



Mainstream

THE BATTLE FOR FRANCE

R. Palme Dutt

Phillip Bonosky THE SEASONS ON
MULBERRY STREET

Martin Carter UNIVERSITY OF HUNGER

Renaud de Jouvenel PARIS LETTER: II

Gropper DE GAULLE

Charles Humboldt "THE VISIT"

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THE BATTLE FOR FRANCE

R. PALME DUTT

The remarkable article which follows was written by the editor of the *British Labour Monthly*, shortly after the events whose import he analyzes had taken place. Illness has prevented him from adding the postscript for which we had asked him, but the extent of succeeding events would have called for a considerably greater development of his exposition than we could have hoped for in any case. Nevertheless, the reader will see that nothing which has happened since the article was written in any way controverts the points and the predictions made by the author. We hope to publish similar essays of his from time to time.—The Editor.

THE battle of France is not over. It is only beginning. De Gaulle, to adopt his own words of eighteen years ago—when he fought the men of Vichy instead of leading them—has won a battle. He has not yet won the war.

It is only eighteen years since the French Army chiefs last betrayed France. They opened the front to Hitler. Their motto was: "Rather Hitler than Communism." That was also the motto of the French Right, traitorous as ever through their fear and hatred of the French working class and people. The craven leaders of the parliamentary majority (including at that time the majority of Socialist deputies), having banned and excluded the Communist Party, and imposed the death penalty for Communism, surrendered to fascism and voted the special powers to Pétain. For four years fascism with foreign backing ruled France.

In those days De Gaulle united with the French Communists, with the patriots and the Resistance, against the traitorous Pétain and the men of Vichy.

Today De Gaulle has become the Leader and Hero of the men of Vichy, of the new brand of seditious army chiefs, of the plotters of fascism and glorifiers of the Gestapo. Behind his war-time honors they seek to cover their infamies. De Gaulle was the centre piece of the new plot of fascism. Where a direct fascist-military coup could have hoped for no effective or durable success in face of the overwhelming resistance of the democratic Republican majority of the French people, the role of De Gaulle provided the bridgehead for the offensive. De Gaulle could be presented as the "respectable" and "independent" Arbiter to whom the craven leaders of the parliamentary majority, demoralized by the threats

of a military coup, and once again fearing unity of the working class and the left more than they feared fascism, could turn as the Saviors to whom to surrender personal power. Thus parliamentary democracy was destroyed from within.

De Gaulle has won his extraordinary powers. Nothing is to be gained by minimizing the gravity and urgency of this situation. This represents the most serious offensive against democracy in Western Europe since the war. It carries incalculable international consequences. The offensive affects all countries. The unsuccessful try-out of counter-revolution against the Hungarian People's Democracy in Eastern Europe two years ago is now enlarged into an offensive against democracy in a major Western European country.

The "constitutional legality" of the investiture is a shameful fiction covering a reality of open insurrection, threats of violence and cowardly capitulation by those whose duty it was to lead the defense of democracy. The "limitations" and "safeguards" written into the grant of extraordinary powers are in themselves mere paper guarantees, unless backed and made effective by the strength of the people. The executive, the legislative and the constitution-drafting power has in fact been concentrated in the hands of one man. During these six months of absolute personal power, all the conditions could be created for the full offensive of fascism to be carried through, unless the united resistance of the people is mobilized in time. Under cover of the "Committees of Public Safety" the machinery of fascism is being organized.

But the last word has not been spoken. The fortress has been surrendered without a battle by those leaders of the parliamentary majority who preferred surrender to unity. But for this very reason the main strength of the French working class and the overwhelming democratic Republican majority of the people has still to come into action. United resistance has to be built up anew. The French people have shown the ability to build up such resistance before. 1958 is not 1940. It is not 1922 or 1933 or 1936. Nor it is 1851. It is a new world situation, in which the strength of the working class and socialism, of democracy and national liberation, is enormously greater and advancing over the world. Grave ordeals lie before the French people. They are of urgent concern to us all. But we can be confident that the real France, the France of the Great Revolution, of 1848 and the Commune, of the Resistance, the France which has consistently since the war given its first confidence to the Communist Party as the first party of the nation, will assuredly vanquish the new offensive of fascism.

HOW was it possible for democracy in France to be thus destroyed? There was an overwhelming majority for the parliamentary democratic Republic, not only in the electorate and among the people, but equally in the parliament. Up to the last moment there was an overwhelming majority against De Gaulle, not only in the country, but also in the sovereign parliament. Fascism could find no foothold among the masses of the French people. This was a cardinal difference from the period of the advancing Fascisti in Italy or the Nazi Party's gigantic minority votes preceding Hitler's being placed in power in Germany. De Gaulle's attempted "Rally" was a flop and collapsed. The Poujadists were an ugly nuisance, not a menace. Twelve days before De Gaulle came to power the sovereign parliament voted nearly five to one (475 to 100) unlimited emergency powers to the constitutional government to defend the Republic against De Gaulle, fascism and the military rebels. Five days before De Gaulle came to power, the Socialist Party in parliament, which held the key to the parliamentary majority, together with its Executive voted 112 to 3 that "we will not rally under any circumstances to the candidature of De Gaulle." Four days before De Gaulle came to power, the mass Republican demonstration of half a million in the streets of Paris (the Fascists and Gaullists could not rally a medley of motor cars of the gilded youth hooting their klaxons in the luxury West End quarter as their "mass demonstration") expressed the will of the people, their desire for unity and their readiness to respond to a united call for action.

Yet within a twinkling of an eye the whole fabric of parliamentary democratic constitutionalism collapsed. A servile parliamentary majority was voting absolute powers to De Gaulle. The principal leaders of the parliamentary majority and constitutional government, the principal leaders of the non-communist democratic parties and of social democracy, who had been given emergency powers to defend the democratic Republic, who had sworn their eternal allegiance to parliamentary democracy, who had castigated and denounced and banned and excluded the Communists, representing the majority of the working class, for their alleged lack of loyalty to parliamentary democracy—precisely these leaders and super-rhetoricians of the superior virtues of parliamentary democracy rushed in with their own hands to destroy parliamentary democracy, to invest De Gaulle with absolute personal power, and to accept positions as junior lieutenants at the court of the new dictator. These were the heroes of the present Socialist International, the chosen partners of the British Labour Party, the extolled models of "true democracy" held up as its only trustworthy champions against the "Communist menace" to

democracy, and even now, after their open betrayal, defended and excused by Mr. Gaitskell in his speech of June 3.

Why? How? This is not an event at the other end of the world. It is happening within a few miles of us, in the land closest to us, separated only by a few miles of water, in one of the two main countries which were the principal representatives of "West European democracy" (alongside Neo-Nazi West Germany and Franco Spain), in the party with the closest ties to the British Labour Party. How does it come about that this entire fabric of parliamentary democracy, this supposed sovereign panacea and bulwark, once it is separated from class realities and its necessary basis in the strength and unity of the working class at the head of the forces of the people, once it is turned into an abstract theory and dogma in the name of which to divide the working class, can in an instant be destroyed and transformed into an instrument of tyranny against democracy and against the working class? This is the supreme question of our time which every democrat and every socialist, who may have been lulled by the easy phrases of "democratic socialism" and its supposed contrast to the so-called "totalitarian" theories of communism, must now face. It is above all the question which every member of the British labor movement must now ponder. We cannot go to sleep with the easy delusion (famous last words) that "it can't happen here."

Of course we have had it all before with the Weimar Republic and German Social Democracy. German Social Democracy directed its fire against the Communists and working class unity, refused the united front, voted the special powers to Brüning, installed Field Marshal Hindenburg to become Chancellor as the supposed "lesser evil" defense against Hitler, and then, when Hindenburg had placed Hitler (with a dwindling electoral minority vote) in power, and Hitler had banned the Communist Party and unleashed his terror elections, voted for Hitler in the Reichstag in May, 1933—only to find they had sharpened the knife to be turned in the end against their own throats. But the younger generation knows nothing of this, and of the true record of social democracy. The capitalist and Labor press does nothing to teach them. They are fed with lies: even the lie that Hitler came "constitutionally" to power by the will of the majority of the German electorate.

No doubt in a few years, when the heat of the present events is forgotten—since at present even the Conservative press is compelled to treat with contempt the myth of De Gaulle's "constitutional" accession to power and dismiss it, in the words of the *London Observer*, as a "great fiction"—the same scribes will be writing how De Gaulle came to power "constitutionally" by the will of the majority of the elected representatives of the French people. The rotting corpse of social democracy has been

ressed anew in the sweet trappings of "Democratic Socialism" to gull the young and innocent, because the old name stank. But it is still the same old social democracy. Each new generation has to learn the lesson anew by harsh experience. It is urgent that the lesson shall this time be learned in time, before catastrophe goes further. Above all, the rank and file of the social democratic parties need to learn the lesson and draw the conclusions, as they are already fast doing in France, and as the membership of the British Labor movement will equally need to do. The path of Anti-communism leads to Fascism. That maxim should be written in letters a foot high in the council chambers of Transport House, Congress House and the AFL-CIO.

Was there something at fault, some lack of democracy, in the democratic constitution of the Fourth Republic that it should thus prove vulnerable to the first assault and collapse within twelve years of its foundation? On the contrary, The complaints most commonly voiced against it in British and American comment, the complaints of ministerial instability supposedly arising from the multiplicity of parties, are in reality a complete distortion of the true facts, as we shall have occasion to see. But in any case these amount to complaints that the constitution was too democratic: that the representation reflected popular opinion, and that the elected representatives controlled and dismissed Ministries, in contrast to the British system, where the electoral system is devised to distort the reflection of popular opinion, and the Cabinet in practice controls parliament in place of parliament controlling the Cabinet. Indeed in Britain, with the notorious elasticity of the British unwritten Constitution, it would be much easier, in given conditions of crisis, to carry through the entire transformation without any new legislation, through the judicious application of the Emergency Powers Act, the disinternment of a few forgotten laws from the time of Edward II, and a strict interpretation of the existing law of criminal libel and sedition making it a crime to incite division between different classes of Her Majesty's subjects or foment disaffection against Her Majesty's Government.

After the experience of Vichy Fascism, the 1946 Constitution of the Fourth Republic contained every ironclad provision that the wit of the drafters could devise to prevent a repetition. It was an even more perfect model of the complete parliamentary democratic Republic than the old Weimer Republic, which had been celebrated in its day as "the freest democratic Republic in history." The Constitution—mindful of the experience of the voting of the special powers to Pétain—even contained a clause expressly prohibiting the right of the Assembly to vote executive powers to one man. Yet this is exactly what happened. Why? What went

wrong? Where was the flaw in this theoretically perfect parliamentary democracy? Let us examine first the various theories and explanations most commonly offered as excuses in order to reveal their inadequacy and reach beyond them to the truth.

THE favorite theory of American and British ruling class and "expert" press opinion—of course faithfully echoed by Mr. Gaitskell and various other Labor Party leaders—is that the Constitution of the Fourth Republic was fatally weak because it had failed to imitate the Anglo-American two-party system. A democratic electoral system which genuinely mirrors public opinion by proportional representation inevitably results, these critics argue, in a multiplicity of parties. (In fact the French electoral system was only partially proportional, and was successively gerrymandered at each election during recent years in order to diminish the Communist representation below its share of votes.) Hence Ministries can only be formed on an unstable coalition basis; and the shocking habit of the French Assembly in regarding Ministries as their servant to be dismissed when failing to give satisfaction has resulted in the notorious succession of short-lived Ministries and chronic periods of vacuum and ministerial crises which have weakened France and discredited the system.

The theory is interesting for the characteristic anti-democratic bias it reveals. It is fallacious in principle, since plenty of examples can be given of countries with proportional representation and stable coalition governments. But it breaks down completely in its application to France because it ignores the central glaring fact of the French political situation which was the cause of the chronic ministerial crises. With remarkable consistency the French electorate at every election since war has returned a left majority, with the Communist Party in the first place, the Socialist Party running close, and sufficient other left elements to provide the basis for a stable left parliamentary majority and government on an agreed common program. This in fact worked with remarkable effectiveness in the period immediately following the war, when the basis of French reconstruction was laid. It was only the American intervention in 1947, compelling the exclusion of the Communist Ministers, and the surrender of the Socialist and other left Ministers with this American pressure, which destroyed the working of the parliamentary democratic system. The fiction was created that the largest parliamentary party representing the majority of the working class, did not exist, thus in effect disfranchising over one-quarter of the electorate. It was for this reason alone that it was artificially made impossible to scrape together a parliamentary majority except through temporary and unprincipled coalitions.

tions with concessions and surrenders to the right minority. Thus it was not the democratic system which produced the crisis. It was the denial of democracy which produced the crisis and opened the gates to the offensive of fascism.

The second theory lays the blame, not on the Constitution of the Fourth Republic, but on the breach of the Constitution, specifically by President Coty whose sworn allegiance was to defend and uphold it. President Coty took on himself, by the procedure of his extraordinary Presidential Message to the Assembly on May 29 to nominate personally De Gaulle as President of the Council, in place of fulfilling his constitutional function to accept the nomination arising from the consultation of the parties. The Presidential message added the ultimatum that if his nomination were not accepted he would resign. Undoubtedly this was flagrant extra-constitutional procedure to force the acceptance of De Gaulle on the parliament, and it was met with the defiant singing of the Marseillaise by all the left benches. The *Daily Herald's* correspondent in Paris, Michael Foot, obviously in some difficulty to expose the role of the Socialist leaders in the columns of that journal, and unable to cover the fact of the fidelity of the Communist Party to the democratic republic save by a passing sneer at their refusal to start an isolated armed intervention ("its arteries have been hardened," "down on its knees begging to join with others in political action,") found a triumphant solution by pointing a dramatic finger of accusation at President Coty as the Guilty Man. "All the perfumes of Arabia," declared this master rhetorician at the conclusion of his message, "will not sweeten the name of Coty," For this fearless outspoken exposure he was duly expelled from France.

But really. President Coty as the Grand Wrecker of French Democracy? Everybody knew who and what President Coty was. In vain, knowing the universal suspicion with which he was regarded, he had always insisted that he was no relative of the notorious Coty family, the perfume millionaire monopoly which had been among the principal financial backers of fascism before the war. But everyone knew that Coty had voted the special powers for Pétain in 1940 to install the Vichy regime of fascism. Everyone knew that he was a man of Vichy, who should never have been allowed to continue in French politics. But to endow this pigmy in a ceremonial function with such powers of a superman to destroy French democracy? Undoubtedly he played a very active part in the plot. Undoubtedly he violated the Constitution in the interests of the plot. But why did the Assembly surrender to his ultimatum? Why did the majority of the elected representatives surrender?—Why did the

principal leaders of the non-communist democratic parties surrendered. That, and not the rôle of Coty, is the essential question.

THE third theory attributes the destruction of French democracy to the military insurrection in Algiers and Corsica, the fascization of the police, and the consequent impotence and inevitable surrender of the constitutional parliamentary government before the threat of a military coup and civil war. "Civil War or De Gaulle" (*The Times*, May 30, 1958). "The choice between the General and civil war" (*Daily Telegraph*, May 30, 1958). Similarly the *Daily Herald* correspondent, Michael Foot, wrote in its issue of May 28 to explain the failure of Moch, the Socialist Minister of the Interior, to act against the rebels:

The real cause of the weakened resolve of the Pflimlin Government has been the growing proof that the Army and sections of the police would not obey orders.

If any man could have restored authority over the police it was Jules Moch, the Socialist Minister of the Interior. But he found that his instruments were breaking in his hands.

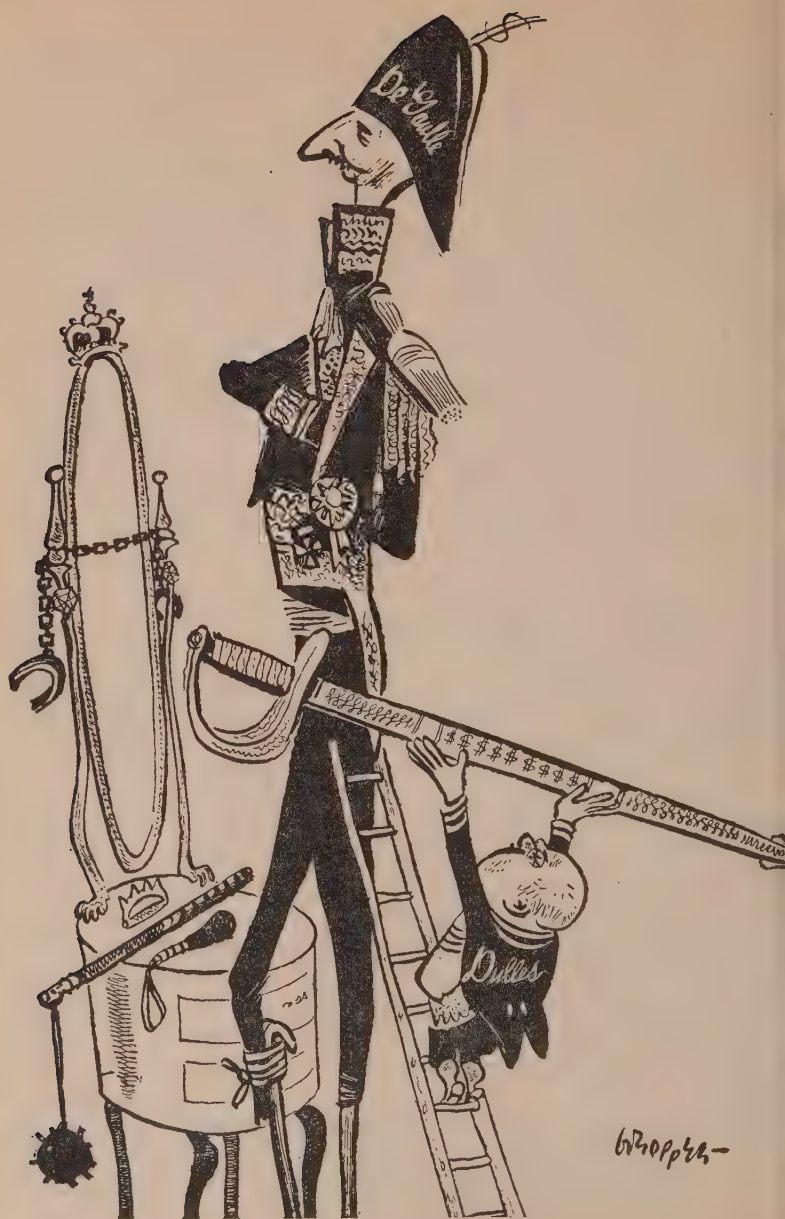
A revealing sidelight from the Labor Party organ on the practical testing of the social democratic theory of parliamentary democracy and implicit trust in the neutrality of the machinery of the state. It may be recalled that the *Daily Herald* on May 19 had welcomed the appointment of Moch as "a man of ruthless action" whose claim to fame was to have been "the hammer" against the Communists when he was Minister of the Interior in 1947 and 1948. Under Moch the purging of left wing sympathizers was begun in the police, the fruits of which he was to experience in this crisis. Moch subsequently voted for the special powers for De Gaulle.

This characteristic social democratic theory of the omnipotence of the ruling class armed power to conquer democracy, and of the impotence of the masses, when it comes to the test, is a damning exposure of their real attitude behind their talk of "pure democracy," in the name of which they have the impudence to lecture the communists for emphasizing the class realities behind constitutional forms. But it will not do as the explanation of their surrender without a battle on June 1. The military insurrection in Algiers and the threats of a coup in France played a very important part in the plot. But that part was not that of a direct insurrectionary seizure of power, which the organizers knew could not be carried through and sustained in face of the overwhelming opposition which would have arisen from the entire French nation. The role was rather to demoralize

and intimidate the parliamentary majority into surrender without a battle, and to provide them with an excuse for that surrender. It was easy for the Army chief in possession of Algeria as a conquered country with half a million troops to announce their triumphant military seizure of Algeria. But they were financially and economically dependent on France. As soon as the coup in Algeria did not result in the fall of Pflimlin in Paris, but in his emergency powers to deal with them, they all began to climb down; and only the permitted political role of De Gaulle and the abject cowardice and inaction of the Paris Government before treason gave them the courage to lift up their heads again and raise their demands.

What could they count on? Salan might cry "The Army to Power." What army? Certainly they could count on their selected highly paid 10,000 "paras," trained for terrorism, and their 30,000 of the Foreign Legion, three-quarters German or ex-Nazi. Could they hope to conquer France with these forces against the resistance of the entire nation? Could they speak for the remaining 900,000 of the French armed forces, mostly conscripts from working class families and background? Would these so readily fire on their fellow workers to help fascism to destroy democracy? The whole tactics of the plot was to avoid such a confrontation. Therefore the method was the method of successive threats: Algeria, Ajaccio, the naval moves. Was the alternative "inevitable civil war"? Even at the last hour when the limited and all too late move to mobilize the people in the mass republican demonstration on May 29 was made, the strength revealed was such as to lead De Gaulle to make at the last moment the most cautious manoeuvres and show of concessions, such as infuriated his fascist supporters. The defeat was not the consequence of the supposed inevitable impotence of the working class and the majority of the people before the threat of military treason. The defeat arose only through the deliberate refusal to mobilize the strength of the masses to defend democracy. That refusal was dictated, as every declaration of its sponsors made clear, not by the fear that it would lead to the defeat of the people, but by the fear that it would lead to the victory of the people, the victory of socialist-communist unity, of the working class, of the left—all that presented itself to these leaders as the spectre more feared and hated than fascism. Therefore they surrendered to De Gaulle.

So we come to the fourth theory, which is compelled to recognize that the decisive role in the collapse of democracy in France was played by the leadership of the parliamentary majority, by the leadership of the non-communist democratic parties, specifically by such men as Pflimlin



and Mollet, who headed the legal democratic government, who were armed with full emergency powers to deal with treason, and who instead surrendered and went over to the enemy. Here we come closer to the facts. Pflimlin, Mollet and their associates had an overwhelming parliamentary majority behind them. They had full emergency powers to defend democracy and deal with the traitors. They refused even to denounce the traitors. They cringed and crawled before the Right and threatened the Left. They immobilized the people. Finally, after another overwhelming parliamentary majority, they resigned to hand over to De Gaulle and slunk off to take posts in his Cabinet. So far the record of betrayal is sufficiently clear and sufficiently damning.

But is it enough to explain the defeat of French democracy through the betrayal by a handful of individuals? Is the sum total of political wisdom and final conclusion to be drawn that Citizen So and So is not to be trusted in future? Mollet, let us suppose (even this is not yet certain), is to be removed from his leadership of the French Socialist Party, and the old Social Democracy is to go on as merrily as ever? When MacDonald, Snowden and Thomas, the leaders of the Labour Party, wrecked the labor government and joined the Tories in 1931, the official Labour Party version still recognizes no lesson. The official Labour Party version only notes that its three principal leaders "happened" to go over to the enemy. For fifteen years the Communist Party had warned precisely against these three leaders as the principal representatives of the class enemy in the labor movement. No lesson was drawn by the Labour Party from this confirmation of the Communist warnings. Hence their successors are able to continue the same theories and the same policies unchecked.

It may be an extreme habit of Communist Parties to make such a fetish of self-criticism that they ruthlessly tear to pieces each preceding phase of their existence in order to dig out and expose to the whole world the mistakes and learn the lessons. But it is at least more laudable than the other extreme. The Labour Party has never in its life admitted a mistake. No prominent Labour Party leader has ever found himself in the wrong. Therefore the old game is able to go on; and all the permanent protests of the left, or bitter experiences of 1931 or 1951 never lead to a serious attempt to draw the lessons and reach conclusions. Were Pflimlin and Mollet such giants they could wreck French democracy? These puny figures were the mere agents and expression of a political system which could only produce such results. They were the expression of a political system of betrayal of democracy, which did not begin in May, 1958, but developed continuously over eleven years since 1947.

THE WAR against fascism taught hard lessons of unity to all socialists, democrats and communists. Disunity had opened the gates to fascism. Now they were learning unity the hard way. The French Socialists had seen their leaders vote the death penalty against Communists and they had voted the powers to Pétain and fascism. Now the socialist rank and file fought shoulder to shoulder with the Communists, with Radical Democrats, Christian Democrats, patriots against the common enemy, against fascism and the French traitors who supported it. Socialists, Communist democrats uniting in the Resistance, in daily peril of death, vowed that they would maintain their unity after the war. This was happening all over Europe. In Germany the Social Democrats and Communists in the underground swore that they would learn the lesson and build a single working class party based on Marxism. These hopes and vows could only reach fulfilment in Eastern Europe. Where Anglo-American power extended, the road was barred. In West Germany Mr. Bevin and the Americans declared illegal the attempt of Social Democrats and Communists to merge in a single Socialist Unity Party and by administrative edict compelled the separate existence of Social Democratic and Communist Parties—the division of the working class as the essential foundation for capitalist rule. In France, where there was no direct administration by the Anglo-American occupying forces, the path was longer and more complex.

In France after the liberation the parties who had fought in comradeship in the Resistance went forward together to build the new France. Together they drew up the new democratic constitution. In the elections they won an overwhelming majority of the left and formed a strong coalition Government. The Communists—they who had been falsely dubbed "traitors" by the real fascist traitors—had borne the main brunt in the Resistance. Indeed, their party had become known as the "*parti des fusillés*" the party of the 75,000 executed by Nazism. Thenceforth the French people in every election have given their first confidence to the Communist Party as the first party of the nation. By right of the premier electoral position the Communist party could have claimed the premiership in the consequent coalition. They showed their deep and sincere understanding of democratic co-operation by not claiming the right and serving loyally under a Socialist Premier. During this first period a great initial work of reconstruction was accomplished; measures of nationalization were carried through; and a system of social security established with levels in many respects considerably above the British levels. Then came 1947.

De Gaulle had already made his first offensive in 1946, against the

first draft of the democratic constitution, and demanding a more authoritarian regime. He had failed and withdrawn. Where De Gaulle had failed in 1946, the United States took over in 1947. The United States had already been engaged in breaking down the post-war socialist-communist governmental co-operation in a series of West European countries (as subsequently they were to try in Czechoslovakia in 1948, and to meet with a resounding rebuff from the united working class) France in 1947 represented the crux of the problem for American imperialism in Western Europe. Britain under Bevin and Attlee was already a completely docile pensioner; and West Germany was being rapidly built up under the old bosses with the aid of American capital. The strategy of the offensive was the Marshall Plan, with Bevin as the principal go-between and salesman. A dazzling supply of limitless dollars was dangled before the eyes of the French Government, grappling with the problems of the post-war and Nazi-ravaged French economy—on one immediate condition, that they excluded the Communists from the Government (the condition of aid to any Government, subsequently written in formally by Congress). There were other conditions in plenty, but less immediately obvious, and gradually unfolding themselves, to involve all kinds of economic and financial control and checking and integration, with West Germany, and the proliferation of a horde of American Commissions and agencies in Paris and all over France. But the immediate requirement was the exclusion of the Communist Ministers. The Socialist and Catholic Ministers succumbed. The Socialist Ministers apologized to their Communist colleagues for being compelled to drive them out, but explained that it was a question of dollars. Democracy in France was sold for dollars.

Thus the betrayal of democracy in France did not begin in 1958. It began in 1947. The democratic will of the electorate was repudiated for the sake of dollars. One-fourth of the electorate was in effect disfranchised from its right to participate in the formation of policy. But the electorate remained obstinately faithful to the Communist Party as the first party of their choice and to the return of a left majority, with Communists and Socialist predominating. Had the will of the electorate been carried out, there would have been no problem of instability of governments in France. There would rather have been a remarkably stable continuity of progressive governments. But since on American instigation the myth had been created that the largest party in parliament did not exist, it was then discovered that it was impossible to scrape together any stable majority and that temporary bargains could only be made by extending concessions to the right minority, rejected by

the electorate. From this followed the ignominious succession of weak and short-lived Ministries and prolonged ministerial crises characteristic of these eleven years of shame. On this basis the further myth was created of the supposed inherent "instability" of French politics (the stability of voting of the French electorate is in marked contrast to the wild swings of the British electorate system), and the consequent alleged "unworkable" character of the French democratic system.

The betrayal of democracy extended to every sphere. To meet the discontent of the working class, thus disfranchised, the police were strengthened and reorganized, with additional special bodies for violent action, and with exclusion of all suspected of left wing sympathies. Thus the police became a more and more openly fascist force, as the police demonstration with directly fascist anti-parliamentary slogans on February 13 this year revealed. A similar process was conducted in the army, with purging of left wing officers and increasing fascist infiltration, especially under the rightwing Minister of Defense, Chaban Delmas, who assigned Delbecque to the staff in Algeria to organize "psychological warfare," *i.e.*, to prepare the apparatus for the insurrection. Thus the fascist infiltration of the police and armed forces was conducted under the auspices of the anti-communist Ministries of this period, with the harvest revealed this year.

THIS betrayal of democracy within France was accompanied by the betrayal of France and the degradation of its role in international politics. The independence of France was surrendered by these weak, servile and unrepresentative Ministries to United States overlordship in return for dollars, with increasing American economic intervention and military occupation. Thus these "democratic" Ministries became associated in the popular mind with servility to the hated American occupation. More. The policy of West European economic and military "integration," fostered by American policy, meant in fact the increasing subordination of France to the dominant partner, the Neo-Nazism of West Germany with the restoration of the Krupps and Ruhr magnates and of Hitler's generals. The new enslavement was symbolized by the enthronement of Hitler's General Speidel in command of the European Army of NATO, including French armed forces, at the American-controlled NATO headquarters at Fontainebleau. This ugly reminder of Nazi military occupation, which infuriated all French patriotic feeling, once again appeared as the guilt of the "democratic" Ministries and provided easy material for the corroding work of fascist propaganda.

France was not inevitably doomed to weakness in this period, had

a different policy been pursued. On the basis of the policy of the progressive pre-1947 phase, with the Franco-Soviet Treaty of 1946, France could have turned from a bankrupt imperialist past to play an independent, leading and progressive role in Europe and international politics, checking the rebirth of Nazism and militarism in West Germany (in vain the Chamber tried to block Nazi rearmament by rejection of the European Defense Community, but the general policy of surrender frustrated this will of the people), co-operating with the advancing democratic, progressive and socialist forces of Europe, and building a bridge across the divisions of the cold war. Instead the servile pensioners of American imperialism, tied to the cold war, sought to assert the "greatness" of France by reckless and ruinous colonial wars. The war in Indo-China for seven years cost a million pounds a day and ended in the defeat of Dien Bien Phu. The "Socialist" Mollet united with the Tory Macmillan and the "Socialist" Ben Gurion to launch the disastrous Suez aggression against Egypt. The war against the Algerian people, with half a million troops, has now rebounded against French democracy. Once again the "heroes of Africa," as Marx called them, the Cavaignacs, Changarniers and other generals who conducted the conquest of Algeria over a century ago and then massacred the Paris workers in the "June days" of 1848, are reproduced in their successors, who from their base in Algeria conduct their war against democracy in France. "The nation which enslaves other nations forges its own chains." Never has it been so powerfully demonstrated that the active support for the battle of national liberation is no subsidiary philanthropic concern of the working class in the metropolitan country, but the vital interest for their own preservation and future.

This senseless policy of megalomaniac aggression, servile dependence on subsidies, and betrayal of the vital interests and needs of France, not only discredited the regime, but landed French finances in an increasingly desperate situation. It is true that French industrial production has been booming in the recent period (an increase of 11 per cent in April of this year over a year ago, alongside British stagnation and the American decline). Profits have soared. But this boom has been built up in an abnormal situation of reckless war expenditure threatening the state finances with bankruptcy, increasing dependence on renewed dollar loans, and desperate worsening of the conditions of the people. The Washington loan of \$655 million obtained at the beginning of this year (extorted with the threat that the alternative would be a Popular Front) is already beginning to run down; and the deficit on the balance of payments is running at the rate of \$480 million a year. Between 1956 and 1958

food prices in France have increased from 30 to 35 per cent, while the consumption of meat per head has fallen by 15 per cent. The desperation of the people and dissatisfaction with the existing regime was growing. It was expressed in a consistent rise of the Communist vote in all the by-elections and local elections this year, and in the advancing demand for peace in Algeria and a new Government of all progressive democratic forces. These were the conditions and this was the moment when the combined offensive of all the fascist, militarist and right wing forces against parliamentary democracy was launched.

The offensive did not begin with the Algiers coup of May 13. It was already manifest with the fascist demonstration of the Paris police outside the Chamber on February 13. Already in March the French Communist Party Central Committee resolution called for the "union of all left wing forces to bar the road to Fascism." Only when the Socialist Party had failed to respond to that call, the militarist and fascist forces in Algiers struck. They had hoped by their coup to compel the downfall of the Government in Paris. When the Communist Party rallied the parliament (which was continuing its debate as if nothing had happened) to meet at once in emergency session and place emergency powers in the hands of the legal democratic Government to quell the rebellion, the plotters drew back; even Massu declared that he had been "coerced" into joining the "Committee of Public Safety." But as soon it became clear that the Government would not use its powers, would not even condemn the rebels, saw always the enemy on the left, and refused to mobilize the people, the assailants plucked up confidence anew. Even so the military threats were only the accompaniment of the "legal front" of De Gaulle to break down the parliamentary majority. The key role had to be played by the "inside men," Pflimlin, Mollet and their friends who acted, not as a Government, but as accomplices and under-cover agents of De Gaulle to disrupt the parliamentary majority from within.

In this situation the decisive factor to turn the balance, alike in the parliament and for the basic issue of mass united action, became the role of the Socialist Party. The original vote of 112 to 3 against De Gaulle "under any circumstances" on May 27 had been undermined by the maneuver of the Auriol letter offering conditional support. Even so the majority of deputies remained against (54 to 40); the Executive was also against (23 to 18); and only the addition of the senators succeeded in obtaining, not a majority for De Gaulle, but a free vote for Mollet and his associates by the narrow majority of 77 to 74. In the event the majority of the Socialist deputies, or 49, voted with the Communists against De Gaulle, as against 42 for. Had the normal practice of the

majority decision of the parliamentary group governed the whole vote, this would have automatically brought down De Gaulle's majority to 21; and the influence of this on the radicals and other groups, alongside the courageous stand of such spokesmen as Mendes-France and Mitterand, would have in practice reversed the vote and ensured a democratic majority. In that sense the Socialist vote was decisive in putting in De Gaulle. But this time the majority were against, in contrast to the majority for Pétain. The personal dictatorship of De Gaulle has now been established. The fascist forces are in full cry to push forward the offensive. But the basis plainly exists for communist, socialist and democratic unity of the people to defeat the fascist offensive. The battle has opened.

THE present stage of the crisis in France is transitional. The personal dictatorship of De Gaulle was established with no initial declaration of program. All the contradictions of the situation in France continue and are exacerbated by the new events. All the contradictions of the situation in Algeria are inflamed. The bankruptcy of colonialism and interminable colonial war cannot be banished by the mock phrases of "integration" to cover the denial of national independence. During the week of De Gaulle's visit to Algeria 591 Algerians were killed by the French army of occupation—no doubt as a symbol of the "new fraternity." The menace of extending conflict reaches to Tunis and Morocco. "My only regret," declared General Massu in a revealing interview after the coup, "is that we did not immediately march to Cairo." Fascism and war are always inseparably interlinked.

The initial partial success of the military fascist offensive, through the surrender of the parliamentary majority and the installation of the dictatorship of De Gaulle, has only inflamed and enlarged the appetite for more. All the fascist forces, based on Algeria and actively operating in France, are in full cry to demand the complete destruction of all democratic institutions and political parties. Their "Committees of Public Safety" (the shameful caricature distortion, habitual with fascism, of sacred revolutionary traditions) are the machinery devised to organize a fascist "mass" movement—the counterpart of the "Society of December" or the Falange or Storm Troopers. There has already been no lack of police terror in the streets to mark the inauguration. The military fascists in Algeria, with openly proclaimed Gestapo models, have already shown their capacities for the methods of assassination and torture. In this situation, despite all the formal guarantees accepted by De Gaulle at his inauguration for the protection of civil rights and of the sovereignty

of parliament, the conditions of personal power and rule by decree, with parliament adjourned, open out the road to carry through decisive further changes in the whole political structure long before any question arises of the old parliament ever meeting again.

Hence the battle is grave and critical. Nothing could be more fatal than the attitude of passivity which seeks to justify the surrender by the "consolation" that the worst has not yet happened; to substitute for popular unity and action faith in De Gaulle as the "lesser evil"; and to look to paper guarantees for the protection of constitutional rights. In this storm the strength of the opposing forces decides. The present unstable situation is not and cannot be static. It can only move in one or the other direction. The fact that De Gaulle is in power does not mean that a straight and automatic road to fascism has already been opened. In every move and gesture so far De Gaulle has had to take uneasy account of the strength of the popular democratic forces. He has to take into account the realities of the international situation and the critical economic, financial and international position of France. Only the further development of the struggle will determine the outcome. There is no doubt that, if united action of the popular democratic forces can be achieved, all the conditions exist for their decisive victory in the final outcome.

This critical battle calls for the most urgent solidarity of the entire British labor movement with French democracy. On the very eve of the surrender the *Daily Herald* on May 30, in a memorable editorial, acclaimed:

those Socialists and other brave democrats who have refused to be intimidated, who have refused to sign their names to a seizure of power. Their courage is the one sign of hope in France. . . . Those who refuse to bow to the threat of force represent the true spirit of Frenchmen. They ward shame from the name of France.

In this way the organ of the Labour Party in fact, whatever the intentions, in the hour of testing paid tribute to the French Communist Party and other democrats, represented "the true spirit of Frenchmen" and "the one sign of hope in France." But by June 1 *Reynolds News* was already climbing down, and, while lamenting that "it is tragic that the French Socialists appear to have failed at the testing time," was back at the old stand of the familiar Social Democratic formula of the parallel fight against "Right and Left totalitarianism"—the well-tried formula for dividing the working class and letting in fascism. By June 3 the leader of the Labor Party, Mr. Gaitskell, was publicly defending Mollet as "equally devoted to democracy" with those who opposed. The Labour

Party officially remained silent through the crisis. Such blindness to the menace at our doors could be fatal. The British labor movement could only at its peril fail to learn the lesson of France or to stand foursquare by the French working class and people in the present battle which is now the front line of battle of the entire working class in Western Europe.

WHEN *Labour Monthly* was founded, Mussolini had not yet come to power. We have seen and lived through it all. We have seen Brailsford's *New Leader* describe Mussolini's Corporate State as a kind of Guild Socialism, and proclaim that "Labor must meet Fascism half way." We have seen the *Daily Herald* after Hitler's accession to power describe Nazism as a variant form of "Socialism." We have seen the price of anti-communism and refusal of the united front paid with the lives of millions killed on the battlefields of the second world war. But we have also seen the strength and victory of the united battle of the peoples against fascism, the downfall of the dictators, the new birth and extension of socialism and national liberation over widening areas of the world. And then during the last few years we have had to see once again for a time the resurrection in certain quarters of all the old discredited slogans of division and anti-communist hysteria. All unconscious of the lessons of the past, a new brood of young innocents has ardently echoed the imprecations of their lords and masters, the heirs and successors of the revived anti-Comintern Axis, when the latest attempt of the hydra of fascism to raise its head anew in the first country of its birth in Europe, was this time utterly and decisively smashed. Within two years, with the echoes of these imprecations still ringing in the air, fascism has struck in France. Must it be always so? Must the owl of Minerva only fly after the light of day has passed into the darkness of night? Must the peoples of the declining and now socially conservative corner of the world in Western Europe and North America learn only on their skins? Let us hope that in spite of all, the peoples of the dying Western social order will still show in the further outcome that they have the strength of life—to learn from the past, to see what is, and to act in time.

WHY! HONEY CHILD

RUSSENE ROWE

You-all will find it warm enough out lazen in the sun. . . .
You-all is welcome . . . sure is fine to have a northern cousin call on
city number one. . . .

Lemonade, why for the lady . . . whiskey for the gent

Now you-all should know which way the hospitality is bent.

Now there you are; ain't that pretty

Honey Child, here's all the keys to this here fair city.

You-all can go, why anywhere.
Our welcome mat you're bound to share. . . .

The northern cousins tall and lean, licked the southern platters clean.

* Russene Rowe is an eighteen-year old New York Negro poet. This is her first published poem.

PARIS LETTER: II

RENAUD DE JOUVENEL

IN my last month's letter, I said that I would give you a brief account of the stand taken in the present crisis by some of the more familiar figures of the French intellectual community. I confess that I feel a little uneasy about this, because I have the impression that Americans have a somewhat distorted view of this world. I suspect, for example, that those writers who have been most promoted by the press of your country, perhaps for other than literary reasons, are not always our most significant creative minds, and that others hardly receive the attention they deserve.

A simple but striking example is that of Louis Aragon, whom I believe to be by far the greatest living French novelist. His *Le Monde Reel* (*The Real World*) comprises four novels: *The Bells of Basel*, *Residential Quarter*, *Passengers of Destiny*, and *Aurelien*. It is a most lively and profound chronicle of pre-war society. One can only compare it with Roger Martin Du Gard's *Les Thibault*. As for the six volumes of *Les Communistes*, which covers the historical period from February, 1939 to June, 1940, these are without parallel in any literature. They constitute a monument of extraordinary stature. This most vivid picture of a nation's liberation struggle appears truer and richer than ever today.

In the field of poetry, Aragon's works are equally outstanding. His two last books, *Les Yeux et la Memoire* (*The Eyes and the Memory*) and *Le Roman Inachevé* (*The Unfinished Novel*) are indisputably the richest and most moving contribution that any living poet has made to the analysis of human emotion and the depiction of personal, dramatic experience.

Apart from these, he has published innumerable essays on literary figures and subjects: Victor Hugo, Stendhal, David d'Angers, Soviet literature and painting. . . . The list is endless.

How much of this prodigious production has been brought to the consciousness of the American reader?

Do Americans know of Elsa Triolet's novel, *Le Monument*? I can think of no other book which has such far reaching implications for intellectuals. Or, have they heard of two most important books on the Resistance and the concentration camps, Pierre Daix' *Dernière Fortresse*,

and Armand Lanoux's *Commandant Watrin*? These are only typical examples.

In addition there are hundreds of writers and thousands of intellectuals of all *metiers*, who play an active part in our country's political life. I hope I shall give no offense when I say that there are probably more intellectuals in the French Communist Party than there are members in the American C. P. at the present moment.

The political consciousness of the intellectuals is constantly attested to by collective demonstrations of feeling on their part. When the brilliant mathematics student Marius Audin was arrested in Algiers, shortly after his disappearance, that is even when his fate was unknown (though he was certainly put to death), one of his colleagues presented his thesis before all the authorities of the Sorbonne; and his Doctor's degree was solemnly bestowed upon him.

Although the Bar has sometimes adopted most equivocal positions, its highest authority, the President of the Barristers, recently launched a movement against the tortures in Algeria; and this must be interpreted as a political gesture in the present context of events.

Of the writers better known to you, Camus has, to my knowledge, taken no stand. One could not expect much of an anti-fascist declaration from a man who has for years used his pen for attacks against the Soviet Union and the People's Democracies, as well as the French Communists. For, whether one likes it or not, there is no way to establish peace without, or in opposition to, the Soviet Union and the New Democracies; and there is absolutely no way to preserve the French Republic without the Communists. *Absolutely none*. Some may regard the choice—"without or with"—as no more than between two ways of committing suicide; but there it is. All that is proposed of some "third way" is nothing but short-sighted political maneuvering, when it is not self-delusion or down-right fakery and lying.

Jean-Paul Sartre knows this perfectly well, and that is why he is a member of the local Parisian Committee of Defense of Republican Liberties, in my sector of the city. He has, of course, made a number of anti-fascist declarations. Recently, to a meeting which was addressed by such figures as Claude Autant-Lara, film director; Claude Bourdet, editor of *L'Observateur*; J. M. Domenach, prominent Catholic columnist; and one of our leading scientists, Jeanne-Pierre Vigier, Sartre sent a message from which I select a passage or two: "General de Gaulle has been forced upon us by the rebel generals and the *ultras*; he is their hostage; it is clear that, whatever intentions he may have had, he cannot make another policy than theirs. . . . Let us fight against the French

people's anti-parliamentarianism. It is justified; the majority in the Chamber and Senate has always betrayed them. But it must be made clear that it is the Algerian war itself which has borne down with all its weight upon our regime; and that these *colons*, these soldiers who condemn our institutions are the very ones who have impaired them." Speaking of the fear of the Popular Front, he writes: "Whatever name one gives it, it means the gathering of all those who want democracy and the Republic. Whoever at this time wants to exclude anyone is, willy nilly, a harbinger of fascism."

Francois Mauriac is, as you know, a novelist of consequence who is certainly deserving of a place in the history of our literature. For some time, he has kept a "Note-Book," which is published weekly in *L'Express*. At one point, during the Algiers rebellion, he expressed the hope that de Gaulle would repudiate its leaders. The general did no such thing. Not only did he underwrite the revolt, but he later broke the promise made to his own ministers by bringing into his cabinet Soustelle, who was the organizer of his secret police during the Resistance, is now the Algerian ultra's special representative in the government, and sees himself as a future French Edgar Hoover. All this has not yet opened Mauriac's eyes, though he is a member of the first Committee against Fascism formed early in May, which includes such figures as Claude Bourdet, Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, F. Joliot-Curie, Claude Roy, the socialist André Phillipp, the eminent mathematician Professor L. Schwartz, and the Radical deputies, Hernu and Hovnanian.

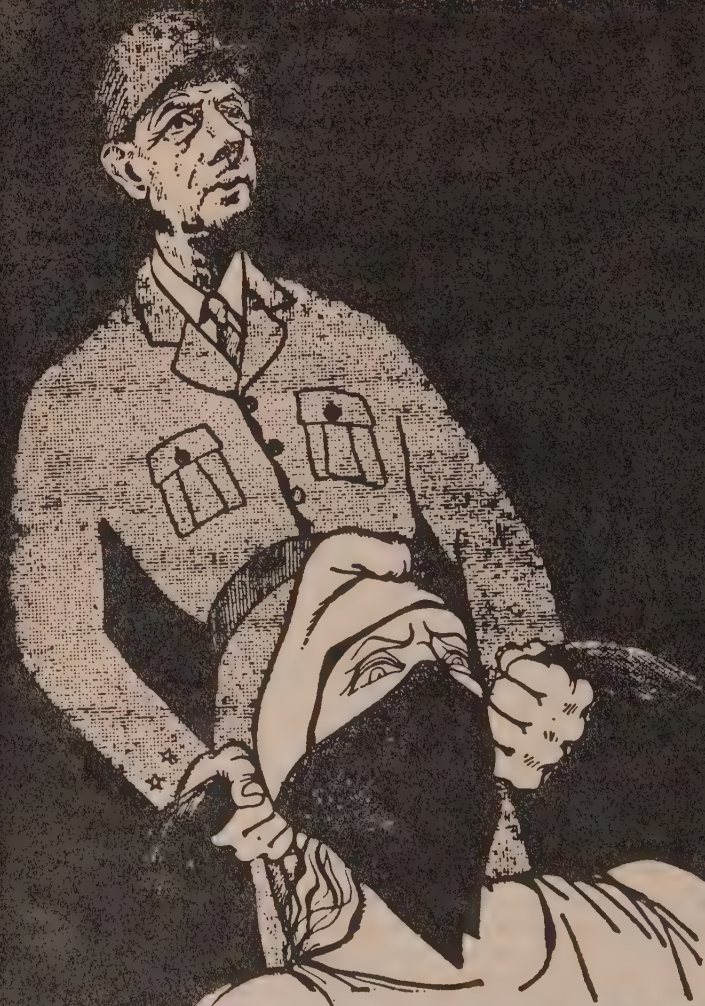
Is there anything, though, that can be said in extenuation of André Malraux, seeing the company in which he delights to be, or reading and listening to his Goebbels-like demagoguery? I don't think so.

Malraux' career as a serious novelist ended with *L'Espoir* (*Man's Hope*), though he wrote one poor novel after the war. Since then he has turned to art, to propagate an obscurantist position which will fascinate only the ignorant.

Malraux is an adventurer, in the more dubious connotation of that word. Some years ago he "discovered" by air a hitherto unheard-of town in southern Arabia. For a few days his name was spilled over the front pages, accompanied by that of his pilot, Corniglion-Molinier, another of de Gaulle's followers. Nobody has heard anything of that town since. During the Occupation, Malraux and I were in the same department of France, the Correze, but we did not belong to the same Resistance organization. I do not think he did much harm to the Nazis. Perhaps he was following the General's orders to save himself for future glory!

You may remember that on the occasion of his first press inter-

DE GAULLE ...



....C'EST LE FASCISME

view as Minister of Propaganda—a position in which he was later to be replaced by Soustelle—he proposed that Sartre and three French Nobel Prize-winners Camus, Francois Mauriac, and Roger Martin du Gard, should go to Algeria to investigate the charges of torture. He knew perfectly well that Camus was on a long South American tour, that Mauriac does not believe in such investigations, that Martin du Gard was seriously ill, and that Sartre had already made his position clear in his introduction to Alleg's book, *The Question*. He did not ask a fourth Nobel prize-winners, the physicist, F. Joliot-Curie, who is a Communist. The whole scheme was a demagogic fake. One should believe in nothing that comes out of Malraux' mouth, except the threats which have become his stock-in-trade. I recommend the reading of his recent speeches to those who do not believe me. No one has uttered such fascist language in France. That is why Goebbel's name came to my mind in connection with his.

While such celebrities at Sartre and Muriac play a prominent part in the present crisis, one should not forget, as Sartre himself has said (and others before him), that France's fate is in the hands of her people, who can only count on themselves. "Each time," writes Sartre, "this hard and healthy truth has penetrated the masses, it is finally they who have achieved victory."

One should not forget, either, the crucial part played by our National Committee of Writers, an organization born during the Resistance and still going strong. On its Board of Directors are Aragon, its president at the moment, Vercors and Elsa Triolet, honorary presidents, Claude Morgan, Claude Roy, Alain Prevost, Guillevic and L. S. Senghor. This Committee is doing all within its power to unite French intellectuals against the menace of fascism.

In my first letter, I described how Defence Committees had sprung up everywhere. A typical one is that of the film industry, which comprises some 400 to 500 members, including some 125 actors and actresses, directors, producers, and critics. Among them are to be found Gerard Philippe, Claude Autant-Lara, Yves Allégret, Denys de la Patellière, Yves Ciampi, Marcel Carné, J. P. Le Chanois, and Jacques Prevert.

Just because of the disclaimer with which it begins, the recent statement of Professor Alfred Kastler of the faculty of physics at the Sorbonne is singularly important. "I am not commissioned by anybody," wrote Professor Kastler in his article, published in *L'Express*. "I do not belong to any party. But I know, and am here to assert that we, hundreds of university professors and research specialists, thousands of college and secondary school teachers, tens of thousands of elementary school teachers,

are willing to defend the institutions of the Republic and to oppose any regime of oppression with a resolute *No*. . . . To those who want to abolish democracy, who believe that the pursuit of knowledge presupposes a lack of courage, who imagine that the intellectuals will be swiftly broken in and brought to heel, we say that they are mistaken. It is true that university people do not have a very martial appearance. But those among them who have died for Freedom and for France have taught us that an intellectual, too, knows that one has to pledge his life in defense of his convictions." In conclusion, Professor Kastler warned that if ever a fascist dictatorship, open or disguised, were to be installed, the men of science would refuse to cooperate with it.

Similarly, at its annual Congress, the National Union of Elementary School Teachers, representing 80% of the profession, voted for a resolution calling upon its members to defend democratic liberties. Of the 195,000 members of the Union, one fourth are Communists.

No one can say that the French intelligentsia is not devoted to the republican cause. Today, the word "Left" is too restricted to describe the forces that have made the only acceptable choice between the Republic and fascism. Everyone but the blind knows that the phrase "it can happen here" expresses an absurd hope. That is why I believe the Republic will be saved by those forces among which our intellectuals play a leading and honorable part.

THE SEASONS ON MULBERRY STREET

PHILLIP BONOSKY

FALL

Booths are going up on Mulberry Street!

There's been a-pounding and a-building in the street since early morning. I lie in bed and listen to the brass band marching up and down playing the *Star-Spangled Banner*, *Tipperary*, *God Bless America*. I get up and stick my head out of the window. The band is made up of old and middle-aged Italian men who march blindly up the street.. Their eyes are glued on the tiny sheets of music stuck on their instruments.

Behind them, little girls in First Communion dresses. Little boys in black suits, white shirts and silk arm bands. They carry huge unlit candles. Then Boy Scouts. Then men carrying the plaster saint. It is Saint Genarra, and four men lift her on a platform, and their faces flame with effort. Long drapes of money, pinned together with straight pins, flow from Saint Genarra's shoulders to the platform. Women cross themselves.

Saint Genarra has a mild expression on her plaster face, which does not change as she passes through this slum. She stops for a moment so that the men can rest, and stares with painted blue eyes at a rat among the garbage still uncollected on the curb.

When I come home at night, my street is unrecognizable. It is flooded with light. Overhead shine huge rose designs in light. The smells of cooking pork sausages, peppers, zeppoles, pizza rise over the smell of the slum. Hawkers are yelling. The wheel of fortune is turning. There are gold fish waiting to be won. There are bottles of whiskey for the lucky number. The Saint who toured the street this morning is now standing in a small chapel surrounded by candles and the drape of money has grown longer.

On the platform built over the street a woman takes the microphone and begins to sing.

Women on the sixth floor lean out of the window and look down on her.

Everybody's smiling.

Two Italian boys about seventeen.

One says: "So your mother signed?"

"Yeah, she signed."

"Boy, you're *in* now! Nothing can get you out!"

"Yeah, that's right—nothing, unless you have a record."

But he's only seventeen: there's little chance he's got a police record.

So long, they say, and each disappears into a different slum door.

But tomorrow—the Marines!

* * *

I take my shoes to the Italian shoemaker. He keeps a red votive cup with a yellow, sallow candle burning. Behind the cup is a photograph of his wife in her coffin.

He looks up at me with sick eyes.

"But I need the shoes," I say.

"I am seek," he says, modestly pointing to himself.

"But I need the shoes."

He nods. When I come back to get the shoes, he is no longer alive.

* * *

"Why do you live down here?" the barber asks me. "It stinks from garbage."

He sends the scissors clipping close to my ear.

"Oh," I reply, "the rent's cheap."

"It stinks down here."

"But the rent's cheap."

"But it stinks!"

The child romps through the unswept hair on the floor, and he says, pointing to the child: "When I was a boy in Italy, I had a big mass of hair—like this." (He's bald.) "And my mother was always grabbing it when she was mad at me. That hurt. So one day I went to my uncle who was a barber, too, and said, 'My Mama always pulls my hair.' So he cut it all off; when I came home, my Mama saw my head bare and started crying—oh, how she cried! 'How bad I am to you!' she said. 'No, Mama,' I said. 'But you always pulled my hair.'"

I remember this and make a story from it, which eventually is published.

That's one of the reasons I live down here, I'll tell him next time.

The fair has been on for several nights now. The rich odor of food cooking over coke fires chases away the odor of poverty.

Two Negro musicians sit on the curb. One plays the guitar, the other beats a greasy drum with his foot and clashes faded old brass cymbals. He turns frighteningly opaque eyes that are blind to the dancers.

It's after midnight and most of the slummers have gone. The booths are turning down their lights. But around these two solitary players some young Italian boys and girls stand and listen and sometimes dance. They admire the players, and they dance in a leisurely, dreamy way. They've worked during the day.

The two players are playing very sad songs. They are songs that are almost whispered, they seem very private. The blind player thinks about them as he plays. The lights go down. But the Italian boys and girls still want to dance. So they *shoo-shoo* softly on the street, and their expressions are soft and thoughtful. They dance almost as if remembering dancing.

And the blind musician softly strokes the drum with his felt-covered drum stick. And touches the cymbals so that they do not crash—they almost sigh.

It gets later. These working kids begin to leave, and they drop money into his cap, and he nods blindly until they're all gone. But still he waits. Then his partner gets up, and he lifts him up, and together they walk slowly down the street.

* * *

I gather my sheets and pillow case and underwear and take it to the Laundromat.

I weigh my bundle. It's over 9 pounds. I take out two pairs of socks and a pair of shorts. Ah, that makes it 9 pounds. Only 9 pounds can go into one machine, and I am in no mood to pay an extra thirty cents to wash a pair of socks and a pair of shorts.

"Let me put these in?" I bargain with the laundromat proprietor. I hold out the socks and underwear. "No," he says. "You need another machine."

But what am I going to do with these? They can go in!"

He shakes his head. I stuff them into my pocket.

* * *

Knocks. . . .

The knock of a friend, confident. The knock of the salesman: not too

loud, not too shy: in between. The loud legal bang of the policeman! The polite but crafty knock of the FBI. The knock of the Con Edison bill collector—brutal, authoritative, like a cop's.

Then the **unmistakeable knock** of the landlord.

That's it now!

I turn out the light and sit without breathing in the darkness. No sound. The door is between us. I sit for a long time; then turn on the light.

Immediately, the knock! "Have you anything for me?"

But now the plumbing has gone to pot, and I trek over to the landlord's place. I knock. There is a deep silence. I knock again, and again, and again, I go outside and wait.

Finally he appears.

"Oh," he says.

* * *

Baby carriages are chained downstairs to a pipe or an iron bar. Inside the hall sometimes; sometimes on the sidewalk.

The mothers can't drag those carriages up six flights of stairs!

Tonight drunk college kids break one loose, and run up the street pushing it; a college boy sprawls in it like a baby, his legs hanging out.

In the morning I'll hear about it from the women.

* * *

I see red. Albany has just granted landlords a rise in rent. They are all "hardship" cases. My landlord has sent me a notice that henceforth I will pay him 15% more a month, which means an extra \$3 for the privilege of chasing cockroaches.

I am finally driven to action. I learn the address of the rent commission. I've had no painting done, no repairs, the plumbing is ruined, nothing works! When I locate the address, I notice the hours are "business hours" from 9 to 4:30 P.M. Most workers cannot get here. I go up, open my mouth to complain—and a man shoves some papers at me. "Fill it in in triplicate," he says. "One for us, one for the landlord, and one for you. Then mail ours in."

Stupefied, I hold the papers, and start reading. Soon I am dizzy. I take the papers home, look at them, and my eyes blur at the small print. I set them aside. The first of the month comes around, and they're still unread. I pay my extra three dollars.

Why don't you do something about this? a friend asks me, pointing to the unpainted walls.

Vaguely I explain that it's not as bad as it looks. . . .

* * *

What's wrong? I stand at my window and stare outside. Something is falling down between the dark gray houses and touches the street below and expires.

It's snow. Autumn has ripened the street, and now snow has come to put it to sleep.

I stare at the silent oil stove in the kitchen.

It will have to be lit.

WINTER

Snow—thick, old-fashioned snow! Good old snow. Mulberry Street is unbelievable—for a moment it is exquisitely white. Every fire-escape has borders of white, runners of white; and sudden designs of iron work lost in the general grayness, leap out. The snow packs itself against the window.

Next day I am shivering, and the lyricism is muted.

Living here now is like living inside an ice-box.

* * *

It's *cold*! The temperature this week has hit zero twice. I pile all my coats on the bed, sleep in my clothes, with socks, my scarf wound around my neck. Even so the cold wakes me at night and I cower and shiver. In the morning I open slow eyes that seem to creak a little opening. I touch my nose gingerly to feel if it's there.

What courage to get out of bed! That moment of agony till the kerosene stove is lit, and the first waves of kerosene heat come, and you grab it, and wrap it around you.

Then, to pick up the morning paper and read that in the same night a kerosene stove exploded in a Brooklyn slum and a whole family perished!

* * *

Sitting reading in the kitchen, breathing in the kerosene fumes. Sit almost on top of the stove. Find myself more and more depressed, not knowing why. Suddenly I become fully aware of a dismal, never-to-be-

comforted and stubborn crying of a little boy somewhere in this house.

Even the mother no longer tries to quiet it. The sense of profound despair that comes over me is not only because of this crying in the slum-ridden house. It is as if the crying had come down the long corridor of years from inconsolable babies in all the homes of all the poor I've known, and the weight of it presses unbearably on my brain. . . .

* * *

I sit writing. But I can hear everything that goes on in the house. Every day the young mother starts upstairs. Her arms are full of bundles. She has a two-year old boy who want to be carried up six flights. He sits down. He wails. She begs him to walk.

She is white, her husband is Negro. Finally she has gotten him to my floor. He sits down and wails. She begs him. I jump up, run out, pick the boy up, rush him to the sixth floor, set him down, and rushing on my way back, meet the mother who says, "Thank you." "Not at all," I answer; rush into my room, close the door and lean panting over my typewriter.

Where was I?

* * *

A discreet knock at the door. I open it. Two nuns holding a small box. "We're collecting for the poor."

I smile and shake my head, and close the door. They knock on the next door. "We are collecting for the poor."

There is the simple sound of coins.

I had thought there were no poorer poor than here!

* * *

Same day another knock. This is very authoritative. I open.

A big man who looks like an ex-prize fighter. "I'm from Con Ed," he says.

"Are you?"

"You haven't paid your light bill."

He doesn't ask to, he just steps in. He knows how to browbeat; he knows we've got no rights here in the slums. "Have you got the money?" he demands.

"No."

He takes a step toward the meter. "I'm going to turn it off."
"Turn that off," I explain to him, "and I'll knock your brains in!"
He turns around and skips out of the door.
But I have light.

* * *

I am writing, peacefully. Suddenly I smell smoke! The whole kitchen is in flames! The kerosene stove has caught fire! Panic goes through me—I think of the babies in the house; the little children, the mothers. . . .

Every muscle springs to life.

I start filling a pan with water at the sink. It's endless! Suddenly I remember the pan of water on top the stove, left there for moistening the air. I push through the smoke, bat at the flames, and grab the pan. I dash the water at the base of the flames. For a moment they die down. I fill the pan at the sink. The kitchen floor is flooded; the kitchen is choked with big billows of black fumes. More water. Still more. And more yet! I slip in it. But the tank filled with kerosene does not explode!

The room is covered with soot.

At night I wake with a shudder, smelling fumes.

But I don't dare leave the stove on at night—and lie under four army blankets, my overcoat, and even towels.

* * *

Mott Street is next to Mulberry. I go to a store there for a container of milk. This is Monday. The grocer sneaks the container into a paper bag and I carry it home. When I drink it, it's sour. Then I see it's Friday's milk.

I burst into a rage, for this man has cheated me before. Stale eggs. Stale bread. Rusty cans. I am familiar with all the horrible craftiness in his eyes as he schemes to cheat me out of three cents.

I know how the poor feel; how the war goes on at this level. Just like that. I raged, and wanted to storm back and throw it in his face—and then suddenly a sickness at such greed, such pettiness overwhelms me. I despise the grocer, I hate myself. I am terribly shocked: something happens to me with this.

I have to drive it quickly out of my mind!

I throw the milk away, drink water instead.

All I want is to forget that a society exists in which a man cheats from sheer habit, *as a way of life!*

I am coming down the Bowery on my way home. Idly I watch a man briskly walking toward me. An old, wavering drunk approaches him with an outstretched hand. Without breaking stride, the man with a cigar gripped into his teeth, juts out a stiff arm and catches the drunk square on the jaw.

The old man flops backward onto the sidewalk. The man with the cigar doesn't even turn.

The old man tries to get up; he looks around.

"Why did he do that?" he asks the world more in surprise than anger.

It's after midnight.

As I come down the dark street, I hear cries. They are half-muffled but they are protests—not angry, but merely explanatory. Then I see a Negro man being pushed out of the subway. He grips the iron rail, and the cop takes his billy with the thick lead top and methodically smacks each finger till he breaks the man's hold.

"I'm coming, I'm coming," the Negro protests. "You don't have to do that."

The policeman cracks him smartly across the shoulders, and shoves him into a waiting squad car.

* * *

These young men who sometimes stand on the corner. They never work. But they wear good clothes. They have cars. They go to church. They are strange commentators on life, too. When the procession of St. Genarra goes by, they cross themselves and add their dollars to the Saint's train.

I pass them by.

Four of them later will be shot to death by others just like themselves! Mulberry Street and one mile east will be called in the press, "Murder Mile."

I walk in and out of gangsters with the innocence of a child and the safety of the utterly poor!

* * *

A flurry. Two cops are running wildly after a third man. The third man runs into a doorway and hastily tries to swallow something. Too late! He's caught; they grab him by the throat and make him cough it back up, and they take the precious stuff away from him.

It's marihuana. The cops take it along with the prisoner.

But don't worry! The high school boys won't lose their smokes. Tomorrow someone else will step into the place temporarily vacated.

* * *

"Hey," says the store-keeper, "don't use that phone!"

I look at him.

"It's busy," he adds.

I go into the booth next to it, and the telephone rings, and the store-keeper picks up the phone and says, "Yeah—yeah—yeah—" and hangs up.

As I leave. "Have you got any razor blades?"

"Nah," he says.

That Sunday he goes to the church in the next block—the big one with the high walls around its cemetery—and puts money into the bucket which some good pious horse brought in for him.

SPRING

We've come through!

Yes, it's spring—I know it's spring. And we've come through. It was a hard winter, it was very cold. A lot of people were burned to death from exploding kerosene stoves.

I know now what my father meant when he'd shake his head and say, "I don't think I'll live through this winter. . . ." If it had only been summer all the time!

We had zero weather, and my bones ached from the cold. I was cold all winter.

But, there's the sunshine! We've come through!

* * *

All winter she was bundled up, going up and down the dark stairs with lowered eyes. She lives next door, and has two girls. She's ashamed of living in the slums, but unlike other Italians, can't leave. With the Puerto Ricans moving in, she gets bitter.

But it's spring now. I meet her coming up the dark stairs, holding closely to her a pink bundle.

I stop with amazement. "A baby! Yours?"

She nods shyly. "Yes," she says. "A girl."

On these dark steps she unfolds the pink blanket and there it lies—
pink-bundled sleeping purity!

"Your third girl," I say.

She beams.

The men on the corner say to her husband: "Don't you have no man
juice in you?"

* * *

Sunshine! It lies along the old-rose colored walls of the churchyard.
Boys cross themselves stealthily as they pass the church. Then they gather
at the parish steps and fall on to their knees.

There is the jangle of coins. One of the boys with his fists clutched
crosses himself, shakes his fists against his ear and rolls.

There's the tinkle of the bell warning that Mass has begun. They
swoop up the money, rush across to the church, cross themselves and sink
to their knees. . . .

* * *

A Puerto Rican father and his 10-year-old son at the Unemployment
Office. The clerk says something, the father turns to the boy. The boy
explains in Spanish what the clerk said. The father replies, the boy
turns to the clerk and answers in English. Then the clerk speaks and
the boy relays what he said to his father. And then back again.

I seem to have seen this before—generations before: Jewish boys
serving their fathers; Polish boys turning Polish into English and back
again; Italian boys explaining. . . . Now this Spanish boy explaining to
his father how to live though unemployed.

Back and forth. Finally, it's over.

"Whew!" the boy whistles in relief.

On the wall outside smeared in huge blue paint: NO GUINEA
WANTED. HESTER STREET GANG.

Underneath, a skull and cross-bones.

* * *

I am walking up Mulberry Street. Ahead of me two sweet little
Italian girls about six or seven carrying a basket of laundry between
them. They are skipping and singing a song on this bright spring day.

*"Piels is the beer for me, boys,
Clear as a beer can be. . . ."*

They smile shyly as I pass them.

That white Boston bull is old. But very alert. One block—from Broome Street north—that's his domain. Right now he's playing with two kids—tolerantly, only to amuse them. He unbends just enough to play but not so far as to give up his dignity.

I stand and watch him brazenly, avidly, I've never seen a dog like him.

At one point he catches my eyes; he doesn't like me standing there watching. Who do I think I am?

Grrr!

He jerks his head northward—that's my direction. I smile. He thinks I've come from uptown. No, I shake my head.

Grr.

He takes a few steps towards me. I turn on my heel. I throw a look back; he takes a couple steps toward me.

Now every time I pass he comes out and growls at me till I've crossed Broome street. He doesn't care what I do after that.

In time I make a detour around his territory.

* * *

I had often passed this young couple on the stairway. They were very newly-wed; both were still students.

One day the boy asks me if I was who I am, and whether I'd written a certain book.

I said yes I was, and I had written a certain book. He looks at me, but doesn't quite put into words: What are you doing *here*?

Suddenly they have produced a baby.

One day the boy—a father now—stops me and says: "Look, I wish you wouldn't put the *Worker* in the trash. The FBI was here to see me. . . ."

He looks half-ashamed, half-anxious.

"I'm afraid to lose my job . . ." he admits.

I was impressed.

* * *

The bum is standing in front of a young student. The student is the 'sensitive' type, as you can see. He's been looking at books in an avant-garde bookstore window: Kafa, Kierkegaard, Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot. . . . Flushing, he searches through one pocket after the other for a coin, while the bum waits good-naturedly, saying once, "Try the back pocket. . . ."

Finally the student fishes out a coin, hands it over, and his head down, his face flaming, hurries off as though caught in an immoral act. The bum gives him a parting ironic salute.

* * *

I rush downstairs, passing a woman also going downstairs. She's carrying a baby.

Sunlight and beauty outside, so I linger near the subway entrance reluctant to commit my body to that hole in the earth. The same woman whom I had passed on the stairs passes me again and goes down into the hole.

In a moment, with a last look at the sunlight, I go down too.

There she is at the foot of the stairs. The baby is asleep.

"Do you happen to have an extra token?" she asks me. "I had one but lost it." She pushes her hand into her pocket to prove it.

"No," I answer, and give her a quarter.

"Thank you," she says. "Give me your address and I'll send it back tomorrow."

"Forget about it," I mumble, and hurry off.

How could I tell her we live at the same address?

* * *

The couple who take care of this house are old. They work slowly; it's painful to come upon the old lady washing the steps. They live in the cellar, along with the rats.

For a long time two obscene dogs waddled behind them everywhere they went.

Today the woman suddenly appears with a frisky pup, which she has chained, and she takes him everywhere she goes. He will live and die on that chain!

I ask her what the pup's name is.

"Baby," she says shyly.

* * *

One block west from Mulberry Centre Street becomes Lafayette. This is the route of the famous—from City Hall downtown on up, hitting Broadway finally. Lincoln went this way once. General Grant, too. Probably Mark Twain.

But no longer. Sirens are wailing. Motorcycles roar. I go out and stand with the thin line of onlookers. Here he comes—a profile hand-tooled for coins. Paper comes dropping down.

A woman besides me laughs. We save up paper for days like this," she says. "The janitor doesn't have anything to do. . . ."

* * *

"Did you see the parade?" one of them remarks to the other.

"Yeah," the other one answers. "The General come up to me and asked me for a match."

"What'd you say?"

"I said I didn't smoke."

The first one says, "Yep, he's a wonderful man. A great General.

"Yep," the second one says, "he's a great general."

"Well," the first one says, "are you going to join up?"

"Yep," the first one says, "he's a great general, he's a sure a great general. . . ."

* * *

All these kids bunched together on Mott Street. It's exciting! The grocery store is festooned with colored streamers, on which I read: "Clarabelle Will Be Here at 1 O'Clock."

I don't know who Carabelle is, but these shining-eyed slum kids do!

Another streamer says that he (or she) is a friend of Howdy-Doody. And both of these are friends of Adax Cleaner, which the store is featuring. For today is opening day.

Mott Street looks like it could use the cleaner right now. It's rained and the streets are slimier than usual. But kids are kids. They're here en masse, and six cops are here to keep them in order. One cop growls: "If you don't be quiet, you ain't goin' see nothin'!"

A police lieutenant with a tremendous paunch, a face like a cartoonist's idea of a bone-crushing cop, officiates. Thick, raw hands, more used to wielding clubs, spread out to pat the children back in line—and nearly knock them over.

Older brothers and sister bring the younger brothers and sisters to see. They perch them on their shoulders. Everyone is already smiling though nothing has happened. There are surprised and modest smiles on the faces of the old Italians, who wonder what's going on.

Photographers move in and out, climbing on roofs, and from the top of the store one of them calls down directions to the kids. As if trained, they all look up, smile and wave their hands. He shoots this.

But no Clarabelle. A lane is kept open by the cops. And we crane our necks down the street: will he (or she) come in a car or drop from the sky?

Suddenly there she is! She's been hiding in the store all the time. But at this moment a garbage truck hauls up and parks between Clarabelle and me. It stands there till the garbage has been collected, and everybody on the other side of the truck is laughing, but I can't see what Clarabelle is doing.

Finally it goes off. The kids are screaming with delight. Clarabelle, who does not speak, has a bottle of seltzer water and is quirting it on everybody. She squirts it on one of the cops who weariedly brushes it away.

Clarabelle is a very funny clown.

A bright young man with a travelling microphone asks Clarabelle how she came. Did she land from an airplane? Clarabelle throws out her butt to show how she landed. Everybody laughs.

Suddenly she shows us a newspaper, tears it up, and then unfolds it again miraculously intact.

"What time is it?" asks the bright young man.

"Howdy-doodo time!" the thin voices of the kids reply.

"Sing it," he says, and the quavering voices lift up in song:

*"It's Howdy-Doody time,
It's Howdy-Doody time . . ."*

"What kind of cleaner are you going to buy?"

"Ajax!" they answer. Clarabelle jumps up and down with such pleasure that all the kids are glad they made her happy.

SUMMER

It's summer all right! The cold keeps the garbage refrigerated. But now it steams; it ripens . . . and I sit reading at night near the open window, and finally close it. But the smell comes through.

It's very late. Suddenly I hear the thick gush of water. I look out. Somebody has opened up a water hydrant, and the water comes in a thick stream. The kids line up and run toward the thickest flow and stick their heads in it. They wear swimming trunks, or just their underwear.

The Boston Bull lines up too. When his turn comes, he rushes for-

ward, thrusts his head into the gush of water, bites it, and then runs back to take his place in line again.

* * *

It is 2:30 A.M. I hear a woman calling from a window across the street: Mo-o-l-l-y . . ." over and over.

And no reply.

* * *

Two strolling Italian musicians. One plays the saxophone, the other carries a guitar. The guitarist stops in front of the watching women with his hat in his outstretched hand. People drop in coins.

At the saloon the juke-box blares out a song. They pass by silent until they can be heard again.

Then the deep throb of the sax, the thrum of the guitar.

* * *

The Italian housewife next door, whose third girl had arrived in the Spring, cusses out the landlord. Something's wrong again, and the landlord has arrived with professional belittling.

"Oh," she cries bitterly, "everything's 'nothing-nothing' to you! But you don't have to live here!"

The landlord complains to *me* that he doesn't own the houses either. Somebody 'up there' does. God?

He's Italian too, does the repair work himself, and says: "Perry Como is a good family man. Not like Frank Sinatra. . . ."

* * *

There are bonding offices here. So many of them I feel embarrassed. Why am I not in or about to go into jail? To keep all these bonding offices happy, a lot of people must be constantly arrested!

There are also check-cashing joints. Checks are cashed for 25 cents a check up to \$50. There are places here where you can sell your blood for \$5 a pint. For 30 cents a pint you can buy some "dago red," except that it turns out to be wood alcohol, and you never wake up again. You can hire yourself to work on a railroad gang—free transportation, showers, and good pay. You can buy a second-hand pair of glasses for 10 cents from the sidewalk market. . . .

Foley Square where there are places where you can get married, get judged and get jailed is also here.

* * *

It is late at night, and very hot. I am dead on my feet after a long hot day, and am walking along Delancey Street homeward bound. I hardly feel I am so tired. I pass the subway exit right next to the Bowery. The sudden glance into the lighted pit is theatrical. It seems to me I am looking into the face of a Chinese man, whose eyes are bulging, whose tongue is rigidly thrust out. An arm seems to be thrown around his neck from behind him. I'd seen that kind of grip in a movie.

That's probably why I keep walking.

I hear the jangle of coins, and stop. "Did I see that?" I ask myself.

I turn back. Two young men spring out of the exit, and walk toward the corner; then as if the corner is too far, break into a run. I chase after them half-heartedly, not to catch them but to see where they're going. They jump into the back of a waiting truck and the truck pulls off.

I go back to look for the Chinese. But he's gone. Later, I'm told by a friend that he would have denied being robbed, and refused help and precisely the help of police. Why? Because most Chinese are in the country illegally, and are preyed on in this fashion because the mugger knows they'll not report them.

I walk on. On the Bowery I meet a young policeman strolling along, whirling his club, and I pause. Should I tell him? But there's nothing left of the drama any more. It's as though it really happened in my tired brain only.

Besides, I'm carrying the *Daily Worker* under my arm, and that's real. Who knows what's the bigger crime?

* * *

I have fever. I am walking along Delancey Street home to Mulberry, a route called 'Murder Mile.'

I hear a screeching of brakes, then a thud. The car stops a half block beyond the body of an old Jewish woman sprawled on the street, her dress up to her knees, her pocket-book jarred open, and the contents spilling out. Her leg looks broken. She is unconscious. Blood—the sting of blood of old people—lies thinly on the street.

A young fellow about 19 keeps taking flash shots of her. Now she moans and changes her position, and he catches that with his camera.

As the ambulance doctor, who finally arrives, bends over her, he shoots that. He passes efficiently in and out of the quiet, moved onlookers. As they lift her on the stretcher, she wails, and he snaps her pained face. The ambulance drives away. He hurries to the corner newsstand and rifles through the pages of the *Daily News*, then of the *Mirror*.

"Who got hurt?" asks the news vendor.

"Some old lady."

"What are you looking for?"

"The phone number of the *News* or *Mirror*."

"Why?"

He pats his camera. "I want to sell them these pictures!"

He fixes the point with his finger, memorizes it hastily, and then hurries into the phone booth.

* * *

The watch-repair downstairs has a dingy dusty old shop. I've given him my watch to fix. As I wait for him to return it to me, I ask him whether he has any wedding rings.

He brings out a covered box from the rear, where there's a grandfather's clock, a safe with a broken handle, and a row of dusty watches that seem to have been unclaimed since Lincoln's day.

He blows the dust off, and opens it.

There lie a row of gold and silver rings.

"Cheap," he says to me, "they're second-hand."

I stare fascinated at second-hand wedding rings.

But superstitious, I reluctantly shake my head.

* * *

It's Sunday, I'm lying late in bed, half-dreaming. My window that looks out on an airshaft is open—and I can see some shafts of sunlight in which lazy motes are tumbling.

There has been a lot of coming-in and moving-out lately. Puerto Ricans in; Italians out. Above me now is a new Puerto Rican family—and also below me. One is on the fourth floor, I am on the third, and the other is on the second. Above me a woman is calling the boy below me. Half-dreaming I hear this conversation.

"Cloo-Cloo," she calls. The little boy whom she is teasing sticks his head out of the window and his voice sails past me to the fourth floor. Go to the telephone, Cloo-Cloo," she says.

I hear the telephone ring below.

"Who do you guess this is, Cloo-Cloo?"

"Is it Ma-ry?" the boy asks.

"No, Cloo-Cloo, I'm not Mary." Then she asks: "Is Mary your teacher? No, I'm not your teacher."

He says something in Spanish. "I don't onnerstand you, Cloo-Cloo. I don't onnerstand Spannish, Cloo-Cloo," she says. "Speak in Eengleesh."

He keeps on guessing who is on the phone. His short list comes to an end, and finally she cries, with great delight: "I'm your Aunt!" There is a silence. Then she says: "Where are you going today, Cloo-Cloo? To church! The movies are better!" (I am surprised.) "Wouldn't you like to go to the movies with me?"

His voice comes up through the shaft as he speaks on the phone. "I have to go to church."

"I'll take you to the movies, Cloo-Cloo."

"I have to go to church."

"Oh, Cloo-Cloo!" she cries. "Do you like me, Cloo-Cloo?"

"No."

"Yes you do-o-o-o!"

"No, no no!" he says.

"All right, I won't take you to the movies then! If you don't like me, why should I take you to the movies? I like you-o-o-o. Do you like me?"

"No, no, no, no!" the boys says.

"Speak in Spanish, Cloo-Cloo," she says, "I don't onnerstand Eenglish."

* * *

Well, this is it. I'm moving. The moving men arrive, and begin loading up my books into big hogshead barrels.

The Puerto Rican woman from upstairs comes in, anxious and excited. "You move?" she asks me eagerly. "You move?"

"Yes."

"You want sell apartment? I geeve you \$125!"

"Oh, no," I say. "This isn't worth \$125! Anyhow, I wouldn't take the money."

Her sister comes in. They think I'm bargaining, that I want more money. "Meester," she pleads, "my seester need apartment. I geeve you \$125."

It is true we've paid to get into our new apartment, which is not much better than the one I'm leaving. But I don't choose to become part of the kind of thing.

She tells me they paid the landlord, the one who admires Perry Com-

for being a church-going family man, \$125 to get into the apartment above me. But it's over-crowded. They need more rooms. Another sister paid \$1000 for an apartment on Mott Street because it was "furnished." They all work in the needle trade industry; they sew.

They beg me to take the money. I don't.

The moving man takes the last barrel of books. I take my unfinished manuscript in a suitcase with me, personally. And I don't intend to leave my humanity behind.

"Here," I say, giving her the key. "Move in. Take over! And don't give the landlord a single penny! Just move in. The rent is \$23 a month—that's double what it's worth. Demand a new paint job; insist on having the plumbing fixed. *But don't pay anybody anything for the right to live in a slum!*"

I drop the key in her hand, and she stares down at it unbelievably. The money is in her other hand.

And this is farewell to Mulberry Street.

UNIVERSITY OF HUNGER

MARTIN CARTER

Is the university of hunger the wide waste
is the pilgrimage of man the long march.
The print of hunger wanders in the land
The green tree bends above the long forgotten
The plains of life rise up and fall in spasms
The roofs of men are fused in misery.

They come treading in the hoof marks of the mule
passing the ancient bridge
the grave of pride
the sudden flight
the terror and the time.

They come from the distant village of the flood
passing from middle air to middle earth
in the common hours of nakedness.

Twin bars of hunger mark their metal brows
twin seasons mock them
parching drought and flood.

Is the dark ones
the half sunken in the land
is they who had no voice in the emptiness
in the unbelievable
in the shadowless.

They come treading on the mud floor of the year
mingling with dark heavy water
and the sea sound of the eyeless flitting bat.
O long is the march of men and long is the life
and wide is the span.

Is air dust and the long distance of memory
is the hour of rain when sleepless toads are silent
is broken chimneys smokeless in the wind
is brown trash huts and jagged mounds of iron.

They come in long lines
toward the broad city.
Is the golden moon like a big coin in the sky
is the floor of bone beneath the floor of flesh
is the beak of sickness breaking on the stone.
O long is the march of men and long is the life
and wide is the span.
O cold is the cruel wind blowing
O cold is the hoe in the ground.

They come like sea birds
flapping in the wake of a boat.
is the torture of sunset in purple bandages
is the powder of fire spread like dust in the twilight
is the water melodies of white foam on wrinkled sand.

The long streets of night move up and down
baring the thighs of a woman
and the cavern of generation.
The beating drum returns and dies away
the bearded men fall down and go to sleep
the cocks of dawn stand up and crow like bugles.

Is they who rose early in the morning
watching the moon die in the dawn.
Is they who heard the shell blow and the iron clang
Is they who had no voice in the emptiness
in the unbelievable
in the shadowless.
O long is the march of men and long is the life
and wide is the span.

NO HARD FEELINGS

CHARLES HUMBOLDT

THE dogs waddle on our summer street, shapeless on short legs like tenement tubs. At the master's call their plumed fountains sprout over their rears. But don't you stoop to pet them; their immy eyes grow stiff with super-ego and their yells sink into your trusting flesh. One day two of these dwarfish monsters met at the ends of their leashes and began their ritual tooth-baring. Smartly, one's owner said to the other's: "And people want to know how wars are started!"

Recently a friend was strolling with her own dog. A man about 5'6" in overalls, shook his head and told her: "You know, they call him man's best friend, but if you were sick in bed and couldn't move, I bet he wouldn't go out in the kitchen and get you a drink of water."

I remember meeting a poor man in Algiers, an Arab workman. We sat on a low stone wall and watched a poodle prancing along like a gigolo in a palm-beach suit. "See that dog," my friend said. "Sickness comes from such animals. The women kiss them. They kiss the women. The women kiss men. The men," (pointing down), "the men rot away and perish. That's what happens when dogs are treated better than men. Look how fine that dog is combed. Look at his pretty strap, the good leather. Did that mutt defend what they called my country in 1914? Did he march in the rain and sleep in the snow? Did the flies eat him up in the summer desert? Did he ever work on the docks and the railroad roads for a wife and five children? This I do, and look at me."

He has no shoes, his pants are not pants but patches of patches. "Yes," he says, "maybe I'd make more if I pushed a pen for two hours in the morning and two in the afternoon and fell back on a couch like this," and he flops around like a fish on the dock, "but they took care not to teach me to write." When we part he shakes my hand and kisses his own.

* * *

A while ago the Algerian *colons* shouted, "De Gaulle to the microphone!" That call should have made him shudder. Such cries are only a few years away from "—au bourreau!" To the executioner.

The morning I heard of the landing in Lebanon an incongruous German phrase began to gnaw at me. It was the first line of Mignon's song in *Wilhelm Meister*: "*Kennst du das Land, wo die Zitronen blühn. . .*" Do you know the land where the lemon blooms? I kept leafing through my mind, looking for the experience that would relate those sorrowful words to what I had listened to on the radio: my hitchhiking days as a kid . . . the time the bulls threw fifty of us off a freight in the New Mexico desert . . . the oranges rotting in the groves near Riverside in '31 . . . the North African oranges big as grapefruits that the officers tried to keep us from eating by telling us the Arabs had injected them with poison . . . the German prisoner in the quarry outside Oran . . . I can't recall his face, or how he came to hand me the slip of paper through the wire fence . . . but the words on it I do remember:

Do you know the land
Where the sun laughs
Where they turn men into idiots
Where one forgets
All culture and all virtue?
Wehrmacht——
Murderer of my youth!

That was fifteen years ago, and now they are trying to make us walk down the road to the quarry, the ones who talk freedom and mean oil, for whom green is not the color of trees but of dollar bills, who provoke desires and swipe the wherewithal, the Cadillac chiselers, austerity experts with gold-bordered swindle sheets, the moralists spitting messages of love me or else, striped-pants blackmailers, housebreakers of whole countries boasting of yesterday's swag and tomorrow's mass murder, the Great Engineer of Hunger, the Happy Hooligan of the Bomb, the brilliant Brinksman fishing in nitro-glycerin, the inventor of the non-consecutive sentence and absolute *non sequitur*, the horselovers and maneaters, the six inch Colossi with one foot planted on the Stars and Stripes and the other on the national debt, the smooth-running White Citizens who scatter matches but would never set fires, the coxwains of culture heading science toward a rock covered with the lime of stoolpigeons, the college Brass for whom knowledge is close order drill and the arts a timely shipment of white cargo, specialists in the treatment of discontent prescribing jockstraps for the ailing mind, the gentlemen dingoes who slobber at the bell of war and go mad in the midday sun of peace, the dollar-a-year and thousand-a-day lovers of their country and the envy and horror of the world. And when will we stop letting them string us along and hold us up and drag us down and use us worse than their cars and rugs,

nad when will we say *no more*, we are sick of you bloodsuckers, and *yes*, we will turn around and walk the other way toward our millions of brothers and ask them to forgive us for taking so long to learn?

* * *

Countless playwrights, actors, and even critics have complained the economic and other, derivative, absurdities of the contemporary theatre: the rental situation which makes it mandatory for a Broadway production to be a hit within three days to a week of its opening if it is to survive; the average income of performers which is twice that of a tubercular tribesman on a reservation dying of the American Indian way of life; the prices which allow those who come late and leave early to hear every sigh on the stage above the clatter of their seats and the rustle of their playbills, while serious, usually poorer spectators struggle to find out what the characters are numbling down below; the farcical practice of first-night reviewing which gives the critic the power of king-maker-or-breaker, and forces him, sometimes against his will, to fit the old saw: "Often in error, never in doubt." I'll not go on.

Off-Broadway has, of course, helped out some (if the prices are high there too now, at least one can't sit too far away from the boards); and the New York Shakespeare Festival, prove once again that supply can create demand. But what's still required is repertory theatre on a grand scale, and for that one needs federal funds. Maybe the best way to have a people's theatre is to get people to pay for it directly; but should a working producer like Joseph Papp have to spend his time panhandling while the town's stepfathers and the usual rich act as though good theatre were *too* good for the lesser citizens? In addition, trade union sponsorship of permanent companies, freer as these might be from government snoopers and repression, could make a big difference not only in the quality of the productions but also in the thoughts that enter the contemporary playwright's head. It would encourage writers to pay more attention to the immediate and concrete situations of people's lives, and to the social structure that conditions "man's fate." A remark of Shaw's is pertinent here: "The general preference of dramatists for subjects in which the conflict is between man and his apparently inevitable and eternal rather than his political and temporal circumstances is due in the vast majority of cases to the dramatist's political ignorance (not to mention that of his audience), and in a few to the comprehensiveness of his philosophy." Working for a theatre whose audiences were in the main members of the working class would give the writer pause before he flattered himself that he had transcended the "transitory" problems which he had, in fact, merely by-passed.

The cultivation of the audience is also at stake. Most people w

to the theatre at all see just enough plays a year to bolster their lack of discrimination. They will see false parallels and stereotypes where they do not exist and miss them when they are plain as day; or they will make demands of one genus of play, say an intellectual or tragi-comedy, which can legitimately be made only of another—tragedy. In addition it rarely occurs to them that it is hopeless to try to assimilate a play from one performance. Here, again, Shaw is the voice of common sense: even when the author raises no hostility or misunderstanding by breaking new ground, as Beethoven did, yet it is not in the nature of things possible for a person to take in a play fully until he is in complete possession of its themes: or, to put it in another way, until he knows the end of it. . . .”* Further, the playwright must wrestle like Jacob with the angel for the slippery attention of the public, the majority of whom listen to his lines as the occasional concertgoer does to a quartet, passing in and out of hearing almost without being conscious of the transitions. In view of theatrical economics, it is rare for a playgoer to fill in what he has missed hearing with a second trip to the play, but a paperback or even mimeographed version to be sold at the performance might help in justice to a new playwright who is just acquiring an audience or is in peril of alienating one. For contemporary theatre has a good deal of the *corrida* about it; the mood of the spectators is as dangerous as the charging of the bull.

* * *

These notes were made after seeing two plays about which friends have expressed all sorts of opinions: Friedrich Dürrenmatt’s “The Visit” (the real title is “The Visit of the Old Lady”), and the American Ettore Sottsass’s “Sign of Winter.”

The plot of Dürrenmatt’s tragi-comedy concerns the return of an old woman, Claire Zachanassian, to the town of her birth in Central Europe. She had been forced to leave Gullen forty-five years before, pregnant and friendless, spurned by the father of her child who bribed two witnesses to testify that they had slept with her. Now she has come back, a multi-millionairess by previous marriage to an oil magnate (whence her name), bringing in her train a black panther, two Chicago gangsters, a judge who decided against her so many years ago and who is now her butler, three new husbands (the New York production has reduced these to one fiancé), and the two witnesses whom she had hunted to the ends of the earth to blind and castrate them.

Claire is greeted by the people of Gullen as though she were the most beautiful creature on earth, though various parts of her body have

* This and the preceding quoted passage are from *Shaw on Theatre*, edited by E. J. West. London and Wang. \$3.95. This book will be reviewed shortly.

required artificial replacement due to transport mishaps. (Miss Fontana has spared herself these unflattering details.) The town is on its legs. For some years its industries have been shut down, though it is yet known that she bought the factories in order to close them. The only hope of the inhabitants is that Claire will use her inexhaustible funds to restore to their former prosperity the place and the neighborhood among whom she had spent her happy childhood. She agrees—on condition: that the townspeople kill the man who betrayed her and who is now a well-liked grocer, in line to be their next mayor. From here we watch the shopkeepers, housewives, professionals and petty officials of this little bourgeois community pass through every stage from no anger at the terms of the old woman's bargain to justification and commission of the crime that is to free them from want.

The general impression seems to be that Dürrenmatt's is a play with a thesis, conveying the message that all men are corruptible, or, to borrow a phrase, that you can buy all of the people all of the time. There are folks who believe that, and who like the play because they are sure that is what it says. On the other hand, there are many who do not share that belief and dislike the play for the same reason. Their feelings range from disappointment at the lack of even one character who resists temptation, to anger at being "had," that is, seduced by dramatic guile almost to the point of accepting a hopeless view of the human race.

I think that both groups are mistaken in their interpretation, much as I may sympathize with the proponents of a brighter side to man's potential. The fact that men are corruptible is obvious—any fool knows that; but one needn't conclude that they are all, always and absolutely so. It is true that the playwright, in an interview printed in the *New York Times*, asserted that Communists do not understand that perfect justice is impossible, and that man is always torn between many interests. Neither the latter part of this statement is pretty close to being a truism. (I would take exception to Dürrenmatt's speaking for the Communists. It seems to me that while Communists refrain from making any ultimate pronouncements, they are convinced that perfect justice, whether attainable or not, is certainly damned hard to achieve.) Yet whatever Dürrenmatt believes privately is irrelevant, since his play was not written to affirm original sin or any other generalization about human nature, but to show how men can be, and are, bought right here and now. One might call it limited in its vision because, strictly faithful to the "world" of capitalist society as is, it does not suggest social change. There is certainly no character capable of helping bring it about; almost all are equipped to hinder it. A serious writer should, however, be so honored for what he does reveal than carped at for what he does

ach. And Dürrenmatt is certainly in the large tradition of critical realism, as one can tell in a moment by comparing "The Visit" with the static pseudo-dramatic symbolism of "Waiting for Godot" and other avant-garde satire.

Perhaps some of the disillusion experienced by progressives at the play comes from their viewing it as though it were an avant-garde critique of the vanity of human ethics. But though its figures are contemporary-typical, the author did not aim to create a microcosm of the whole truth, either for all time or today, to establish a philosophy or project a *weltanschauung*. For us, too, the play's first context must be the play itself; and we have to judge it in terms of the relationships developed therein. This alone permits us fairly to evaluate its fine perceptions and, paradoxically, its wit. Why paradoxically? The "fault" is in the play itself, in its doublesidedness, tragic from the standpoint of the hero, comic in the quality of passive self-deception practiced by his jury, and tragic again as we must, we carry the implications of that indulgent deceit beyond the play into the society from which it sprang. (The author, in the interview mentioned above, describes it as a tragedy with comic characters; and allowing for the evident differences in the humor, isn't there some semblance to "Monsieur Verdoux"?).

If "The Visit" is not a symbolic or avant-garde sortie, neither is it psychological drama in the accepted sense. It *does* try to make us understand the mental dynamics of corruption in such a manner that we "sympathize" with its participant-victims and beneficiaries. At the same time, we are shown the material forces—Property, Money, on the one hand, Need on the other—in whose honor these honest citizens perform their grotesque dance. We are left in no doubt as to what determines their psychology" at least.

When Claire first makes her outrageous offer, the mayor asks her to remember that she is in Gullen, a town with humanist traditions; Goethe slept there; Brahms composed a quartet. . . . Soon thereafter he has bought himself a new typewriter and informed Claire's old lover that he, a criminal, will never be mayor as he had hoped. As he tells Schill (the name in the original is Ill) of the plan for a new town hall, the latter cries out, "You have condemned me already." This theme of prosperity as doom, of the expectation of plenty as the sound of death, is pursued to the end, on various levels of mood from humor to horror, and on occasion with a mixture of both. When the terror-stricken Schill, sensing what is in store for him from the credit buying of his customers, appeals to the pastor for help, this good man counsels him not to fear man, only God, not the death of the body, but of the soul. Our fear lies in our hearts, in our sins. But, the distracted Schill tells him, the neigh-

bors have bought a new washing-machine! The incongruity might be hilarious, but at that moment a new bell rings in the churchtower:

Schill: You, too, reverend!

Pastor: Run away, we are weak, Christians and heathens, the bell betrayal rings. Do not lead us into temptation!

But Anton Schill cannot run away, even though his innocent family has also gone on a buying spree—or perhaps partly because they have. When he goes to the station, half of his friends in town accompany him. They do not threaten him really, but he becomes deadly ill on the platform and the train leaves without him. It isn't just that he knows Claire will find him anywhere, as she did the two eunuchs. It's that the society of which Güllen is a part, an average man lives, as it were on the slopes of Vesuvius. If he is lucky, he cultivates his friends and flourishes among them; if unlucky, he cannot leave without tearing up his roots and putting his livelihood in hazard. Always there is the threat of a smoking flood which he will try to flee only when it bears down upon his house. Schill is frozen with fright, and a perverse form of loyalty. He hears his friends thinking: if he is to die anyway, we might as well get the credit. They are still not screwed up to the point of facing how it will happen. "No one want to kill me," he says, "everyone wants someone to, so someone will."

But it turns out that all of them will. That's what sticks in the craw. But why should it, anymore than the virtually unanimous Fall of the righteous citizens of Hadleyburg? If Mark Twain's respectables do not strangle a man, this isn't due to his brighter opinion of the scene compared to temporary with him, but to his writing at an earlier period of monopoly capitalism. He was then in the midst of the Spanish-American war (his story appeared in 1899). Two World Wars, fascism, and now the threat of total annihilation, provoked by imperialism, are in the writer's consciousness today. And on his conscience, too. For so long as any man does not reveal, speak out, and oppose, at some risk, what he cannot help knowing, he may well ask himself: "Who knows whether I am not a townsman of Güllen?"

It is no use protesting that one would *never* do what they did. The playwright does not say you will, inevitably. But he does urge you to keep your fingers crossed. He shows you how people are tempted and driven, and what drives them: economic necessity. He discloses the source of the corrupting power today: monopoly capital. He warns men not to if they start by justifying their evasions or their forgetfulness, they will end by making crime and justice one. This is not a thesis planted by the author, but it can be gathered as it grows to full height in his play.

it revolts us we had better pluck it anyway. As Dürrenmatt says: "Art is made for men, not adolescents."

Isn't all this contradictory to our contention that it is rash to attach too much broader significance to a play whose characters have little need of outside help? Isn't it the worst kind of extrapolation to drag in monopoly capital, fascism, war and what else when the moral of the play is plain without such intruders? Has a play no boundaries, no scope, no step beyond which is to violate its integrity?

Actually, Dürrenmatt himself gives us considerable leeway by being quite up-to-date and even topical. When the police chief wants to calm Schill, he sports new yellow shoes, a fresh gold tooth, and a fine radio. He reassures him by pointing out that Claire's proposition cannot be taken seriously. She might offer a thousand marks or two to have him taken for a ride—but a billion? Ridiculous. Then there is even something about a telegram of congratulations from our Ike. . . . (This was omitted in New York.) Finally, there is the saturnalia of reporters and photographers at Schill's murder.

That's too easy, though. One must also ask: when does a work of art become a serious matter? I would say, when it passes from being what the artist has in mind to becoming what the beholder does with it. This doesn't permit us to bring to a work anything we please from our private storehouse of conclusions and expectations and to tell the writer what he means; but it does make it legitimate—however delicate the venture—to carry a play beyond its stated meaning, yes, even if the writer, shrewdly or in all honesty, disclaims any such intention. While a play is primarily a portrayal of experience and may project a set of values, it has still another dimension: that given it by its wordly context, the horizon of the spectator. Why is the latter so important? Because it is absolutely pertinent to its truth, that is, to its capacity to represent some typical situation, individuals, or class of our time.

Friedrich Dürrenmatt is a Swiss, the inhabitant of a country whose democratic institutions have become of interest to the world," as one of his characters puts it. In other words, it is a bourgeois democracy with enough history of struggle against foreign oppressors to encourage in its burghers the illusion that this tradition is something they can depend upon, like money in the bank. But the real money is brought in by tourists and by international capital, which has made of this beautiful land a clearing house, that is, an impeccable house of assignation for clandestine honeymoons. Sometimes its businessmen must wonder whether—as the teacher in the play fears—the Old Lady will come for them, too.

They might well have wondered years before this play was written,

for there across the northern border sprawled the glorious and fat Third Reich of Hitler, its working class betrayed and its ordinary people either condemned to terror or seduced by promises of prosperity so that they did not see what they could not wish to know. Then years later, to the west, one could hear the well-fed termites ticking in the beams of the Fourth Republic. While thousands of miles away, some millions of people learned the fine art of adjustment to everything: Truman, the A-Bomb, Korea, Eisenhower, Dulles, the H-Bomb—and now Lebanon. Of course not everyone swallows the bait, but then we never said Dürrenmatt was a revolutionary artist. Surely, though, a playwright has sufficiently fulfilled the demands of the typical if he touches upon so vast a phenomenon as the crumbling of bourgeois democracy and delineates some of the figures and the way of surrender to fascism. If we do not like his lesson, we can ask for more but not cry for less. After all, he did not compose the silence of multitudes before the German ovens, the tortures in Algeria, the lynchings here at home.

In Dürrenmatt's action, the area of unawareness predominates over that of consciousness. That is certainly a limitation, even if he should make the best of it, as I think he does. The clearest-headed of his characters is Claire with her intelligent malice. But her demonic rage is so out of her control that it actually imprisons her. So strong intellectually, she has a curiously weak heart which drives her on yet almost deprives her of her revenge. From this comes the equivocal, nostalgic episode with Schill in the wood, a scene which seems unsuccessful because the writer is trying to "round out" something in the way of character when it is already too late for that.

The people of Gullen are not evil, though they are criminals. They are led to do what they did not intend, because their initial crime was to have never intended anything. They were simply not trained to resist.

Neither was Schill. He is the perfect un-heroic hero, a man who is not punished for the crime he once committed but killed by friends in need for whom that crime is a happy pretext. It takes him a good while to realize what he did so many years ago and to admit that he, too, is involved in his own murder, since he was to Claire what the town now is to him. We do not speak of justice, only of retribution. For in this society, such justice is meted out that the least guilty are the most punished and the great criminals not at all.

Which brings me to the demand of friends for some positive character to relieve their gloom. I find it hard to take this longing seriously. If they are not sufficiently buoyed up by the intellectual stimulation of the un-sentimental drama, then nothing can console them. That is, nothing but some false jack-in-the-box who will transport them with a vision of

future toward which *he* at least will not lead them.

No, you cannot bring back Dr. Stockmann, if ever he was effective, that with all the steam he let out and his railings against the stupid people who "are in an overwhelming majority all the world over." As for his talk about the strongest man in the world being "he who stands most alone," well, Dürrenmatt's observation is that today Anton Schill, the grocer, is standing most alone. That is why Ibsen's hero has been replaced, on the bourgeois stage, by the high school teacher who, knowing what is going to happen, resolves to speak out—and is silenced by Schill himself as well as by the enraged townspeople. When it finally occurs to him that the object of his concern is resigned to his fate, he makes a ceremonial speech about justice which everyone interprets in his own fashion, and which therefore becomes a prosecutor's summation sending Schill to his death amid righteous cheers. What else would the theatre-goers have him do? Get himself killed, while they give up nothing but the price of their theatre tickets?

Oh, isn't this the worst kind of cynicism? Are there no decent people in the world and in every class of society? Of course there are; but which among them are going to stop the Old Lady from turning the world into a brothel after she sweeps out of Gullen with husbands, gangsters, eunuchs butler, and coffin? It's my impression that they will come—as they have already in other parts—of a class which appears hardly, if at all, during this theatrical "Visit." Those of the audience who expected a socialist play are surely right to be disappointed. But they cannot ask bourgeois characters to assume roles which history has not allotted to them. Why not relax and enjoy seeing how things look to a man who, like Rameau's Nephew, has his eyes wide open on the present, though not to the future?

* * *

I've used up my space, so that I'll have to defer writing something about Ettore Rella's very different type of play until next time.

Right Face

In Typo Veritas

Secretary of State Dulles is expected to fly to London for a meeting of the Council of the Baghdad Pact nations. His purpose is understood to be twofold:

1. To try to hold together the pact despite the Iraq revolution. . . .
—Dana Adams Schmidt in the *New York Times*.

Sheer Invention

Latin-American diplomats were as shocked by the announcement of troop movements as by the reports of the Caracas incidents. The idea of marine intervention in the affairs of Latin America was one of the favorite devices of anti-United States elements, they said.—*The New York Times*.

Friendship, Friendship

A 56-year old Norwegian postal official reported that he was beaten up by a dozen United States sailors in Oslo's Royal Park last night. The United States carrier Intrepid and cruiser Macon are here on a goodwill visit.—*The New York Times*.

Just a Perfect Blendship

The Lebanese press reported today that the official tobacco monopoly was distressed by a sudden increase in the sale of smuggled United States cigarettes.

It said that since the arrival of the United States Marines the price of contraband cigarettes had fallen from the equivalent of 45 cents a package to 32 cents and that the sale of legitimate tax-paid cigarettes at 48 cents a pack has fallen off badly.—*The New York Times*.

Success Story

A Polaris test vehicle burst apart with a flash of fire shortly after take-off today. But the Navy announced that the rocket had behaved as expected.—The *New York Times*.

Neurotic

Secretary of State Dulles has a theory about Nikita Khrushchev that being put to the test this week-end.

This is that Khrushchev is a narrow, self-indulgent, emotional man who is inclined to get trigger-happy whenever any Western forces come close to the Soviet border.—James Reston in the *New York Times*.

Fighting Words, Sub

Representatives Prince H. Preston of George and L. Mendel Rivers of South Carolina . . . made no secret of their outrage that the pavilion would be telling the world that segregation was a problem the United States must solve.—The *New York Times*.

Die That On

IKE WAS RIGHT!

The Recession *Has Recessed*.

Mr. Eisenhower, our snap-brim is off to you. You called it on the loose. The economic tide has turned, and our business is booming. Just this past week, more ties were sold in the nine Scot stores than any week since Christmas. Right here and now we offer you, Mr. President, our policy for continued prosperity. We're matching our mood of optimism with a selection of Scot Ties that's truly unusual. And we're calling on the men of America to arise! Shrug off the weary worries of the past, and face the future with confidence! Face the world in a Spring-bright Scot tie!—Ad in the *New York Times*.

SOVIET WRITERS APPEAL FOR PEACE

APPEAL

WRITERS OF ALL LANDS AND PEOPLES!

In this grim and menacing hour when the United States and British aggression in the Lebanon and Jordan has brought mankind to the verge of a terrible disaster, we Soviet writers appeal to all writers the world over.

War is knocking at the door of every home. A handful of frenzied millionaires possessing power and weapons have put the remaining two-and-a-half thousand million human beings in the world face to face with the threat of the most appalling, most devastating war mankind has ever heretofore known. Lying talk about a local war can deceive no one. Everybody knows that the first step crashingly destructively through peace will be followed by other steps, and the conflagration now starting in the Arab East will spread over the whole globe.

There is an ominous regularity in the way every big war on our planet starts with the massive use of those means of destruction which closed the previous war.

The end of the First World War saw real fighting aircraft, and the first clanking forerunners of the modern tanks, the so-called "music-boxes," crashing through barbed wire.

A few years passed, and when the bitterest enemy of humanity, German fascism, launched a new war, tens of thousands of high-speed aircraft and thousands of tanks poured over the terrain, leaving blood, ashes and terror behind them.

We well know the means of destruction with which the Second World War closed. Was the atom bomb, from which people are still dying in Japan, merely the feeble forerunner, the "music-box" of new, deadly weapons that will bring destruction to humanity with the start of a third world war?

We, Soviet people, have borne the burden of devastating, sanguinary wars. We have seen the ashes that once were homes, we have seen millions of homeless men and women. We cannot forget those days and nights of blockade in Sevastopol and Leningrad, we remember that half the soil on which Stalingrad stands consists of fragments from shell and bombs. And we appeal to you not to let our buildings on the banks of the Hudson and the Thames become smoking ruins, not to let the sad mounds of mass graves rise on land where flowers bloom.

must not let the great creations of human genius, born of the work and thought of many generations, be burned up in the poisonous, million-degree fire of hydrogen bombs, from which there can be no salvation either for the helpless victims, or for those who bear the guilt of war.

The day of colonialism has passed, the time when it was possible to impose one's will on other peoples by threats and coercion has gone forever. Every people, large or small, is filled with the great spirit of a nation. This spirit calls a people to choose its own path. Therefore, the attempts of the ruling circles in the United States and Britain to prevent the people of Lebanon, Jordan and other Arab countries to decide their own destiny are senseless and hopeless.

Writers of the world! A great responsibility rests upon us today. We cannot confine ourselves to the role of indifferent observers when a crime against humanity is being committed. The words uttered by writers are always heard by governments and peoples.

We appeal to you, let us unite our efforts. Every writer must say his word, must devote his brain and talent to the defense of peace and democracy. There must be nothing more important than this at the present time. We must find words which will express in hundreds of languages the will of the peoples the world over. Let the earth's whole population speak through us. All means must be mobilized—newspapers, radio, television, the cinema, and the living voice of writers—to prevent war. We join our voice to that of the Soviet government which urges an immediate meeting of the heads of the great powers.

We appeal with special hope to you, writers of America. Do everything to stop out war before it takes hold. Whatever may be your political views, to whatever parties and social groups you belong, whatever you think of communism and capitalism, you cannot evade responsibility to your people, to all mankind and the dire consequences of military ventures. It is in your country, the United States, that greedy monopolists and frenzied generals launch them. Raise your voices in protest against the crime which is being committed!

We appeal to you, writers of Britain. Can you agree, in silent resignation, to the launching of a new world war which will destroy your great, ancient culture?

We appeal to you, writers of France, with the same questions, the same pleas, we address to our American and British colleagues.

In these grim days we call on writers of all countries and peoples to take the only stand possible for an honest, courageous writer, to defend the peace. We solemnly declare our full solidarity with the peoples of the Arab countries who are fighting for their national independence. Together with them, together with all freedom-loving peoples we demand the immediate evacuation of American and British forces from the Lebanon and Jordan, an immediate stop to the violation of the independence and freedom of the countries of the Middle East.

Writers of the world, every hour is precious. Peace is in danger; Culture is in danger! The lives of millions are in danger! We await your answer. We believe that common sense and humanity must win.

(Signed) I. Abashidze, V. Azhayev, M. Aibek, M. Aligher, S. Antonov, M. Arazi, M. Auevov, C. Ashirov, M. Bazhan, Y. Baltushis, G. Bashirov,

P. Brovka, E. Bukov, W. Wasilewska, R. Gamzatov, F. Gladkov, P. Glebov, N. Gribachov, M. Gusein, D. Gulia, S. Dadiani, A. Dementiev, A. Dekhterov, V. Druzin, D. Eremin, V. Yermilov, K. Zelinsky, S. Zoryan, Z. Zoryan, V. Ivanov, V. Kazin, M. Karim, V. Katayev, A. Kakhar, B. Kerbaba, V. Kozhevnikov, A. Koptyaeva, A. Korneichuk, V. Kochetov, K. Krapivin, A. Kuleshov, B. Lavrenyov, V. Lacis, G. Leonidze, L. Leonov, M. Lukatskiy, V. Luks, M. Lynkov, M. Markov, S. Marshak, E. Miezelaits, G. Menzies, M. Mirshakar, S. Mukanov, G. Musrepov, G. Mustafin, V. Panfiliy, Z. Paperny, F. Panferov, B. Polevoi, E. Popovkin, A. Prokofyev, S. Rabinovich, R. Rza, A. Sakse, G. Saryan, G. Sevunts, K. Seitliev, I. Semenov, S. Sergeyev-Tsensky, V. Smirnov, S. V. Smirnov, S. S. Smirnov, Sobolev, I. Smuul, V. Soloukhin, A. Sofronov, V. Sytin, R. Suleimanov, A. Surkov, T. Sydykbekov, G. Tabidze, M. Tank, A. Tvardovsky, V. Tkachenko, A. Surkov, T. Tilvytis, A. Timeon, N. Tikhonov, A. Tkombayev, P. Tychkov, S. Ulug-zade, A. Upits, A. Usenbayev, N. Chertova, S. Chikovani, Shaginyan, M. Sholokhov, A. Stein, S. Shchipachyov, I. Ehrenburg, A. Jacobson, A. Yashin.

tor, *Mainstream*:

John Howard Lawson's adverse criticism of the film *Sayonara* (in the July issue) seems to me to need a little consideration.

The film moved me deeply. I understand that the Japanese don't care for it particularly; that it's true as Lawson says, "the picture's misrepresentation of Japanese customs has been strongly retorted." It shows the hero and heroine kissing, and kissing is considered vulgar in Japan. But after all, *Sayonara* was intended for the American, not for the Japanese public. Should one or two objections of authenticity lead us to deny that the film has any progressive theme at all?

What is the basic theme? That something is wrong with interracial marriages; that prejudice creates unnecessary tragedies. Is this so bad?

Mr. Lawson complains that "the ease in which the hero" (Marlon Brando) abandons his prejudices (against marrying a Japanese woman) "gives the significance to his decision." In the picture, his victory over his own prejudice is *not* easy. It is motivated by his attraction to a beautiful woman and his affection and sympathy for his buddy, who is boldly tackling problems arising from practices that originated in racism, and (3) most of all by his suspicion that his (Brando's) engagement to an American girl will result in a happy marriage. However, the script writer did not concentrate on Brando's emotional conflict. If he had done so would have blunted the message. Instead, the chief difficulties are created by outside forces: prejudice, Army regulations, and the emo-

tions of the Japanese girl herself, as a resident of an occupied country. It seemed to me that this film won through to being an outstanding fictional story of a love that triumphs over difficulties, and in doing so kept its progressive theme intact.

I didn't think that the sub-plot, ending in the joint suicide of Red Buttons and his Japanese wife, was a mere repeat of *Madame Butterfly* as Mr. Lawson suggests. Lieutenant Pinkerton did not commit suicide alongside Cho-Cho-San. Red Buttons as Kelly gave a most convincing presentation of how an American might truly love a Japanese, quite the opposite of the philandering Navy man in the classic opera. The tragic ending of Kelly's romance sharply pointed up the evil created by prevailing racist attitudes. Isn't this progressive?

(However, I did not care for the second sub-plot of *Sayonara*, in which Brando's jilted American fiancée decides to marry a Japanese dancer. Improbable to start with, this ending was not brought any closer to credibility by poor casting of the man, lack of build-up, and absence of any stated motive on the part of the girl.)

Finally, Mr. Lawson objects to the "imperialist overtones" of the scene in which "the crowd assembles with signs demanding that the Americans go home." He says this "genuine moment" is dissipated by the announcement (later on in the film) "that these are trouble-makers." Should the script writer, who set out to make one point—that prejudice is wrong—have tried to make the same story take up the problem whether American military personnel should be in Japan at all?

When we have Socialism, or are fairly near to it, there may be a climate in

which such a question can be discussed in fictional media. As of now, I'm willing to settle for the sound anti-prejudice lesson that the writer or writers of *Sayonara* have managed to deliver in the acceptable wrappings of a fine love story.

R. M.

Editor, *Mainstream*:

I herewith wish to renew my subscription to *Mainstream* for one year.

I am enjoying the reading immensely, especially the short stories. The first item I always turn to is "Right Face," which always gets a big chuckle out of my friends and myself. Wish I had more time to gather material for this page, and also to go into more detail with regard to the contents of *Mainstream* as a whole.

Will do so in the near future, however. Until then, carry on and keep up the good work!

Editor, *Mainstream*:

We celebrated spontaneously and appropriately enough on the eve of Independence Day in Griffith Park.

Somebody got the idea for a picnic dinner; a chain reaction set in; one phoned the other and at final tally over 300 of us showed up. This all happened within three days beginning with noon on Monday, when the glad tidings came to us over the radio. The dinner away

we gathered around the campfire, program, we just sang.

In the midst of this jubilee leader and minister entered the singing circle. We all arose for him, but he waved us down. He held aloft a large board tacked full of telegrams from all over the United States and a cable from England. We were commended for our courage and fight-fulness. The senders wished us well in position with lines from great literature and from a Negro spiritual that admonished us to always walk together children.

The great day comin' for our churches and 34,999 other churches in California had come on Monday June 30, 1954, when the historic decision of the Supreme Court knocked the pins from under the California Chinese Loyalty Oath. We worried far into the night and had struggled for long years against this intrusive piece of legislation. At long last, Freedom of Speech and Religious Conscience had been restored to those of us who worshiped in the First Unitarian Church of Los Angeles.

At going-home time we were singing "Fritchman is our leader. We will not be moved—just like a tree standing by the water——."

Sincerely

DAVID SEIDMAN

Member First Unitarian
Church of Los Angeles
(This is not an official
communication.)

Now Ready

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