but it is certain that there is an unbreak-le unanimity that we will not work on weapons." Professor Gerlach nswered Adenauer's reproach that they had used their appeal as election ropaganda, "An election and an election campaign are temporary phe-omena, but this is the business of all humanity."

Fears that Adenauer would make the eighteen issue some weaker, ologetic statement after he had wined, dined and promenaded them nder the gracious trees of the Palais Schaumburg were soon dispelled. rofessor von Weizsaecker had stated beforehand that the opinion of e scientists would not be changed by talks with Adenauer, and the ct is that since the conference some of the most distinguished of the ghteen have continued their public warnings. Professor Gerlach, head the Physical Institute in Munich, made a speech on April 20th to a ousand people at the annual German conference on plastics, in Bad Pry-ont, where he said, "Without nuclear energy, mankind would retrogress to undignified living conditions, but through misuse of it mankind n be rapidly and completely annihilated." On April 29th Professor von Veizsaecker addressed the annual congress of the West German Student nion on the subject, "The Responsibility of Science in the Atomic ge." He said in part. "The big bombs fulfill their purpose only when ey do not fall. The threat to us all lies in the fact that the owners of e bombs, in order to be able to threaten with them at all, must be epared really to drop them. The hope that every future crisis can be aded off as the Suez crisis just barely was seems to me no better unded than the opinion that one can always win at roulette."

Professor Heisenberg told the West Berlin paper *SOS* that "the scussion of some of the atomic physicists with the Federal Chancellor d not altered anything in their personal attitude or their opinion on e problem. Anyone who can read could see that for himself in the mmunique issued after the discussion."

After the appeal made by the famous humanist physician Albe Schweitzer, Otto Hahn made a new statement welcoming Schweitzer message and declaring that nuclear weapon tests (not mentioned in th appeal of the eighteen) had also been a factor which had made him an his colleagues so intensely uneasy, and he expressed the hope tha Schweitzer's authority would succeed in bringing the nuclear experimen to an end.

In what was perhaps one of the most dramatic statements, Max Bor seventy-four years old, in a special statement in the *Spiegel* said abou the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki: "I do not hes tate to use the word crime. It is a question of collective guilt, of th disintegration of moral consciousness, in which all of us are guilty togeth —I too, although I took no part in it." He went on: "The man wh guided the production of the first uranium bomb, Robert Oppenheime advised against it, but in vain; he himself was forced out of the Atom Energy Commission of the American government. The driving for was Edward Teller, who not only developed the theory of the hydrog explosion but also saw to it that it was carried out. He has entered h name in the book of world history—whether on the debit or the cred side, the future will tell. Both men, Oppenheimer and Teller, as well Fermi and others involved, including Russian physicists, were once my c workers in Goettingen, long before these events, when there still was su a thing as pure science. It is fine to have had such clever and dilige students, and yet I wish they had been less clever and more wise. It probably my fault if they learned nothing else from me but resear methods. Now, through their cleverness, humanity has reached a nea desperate pass." He concluded: "I think that only a general renunciati of all weapons, all force, with step by step disarmament, has any sen And instead of propaganda for getting rid of atomic weapons, I am favor of enlightenment on the nature of total war."

A communique was issued after the Palais Schaumburg conferen which revealed nothing whatever except the fact that the governme was squirming. Containing not a word about the equipment of the Bo army with atomic weapons, nor about their being stockpiled on W German soil, it merely said sweetly that the government "shared t concern" of the scientists, agreed with their motives and had "compl understanding" for their warning. As the Federal government did n intend to produce its own atomic weapons, it had "no occasion" to a the atomic scientists to take part in developing them. As for the sci tists, the communique mumbles that "it has not been their main aim except only the Federal Republic from a general fate" but that "they w

f the opinion that they must start in the nation where they were citi-
ens" to protect the world against threatening destruction. It claimed that
ie government wanted to "influence the governments of East and West
y every available means to reach an agreement on general controlled
isarmament."

This did not stick either. The press kept asking embarrassing ques-
ons and Eckardt and Strauss had to find answers. At the press conference
here the communique was handed out, Eckardt said that "actual equip-
ient of the Federal army with atomic weapons" in the next eighteen to
venty-four months was "not acute." Eager to be helpful, the American
idio station took this up the same evening, echoing that it was "not
rgent and that "it would not even be possible technically to equip the
ederal army with such weapons" in that time span. Strauss was grilled
ver television by the editor-in-chief of the Munich *Seuddeutsche Zeitung*
ho said to him, "in any case, if the weapons are here, if we have a
ederal army equipped with tactical atomic weapons, it is a time of great
anger. The atomic physicists were reproached, Herr Minister, with hav-
ig addressed themselves to the wrong authority. They should have
ritten to Moscow or Washington, et cetera. But obviously, one first
ddresses one's self to one's own government." All Strauss could think
f answering was that the warning of the eighteen "would not make the
ightest difference." He made an ineffectual attempt to worm his way
ut of any responsibility by saying that "any use of atomic weapons by
ie West is impossible without the agreement and without orders from
ie United States."

THIS is an election year in West Germany, and the outcry in Ade-
nauer's Christian Democratic press against the atomic scientists
eflects the party's desperation at this untimely blow. From the look of
ublic sentiment now, Adenauer—who up to now has enjoyed consider-
ble popularity as the chancellor who brought prosperity—will have to
o a neat tightrope walk if he is not to break his neck before September
5th, election day. At the Palais Schaumburg he told the scientists arro-
antly, "Humanitarian statements have no sense any more. They make
o impression." But as Professor Heisenberg told the star reporter of
ie Hamburg *Welt* on April 16th, "We have seen all too many humani-
rian appeals expressed in general terms go up the flue. It would have
een naive of us to add another such appeal to those." They knew,
e said, that this one was bound to have real political effects. The *Welt*
porter wrote that when he visited Goettingen he saw stacks of tele-
rams of support piled on the desk of Professor Hahn. All the eighteen

were quite clear that their appeal was a political stand, the report stated.

So strong is public feeling in support of the eighteen scientists th none of the main West German parties has dared to be silent. Even th vicious BHE, the Resettlers Party, which has just held a party congre demanding the restoration of Germany's "pre-1945" frontiers, reacted the appeal with an official statement that it "could not be taken serious enough" and that "the only protection against atomic weapons is policy which keeps West Germany out of an atomic war.' Social Dem cratic Party boss Ollenhauer speaking at a campaign meeting in Stuttga on April 25th, demanded a binding declaration from the Bonn gover ment in which it should vow not to pursue atomic armament. His rig hand man Mellies had already demanded on April 18th that the gover ment "definitely and outspokenly" renounce atomic weapons for th Federal army. Reinhold Maier, chairman of the Federal Democrat Party, reproved Adenauer for saying the scientists had not been compete to utter a warning. "Unfortunately the Chancellor does not recogni the authority of these eighteen highly qualified German personaliti As usual, he knows better than all the experts," Maier said. Brockman chairman of the Center Party, spoke of the scientists' warning as "uprising of conscience" and declared it must be the beginning of general action by atomic scientists of all countries.

On the evening when Albert Schweitzer's appeal was read over rad stations throughout the world, the biggest West German radio statio felt obliged to broadcast it, although the BBC did not, and the Fren radio refused to touch a similar appeal by Frederic Joliot-Curie. Not o did such stations as RIAS, the American-controlled radio station in W Berlin, read the full text in a respectful tone of voice; they gave it least a full minute's mention on their news broadcasts. They had to. the words of the *Spiegel,* "The previously scolded scientists were able rise from the chancellor's table of flattery with the feeling that they h deposited a time bomb in his baggage whose fuse could no longer removed."

EMBOLDENED by the daring and prestige of the eighteen, all sc of voices began to make themselves heard—voices of other dist guished scientists, of writers and artists, of newspapers, of trade unio and of high church officials who had been exceedingly cagey and sil hitherto.

"Never has a political event given rise to such a flood of mail fr readers," reported the *Nuernberger Nachrichten* on that date. And s

more people expressed themselves after the Schweitzer appeal was broadcast. Professor Buchwald of Heidelberg University, holder of the National Prize, hailed Schweitzer's warning and said the decision on atomic experiments was now placed squarely in the hands of the people. The writers, scientists and artists connected with the West German PEN Club declared their profound agreement with the appeal and made a statement condemning any nuclear experiment that could menace life. The White Collar Workers Union thanked Schweitzer and backed his demand for a halt to nuclear experiments. The *Frankfurter Rundschau* accused the government: "Instead of placing its entire moral weight on the side of disarmament, Bonn uncritically stands up for the ideas of the NATO military. Never has the misfortune of Bonn's policy of alliances revealed itself as crassly as now."

The West German trade union federation (DGB) had announced on April 17th that it would demand on May Day that atomic power be used solely for peaceful purposes. The release stated that "one should start with the repudiation of atomic weapons in one's own country, and in addition do everything to support the willingness of other peoples for agreement on atomic weapons if mankind was to be saved from destruction." This was followed by many statements of the same kind from different branches of the union, from a conference of young trade unionists of the Ruhr in Essen, from the Public Services Union congress in Dortmund, and from all sorts of other groups. *The Sueddeutsche Zeitung* said it was being overwhelmed with reader mail.

Naturally, relief in the German Democratic Republic was just as great as in the Federal Republic when the eighteen scientists spoke, and public reaction was even more impressive. I come to it second for the simple reason that it is much easier to express views against atomic armament in a country fighting for socialism and peace, and because it is obviously taken more for granted that such views will be expressed there than they would be in an aggressively imperialist country like West Germany.

As soon as the appeal of the eighteen became known here, a group of atomic scientists of the German Democratic Republic, including Nobel Prizewinner Gustav Hertz, issued a joint declaration warning against a continuation of experiments with atomic bombs and saying, "We East German atomic physicists who are not confronted with such problems as the production, testing or use of atomic weapons and who are working exclusively on the peaceful use of atomic energy, have heard with deep emotion of the action of our great West German colleagues and feel at this moment particularly close to them. Remembering the lessons of

two world wars we have followed the developments in West Germany with regard to the stockpiling of atomic weapons and the atomic arming of the Federal army with growing anxiety during the past few months."

On April 29th Prime Minister Otto Grotewohl invited eight leading scientists of the GDR to confer with him on questions arising from the dangers of atomic armament. After the conference these eight and six other distinguished physicists of the GDR issued a statement which said in part, "No one has more reason to oppose the threatening fate than we Germans, whose whole fatherland would be the victim of an atomic war. This danger increases with the presence of any type of atomic weapon, regardless of whether these are artillery, rockets or bombs, for even the weakest 'tactical' nuclear weapons cannot, by their very nature, have less destructive power than the bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

"We declare that in the German Democratic Republic, no scientist has ever been asked to work on the development or testing of nuclear weapons."

Professor von Ardenne of the Scientific Council for the Peaceful Use of Atomic Energy, issued his own warning pointing out that German cities were in inconceivable danger. He said that radioactive contamination following a war that made use of present nuclear bomb supplies would afflict forty generations with hereditary diseases.

Many other scientists and scientific organizations followed suit. Arnold Zweig, author of *The Case of Sergeant Grischa* and president of the PEN Center East and West (headquarters in East Berlin), thanked the eighteen scientists in a letter published on April 16th. Trade union organizations and individual workers sent countless statements of enthusiastic support for the eighteen to the newspapers of the GDR.

All the seven bishops of the German Democratic Republic and the deans of all six theological seminaries here published a strong statement on April 26th supporting the eighteen atomic scientists and got the reactionary West German Bishop Dibelius, head of the all-German united evangelical church, to sign it. He had not signed or commented on the joint statement made by eight leading West German theologists previously—possibly because his bitterest opponent, Pastor Niemoeller, was among them. The East German statement ran:

> We thank the West German atomic scientists for their warning against atomic equipment for German fighting forces. We thank the East German atomic scientists for their warning against a continuation of experiments with atomic bombs.

> We are one with the synod of the Evangelical Church in Germany and the entire body of the Church in the radical condemnation of means of mass destruction. In them the gifts of God, human understanding as well as the forces of nature, are abused. In them man, who is God's image and for whom Christ died and was resurrected, is betrayed. In them the goodness of the Creator Himself is blasphemed.
>
> We warn against abetting this thing or permitting oneself irresponsible indifference or resignation. The world danger that not only threatens the present generation but our children and our children's children, demands that every individual act to reach the goal of a universal ban on and abolition of means of mass destruction.

The same day, several hundred evangelical ministers in the Rhineland attending a conference of the "Churchly Brotherhood" in Wermelskirchen, West Germany, made a statement saying, "Mankind today in its whole earthly existence is prey to an unprecedented threat. The life annihilating atomic bomb is here. The consequences of this weapon cannot be made light of much longer. How cruel it is was indicated in the declaration of the 18 atomic physicists. It is an illusion to expect the preservation of life, peace and freedom from means of mass destruction, because the use of such means is destructive in principle. Therefore we pledge not to go along one step further on the road to atomic armament."

The enormous hostility of the German people to the policy of atomic armament was shown in the public opinion poll published in the latter part of May by the "Divo" Institute for Opinion Research in Frankfurt-am-Main. It showed 77 per cent of the population opposed to the storing of atomic weapons in their country with 81 per cent opposed to all experiments with atomic bombs. The German Social-Democratic Party leader, Ollenhauer, said his party would stick to its anti-atomic position even if the USA threatened to withdraw its troops. The President of the West German Red Cross said his organization opposes atomic weapons. Adenauer's party, the Christian Democrats, was forced to propose an appeal to the Bundestag against atomic experiments. This was passed on May 9, but has not yet been sent to the big powers. The Soviet Union did not wait for its copy of the appeal but said it was ready to halt all atomic experiments if the West did. The influential *Frankfurter Allgemeine* believes now that the Christian Democrats are sitting on the appeal because the only powers who must act are now the Western.

It is my impression that the anti-atomic public chain reaction has just started. It is the most hopeful thing, the most unifying thing, that has happened in a Germany split more dangerously than the atom in the ten years I have been living here.

THE ART OF LU HSUN

CHARLES HUMBOLDT

LITTLE MORE than a year ago, if the name of Lu Hsun happened to be mentioned in literary circles, someone might say: "Oh yes, Ah Q." And the rest might summon up a bright, expectant look showing that they had heard of modern China's most renowned writer and his chief character. Is it malicious to say that we were ever so slightly affected by an imperialist assumption: how could the literature of an undeveloped country be other than undeveloped itself? When, furthermore, the writer, Lu Hsun in this case, had for years challenged the material and cultural hegemony of our Powers That Be?

The reader is, however, not altogether at fault. Before the recent appearance of a selection of his stories and reminiscences in English* (for the translation of which we must thank the People's Republic of China ((Mainland))), little of Lu Hsun's work was available to us. We are somewhat provincial in language mastery. Yet even if it were accessible in its entirety, that part of his labor which most concerns us at the moment—his fiction—would still confront us as a literary curiosity. Lu Hsun wrote innumerable articles, memoirs, polemics, and essays—between six and seven hundred of the latter—and a history of the Chinese novel. He made translations chiefly from the Russian of Gogol (*Dead Souls*), Plekhanov, Lunacharsky, Gorky, Fadeyev (*The Nineteen*), Sholokhov, and others. But he has, I believe, fewer than 30 short stories to his credit.

This sparse output is bound to be puzzling to us who associate genius as much with energy as with its other inherent qualities. What could have dried up the sources of imagination in a writer so delicate in sensibility and so powerful in passion and intelligence? But then, how did he achieve such control of his medium in so ephemeral a "creative" span?

* *Chosen Pages from Lu Hsun.* Cameron Associates, Inc. $4.75. Liberty Book selection, $2.62.

(Almost all his stories—26 of them—were written between 1918 and 1925). Since we know so little of his personal life apart from its broad intellectual and political aspects, we cannot even surmise an answer. Besides, the question is defective, reflecting our over-sharp distinction between what is spontaneous and what is reasoned out. Though we do not yet have Lu Hsun's essays, it is hard to believe that they would not be enlivened by the fantasy, the pointed humor, and the dramatic bitterness of his stories. Secondly, while ordinarily a writer does not just choose to quit his craft, the element of choice should not be disallowed a priori. But let him give his own explanation:

> Some people have tried to persuade me not to write these short, critical essays. I am very grateful to them for their concern, and I know that writing stories is important. But there comes a time when I have to write in a certain way. And it seems to me that if there are such troublesome taboos in the palace of art, I would do better not to enter it, but to stand in the desert and watch the sandstorms, laughing when I am happy, shouting when I am sad, and cursing openly when I am angry. The sand and stones may bruise me until my body is torn and bleeding, but from time to time I can finger the clotted blood and feel the pattern of my bruises; and this is not less interesting than following the example of the Chinese literati who eat foreign bread and butter in the name of keeping Shakespeare company.*

The skeptical reader may feel this account to be too strained to convince him that the decision was made freely and deliberately. He may also recall a passage written in 1930 when Lu Hsun, a committed revolutionary, was living under the White Terror.

> Shanghai is like a furnace. So long as I live in it I have no peace of mind for story writing. Even granted that I am able to write one, I don't think any publisher will be dare-devil enough to put it into print. But there are more than enough things here to provide me with material and inspiration for short commentaries. So what else can I do besides continuing to translate and comment?

It is likely that the choice was compounded of subjective inhibitory factors, unknown to us, and the obvious pressure of external and recognized necessity. In any case, it would be frivolous to say that he deserted his vocation for a lower form of writing. His words convey not only his preoccupation with certain themes and images, but also his desire up to the moment of his death to put both art and reason in service to suffering humanity. Here, as in other ways, he resembles the great Russian figures whom he introduced to the Chinese people.

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* Quoted by Peng Hsueh-feng in his introduction to the *Chosen Pages.*

HIS REAL name was Chou Shu-jen, and he was born in the small country town of Shaohsing in Chekiang province on September 25, 1881. When he was 13, his grandfather, an office-holder in Peking, was thrown into prison; about the same time his father, a scholar without a government job, became ill, dying three years later. The remnants of family life were held together by his mother whose surname, Lu, he took for his nom de plume. In the preface to his first collection of stories we find recorded the acrid wisdom he acquired as a child: "I believe those who sink from prosperity to poverty will probably come, in the process, to understand what the world is really like." He made it his task to teach people what the world is really like. He showed them how misfortune seizes peasants and poor scholars, women and sick children, renders them defenseless to insult and outrage, and breaks those it cannot kill. The tone of his stories ranges from that of calm, melancholy narration to a kind of fantastic frenzy, as though he were crying: Something must happen! It is fitting that Lu Hsun should have brought the work of Käthe Kollwitz to the attention of Chinese artists; one imagines how he must have looked at Goya's Disasters of War and the *Caprichos.*

Yet his emotional scope, which sometimes extends to the limits of ferocity, should not make one forget that side of Lu Hsun which gives his art its unmistakeable purposive quality. "As to why I wrote these stories," he once said, "I feel today as I did ten years ago, that I should write in the hope of enlightening my people, write about human life and the need to better it. . . . I drew most of my characters from those unfortunates in our abnormal society, because I wanted to expose certain evils, arouse attention to them and have them cured." While he could permit himself the utmost latitude in invention, his thinking was unwaveringly answerable to readers and subjects alike. Awareness of responsibility is the secret key even to his darkest pages. (Anxiety that their meaning might escape those he wanted to reach surely entered into his resolve to abandon fiction for the essay, where social truths could be stated more explicitly.)

"To have them cured" reminds us that he was a medical student in Japan when a critical incident caused him to adopt a different profession. One day he was watching a film of the Russo-Japanese war. The execution of a Chinese "spy" by the Japanese flashed on the screen. Around the doomed man, whose hands were bound, stood a group of his countrymen passively enjoying their expectation of his beheading. At that moment Lu Hsun realized there were worse things to heal than physical illness. "The people of a weak and backward country, however strong and healthy they may be, can only serve to be made examples of, or to witness such

futile spectacles." He decided to become a writer to help cure both his country and his people.

One thinks of another man, a doctor and writer, whose art took on some of the attributes of his practice. Anton Chekhov's personal modesty is very close to Lu Hsun's distaste for intellectual display. Science had taught them both that while there is an explanation for everything, to say so is not the same as having it. Pretension is quite lacking in their hunt for knowledge, as is any hint of the supernatural or apocalyptic. Their concerns are secular and the answers they look for are rational ones. Men are meant to be happy on earth and if they are not the reasons are to be found here. In their darkest moods, they did not so much despair of humankind as of their ability to show it paths through its misery.

In Lu Hsun's case, the memories of his family's decline were mingled with the taste of national humiliation. The execution he witnessed in the newsreel was one small, if frightful, episode in the history of imperialist plunder which the detested Manchu dynasty was powerless to prevent, or connived to encourage.* When Lu Hsun was twenty, the great peasant anti-Manchu "Boxer" uprising was broken by the intervention of the armed forces of eight foreign powers, and the grateful monarchy spread an already pillaged nation at their feet. From then on, until the fall of the monarchy ten years later, in 1911, the economic subjection of China by the imperialist countries, including the United States, proceeded unchecked, as did the discussions of reformers and revolutionaries on the manner in which freedom from both feudal and foreign rule could be accomplished. This was also a period of sporadic peasant risings and their ruthless suppression. Almost all of Lu Hsun's stories derive from this period and from the betrayal of the 1911 revolution by the constitutional monarchists and the traitor Yuan Shi-kai.

HAVING SAID this, one hesitates to go further, as do the publishers in calling Lu Hsun "the literary mentor of the Chinese Revolution." Feng Hsueh-feng, the critic whose introduction to the book consists mainly of a political analysis of the writer's career, seems also to have imposed upon the stories at least a degree of explicit awareness which the sharpest reader is hard put to find. Some will say that they do not recognize in Lu Hsun the man described by his expositor. There is much truth to this, but it is partly the result of a misunderstanding. It does seem as though the critic by a kind of hindsight were finding in

* The details of the Chinese people's agony and of their victorious struggle cannot, of course, be related here. The reader is recommended to an admirable concise review of them in Israel Epstein's *Opium War to Liberation*, published in Peking by the New World Press.

the stories what he has read in the essays. Is he justified in doing so? We know that Lu Hsun accepted the materialist interpretation of history, that he was a Marxist the last five years of his life (he died in 1936), and that he supported the October Revolution as well as the Communist Party's program for China. Yet the stories, apart from saying nothing of this through their subject matter, are closer in spirit to Chekhov, a critical realist, than to socialist realism. This is contrary to the expectation aroused by Feng's description.

Are we right then in saying that the stories must stand on their own feet, as it were, and that all else is "reading into?" Lu Hsun himself would not accept that, as is apparent from his own remarks about them, and from his use of certain symbols which are ambiguous only insofar as their alternate, or revolutionary, meaning had to be disguised for his security. Moreover, Chinese poetry is an art of echoes, the purest of which is the poem itself. Only a novice would imagine that he had mastered the form by glancing at its surface. So much is left unsaid, ensconced in associations and acquaintance with its traditional signals. So we may comprehend with more sympathy a Chinese critic's discovering in Lu Hsun's narratives a significance we feel he has injected from another source, the history of his country. We see that which is given; he tells what he feels to be its true dimension. But if, as with Feng, the critic does not bridge skillfully the gap between acts or incidents and their implication, between art and ideology, his version will seem arbitrary and unconvincing. He will have trouble with a writer like Lu Hsun whose social vision was heroic but whose characters were not. (To a dilettante eye some of them will appear as familiars of the "Outsider.")

THERE ARE four salient themes in Lu Hsun's narrative repertory. The first, that of rebellion and its sacrificial punishment, appears in a reminiscence and in his first published story, "A Madman's Diary." In the former, Lu Hsun, then in Tokyo, has read a dispatch from China reporting the killing of the Governor of Anwhei and the capture of Hsu Hsi-lin, the assassin. Soon after he learns that Hsu's heart was torn out, fried and eaten by the governor's bodyguards. The literary model of the "Diary" is Gogol's "Memoirs of a Madman," but the incident of which it is figuratively a transmutation is the martyrdom of Hsu Hsi-lin.

The diarist is the subject of persecution because twenty years ago he trod on a certain Mr. Ku Chius' ledgers. Everyone wants to kill him for this: Mr. Chao, who does not even know Mr. Ku, his own brother, the children who were not yet born when it happened. He listens to a story from a nearby village of a "notorious character" who was beaten

to death, after which people ate his heart and liver to give them courage. The narrator looks at him hungrily. He searches through his history book for a record of cannibalism, but the words, "Virtue and Morality," are scrawled on every page. Suddenly the book is filled with the injunction: "Eat people." It occurs to him that he has always lived in a place where for 4,000 years they have eaten humans, and he too may have unwittingly devoured pieces of his sister's flesh. How can a man like myself, he cries, ever hope to face real men? And he hopes that perhaps there are still children who can be saved because they have not consumed their own kind.

It is superfluous to comment on Lu Hsun's artistry in handling the progress of his character's delirium and the swift involvement of every creature in his frightful world. Indeed, our conviction that he is not at all mad, or mad with clarity alone, depends on the power with which his delusion is portrayed. Of course, there are other hints of larger meaning, one of them rather blunt. Ku Chiu, translated, is Ancient Times. The calm Confucian is a devouring tiger. Feudal society, in fact any predatory system, takes its toll of those who question its customs and values. It casts them out only to weaken them so that they can be dragged back again, self-doubters who once were challengers. Dripping with crime, it becomes the accuser, smears the innocent with blood and passes judgment on their trembling. Worst of all, it delivers them to the anger of its other victims, those who cannot yet recognize the true criminal.

The sacrificial motif reappears in the story, "Medicine," written a year later. Here a father buys a roll dipped in the blood of an executed revolutionary, believing that it will cure his little son of tuberculosis. A conversation of villagers reveals that the victim, a young man, was betrayed by one of his neighbors, and that the jailer whom he tried to stir to understanding beat him because he had no money and later stripped his body of its clothing. The people's talk shows that they have little but contempt for the dead, or think him to have been mad.

The child dies, of course, and on the appropriate day his mother brings memorial dishes and rice to the cemetery. The young man's mother arrives, timid and ashamed, and is amazed to find a wreath of red and white flowers on her son's grave. She believes that he has placed them there himself to tell her that he has not forgotten the wrong done him. She begs him to make a nearby crow fly to his grave to confirm her faith that he will be revenged. Instead, the crow stretches his wings and takes off to "the far horizon."

Again we have a story of extraordinary craftsmanship, except for its somewhat contrived ending, for which Lu Hsun later supplied an explana-

tion. The villagers' talk is a miracle of compression; in less than two pages it achieves the same effect of intolerable confinement as does Chekhov's long story, "Ward No. 6." It tells us that so long as people are not awakened, sacrifice is futile. The deaths of heroes are travestied in the use to which they are put: the selfless deed becomes part of a ghastly ceremony for perpetuating the enslavement of the participants. The writer is very close to the borderline of fury at the exploited for allowing themselves to be abused and destroying their rescuers.

In his essay on Lu Hsun, Mao Tun, China's Minister of Culture, carries the sense of the episode further. According to Mao, the agitators of the time of the story—the eve of the 1911 Revolution—are rebuked in retrospect for their romantic isolation from the masses. This in turn serves to warn the revolutionaries of 1919 to learn how to speak to people so that the latter can be helped to break their mental chains. I must admit that I cannot find this thought in Lu Hsun's tale. It seems like a piece of extrapolation on Mao Tun's part, over and above the author's intention. The added lesson detracts from the conscious bitterness of the story, which, paradoxically, in this instance is intensified by its more limited political outlook. But one would have to be familiar with the original to be sure of this. Lu Hsun's later comment, quoted by Mao Tun, on the scene at the graveyard is most interesting, because it implies that he understood quite clearly when he was introducing elements extraneous to his narrative. Of the symbolic wreath he says: "Our chiefs then (during the May Fourth movement) were against pessimism. And I for my part did not want to infect with the loneliness I had found so bitter those young people who were still dreaming pleasant dreams, just as I had done when young." One may, if one wishes, read this as another example of submission to political dictatorship, for there is no doubt that the wreath is an addendum to the recital rather than integral to it. But perhaps this purely aesthetic view is too impatient. I have mentioned Lu Hsun's sense of rseponsibility. He did not decide lightly to spoil his narrative by continuing it beyond its just limits. Before judging his offense, we should remember how many great artists, Rembrandt and Dostoyevsky among them, violated one principle of form or another to say what had to be said.

A last word on the crow. He does not go to the grave, but to the horizon. He cannot afford to console the old woman since he flies for the young people.

THE SECOND theme we encounter in Lu Hsun recurs throughout his work. He was haunted by the sufferings of plain people, whether

peasant, scholars, or city-dwellers, and the waste of their forces. Toward them he had the feelings of a man on a cliff as he watches the sea lazily flinging a swimmer against the rocks below.

There is the scholar Kung I-chi, who hangs around the wine shops and humbly offers to teach a twelve year old boy, now the narrator, how to read. His fellow drinkers laugh at him because he has had his legs broken for stealing and must drag himself along like a crippled dog.

In a second wine shop the storyteller meets an old classmate with whom he used to play pranks in the temples, such as pulling the beards off the images of the gods. Now his friend has returned to his home town to rebury a little brother who died many years ago. The old coffin has rotted away and the body is gone, but he has a new box interred so that he can tell his mother her wish was complied with. The friend has made another gratifying, though futile, gesture. Not knowing that a boatman's daughter whom he remembered from before had died, he has brought her a spray of flowers, like those she once cried for as a young girl. Suddenly, this dutiful and gentle man, once so lively and now so dull, confesses that he makes his living expounding the Confucian classics and various manuals of feudal behavior to the children of the moderately rich. As he admits this, his eyes turn to ashes in his scarlet, wine-swollen face.

More terrible is the fate of the emancipated couple in "Regret for the Past." A young government clerk and would-be writer, Chuan-sheng, recounts his love for a charming girl and their decision to live together in defiance of her relatives and the scorn of their neighbors. With difficulty they find two rooms in the small house of a petty official, acquire a few creature comforts, four chicks and a spotted dog. Then, because of the gossip about them, he is fired from his job. At first he is elated by the challenge, decides to become a translator, and writes the editor of a magazine, an old friend, that his services are available. The rest is foregone: noncommittal answers to his letters, pitiful pay for his writing; the chicks, now grown, are eaten; he takes the dog to the edge of town and pushes him into a pit so that the animal will not follow him. Now the daily cares and chores become intolerable; the normal small anxieties are magnified; quarrels replace misunderstandings; and at last something cold and malicious seizes Chuan-sheng's heart. He decides, with no conviction of course, to make a fresh start by breaking with Tzu-shun. With a coward's resolution he tells her that he no longer cares for her. So he dooms them both. She is taken away, unresisting, by her father, "heartless as a creditor with his children." Not long after he learns that she has died, tormented by the "truth," uttered by a weakling, that she is utterly alone

and unloved. And he? "I must make a fresh start in life. I must hide the truth deep in my wounded heart, and advance silently, taking oblivion and falsehood as my guide. . . ."

If this stripped abstract sounds pathetic, be assured, there is not a grain of sentimentality in the story. Hedged in though it is by circumstance, the narrator's guilt is not pardoned, least of all by himself. He knows that even if unhappiness was unavoidable, he could have played other than his miserable role in its completion. The world brought ruin but he added desolation.

In this and the two preceding stories Lu Hsun exhibits what is meant by "the typical" in art. The discerning reader will see what is at stake here is the intellectual as an individual, alienated human being, and the intelligentsia as a class in feudal or transitional China. The depiction of the first is the source of our emotion; the implicit generic application evokes our understanding. Short of either we would have something less than art. According to Lu Hsun, his intellectuals did have a choice. They could become parasites or revolutionaries, pilot fish or mariners. If they did not choose the latter course or floated irresolutely, they had only degradation as an alternative; and in that state they could be victimized, vile, or a mixture of both. By their choice they would preserve or forfeit their will power. The destiny of Lu Hsun's characters cannot help us decide whether man's will is ultimately free or not, but it it can show us what are the range and effect of men's choices within a given social system. One might say that his art approaches philosophy as close as it can —but no closer than it should.

IF CHOICE, no matter how constricted, was nevertheless possible in the case of the intellectuals, there were others on whom misery and disaster settled like dust of the air. To beat it off would require, as it did, the awakening and movement of hundreds of millions. Lu Hsun, who knew from his childhood what life on the land was like, had no illusions about it. Sensitive though he was to the human potential, he still could not blandly ignore the crippling effect of a thousand blows, natural and man-dealt, on the peasants of his country. He disdained to inspire his readers by making the wounded run and drawing smiles on suffering faces. Sometimes he shouted accusations; often he would single out a figure of pain so that anger could rise, unforced, in his audience.

In the vignette, "Tomorrow," a widowed mother having exhausted the resources of the gods to cure her feverish child, takes him to the local doctor. As the latter puts out two fingers to feel the patient's pulse, she notices his four-inch fingernails and this gives her confidence that her

son will live. The charlatan begins an explanation of the illness: "The element of fire overpowers that of metal . . ." but leaves his wisdom in midair. And so after swallowing Infant Preserver Pills, the little one dies. The mother pawns her earrings and a silver hairpin at Prosperity Tavern for his coffin, burns paper coins, and sets by his pillow his favorite toys: a clay figurine, two small wooden bowls, and two glass bottles. Then she sits down to face the thought that he will never talk to her again. Outside, two drunkards, who know that her child is dead, are singing in falsetto: "I pity you, my darling, all alone. . . ." As they reel away laughing, the tavern closes. "Only the night, eager to change into the morrow, was journeying on in the silence; and, hidden in the darkness, a few dogs were barking." So it ends. There may be consolation in the eager night for us, but for the mother, none.

"My Old Home," written before "In the Wine Shop" (the sketch of the old classmate), is its peasant equivalent. In that tale, we saw how weakness of desire brought the scholar to his knees. Here it is the force of circumstance, outside the power of the lone individual to change, that defeats the farmer. When Lu Hsun—the "I" is certainly he—returns home for the last time, to break up the household, a childhood pal comes to see him. Jun-tu was the son of a part-time servant of the family, an alert, self-reliant boy who taught him how to set traps, catch small birds, and other earth and water lore. But now this former playmate and equal calls him Master so that a shiver runs through him. Jun-tu's face and body has coarsened with labor. "Children, famines, taxes, soldiers, bandits, officials and landed gentry, all had squeezed him as dry as a mummy." He is so poor that he asks for the ashes of the stove to fertilize the sandy soil of the seashore where he lives. An officious neighbor accuses him of having hidden some of the family's dishes to come back for them when they have left. The two old friends have nothing serious to say to one another, and Lu's only solace comes from seeing his nephew and Jun-tu's son play together, oblivious of the social chasm across which they may soon face each other. He hopes that the same wall which has grown up between him and Jun-tu will not separate the children, that they will not become blunted by routine or stupified, nor take refuge in dissipation. The wish is not ecstatic. It is as sober and unillusioned as the depiction of his failure to make contact with his friend who still worships idols. Hope, also, must cease to be used as an idol since it "cannot be said to exist, nor can it be said not to exist. It is just like roads across the earth. For actually the earth has no roads to begin with, but when many pass one way, a road is made." If one compares this reflection of the writer's with his sterner, more demanding compassion toward the intellectuals,

one sees how sensitive he was to the varying degrees of choice open to different individuals and what one had the right to ask of them. He understood that—and why—material rather than spiritual factors played a much more direct part in the decisions of workers, farmers, and "the poor." The intellectual could choose to act or not to act according to his sense of values—or so he thought. He could also pick the values which provided the basis, or rationalization, for his doings. The Jun-tu's of the old China had no such latitude. Their condition of life—labor and poverty—was the immediate source of their actions, and their values issued from the latter, not the reverse. In their case, tradition was the ethical side of four thousand years' relatively unchanging mode of production.

WE SHOULD not imagine, however, that Lu Hsun exalted action through deliberate choice above action taken out of dire necessity. He would have rejected that as social and moral snobbery. As for the effect of either kind of action on history, he would have pointed out that men have always traveled by roads built by hundreds and along highways worn into the earth by millions.

Somewhere, Lu Hsun speaks of the souls of his people growing, fading, and withering "like grass under a great rock." Of whom could this be truer than of Hsiang Lin's Wife in "The New Year's Sacrifice"? The narrator, returning to be a guest of an older clan member in his native town, is accosted by a beggar woman whom he recognizes as a former servant of his "uncle's" family. She has changed fearfully since he saw her five years before and seems frozen with sadness. She asks him unexpected questions about the after-life. Caught off guard, he answers so badly that he loses self assurance and, even after an intervening night's rest, resolves to leave the following day. That evening he overhears a casual conversation which informs him that she has died. He starts to ask his uncle about her, but senses the latter's reluctance to expose his passive responsibility for her miserable end. He is convinced that the uncle, a neo-Confucian, suspects and dislikes him, and wants him to go.

At first the uncle had disapproved of Hsiang Lin's Wife because she was a widow; but she was too hard a worker to let go. Then one day his fears were confirmed. A woman showed up, announced that she had come to collect her runaway daughter-in-law, as well as her back wages, which she had entrusted to her mistress. Hsiang Lin's Wife was then re-married to someone she had never seen. They took her, cursing and screaming and tied with a rope, from bridal chair to bridal chamber, and shut her up with her new husband.

When the go-between, who had first brought the rebellious woman

round, returned with her once more, she assured the lady of the house here could be no problems like last time. The husband was dead of yphoid, and the child—who could have foretold that the wolves would arry him off?

But there was trouble anyway. Hsiang Lin's Wife had become silent nd ingrown. When she did speak, she would tell folks how she had ound her child half eaten by wolves, until the women cried and the men topped smiling. Such a person exerts a bad moral influence, the neo-Confucian warns his wife; she must not be permitted to defile the sacri-icial dishes with her gloom.

So the last rag of dignity is stripped from her. Now other servants an tease her, tell her that she will be cut in two in Hell for having uccumbed to her second husband. The story of her child's death, which he repeats monotonously to everyone—Lu Hsun never relaxes his gentle nsight—merely exasperates her unwilling listeners. After some delibera-ion, the philosopher's family turns her out. Absorbed in her sorrow, she ad begun to forget to prepare the rice. With her death the orderly ods are appeased and the storyteller is aroused from his dream to enjoy he recurrent rite of irony:

> I was woken by firecrackers exploding noisily close at hand, saw the glow of the yellow lamp oil as large as a bean and heard the splutter of fireworks as my uncle's household celebrated the sacrifice. I knew that it was nearly dawn. I felt bewildered, hearing as in a dream the confused continuous sound of distant firecrackers which seemed to form one dense cloud of noise in the sky, joining with the whirling snowflakes to envelop the whole town. Enveloped in this medley of sound, relaxed and at ease, the doubt which had preyed on me from dawn to early night was swept clean away by the atmosphere of celebration, and I felt only that the saints of heaven and earth had accepted the sacrifice and incense and were all reeling with intoxication in the sky, preparing to give the people of Luchan boundless good fortune.

I should like to put off commenting on the intent of this wonderful tory. It seems to me to challenge preconceptions, shared by the writer, s to what revolutionary literature should be like, and the persistent ssumption that it must portray the resilience of its subjects. While I till believe the requirement to be fair, on the whole, it would be in-ensitive, in the face of such a work as this, to refuse to modify it. The esistance of Hsiang Lin's Wife, her shouts and curses, are soon subdued; er life's meaning is not in these thereafter, but in what happens to her, hat wolves' teeth have done. If that is true, should we remain in-

transigent in our definition of revolutionary realism, any more than we would be in defense of the alleged Unities of classical drama? One ought not be crabby with an art form; it enriches the generous.

LU HSUN was captivated by resilience and moral stature, too, and that is his third theme. In the charming story, "The Divorce," the spunky young wife, Ai Ku, resists the bribes and threats of a whole hierarchy of rich in-laws and important persons who want her to agree to a divorce. It's not that she loves her boor of a husband; she despises him for his grossness and brutality. But she refuses to be pushed around at *his* will. When she suddenly gives in at the council of her relatives, it is only because Seventh Master, the friend of magistrates and connoisseur of anus-stops, calls for his snuff in such a shrill voice that she thinks he is about to execute some awful judgment upon her. Incidentally, an anus-stop is a small piece of jade stuck by the ancients into that orifice of a dead man to keep him from decaying.

A graver note is struck in "An Incident." One day a rickshaw man who is pulling the narrator—again, it is almost surely the writer—runs into an old woman. Though she is obviously pretending to be hurt, the rickshaw man helps her to a nearby police station where she is hardly likely to get help but where she is sure to lodge a complaint against him. At first his passenger feels annoyance at the delay, and irritation at what he feels to be the man's foolishness in getting himself into this trap. But suddenly it seems as though the man's retreating figure has grown; the greater the distance, the larger he looms.

The inevitable happens. A policeman comes to say that the driver has been detained and can take him no further. Without thinking, he takes out some money for him. He is almost afraid to look at himself. "This incident," he writes some three years later, "keeps coming back to me, often more vivid than in actual life, teaching me shame, urging me to reform, and giving me fresh courage and hope."

What gives this lesson its special attractiveness is the candor of the learner's self-observation, the unaffected, almost casual admission of the small, ugly traits which people are more anxious to forget than actual crimes. Here the quality of modesty is tested as it cannot be when great confessions are exacted. And the rickshaw man is dear to us equally for his selflessness and for his matter-of-fact absence of gesture which deprives the narrator of satisfaction while it gives him courage.

WE NOW turn to the last and most political of Lu Hsun's themes: the status and attitudes of the various classes which were con-

fronted by or participated in the overthrow of feudalism and the establishment of bourgeois democracy. The two stories I shall describe were written in 1920 and 1921 respectively, that is, shortly after the October Socialist Revolution in Russia. The effect of that upheaval was to give strength and encouragement to the anti-imperialist elements of all classes in the colonial and semi-colonial countries. It also showed that the leadership of the bourgeois-democratic revolution would have to be taken over by the working class from the irresolute and compromising bourgeoisie. Israel Epstein quotes a passage from Mao Tse-tung which analyzes this transition most concisely:

> A change, however, occurred in the Chinese bourgeois-democratic revolution after the outbreak of the first imperialist world war in 1914 and the founding of a socialist state on one-sixth of the globe through the Russian October Revolution in 1917.
>
> Before these events, the Chinese bourgeois-democratic revolution belonged to the category of the old bourgeois-democratic world revolution, and was part of that revolution.
>
> After these events, the Chinese bourgeois-democratic revolution changes its character and belongs to the category of the new bourgeois-democratic revolution and, so far as the revolutionary front is concerned, forms part of the proletarian-socialist world revolution.*

The new democratic revolution, as Epstein calls it, was initiated on May 4, 1919 by demonstrations which forced the government to reject the Versailles Treaty transferring Germany's territorial and economic concessions to Japan. The socialist revolution was formally brought into being when the Communist Party of China held its first Congress on July 1, 1921. Lu Hsun's full appreciation of the significance of these two events was to come a good while later—in fact, after his short stories were all written—but the influence of the Russian and Chinese liberation struggles upon him was crucial. For one thing, it eased his disgust at seeing the pattern of treachery, which he had studied between 1911 and 1918, repeated after May 4. It enabled him to summon up the cast of these betrayals, first with humor (when he dealt with their minor actors) and then with a kind of fantastic satire which is a distinct contribution to literary genres.

"Storm in a Teacup" is a lighthearted version of a matter for weeping.

Scholars floating in pleasure boats past the village of Luchen remark on its idyllic, carefree look. They don't know that its inhabitants are named after their weight at birth: Ninepounder, Sevenpounder, Six-

* *On New Democracy.* Foreign Languages Press, Peking.

pounder; and that there is continuous angry argument as to whether or not the decreasing weight of succeeding generations betokens a decay of the species. To this Chinese Kasrilevka, of which Prosperity Tavern is the hub of news, comes the rumor that the Emperor has re-ascended the throne. At once Mrs. Sevenpounder starts to upbraid her husband for having cut off his queue, sign of submission to authority. To make matters worse, Mr. Chao, owner of Abundance Tavern in a nearby village, whom Mr. Sevenpounder had called a bastard two years ago, shows up in his ominous long gown. He has let down his pigtail, which he prudently did *not* cut off, and everyone knows that he wears his elegant costume only to celebrate the misfortune of enemies. Taking a predatory look around, he comments on Sevenpounder's queuelessness, and puts the family and other villagers in a fratricidal uproar. Everyone falls in the dumps.

But two weeks later nothing has happened. Mrs. Sevenpounder has seen Mr. Chao reading in front of his wineshop, his queue coiled on top of his head. Mr. Sevenpounder will once more be respected by his wife and the other villagers, and confident of the future, the parents will begin to bind the feet of their little girl, Sixpounder.

THIS WAS fun, but as its ending shows, Lu Hsun knew that all was not well. "Storm" was the incision; now he would have to probe. So he invented Q and his "True Story." With this half-clownish, half-tragic character, he entered the lists of world literature. Feng Hsueh-feng says that Lu Hsun is successor to the classic satirists of China, and the reader is teased throughout his hero's adventures by delicate shadows of reference to national literary and folk humor. But universal figures like Panurge, Don Quixote, Candide, Chichikov, Schweik, Langston Hughes' Simple, and Chaplin's tramp also come to mind, called up by a sixty-page chronicle of the life and death of a foolish guy.

What makes this achievement still more amazing is that Ah Q, the odd job man, is much more than representative of whatever class you might think he belonged to. He is an amalgam of diverse and even hostile types, and therefore classes. It is intriguing to speculate why Lu Hsun attempted such a miracle of compression, the outcome of which was bound to have more than a touch of the grotesque. Did he want to see whether he could carry it off? Or did his attachment to the small form compel him to discard the assembly of characters which any sensible novelist would have found indispensable for the mark Lu Hsun set himself? After all, he was to portray, through one protagonist and two or three near-extras, an entire society as he saw it. For Ah Q is himself and . . . But let us begin with him.

No one knows where he was born and he can't be called a native of Weichuang because he lives there only part of the time. His name is Ah Q for lack of a better. (A good deal of learned kibbitzing goes into proving this.) He lives by himself in the temple of the guardian deity and works for everyone, is forgotten as soon as the job is finished, and recalled only when something else has to be done. He nevertheless rates himself above his employers, including the rich Misters Chao and Chien who are fathers of students. As for the latter, "My sons [he is childless] may be much greater."

Visits to town increase his self-esteem. The townspeople are so absurd as to call a long bench a straight bench, and the villagers are idiots for not knowing of such differences in custom.

The possessor of ringworm scars, he resents the most indirect reference to them, such as the use of the words, "bright" and "light" or even "lamp" and "candle." Having been worsted in too many fights on this account, he satisfies himself with glaring at offenders.

After winning at gambling for once, he is robbed in a fake fight. Furious with defeat, he devises a way out. He will slap himself. The slapper is, of course, he. The slapped one is someone else. He is a winner at last. He ekes out a similar victory from a beating administered by Mr. Chao. Having felt the latter's blows, he consoles himself with the thought that he is the victim of a prominent man, some of whose renown must rub off on him. As it does.

Then he meets a series of reverses, beginning with a drubbing at the hands of Whiskers Wang, a beggar whom he resents and insults because Whiskers catches more and bigger lice than he. Fresh from this battle, he is caned for cursing Mr. Chien's eldest son whom he is wont to call Imitation Foreign Devil or Traitor in Foreign Pay because that advanced young man returned from Japan with his pigtail cut off, and then put on a false one. To forget his humiliation he pesters a passing nun to the amusement of the men in a wineshop. He has decided that she —doubtless like a black cat—is responsible for the day's catch of bad luck.

The little nun has turned his mind to women—he was always a great puritan busybody before—but his lechery merely earns him more blows, this time from the son of Mr. Chao, in whose house he has made passes at one of the servants. To add outrage to injury, the raggedy shirt which he has left behind in his flight is made into diapers for the new baby. Figuring that he has had enough, he leaves town.

WHEN HE returns some months later, he is a relatively prosperous man. He claims that he has been working for a successful provincial candidate (there is no note to explain exactly what this means, but one can imagine); and that he left voluntarily because he could not stand his master. Besides, the people in town used shredded shallots with their fried fish instead of leaves sliced half an inch long, and the women did not sway properly. But on the other hand, any kid on the street could play mah-jong better than the Foreign Imitation Devil, who was the only one in Weichuang skilled at this game. He also delights in frightening everyone with his story of the execution of a revolutionary. At that moment his prestige is at least equal to Mr. Chao's.

Then suspicion rears its ugly head. People ask where Ah Q has acquired the silk skirts, calico and curtains they have been buying from him. It turns out that his town service was not to the successful candidate at all but to a robber who would drop stolen goods into his arms as he stood outside the wall (not having nerve enough to enter himself). His limited stock is booty from a swift run-out on his boss who had apparently gotten into trouble inside some house. At first people were just wary of him and treated him as Confucius said the gods should be dealt with: they paid their respects to him, yet kept him at a distance. But when he begins to boast of his exploits, "they knew he was really too low to inspire fear."

No recorded history relates how the Revolution (of 1911) came to Weichuang. Nor would the readers of textbooks alone have recognized it if they had been there. It left no documents or proclamations—save that of Ah Q, which was oral, consisting of a shout—and the memories coupled with it were not exactly noble. In every great flood water backs up in the low places, bearing with it dead branches, planks, tables, boxes, letters, and a body or two. Here the flotsam is rumors, intrigues, thieving on the part of unexpected persons, and at least one corpse.

As night approaches for the Manchu dynasty, one may see our villagers scanning lightning flashes over the not far distant town. In their eyes lurk prudence and anxiety. Mr. Chao, for example, has accepted for safeguarding some packing cases sent him by the provincial candidate from whom he was estranged before. Hearing of this, Ah Q, who has always detested radicals, becomes one himself. He snubs the Chaos, father and son, who want to make up with him. That night he has a dream of triumph and piracy like the servant girl's song of vengeance in the *Three Penny Opera.*

The next morning he wanders off, "either by accident or design," to the Convent of Self-Improvement, but a crying nun informs him that

other revolutionaries—Mr. Chao's son and the Imitation Foreign Devil—have preceded him. These two, not on good terms in the past, have become pals in the night and are embarked on a reform campaign. Their first heroic gesture is to batter on the door of the convent and on the old nun's head, break a tablet inscribed "Long Live the Emperor," and steal a valuable bronze censer from the shrine of the goddess of mercy.

Naturally, the expected great changes are slow in coming. The titles of posts have been altered, but not the officials who hold them. More folks, the Chaos and Ah Q among them, have pinned up their pigtails. But when Ah Q wants to join the new Liberty Party, whose symbol is a silver peach, he is driven out by a recently appointed organizer—the Foreign Imitation Devil! His ostracism from the revolutionary ranks so infuriates him that he resolves to inform against his hated rival—provided the old order should ever return. Meanwhile, soldiers have arrived and are pillaging the homes of the rich.

A few days after the military incursion, Ah Q is seized by a squad of soldiers, a squad of militia, a squad of plain police, and five secret policemen, supported by a machine gun. The Chinese Dillinger is dragged to town and prison for his alleged role in the robbery of Mr. Chao's house. At first he decides that it is everyone's fate to be dragged off to jail at some time or other. He is ashamed, though, that when asked to sign his name, he had to confess that he could not write, and when asked to make a circle instead, he could only draw something that looked like a melon seed. But he concludes that "only idiots can make perfect circles." And so falls asleep.

Alas for Ah Q. Despite the intervention of the provincial candidate, who would sooner have his packing cases, which were stored at Mr. Chao's, returned to him than to see Ah Q made an example of, he is found guilty of the crime he did not commit. Does he have anything to say? the old judge asks him. And he answers: "Nothing."

So he is carted away to his execution. As he looks at the shouting crowd come to enjoy his death, he thinks of a wolf which had once followed him at the foot of a mountain; now a thousand hungry eyes are upon him. He cannot sing some heroic aria because his hands are tied. All that occurs to him is "Help, help!" yet he cannot utter this either because he feels his body is "being scattered like so much light dust."

In Weichuang, everybody agrees that Ah Q was guilty, for if he had not been, he would not have been shot. In town, people are disappointed because he was not decapitated, and had not sung from an opera. "They had followed him for nothing."

I HAVE reported "The True Story of Ah Q" in such detail so that the reader will see how interwoven are its realistic and symbolic elements; its factual and fantastic episodes; its farce and its content, which is far from farcical; its pitiless judgments and uncondescending pity; its scorn for all-sized tyrants and charity to the Ah Q's who try to imitate them. These qualities lift the story above prescriptions for his time—or for ours. So does the anguish Lu Hsun felt, to see how the underdogs learn the hardest way while the powerful, curled in the womb, already know that one hand washes the other. If someone should object that such verities are not timeless, we can only say that, for the moment, they are timeless enough.

Plainly, then, Ah Q fulfills the conditions of what we like to call a universal figure: all of us have some of his traits and some of us have all of them. But there is more to art than universality. A painter looks hard at these granite boulders; a writer stares at the face of his dying friend. That is what they begin with, not with ideas of immortal Stone and Man. So with Ah Q. No matter how much of him remains today, he is still the old China, not the new, and he is timeless because he is rooted in that place and time.

What puzzles us in Ah Q is that he is so many people at once. But doesn't that, as well as his crazy adventures, show him to be part of the family of folk art? He is kin to the Mexican papier maché Judas, who may combine the body of a small child with the head of a mountain lion, angel's wings, boxing shorts, the knee guards of a soccer player, and a bullfighter's ruffled shirt. With this small difference; while Ah Q was shot, the Mexicans string firecrackers around Judas on Good Friday and blow him up. (Nevertheless, they are fond of him.)

On the surface Ah Q is an odd job man, or as the French poet Claude Roy describes him, "a coolie, naive yet given to showing off; defenseless but cunning; foolish and sly; a creature to belabor, to insult, to give the dirty jobs to, who dreams rather than lives his wretched existence." The concluding clause is provocative, and one wishes that Roy had gone on from there. For the capacity to dream rather than face life is not especially a working class skill. It is more the privilege of parasites in a congealed society like that of feudal China. Mandarins are entitled to it, all ranks of bureaucrats, landlord, police officials, anyone who has plenty of time to spare because from time immemorial his kind have been perched on the back of Ah Q.

Ah Q is both himself and his oppressors; that is why we see him as his own worst enemy. His energy is not so much theirs, as it is the force in him that they have appropriated to enslave him. His vices *are* theirs,

by which they bind him to them. The abuser of beggars is himself abused, the teaser of nuns is sheltered in a temple, the poor craven is beaten by rich cowards. He is the infection and the sufferer.

But a rebel? In the story, Ah Q's conversion to the revolution is replete with comic touches. Yet in 1926 Lu Hsun said of this episode: "As long as there was no revolution in China, Ah Q would not be a revolutionary, but as soon as there was one, he would." This can be taken in two ways, each of them valid, I believe. The first is that Ah Q, insofar as he is one of the multitude of the exploited, is capable of meaningful revolt given a situation in which he is led by—shall we say the Communist Party of China? The other is that Ah Q, as his own opposite, is the essence of political opportunism, that blight devouring all his country's revolutions except the last. If the fake-revolutionaries Mr. Chao and the Imitation Foreign Devil, (or Chiang Kai-shek, or "running dog of imperialism," as he used to be called) look at him coldly, it is only as the big fish eye the little ones. If we read irony into Lu Hsun's remark, we will see that it foretold the banker and compradore betrayal of the revolution in 1927. If we read it straight, then it is prophetic of the freeing of China by 1949.

IS THIS dragging politics across the fine carpet of art? Pleading guilty, I must point out that the artist himself misled me. It was he who wrote about his own work so unequivocally that no one could pretend not to know where he stood and whom he wanted to win. And said: "The life of satire is truth."

There is, nevertheless, something to the charge. It is easy to say that truth is a reflection of reality, political as well as other kinds. But there are various levels of reality—each of the sciences pierces a different plane—and it is not the business of art to shine on all of them. Furthermore, there are all sorts of mirrors; what we call artistic truth is an interaction between the external world and the sense and mind of the artist. His work reflects *that* interaction and not just flat reality; if this were not so, all works of art with the same subject would be identical.

For example, Lu Hsun strove all his life to tell men the truth about their lives and the causes of their un-freedom. His writer's conscience was absorbed in cares to make his message absolutely clear. "I do my best to avoid wordiness. I try to convey my meaning without any frills. . . . I do not indulge in unnecessary details or make my dialogue too long." Artist and "citizen" are indistinguishable in such passages. Yet can we say that his stories are wholly free of ambiguity? To claim that we would have to have perfect pitch in the realm of ideas. Lu Hsun wanted to strengthen his people, make them more militant, and save them from

being caught in the mire of commiseration. Yet one foreign critic, and a most sympathetic one, feels that his tales distil a "snowy, cool pessimism." We can account for such a breach between intention and opinion only if we admit the *personal* in art, the vital element most neglected in contemporary Marxist criticism because it cannot be weighed so readily.

We know that Lu Hsun served his aims to the end of his life; else why should the Chinese people honor him today? However, he fulfilled them in his own way, in his own style, and in the groove of his own temperament. When the experiences of early childhood made the strongest impression upon him, he recorded those. When he remembered how abashed a man is before the question of hopeless sufferers, he wrote "The New Year's Sacrifice." It is interesting to note that this story, written in 1924, follows the more "politically conscious" saga of Ah Q by more than two years; one would be hard put to call it an example of socialist realism, at least as that category is narrowly and—unfortunately most often—defined. We can defer our discussion of the much worried topic, but we cannot, except at our peril, forget Hsiang Lin's Wife.

"Oh," you may say, "she arouses nothing but pity. Every drop of the future has been drained out of her. Besides, Gorky felt that pity is degrading." That is true, but what if there are two kinds of pity? The one that Gorky had in mind is that semi-professional emotion which absolves hypocrites of their duty to others; how will they preserve their noble sentiment if they have no unfortunates on whom to practice it?

BUT THERE is a revolutionary pity so different from the first that we may need a better word for it. It is not grounded in moral principle; it comes rather from some quality of imagination which makes the hearts of others beat in our bodies. Perhaps there will again be a time when this is a simple skill, and no one will think twice about it. Now, to attain it seems almost a miracle. The peon is a full seven hours' flight, the African a week away by boat; while anyone who cries around the corner is a million light years off. Who can care about these aliens? A man has troubles enough, a woman her own worries. Hardness of heart is not a stone; it is the fine chalk of our social life settling in that well guarded place. Into that coldness comes the pity which is imagination, linking us to Hsiang Lin's Wife, Ah Q, and every man from whom Money, god of our self-entranced and solitary freedom, has estranged us. Then when that idol's temple is swept clean of him, perhaps we shall remember to put no other there. To remind us, we have the modesty of Lu Hsun, who was

as a nerve o'er which do creep
The else unfelt oppressions of this earth.

THE DOUBLE-FIFTH FESTIVAL

LU HSUN

This satiric tale was written in 1922 when Lu Hsun was a teacher in Peking. The Double-Fifth Festival falls on the fifth day of the fifth moon. It is also known as the Dragon Boat Festival since it commemorates the famous poet Chu Yuan who committed suicide by drowing in the fourth century B.C. The occasion, now a festive one, originally symbolized the search for his body.

RECENTLY Fang Hsuan-cho has become so fond of the expression "there's hardly any difference" that it has become a sort of catchword with him. It doesn't just pop up in his speech. It has taken possession of his thoughts. His old pet phrase was "it's all the same", but he seems to have found that inadequate. So he has replaced it with "there's hardly any difference", which he now uses.

Since he discovered it, this plain epigrammatic expression has caused him many a sigh. But at the same time it has given him comfort. For instance, he used to feel outraged at the sight of older people riding roughshod over the young. Now, after some deliberation, he has come to the conclusion that when these young people have children of their own, they will show off their authority in the same way. This thought has brought him solace and soothed his ruffled feelings.

Or again, when he sees a rickshaw-puller being beaten by a soldier, he is no longer indignant as he would have been in the past. Instead he reflects that if the rickshaw-puller were a soldier and the soldier a rickshaw-puller, the one would beat the other just the same. This consoling thought sets his mind at ease. Occasionally, when he reasons in this manner, it occurs to him to wonder if he has invented it as a way of putting his conscience to sleep because he lacks the courage to fight the evils of society. Perhaps, he thinks, he has become indifferent to right and

wrong, and ought to put himself straight. But this does not prevent the new watchword from taking ever-deeper root in his brain.

He enunciated his "hardly any difference" theory publicly for the first time in his classroom at the "Chief Virtue" School in Peking, where he was discoursing on some historical event or other. "There is little difference, really," he said, "between the people of various times, ancient or modern. However unlike they seem, they are all akin in nature." This rambling lecture reached its climax when he got around to the subject of students and officialdom.

"Nowadays it's the fashion to blame everything on the government officials," he declaimed. "The students are particularly bitter against them. But, when we come to think of it, the officials aren't a special kind of human being; they come of the same stock as everyone else. Many who are officials today were students yesterday. And they're not much different from the officials we had under the old government. People adapt themselves to their circumstances; their ideas, speech, behavior and manners take on the characteristics of those around them. Look at the things the students' organizations are trying to do! Aren't they full of mistakes too? Hasn't many a student activity come to nothing? There's not much difference . . . more's the pity, for the students are supposed to be the country's future."

His audience consisted of some twenty students, sitting scattered around the classroom. Some of them were depressed by what he said, and perhaps agreed with him. Others were furious, outraged at the insults he was heaping on the "sacred youth." Several smiled, perhaps they thought he was apologizing for himself! For Fang Hsuan-cho was not only their teacher; he held an official post at the same time.

They were all mistaken. His words were simply a plaint, a dissatisfaction expressed in the form of empty talk—the limit beyond which he would never go. He did not know whether it was because of laziness or ineptitude, but somehow he felt he was a man of inaction who would never stir an inch beyond his own self-interest. Once when the head of his department had called him "mad", he had not so much as moved his lips in protest. He would never act as long as his position was secure, and his salary as an official was enough to keep him going. When the teachers received no pay for over six months, he didn't open his mouth. What's more, when they got together and demanded their back pay he privately condemned them as crude and noisy. But when some of his fellow-officials got pretty stinging in their jeers at the teachers he felt that the officials also were going too far. On thinking it over, however, he decided that this had been because he was short of money at the time,

and he excused his official colleagues for their lack of comprehension.

Hard up though he was, he did not join the teachers' organization. Just the same, when they went on strike he stayed away from his class. It was not until he learned of the government's answer to the teachers—"money will be given but not before teaching is resumed"—that he became slightly indignant at its policy of "teasing a hungry monkey with fruit". Even then, he did not say anything till he learned that an "illustrious" professor of education had remarked that it was "ignoble" of the teachers to "take books in one hand and hold out the other for money". Then he did speak out—but only to his wife.

"Hey, why are there only two dishes?" he demanded, staring at his supper on the day he learned of the "ignoble" epithet.

The couple had not been educated in the new style, So Fang Hsuan-cho's wife had no elegant name for her husband to address her by. Of course, he could call her "Madam" in the traditional way, but that would sound rather old-fashioned. Of necessity the word "Hey!" had been invented. As for his wife, she doesn't even have a "Hey!" for him. But if she turns her head towards him when she speaks, it is his habit to assume that she is addressing him.

Standing by the table, her face towards him, she said: "You only got fifteen per cent of last month's salary, and it's all gone. Yesterday I had to buy rice on credit, and it wasn't easy."

"Do you know, they are saying that it is 'ignoble' of the teachers to claim payment for their work! People who talk like that don't seem to realize the simple fact that men have to eat, and if they are to eat they must have rice, and rice costs money. . . ."

"You're right. Without money how can we buy rice, and without rice how can we . . ."

His wife's answers made him puff out his cheeks with annoyance. It was "hardly any different" from his pet theory, too much an echo of his own words. He turned his head away to stare in another direction. This was his habit when he wanted to signify the end of a discussion.

Quite unexpectedly the government paid out a small sum to the teachers. This was after they had marched in a body to demand their overdue salaries in front of the Hsinhua Gate of the Forbidden City where, trampling in the mud on a day of bleak winds and icy rain, several of them got knocked on the head by the soldiers. Without any effort on his part, Fang received his share of the money. He used it to pay off some outstanding bills, but he still needed a much larger sum. He had come to this pass because the payment of salaries to officials was overdue too. By this time, even the most nobleminded of the officials, who had

hitherto taken a very lofty view of money, were beginning to think that it might be necessary to demand their back pay. Naturally Fang, who was a teacher as well as a civil servant, felt a deeper sympathy than ever for his teaching colleagues. He showed a greater willingness to support their resolution to carry on the strike—a resolution passed in a meeting at which he was not present.

The government, however, paid out a little more money and the teachers went back to work. A few days previously the Students' Union had petitioned the government, demanding, "No money for the teachers unless they return to class!" Although this had had no effect, it reminded Fang of the government's earlier proclamation: "Money will only be paid when teaching is resumed." The ghost of "hardly any difference" flitted across his mind. Hence the speech he made to his class, as we have related.

It is clear, then, that if one likes one can describe his theory of "hardly any difference" as a kind of plaint—not an altogether disinterested kind. But it would be a mistake to regard it as a defense of himself for being an official, except when he comes to the point where he talks about things like the future of China, and practically looks on himself as a patriot. It is a pity people don't know themselves a bit better.

Then something else happened that was "hardly any different". At first the government's neglect had been confined to the obstreperous teachers. But now the same thing began to happen to the hitherto well-behaved officials. Payment of salaries lagged behind month after month, until quite a number of these superior civil servants who had previously despised the teachers for demanding money suddenly turned into valiant warriors—at a mass meeting held to demand their own back pay. Now the press began to publish articles ridiculing them too. This did not surprise Fang in the least, nor did it upset him. According to his theory of "hardly any difference", he reasoned that the journalists were still getting their salaries. The moment the government, or their papers' influential backers, withdrew their subsidies—they too would probably hold mass meetings.

Just as he had sympathized with his fellow-teachers in their protest, so now he approved wholeheartedly of the action of his official colleagues. However, he just sat in his office, and did not join them when they went in a body to press their demands. Some of them accused him of being "too lofty to stoop," but they were mistaken. His own explanation was that he was no good at things like that. Ever since he was born, he explained, his money relations had always been with people who came to demand debts from him; he had never demanded debts from other people. Moreover, he said, he was really reluctant to go and see people

who had economic power. If one met them when they were not in office, giving talks on Buddhism with a copy of the religious classic *Initiation to the Great Vehicle* in their hand, they were doubtless quite kindly and approachable. But as long as they had power they all wore terrible faces like the Prince of the Infernal Regions, regarding everyone as their slave and behaving as though they had the power of life and death over ordinary mortals like oneself. For all these reasons, he said, he was positively scared to go and see them. This attitude of his sometimes made him seem "too lofty to stoop" even in his own eyes. But at the bototm of his heart he suspected that it was really due to the fact that he was no good at anything.

Every effort was made to keep going from one crisis to the next, and life dragged on as usual. But Fang's finances were now in worse shape than ever. Because of this, even his wife became less respectful to him, to say nothing of the shopkeepers he dealt with and the boy who ran his errands. His wife showed a new independence of opinion. She no longer echoed what he said, and occasionally behaved in quite a challenging way. When he returned from work at lunchtime on the fourth day of the fifth month, he had no sooner entered the house than she thrust a pile of bills under his nose. Such a thing had never happened before.

"There's at least a hundred and eighty dollars needed to settle all these. Did you get paid?" she said, not looking at him.

"I'm going to resign my job tomorrow. The government sent a check today but the representatives of the Association to Demand Back Pay refused to hand out the money. . . . At first they said that only those who had joined the Association would get any, and afterwards they announced that each one of us must go in person to collect his cash. It's only today they got their hands on the money, and already their faces have become like the Prince of the Infernal Regions. I'm scared to look at them. . . . I don't want the money, I simply don't care to have the job any more—such endless humiliation. . . .

His air of righteous wrath was so unusual that Mrs. Fang was quite taken aback, her own spirit quenched.

"Why not go for it in person? What's wrong with that?" she asked, looking at him.

"I refuse! It's my official salary, it isn't charity. It's the accountant's office that should send it to me according to custom!"

"But what shall we do if they don't send it? . . . I didn't tell you last night, but the children said the school is asking for their fees. If we don't pay . . ."

"Nonsense! Here's a father who gets nothing either for teaching or

for his part in public administration! Why should he pay for his son's schooling!"

She saw that he had worked himself into such a state that he was shouting at her almost as if she were the principal of the school. She decided it was unwise to say anything more for the time being.

They ate in silence. After the meal he thought for a while and then went out sullenly.

It had been his custom in recent years, on the eve of the New Year or any other festival, to stay out late and not get home until about midnight. Fumbling in his pocket as he entered the house, he would shout "Hey! Here you are!" and then, with considerable pride and satisfaction, he would hand his wife a wad of clean new banknotes issued by the Bank of China or the Bank of Communications. But this night, the eve of the Double-Fifth Festival, was an exception. He arrived home before seven o'clock. Mrs. Fang was perturbed by this departure from custom, and wondered if he had thrown up his job. But a covert look at his face reassured her. It was clear that no such disaster had occurred.

"So early? . . . What's the matter?" she murmured, watching his face.

"Couldn't get the money today. Too late to draw it out—the banks are all closed for the Festival. We'll have to wait till the eighth."

"You went yourself to get it?" she asked nervously.

"No, that condition has been withdrawn. The money will be sent out by the accountant's office as usual. But it was too late today, and the bank is closed for three days. We must just wait until the morning of the eighth."

He sat down, staring at the floor. Taking a sip of tea he slowly began to tell the rest of the story.

"Fortunately there seem to be no more questions at the office.'," he said. "I am pretty sure the money will be ready on the eighth. . . . It's so disagreeable to borrow from relatives or acquaintances who are not concerned about one! This afternoon I plucked up courage to go and see Chin Yung-sheng. We talked for a bit. He congratulated me on not joining the association to demand back pay—and on my refusal to go and fetch the money myself. He thought it was very noble and praiseworthy, he said, and a man ought always to act like that. But when I asked him to lend me fifty dollars, he grimaced as if I had stuffed a handful of salt into his mouth. His whole face puckered up. He began to complain that business was bad and he was unable to collect his rents. Then he said that after all there was nothing so bad about going to one's colleagues in person to ask for one's pay. And with that he showed me out."

"Who would lend money on the eve of such a big festival?" said Mrs. Fang, not at all surprised or indignant.

Fang Hsuan-cho rested his head on his hand. He began to see that after all this was nothing to be astonished about. Besides, he and Chin were not intimate friends. And then something else came into his mind. He remembered how on the previous New Year's Eve an acquaintance from his home town had come to ask him for a ten dollar loan. Feeling that the man would not be able to pay him back afterwards he had put on an air of helplessness, saying that since his salary was overdue at the office and at the school there was nothing he could do, though he would have liked to help. In fact, an endorsed check for his official salary had been lying snug in his pocket all the time. He had sent his visitor away empty handed. He had not thought how his own face looked at the time, but now that he recollected it his lips twitched and he shuddered.

But after a few moments, a brilliant idea seemed to strike him. He sent his errand-boy out to get a bottle of Pale-Lotus wine on credit. He felt sure the shopkeeper would not refuse, expecting that all the bills would be paid the following day—as was the custom. If he did refuse he would suffer for his impudence. Not a penny would he get.

The boy came back with the bottle of Pale-Lotus. After a few glasses, the pallor of Fang's complexion turned to crimson. By the time supper was over his high spirits had returned. Lighting an expensive cigarette, he took up a volume of Hu Shih's *Experiment** and, throwing himself on the bed, began to read.

"What shall I tell the tradesmen tomorrow?" said Mrs. Fang, who had followed him to the bedside. She stood there with her eyes fixed on his face.

"The tradesmen . . . just tell them to come back on the eighth, in the afternoon."

"I can't simply say that. They won't believe it anyway. They won't let the matter drop so easily."

"Why shouldn't they believe it? They can check up if they want to. Not a single soul in the whole office has got anything. Everyone has to wait till the eighth." Here he drew a half-circle in the air with his forefinger. Mrs. Fang's eyes followed his hand, and saw it turn the pages of *Experiment.*

His unconcern was so staggering that she was momentarily deprived of speech. "We can't go on like this," she said, trying a new approach. "Something has got to be done. You must find some other way out. . . ."

"What can I do? I am not meek enough to be a clerk and I'm not

* *Experiment* was a book of free verse by Hu Shih, a conservative writer. In later years, Hu Shih became a high official under Chiang Kai-shek.

strong enough for a fireman. What else is there?"

"But you used to write things for the publishers in Shanghai, didn't you?"

"The publishers in Shanghai? Why, they pay by counting the number of characters you write. They don't pay for the blank spaces. Look at the verses I've written lately and see for yourself how many blank spaces there are. A whole volume wouldn't fetch more than thirty coppers. And as for royalties, nothing would come in for at least six months. 'Distant water will not put out the nearby fire', as the saying goes. No, nobody could be as patient as all that."

"Why not write for the newspapers?"

"The newspapers? Look, in spite of the fact that the editor of one of the big ones is a former student of mine, I get so little per thousand words that I could not make enough to support the family if I were to write from early morning till late at night. Besides, I don't know enough to write articles."

"Then what's going to happen after the festival?"

"After the festival? . . . I shall go back to the office as usual. Tomorrow, when the tradesmen come for their money, tell them to call on the eighth in the afternoon."

He turned to his book again.

Mrs. Fang, desperately trying to keep his attention while she said what was on her mind, stammered out:

"Don't you think, after the festival, on the eighth, we had perhaps better buy a lottery ticket? . . ."

"Nonsense! How can you be so ill-bred as to think of it. . . ."

As he spoke, something else came back to his mind. After he had been kicked out by Chin Yung-sheng, he had walked down the street in a melancholy frame of mind. Going past the Tao Hsiang Tsun confectionery shop he had noticed several posters on the door, saying in large characters: *"Ten Thousand Dollars for the Prize-winner!"* He seemed to remember that the thought had crossed his mind; perhaps he had even slackened his steps for a few paces. But—probably because he could not bear to part with the sixty cents that was all he had left in his pocket—he had walked resolutely past the temptation.

As he recalled this his face paled. Mrs. Fang thought he was displeased at her ill-breeding, and withdrew as quickly as she could, without finishing what she had been going to say. Neither had he finished what he had to say. However, he merely stretched his limbs and began to read aloud some verses from *Experiment.*

(Translated by Professors C. H. Chen and K. Chen).

THREE POEMS

EUGENE FRUMKIN

HOMAGE TO MY MOTHER

Your knobby fingers, mother, know more
of mankind's pulse than mine
which too often tap a dry machine.
Teach, teach your knowledge to my daughter,
born in a quick pain as the cock awoke
and grown to face the light in your image.

I hold her milky smell of infancy,
her wrinkled cries flailing the air,
when suddenly frown and smile merge
in single expression, and I see
(so slight a symbol turns me to you)
a wind of tears in your bluebird eyes.
Here, soon asleep in my arms, is the dream
you carried in shacks and tenements,
on dole, through nights when love was dark
in windows though the moons burned high:

your sickbed son raises a new health.

I bridge your blood to her across
the seasons, blood that flowered on rock.

MOBILE FOR CELENA

A palette of birds, paper stuffed, swings
leisurely from its blue tin tree.
The four branches suspend four strings
of birds (red, blue, gold and green)
that fly nowhere on silent wings.

To the baby's eyes the colors merge
in fires and shades that jar the air
above her crib, circle and surge:
a flight of feathered things that flare,
darken and fall in her mind's own forge.

The room's square window frames the leaves
in clusters of wind. The stiff birds wheel
but their illusion no longer weaves:
she cries her need blindly to the wall
in a rage that no one quite believes.

But soon the droning will begin,
her sky coarsen with airplanes that scud
shadows across landscape and brain—
a new *Toledo* struck in the blood
to hint at some forgotten sin.

She will learn that crying, burning, maiming
hid in the clouds before birds came;
will know the iodine of screaming
sealed wounds while she slept in Plato's womb,
frozen, of pure white spaces dreaming.

But if an amazon of love,
she'll bear all sins like pearls in her breast,
spit in the eye of the wind above,
raise the roof on a wood of nests
to tempt perhaps the perfect dove.

RECOLLECTIONS OF SUMMER IN NEW YORK

I

All the scuttled white summers when minutes were waves of the sea
and hours waters where boys sailed their boats in the cup of my palm . . .
time's Magellans have circled full wind the dead flags of my hair
(curled, unkempt) in my flowering Bronx where the streets curved away,
ran away, from the sea to the tenements (boxes of dust
that entombed each memorial of sky that I lost night and day).

II

How those mudfed and toughguy Italians and Jews of the sun
leaped like dolphins through dreams! And I, bedded, roots dug in cement;
while they, ball-happy, pistol-thighed, boxing the Pope on a dare,
glittered, caught in my wonder. Their billingsgate streamed with the slush
of the gutters but could I have sipped one salt curse through my lips,
buddily mine, my head should have broken with fevers of joy.

III

Then the mantel of flame fell upon the back of the city
and the eyes of the skyscrapers closed—and still glared—in the west.
Fireworks month, in which Handel could have lit but candle or two
in his second-floor flat before music was dimmed in the blaze
of his walls and he too dozed or stared in starlight on the roof.
Stars were heavy like mountains, red engines pursued the falling.

IV

Candy store, with its glass beaconing in the night, never slept,
and with sun-sucked mouths, the kids (mosquitos of ice cream) clustered
at that lamp, and there the Harlow-star fell, the blonde idol lost
in an evening's headline. And I learned that the death of her face—
O her platinum kisses were birds that had flown to the moon—
sang to me as a day in the country recalled in the rain.

V

Among hot-bearded Jews was the tongue of Jehovah burnt dry,
laid ashen on the avenues (wild with heretical feet),
there to lie legends small as the symbols on posts and pavements.
And I walked (a fatchild in my exodus from the dry land)
through the seas of discarded laws, toward the crown my head made,
a new monarchy born of the synagogue's throne-room of bones.

VI

I look back on that desert where days withered in my boy's eyes:
play an idiot flower that bloomed on the rare grass. But though
the sun wore a black skullcap, it had its lighter moments too:
when we all ran, zebras, from the zoo while the sun turned its coat
to raindrops. The jungle of my mind is cleared now—I would stalk
my old cage through remembered summers for a single wild cry.

THE WRITER IN AMERICA

A three days' National Assembly of Authors and Dramatists was held under the auspices of the Authors League of America in New York City in May. It was in some ways an unusual meeting, the first of its kind in the 45 year history of the League. Annual gatherings have usually mustered thirty or forty writers; this drew hundreds from all parts of the country to it.

The principal matters dealt with at the Assembly were censorship, the writer's position in America, and the economic picture, including of course the paramount issue of writer-publisher relations. Since the sessions of the conference were not open to the public, we are not in a position to report them. It can be said, however, that the economic problems of the writer were treated with greater frankness than ever before. Contracts, for instance, were discussed in a spirit of genuine helpfulness, more as subjects for mutual consultation than as inviolable secrets. Many writers, liberal and conservative, took strong, and in the main, unequivocal positions on the question of censorship. Some forthright things were also said in the panels on the writer in America, his status and responsibility. The papers dealing with these themes were among the most interesting.

It is regrettable, therefore, that the Council of the League—its ruling body, comprising 24 members and 4 officers—should have rounded out these very real accomplishments with a weak and self-contradictory statement entitled "Freedom to Write."

This document was drawn up some time before the meeting with the evident intention of submitting it to be passed upon by the membership. However, it was not presented as an ordinary resolution. Unlike the major speeches, which were mimeographed, it was handsomely printed on antique paper so that it appeared like a statement of League policy. The burden of dissent was thus placed upon the individual writer who might want to express certain doubts as to its wording. Furthermore, the statement was brought forth as the final event of the Assembly, so that it could not be discussed. A ballot, subsequently sent to the members, contains no provision even for suggestions to alter or amend any part of it. All a member can do is vote yes or no.

The resolution is strongest in its outright condemnation of all censorship. It is weak, though, in its seeing the threat limited to what it calls "self-appointed censors," that is, individuals and private religious and "patriotic" groups such as the National Organization for Decent Literature, the American Legion, the Daughters of the American Revolution, etc. It says nothing of violations of free speech and the persecution of writers

under the Smith Act, or by congressional committees and the State Department. (The Arthur Miller case is one instance; V. J. Jerome's is another; a third is that of the American correspondents who were banned from going to China.) These are offenses of the national government, which the Council statement naively entrusts—along with the state governments and the courts—with responsibility for punishing abuses of the freedom to write. As for the states, what does the Council say of Texas, which has passed a law making mandatory the signing of a loyalty oath by the writer of any textbook used in its schools?

More disappointing is the linking of the issue of freedom to write in this country with the "free nations of the world, including the United States," which "are engaged in a struggle with authoritarian communism for the leadership of the human race."

There is a strange, familiar sound to this formulation. Its wording is that of the very organizations and individuals against which the Council has been inveighing. The fight against censorship is incompatible with the taking of a loyalty oath. But what is the Council's phrasing if not an implicit pledge of allegiance to a policy of imperialist penetration which is the subject of anxiety and criticism throughout the "free world" itself?

Perhaps we might have devoted more space to the considerable positive accomplishments of the League Assembly, but we felt it necessary to devote attention to an aspect which threatens to vitiate them.

We now present the important papers of Arthur Miller, Langston Hughes, and Bruce Catton, which have been made available to us through the courtesy of the Authors League.

ARTHUR MILLER

IN SIX minutes one can't hope to do more than make an assertion or two about so complex a thing as the writer's position in any society, let alone America. One relationship, however, can at least be profitably touched on, even if a just balance cannot be struck in so short a time. It is the question of the integration of the writer into the domestic and foreign policies of the nation at any particular moment.

Through most of history the relationship between the artist and political power has been, how shall I say, uneasy. Our profession has had a higher percentage of exiles, jailbirds, and public offenders than any other. This is probably due to the conflict between the artist's personal search for life's meaning, and the politician's insistence that his policy and his power embody all the wisdom any honest patriot requires. It is possible to pity both politician and artist, but it seems evident that the welfare of the race must insist upon those conditions of freedom which will make the competition for truth at all possible. I believe that we

are in a period when, in a rather submerged and stuttering way, power is striving, sometimes consciously oftentimes in ignorance of what is at stake—striving to preempt the field entirely for itself. The most recent and blatant example can be found in last week's exchange of letters between Mr. Sulzberger who publishes the *New York Times,* and Mr. Dulles. The immediate issue revolved around newspaper writers, but in 1957 it seems no longer possible to imagine that its weight does not fall equally upon novelists, playwrights, and poets.

Mr. Sulzberger wrote to protest the State Department's refusal to allow American newsmen to go to China to report the news and its threats of reprisals for any who dared disobey. He wrote, "As things now stand, I cannot escape the feeling that the Administration is abridging the freedom of the press and using the press as an instrument in its diplomacy." Mr. Dulles replied in part, "When young men are drafted and sent abroad, they are used as instruments of foreign policy. When business people are not allowed to trade with Communist China, they might equally argue that they are being used as instruments of our diplomacy.

"Foreign policy and diplomacy cannot succeed unless, in fact, it channels the activities of our people, and in this respect newspapermen have also their loyalty and patriotic duty."

I do not know how many of you share my view of history in this respect, but I believe that this statement of Mr. Dulles is a new thing among us and represents a way of thought which, to phrase it charitably, departs from our practice and traditions. I am not saying that you can't agree with this "channeling," but, if you do, it seems to me you have to recognize that it entails certain drastic concessions of traditional liberties. My point here is less Mr. Dulles than the accuracy with which his statement reflects a misconception, widely held in and out of government, concerning all writings and all writers, science and scientific thought as well. The basic assumption here is what Mr. Dulles says it is, that "Foreign policy cannot succeed unless, in fact, it channels the activities of the people. . . ."

I don't think it unfair or inaccurate to say that this is what has been called "Total Diplomacy." If it means anything, it means that every resource of a nation is organized into the effort to achieve a diplomatic end, and not the least of the resources required is the thought, the ideas, the information of the people and their projection of what should be in the world. I think it must be said for Mr. Dulles that American administrations in the past have done their best to confute internal opposition to their policies; that Franklin Roosevelt, for one, campaigned against individual members of the House and Senate to eradicate or reduce their influence against his policies. But excepting during the Civil War and in

the time of the Alien and Sedition Acts, the very punitive power of government itself has not been used to limit the liberties of citizens, or to equate political opposition with disloyalty, in order to cut off its potential opponents.

I CITE this exchange of letters only because it puts the dilemma so clearly.

I can say from my experience that plays and playwrights are also considered as bearing upon high policy, and are justified as being forbidden to go abroad, while within the country other arms of government are used to organize them out of circulation. The State Department has interfered with the circulation of American books abroad, American music and musicians, and American painting. It is no news that it is now impossible for American scientists to act as hosts to international scientific congresses within the United States because so many foreign scientists will not be admitted here. I believe that once we assent to the idea that high policy alone is sacred, and that every other value can easily be sacrificed to it, we shall have abdicated our independence as writers and citizens. I believe we have by silence given this consent, and by silence helped to raise the state to a kind of power over all of us which it cannot have without crippling the soul of art and the people themselves.

I wonder if it is not time for some expert testimony on this problem. I wonder if it is not time for writers, who know best the delights of freedom because they use freedom every day, to make it clear to government and the people that there is in fact a very important difference between businessmen and soldiers on the one hand, and writers and artists on the other, even if the actions of all do bear upon foreign or even domestic policy. The government is proceeding on a very hollow sylmouse is a lion. The virtue of a syllogism is that while it may bring out similarities it totally obscures differences that in real life separate one thing from another. It is not the part of writers to concede, let alone to pretend that they are the same as businessmen and soldiers. And this, simply because the salvation of the nation and the race do not and cannot depend upon steel ingots and shoes and jet planes in the same way as they do upon the free expression of opinion, of viewpoints, and of the saving awareness and wisdom that not infrequently springs from the written word and cannot spring from iron or armies. The mission of the written word is not to buttress high policy but to proclaim the truth, the truth for whose lack we must surely die; it is a mission not lightly to be cast aside for temporary advantage.

It is now common among us, if not downright fashionable, to inveigh

against the trends of conformity, the emergence among us of the "organization man," the "lonely crowd," the-in short-"channeled' personality. The writer knows that for him to be organized-in, so to speak, is to lose his very field of action, his reason for existence as a writer. Is it not time to state that high policy is not the only value worth saving, just as we do not believe—at least I hope we do not—that efficiency and progress may rightfully consume whatever in the human being does not fit into efficient and progressive patterns? Is it not time to state that the news is still sacred too, that the freedom to write, to create unmolested and unblackguarded by government is at least equal to the sanctity of high policy? For God's sake let us at least cling with one finger, if we cannot grasp it in our hands, to the most secure proposition mankind has ever proved in its bloody time on this earth—that an artist and his vision need not be any more mistaken than even a politician's. It is not a question of trying to uphold the dignity of America before the world, even though, believe me, it has been gravely sullied by this brand of "realism." It is purely and simply a question of preserving the conditions of a free press and a free literature. The people do not understand those conditions, not because they care little for things of the spirit, but because we who are experts, or should be, have not made clear what those conditions are, nor how they differ from conditions required if business is to flourish or soldiering. What freedom we are using now we have not helped to make, and what is being eroded around us we are making no effort to protect. And I say these things because I have learned them at my cost, and because I wish none of you will have to learn them the same way.

LANGSTON HUGHES

BRUCE CATTON spoke today of the writer's chance to be heard. My chance to be heard, as a Negro writer, is not so great as your chance, if you are white. I once approached the Play Service of the Dramatists Guild as to the handling of some of my plays. *No,* was the answer, they would not know where to place plays about Negro life. I once sent one of my best known short stories, before it came out in book form, to one of our oldest and foremost American magazines. The story was about racial violence in the South. It came back to me with a very brief little note saying the editor did not believe his readers wished to read about such things. Another story of mine which did not concern race problems at all came back to me from one of our best known editors of anthologies of fiction with a letter praising the story but saying that he, the editor,

could not tell if the characters were white or colored. Would I make them definitely Negro? Just a plain story about human beings from me was not up his alley, it seems. So before the word *man* I simply inserted *black,* and before the girl's name, the words *brownskin*—and the story was accepted. Only a mild form of racial bias. But now let us come to something more serious.

Censorship, the Black List: Negro writers, just by being black, have been on the blacklist all our lives. Do you know that there are libraries in our country that will not stock a book by a Negro writer, not even as a gift? There are towns where Negro newspapers and magazines cannot be sold—except surreptitiously. There are American magazines that have *never* published anything by Negroes. There are film studios that have never hired a Negro writer. Censorship for us begins at the color line.

As to the tangential ways in which many white writers may make a living: I've already mentioned Hollywood. Not once in a blue moon does Hollywood send for a Negro writer, no matter how famous he may be. When you go into your publishers' offices, how many colored editors, readers, or even secretaries do you see? In the book review pages of our Sunday supplements and our magazines, how often do you see a Negro reviewer's name? And if you do, 9 times out of 10 the Negro reviewer will be given a book by another Negro to review—seldom if ever, *The Sea Around Us* or *Auntie Mamie*—or *Compulsion*—and yet a reviewer of the calibre of Arna Bontemps or Anne Petry or J. Saunders Redding could review anybody's books, white or colored, interestingly. Take Lecturing: There are thousands and thousands of women's clubs and other organizations booking lecturers that have never had, and will not have, a Negro speaker—though he has written a best seller.

We have in America today about a dozen top flight, frequently published, and really good Negro writers. Do you not think it strange that of that dozen, at least half of them live abroad, far away from their people, their problems, and the sources of their material: Richard Wright—*Native Son* in Paris; Chester Himes—*The Primitives* in Paris; James Baldwin—*Giovanni's Room* in Paris; William Denby—*Beetle Creek* in Rome; Frank Yerby—of the dozen best sellers, in Southern France; and Willard Motley—*Knock On Any Door* in Mexico. Why? Because the stones thrown at Autherine Lucy at the University of Alabama are thrown at them, too. Because the shadow of Montgomery and the bombs under Rev. King's house, shadow them and shatter them, too. Because the body of little Emmett Till drowned in a Mississippi river and no one brought to justice, haunts them, too. One of the writers I've mentioned, when last I saw him before he went abroad, said to me, "I don't want my children to grow up in the shadow of Jim Crow."

And so let us end with children. And let us end with poetry—since somehow the planned poetry panel for which I was to have been a part, did not materialize. So therefore, there has been no poetry in our National Assembly. Forgive me then, if I read a poem. It's about a child—a little colored child. I imagine her as being maybe six or seven years old. She grew up in the Deep South where our color lines are still legal. Then her family moved to a Northern or Western industrial city—one of those continual migrations of Negroes looking for a better town. There in this Northern city—maybe a place like Newark, New Jersey, or Omaha, Nebraska, or Oakland, California, the little girl goes one day to a carnival, and she sees the merry-go-round going around, and she wants to ride. But being a little colored child, and remembering the South, she doesn't know if she can ride or not. And if she can ride, where? So this is what she says:

Where is the Jim Crow section
On this merry-go-round,
Mister, cause I want to ride?
Down South where I come from
White and colored
Can't sit side by side.
Down South on the train
Down South on the train
There's a Jim Crow car.
On the bus we're put in the back—
But there ain't no back
To a merry-go-round:
Where's the horse
For a kid that's black?

BRUCE CATTON

I AM NOT altogether certain that there is very much point in trying to get a really accurate historical perspective on "the writer's position in America." By and large—and making due allowance for the fact that by nature the writer is a maverick (if he weren't, he would not be a writer)—it does seem to me that the writer's position, ultimately, is very largely what the writer himself makes of it. We are fond of saying that we live in a country of limitless opportunities. One of these, obviously, is the opportunity which the writer always has to stultify himself—to make inadequate use of his talents, to aim at an unhittable target, to work himself into a box from which he cannot escape. That opportunity is

wide open, in America; always has been, and presumably always will be.

Thus, if the writer chooses to be a strict conformist, a conformist's position will always be available to him. If he elects to ram his head against a stone wall, on the off chance that he will some day find a wall which is a little softer than his own head, this country does offer an abundance of stone walls, with a free field in front of them. And if what the writer wants is simple financial success, he might as well make up his mind to the fact that he is simply playing a gigantic and largely incomprehensible slot machine, and that the most he can do is pull on the lever, shut his eyes and hope for the best.

Probably what most of us really want is some unearthly blend of all three. We would like to be well thought of, by our associates and by the general reading public; which is to say that against all of the odds we would enjoy a touch of respectability, especially if that could be attained without too much pain. In our weaker moments, at least, we would like to produce best sellers; at the same time we would like to go forward with the movers and shakers, putting our own individual imprint on the life and thought of our times. This of course is asking for a good deal, and we probably will not make it; and so, I suppose, we come down finally to an examination of the writer's position in the past—possibly in the hope that if we study it carefully we may find something to encourage us in the unfeeling present.

The most encouraging point seems to me to be the fact that for a good many generations, at least, America has been a country with a prodigious amount of respect for the written word.

This is a fact which is frequently overlooked. One of the most fashionable of cliches is the one which holds that America is a highly materialistic nation, a nation which exalts the money-grubber and has a minimum of respect for things of the mind and the spirit. The writer, according to this theory, is and always has been an outsider—a restless, ineffectual person condemned by the cruel customs of society to utter despairing cries from the sidelines or driven by force of circumstance to join the procession and chant insincere hosannahs to values in which he does not actually believe.

There is of course an element of truth in this. The serious writer—in America or in any other land—is very likely to be at odds with his times. Society is apt to indulge in the unholy reprisal of not listening to him and of withholding from him the rich rewards that go to the men who join lustily in the prevailing chorus. Dissent is rarely popular and the dissenter usually gets treated as a dissenter.

Nevertheless, the fact does remain that ever since the birth of this

republic the writer has had a profound and permanent influence on actions taken and on mental and emotional attitudes riveted into the national consciousness. He has been listened to, in other words, and it is easily possible to make up a rather imposing list of writers of whom it can truthfully be said: This would be a different sort of country altogether if these men had not written.

There was, for example, Thomas Paine. From our present lofty eminence we may if we wish dismiss him as a mere pamphleteer—except that a pamphleteer is, after all, a writer. Furthermore, there was nothing "mere" about Paine. The American Revolution would not have gone just as it did go without his writings. Within reasonable limits, we can say that we owe our very existence as an independent people—in part, at least—to the fact that this man wrote and to the added fact that his fellows listened to him.

THIS WAS a special case, to be sure. But consider the extent to which American thinking has been shaped by the words Thomas Jefferson set down in the Declaration of Independence, or to the closely-reasoned discussions of constitutional problems embodied in the *Federalist Papers*. Thoreau produced relatively little and died young—but he put an imprint on men's minds that is still working today. Gandhi might not have been Gandhi, without Thoreau: in which case the condition of affairs in India today would look very different. Emerson certainly had a lasting effect on American thoughts and attitudes. Harriet Beecher Stowe wrote a novel (concerning whose literary value there still rages a spirited argument) which had much to do with touching off the American Civil War.

Indeed, the whole period up to the Civil War may be said to have been one which was highly favorable to the writer. Gerald Johnson has remarked that what the writer needs is the ability to work in a society which has "a reasonable hospitality to ideas," and that hospitality was present, certainly until the time of the 1860's. That, as Mr. Johnson has pointed out, may have been due to the fact that the country was then in the process of breaking through all physical bounds. It was almost literally exploding, expanding in size at a completely unheard-of rate and laying its hands on new techniques in a manner never dreamed of before. It desperately needed ideas, and apparently it was aware of the fact; it was ready to listen to anyone who had anything at all to say, including a vast number of quacks and charlatans, and despite the immense emphasis which was put on purely material progress it recognized the importance of the writer. It paid at least moderately respectful attention to men like John Humphrey Noyes and Bronson

Alcott, it elevated Horace Greeley to the position of a seer and prophet, and it heard men like Cooper and Longfellow with such eager care that their writings—for better or for worse—probably put a lasting imprint on our mythology in respect to the Noble Red Man. An egocentric army officer like John Charles Fremont could win enough fame to make him a candidate for the Presidency, not so much for anything he had actually done as because his writings about the great West had been read all across the land. If the age failed to shower riches upon a Melville or a Whitman, it at least permitted them to have their say; and we have *Moby Dick* and *Leaves of Grass* today as a result.

It is of course true that as far as the general reading public was concerned, both Melville and Whitman were—during their lifetimes—pretty largely relegated to the class of the great un-read. This is not to say that these men were entirely ignored; indeed, each one gained, if not fame, at least a certain measure of notoriety, which was not precisely what either of them was after. But they won nothing resembling genuine popular acceptance, and Melville at least was all but completely forgotten in the latter part of his life.

Yet they did write what was in them to write, and their impression on later generations has been very great indeed. They stand today among the great figures of American literature, and their influence on the main currents of American thought is still powerful.

And we must bear this point in mind: the impact of the genuinely creative writer, as opposed to the out-and-out polemicist, is something that cannot be measured at once; indeed, in the real sense of the word it cannot be measured at all. It can only be estimated. On a short-term view, such a man as Melville could be written off as a flat failure, and the land which refused to pay much attention to what he had to say, while he was actually saying it, could be set down as a land in which a creative writer could not thrive. But the polemicist is looking for an immediate effect, and the creative writer is looking for something quite different. He puts something into the national bloodstream, and its effects appear, very often, long after he is gone. They are beyond quantitative analysis. We can only say that we think and behave differently—that our attitude toward art and toward life itself is somehow different—because of what he wrote. Considered in those terms, both Melville and Whitman did precisely what they set out to do. That their personal problems along the way were very great is unfortunate but really more or less incidental. What they had to say is now our permanent possession, and it will never cease to work on us.

I DO NOT see much point in making out a catalog of American writers of the pre-Civil War period, mentioning the names of their books, citing the fame and money which, severally, they did or did not win, and entering into a long appraisal of the effect which they had on their times. It may indeed be cause for regret that a writer like Melville could fall on hard times while a Cooper could grow rich; it is probably too bad that there was a time when most people considered Longfellow a much greater poet than Whitman; what actually matters is that—at whatever cost to themselves, and in spite of whatever obstacles—writers of genuine stature did flourish in those days and permanently enriched the body of American literature. At the very worst, we must admit that the intellectual climate in those days must have been tolerably stimulating. Any nation which would make a perennially paying proposition out of a lecture tour by an Emerson was at least a nation which was in a highly receptive mood as far as the writing man was concerned.

After the Civil War, to be sure, there was a change in the moral and intellectual climate. The post-war years do not make a period on which it is a pleasure to look back. All of the pressures which had been accumulating through years of geographical expansion, of technological and industrial development, of wartime anger and violence, of immeasurable opportunity for financial manipulation—all of these burst loose, once the war ended, and for a quarter of a century we had a time in which all of America seemed to be on the make. It goes without saying that this was not a time which offered the writer Mr. Johnson's "reasonable hospitality to ideas." An idea which could not quickly be turned into cold cash was quite likely to be a drug on the market in the 1870's and 1880's.

Out of that and immediately succeeding generations there seems to have been born the enduring tradition that the American climate is not favorable to the full development and exercise of the creative impulse. The writer was relegated to a position of minor importance; he got an inferiority complex out of it, and the memory of it lingers to the present day. Some writers deprived the land of their presence altogether and went abroad to work. Others, doing their best in the home environment, complained bitterly about the cramping effect of the prevalent worship of "the bitch-goddess, Success," and testified—in what they wrote, and in the way they lived—to the harshness of the intellectual climate. As writers, we ourselves are acutely aware of all of this; the memory of it, I suspect, has deeply colored our own opinion of our American environment, even though the environment itself has changed immeasurably since that day.

As a matter of fact, it can be argued that the picture even in the post-Civil War years was not entirely black.

That is to say that despite the odds the creative impulse was at work and the intellectual current was still moving, and the independent mind did find chances to have its say. Mark Twain is often taken as the great example of the gifted writer who was twisted out of shape by the pressures of the Gilded Age; the potentially great satirist who conformed, outwardly at least, to the anti-intellectual pressure of his time and who became finally much less than he might have become if the world had just been a little different. All of this may be true enough; yet it might be remembered that despite all of this twisting he did succeed—in *Huckleberry Finn*—in writing a novel which today is ranked very close to the top among all novels ever written in America. He also made peculiarly his own, for all American time, the glowing colorful life of the pre-war era in the Mississippi Valley, and to this day an uncommonly gifted humorist will, if he seems to deserve the ultimate in praise, be compared with him. How much do we ask of a writer? Can an era which could produce the writings of a Mark Twain—even though those writings do include a considerable quantity of trash—be written off without further ado as an era in which all of the cards were stacked against the writer?

Then there was Henry George. Henry George was various things, including a candidate for political office, but among them he was a writer, the producer of a book called *Progress and Poverty*. Here is a book which made a profound impression on certain aspects of American thought—and, for the matter of that, on thought overseas as well. Along with everything else, it had a good deal to do with the shape the New Deal finally took, in the 1930's—which, of course, may or may not be a point in its favor, but which at least testifies to the fact that the times did not deprive all creative minds of the chance to speak to their fellows.

TO SAY THIS, of course, is not to argue that the latter decades of the 19th century were in truth a grand time for conscientious and devoted writers. They were not; they were not, in fact, a very good time for truly conscientious and devoted folk in any walk of American life, for they represented an era in which the entire country was adjusting itself to one of the most remarkable explosions of physical energy in the history of the human race, and if for a time the things of the spirit were cramped and tragically warped it is not to be wondered at. But I do want to suggest that the scene was not one of universal twilight; and, in addition, it might as well be pointed out that it was not lasting in its effect.

For with the early 1900's the field in which the writer operates became much more hospitable to a proper exercise of the writer's talents. The famous "muck rakers," for instance, were all writers, and it is

hard to think of any era in which a few ink-slingers did more to change the climate of opinion. From Lincoln Steffens and Ida Tarbell to Upton Sinclair, these people were able, not merely to say exactly what they thought about the life of their times, but to find a receptive audience. The literature of protest suddenly became important. If the Gilded Age had been a bad one, three was a wide rostrum on which anyone who chose could dissect it publicly, could say precisely how and why it was bad, and could help to replace it with a better age.

Indeed, when you stop to think about it, the twentieth century did bring in a period in which society was quite anxiously looking to the writer for a re-evaluation of all accepted values. The writer responded, and he has been responding ever since; and (which is more to the point) society listened to him with considerable attention. Frank Norris and Hamlin Garland may have written about a society in which the pressure for conformity was immense, but they themselves were not conformists; and they paved the way—building, incidentally, in part on the work of another product of the Gilded Age, William Dean Howells—for the long stream of realistic fiction which is one of the great achievements of American literature.

There is no particular point in undertaking a name-by-name catalog, running from the early 1900's down to the present. It may be pertinent to ask if any writer could hope to leave his imprint on the mental and emotional attitudes of his time more effectively than Sinclair Lewis did; to ask if an editor and essayist could easily have a greater impact, during his years of activity, than did H. L. Mencken; and to point out that by the 1930's the writer had come to occupy such an important place, in the molding and shaping of American opinion, that a major effort of the revolutionary Left was to get as many as possible of the novelists, the critics and the polemicists into the fold. The results of this effort may have been deplorable; but the fact that so much emphasis was put upon it simply indicates the high degree of acceptance which the country generally had given to its writing men and women.

And what we are engaged in, today, is an effort to evaluate the position of the writer in America. Does he work in an environment which permits him to make full use of his talents? Is there that general air of hospitality to ideas which is essential to the production of creative literature? Are there social, moral or economic pressures which tend to handicap the writer, to twist him out of shape, to force him to conform to standards not his own?

PRESSURES do exist, of course, now as always. We still live in a business civilization. Like it or not, the man who can write a poem or a novel or anything else that goes on paper between book covers is apt to get less in the way of money, influence and exalted social standing than the man who is able to become, let us say, chairman of the board of a mighty industrial corporation. The rewards which go to a writer who is willing to assert that all is for the best in the best of all possible countries—meaning this one—are likely to be substantially greater than those which go to the man who feels that the times are out of joint and who wants to say so in public. Since the end of the Second World War the pressure for conformity has been especially great, simply because all of us have had a bad scare by a monstrous intangible; a frightened country does not tend to offer a hospitable reception to ideas that are not pretty carefully screened. The writer who proposes to say exactly what he thinks, and who does not confine his thinking to orthodox channels, may eventually find himself discussing his past with a Congressional committee. At the very least, his sales figures are not likely to be of a kind which will cause publishers to beat a path to his door.

It would be foolish to minimize the bad effects of this immense, if temporary, pressure. It would be equally foolish to let it create undue discouragement. For in the end we must come down to the writer himself. Life has never offered him a bed of roses, and—this side of the Elysian fields, at any rate—it probably never will. It offers him a very hard, wearing job, attended by innumerable discouragements, and it forever tempts him to put his integrity on the auction block. Pressure of one sort or another is on him from the moment he puts a piece of paper into his typewriter. By definition, he is the sort of man who can resist pressure. If he isn't, he isn't much of a writer.

And the principal question, now as always, is simply: What does the writer want? What is he shooting at? What makes him tick? Does he want, most of all, the approval of his fellow countrymen, money in the bank, a country home in Connecticut, a cooperative apartment in Manhattan, abundant leisure, and a nodding acquaintance not merely with the influential critics but also with the head-waiters in the more expensive restaurants? These are nice things to have; if he goes after them, he can get them—always provided, of course, that he has a certain amount of luck along the way. They are the fruits of studious conformity, and this particular era in American life does offer them in abundance.

Or—on the other hand—does he simply want to write? Is it the categorical imperative to have his say that really moves him? Does he, above everything else on earth, want to express what is in him to express—to lay hands on the dreams and the ideas that have been tormenting him

and, by hour after hour of lonely, unremitting work, hammer them out into a shape which he can present to other people?

If that is what the writer really wants—and if it is not there is very little point in our getting together here to discuss the matter—then I believe America today offers a very fair environment for his career.

Of course he will encounter pressures. Innumerable voices will constantly be telling him how to trim his sails to the prevailing winds, which now and then will rise to gale force. He will be, by turns, tempted and frightened, and he will find, as all writers worth the name have always found, that his greatest fight will be the fight simply to be himself. But what of it?

I would not hold William Lloyd Garrison up as a model for writers. That cantankerous abolitionist may very well have done much more harm than good, between the time when he first grasped his pen and the time when he finally laid it down. But the little statement of purpose which he nailed to the masthead of his anti-slavery magazine does have in it an element of the determination which is the writing man's final reliance—

"I am in earnest. I will not equivocate: I will not excuse: I will not retreat a single inch—and *I will be heard!*"

It is that "I am in earnest. . . . I will be heard!" that says it. Not, necessarily, heard by everyone; not necessarily heard by the people who have the richest rewards to give; but at least heard—my thoughts, my ideals, my own particular, personal way of looking at life and its tremendous riddles, reduced to words as well as may be and then brought to the notice of at least some of my fellow men. That, it seems to me, is the ultimate force that makes a man write.

OBEDIENT to that force, the writer does encounter a number of things that are not as they should be. Some of these things are more or less peculiar to the present day. The machinery of publishing is archaic and heavy-handed; there are times when it seems to be operated with a minimum of feeling for the values which may lie in the written word, and the writer's lot would be much easier if editors were not so often engaged in a desperate search for books exactly like the ones which have just appeared on the best-seller list. The mechanics of book-distribution are, perhaps, in even worse state, and the influence of the great book clubs is not uniformly beneficent. The state of literary criticism in America could unquestionably be better. I suppose each one of us has his own private list—be it long, or be it short—of critics who really ought to be boiled in oil. It can be uncommonly hard for a beginner to get his book published at all, or to have it sold to any appreciable number of people after it is published; and it is extremely hard even for the veteran, "estab-

lished" writer to make a comfortable living out of his chosen calling. All too often he has to devote valuable time and energy simply to the task of supporting himself in order that he may be a writer.

Nevertheless, I do believe that the American writer today operates in a fairly hospitable environment. By and large, this is and has been a country which is willing to listen. It may at times listen with an undiscriminating ear; it may not reward the writer as richly as we who write think it should; it may not shield him from the hard knocks of life, and it may subject him to all manner of pressures from which he ought to be liberated. But it does give him the chance to be heard. It is the kind of society in which a man cannot merely speak his mind but can exert a lasting influence on the life and thought of his times; we are still living in a country which offers a substantial hospitality to ideas.

As a matter of fact, I think that this particular moment offers an invigorating challenge to the writer.

We have come to a profound turning point in the development of human society. All of the old guide-lines seem to have been smudged, if not erased outright. More than ever before, people want to listen to the man with ideas.

As writers, what more can we ask than that?

books in review

Thought in Action

PHILOSOPHY IN REVOLUTION, by Howard Selsam. International Publishers. $2.00.

A CENTURY after Saint Paul there were a number of small Christion communities in the Mediterranean region. A century after Luther's defiance at Wittenberg, Protestantism was established in some sections of Europe. But a century after the appearance of the Communist Manifesto, Marxian thinking guides the actions of a large section of the whole human race. What is the nature of this power, grown despite pontifical and professorial denunciations, despite persecutions and wars of extermination?

The influence of Marxian thought has grown with the strength of the working class and its allies among the oppressed of all nations, notably those in the colonial and semicolonial countries. Its intellectual power is not only due to the fact that it represents the interests of rising classes. It is equally due to its intrinsic merit as the outcome of two thousand years of human thought. It is the merit of Selsam's book that it gives a lucid picture of this intellectual power, always seen as the mode of thinking of classes fighting for the establishment of socialism as a first step on the road to human freedom.

The author brings to his exposition the skill acquired in many years of teaching philosophy; much of his teaching was to working-class audiences not accustomed to academic learning, but keen in testing theory against the realities of daily life—especially that most essential part of daily life which is the production process. This background gives a directness to his exposition which makes for clarity without condescension, concreteness without extreme oversimplification, serious and sometimes profound reasoning without dullness—and with a touch of wit to boot.

It is not always realized how radical a departure from previous philosophy was taken by Marx and Engels when they, reflecting on philosophy past and present, concluded that so far men had only been talking about reality as object and not as social beings active in changing nature and society.

In this they brought the ancient materialist outlook developed by Leucippus and Democritus in the ancient world, and revived and improved in the modern period by Descartes, Gassendi, the French "philosophes" of the 18th century and other thinkers, to a new and higher level, on which many of the positive achievements of the idealist schools could find a new interpretation. In this great step ahead, Marxian philosophy has never been overtaken. On the contrary, modern idealist philosophy, especially the kind which flowers at our universities, has in its retrogression as compared to Descartes, Diderot and Hegel increased the gap between official reflective

philosophy and the Marxian approach. This gap in theory corresponds to that between the reactionary and even destructive forces in modern imperialism and the progressive vigor of the world-wide struggle to build and improve socialism.

Selsam's view is that the history of philosophy is that of the struggle of man for a scientific materialist world view. (This is the point of view of the historian of science, who sees it as a story of progress, and not that of the traditional historian of philosophy, who places one system next to another.) Prior to Marxism, Selsam shows philosophy was the expression of a small elite removed from the production process. Thus Marxism, reflecting the position of the industrial working class, has brought about a revolution in philosophy because it was, and is, based on the standpoint of the actual producers—a class that struggles for the end of all class exploitation. Now, at last, the historic goal of philosophy begins to be realized, and its place increasingly taken by science and the generalizations of logic and dialectics. These theses are further explained in five chapters, in which considerable light is thrown on the historical and doctrinal position of the philosophers from Plato and Democritus to Descartes, Locke, Hume and Hegel.

Selsam pays special attention to that type of subjective idealism which now flourishes at American universities under the name of pragmatism, positivism or instrumentalism. His main point is that this philosophy, despite its use of modern and sophisticated concepts, inevitably leads to that hoary enemy of all thought and action: solipsism. Philosophy ends in courtesy: some of my best friends are people and we cannot deny their existence; for several of these modern thinkers it is not even certain that the sun will rise tomorrow. Especially in the chapters on "Matter and Mind" and on "Knowledge, Practice and Reality," the reader will find a good deal of insight into the philosophies of past and present, but never only as abstract systems, always as expressions of the thought of classes in action. We understand better the relationship between seventeenth-century rationalism (Descartes) and empiricism (Locke), usually considered in contrast but in reality two aspects of the same mode of thinking by the progressive bourgeoisie of that period. We also understand why Jefferson called Hume, one of the masters of modern positivism, "that degenerate son of science."

In such a concise text oversimplification does occur, as everyone knows who has tried to explain a difficult subject in limited terms. When we think we meet it in Selsam's text, we can indulge in matching our wits against those of the author. An example is his discussion of the "economy of thought," a famous principle of the positivists. But can it really be so easily dismissed as Selsam does by calling it something useful in Renaissance days in the fight against scholastic "essences" and "forms," but afterward serving only as a mystical device? The fact is that this principle, in some form or another, especially as "harmony of the universe," has guided some of the best minds from Kepler to Einstein. Marxist philosophy has to study the place of this doctrine as a certain aspect of physical reality. It is true that a universe which contains the Dulles brothers cannot be under-

stood by any principle of economy (in thought or otherwise)—or harmony, but a look at a snowflake will show what I mean.

The chapter on materialist ethics is a short but excellent exposition of the right, the objectivity and the superiority of this approach to the good life. Here again we have a reservation: ethics is conceived too narrowly as social ethics, in the sense of the mode of life for a class which has the task of establishing socialism as a decisive step out of inhuman conditions toward human dignity. We must not forget that ethics also includes the conduct of ordinary life, and it is here that Marxist philosophy has as much to say as in the great matters of social transformation. Materialist ethics, contrary to what its enemies may say, gives firm support to a conduct which practices the elementary virtues which control—or should control—the relationships of man to man in private life: honesty, friendliness, human understanding. Marxian ethics can lead us much better than traditional moral theologies to the understanding of the connections between private and social ethics. May this book have many editions to do its enlightening work.

ALEXANDER HOLBROOK

Careless Guide

TIDES OF CRISIS, A Primer of Foreign Relations, by A. A. Berle, Jr., Reynal & Company. $4.00.

THE OBSTACLE in the way of progress that Mr. Berle seeks to remove is the practice of dealing with twentieth century problems in nineteenth century terms. The other purpose of his book, which he has subtitled "A Primer of Foreign Relations," is to inform particularly young people of the considerations and facts underlying the formulation of foreign policy. He has substantially failed to meet either aim.

At his most positive, Mr. Berle recognizes that the development of nuclear weapons by several powers "has made war almost useless as a means of accomplishing any human end save mass suicide," and that the dangers of atomic radiation and guided missiles impose the necessity of arms limitation "by the sheer weight of facts." He also sees the possibility of peaceful relations with the Soviet Union, although this is said to depend wholly on changes in the Soviet Union and not in the United States.

Unfortunately, these are nuggets in a pile of dross, and in view of the fact that such gold has become readily available elsewhere, it seems hardly worth while to refine it from this source.

The most provocative part of *Tides of Crisis* is its title which reflects the fact that the crises of American foreign policy no longer come singly but in waves and practically twice a day. But Mr. Berle totally lacks the critical faculty to come to grips with this problem, and what he has produced for the most part is a highly biased girls' finishing school text that offers few new insights and might better have been entitled *Girls: Meet the World,* or better still *The World of A. A. Berle.*

It is not a view of the world that will prepare the reader much for what is coming next. Mr. Berle's basic thesis is that the United States can no longer

maintain its position through narrow nationalist policies but must have the support of other states, linked together in an international and supra-national system and cemented by common ideology and ethical values.

In fact, this is not a new concept—at last count, the United States had military ties with no less than forty-five nations on five continents while the ethical side was looked after by the Voice of America, and C. L. Sulzberger of the *New York Times* once wondered whether this country is not suffering from "pactomania." For quite a while now, the whole elaborate system of NATO, SEATO, Baghdad Pact, Chinese trade embargo committee, etc., has shown signs of increasing decay. Yet Mr. Berle has not a word of criticism, indicating merely that he would support these military efforts to maintain the United States position with greater political organization. Political action must be combined with the military, he says, because without it we will not achieve in South America, for example, "that measure of good-will which keeps the Latin American economy joined to the economy of the United States." Not much twentieth century thought in this.

Mr. Berle urges the desirability of a sense of history to understand the present, but he neither has a clear view of the past nor an historical feeling for contemporary events. With breathtaking liberality, he dismisses the ideas of capitalism, communism, nationalism, imperialism, race superiority and spiritual supremacy as equally outdated, "ghosts" of the past that must be exorcised to pave the way for the "free world revolution of the twentieth century." Admittedly, these "ghosts" still have a powerful hold on the minds of men—including Mr. Berle's. And he should perhaps be excused for failing to describe these spectral phenomena with the precision the twentieth century demands in more earthly matters.

Many of his excursions into history are devoted to the erection of analogies between Czarist Russia and the "Soviet imperial system." These in turn give rise to stale geopolitical musings on Soviet pressures towards the Mediterranean, the Atlantic, the Persian Gulf, and the Pacific. Stalin seized "half of Asia," and now Russia and China are "the two most prehensile colonial masters and imperialists extant in the world today."

On the other hand, the United States has never been imperialist (Mr. Berle informs us that his father was active in the Anti-Imperialist League, but apparently he was tilting at windmills); its continental expansion in Florida, the Southwest and California merely occupied "empty lands" (at least Mr. Berle has exorcised the ghosts of Mexicans and Indians); and its world position is the result of emotional idealism and entirely involuntary. At one point, Mr. Berle remarks that "Vigorous 'defense' of an ally is one of the diplomatic euphemisms for occupying a piece of its desirable territory," but the United States has never so aggrandized itself.

Perhaps at the bottom of Mr. Berle's complete inadequacy as a guide to the second half of the twentieth century is the fact that, his protestations to the contrary notwithstanding, he still thinks the world revolves around a London-Washington axis. He sees the Middle East as an extension of Europe. At a minimum, it would be important to

note that Asians think of the Middle East as Western Asia.

More important, it is impossible to understand the world today if one believes that "In newly freed colonies the bulk of a population is usually supine, * * * while the politics of the country are handled by an active few." Mr. Berle is puzzled that the United States, despite its purported anti-imperialist record, is encountering "little sympathy" in Asia. After the recent Hungarian events, he hopes, "Contrast between the American and the Russian systems is so striking that the densest or most prejudiced Asian, African or Near Easterner can hardly fail to draw conclusions." But, to cite only one illustration, in the general elections held in India earlier this year—since Hungary—the Communist Party polled over twelve *million* votes, more than twice the number it received in the previous elections in 1952. According to Mr. Berle, we are left with the question: How "dense" can they get?

It remains to be said that the book is not free from factual errors. The establishment of a "Communist" Government in Indochina, for instance, cannot be attributed to the intervention of Chinese troops, since the only Chinese forces there were Kuomintang troops which for a short time occupied part of the country by Allied agreement subsequent to the founding of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam in August, 1945. Nor did the Chinese establish the North Korean Republic. And, though Mr. Berle insists, the Vietminh is not a country, but a political movement.

CHARLES WISLEY

The Spirit of the "Wobblies"

THE IWW, A STUDY OF AMERICAN SYNDICALISM, by Paul Brissenden. Russell and Russell. $7.50.

THIS STUDY of the American labor organization known as the Industrial Workers of the World is a re-publication of the famous volume first issued in 1919. Its reappearance almost two generations later, when few remember its name or know what the three-letter designation represents, is nevertheless a valuable and timely addition to the library of labor and social studies.

The same publishers recently reprinted another valuable work, Samuel Yellen's *American Labor Struggles*, first published in 1936, which takes us from the great railroad strike of 1887 to the San Francisco General Strike of 1934. Another important study in the same field is *Labor's Untold Story*, by Richard Boyer and Herbert Morais, which carries the story of labor's historic fighting advance up to the present day.

Books like these are especially timely today because Labor and the progressive movement generally more than ever need to draw on these traditions and militant experiences. Labor today is bigger than ever, but it is like a giant with clay feet, retarded by bureaucracy, corruption and ideological domination by its enemies. It faces a line of attack against which it has not yet developed a real answer.

The IWW headquarters in Chicago, Professor Brissenden notes in his preface to the present edition, still claims 2,000

members; what you have left is a dry skeleton no longer embodying the IWW that made history. Even by 1919, when the first edition of his book appeared, the IWW had already seen its best days. I recall a symbolic scene in 1934 which underscored the point of this already advanced decline and isolation. As editor of the *Western Worker,* I had just "put to bed" the edition that featured the swift developments of the San Francisco general strike in which, as every one knows, the Communists and the Left were the major influence. Our print shop was in the "skidrow" area in a block of abandoned stores and dilapidated houses. On one of the store windows was written the letters "IWW." Seeing a dim light inside, I walked in, curious to see what the IWW headquarters was like at the moment of a great historic labor struggle. The light came from a kerosene lamp. An elderly man sat in an arm chair and just seemed to be staring. On the wall were dusty slogans and the inevitable "cart wheel" of the IWW's union plan of organization of the future society. There was a dusty literature rack, the once famed IWW song book with songs still sung today by millions who never heard of the IWW. And this scene of futile isolation was in San Francisco, where the IWW had flourished.

Brissenden's scholarly book was based on original sources, and on interviews with many of the IWW leaders when they were alive. He gives us much of the color and spirit of the "Wobblies." Most of the old leaders are gone, though we have with us that wonderful woman leader, Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, who was a delegate to the third convention in 1907.

The IWW was plagued by the anti-political attitudes of anarcho-syndicalism, by dual unionism, by its determination to withdraw from the mainstream of the labor movement. But it also gave new emphasis to the idea of rank and file control of unions, to mass style struggles for free speech, and of course to the powerful idea of industrial unionism. We certainly can still draw on these positive sides of its history. Brissenden saw some of the weaknesses of the IWW, and gives a lengthy account of W. Z. Foster's effort to get the IWW to shift its forces to the main body of labor. His book is not the last work on the subject, of course, since it carries only down to 1919, with the IWW still having a few years left of active work. Newer studies will have the benefit of the subsequent evolution of the organization, with knowledge also of the verdict that history has given of its career.

GEORGE MORRIS

Books Received

THE ROSENBERGS: POEMS OF THE UNITED STATES, edited by Martha Millet, Sierra Press, P.O. Box 96, Long Island City 4, N. Y. $3.00.

This volume is a collection of poems on the notorious Rosenberg Case, gathered by Martha Millet, who contributes a poem and an introduction. The shock of the Rosenberg executions is felt in these writings, and it is good that these emotions are here placed between covers in permanent form. The poems remind us of the great moral issue which Julius and Ethel Rosenberg faced and met. Among the poets included are George Abbe, Dr. W. E. B. Du Bois, Michael Gold, Aaron Kramer, Alfred

Kreymborg, Eve Merriam, Helen Sobell whose husband is still in Alcatraz as a result of the Rosenberg frame-up, Yuri Suhl and Dora Teitelboim. A book to be cherished.

PRISONERS OF LIBERATION, by Allyn and Adele Rickett. Cameron Associates. $4.75.

This is the unusual first-person story of two Americans who returned to the United States after having been imprisoned in People's China for espionage against the new government. Mr. and Mrs. Rickett astounded the press here by refusing to retail the standard yarns about torture and brainwashing; instead, they have been telling their fellow-Americans something of the truth of the great social transformation in the new China. The authors had an unusual opportunity to observe the transition from the old to the new, and their account should help to enlighten the public here on the need for peaceful and cooperative relationships with the Chinese people and government.

AN ECONOMIC INTERPRETATION OF THE CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES, by Charles A. Beard. Macmillan, $4.75; Liberty Book Club, $2.62.

This is a reprint of the Beard book which came like a bombshell onto the 1913 scene; it contains the interesting introduction that Beard wrote for the 1935 edition.

The work's data, interpretations and conclusions have been increasingly challenged in recent years (among others, by Robert E. Brown, Herbert Aptheker, and Edmund S. Morgan) and the challenges have been cogent and persuasive. Nevertheless, Beard's work remain indispensable for anyone wishing to *begin* a careful and realistic study of the American Constitution.

PRIZE STORIES, 1957. THE O'HENRY AWARDS, edited by Paul Engle. Doubleday and Co. $3.95.

Given the heartbreaking conditions under which serious short stories are produced today, it is remarkable to find in this collection so many good ones. It is also interesting to note that quite a number of them appeared in mass- or near mass-circulation publications, such as *McCalls, Harper's Bazaar,* the *New Yorker,* and *Mademoiselle.* The rest are from the college and privately subsidized magazines, *Kenyon Review, Hudson Review, Antioch Review, Sewanee Review, Paris Review, Commentary,* and the like.

The better known writers represented are John Cheever, William Faulkner, Mary McCarthy, Irwin Shaw, and Jean Stafford. Among the more exciting stories, whose central concern is the manipulation of social factors, are works by Flannery O'Connor, Herbert Gold, Arthur Granit, and R. V. Cassill. In these and others racial themes are dealt with in a fresh and original way, and there are excellent depictions of the process of individual corruption as a result of social pressures and the attempt to predatory characters to hold on to untenable positions in a system whose forms of exploitation have changed.