Mainstream

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FRICA, COME BACK

RUTH ADLER

1. THE FIRST EVENING

T all began one Easter Saturday while I was sitting at lunch with Soraya, an Egyptian student from Alexandria. My husband and I are ays having visitors dropped on us—"Send them to the Adlers," some- e says, "They've got a spare room." Naturally we wouldn't do it if didn't like it. We find it enriches life, having people to stay. The it began soon after we were married. In those days we had only a pery sofa in the living room for overnight guests; they invariably ped off in the middle of the night.

Our first visitor was a Hunger Marcher from Lancashire, so you can ss how long we've been married. Since then we've put up delegates m all parts of Britain to conferences of all kinds—sometimes from er countries too.

As our sons grew up they caught the habit, of course, and when they covered that each of their divan beds could be split in two, it got so t on Sunday mornings we never knew how many youngsters would be ing breakfast. Now and then we got fed up with it. I would put my t down and say this isn't a hotel, but it was never long before it began over again.

Soraya was a friend of the boys. They had met at a student's get- ether in Paris at the beginning of the vacation, and as she wanted spend a few weeks in England, they sent her to us and continued their ch-hike through Europe. We didn't really mind; we like having young

people about, and this one certainly brightened the old home up. Th boys called her Cleopatra, and the name fitted.

Now this story is not about Soraya; it's about two other people. Bu Soraya comes into it; you'll see.

During the few days she had been with us I learned how enslave the women of Egypt were—to their fathers or brothers before marriag to their husbands afterwards. Seeing the resentment with which sh spoke, I asked her if she belonged to any of the organizations which wer trying to change the situation, but she said no; she thought they wer ineffectual.

At lunch that day she was telling me how her parents' home was ru I forget whether they had two servants or three, but in addition a woma came once a week to do the washing. She worked the whole day, fo which she was given two shillings and sixpence, and her meals.

"Two and six?" I said, "for a day's work?"

She assured me that was quite usual.

"And does she do the same for other families?"

"Of course, every day. Washing is her job."

"So," I said, "five days—or is it six—at two and six a day, tha makes . . ."

"No, Ruth" said Soraya. "*Seven* days at two and six—Sundays also otherwise there'd be no food for her children that day."

I tried to imagine this woman's life, and something boiled up insid me.

"It's time this was changed!" I said angrily. I was angry with Soray which was stupid of me; it wasn't her fault.

Soraya said, "It will only change when the people are educated. The are ignorant, illiterate, and believe everything they're told."

It was at this point in the conversation that the telephone rang.

Celia, an acquaintance of ours in charge of a women's organizatio said urgently:

"Ruth, two African women are arriving in London tonight. I can get them into a hotel and everyone I know seems to have gone off fo the weekend. Can you have them?—they'll be flying home on Tuesday

"Two?" I said doubtfully. "One would be easier. What are they doin here?"

"They were delegates to an International Mothers' Conference i Holland, and since then they've been on a tour—China, the Soviet Unio and Germany."

One of them would have to sleep in the sitting room. "Righto. Sen them along." I was rather excited. We'd never had Africans before.

When Dick came home his only comment was, "I hope they're young nd pretty."

Soraya helped me to tidy the spare room and make up the two beds. Ve waited expectantly the whole evening; and at midnight, disappointed, gave them up and prepared for bed. Then the bell rang and Dick went own in his dressing-gown to open the door.

"I wish people would come at a reasonable time," I grumbled. I was ired. Dick came staggering upstairs, a heavy suitcase in each hand, the vomen following. "This is Rosa," he announced, "and this is Marion"; e never bothers with surnames. We all shook hands, and at once I stop-ed minding about how late it was.

Rosa was from Bloemfontein, about sixty I thought at the time, and nearly black as it's possible to be. She was short, full-bosomed, with a rong, patient face and close-cropped, crinkly grey hair.

Marion was from Johannesburg. She looked like a young woman, and could hardly believe it when she told me later she was fifty. She was ller and slimmer than Rosa, her skin was a warm brown, and her hair as close-cropped, crinkly and black.

We got busy making tea and sandwiches, but Rosa wanted only hot ater.

Marion said; "Rosa must go straight to bed. She has a bad heart and tired from the journey." So I took Rosa to the spare room. It gave me special sort of pleasure to look after her, thinking how she must all er life have waited on white people.

"Why hot water?" I asked her.

"In China they tell me, when my heart is bad, drink hot water. One, vo, three glasses. It helped me. Later, two glasses. Now, one only." osa's voice was gentle and very soft—her t's sounded like d's.

When she was settled for the night I hurried back to the kitchen, ntalized by the snatches of talk and laughter I could hear. Marion was escribing, in her rich, warm voice, how they left South Africa. We l sat round the table drinking tea and listening to Marion.

". . . you see, my dear, we were elected delegates by the women's ovement to go to this Mothers' conference. We wanted to go, for all e mothers in South Africa we wanted to go, to see what could be done r our children. Our European friends made collections for our tickets, r our clothing—suits, warm clothes, handbags even, every detail The ght before we took the plane, we were taken to a hotel near the airport.

But Africans can't stay in hotels, only work in them! We were given e basement, and that was a favor. My dear, I cried when I saw it—

filthy, *feelthy,* my dear," Marion said painfully, "and bad-smelling. To think that in our own country we have to sleep in such a place, and upstairs there is luxury, for white people only. . . ."

"At the airport the next morning, how everybody stared at us—Kaffirs travelling by air! Perhaps it never happened before. There were questions to answer, forms to fill in—at last they allowed us into the plane. My knees were shaking like this . . ." She showed us how her knees shook. "I said to my knees: Be stiff, be brave!—and we went in. When we sat down the Europeans sat like this . . ." She showed how they turned away their faces and turned up their noses. "But the captain came along and said: Here there is no segregation, here everyone is equal. Make yourselves comfortable and enjoy the trip. And he shook hands with us.

"So then we also make like this . . ." She turned up her nose with a look of ineffable scorn. It was very funny. When we laughed, she laughed too, with great enjoyment, crinkling her little nose and showing two rows of small milky teeth and pink gums. It was a pleasant sight.

"The plane went rrr . . ." She imitated with tongue and throat the sound of the plane moving along the runway. "Then up, up, up like this. . . ."And she produced the change in the engine's roar. "Now, I said to Rosa, now we are really going, now we are free."

"And what about your tour?" asked Dick. "It must have been a great experience for you?"

"Terrific, my dear," she said. She rolled her r's; it was terrific, terrific. "I am a new person. I am not the same Marion who went away from South Africa. I have seen China and the Soviet Union and Mongolia. The people there used to be like slaves, live like animals, as in my country. But the day came when those people rose and freed themslves, and it shall come in South Africa also. It shall automatically come," she said with deep conviction.

"How did you come into the movement, Marion?" I asked.

"I was born by the Defiance Campaign, several years ago. You know that in 1952 the African National Congress, the South African Indian Congress and the Colored People's Organizations decided to organize defiance against the Apartheid Laws—against segregation. We have always been segregated but the new laws make things much worse for us. We are told where to live, where to work, not only sit in separate carriages but even enter the station by a special entrance. It is as if we were animals. And the Pass Laws were made stricter for the men, and now they want to make women carry passes also. Our lives were made heavier than ever before by the Apartheid Laws.

"In June 1952 African lawyers took a document to the magistrate saying that Apartheid would be defied. Many people were sent to jail with sentences from two weeks to two months in the beginning, but in January 1953 we were told that defiance would get three years or £300 fine, with lashes.

"My child, at that time aged fifteen, was very ill. After an appendix operation she was sent home but at once started to suffer with her bladder. She could not control herself at all. I thought in my mind, my beautiful daughter, whom I brought up with so much trouble, what have they done to you? I sent for an ambulance—do you know when it came? —it is still coming. I had to take a taxi. In the hospital they said her bladder had been torn during the appendix operation, and they kept her in.

"All this time the defiance campaign was going on. I was thinking about it all the time. One night I said to my mother; Mother, I would like to go to defy. My mother said; How can you go? Your child might die while you are in prison. I said: Mother, will you come with me outside the house? It was night, and I showed her all the lights on our location. I said: Mother, which is better, to stay with my child, or to help all these people so they do not live like dogs but like people? She said: You are right. It is better to leave your child and help all the people.

"I organized five women to defy. One of them had seven children. She said: If my husband will not go to defy I will leave the children with him and I will go. Another had a baby of five months. She said: I will leave the baby with my husband and come with you.

"When we all met they said to me: How can you leave your child when she is so ill? I said: All *right*. We will go to the hospital and see what she says. In the hospital we all gathered round her bed. She was being fed by tubes, and tubes took away the water. I said: How are you, my child? She said: I am ill, mother. I said: My child, I think I must go to defy the unjust laws. It might mean prison for three years. What do you say?

"She tried to sit up but could not. She supported herself on one arm and raised the other, put up her thumb in the African salute, like this, and said: Mayibuye Afrika —Africa, come back during our lifetime — it is the slogan of the African national movement. None of us could speak. Tears were running round our cheeks. I was so moved, so inspired that my child had so much courage.

"We all went together to the Post Office. One part was for Europeans, one for us. We were shaking with fear, and the others were looking

at me to run. If I ran, they would all run. I walked into the white part of the Post Office, took a telegram and started to write.

"The man said: You are in the wrong department. I said: No, I am not in the wrong department. It is my country, I can go where I like. I wrote the telegram to Dr. Malan:

WILL YOU PLEASE REMOVE THE UNJUST LAWS. IF NOT, REMEMBER WHAT HAPPENED TO HITLER IN GERMANY AND TO MUSSOLINI IN ITALY."

We burst out laughing, and again Marion joined in, her face swimming with laughter.

"My friend, the one with the small baby, she also came into the white part and asked for a stamp. The man said: you are in the wrong department, get out! She said: I only want to buy a penny stamp—not a black stamp, a white stamp! The other three were just walking about in the Post Office, and when the man ordered them out, they said: In our own country we walk where we like. So he phoned for the police.

"When the police came, a big, *beeg* crowd, black and white, gathered outside. The police caught hold of me roughly and pushed me outside. The people said to me: What have you done, Annie? Did you steal? (They call a black woman Annie no matter what her name is.) I said No, I did not steal. I came to defy. And many of the people shouted AFRIKA! AFRIKA!

"We were all taken to the police station and put in a cell with a cement floor. After a while we started shouting: We are hungry! They brought us rotten porridge. We were so hungry we started to eat but could not. It was horrid—slimy, my dear—and it smelt bad." We could see the bad smell by Marion's expression.

"The mother of the seven children said: Let us pray. She said: God we are going to sleep on a cement floor not because we have no beds at home, but because we are opposed to the bad laws in our country.

"Next day we came into court. The magistrate asked me what was in the telegram I wanted to send. When I told him—remember what happened to Mussolini and so on—he went red, *red* in the face. I thought he would burst. He said: Who the hell do you think you are? I said: I am an African woman, and I want to go where I like in my own country.

"Well, the end of it was that we were sent home on our own recog recognizances." She stumbled over the long word. "As we went, we all shouted: Africa, come back during our lifetime Five different times we were called to the court. It was a test case. But our lawyers won. After the fifth time we were set free with no punishment."

"And what happened to the Apartheid Laws?"

"They are still going on," said Marion. "But defiance did good in this way, that Africans are now bolder, more united and more calm, not so much afraid of the European. I will tell you of one small thing that could not have happened before the campaign. One morning I was late for work and went off without breakfast. I just ran into a shop to buy an apple. The white man said to me: What do you want, Annie? I said: I want an apple, Jim. He shouted: How dare you call me Jim? I said: How dare you call me Annie?

"Another white man who was sitting in the shop said I was right. Since then this shopkeeper is very nice to me. When I come in he says; How are you, my darling? I say: I'm very well, sweetheart!"

It was half past two before we could tear ourselves away from Marion and go to bed. Soraya had been silent the whole time. She just sat drinking everything in with her big eyes. At the door of her room I said: "Soraya, this woman is uneducated, like the women you were speaking of in your country."

She said quietly, "Yes, I understand."

I couldn't sleep for a long time, thinking of all that Marion had told us, and of her dark face lit with sudden laughter, and the way she had looked when she said, "Africa, come back during our lifetime!"—as if it were a dream, a command, a challenge and a prayer, all at once.

2. "I AM ALIVE, ALIVE!"

When we got up the next morning we found Rosa already bathed and dressed. In the days which followed there was this mystery, that although Rosa moved so slowly she was always ready before anyone else.

When I went into the sitting room to call Marion for breakfast, she was sitting at the table in her dressing gown, writing a letter. She looked up with such an expression of grief that I went to her in concern.

"What is it, Marion?"

"I am writing to my European friend in Johannesburg. I am asking her why is it, when she could have taken the broad and easy road of a comfortable life, that she has chosen instead this narrow, bitter and dangerous path of helping my people?"

I put my arm round her shoulders, and two big tears rolled down her cheeks. It dawned on me then that Marion was beautiful, with her eyes like black flowers, her charming child's nose and her thick and

tender mouth.

She said, "Ruth, I used to hate white people, but after my journey I am changed. I see that wherever we have gone white people have welcomed us like human beings."

"Marion dear, don't make the mistake of thinking every white person in England would welcome you. Many would not. But we are Socialists, and we believe all human beings should be treated in the same way."

"But when we travel in trains or buses here we can sit next to white people. Is everybody in England a Socialist?"

We sat long over breakfast, while Marion talked to us about her family; about her mother, whose hands were so crippled with rheumatism that she could not do anything with them. She would lift a saucepan between her wrists; it was dangerous.

"My mother is like gold to me," said Marion. "Her rheumatism is through having her hands always in water. She used to do washing and took in extra washing at night to pay for my education." This education had lasted four years. Now her mother could do nothing but watch the children. Every day she gathered together the little ones from round about, and took them into a nearby field, and watched over them while they played.

Marion's husband had died a few years before. Apart from the daughter she had spoken of the night before, she had two boys, aged eleven and nine, and a girl of five.

Rosa said very little; partly because her English was halting, partly as I realized gradually, because of a natural reserve. Marion wanted to recall a name or a date she turned to Rosa, and Rosa always remembered.

Dick and I had promised Soraya a day in the country. Rosa had to rest and Marion had to write her report on the Mothers' Conference so we left them with a good conscience. We enjoyed our few quiet hours by a river, but soon after tea found ourselves hurrying home, eager to see our guests again.

That evening we asked Marion to tell us about her travels. It was easy to start her talking; speech flowed from her.

"Where shall I begin?"

"Tell us about China."

"To tell you about China I must start with South Africa."

"Go ahead!"

"You see, my dear, while I was still in South Africa people came back from China and told us a new world was being built there. I wondered, what does it mean, a new world? I thought there would

be a new world only when the trumpet would sound, when the sun would grow dim, the stars fall upon the earth, and Jesus Christ in all his glory came riding in a chariot.

"When I came to China I saw there a new world on earth. I saw the Chinese people rebuilding their lives, and this they were able to do because they had chased away the rich people, chased away Chiang Kai-shek. We went to church in Peking, a Christian church, and the priest gave us English Bibles, and asked us to open at . . . what place was it, Rosa?"

"St. Matthew, Chapter Six."

"That's *right.* One of the verses read: Our Father, who art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kindom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Then the preacher said: Which is the will of God? The will of God is to see that everybody on earth lives happily. In our country we have new leaders now, and because of this new leadership the landless have land, the hungry have food, and the people have their own Government. The Government belongs to the people and the people belong to the Government. Children who never saw school, today they are mothers and fathers, and they are being given education. This is the will of God. I wish," said Marion, "that the preachers in South Africa spoke like this!"

"In China I saw the older generation with humps on their backs from dragging carts like oxen. I saw that because there is not enough transport they still sometimes drag carts, but I thought in my mind, it is not so bad because now they are doing it for themselves, not for the rich. And I saw that the younger generation will not have humps. They are getting motor cars and lorries, and other machineries.

"I thought, how wonderful it will be when South Africa is free and we can build there a beautiful life for all races—including the white! Then we will send things to China, and they will send things to us—including their beautiful embroideries! Now that I have seen what they are doing in China, I shall not rest until we have done the same in South Africa, whatever it will cost us."

She was sitting very straight, as she always sat, holding her small head like a queen, and, quivering a little with the force of her feelings, she added:

"I shall never be afraid again. Even death could not hurt me now."

She went on to tell us about their visit to Germany. One of the first places they were shown was Buchenwald, the former concentration camp, on the anniversary of its liberation.

"It was a cold day, rainy and very cold. Fires had been lit round the place. Thirty thousand people were present. There were masses of wreaths.

"We did not know what a concentration camp was. Now we know. We were shown how people were tortured by the Nazis. We were shown a table—and I touched this table with my hand—where people were operated without chloroform, like you would not do to an animal. We saw a room where they had put up rings, given the people rope, and made them hang themselves. If they were slow to die, they were beaten with knobkerries until they were finished. We saw the lampshades made of human skin. We saw the photographs of people rescued in the end, people without flesh, you could count each bone. It was unbearable.

"I heard of a child hidden among the prisoners; in spite of everything they hid the child, and he is now alive and grown up in Poland. This shows me that the will of people cannot be broken if they are united. The guide who showed us round was in Buchenwald himself for four years. His face was like fire when he was telling the story. One of the speakers said: German women! German women! *You* must see that such a sight should not be seen again!

"In my country I am an organizer for peace, but I did not know what peace meant. Now I know. It means no more Buchenwald. Once I used to think, let the white people kill each other, what does it matter—a few bombs on London and Berlin? Now I saw what war means—Buchenwald. When I saw Buchenwald I thought in my mind, if that is what white people do to each other, what would white do to black? I took a pledge: when I go home I will go from door to door, not only to black people but to white also, and explain to them why we must have peace. It would be better to be tortured in the struggle for peace than to see such a thing as Buchenwald again."

During their stay in Germany, they were taken to address a women's meeting.

"When we got there women met us with flowers for welcome. We found the hall packed to the brim. There was a choir of young children singing. We came on to the platform, and the children and all the people rose and clapped and clapped for ten minutes.

"I looked behind me, thinking it must be a mistake, that it was not for us. But there was no one behind us. Then I thought, perhaps they think we are educated women, professional women. But it was for us, black women. My heart was moved. I was so moved at this welcome in a foreign country that I cried. To think that here I am welcomed

like a human being and in my own country I am treated worse than a dog. . . ." On the word "dog" her voice deepened with sorrow and contempt.

That night I was sitting on Marion's bed while she undressed. She said, "What film was it, Ruth, with Charlie Chaplin, about a girl who lost the use of her legs?"

"You mean *Limelight?*"

"That's *right.* You know my dear, after that meeting in Rostock, I woke in the middle of the night, thinking of that part when Charlie told the girl to walk. She said: No, I can't. He said: Yes, try, try to walk. He stood her up, and she still said no. But he kept urging her. And at last she took a step—and then another—and another. And she said: I am walking! I am walking! I am walking!

"And it came to me that night, like a dream, like a vision, that I am alive! alive! I am a human being like other human beings! They might enslave my body, but my soul is free. Before, I was dead, but now I am a live human being! And this I learned in Germany. And it was not a dream, or a vision, but true."

3. GETTING TO KNOW EACH OTHER

Easter Monday was gloriously sunny and we all went into the garden. Marion and Rosa chose a shady spot under a tree but the rest of us sat in the sun. The Africans laughed at me because I kept turning this way and that, determined to get suntanned all over.

"When will you have enough?" asked Marion.

"When I'm as black as you."

"You wouldn't like to be black in South Africa."

I brought my arm over to Marion's and compared them. No, I'd never get so black. . . . Her arms were plumb and shapely, tapering to slender wrists and long, strong hands. I turned her hands over and marvelled at the pinkness of her palms and nails, as pink as mine.

After lunch we decided to go to Hampstead Heath. For this excursion Rosa put on her national costume. It was made of heavy cotton, flame colored, with a voluminous skirt to the ankles, and the upper part simply a wide shawl. In Africa, she told me, nothing at all was worn under this shawl, but for us she had put on a white, short-sleeved vest. She also wore a turban, elaborately wound, and carried an ornamental pipe. She was quite transformed in this outfit. We called her the Queen of

Tonga as she proceeded down the street with superb dignity.

Our group caused a minor sensation: Dick in shorts; Marion, myself and Soraya in European dress; and our African queen in her flame colored robes.

Rosa couldn't walk much, so we spent the afternoon on the lawn in front of Ken Wood House, enjoying the peaceful scene.

"Are there many parks in Johannesburg?" I asked.

"Oh, yes, beautiful parks," she said, "but not for us, only for Europeans, unless we have a European child with us."

We were silent.

"They even divide the sea!" said Marion. "When we were waiting for our plane, I used to go down to the beach with my European friends. There is a fence stretching out to the sea. On one side it says EUROPEANS, on the other NON-EUROPEANS. We thought what to do. I would not be allowed in the European side, so my white friends came with me in the non-European side. Once an attendant came running up to the husband, shouting: That's not your side! My friend shouted back: It's all the same sea, you idiot! and swam away laughing."

That evening we invited an old friend, a professor, to meet our guests. He wanted to know about the Bantu Education Act.

Marion explained: "Only about 35% of our children get any education at all, and of these many stop at eleven through poverty, and start work. Many children do not start school until twelve or thirteen —if they live in towns, because they must watch the younger children while their parents go to work; in the country, because they must watch the animals. There are not enough buildings even for those who do go to school, many are taught in the open air. If it rains, there is no school."

"Did your daughter get any education, Marion?"

"Yes, she went to a missionary school. It cost one shilling a month and we had to buy the books ourselves. This was before the Bantu Education Act, and it was not so bad. She studied five hours a day reading, writing, geography and history, her own language—Xoxa—and also a little Afrikaans. This was called Native Education and it was under the Education Department.

"But now they have made Bantu Education. It is not under the Education Department—it is under the Native Affairs Department. The children will go to school only half a day, so our teachers get two different lots of children the same day, for the same pay. They are not taught history or geography or anything at all except reading and writing—just a *leetle* bit English to understand their masters in the towns

a *leetle* bit Afrikaans to understand their masters on the farms. In this same half day they must also clean the school and the benches. When they get to Standard Six a man will come from the Native Affairs Department. To one child he will say: *You* must be a gardener. To another: *You* must scrub. To another: *You* must do washing.

"I say to our people, are we fowls?" Marion said passionately. "Fowls belong to those who own them, who decide this one is for slaughter, this one may stay living; who decide what to do with the eggs, whether to make a pudding with them or send them to the mother-in-law. We say *no* to Bantu Education. We are not fowls.

"Education is the foundation of a human being. I have seen what can be done with education in China, in the Soviet Union, in Germany. Without education a man is a living corpse, he does what his master tells him, he cannot think for himself. We want universal education, the same for black and white. Why should we have special education designed for us, to be separated from other people?"

"In December 1954 the African National Congress had a conference in Durban. It passed a resolution that the day the new syllabus came into force, the children must not go to school. There was a mass protest. The children did not go. In one district the leader of the protest movement was exiled. In another, forty-two women were arrested. When I get back I will tell them what I saw in the countries I visited and what education means. In my opinion it is better that the children should run the streets than get this Bantu Education."

The Professor disagreed. "I think you should take advantage of even this bit of education, where they will at least learn to read and write, and organize your own schools to teach them in the other half of the day."

"But we are not allowed to!" she cried. "In Alexandria township the men and women started building their own school and the police interfered. It is written in the Act: Nobody may teach our children apart from the Native Affairs Department. And this education is poison for our children. It is designed to teach them from the beginning that they are inferior. If you give a child poison, he might vomit some, but some will remain."

"I think she's right, Prof." I said. "The whites can't run the country unless the Africans have some education. If the children are kept away from school altogether, they'll have to climb down sooner or later."

"That depends," he said, "on whether the boycott is complete. If some stay away and some go, it won't help."

"Then we must see to it that the boycott is complete," said Marion.

Later on in the evening we asked the two women to show us an African dance. Marion said it wouldn't do in European dress, but Rosa, still in her national costume, promptly got up and danced for us, swaying her body with unexpected grace and singing at the same time, in a pleasant contralto, the song of her people. For a few minutes we glimpsed a different Rosa, gay and vigorous, but suddenly she was exhausted and had to go to bed.

Dick said: "Remember the grandmother in *The Childhood of Maxim Gorky?* Rosa looked just like her—a heavy old woman who also came to life when she did a Russian dance."

We finished the evening with English and American folksongs, and Yiddish work-songs. We sang the Professor down the stairs and out to his car, and unable to stop, sang ourselves to bed.

The long holiday weekend was over. On Tuesday morning we went to work, leaving our friends to their own devices.

"If you get a phone call that your seats are booked," I said to Marion, "ring me at the office and I'll get off early."

But she did not ring that day. Nor the next, or the next. Once Celia said they could travel in three days' time, but the next day the booking was cancelled. Obviously there was going to be trouble getting them home. Celia came round to apologize for having landed me with such a long visit. I cut her short.

"I can't thank you enough for having brought them. You don't know what a pleasure it is."

In the evenings when I arrived home Marion would come to the top of the stairs with her heart-warming smile. "Hullo, my dear. How are you?" We would talk hard while we prepared the evening meal together. If I'd had a bad day she always noticed. "What's the matter, Ruth? Your lights have gone out."

A warm friendship sprang up between us. Sometimes at night we shut ourselves in the sitting room, allowing no one else in, and discussed the things women like to talk about alone Often we sat till one and two o'clock in the morning; the next day I would stagger to work half asleep. During the first days of their stay I tried to carry on with my usual evening activities, but very soon I became aware that it was important for me to listen to all they said, and I shelved what I could. I was getting an education.

I had always thought of black people as living in unimaginable squalor, and many do. But Marion and Rosa had homes—poor homes, yes, but with a high standard of hygiene. Marion looked forward to the spring-cleaning she would give her house when she returned. Rosa

complained that her husband used to make the table-cloth dirty.

I had imagined that the grimness of their struggle to live left no room for the kind of emotional relationships and personal problems that we experience. I was wrong: their lives revealed a familiar pattern. Once, in their youth, Marion's husband thought she loved another man. His misery was such that he did not go to work that day—and they lived on the brink of want. She worried about her little girl who wept too easily and made too many demands on her. A couple of years after her husband's death she became friendly with a man—she called him her boy-friend. One night he called for her and found her away at a meeting. He sat waiting in her room till midnight, baffled and resentful. When she returned he said:

"Me or the movement?"

"The movement!" said Marion. And that was that.

It was all there, the same complex of human emotions and conflicts.

Getting to know Rosa was difficult. When Marion was there she always left the talking to her. But one evening I got Rosa to herself when Marion was out with Soraya, and through question and answer I learned a good deal.

"I am fifty," she told me. And I had taken her for over sixty. Yet I should have realized it was the slowness and heaviness of her body that made her seem older; her face was almost unlined, a serene face.

"I had twelve children. The thirteenth, a miscarriage. Six of my children died of starvation." She said this simply.

"Six!" I exclaimed. "How old were they?"

"One, five months. One, nine years. One, one month." And so on.

"How was it a baby of one month died of starvation?"

"I was dry." She indicated her breast. "Not enough food."

Her husband earned, in those days, thirty shillings a month, and she earned a little also with washing, carrying water, cutting grass. And still it was not enough to feed the family. Later he earned three pounds a month, but began drinking, and gave her very little money. He would come home drunk and behave violently.

"When I was in hospital in the Soviet Union, I read Gorky's *Mother*. I had to laugh to myself—her husband was just as mine."

A few years ago he left her and took another wife. "He said that I wanted to be the man. That was because I was active in the movement." The children were divided in their attitude, some siding with the father, some with the mother. Two of them went to live with him, but the four who remained understood what she was doing and had begun to join in. Two sons were associated with the African Na-

tional Congress, and one was treasurer of the local Modern Youth Society.

She had trouble with the children. Her fifteen-year old daughter ran about with boys—"Not one boy. I would not mind that. But many boys." She resented the mother's criticism.

"I will go to my father," she said. "I am proud of him."

"My child, if you are proud of your father, go to him."

She went, but did not like it and came home again.

Then one of the boys began stealing.

"What did he steal?"

"He was with other boys on a train. He stole a man's hat."

I burst out laughing. Rosa looked at me in surprise.

"That wasn't very serious," I said. "Just a prank."

She said gravely, "That man was a human being. Why should his hat be stolen?"

I was abashed. "Go on."

"Later, worse trouble. He was mixed up in a fight. A boy got stabbed. All the boys ran away, hid themselves. I found out where my boy was, and I told the police."

"Oh, I wouldn't have done that!" I cried impulsively.

"No? They were looking for him. He would be always running. Always hiding. No proper job ever. But now, he was arrested. Because I helped, he was let go with just a few lashes. He is working steady He promised me to go straight. The other mothers said I was right. They may never see their sons again. Those boys will never settle down."

"I see. . . ." What I saw was that again she was right.

Then she told me how she had started a creche in her district.

"In 1948, I heard that in some countries mothers who go to work can leave their babies in a creche. I say to the women in my location: You have to go to work. You leave your babies with the bigger ones, who still need a mother's care themselves. Sometimes, you come home to find a child burned. Sometimes, the bit of bread left for all has been eaten by the oldest, and the little ones are crying from hunger.

"We made a creche in my shanty house. We started with seventeen children. I said: No babies less than six months. But the mothers pleaded with me. I had to take younger. Also I said: not before eight o'clock. But sometimes, at six when I am still asleep, a mother knocks on my door and says her child is in the creche. Sometimes, they just lay them in the cradle and not tell me! What could I do? I must look after them."

Rosa was helped by a friend to cook and wash for the children and

o watch over them.

"Once, all the children were crying at once. We could not quiet hem. I asked my boy of fifteen to help. At first he would not. But at last he said: All right—give me an orphan! And soon they were ll playing nicely."

When they started they charged two shillings and sixpence a week, but found they were making a loss and had to raise it to five shillings. Many mothers could not afford so much, and had to take their babies way. It was impossible to run the creche economically with so few children, and they had to close it down.

"We went to the municipality. We begged them to help with money for a proper creche. They said there is no money for such things. That even white people do not have creches. Of course they do not. They have nannies—the same who have to leave their own children alone in the house. But in the end we gathered money. Some, from private donations. Some, from a students' rag. While I was away I heard a proper creche has been built." I made her promise to write and tell me about it.

I found myself telling Rosa about my parents' youth in Poland, the bleak poverty and anti-Semitism which had driven them to seek a better life in England, their early struggles here, and my childhood in the East End of London. Later, through the influence of a teacher, through the novels of British and American writers, I had come to see the hope which Socialism offered to all poor and oppressed people.

"But your boys," said Rosa, who had listened intently, "they were not poor. They had good lives, good homes. How did they become Socialists?"

"Once I asked my husband that same question when they were little boys. Why should these children become Socialists—what is wrong with their life that they should wish to change it? And yet, that s how it turned out. I suppose it was because in their home they saw nd heard about the battle going on against all kinds of injustices. They aw for themselves the damage and suffering of war and were drawn o the movement for peace. They saw that many people, some of their own friends, do not have good lives or good homes. I think it was heir sense of justice that made them become Socialists; their sympathy vith all whose lives are spoilt by the way things are now."

"Symbuddy . . ." Rosa nodded and repeated the word tenderly. Symbuddy . . ."

After a meal Rosa always went to lie down with her glass of "hod vaddah" but Marion and Soraya helped to clear the kitchen and wash

up. Dick used to say, "That's fine. I can retire now and my wives can do all the work."

Marion watched him in wonder when he helped me. She said their men did nothing in the house.

"You must teach them to help," I said. "Next time you marry, see that he helps you all the time."

"I shall not marry again," said Marion. "I want to be free! Besides, who would marry a woman with four children and a helpless mother?"

"If he loved you, he'd put up with everything."

"Maybe in the beginning, when love was still hot. Afterwards, there'd be trouble, I know."

She began singing her favorite song, "Johnny." It went something like this: "I've met men, but never anyone like you, Johnny!"

"That's how I met my husband," she said, "through that song. I was singing it outside a house, and a man came out and looked at me. I'm Johnny, he said! As soon as he saw me, I was the one for him. And it was the same with me."

Soraya was not always with us. She had plenty of escorts among our sons' friends, who competed for her company. Several times an evening the phone rang and a young man asked hopefully for Soraya, to hear in despair that she had gone out. During the day she wandered about London having her fill of the museums and art galleries. Occasionally Marion went with her. Sometimes Soraya went away for a couple of days to stay with friends in the country. When we came in from work in the evening and saw a bottle of orange squash on the table, or a melon, we knew she was back. Every day she made some contribution to the larder.

She had little in common with the rest of us. We four—the Africans, Dick and myself, were united by common interests, feeling ourselves part of the same movement against injustice and for a new kind of society. We always had something to discuss and argue about. Soraya, although she listened intently, never took part in these discussions, and sometimes I wondered what was going on inside her head.

Yet oddly enough she fitted in well with our household. She was sympathetic and considerate, and took a willing share in the household chores. Her youth, her good looks, her bright clothes, made it a pleasure to look at her. We missed her when she wasn't there.

4. A SEWING SESSION

One evening, when we were all in the sitting room together, I got

ut a pair of Dick's pyjamas that had gone to seed. There was one ad rent in the back of the jacket, which had lost its buttons, and another n the trousers, which had no cord. After consultation, each of the vomen took a share in the mending. I cut a few inches from the egs, which had always been too long, and I stitched them together to nake patches. Soraya began sewing them in to the pyjamas with as nuch care as for a wedding dress; Rosa sewed on buttons and Marion ound a tape to pull through the waist. Dick was terribly pleased.

"I'll cherish these pyjamas all my life," he said. "They'll remind ne of my harem."

Marion said, "European women would not bother to mend things like nese in South Africa."

"Do they do any mending at all?"

"A little mending sometimes, a little knitting sometimes. European vomen do little for their homes, their men, their children. *We* are the nothers of the European children. In the evening the parents go out. f the child cries we lie down beside it and soothe it, sometimes fall sleep with it in our arms. We love these children and they love us. Then, vhen the child begins to understand a little the mother talks to it. One ay we say to the child: Come here, darling, come to Nanny! And the nild runs from us and says: Mummy says I mustn't touch you, you're ull of disease, you stink.

"Would they allow us into their homes if we were diseased? Would ney let us cook for them and care for their children if we stank? They now it is all lies. How can a mother teach her little child to hate? n Church we are told, he who hates his fellowman will not see Heaven. Don't white women want their children to see Heaven?"

That was how it was with Marion—a chance remark, and the pain nd indignation that smouldered within her would be stirred into flaming rotest.

"We go to work early, leaving our own children who still need us. Ve creep in quietly. The white people are still asleep and we urry to give them tea in bed. Then we clean the sitting room, polish till it glitters like glass. But when it is finished we must not enter nat room—the dog may enter but not us; that European woman will old a dog in her lap but not a black child.

"We do everything for the man, mend his socks, wash his clothes, elp him put on his tie even. But if we meet him in the street we nustn't speak to him or recognize him. European men molest our omen, lie with them one moment—and spit on them the next. So hat is all this talk about his white skin being superior? Does he

change his skin at that moment when he is doing what he wants?"

Rosa interposed with a quiet smile: "He does not change his skin; he only changes his mind."

"They give our women babies. These poor girls bring up their children with so much trouble, so much suffering. Then as soon as the child is grown, he is ashamed of his mother and calls her Kaffir; he is superior because his father was white."

"Did you work in a European home yourself, Marion?"

"Yes, once—the first and the last time. I used to watch my madam knitting, and once I asked her to teach me. She said no, and after that she never knitted when I was there to see. Then one day she gave me an old jersey. I unpicked that jersey stitch by stitch, watching to see how it was done, and with new wool I knitted, stitch by stitch, just as the old one. If it went wrong I undid it and tried again. I was determined to learn, and sat up with it late every night, once till five in the morning.

"At last it was done—an exact copy of the old one. When I showed it to my madam, she said: Did you do this? How did you learn? Now I can knit beautifully, white people bring me things to knit for them. I buy patterns. They are very difficult for me to follow, but I can make everything just as it should be."

We loved that story.

"And now you work in a factory?"

"Yes, I am a dressmaker, and embroider the dresses by hand. I earn seven pounds a week. That is an exceptional wage for an African —most of our men earn about a third of that money. But see what happens—I have to teach a European girl the same work as myself, and the following week she gets twice my wage; even when she is still making mistakes and I have to undo her work and show her again."

"Are you in a trade union?"

"Of course, the Garment Workers' Union. Once there were two branches, Number One for white people and Number Two for colored people and Africans. Now under the new Labour Bill (The Settlement of Disputes Act) they have pushed us out of Number Two branch and made a Number Three branch for Africans. And this Number Three branch has no rights or powers. We cannot negotiate with the employers. We are not recognized."

"Then it is quite useless!" I exclaimed.

"That's *right*" she said calmly. "That's why it was done. But things are changing. Some time ago they had a Union Conference for the first two branches. So we in our branch decided to have one too, or

ıe same day, in a nearby hall. Soon many people from the other ɔnference came in to ours and it was packed. It was a greater success ıan theirs."

"What made them come, Marion?"

"You see, they are learning it is better to be all together than divided. he leadership of the white unions did not want to discuss the new abor Bill, but white workers saw they could be displaced because black bor is cheaper, and so they supported our conference. Economic ɔnditions are bringing white and black workers together."

"What a terrible thing," said Dick, "that a union should allow self to be divided."

"You're right, my dear. The Bill was a terrible blow. Before it ıme, I used to think that at least the churches would protest, because would affect the wages of the Africans, and the churches depend upon ır wages. But not a single church protested."

"Are the churches popular?"

"Yes, my dear. Nearly everybody goes to church. Many of our eople think when they die they will have a better life in Heaven. Into ıe church comes a white priest with a big stomach and a brief case. he brief case is for the money. He preaches for a few minutes about rotherhood and peace on earth. Then he says: Bring your gifts to ɔod.

"Our poor women believe every word and they give their money, ɔmetimes all they have. A woman might give as much as ten shillings, ıd when she gets home there is no food for the children, perhaps ɔt even a candle for light. It has all gone to God. Oh, I know there re good priests like Father Huddleston and others, who do wonderful ork for my people. But they are few. Most of them do not care hat happens to us so long as we give our money. What kind of ligion is that?

"We are told that Christ shed his blood for all the people, of all ces, but it seems to me that the blood of Christ did not fall on our de, only on the white people. We have had Christianity for three ındred years, and all that time we are being pushed backward and ackward. The laws get more cruel all the time.

"Our men dig the gold underground. Once there was an accident ıd fifty-eight men were killed: fifty-seven black and one white. The hite man's family will be looked after until death. The families of ch of our fifty-seven men got fifty pounds. What is fifty pounds? Vhat about the children, what about their schooling, what about their ɔthes? How long will fifty pounds last?"

We listened with tightening throats.

"When the English came to South Africa, they did not bring chickens or cattle with them. Our ancestors gave them milk and eggs. Today we cannot give our children milk, eggs or cheese; that is food for the white people. Today we give our children mealie-meal porridge for their hunger, while they drink brandy. Yet the Government increases our rents—why do they not increase the cost of brandy instead?

"Once, long ago when we lived in the kraals, it was possible to walk for miles and at sunset to lie under a tree, and the only fear a man had was of being bitten by a snake, or a wolf or a lion. Today under civilization, our children are turned into murderers. When I was a child in Johannesburg, it was possible to walk freely in the city at night. Now we go in fear of being killed by our own children . . ."

"Do they kill their own people?"

"Yes, my dear. They murder us for the clothes we wear, for a pair of cheap earrings like these," she touched those she was wearing. "Sometimes to buy food for their hungry stomachs, sometimes just for a packet of cigarettes. And instead of building more schools, the Government builds more jails.

"Once, in the reserves, Africans had many cattle, today they have only strips of lands, and the cattle have to be limited. But I have flown over South Africa, and I have seen that it is a big, *beeg* country and much land is lying idle. I think there is enough land to give plenty of food to all—even if all white women and all black women each had twenty children!" And the evening finished in laughter.

5. DISCUSSIONS AND ARGUMENTS

Ten days had passed since their arrival, and still there was no news of a passage home. Poor Celia transferred the application to another travel agency, and there was another disappointment. Rosa took it with her usual stoicism, but Marion got depressed.

"Shall I ever see my children again? Shall I ever see my mother again?"

We discussed, partly in fun, partly in earnest, how they would make a living if they had to stay with us for ever. Before long Marion's spirits rose again.

"When I go home I will put my little girl on my back and go about

ith her all day long." And, a little later: "When I go home I will et into bed with my four children and stay there all day long." Then gain the plan changed.

"When I go home I will take my mother into my room and sit on ie floor, and talk and talk and talk, all day long!" This I could well elieve.

One day she asked suddenly at the table, "What is Communism?" friend who had dropped in to the meal, an economist, began answering ie question in his own way, but after a few sentences she stopped him.

"You are speaking to me as if I was an educated woman. I can't nderstand half you are saying!"

Her expression, in which pride competed with regret, went to my eart.

"What makes you ask about Communism, Marion?"

"I am asking because in the Soviet Union I said to the people who ere showing us round that I thought Communism was Christianity practice. In my country they preach Christianity but do not practice In my opinion the Europeans in South Africa are anti-Christian. But China and in the Soviet Union I saw people behaving like Christians.

"When I was going to the Soviet Union I was so impatient that I ought the plane was too slow. And when we got there I thought ere would be an Iron Curtain reaching from the sky down to the earth. ut instead we were welcomed with embraces and taken to a beautiful otel. And then we were taken round and saw there was work for all, od for all, homes for all, hospitals and creches for all—all the things e have not got in South Africa.

"And so I told them I thought Communism was Christianity. But ey did not agree with me, and I spoke to several professors there id they told me I was wrong. We had long arguments about it. But still don't understand why I am wrong."

"Have you heard of the Dean of Canterbury?" I asked.

She nodded.

"About twenty years ago he went to the Soviet Union for the first me and when he came home he wrote a book about it, in which he id that the Soviet Union was the most Christian country on earth. So u're not the only one, you see, who thinks Communism and Christianity e the same."

The next day, when Marion and Rosa came to lunch with myself d the Professor, she immediately put the same questions to him; "What Communism, and is Communism Christianity in practice?"

The Professor smiled; he liked this kind of question.

"Communism," he began, "is the final outcome of the struggle fo freedom. People will be free when they can build their own way o life and use the fullest available knowledge for this purpose. Th struggle has gone on as long as people have felt they were unjustl treated, and this arises whenever society is organized for the profit of th few at the expense of the many. In this fight Religion and the Churc have been used to persuade people to feel contented."

Marion nodded, "That's *right.*"

"But sometimes," he went on, "those who fought for freedom use religious ideas as a weapon in the struggle. Jesus fought for th oppressed, and used the religious ideas of those times to make h meaning clear. We now know that those ideas are just parts of ancien mythology—fairy-tales—but we can see the strength they gave hir nevertheless. Is the Soviet Union now putting Christianity into prac tice? No, she is building a society which may one day give peopl freedom. The ideas that will grow in the process must turn out t have meaning for people at this later stage, different from that of th poor people of Palestine 2000 years ago. We all understand muc more now.

"So when they say in the Soviet Union they are not putting Chri tianity into practice, they are right. They are putting into practice much greater understanding than early Christianity ever had, but the are really bringing to fulfillment the true meaning of the hopes of th poor people for whom Christ spoke in his time." He paused. "Doe that answer your question, Marion?"

"Yes, Professor, it does. I understood you better than I understoo the Russian professors."

He chuckled. "I expect my English is better than theirs!"

After lunch the two women went with him to see the Africa exhibition at the Imperial Institute. They were thrilled to see a li of all the African tribes, their own among them. Marion told m all about it in the evening.

"We stood looking at a picture of a mine," she said. "There w a white overseer with a crowd of black workers. I said to the pr fessor: You see that white man—he earns more than the whole crow of black men. And you know, my dear, the Professor turned away fro us, saying: You make me feel ashamed. When we finished with th exhibition, he took us up to his room at the College and talked to for the rest of the afternoon. How is it, Ruth, that he gave up much of his time? In the Soviet Union also, professors spent much tim listening to us and discussing our problems. You would never find th

in South Africa—a professor talking to ignorant, unimportant black women!"

"Listen, Marion—I won't have you talking like this! You are not ignorant, you understand a great deal. And also you are important because you are passing on your understanding to others. As for our Professor, and those in the Soviet Union, they need to listen to you and learn from your experience, just as you need to learn from theirs. It's just a different *kind* of experience, that's all."

"That's just what the Professor said this afternon. He is a wonderful man—we enjoyed it very much, to be with him."

And when Dick asked her later how she liked the Professor, she said: "I didn't like him—I loved him!"

"Oho!" said Dick. "That'll please him; he likes to be loved!"

Marion was in a boisterous mood after her stimulating afternoon.

"Tell me, Dick, do you think it is wrong if a woman tells a man she loves him?"

"No, I can't see anything wrong in it."

"All right," he said. "Suppose you get a letter like this: Dear Dick—you don't know me but I love you. Will you be my sweetheart?—What would you say?"

"I would say," he said, smiling: "Dear Marion, thank you for your charming letter. But I cannot love you because I do not know you."

"Oh, but I would teach you," she said with such promptness that we burst out laughing.

"I'm going to warn the Prof." I said. "that a nice letter is coming for him."

"Hey!" Dick said indignantly, "That letter's for me, not for the Prof!"

One day I asked Marion a question that had been on my mind for some time.

"I have some South African friends, white people. Some of them say that in South Africa, Jews behave much better than non-Jews to Africans. Others say they are just the same. What do you say?"

"They are just the same," she answered decisively. "There is no difference. You should see those rich Jewesses, with their big breasts, all covered with jewels!"

I didn't like that at all. I felt myself flushing.

"Marion, do you mind if I try to explain something to you?"

"I am listening to you, Ruth. I want to learn as much as possible."

"Well, then . . . you know that in your country there are some Africans who are dirty, some are thieves, some are murderers. But if

a white person were to say: Africans are dirty, they are thieves, they are murderers—wouldn't you be upset—even if it is true in some cases?"

"Yes," she agreed. "I would be upset."

Well, Jewish people would be upset in just the same way if they heard you speak as if all Jewish women were fat, loaded with jewels, and behaved badly to Africans. But you have told me about your European friends who help the African people—some of them are Jews, aren't they?"

"Yes, of course," she said, and added instantly: "I see what you are telling me. I understand. I will not speak like that again."

That encouraged me to take her up on another matter.

"If you don't mind, I would like to criticize your use of the word 'automatically.' Several times I've heard you say, about the change that must come in South Africa, that it will come 'automatically.' But such a change will not be automatic. It will come when the people develop their understanding,—in the course of the struggles for a better life. When they are strong and united, then they will begin to make a change, but it won't be automatic."

She thought this over. "Yes, of course they will have to struggle more, and understand more. But then the change will be automatic."

"No darling. Automatic means something mechanical. A machine doesn't develop itself, or think. It does only what it has been made to do. Human beings are not machines."

"But you know," she said, "when you are making a speech to people, if you speak in a certain way you know in advance how they will respond. They will respond *automatically* to what you have said."

That floored me. Dick, who had come in during the discussion, took her up.

"The people respond to what you say only because you have said something they agree with, which they feel and think is right. So their response is not automatic, it is the result of their feeling and thinking. You can only use the word 'automatic' about a machine—or about a person who acts without thinking—for instance, in sudden danger, a person may behave automatically because he hasn't time to think out his behaviour. But before any changes are made in South Africa, everybody who wants those changes will have to do a lot of thinking, to decide what kind of changes they want, and how to make them."

"I see," she said slowly. "Thank you Dick. You have made it very clear." And she looked at him with warm admiration.

6. DEFEAT AND VICTORY

"Marion, explain to me the Re-Settlement Act of 1954. I was told that Sophiatown was demolished because it was a slum, and the people were moved to better accomodation. Is that true?"

"It is not true! I will tell you about it. There were plots of land bought by Africans, and they built homes there with spacious rooms, even with pantries and bathrooms. Some had their own shops, some were dressmakers and tailors. This was Sophiatown. Once it was a few miles out of town, but as Johannesburg is growing, and the factories expanding, it was decided that Sophiatown was too near the white people. It was called a black spot. The Africans must be moved.

"These homes were built by the hard work of the people who did extra work, such as washing day and night, to get the money. Do you know what it means, to work at night as well as by day—it means no sleep, just lying down for an hour or two, just dozing, and it is time to start again.

"Many of the people in Sophiatown were widows and widowers who depended for their income on letting some rooms in their homes. Some of the houses had outbuildings also, to accomodate more people. It is true these were roughly built, but I have seen worse slums than these. If the Government was afraid of overcrowding, and had demolished only the outbuildings, one could understand, but it was not so.

"When the Resettlement Act came out, we organized a protest movement against it, because we thought if they will move these people, no African will ever be able to own any land; the Europeans will move us wherever we are. Women used to go to church, weep and pray to God, not to be moved from their homes. Women who belonged to the democratic organizations all protested against the Act—the African National Congress, the Trade Unions, the South African Indian Congress, the Colored People's Organizations, Congress of Democrats, Organization of Prayer Women—all protested. We had a slogan: WE ARE NOT MOVING!

"Because of the strength of this protest, it took two thousand police armed with Sten guns to remove one hundred and fifty families from Sophiatown. They came two days before the published date of removal, and took the people by surprise. Many were away at work, so the protest failed and the moving went off smoothly. If people were moved to better accommodation, would police have to move them? They were sent to Meadowlands, to houses like matchboxes. They are

built of brick, with cement floors and tiled roofs—but badly built, the wind blows through them; freezing in winter, baking in summer; tap in the yard, toilet in the yard.

"And that's not all. Transport from Meadowlands to town is very bad. Transport from Orlando, nearby, was not enough, and now the people from Meadowlands are added to it, and transport is not increased. The trains are so full, the youngsters give up their seats to the older people, and hang outside all the way from Orlando. This causes accidents, sometimes death. It is not even mentioned in the papers. One Kaffir less, what does it matter? People rush to the stations to get the very first train—it is about five o'clock in the morning. If they get on they arrive in town at five forty-five, and have to wait two hours for the factories to open. For women it is worse. Some women have miscarriages right at the station, and many children are born dead because of the way mothers are crushed in the trains."

"And what happened to the homes they left in Sophiatown?"

"They were demolished under police guard. It is one of the most disgraceful things that ever happened in South Africa. And it was a battle that we lost," she said dejectedly.

But the next day, reading in the newspapers about rent strikes in various parts of Britain, she was reminded of a battle that was won.

"In South Africa we also have rent strikes. I'll tell you about the one in Johannesburg District. The municipality wanted to increase our rents, the increase to be based on the wages. Do you know, once they only had one rent office in Orlando—now they have three. The number of houses has not grown, only the number of rent offices. Each office has a superintendent, each superintendent runs a big car, an American Hudson, and has an interpreter to assist him. What for? If they employed our men they would walk to the office, and they would not need an interpreter. But they have cars and interpreters and they want us to pay for them.

"I got five women together, and I said to them: How can we pay rent increases—we have no money to feed our children properly even now? The women said: That's *right!* Then I said: Each of you bring five more women and we will meet on Saturday under the bridge with hymn books, in case the police come.

"On Saturday thirty-five women came under the bridge, and I said the same to them: The wages of our men are not increased, so why should we pay rent increases? And I asked each of them to bring ten women to the kopje in a week's time. All the women said: We will not pay the increase!

"When the day came, two hundred and forty women came to the kopje. Just when we began the meeting, the police came.

"My friend said to them: It is a meeting for women, even our husbands are not allowed here. Please go away. They went away—to call the Flying Squad. The sergeant said: Who is the leader of this meeting? The women said: We are all leaders! We are the resident tenants of Orlando! One of the police pointed at me and said: She is the leader. And the other policeman said: No, it is her friend, who told us no men were allowed, she is the leader.

"I said to the sergeant: You have two policemen with two different statements. Which are you going to believe? The sergeant shouted at the police: Get out! And they all went away. So we continued the meeting, and we agreed to pay rent at the right time, but to pay the usual amount, and if we were asked for the balance we would say we have nothing to do with a balance. And that's what we did.

"Then we called a meeting with the men also. They stood about at the edges of the meeting. I said to the women: Can we get the men to help, or must we do everything ourselves? Are they men or are they window-dressers?

"I heard the men talking among themselves: Do you hear what she calls us—window-dressers!

"Well, the men took up the case after this. They organized other men to tell their women to come to the meeting The men also got us our slogan. When we met in the morning we lifted our thumbs in the African salute, but instead of saying: Afrika! as we usually do, we said: We have no money! This was to encourage all the women to refuse to pay the increase. The children would run to meet me, laughing and shouting: WE HAVE NO MON-EE!

"We collected two shillings and sixpence from each house to get lawyers to fight the case in court. In Orlando alone we collected £500, and had to close the fund as it was over-subscribed.

"Well, it was a great success. When the case went to court our lawyers won—the rent increases were declared illegal. To this day we are paying the old rent. And we had so much money over that we held a great victory feast. Oxen were roasted in the open, there was beer to drink, and singing and dancing went on all night."

We were sitting at the table after dinner, feeling relaxed and peaceful.

"You know, Marion," I said, "I always thought that South Africa was the last country on earth I should like to visit. My South African

friends told me that each group of people are divided against the others—black against white—Jews against Gentiles—British against Africaaners. It sounded poisonous. But you have given me another picture, of your people learning to unite itself, and getting friends from other races to help. Now that I have this feeling of unity and friendship between people, of something tremendous and alive growing up, of a lovely warmth and neighborliness among your people—well, now I feel I'd love to go to South Africa, to see it for myself, and to mix with your people and your friends."

"Oh, do come!" she said exuberantly. "Yes, yes—do come. I'll show you everything, and you'll write about us!"

"It's not so easy, my dear. It costs a lot of money to go to South Africa. Only a miracle could bring me there."

"Well, perhaps there will *be* a miracle. When we have a real democratic government in South Africa, I'll be Minister for Foreign Affairs, and I'l send a plane for you!"

"And for Dick too?"

"Of course! I wouldn't dream of leaving Dick behind. I'll meet you both at the airport with a big American Hudson, and take you all over the city. And then I'll take you to the best hotel in Johannesburg."

"No, no. I want to stay with you, and your mother and the children."

"All right, with me then."

She sat with her chin resting on her cupped hand, the tip of her long forefinger strikingly pink against her dark cheek.

"Once I used to dream of being rich. I had it all worked out. In the morning I would step ito my big American Hudson, with my mother beside me and the children in the back. We would drive all over Johannesburg. . . ." She sat up straight, her hands guiding the wheel, looking this way and that for the traffic. "Then at eleven o'clock I would go in to work. My employer is very good to me, but if I'm a few minutes late for work he says: Good *afternoon,* Marion! And so I decided if I was rich I would go in to work at eleven o'clock, and if he said: Good afternon, Marion, I would say: Bugger you!" She said this very politely.

"But now, see what has happened. I am not rich, but I have been over half the world, and travelled everywhere by plane, and stayed at the best hotels. And this I was able to do because of the strength of the people in my country, and because of the strength of the people in the countries I visited. So you see, everything is possible, and you may

And so the golden summer evenings slipped away. Sixteen days come to my country yet."

And so the golden summer evenings slipped away. Sixteen days

had passed, and we were all old friends. Dick and I could hardly imagine the flat without them. We were sometimes sad on Rosa's behalf. She never felt well, and occasionally had to spend a day or two in bed. When she was up she moved slowly and rather solemnly between the rooms, taking little part in the conversation. All the same we were conscious of a quiet strength in her, an indomitable courage, and a deep wisdom. But Marion poured out everything that was in her, and she was a joy to have about—like quicksilver she was—vibrant and unexpected. Once I was discussing the two women with the Professor, and he said:

"To me the two of them are Africa: Rosa the African earth, solid, enduring . . . fertile. And Marion the brilliant flower which springs from it."

At last, on the seventeenth day, came the long awaited call.

7. THE LAST EVENING

We were in the middle of the evening meal when the telephone rang—Rosa, Dick and myself; Marion was out with Soraya. Celia told me:

"The passage is definitely booked—no, this time it's definite. Tell them to pack at once, and be ready to leave the house at seven o'clock tomorrow morning."

When I came back to the table and repeated this, a slow, happy smile illuminated Rosa's face, but she said nothing until we were washing up.

"Tonight," she said, "I have my last comfortable bath."

"How do you manage at home, Rosa?"

"We have to go for water two hundred yards. It costs half-penny a gallon. So we bathe once a week only. And all in the same bath—youngest first, me last. Impossible to make separate baths for everyone."

The phone rang again and Dick answered it. It was Marion, to tell us that she and Soraya would be back within the hour. I leaned over Dick's shoulder, and he held the earpiece so that I could hear her reception of the news.

"You're joking with me, Dick!"

"No, no. It's true. You're really going!"

"What, really? Have you got my dinner ready?" There were shouts of laughter at each end of the line.

When they came back the flat hummed with excitement. Charac-

teristically, Rosa's things were in good order. She took half an hour to pack and then sat down tranquilly. But Marion flew about like fireworks in constant explosion, collecting her belongings from every room and arguing interminably with Dick as to what to take with her and what to send by freight.

Soraya whispered to me: "Have you noticed Rosa's face? It is quite different!"

Indeed it was different. She was transfigured—radiant—beautiful. She was going home. Only now did we see what it meant to her.

It was eleven o'clock when the hullabaloo over Marion's packing was over. Going into the kitchen to make the final cup of tea, I found myself alone with her for a moment.

"I shall miss you, Marion," I said inadequately.

"I shall miss you too, Ruth," she said warmly. Our eyes met.

"I'll write to you often," she said.

"You'll have so much to do when you get back. You won't have time to write."

"We have time for love, don't we? Well then, we must make time for letters also."

In the sitting room we gathered round the little table with our tea and biscuits, surrounded by packing cases and lengths of string. Marion's books and papers were strewn over her divan. She could not sort these, she said, until she was alone.

For a few minutes we were all silent. Then Rosa said unexpectedly: "I want to say something." Never before had she started a conversation.

Speaking slowly and softly, as always, she said:

"Once an old woman called me to her, to tell me something. I thought she was going to say a lot. But she said only one thing: Out of little things, big things grow. *Now.*" When Rosa said 'Now' it was a sentence on its own; a musical sentence.

"*Now.* Here are we five friends gathered together. Each is one, but each can be as hunderd people. You. . . ." she pointed to Dick, "hunderd. You. . . ." to Soraya, "hunderd. Ruth hunderd. Marion hunderd. Me. . . ." she pointed at herself, "hunderd. If we know what we want to do, each can be as hunderd people."

She paused, still with that happy smile playing on her lips.

"I used to hear talk about the world, about other countries. I wanted to see them. I thought I never would. But I have been, and I have seen. So many countries. So many people. Good people, all working to make life beddah. Not just for themselves. For every-

ıe. Now I have seen how life can be. We five friends all know how 'e can be. And each of us can be as hunderd people, to make life ddah."

Dick said, "I want to say something too. You know, when you ve been working in the movement many years, sometimes you get sty . Perhaps in the rush of doing things, you don't always have in ind what all your work is for. But meeting you two people has re-inded me again. Life must be changed . . . the life your people live ust be changed. You've a hard struggle ahead, but remember you have ends everywhere, who are supporting you in your struggle."

I could see a pattern forming, a leave-taking pattern.

"All right," I said. "My turn. What you two have taught me I uldn't have learned from books. You've brought me close to the frican people—you've been their ambassadors to us in this house. hen I read about South Africa now, I'll think of you. In par-ular . . ." I hesitated, fumbling for the words. ". . . there's something ecial in the happiness we've all had from each other's company . . . at is it? . . . a kind of foretaste of the happiness all human beings uld give each other, if life was different—if people could cooperate d share each other's lives more, the way we've done here, but on a g scale, a social scale."

I felt dissatisfied with what I'd said; there was more to it than at. We'd all been living at a higher pitch than usual; in a kind of diance; exhilarated by discovering our common humanity in people different. But I couldn't find the words in time, and Dick was turn-g to Soraya.

"What about you, my beauty? Do you want to say anything?"

"Yes," she said. "I do, but I don't know how to say it." We ited. "You don't know what it has meant to me, meeting you ople, all of you. I have heard so much, learned so much, things I ver knew or dreamed about, things we never discuss at home. I feel at the whole of my life until I came here has been meaningless—rties, dances, empty things. I have been blind . . . I feel confused ." She faltered. "I don't know where to start, what to do, when I back to my own country. . . ." And suddenly she was weeping.

We all looked at each other, but it was Rosa who knew what to say. e laid her hand on Soraya's knee, and said gently, "Before you have en, you cannot know. Before you have heard, you cannot think. ow you have seen and heard. When you go home, you will think d understand. And soon you will know what to do."

Dick suddenly remembered a half bottle of wine in the cupboard.

"This is an occasion to celebrate," he said. "We must have a drink."

So Soraya dried her eyes, and I got out the glasses, and we clinked them together and drank to a trouble-free journey for our friends.

"Now, Marion?"

"Marion said this: "I used to hate white people for what they have done to us Africans. But first I met the white people in my country who are helping us to free ourselves, and then I went abroad, and white people wherever we went welcomed us with flowers and embraces. I used to think people were divided like sugar—the white superior, the brown inferior. Now I know there are no two sugars—we are all one.

"And then we came here. Before I had been in your home two hours I was a member of your family. It has been just the right ending to our journey. I feel as if heaven sent us to your house. I have learned so much here. I talk about you wherever I go. We are such —friends—no. That is not the right word. . . ."

"Sisters . . .?" I offered.

She shook her head. "I would like to find a word, a word which would explode like dynamite because it had hit the right thing. There isn't such a word." She sighed.

"You know, I had quite made up my mind not to marry again. But now that I have lived with you, and seen how a husband and wife can talk to each other, and be to each other, I think I shall get married again as quickly as ever I can!"

And while we were still laughing, she added, "But only if I can find a wonderful husband like my Dick! Oh it has been so lovely living here all together, four women with one husband!"

The room rang with laughter; tears ran down our cheeks.

"When I get out of the plane," said Marion, "I will lie down on the earth with my stomach pressed against it, so that Africa shall know I am back." And she slipped from her chair, and lay down on the rug to show us how she would do it. Oh Marion, Marion. . . .

"And then," she said, rising, "I will get up and say: Baas, here come trouble! That's me!"

It was one o'clock. We had to be up at six.

We filled our glasses again, and stood up, and said all together "Mayibuye Afrika! Africa, may it come back during our lifetime!

NTRANCE

EDITH ANDERSON

The future is not too proud to enter
By a low and ugly door.
She is no lady in any of her guises—
Hydra, termite, whore,
She takes, she does not give,
Whatever she needs to live
And moves by whatever path she pleases.

The present is particular,
Sits with a prim little smirk and tats,
Won't lower herself, is too good,
Shrieks at the sight of rats,
Draws up her tiny legs on the period chair,
Waiting for Mr. Right, the heir
To fun, funds, fame, her fatuous lies,
All that disintegrates and dies,

While he, the past, completes the triangle,
Sly, sentimental, wise,
Holding the midget door for milady
To beckon behind her back with his eyes
To madam, that other, standing godlike outside,
Indifferent in her outlaw's pride,
But not too proud to enter, though stooping is a bore,
By the low and ugly door.

SOME HERR KEUNER STORIES

BERTOLT BRECHT

These "Herr Keuner Stories" were writen on various occasions by Brecht throughout his life. Brecht described them as "an attempt at making gestures memorable."

THE QUESTION OF WHETHER THERE IS A GOD

Someone asked Herr K. whether there was a God. Herr K. said "I think you ought to decide whether my answer could in any case change your attitude. If it couldn't be changed, then we might as well let the question drop. If it could be changed, then at least I can be helpful by telling you that you have already decided the question yourself. You need a God."

A WAY TO OPPOSE POWER

While Herr Keuner, the thinking man, was exhorting a number of people in a hall to oppose power, he saw that they shrank from him and turned away. He looked about and saw, standing behind him, Power.

"What's that you were saying?" Power asked him.

"I was speaking in favor of Power," replied Herr Keuner.

When Herr Keuner left, his students asked him if he had no backbone. Herr Keuner replied, "I have no backbone for being pulverized. It is simply a matter of outliving Power."

And Herr Keuner told the following story:

One day, during the period of illegality, an agent entered the dwelling of Herr Egge (a man who had learned to say No) and produced a document bearing the names of the men who ruled the city, which stated that to him should belong any dwelling into which he stepped as should any dinner he might desire; also, that any man whom he saw should serve him.

The agent seated himself in a chair, demanded dinner, washed himself

lay down, and, with his face turned toward the wall and on the point of falling asleep, asked: "Will you serve me?"

Herr Egge covered him with a blanket, drove away the flies, watched over his sleep, and hearkened to his wishes for seven years as on this first day . But of all the things he did for him, there was one thing he took care not to do; and that was to say one word. Now with the seven years passed and the agent grown heavy with too much eating, sleeping and commanding, the agent died . Herr Egge then rolled him up in the blighted blanket, dragged him from the house, washed the bed, whitewashed the walls, and taking a deep breath, replied: "No."

HERR K. AND THE CATS

Herr K. had no love for cats. He thought them no friends of man, and thus he was not their friend. "If we had similar interests," he said, "then I wouldn't mind their hostile attitude." But only reluctantly would Herr K. chase cats out of his chair. "It requires work to get some rest," he said, "they ought to have some success." And when cats yowled outside his door he rose from bed, even when it was cold, and let them into the warmth. "Their calculation is simple," he said, "if they call you, open for them. If you don't open for them any more, they don't call any more. Calling, that's progress!"

SOCRATES

Having read a book on the history of philosophy, Herr K. criticized the attempts of philosophers to represent things as basically unknowable. "Whereas the Sophists asserted that they knew much without having studied much," he said, "the Sophist Socrates came forward with the arrogant assertion that he knew that he knew nothing. One might have expected him to go on to say: I have studied nothing. (To know something, we must study.) He seems not to have said anything more—although perhaps the immense applause which broke loose following his first sentence, and which has continued for two thousand years, drowned out anything further."

CONVERSATIONS

"We've got to stop talking to each other," Herr K. said to a man. "Why?" asked the startled fellow. "When you are around, I say nothing rational," complained Herr K. "But I don't mind that," the other consoled him. "I believe it," Herr K. irritably said, "but I mind."

A GOOD REPLY

A worker was asked by a judge whether he prefered to take th sacred or secular oath. He replied, "I am unemployed."

"This wasn't because he was distracted," said Herr K. "By his answe he let them know that he was in a spot where such questions, and mayb the whole legal framework, no longer had a meaning."

CONVINCING QUESTIONS

"I have noticed," said Herr K., "that we frighten many people awa from our doctrine because we have an answer for everything. In the in terests of propaganda, what do you think of posting a list of questior which we consider unsolved?"

A QUESTION OF ENDS

Herr K. raised the following questions:

" Each morning my neighbor plays music on a phonograph. Wh does he play music? I am told: because he exercises. Why does he ex ercise? Because he needs strength, I am told. So why does he nee strength? Because he must beat down his foe in the city, he says. Wh does he have to beat down his foe? Because he wants to eat, I am told

When Herr K. had heard that his neighbor played music to exercis exercised to be strong, wanted to be strong so he could destroy his foe, an destroy his foe in order to eat, he put this question: "Why does he eat

THE INDISPENSABLE OFFICIAL

Herr K. heard it said, in praise of an official who already had been office for some time, that he was such a good official that he was indi pensable. "How is he indispensable?" Herr K. asked angrily. "The offi couldn't get along without him," said the other. "But if he is such good official, how come the office can't get along without him?" ask Herr K. "He's had time enough to organize his office so that he would dispensable. What has he actually been busying himself with? I'll t you: blackmail!"

TWO CITIES

Herr K. prefered City B to City A. "In City A," he said, "they lo me; but in City B they were friendly to me. In City A they made thei selves useful to me; but in City B they needed me. In City A they ask me to dinner; but in City B they asked me into the kitchen."

OETHE AT THE CROSSROADS

FREDERIC EWEN

N THE year 1787 a young German poet named Friedrich Schiller made his escape from the city of Stuttgart and brutal overlordship a petty tyrant, Duke Karl Eugen of Württemberg. He had already nposed a fiery declaration of independence, *The Robbers:* and had n imprisoned several times for acts of insubordination toward the al authority. Fired by these and other insults to his person, the of a poor army surgeon was destined to avenge himself ultimately. the comparative freedom he attained elsewhere, he wrote the most sionate of German denunciations of aristocratic tyranny, *Kabale und be,* and some years later a most moving of pleas for freedom of thought, *Carlos.*

In the year 1788 another Germon writer, Johann Wolfgang von the, some ten years older than Schiller, also fled. He fled, not from oppression of a tyrant—although the reigning Duke of Weimar, l August, was a typical example of the small "enlightened" despot of century, but from the conflicts engendered in his soul and mind, een the responsibilities and disappointments of his court office—he the Duke's Councillor of State—and what he felt to be his future ic growth. Behind him he had already a solid body of literary suc-es, the emotional revolutionary manifestos of the *Sturm und Drang*: novelette, *The Sorrows of Young Werther,* and the exciting drama eudal oppression and rebellion, *Goetz von Berlichingen.* Other mo-tous works were then already in preparation: the first sketches of *t,* and a good portion of *Egmont.* Goethe fled southward, toward warm and classical land of Italy.

Years later the two writers were to meet in Weimar, and form one

of those literary and spiritual unions that were to mark them as t "Dioscuri" of German letters.

It might be instructive to speculate for a moment on the significar of each of these "flights," especially because literary historians have be too prone to concentrate on the finished products of the later Weim collaboration.

Schiller's flight was one toward spiritual as well as physical fr dom—towards artistic self-realization and human dignity. The conc of "freedom" he was to develop was to be a practical as well as a theore cal one. Goethe fled what might be called unpleasant realities. His flig too forms the center of an artistic revolution and transformation, but an altogether different sort.

The major plays of Goethe which are the subjects of Mr. Ron Peacock's intelligent analysis* in one way or another are related to t "flight" from Weimar. *Goetz von Berlichingen, Clavigo,* and *Egm* antedate that event. *Iphigenie in Tauris, Torquato Tasso,* and the co plete *Faust* follow upon his return. These, in fact, epitomize Goe —or more correctly, the *two Goethes.*

One is the later Goethe—the becalmed Olympian, majestically lo ing down on Man and his Works, benign and wise, but altogether, "abo the battle." The other is the younger Goethe—too often forgotten deliberately obscured in favor of the "bourgeois humanist"—the youn Goethe, we say, storm-tossed, involved in history and its problems, p foundly concerned with the question of personal as well as political fr dom, writing plays and stories deeply rooted in historical actuality, wh the issues are fought out not in an idealized Hellenic or Renaissance gion, but in the Germany of the Protestant Revolt and the Peasants' W (*Goetz*), the Netherlands in the time of the Spanish oppression (*mont*), or Spain and France on the eve of the French Revolution (C *vigo*).

Goethe, unlike Schiller, was "Fortune's favorite," offspring of a w to-do patrician household in Frankfurt; but he was not, in his e years, the detached, aloof personality we have come to accept. Mr. P cock, it seems, has not always kept this fact in mind, otherwise he wo not have been at such great pains to detach his analysis of Goethe's p from their immediate historical and personal connections. Goethe deeply interested in the daily life of his fellow-citizens in Frankfurt; even of the "lower classes" he writes with understanding. Thus to dear friend, Frau von Stein, in 1777 he says that he is proud to asso

* *Goethe's Major Plays: An Essay,* by Ronald Peacock. Hill and Wang, Inc. $3.95

himself with "the class of people we call the lower classes . . . certainly the highest in the eyes of God." And when was he ever, in his later, more finished and perfected works, to give us such vivid pictures of humanity in movement as in *Goetz* and *Egmont?* Or how could all the later more refined and certainly more elegant visualizations of a *"Humanitätsideal"*—the ideal of humanity—equal the fervent pleas for freedom and justice in these plays and in their heroes? Mr. Peacock thinks of *Goetz* as provincial and narrow, likely to appeal only to an audience acquainted with the history of the German Reformation and the Peasants' Wars, but the theme certainly is a universal one, and the liveliness and vividness of the many scenes have lost nothing by being historically "fixed" in specific time and place. But even more important is the breath of revolt and criticism that animates both these plays and *Clavigo* as well. Goetz von Berlichingen struggles for the rights of the oppressed individuals, against a corrupt feudalism, against the tyranny of an oppressive legal system, against an exploitative church; even in the midst of the most pressing dangers he foresees a brighter future for humankind, and dies with the words "Freedom, Freedom" on his lips . Egmont, likewise, betrayed by his own equals, dies with a vision of certain freedom for the Netherlands. And Beaumarchais, a character in *Clavigo,* defends the rights of a middle-class human being, his own sister, against betrayal by a Spanish grandee.

These are the sentiments Goethe brought to Weimar, when he accepted the Duke's invitation. What he saw there amazed and horrified him; he proceeded to set reforms in motion; to alleviate the insupportable tax burden on the people; to curtail the wastefulness, luxury, and exploitation at the court; to extirpate the parasitism he saw all around him; he speaks of the "termites and tree-lice" that suck the life's juices from the populace, of a court where more is consumed "up on top" than is "produced down below." He succeded in abolishing the tithe; in restricting the right of chase. But most of his hopes were to be frustrated; court opposition was too strong, and Goethe finally came to the sad conclusion that most princes are . . . mad, stupid, and silly."

This was the reality he sought to escape. To vindicate his right to his own development as a poet and as a human being, he sought out the lovely regions of classical poetry and art, vicariously to be found in Italy —Greece's immediate surrogate. He came back to Weimar, to his duties, but the compromise had already been effected. He would be poet first and always. *"Entbehrung"*—self-denial; *"Entsagung*—renunciation; *"Beschränkung"*—self-limitation—these things become the battle-cries of the poet, battle-cries so easily taken up by a later generation, and ultimately

used to such disastrous and unfortunate ends!

In restricting himself almost exclusively to an aesthetic and ethical examination of the plays, and regarding these as primarily battle-grounds of personal struggles, Mr. Peacock has, it seems to us, impoverished his otherwise pleasant introductory study. For even *Torquato Tasso,* written after Goethe's return, is incomprehensible without an understanding of the bitterness Goethe, the poet, felt in relation to a court that, as Mr. Peacock, too, recognizes, regarded Tasso as some kind of "possession" (commodity, would be a juster word), without an understanding of the real dignity, worth and true nature of poetic genius. His wide reading of the Goethe literature could with profit have included Georg Lukács and Franz Mehring.

FREDERIC EWEN

THE PARTISANSHIP OF VINCENT VAN GOGH

JOSEPH FELSHIN

TO HIS brother Theo, patient, responsive, ever helpful Theo, Vincent Van Gogh once wrote: "If you and I had lived then"—he was referring in a letter written in August, 1884, to the revolutionary ferment that had swept France in 1848—"we might have stood as direct enemies opposite each other . . . on such a barricade, you before it as a soldier of the government, I behind it as a revolutionist or rebel."

This conviction, so vehemently hurled even against one as dear to him as Theo, was an expression of the fierce partisanship which permeated Vincent's outlook upon almost every facet of his environment and work. It keeps breaking through again and again in his vivid, profoundly self-revealing letters.* It is startling to discover, in one whose fame rests so solidly upon his work as a painter and graphic artist, not only such strongly held views, but their militant and conscious character.

Van Gogh was unfailing in his allegiance to the humble, the ordinary people around him, workmen, fisherfolk, peasants, men and women marled and hunched and furrowed by toil. His loyalty was almost never based solely or even primarily on mere personal compassion. It was a partisanship embracing sharply defined political and social concepts, markedly advanced for his day. And though Vincent never permitted differences with Theo to separate them, he was astute enough to discern that these disagreements, when they did arise, were basically ideological and connected with what he termed "the general drift of society."

"Neither you nor I," he wrote to Theo, "meddle in politics, but we live in the world, in society, and involuntarily ranks of people group them-

* *The Complete Letters of Vincent Van Gogh.* Three volumes. 1,876 pages. The New York Graphic Society. $50.00.

selves. . . . As an individual, one is part of all humanity," but—he em phasized the point—"that humanity is divided into parties."

Again and again, sometimes to Theo's annoyance, his letters kee reverting to the same theme. "There is an old civilization that, in m opinion, goes under by its own fault—there is a new civilization whic has been born, and grows, and will grow further. . . . In short, there ar *revolutionary* and *anti-revolutionary* principles."

"Then," Vincent maintained, again referring to the political upheaval of 1848, "it was a barricade of paving stones—now it is not of stone but a barricade as to the incompatibility of old and new."

He never doubted where *he* stood. "The one comes to a dead en . . . the other, on the contrary, has something infinite." He found intolerable that Theo, to whom he was so close, should seem to identif himself in his sympathies and views with the forces in society whic Vincent regarded as backward and stultified.

It was to Theo's conservatism in the main that Vincent attributed "th differences that have sprung up between us," and though Theo shunne politics and tried to avoid polemics, Vincent was not to be put off. Fo him there could be no middle ground—in letter after letter, he continue to press his arguments on Theo.

"The policy of floating beween the old and the new," he insiste "is not tenable. Sooner or later it ends with one's standing fully eithe to the right or to the left . . . whether we are *conscious* of it or not He pleaded with Theo: "Try to know for yourself where you really b long, as I try to know that for myself."

This ideological yardstick he applied not only in his estimate of pe ple and events, but also in his approach to artists and art. "As far as know," he asserted in a letter to the painter, Rappard, "there isn't single academy where one learns to draw and paint a digger, a sowe a woman putting the kettle over the fire, or a seamstress. . . . The figur in the pictures of the old masters do not *work.*"

In another letter to Rappard, written in May, 1883, Vincent spoke the French Revolution as "the central point—the Constitution of 178 being the modern gospel, no less sublime than that of 1 A.D." H love for Corot stemmed not only from his admiration for the latter as painter "simple as a workingman all his life, and so sensitive to th miseries of others," but because he had discovered, in reading a biograph of Corot, that during the epic days of the Paris Commune, in 1870 an 1871, "when he was already very old . . . he visited the ambulances whe the wounded were dying."

He could hardly contain his pleasure on learning that "the workmen Smulders" so admired one of his early prints, an engraving he had de of an old man from the almshouse, that "they asked the printer hey could have a copy to hang on the wall."

"No result of my work," he impressed upon Theo, "could please me ter than that ordinary working people would hang such prints in their m or workshop."

He confided to Theo that, even while reading Shakespeare, he found nself "wondering if the ideas of the people of those times were dif- ent from our own, or what would become of them if you confronted m with republican and socialist beliefs. . . ."

VERY question affecting the relation of the artist to the people in- trigued him, stimulating new ideas and projects. "If the painters nbined to take care that their work (which in my opinion is, after made for the people, at least I think this is the highest, noblest calling any artist) could indeed come into the hands of the public, and was ught within everybody's reach, that would be something. . . ."

"Of course," he explained to Theo, "a drawing must have artistic ue, but in my opinion this must not exclude the condition that the n in the street find something in it."

"It has always been my great desire," he wrote, "to paint for those o do not know the artistic aspect of a picture." Elsewhere, he ap- ved enthusiastically "the idea of drawing types of workmen from people for the people," and, pursuing this project to its logical goal, spread them in a popular edition . . . it would be a good thing—not mercially but as a matter of public service and duty."

"Instead of grandiose exhibitions, it would have been better to address self to the people and work so that each one could have in his home e pictures or reproductions."

"The existence of such papers as the *British Workman,* for instance," declared, referring to a London periodical he had come to read and ire during his brief stay in England, "can be a guide in showing how lo it and how not to do it."

Despite the occasional disagreements that cropped up between them, cent was too deeply attached to his brother to reject summarily Theo's cisms of his social and political views; but neither did he find it ible to accept them.

"It is perfectly true what you say: 'that if I made good pictures it is e likely I shall achieve something than by discussing revolutionary stions,'" he replied to one of Theo's reproaches. But his preoccupa-

tion with "revolutionary questions" persisted to the end. Indeed, th painter, Paul Signac, on a visit to Vincent at the asylum in Arles a fe days after the latter, in a volcanic mental seizure, had slashed off the lob of his ear, reported that "throughout the day he spoke to me of paint ing, literature, socialism."

Class lines, to Vincent, were always sharply drawn. "The labore against the bourgeoisie," he insisted, "is as justifiable as was the *tiers eta* against the other two (nobility and clergy—J.F.) a hundred years ag . . . fate is not on the bourgeois side."

This sustained concern with the ideological and political conflict of his day may not have been central to Vincent's life work, but it formed nevertheless, an important point of departure in his development, sharp ening and reinforcing his social consciousness, helping to shape and focu his political partisanship.

VINCENT'S outlook was undoubtedly related to his lifelong dependenc upon others, not only for his sustenance but for the very means wit which to paint. His personal poverty was such that during his whol life he could hardly call a single shirt, a brush, a tube of paint his own He was forced to rely almost entirely first upon his parents; then, up t the time of his death in 1890, at the age of thirty-seven, upon Theo And though his brother never failed to heed his sometimes frantic appeal for aid, even the means for sending these letters of desperation ofte depended upon Theo's bounty. "I found a stamp in my pocket," he wrot to Theo from the Hague, in January, 1882, "otherwise I would not be abl to send you this letter."

In dead earnest, he once explained to Theo, "I am short of mone just because I have painted more than I could really afford. . . . I inten to make the people gradually pay something, not in money, but by tellin them, you must give me *tubes of paint.*"

Forced at times to choose between paint for his canvas or food to sti the pangs of hunger, Vincent always and unhesitatingly chose to pain proclaiming with characteristic elan: "I am privileged above many other . . . In my opinion, I am often as *rich as Croesus,* not in money, but . . because I have found in my work something to which I can devote my self with heart and soul, and which gives inspiration and zest to my life

"For me," he told Theo, "the work is an absolute necessity. I canno put it off, I don't care for anything else but the work. . . . The pleasur in something else ceases at once . . . when I cannot go on with my work

His over-riding passion for painting enabled Vincent to endure fearf hardship even with a certain equanimity, though not until 1879, wh

inally shook off the hypnotic influence of religion, was he able to turn
n complete absorption to his first and true love—art. But those
nths between his break with the church and the resurgence of his crea-
activity were perhaps the most bitter and painful of his life. They left
nim a feeling of revulsion for organized religion. "That God of the
gymen," he wrote to Theo, "he is for me dead as a doornail." On
ther occasion, he expressed his repugnance for something by saying:
gives me the shudders, as if I were in a church." At the same time,
searing experience of finding himself rejected by the church to which
had dedicated himself with complete devotion, plunged him into a
e of despair from which he seemed unable to lift himself . He felt
nated from his family "like an intruder or an outcast." Even Theo
"to a certain degree . . . become a stranger."

To charges of laziness, leveled against him by relatives and friends
ou have gone down, you have deteriorated. You have not done any-
g . . . spending your days in idleness"), he insisted he was a man
e in spite of himself, who is inwardly consumed with a great longing
action, who does nothing because it is impossible for him to do any-
g, because he seems to be imprisoned in some cage, because he does
possess what he needs to make him produce."

He rejected, too, the accusation: "You have changed so much, you are
the same any longer."

> That is not quite true . . . my way of looking at things and my way
> f thinking, that has not changed. If there has been any change at all, it is
> nat I think and believe and love more seriously now what I already thought
> nd believed and loved then. . . .
>
> You must not think that I disavow things. I am rather faithful in my
> nfaithfulness, and though changed I am the same and my only anxiety
> : *how can I be of more use in the world?*
>
> That is what preoccupies me constantly, and then I feel myself im-
> risoned by poverty, excluded from participating in certain work, and cer-
> ain necessary things are beyond my reach . . . and then one feels an empti-
> ess where there might be friendship and strong and serious affections, and
> ne feels a terrible discouragement gnawing at one's very moral energy, and
> te seems to put a barrier to the instinct of affection, and a flood of disgust
> ses to choke one. And one exclaims "How long, my God!"

n his anguish, he despaired of making himself understood, even to
. "Our inward thoughts, do they ever show outwardly? There
be a great fire in our soul, and no one ever comes to warm himself
and the passers-by see only a little bit of smoke coming through

the chimney, and pass on their way." In those bleak and bitter day Vincent found himself, he knew not how or why, enrolled in what h called wrily "a free course at the great University of misery." But h never succumbed to that misery. "I try to avoid everything that has an connection with heroism or martyrdom."

"Grief," he wrote to Theo, "must not gather in our heart like wat in a swamp."

In a letter written in July, 1880, in which he tried to explain to Th the essence and real nature of his "failure" in society, Van Gogh demo strated remarkable insight into its class structure and social stratificatio

> One of the reasons why I am out of employment now, why I have been out of employment for years, is simply that I have other ideas than the gentlemen who give the places to men who think like they do. . . . Those people, when they are at the head of affairs, dispose of positions, and by a rotary system they try to keep their proteges in their place, and to exclude the other man. . . .

"It is not a simple question of dress as they have hypocritically r proached me, it is a much more serious question, I assure you," he we on, castigating the "gentlemen" as "detestable, tyrannical, the accumulati of horrors, men who wear a cuirass, a steel armor of prejudices and co ventions. . . ."

> Because I see so many weak ones trodden down, I greatly doubt the sincerity of much that is called progress and civilization. I do believe in civilization . . . but only in the kind that is founded on real humanity.

Even when, in the face of the violent opposition of his family, Vince was forced to give up the thought of marrying Christine, a rather beat and pitiful woman whom he had met in the Hague and whom he h come to love, his disappointment only strengthened his sense of iden fication with the working people, with the poor and disinherited. "I do not mind what anyone says," he wrote.

> We do not pretend to keep up any social standing. Acquainted with the prejudices of the world, I know that what I have to do is to retire from the sphere of my own class, which anyhow cast me out long ago . . . besides, I do not feel the least inclination or longing for it. . . . What I should like best would be to have fixed weekly wages, like any laborer, for which I would work with all my strength and energy. Being a laborer, I feel at home in the laboring class, and more and more I will try to live and take root there.

I cannot do otherwise. I do not want to do otherwise. I cannot understand any other way.

The fact that Christine was the mother of a small child and pregnant
another at the time he found her—considérations which distressed
o—in no way deterred Vincent. On the contrary, "This," he wrote
Theo, "takes away all stain from her. I respect a woman who is a
her and I do not ask after her past. I am glad she has a child. . . ."
At the same time, though prevented from marrying his "Sien," his
rs reveal the extraordinary purity of his concept of the love relaship. "For her and for me, it is indeed important," he wrote to
o, referring to their hopes of marriage, "but it is secondary to the
essence of the matter, the love and faith between us as it exists and
vs daily." The promise of marriage was, to Vincent, a promise "to
each other, to support each other, to cherish each other as if we were
ady married, by sharing everything together, to live all in all for each
er, not letting ourselves be separated by anything."
"Man and wife can be one," he assured Theo, "not two halves but
whole." He could not understand that this lofty sentiment might
be shared, or even comprehended, by "Sien."

O WITHSTAND the conditions of a life like his required a particular type of courage inherent in an attitude toward both life and art
dly expressed in a passage from one of his letters to Theo describing
challenge he found in "a blank canvas staring you in the face with a
ain imbecility."

> You do not know how paralyzing that staring of a blank canvas is; t says to the painter: *you can't do anything.* The canvas stares at you ike an idiot, and it hypnotizes some painters, so that they themselves become idiots. Many painters are afraid of the blank canvas, but the blank anvas is afraid of the really passionate painter who is daring—and who nce and for all has broken that spell of "you cannot." Life itself is also orever turning toward a man an infinitely vacant, discouraging, hopeless, lank side on which nothing is written, no more than on a blank canvas. But however vacant and vain and dead life may present itself, the man f faith, of energy, of warmth, and who knows something, does not let imself be led astray by it. He steps in, and acts, and builds. . . .

Even his earliest letters, which begin in 1873, confirm for us those ities in Vincent's character which can only be sensed in his paintings
restlessly probing mind, tenacity in the search for truth, unsparing
discipline toward his work. And these attributes were combined in
cent with an unblemished innocence, humility and goodness of heart,

and utter inability to lie or dissemble.

Far more than his paintings, his letters, of which more than sev hundred have been preserved, enable us to commune with the man, grasp the reality that Vincent in his paint-stained rags represents man his highest, man aspiring, struggling, aware—man *creative.* It is in letters that Vincent begins to emerge for us with a slow and measu grandeur, much as a statue might gradually, almost imperceptibly, emer from the massive stone block under the sculptor's chisel. *Suddenly,* begin to see *the whole man.* Suddenly comes awareness that in a through his letters he has imparted to us something of his own love humanity—his *belief in man.* Even "in moments when one does not c for nature any more," he wrote to Theo, "one still cares for humanit At the same time, his letters have led us, as the publishers state in th foreword, "as close to the creative process as we probably can get."

There was, indeed, a brief period during his formative years wh Vincent seriously considered the calling of a writer, then put it aside as art more and more possessed and dominated his life. But he remain keenly aware that "to draw in *words* is also an art which sometimes l trays the slumbering of a hidden force."

"Books and reality and art are for me alike," he affirmed, demandi in all three only that they be imbued with "more soul and more lo and more heart."

A tireless reader from his earliest years, Vincent had become rema ably fluent in English and French. Balzac, Tolstoy, Flaubert, Heine, V tor Hugo, Maupassant, the Goncourts, Zola were among his favorit Dickens, Longfellow and Walt Whitman he read in the original En lish, describing the last in a sparkling word-portrait as one who "sees the future, and even in the present, a world of healthy, carnal love, stro and frank—of friendship—of work—under the great starlit vault heaven. . . . At first, it makes you smile, it is all so candid and pure, it sets you *thinking* for the same reason."

Uncle Tom's Cabin, too, he read in the original, studying it with miration not only for its stark depiction of slavery in the United Sta ("there is so much slavery still in the world," he wrote), but becau as he explained to Theo, the author, Harriet Beecher Stowe, was woman—a matter of no small significance to one so free of the infect of male superiority.

Above all others, he adored Shakespeare. Here, too, his admirat found expression in terms uniquely the artist's. "My God, how beaut Shakespeare is!" he wrote to Theo. "His language and style can indeed compared to an artist's brush, quivering with fever and emotion." He

re-read *Hamlet, The Tempest, Henry IV, Timon of Athen, Romeo Juliet,* each time more moved, more deeply agitated than before. "I lf," he wrote, "after reading them for some time, feel obliged o out and look at a blade of grass, the branch of a fir tree, an ear of t, in order to calm down."

HERE is a serious and general misconception that Vincent was altoether unaware of his rare powers as an artist, that he groped blindly, crudely and clumsily, toward his vision, that magnificent paintings d their way onto his canvases by some inexplicable phenomena ature, as though he himself were nothing more than a blind instruality through which a fabulous creative genius found expression. The reality was altogether different. Allowing for the fact that every artist has moments of doubt, Vincent's passion to paint was rooted n unshakeable *conviction* that he had something to say in his art, thing durable, something of significance to the world. His innoe in worldly matters did not carry over into his art—when he stepped *that* threshold, he shed all naivete; especially in his later years, he ed with the confidence of a master.

I cannot help it that my pictures do not sell," he once wrote to , adding calmly, "Nevertheless, the time will come when people will hat they are worth more than the price of the paint."

Since the day I began to draw, have I ever doubted or hesitated or red? . . . I pushed onward and . . . grew stronger in the battle." If we can stand the siege," he assured Theo, "victory will come to ne day, in spite of our not being among the people who are talked t." And again, "In spite of much old and new sorrow, I feel less less doubt about my own future, both as to my work and as to lf."

A measure of this awareness of his own worth as an artist could be rned even in the first years after he had plunged into painting, when ologized to a friend, Kerssemakers, because he had failed to sign one s works given as a farewell present. "Actually," he wrote, "it isn't sary; they will surely recognize my work later on, and write about hen I'm dead and gone. I shall take care of that, if I can keep alive ome little time."

This promise, of course, Vincent redeemed. But it is also good to that there *were* others, particularly among his fellow artists, who ived something of Vincent's real stature as a painter. Some insight the regard in which he was held by other artists may be gleaned Theo's letter to Vincent while the latter was confined at the hospital

in St. Remy, informing him of the success of his paintings then showi in the notable exhibition of "the Twenty," in Brussels. The *Vingtis* included many of the most dynamic figures of the rising and still high controversial Impressionist movement.

In his letter, Theo told Vincent he had "read in a paper that the ca vases which arouse the curiosity of the public the most are the open-a study by Cezanne, the landscapes by Sisley, *the symphonies by Van Gog* and the works of Renoir."

At the even more important exhibition of "the Independents" whi opened in Paris a few months later, the exhibitors included, in additi to Van Gogh, such outstanding painters as Monet, Pissaro, Lautrec, Seur Gauguin, and others. Writing to Vincent on March 19, 1890, while t exhibition was still in progress, Theo sent a glowing account of the a claim accorded Vincent's canvases by many of the other participati artists.

Theo wrote that Pissaro, who had attended the exhibition every d "tells me that you have achieved a real success with the artists."

"Gauguin," he reported, "said that your pictures were the chief attr tion of the exhibition."

Gauguin himself, in a letter to Van Gogh in April, 1890, after havi "studied with great attention" the ten canvases which Vincent had su mitted to the Independents, declared "To many artists you are the m remarkable one in the whole exhibition. Among those who work fr nature, you are the *only one who thinks*"—a forceful tribute to Vinc both as a painter and a creative intellectual. Gauguin went on to p pose an exchange of one of his own canvases—*"anything of mine y choose"*—for one of Vincent's. "All congratulate you," he concluded.

What must perhaps have gratified him most was the praise of Mon "Who," Vincent had once asked, "will be in figure painting what Clau Monet is in landscape?" And now, "Monet," wrote Theo from Paris, "s that your pictures were the best of all in the exhibition."

ONE of the first to perceive his genius, Paul Signac, later descri with emotion the impact Van Gogh's paintings had made upon h on the occasion of his visit to the asylum at Arles. Although Vinc still, in Signac's vivid description, "had the famous bandage around head and wore his fur cap," he had recovered sufficiently to be permit to go out for a stroll with his visitor. Van Gogh, Signac recount "led me to his apartment in Lamartine Square, where I saw his marvel pictures, his masterpieces: *Les Aliscampes,* the *Night Cafe, La Berce* the *Lock,* the *Saintes-Maries,* the *Starry Night,* etc. Imagine

ndor of those white-washed walls, on which flowered those color- in their full freshness."

As for Theo himself, he was the first to recognize—and more than other he helped to nourish and sustain—the flame that burned in his her. "We can wait patiently for success to come," he wrote to Vin-. "You will surely live to see it . . . and it will come of its own rd by reason of your beautiful pictures." In every respect but the ng, his prophecy was fulfilled.

Over the years, Vincent had poured into his letters to Theo, illumi- ng them with hundreds of sketches, jottings and drawings, what ime became a treasury of intimate observations and commentaries problems of color, technique, composition, perspective. His knowl- e, acquired at a tempestuous pace in a race against time, crowded the single decade of the Eighties a wealth of daring experimenta- and innovation, particularly in the use of color, revealing always esh and completely unfettered approach to the complex problems he artist.

"Last year," he wrote to Theo, "I painted hardly anything but flowers order to get accustomed to using a scale of colors other than gray amely pink, soft and vivid green, light blue, violet, yellow, orange, red."

"There are," he explained, "colors which cause each other to shine liantly, which form a *couple,* which complete each other like man woman."

In another letter, he developed the thesis that "The real thing ot an absolute copy of nature but to know nature so well that what makes is fresh and true." In the same note, he expressed his eat longing to learn to make those very incorrectnesses, those devia- s, remodellings, changes of reality, that they may become, yes, un- h if you like—but more true than the literal truth"—a concept ch in no way violated or contradicted Vincent's passionate attach- t to nature and reality.

"As you know," he wrote to the artist, Bernard, in 1889, "once twice, while Gauguin was in Arles, I gave myself free rein with ractions . . . and at the time abstraction seemed to me a charming . But it is enchanted ground, old man, and one soon finds oneself against a stone wall. . . . I found danger in these abstractions." He led Bernard for the religious mysticism in several of his paintings. sonally," he wrote, "I love things that are real, that are possible." To Theo he expressed his firm belief that "the painter of the future be *a colorist such as has never yet existed. . . .* But this painter

who is to come—I can't imagine him living in little cafes, work away with a lot of false teeth, and going to the Zouaves' brothels, as I He derided reliance on "genius" and was scornful of the idea that g art would or could be created only by the gifted few endowed v extraordinary powers derived from "nature."

Though eighteen at the time of the Paris Commune and ba thirty when Karl Marx died in 1883, Vincent's letters give no ind tion that he was acquainted with the scientific thought of Marx Darwin. But he did take his place among the leading progres intellects and painters of his time, such as Courbet and Daumier, his colleagues, the socialists Pissaro and Signac, in arriving at a m rialist comprehension of the basic problems of his art.

"I think," he wrote to Theo, "that color, that chiaroscuro, that spective, that tone and that drawing, in short everything has fixed which one must and can study, like chemistry and algebra. Thi *by far not* the easiest view of things, and somebody who says: one must know it all by nature,' takes it very easily indeed. *If* that v sufficient! But it is not sufficient, for even if one knows ever so m *by instinct,* that is just the reason to try ever so hard to come f *instinct* to *reason.*"

"The laws of the colors are unutterably beautiful," he obser "just because they are *not accidental.*"

"Painters understand nature and love her," he declared, "and t *us to see her,*" which, perhaps more than anything else is what V cent's own art teaches. For if, in our time, painters like Bon and Soutine in France, or Nolde and Pechstein (who called Van G "a father to us all") among the German Expressionists, or fine colo like David Burliuk and Kay Harris among contemporary Americar if these, together with so many artists in other lands, proudly af their inspiration in the joyful art of Vincent Van Gogh, this affi derives above all from the fact that they have learned from Vin a new way of seeing—and loving—nature and people.

"To live, to work, and to love are really one," he wrote to T compressing into this simple affirmation the credo of a grandly manist philosophy of life and art. But such soaring concepts did blind Vincent to the commercialism and cannibalism of what he ter "this society of money and soldiers." To his sister, Wilhelmina voiced on one occasion the bitter complaint that "The exhibit the picture stores, everything, everything, are in the clutches of fel who intercept all the money. . . . People give a lot of money fo work *after* the painter himself is dead."

And yet, he never at any time attributed his frustrations to any particular philistine or charlatan, collector or critic. Vincent saw ly, with a wisdom that transcended immediate expediencies, the , the greed, the smugness of the bourgeois society in which he so desperately to live and work. He was crucified not because was "crazy" or "eccentric," but because his "lunacy" was com- ded by a principled refusal to swallow the corrupt standards and nercialized values of the respectable hypocrites who stood as pillars hat society. His integrity would not permit him to accommodate elf to the code by which the bourgeoisie lived and traded. To do ould have meant to betray the truth as he saw it, to compromise rt, to degrade his dignity as a man. In the end, after years of izing—though far from unsuccessful—struggle, when he felt he no er had the strength or means to continue his work, he preferred d his life.

HERE was a time in Vincent's youth, before he had fully found his art, when troubled, confused, groping to discover his path, he turned eligion, thinking within the church to realize the possibilities of g the most and best of himself to mankind. It was a difficult, ed period in Vincent's life. One should not perhaps be surprised in the very first sermon he preached, he chose for the theme of liscourse—of all things—*death*. To so intense, virile and poetic n as Vincent, then in the full vigor of young manhood, that ulti- and most irrevocable fact—death—must have seemed utterly l. True, Vincent's fixation upon death imbued his sermon with ones of hope and exaltation, but at the heart and center of it was an abysmal despair.

We only pass through the earth," he cried, gazing from the pulpit the faces of the congregation before him.

We only pass through life," was his anguished cry. "We are strang- d pilgrims on earth."

was a different Vincent who spoke out a decade later. It was the of a man seasoned and matured by years of intense creative labors, estling with and overcoming the mighty angel of his art. It was a who had sought and found in painting the language which most expressed the love he felt for mankind, who had grown in heroic gle into an impassioned partisan of humanity.

was a Vincent who, summing up a lifetime of deprivation, denial, er and neglect, could nevertheless render the simple judgment: *There is nothing more truly artistic than to love people.*"

THE COURAGE OF PHILIP EVERGOOD

ALICE DUNHAM

AT ANY time, an artist needs a peculiar quiet courage to keep
vision from being dimmed by the smiles and silences of friends a
critics. But during the last twenty years, when non-objective and abstr
expressionist painting has been dominant, when a recognizable subj
has been almost automatic grounds for rejection, it has taken tenacity
paint apart from the dominant mode. And this is what Philip Evergo
has done, not without hardship. It was especially interesting to see,
his recent large retrospective exhibition at the Whitney Museum
American Art, the cumulative effect of his work.

Some artists have a way of putting the whole world they paint throu
a sort of meat-chopper of their personal style. No matter what they lo
at or feel, the result can be anticipated in a certain combination of col
a certain breaking up of form, a certain kind of texture. Philip Evergo
does not do this. He seems to come freshly to each canvas, to find the n
particular form and composition, the new particular color and textu
which the canvas requires. This demands vitality, a great deal of cari
about the world and the medium of paint. And this is Philip Evergo

This very diversity in his work makes a short study difficult. Bu
would like to consider the main content which emerges from this ret
spective show and to consider how Evergood's techniques vary with
content.

Stated most generally, the content is made up of two main categor
the social and the lyrical. Within these two main groups of works,
sense of wit about what is, and his sense of fantasy about what might
heighten his statements and help him to find the paint language for w
he feels. He is rarely simply declarative.

During the nineteen-thirties, the whole wild vitality of the American scene found form on Evergood's canvases. In *Art on the Beach,* a painting only thirty-five by fifty-one inches, there are twenty-four people either painting or watching painters, two extra sets of legs, a dog, an anchor, a model with an oar, a dozen or so canvases, fifteen boats, a wharf, two airplanes, and that's not all.

How did Evergood hold this teeming paint in place? First, there are strong light areas and dark areas—not just light and shadow throughout areas—and his color is subservient to this end. Then there are linear accents for clarity. Evergood has used the knowledge gained from two years of drawing at the Slade School in London to create an arabesque of pattern. Finally, he has used what you might call psychological perspective, allowing objects to be large or small according to their importance. The Egyptians, of course, did this for several thousand years, and children continue to do it. But this does not mean that the method is used naively. It is child-like, not childish. It is the result of choice and control. In flattening out the space, the profusion can form an organized pattern.

The effect of *Art on the Beach* as social comment is warm, friendly, and amused. In the *Treadmill,* a fantastic pattern of signs and people forming a rich texture of horizontal stripes, the mood is also that of the genial observer. In the moving crowd on the pavement, the group forming the lowest horizontal stripe, the women are all painted with accents drawn so that their clothes look transparent. The drawing is a little reminiscent of George Grosz, the passing crowd a little like John Sloan, but the painting as a whole is unmistakably Evergood.

In *The Siding,* railroad workers, gathered in and about a handcar, engage in a card game. For Evergood, this painting has great simplicity: the men are all united psychologically in the game, and they form an integrated pattern. The handcar is a beautiful blend of reality and fancy, a rich chartreuse, scrolled gingerbread design, and a compartment for wrenches. Above all is a serene sky.

But one year later, in 1937, there are three paintings of agony. *American Tragedy* (the Memorial Day Massacre) has a foreground of strong, mechanized figures advancing solidly with guns and clubs. This insistently dark, menacing mass is contrasted with the light, broken forms of the falling workers. Evergood's literary statement is clear, but the design speaks the same language. The stress and strain of lines and mass in his non-objective language express the same conflict.

In *Mine Disaster,* Evergood uses tonality to convey death and suffering. The whole painting is dark. Only spots of light from the lamps on

the miners' caps relieve the gloom and reflect the horror on the fac of those gathered together but unable to help. By contrast, in *Fasc Company,* painted in 1942, Evergood uses symbolism to convey h meaning. Death, in the person of the two fascist leaders, rides not pale horse but a later descendant of Uccello's horses crossed with a stra of de Chirico's.

The Pink Dismissal Slip portrays the anxiety or despair felt by tho in the depression period who had no hope of jobs and nowhere to tur Evergood has built his whole composition around the pink slip which held up toward a weak electric bulb—since the slip must be read. Th painter (a self-portrait) looks with stunned attention at the message. door behind the painter emphasizes the figure in the composition. With the studio door is an easel, now become useless. On the stairway a older woman, occupied with her own letter, walks up alone. All the lin of the compositon isolate the figure and leave him only with the ine capable pink slip.

Might this be called genre painting, portrayal of some ordinary scen in everyday life? This was, unfortunately, an incident of everyday life the Thirties—and dismissal slips are not unknown today. But gen painting outgrows itself when it somehow achieves scale. Vermee paintings of Dutch interiors are of everyday life, but their compositio their control of tone and color, are so exquisite that they grow into grander category. The skill which Evergood displays in taking an ord nary event and painting its essence gives his work great distinction. An he does not use the easy device of giving his canvases importance simply making them big—a device much in fashion at the present tim As one of the signs read in the recent amiable picketing of the Museu of Modern Art, "How large can a canvas get with nothing on it?"

In all of his social comment I feel that Evergood is saying, "I ca about people." Thi is somewhat different from the social criticism Jack Levine, who, in his handsome paintings, emphasizes human sho comings. I think that the difference derives from the fact that Eve good tends by implication to criticize the social structure itself rath than the acts of individual persons. This approach leads to compassi rather than bitterness.

In one canvas, however, *Threshold to Success* (1955-1957), Eve good uses harsh wit and harsh line to portray a young man new equipped with the accoutrements of education—football pants and mortarboard hat. Although a dozen young ladies almost innocent clothes swarm about his head like the insects in the canvas, the you man has one preoccupation—getting ahead, getting himself ahead.

has appetite without love. Hard lines contain the pallid area of his neck and face. The tensed muscles of his neck, the tight small mouth, the slightly distended nostrils, but most of all the hard staring eyes, outlined by the dark sharp pattern of the glasses, reveal relentlessly the hardening of a human being. The glory of education as a great humanizing experience has been quite perverted.

In this canvas the color as such is inconsequential. The black and white reproduction adequately gives the main feeling of the painting. Lines, hard lines, show the dehumanized engine grinding along the track of success.

By contrast, Evergood paints with poetic compassion in his large canvas *The New Lazarus,* developed from 1927 to 1954. Though it is full of symbolism, this painting makes its final impact through the medium of paint itself. The pervasive areas of gray blue are set off by smaller areas of near white, rich dark, some ochre, and red. The textures range from smooth solid paint to dark thorny patterns against the blue-gray sky.

The symbolism is an astonishing combination of ancient religious iconography and contemporary material: the crucified Christ and the white dead soldier also wearing a crown of thorns, the lynched Negro and the suffering Lamb of God, the mourners and the indifferent ones in the pose of the see-nothing, hear-nothing, say-nothing monkeys. Out of this welter the new Lazarus rises; out of this grief and suffering also rise cleansing anger, and then love and hope.

This positive feeling for people leads Evergood into lyrical expression, full of fantasy and tenderness, especially in the paintings of his wife. *Juju as a Wave* conveys in its floating figure some of the delicacy of Boticelli's *Birth of Venus.* The colors are fragile, the brushwork subtle, and only the dark, thin branch of a tree has the sharp angular accents common in some of his other work.

In one of his larger canvases, worked on over a period from 1931 to 1955, *David Playing to King Saul,* Evergood uses almost flat areas of pale color against chalk-white accents. The whole canvas sings with a sweet clarity. In *Woman at Piano,* also painted in 1955 and almost the same size of canvas, Evergood uses linear accents to give the special vitality to this work. The lines in the floor become active ridges, insistently drawn like details in Henri Rousseau's paintings. Only the equally insistent but delicately drawn texture of fern-like forms emerging from a vase on the piano, the black and white accents of music in the singer's hands, and the detail of a cityscape seen through the window hold down the extraordinary activity of the floor. Some credit

should also be given to the large flat dark area of the piano with white vase, and the white figure of the young women, delightful her diaphanous gown.

A whole series of nudes provide Evergood with material for h wit. *Nude by the El,* in a pose made famous from Titian to Man reclines on a vivid orange sofa. But the room, instead of having velv drapes and romantic vistas, contains a wicker chair, a pot-bellied stove, a beyond the window, an elevated train!

In conversations with I. H. Bauer, who wrote the excellent catalog for the Whitney exhibition, Evergood said of his progress in paintin "I wanted to be as free and as daring as a Pollock, and I wanted to as disciplined as a Giotto—if I could." This is the freedom to allo the incredible color or pattern or form to happen, but then to subje each part to the disciplined needs of the canvas as a whole. These a the creative decisions that every artist must make in the course completing a work. If he lacks courage, he will continue to paint f the rest of his life his first successful painting, and so he will fail develop fully through fear of failure. If, however, he has courag he may occasionally fail to produce a thoroughly success canvas, b he will succeed in true growth. This second creative courage is Eve good's way. There is an unevenness in performance, but so many his canvases succeed that we can only be grateful for his daring. H retrospective exhibition, then, sparkles as a whole, and the canvas complement each other with their diversity.

NOTE: The Evergood retrospective exhibition may be seen from June through April, 1961 in various cities of the United States. Places and da are as follows: Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, June 8-July 7; Wadswo Athenaeum, Hartford, Conn., Aug. 3-Sept. 11; Des Moines Art Center, Se 28-Nov. 6; San Francisco Art Museum, Nov. 23-Jan. 2; Colorado Springs Fi Arts Center, Jan. 18-Feb. 26; Munson-Williams-Proctor Institute, Utica, N. Mar. 15-April 30. Mr. Evergood's gallery is the ACA in New York City.

'HOUSANDS ARE BUYING

VERNA WOSKOFF

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erybodyelse is, everybodyelse is,
erybodyelse is, so why aren't you?

ink the drink Your Neighbors are drinking;
ink the bingbang action drink,
k for CYANIDE
nd you'll never ask for any other.

your firstborn baby,
ith his skin as sweet and slippery as the inside of a seed,
eamed of owning a gleaming shoot-em-dead shotgun
st like the one Lester from upstairs showed him yesterday,
ould you frustrate him and isolate him
om the love of his buddies?
course not. (*Would you?*)

d if those printed pictures on the pink and yellow squares
ith the funny fiends and monsters and the nice naked victims
rned his mind into a cavern overrun with snakes,
uld you cut him off from the bewitching world of other children?
turally not. (*How could you?*)

erybodyelse is, everybodyelse is,
erybodyelse is, so why aren't you?

books in review

A Suspense of History

THE DEVIL AND THE GOOD LORD, and 2 Other Plays by Jean Paul Sartre. Alfred A. Knopf Inc. $5.00.

IT HAS been left to Alfred A. Knopf Inc. to save the New York 1959-60 theater season by publishing this volume of plays by Sartre. Knopf's financial risk is undoubtedly less than that of Broadway producers, but even the least of the three plays here published reminds us that Sartre is more theatrical and rewarding a playwright than Anouilh, Camus or Giradoux with whose works Broadway was willing this winter to run the gauntlet of newspaper reviewers and theater parties organizers. One cannot predict that *The Devil and the Good Lord* would not have baffled these arbiters of the theater, but it would have pleased or aroused to lively argument those who still hope to find in the theater ideas, situations and characters important enough to consider and discuss after the last curtain call. Nowadays the playgoer is usually left only the actor's performances to weigh seriously, a concern that has its rewards and charms, but which, let us hope everyone agrees, is subordinate.

A production of *The Devil and the Good Lord* would put all criticism of it in the proper light: it would sho to use the Broadway verb, whether t play "works." A play can only le a full life on the stage; between c ers, it is, like the iceberg, consid ably hidden from view. We have seen any notices of the Paris prod tion of 1951, and it is only from re ing the play that it seems to us to capable of exciting dramatic life. "works" in the grand manner t Shakespeare's histories do; its sce take you from one dramatic action another, never fussing with sets or details of place, yet always taking ti for the homely and personal that m the great passions, the grand imag of the language, and the turbulent tions seem real. Its scenes have freedom and mobility that the epic the drama requires, and the ph sophical and psychological concerns Sartre's characters are set, like Shak peare's soliloquies, in actions that sustain these concerns. This seems p ticularly true to us in the first act wh the scene and the problems are and lacking a production of the play analyze, one has to turn to its sub and its point of view to explain w the rest of the play is not as effectiv dramatized as its masterful beginni

As the publishers state on the jac Sartre obviously knows and consid sixteenth century Germany, with peasant revolts, an era from wh

ıe can draw much significance. Interıtingly enough, so did Friedrich ıgels who wrote a study on it, *The easant War in Germany*. Engels at s death was preparing to recast and ılarge it into what promised to be major historical study. Of course one nnot ask of Sartre's play that it teach as much of the period as Engels' ıdy, but if Engels is often concerned show the relevance of class actions ıring the peasant war to the revoluon of 1848, Sartre is engaged exclurely with modern psychological and ilosophical problems, particularly ith the problems of personal commitent to social struggles.

Sartre's ideas are compelling, but, reflection, they seem to have little ason for being in the historical pe-od in which his characters live. His ro is the only character whose name ows up in histories of the period. ıe real Goetz was a traitorus genıl who changed sides on several ocsions, but this is the only characristic of his that Sartre used. Otherse, he has placed Goetz in incidents th which he was not connected. owever, the situations and characters rrounding him are inspired, in some es, by actual ones. The characters' ıcern with God, theology, the Church certainly valid, for, as Engels notes, class struggles of the time "hid mselves behind a religious screen. ." But where Engels looks behind screen to show the forces that make tory, Sartre does so to reveal how individual struggles with these conts and institutions in order to free ıself.

At the play's start, Goetz is leading army of mercenaries in the service the Church and has laid siege to the city of Worms which is in the hands of the burghers and "the people." The alliance of Goetz, a bastard son of a prince, with the Church is as uneasy as that of the burghers with the city poor. Goetz, however, stands off from his historical position in a way that the others do not; he suffers an alienation that appears very modern. He is demonic in his insistence on destroying Worms and listens neither to the Church nor to the burghers who, given their material interests, do not want to see the city physically leveled. He is intent on doing evil both as a general and as a human being in his personal relations.

On the night before he hopes to take Worms, two men come from the besieged city to appeal to him. One is Heinrich, a hypocritical priest who has pretended to love the poor and who gives Goetz the keys to the city, thus betraying the people of Worms, in the hope that Goetz will spare the priests. The other is Nasti, a prophet revolutionary, who, learning that the city has been betrayed, takes this desperate means of persuading Goetz to join with "the people from the city and the peasants from the fields." Goetz rejects both their appeals, but his egoism is piqued when the priest tells him Goetz's evil-doing is not remarkable, since everything man does results in evil. As the first act curtain is about to fall, Goetz, to disprove the priest, resolves to do good.

This first act shows us Sartre at his very best, able to write mass scenes that with remarkable economy allow the characters to reveal themselves with real definition. A good half-dozen characters, of the most diverse social positions, come forward in a series of

explosive scenes, each with enormous potential for dramatic action yet all held in perfect balance, so that an intricate canvas comprising a total social portrait is vividly composed. Nasti, Heinrich, the Archbishop, the Banker, Goetz's mistress are able to achieve the typical because they so richly express themselves as people imbedded in the social fabric. "O Lord," exclaims the Archbishop, "on my golden coins the thumbs of my subjects have worn away my effigy; and now Thy terrible thumb is wearing away my flesh!"—and he immediately comes alive.

In this first act Sartre also demonstrates his unusual talent for the dramatic expression of feelings and ideas that can—as later in the play—also hide his faults and seem merely sensational. To show Goetz's cruelty in personal relations, for example, he maintains the audience in suspense throughout a long scene in which many actions take place by holding out the possibility from the first that Goetz may deliver his mistress to the soldiers to be their whore. To this, on another but related level, is added in the same scene the uncertainty of how Goetz will react to the appeals of the priest and the revolutionaries; and their possible fates hover frighteningly before the audience.

To give another example, Sartre can quickly dramatize such a complex of factors as the nature of Goetz's men, his relations with them, the self-hatred of the traitor priest, and the imperturbability of the revolutionary Nasti, in a short exchange, as the following:

Heinrich: I betrayed my city out of spite and malice; I deserve to be scorned by everyone. Spit in my face. and let there be no more of this. (Nasti does not move.) You, soldier, spit!

Frantz: (*Gaily, to Goetz*): Shall spit?

Goetz: (*With equal gaiety*) Sp my boy, and do a good job while you at it!

Sartre's sense of drama and abili to shock cannot, however, entire hide from us the narrow concerns the rest of the play, for after the fi act the play becomes the story Goetz's failures: he is unable to achie communion with the people or Go After giving up his attempt to do goo for the people, he goes through th depths of fasting and self-mortific tion until he comes to realize that h defeats have come about because his reliance on God, on a sign fro Him that good is rewarded and th its effects can be predicted. There is God, he realizes, and consequently is free though alone. Having come this awareness, he can then respond the appeal of the prophet revolutio ary. Nasti, to join the world of m for what he is: an extraordinarily c pable general who can lead the pea ants in their fight. "I shall rema alone with this empty sky over m head, since I have no other way being among men," he says as makes his choice. "There is this w to fight, and I will fight it."

Having endured with Goetz all t tortured experiences that life deals hi when he tries to do good, the read may respond to this ending with lief, an emotion unintended by Sa tre. Good, good, one is sorely tempt to feel, Sartre has come out on "t right side." Or, as in a Hollywo movie, one can be beguiled into wal ing into this sunset, without aski just what that gorgeous glow is ma of. When the roll is called up yond Sartre will probably be there, but f

the sake of the rest of us, it is necessary to decide whether there would be fewer casualties on another road to the pearly gates.

It is right that Sartre should ask us to commit ourselves to the good fight, but the body of his literary work is always more concerned with the tenets of existentialism than with the *actualities* of the good fight. Commit yourselves, he says, with the full knowledge that there are no assurances from God or man. Most of us would be willing to give up God as he asks, but Sartre cannot blame us for hesitating before we give up history as well. If one refuses to learn from history or take heart from it, one's decision to become "engaged" can be as noble as Sartre's heroes but it can also be of very little use.

It is interesting that Sartre can end his play about the peasant revolts on such a calm and heroic note—though we all know how disastrously they did end. Engels was only writing an historical study, but he could not be so calm. He is angry with the stupid leadership of the peasants and continually points out how their short-sightedness frequently defeated them. There is something healthier and more human in this rage than Sartre's noble dedication, in the pose of his hero "engagé" before the abyss. One can understand Engels at the end of his life still feeling restive about the study he had done; he wanted to come back to it and redo it in greater depth, for the seed of development of modern Germany, he felt, was to be found in that configuration of heroism and defeat of the sixteenth century. Engels was still trying to extract useful lessons from history and so could not be Olympian.

One cannot ask Sartre to make history his subject, but one can ask him not to deny it. After the first act, Sartre wrenches his hero from the real situation of the times, and proceeds to the argument, implicit here but overt in his novels and philosophic works, that history has nothing to give us. If Sartre felt differently, an immediate good effect might have been the avoidance of those rigged little parables of the second and third acts which, despite Sartre's dramatic inventiveness, make the play less and less compelling. Although the revolutionary Nasti stands at Goetz's side at crucial moments to guide him to a realistic approach to struggle, one is always aware that Goetz is involved in a philosophical problem, not a real situation. One sees him think, but less often sees him live. We do not mean to say that Sartre has not extracted revealing emotions and motives out of the setting of sixteenth century Germany; but the uneasy feeling remains that the sealed enclosure of *No Exit* is still the best setting for the core of what Sartre has to say.

Mention should also be made of the wit and charm of the other two plays in this collection: *Kean,* a farce about the nineteenth century actor Edmund Kean; *Nekrassov,* a satire on anti-Soviet propagandists. It must also be said that, different as these plays are in material and tone, their heroes all have to some extent the same psychological preoccupations. But only in *The Devil and the Good Lord* are they raised to the philosophical level common to existentialist heroes.

FELIX GUTIERREZ

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