AUGUST, 1961
50 cents

Mainstream

ERNEST
EMINGWAY

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NEGRO
DUCATION
AND THE
COURTS

Leon
Josephson

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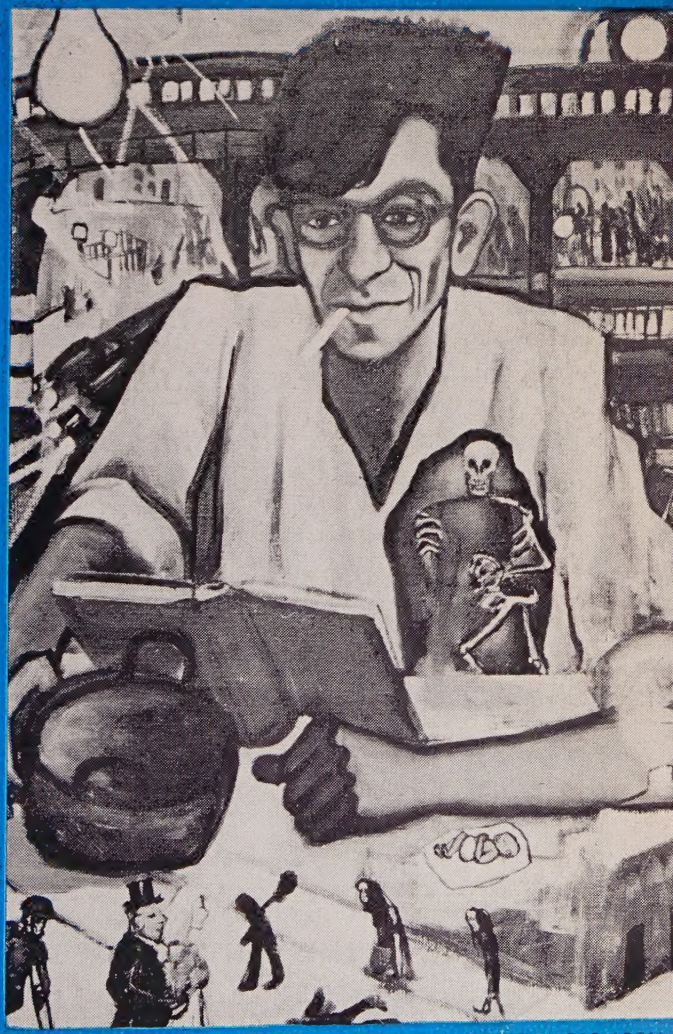
Sidney
Finkelstein

ON
HAKESPEARE



KENNETH FEARING (1902-1961)

POEMS by KENNETH FEARING

Vol. 14, No. 8

Mainstream

AUGUST, 1961

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Among Our Contributors

Leon Josephson, the noted attorney, is author of the *Individual and Soviet Law. Kenneth Fearing,* whose poetry we republish in this issue, was a former contributor to the *New Masses. Sidney Finkelstein* is the well-known Marxist critic. Recently he has taught a course in Shakespeare at the New York School for Marxist Studies. *Gyorgy Sos* is a Hungarian author. The prize-winning radio play which we publish in this issue first appeared in the *Hungarian Quarterly,* an English language journal of excellent quality.

Next Month

We will feature a study of the celebrated English novelist C. P. Snow by *Sidney Finkelstein.* No author writing in English ras received so much attention in recent years as this noted scientist and man-of-letters. This is the first full Marxist appraisal of the man and his work and will undoubtedly be of interest to readers in both the United States and Great Britain. *John Pittman* will be represented by an exciting piece on Soviet Estonia.

in the mainstream

Eichmann Trial By the time this editorial appears in print, the Eichmann trial will no doubt have been concluded, the verdict pending. Nobody, we think, will add that justice has been done. The death or the imprisonment of no man, nor group of men,—certainly not the death of that whining "cog," Eichmann—can ever wipe out or atone for the crime of crimes—German fascist genocide.

The dead cannot be brought back to life. But if the living are to be saved—and the descendants of those alive today—other conclusions must be drawn than those that have appeared in the press, or those that Ben-Gurion himself has officially declared: that the mass murder of Jews was the result of anti-Semitism, as though anti-Semitism had no roots in social forces, but like original sin, was the stigma of Christian men and women at birth.

If there is a feeling of anti-climax aroused by the daily sight of a little man sitting behind a bullet-proof glass, with an indelible smirk on his undistinguished features, it is because, we think, the equation that the trial establishes between this man and the crimes of Nazism is felt by everyone to be inherently absurd. Nor can the crime of fascism be proven in a court after the same principles of evidence by which a pick-pocket is convicted. For, meanwhile, Gen. Adolph Heusinger, surely as guilty as Eichmann ever was, came to Washington, D.C., as an official of NATO ready to carry out by more deadly, more universally destructive weapons, precisely the same policy that Hitler, Mussolini and Tojo failed in, and for which Eichmann is today standing trial. General Speidel, his hands as crimson with the blood of the innocent as any of the Nazis, is given a high post in NATO. Hans Globke, another well-known criminal, is a leading member of Adenauer's cabinet. West Germany is polluted with hundreds upon hundreds of judges who sent under Hitler thousands of anti-fascists to the firing squal and continue to send anti-fascists to long prison terms now under

Adenauer. Theodore Oberlander, another murderer, was dismissed from Adenauer's cabinet only when the exposure of his crimes made it no longer possible to retain him. But the political policy, the point of view that accepted these men—these collaborators of Hitler—remains, as Konrad Adenauer has made amply, and convicingly, clear.

We remember Chancellor Adenauer's statement to Pope John in Rome, in January, 1959: "I believe that in these calamitous times we are traversing God has entrusted a special task to the German people—that of being a dike for the West against the powerful influence that militates against us from the East."

And when West German Nazis painted swastikas across synogogues, David Ben-Gurion felt it necessary to chide those Israelies who were shocked that his government could agree to supply West Germany with Israeli-made sub-machine guns and other arms: "There is anti-Semitism, there is Nazism, perhaps in high places. But this does not make a people a nation of murderers. . . ."

But it is not the people who make policy in West Germany. It is Adenauer and the financial cabal whom he represents who make policy now as they made policy with Hitler. The faces—and not even too many of them—change; but the ideas remain, the aim is still *drang nach osten.* Hitler's greatest crime, in their eyes, was not that he was wrong in wanting to destroy the working class in Europe and dominate the world for German imperialism—but that his methods were wrong. Nothing that has happened in Germany, nor on the international scene, warrants any other conclusion.

If all that the Eichmann trial accomplishes is to remove the smirk from that little fiend's face, then it will have succeeded in obscuring rather than exposing the true nature of the terrible danger that confronts mankind today, and at this moment, most critically at the focal point of Berlin.

The real history of German fascism does not emerge at this trial. This is no accident, we are afraid. Even before it began, Ben-Gurion hastened to define away its real meaning, and to substitute instead the abstract drama of man's continuing inhumanity to man. The criminal was to be sought in ourselves, in our evil natures, and not where it really exists—in world imperialism, first of all in the American-German combination. Once before the West was led to believe that German imperialism would accept the role of shock troops in the war against the world's first working class state. Millions upon millions died. And once again, as though nothing that has happened has had any real meaning, as though the millions of dead were just a dream, the same

forces which produced the terrible calamity in the first place continue to set up the conditions for a reenactment of the same crime, now on a level that places the very future of humanity itself in the balance. Hitler declared that if he fell, he would bring down Europe with him. The American-German combination now threatens to reduce all of humanity to rubble if it cannot have its way.

The Eichman trial must teach the people that fascism was not the invention of a single mad man, Adolph Hitler; just as the death of an obscure American soldier named John Birch cannot be the power that has set such sinister forces into motion in the United States. Nor is anti-Semitism the heart of the meaning of fascism: fascism is aimed at crushing the working class in each country by the financial oligarchy in order to ensure the supremacy of that class on a national and world level. Anti-Semitism is primarily a means and not only an end. The end is to destroy men's hope in a better life for himself and his children.

America must not be allowed to pick up the bloody crusade of anti-Communism where Hitler laid it down. For the road between anti-Communism and Buchenwald is straight and narrow. The bloody regime of Hitler is not to be atoned for by sending a little man called Eichmann to the gallows. Hitler and all his works, everything he stood for, must be rooted out of life entirely; and the source of fascism—of war—is not to be found in this or that personality, or combination of personalities: it is to be found where it exists—in world imperialism, with American imperialism taking the leading role, with Germany once again assuming the role of cut-throat and executioner. Let the trial of Eichman be followed with a complete purge of West German militarists, from top to bottom. There is no other way to peace in our time.

ERNEST HEMINGWAY: 1898-1961

THE death of Ernest Hemingway from a self-inflicted gunshot wound, on July 2, was mourned in every part of the world where books are read. There were American writers of his generation as much admired as he, perhaps more. It may be that posterity will rate some of them higher than he. But none commanded the affection he did. And the reason was that there was love for the working people in his books, so that millions looked upon him as a friend.

The working people, as Hemingway saw them and wrote of them, are connected to the working class, but not to be confused with it. The working class, organizing itself, conscious of the manner of its exploitation and of its role in history, never did enter his books. One finds hardly a mention of those who labor in mines and factories, of strikes, trade unions and working class political parties. Hemingway's people, whom he saw as the salt of the earth, could be farmers, peasants, hunters, fishermen, newspaper reporters, boxers and bull fighters. What was characteristic of them was that they supported themselves with hands and mind, did honest work, hired and exploited nobody, sought to take advantage of nobody, and did not assist at the exploitation of others. To him they were the underdogs of society. In war time they were the common soldiers, sent to be mangled and killed. In peace time they were lied to, cheated and robbed.

Hemingway saw their plight as hopelessly tragic. The tone in which he wrote of them reminds one of Gloucester's lines in *King Lear*:

> *As flies to wanton boys are we to the gods,*
> *They kill us for their sport.*

But of course to Hemingway, it was not the "gods" who so played with other people's lives. It was the people of wealth, the gentry of high position, the rulers of society and high officialdom who were callous to the

sufferings they inflicted on others. These "two worlds" of Hemingway are marked out, for example, in this passage from *A Farewell to Arms,* the novel of the Italian front in the First World War:

> There were small gray motorcars that passed going very fast; usually there was an officer on the seat with the driver and more officers in the back seat. They splashed more mud than the camions even and if one of the officers in the back was very small and sitting between two generals, he himself so small that you could not see his face but only the top of his cap and his narrow back, and if the car went especially fast it was probably the King. He lived in Udine and came out in this way nearly every day to see how things were going, and things were going very badly.
>
> At the start of the winter came the permanent rain and with the rain came the cholera. But it was checked and in the end only seven thousand died of it in the army.

This passage gives also the characteristic tone of Hemingway's style. It is a parody of a state of innocence, the mind clean of all social memories, associations and moral judgments, only seeing and recording. But through what is seen, the suppressed bitter feelings rush out at the reader, and as in a "poker face" humor, little touches beckon to the reader to fill in his own judgments and conclusions. One recognizes the exalted personage of the king by the fact that he is so small, so that one only sees his cap, between two stalwart generals. He goes out daily to "see how things are going." What he does about it, nobody knows. Cholera comes, but it is "checked." This is a magnificent victory. Only seven thousand soldiers died. It could have been seventy thousand. To the noble personages in their high eminence, the common people are just so many statistics.

Beyond this presentation of "two worlds," Hemingway rarely goes. There is fierce hatred for the one, with its arrogance, pretensions, illusions of greatness, selfishness, hypocrisy, callous misuse of other human beings, and boundless love for the other. The "underdogs" represent and embody his own morality; honesty and courage. Typical is what he says, in the same novel, of Catherine Barkley, the English nurse:

> If people bring so much courage to this world the world has to kill them to break them, so of course it kills them. The world breaks every one and afterward many are strong at the broken places. But those that will not break it kills. It kills the very good and the very gentle and the very brave impartially. If you are none of these you can be sure it will you too but there will be no special hurry.

If Hemingway wrote frequently of situations in which people faced death, it was not because, as some say, he was "death haunted." One reason was rather that these situations called for the utmost in such courage. And if he wrote of bull fighters so warmly, as in *Death in the Afternoon,* this was not merely because they faced death, but also because of the conditions under which they did this. They were also people of the poor, sons of working people, who saw a way out of the dismal future life offered them, a path to money, love and fame, by developing a magnificent artistry which at the same time demanded the risk of their lives. The situation is not much different from that of the American boxers, who always came from the successive waves of immigrants, or from the poor; Irish, Jewish, Negro, Puerto Rican.

BEHIND the tragic feeling in Hemingway's books lies also the shock of the First World War, which broke out when he was sixteen, and which the United States entered when he was nineteen. Something seemed to have died in him before he started serious writing. It may seem strange to say this of a writer who in his life as well as his works showed so avid a search for intensity of experience; who was himself newspaperman, war correspondent, driver of an ambulance on the Italian front in 1918, friend of bull fighters, fishermen and big game hunters; one who associated himself with the Spanish Republic in 1936-39 and wrote from Madrid with fascist shells falling. But it is in his books, as for example in the two which established his reputation, *In Our Time* of 1924 and *The Sun Also Rises* of 1926.

In Our Time is made up of a series of connected short stories, of a youth hunting and fishing in the woods, full of exquisite love of nature and all the poignancies of rising and frustrated love feelings in adolescence. They are separated by short, graphic episodes of the horrors of the First World War. Although there are no protagonists named in the war episodes, the feeling is that the same people are involved in both. The juxtaposition is a powerful shock to the mind. Communicated is not only the brutality of the war itself, with people clawing at each other like animals, but the conviction that something precious in American life had irrevocably passed away. The war brutality was reality breaking in on a dream. The dream might once have had some existence in reality, but that life could again be lived this way was an illusion that had to be ruthlessly exorcised. The brutality of life was the real world, for America as for everyone else, openly so in war, thinly disguised in peace.

The Sun Also Rises presents a group of people, American and English,

moving about Paris, aside from an excursion to the bull fights in Spain, in the years soon after the war. They drink, talk, argue, go to the fights, make love, but live nevertheless as in a perpetual state of shock. The war itself has overwhelmed their mind. They never talk about it. They have nothing to say about it. They don't understand it. But all they know is that they must be perpetually on guard. Never again will they believe anyone. Never again will they follow anyone's exhortations. They will believe nothing, for whatever one believes is a lie. All they can do is keep from being drawn into the world's cruelty. They can be decent to whomever they know. And they can trust, as far as it goes, to their own strength, to keep the world from breaking them.

HEMINGWAY'S subsequent writings show him to be attempting to move away from this position, but he never went very far. For a lengthy literary career, which started in 1923, when he was twenty-five years old, and extended to his tragic death this year, he wrote comparatively little. He reflected the labor struggles in the United States of the 1930's somewhat obliquely, in the moving novel *To Have and To Have Not,* with its conclusion that a man cannot fight "alone." But how are people to fight together? Perhaps it was his basic "two worlds" philosophy, of "overlords" and "underdogs," which caused the somewhat equivocal position he took in *For Whom the Bell Tolls,* on the Civil War in Spain. There was no question, of course, about what side he was on. He was against Franco and the fascists, and he was for the Republic. The latter was the side of the "underdogs." But for the "underdogs" to have a government, leaders, generals, a set of beliefs beyond their hatred for their oppressors, represented new territory which he could not bring himself to enter. So it was perhaps, more recently, with Cuba. His hatred for Batista, and Batista's cut-throats, and the grasping money forces behind the dictator, was unequivocal. He celebrated the "underdog" in the old fisherman of *The Old Man and the Sea.* He supported the revolution led by Fidel Castro, and he treated with disdain the hypocritical hue and cry raised against the new Cuban government by those whose exploiting claws had been clipped and whose financial toes had been stepped on. But for the "underdogs" to be no longer the underdogs, to organize a society after their own mind, to have beliefs and knowledge going beyond simply a hatred of the evildoers and the powerful, was a new kind of world which he could only gingerly enter.

To those that knew and loved Hemingway for his writings, there was always the hope that he would grow. Now this hope is over, although the announcement that there are unpublished manuscripts leaves

something of the Hemingway question still open. He is sometimes classified as one of the writers of the "disillusioned 'twenties," but he stands alone among them. He did not grow backward, as Dos Passos did. He did not leap into the arms of the "strong man," and become himself a fascist, like Pound. He did not share Eliot's "The Waste Land," for Eliot's world had no room for people at all, except an "elite" to whom he offered himself as theologian. Hemingway's world was full of people, "the salt of the earth," the ordinary human beings. His affection for them was as boundless as his contempt for their despoilers. It is for this reason that among the millions who now mourn his passing, foremost are the ordinary people of the world.

S. F.

THE LAW AND NEGRO EDUCATION

LEON JOSEPHSON

LAW AND NEGRO EDUCATION DURING SLAVERY

> *"We have, as far as possible, closed every avenue by which light might enter in their minds. If we could extinguish the capacity to see the light, our work would be completed; they would then be on a level with the beasts of the field, and we should be safe! I am not sure that we would not do it, if we could find the process, and that on the plea of necessity."*
>
> Mr. Berry, speaking in the House of Delegates of Virginia (1832).[1]

THE economics of slavery required that the slave be kept in ignorance. Education and slavery were incompatible. Just as the law of slavery denied to the Negro the right of self-defense, even to protect his life from an unwarranted deadly assault by a white man, so in order to maintain slavery it was found necessary to deny all educational opportunities to the Negro.

In a trial of a slave charged with murder, Judge Ruffin declared that "at the point when the slave wrested the stave from his attacker and defended himself, he took on human attributes," but "to hold that Negro slaves may assume to themselves the judgment as to the right of resistance to the authority of whites . . . may end in denouncing the injustice of slavery itself, and upon that pretext, band together to throw off their common bondage entirely."[2]

Just as Judge Ruffin's decision denying the right of self-defense was based on the fear of insubordination, so the denial of the right to education was based on the same fear.

"The laws in question (denying education to the Negro) are imperiously demanded by a regard for public safety, not because slavery is most compatible with profound ignorance, but because slaves would have placed in their hands those other documents, books and papers inculcating insubordination and rebellion."[3]

All southern states and some northern states passed laws declaring

it to be illegal to teach Negros, free or slave, to read or write. As early as 1740, South Carolina declared the object and reason for such prohibition to be:

"Whereas the having of slaves taught to read or write may be attended with great inconveniences, such instruction is unlawful and subject to a fine of 100 pounds."[4]

Fear gripped the slave-owners after the Denmark Vesey (1823) and Nat Turner (1831) rebellions. It was alleged that both Vesey and Turner could read and write. And it was believed that it was David Walker's pamphlet, an open call to the Negro slaves to revolt, that spurred Turner to rebellion.[5] New laws against the instruction of Negroes, free or slave, were passed by every southern state and most southern cities.

The City of Savannah passed an ordinance which prohibited the "teaching of slaves to read and write (because it) tends to dissatisfaction in their minds, and to produce insurrection and rebellion."[6]

In Louisiana, not only the teaching of reading and writing was made unlawful, but "Any person using language in any public discourse, from the bar, bench, stage or pulpit, or in any other place, or in private conversation, or making use of any signs or actions having a tendency to produce discontent among the free colored population, or insubordination among the slaves shall, on conviction, be punished with imprisonment or death, at the discretion of the court."[7]

Frederick Douglass in his autobiography tells of his being sent to work as a houseboy to a relative of his master. His new mistress was "a woman of the kindest heart and feelings. She had never had a slave under her control, and prior to her marriage she had been dependent upon her own industry for a living. She had worked as a weaver.[11]

"Very soon after I went to live with them she kindly commenced to teach me the ABC's. Mr. Auld found out what was going on and forbade Mrs. Auld to instruct me further, telling her, among other things, that it was unlawful, as well as unsafe, to teach a slave to read. To use his own words, further, he said, 'If you give a (N)igger an inch, he will take an ell. A (N)igger should know nothing but to obey his master—to do as he is told to do. Learning would spoil the best (N)igger in the world. Now,' said he, 'if you teach that (N)igger to read, there would be no keeping him. It would forever unfit him to be a slave. He would become unmanageable, and of no value to his master. As to himself, it could do him no good, but a great deal of harm. It would make him discontented and unhappy.' "[8]

Every ruling class in history sought to justify its rule "with a

philosophical or speculative system of principles" and the slave-owners were no exception. Philosophy and science were brought in as a prop to support the institution of slavery.

The theory of evolution was adopted to justify the Negro's inferior status. Alfred H. Stone, a Mississippi educator, wrote that "the Negro was an inferior type of man with predominantly African customs and character traits whom no amount of education or improvement of environmental conditions could ever elevate."[9] The editor, Van Evrie, wrote a book proving the "Negroes inferiority with respect to brain capacity and their physiological aspects."[10] And these prejudices have been brought down to date. As late as 1910, E. H. Randle proclaimed that the "first important thing to remember in judging the Negro was that his mental capacity was inferior to the white man."[11]

The law of master and slave was naked and cruel with no pretense "to equal rights under the law," or "the right to the pursuit of happiness." The slave-owners' material interests was the openly admitted objective of the law. And these material interests called for a denial of the right to the most elemental education for the Negro.

LAW AND THE NEGRO DURING THE RECONSTRUCTION PERIOD

> *"It must be remembered and never forgotten that the civil war in the South which overthrew Reconstruction was a determined effort to reduce black labor as nearly as possible to a condition of unlimited exploitation and build a new class of capitalists on this foundation. The wages of the Negro worker, despite the war amendments, was to be reduced to the level of bare subsistence by taxation, peonage, caste, and every method of discrimination. This program had to be carried out in open defiance of the clear letter of the law."*
>
> DuBois, *Black Reconstruction,* p. 670.

THE old slave aristocracy sought to regain its economic and political supremacy by reestablishing the prewar social structure on the philosophy of the Negro's inferiority. This class discovered that it could build a new economic order based upon a depressed labor market of both poor whites and Negroes.

Through Jim Crow and the denial of education, through vagrancy laws and the use of force, violence and intimidation, the Southern ruling class reestablished its political and economic supremacy. The

aim of this ruling class was to destroy the political power, actual or inherent, that the Negro might never again challenge the order that was being built. Through the Poll Tax, the Grandfather clause, the white primary and gerrymandering, and always through unabated intimidation, violence and the threats of violence, the Negro was stripped of effective political participation. He was reduced to a very special caste, to a special status of a "free" laborer.

The Southern states established a particular form, a special kind of exploitation. What outwardly appears as a "free" Negro worker or farmer is in essence a matter of status, a special status whereby the Negro is more brutally exploited. Without an understanding of the special social-economic status of the Negro, there can be no understanding of the Negro question in the United States.

"When Congress intervened by its reconstruction measures to defeat the reactionary program of the South, there swept over that section a crime storm of devastating fury. Lawlessness and violence filled the land, and terror stalked abroad by day, and it burned and murdered by night. The Southern states had actually relapsed into barbarism. . . ."[12]

To check the oppression of the white ruling class, Congress adopted the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments. But in 1877 the Hayes-Tilden election was thrown into Congress for decision. A bargain was struck between the leaders of the Republican Party and the Southern Democrats. In consideration for the withdrawal of Federal troops from the South and the ending of the Reconstruction Period, the Southern Democrats agreed to support the Republican Hayes. The Southern white supremacists were given *carte blanche* authority to deal with the Negro in their own way.

"It was a cold-blooded sell-out that was to cause boundless misery and hardships to the Negro people."[13]

"This meant that the Southern landholders and capitalists would be put in complete control of disfranchised black labor. The Democrats promised to 'guarantee peace, good order, protection of the law to whites and blacks'; or, in other words, exploitation should be so quiet, orderly and legal, as to assure regular profit to Southern owners and Northern investors."[14]

Having consigned the Negro to an inferior caste status, racist spokesmen proclaimed their views that the Negro was incapable of being educated or assimilated. Senator Ben Tillman of South Carolina, declared that "a Negro should not have the same treatment as a white man, for the simple reason that God Almighty made him colored and did not make him white." He lamented the end of slavery which "re-

versed the process of improving the Negro and inculcated him with the virus of equality."[15]

Senator Tillman called for the repeal of the Thirteenth, Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments because such repeal "would confirm the black man in his inferior position and pave the way for greater harmony between the races."

Senator Vardiman of Mississippi also demanded the repeal of the Amendments because "The Negro was physically, mentally, morally, racially and eternally inferior to the white man." He described the Negro as "an industrial stumbling block, a political ulcer, a social scab, a lazy, lying, lustful animal which no conceivable amount of training can transform into a tolerable citizen."[16]

As to granting education to the Negro, Senator Vardiman declared: "There is no use multiplying words about it, the Negro will not be permitted to rise above the station he now fills. It simply renders him unfit for the work *which the white man has prescribed and which he will be forced to perform.*"[17]

Once having regained their exclusive control, the special status prescribed for the Negro was sanctioned by State and local law. The violations of the constitutional rights of the Negro people was, in turn, upheld by the Supreme Court of the United States.

The position of inferiority imposed on the Negro people was justified by the philosophy of white supremacy. This philosophy is not the *cause* but the *result* of Negro exploitation. The struggle against the special treatment of the Negro people, for equal rights, is automatically an attack against white supremacist philosophy and law. It is in the arena of life, in the economic foundations of life as it relates to the Negro people, that the battle for Negro equality must be fought for and won.

THE FOURTEENTH AMENDMENT

> *"Send not your children to the school which the malignant and murderous prejudice of white people has gotten up exclusively for colored people. Valuable as learning is, it is too costly, if it is acquired at the expense of such self-degradation."*
>
> *Letter to American Slaves,* adopted by a Convention of Fugitive Slaves held in Sept. 1850 at Cazenova, N. Y.[18]

THE primary purpose of the Fourteenth Amendment was to destroy the institution of caste and color based on a foundation of racial

segregation. It sought to deprive the States of the power to perpetuate such a caste system. These amendments, the 13th, 14th and 15th, granted to the Negro "freedom from slavery," the status of "citizen of the United States" with all the rights of "equal protection," "due process," and the "privileges and immunities" inherent in citizenship.

It is obvious, from the debates on the Civil rights legislation and on the Fourteenth Amendment, that Congress intended to grant full equality to the Negro people. The purpose of the Fourteenth Amendment was to write into the organic law of the U. S., the principle of absolute and complete equality in broad constitutional language so that future Congresses might be prevented from diminishing Federal protection of these rights. Its aim was to raise the equality created by the Civil Rights legislation to the level of constitutional sanction.

It is evident from the testimony before the Joint Committee of Fifteen on Reconstruction, that the *only* question discussed by it was how to protect the rights of the Negro. In the Congressional debates on the Fourteenth Amendment, both Southern Democrats and Northern Republicans discussed the proposed amendment *only* in terms of how it affected the rights of the Negro. Indeed, the Committee report to the Congress, after relating the denial of human rights to the Negro, declared that "to this end they offer a joint resolution for amending the Constitution of the United States."[19]

How and in what manner did the former slave-owning ruling class shun the Constitution and reshackle the Negro with *a status akin to that of slavery?* A hundred years ago "this nation under God had a new birth of freedom"! How and in what manner was this "birth of freedom" aborted?

The white southern ruling class knew that in order to exploit the Negro *on its terms,* the Negro had to be "short of everything necessary for the realization of his labor power." First, the Negro had to be stripped of the right and opportunity to own his land. In order to reap the profits of super-exploitation, the Negro had to be treated as inferior, segregated, jim crowed, coerced, intimidated. And of course, the Negro had to be kept ignorant. For without education there could be no real leadership and no effective opposition of the special exploitation by white supremacy.

The Civil War, which abolished the order of slavery, replaced it by the right of personal freedom—the right to the ownership of one's own labor power. But this absolute principle of freedom is, in its essence, an empty form. The social content of this liberty was not determined by the beautiful dreams of our abolitionists, or by those who fought for

it, or codified it into the amendments to our Constitution, but by the hard facts of existing life. In the case of the Negro, by the *special facts* and conditions created by the former slave-owners.

In the eyes of the law, the property subject (the slave) is abolished. The control of human beings as *property* is changed in form to the control of human beings as *wage-laborers.* But the owner of property imposes his will on the freed person by reason of the force of economic law and circumstances—on the Negro laborer by the *special* circumstances imposed on him.

"For the conversion of his money into capital, therefore, the owner of money must meet in the market with the free laborer, free in the double sense, that as a free man he can dispose of his labor-power as his own commodity, and that on the other hand, he has no other commodity for sale, is short of everything necessary for the realization of his labor power."[20]

Capitalist society, based on the right of individual liberty, pretends that it is not an order of labor and power relationships. There is nothing in our law which defines capitalism as a specific order of goods and labor. There are no legal norms such as feudal tenure and villeinage, or the power relationships established by the law of slavery. No person has the duty or obligation to work.

Our system is defined in the abstract according to the legal concept of property. *De jure* bourgeois society has no order of goods and no order of labor!

Without the benefit of Ecclesiastical or State law, the development of capitalist production develops its own special *hierarchy of power.* The owner of property develops personal power as an "attribute to organizing production, of correlating the functions and work of the workers. The leadership of industry is an attribute of capital, just as in feudal times the functions of general and judge were attributes of landed property."[21]

Society pretended to abdicate in favor of the individual. Behind such slogans as "individual freedom," "person," "property," "liberty," there is an order of labor and production no less powerful than under feudalism and slavery. This order was established not by legal norms but by economic law. The law of property, which is the keystone of our legal order, conceals its real objectives.

To understand the law as it relates to the Negro people, the *special* "inequalities of fortune that they are heir to," it is necessary to understand the historical development of the American Negro in American life, especially the role played by the Negro people in economic pro-

duction. Segregation and the denial of equal educational opportunities were the means whereby the Negro people could more effectively be exploited. Segregation originated as part of an effort to build a substitute order of exploitation *akin* to slavery.

HOW THE FOURTEENTH AMENDMENT WAS NULLIFIED

> *"Whether by state law or local law, or by the more persuasive coercion of sovereign white opinion, 'the Negro's place' was gradually defined—in the courts, schools, and libraries, in parks, theaters, hotels and residential districts, in hospitals, insane asylums—everywhere including on sidewalks and in cemeteries. When complete, the new codes of White Supremacy were vastly more complex than the ante-bellum slave codes or the Black Codes of 1865-1866 and, if anything, they were stronger and more rigidly enforced."*
>
> Woodward, *Origins of the New South.*

THE Fourteenth Amendment conferred Federal citizenship on the Negro. It made such citizenship *primary* and State citizenship *secondary.* It brought such citizenship under the protection of the Constitution.

In 1873 the Supreme Court, for all practical purposes, repealed the Fourteenth Amendment. In the *Slaughterhouse Cases*[22] it held that "the amendment recognizes two kinds of citizenship. The fundamental rights of the citizen are obtained from their *State* citizenship. The Fourteenth Amendment, therefore, leaves all such rights of citizenship to regulation by the States. Federal citizenship confers *only "auxiliary rights,* such as the right to travel to the national capitol, the right to sue in the Federal courts, the right to protection abroad and on the high seas."

The question of Negro rights was not involved in the *Slaughterhouse Cases.* Nevertheless, it constituted a blow against the Negro people for it established the legal precedent that the rights of the Negro, *as citizen,* was subject to the mercy of the States

To the argument that the Fourteenth Amendment brought the fundamental rights of citizens under national protection, the Court held that "so great a departure from the structure and spirit of our Constitution would fetter and degrade the State government." Thus, in the language of Justice Field's dissenting opinion, it made of the

Constitutional amendment "a vain and idle enactment, which accomplished nothing, and most unnecessarily excited Congress and the people on its passage."

In 1876 the Supreme Court decided the *Cruikshank* case.[23] It held that "the equality of the rights of citizens is a principle of republicanism. Every republican government is in duty bound to protect its citizens in the enjoyment of this principle. That duty was originally assumed by the States, *it still remains there.* The only obligation resting on the United States is to see that the States do not deny the right. *This the amendment guarantees and no more.*"

Section IV, *Article* IV of the Constitution of the U. S. guarantees to every state in the union a republican form of government. The Federal government has the implied power to enforce this guarantee. But this the Court, like the executive branch of the government, has overlooked and ignored. It overlooked the fact that the act complained of in this case was the breaking up of a meeting, i.e., the denial of the right of "free assembly," which is the very essence of a republican government and protected by the First amendment.

The Court further held that the Fourteenth Amendment said nothing about and does not prohibit one citizen from depriving another of his rights. That is a matter exclusively for the States to handle. The Court further held that to deny Negroes the right of free assembly does not violate the Fourteenth Amednment because "the right of free assembly antedated the Constitution, and therefore, was not a right granted by the Constitution or enforceable by the Federal Government."

In the *Civil Rights Cases,*[24] the Supreme Court further reduced the effectiveness of the Fourteenth Amendment and voided the Civil Rights Acts altogether. It held that the power of Congress was limited to legislation "on the subject of *slavery,* and that racial prejudice imposes no badge of slavery or involuntary servitude." The Court held that the question of equal rights for all classes and races was reserved to the States.

The ideology of white supremacy was revealed by the court in its opinion. It held that "there were thousands of free colored people in this country before the abolition of slavery, enjoying all of the essential rights of life, liberty and property the same as white citizens; (an absolutely untrue statement—L. J.) and yet no one at that time thought it was an invasion of his personal status as a freeman because he was not admitted to all of the privileges enjoyed by white citizens, or because he was subjected to discrimination in the enjoyment of accommodations in inns, public conveyances and places of amusement."

Under these decisions, the restraint directed by the Fourteenth applied only to the States. The effect of these decisions was to place in the hands of the rulers of the South, the exclusive right to establish the nature of racial relations between Negro and white.

Not only did the Supreme Court open the way for a system of racial segregation and violence against the Negro people, but it gave its approval to such treatment.

In *Pace v Alabama*[25] it upheld a miscegenation statute, and in *Plessy v Ferguson*[26] it sustained Jim Crow legislation. In *Pace* the Court upheld the doctrine of racial purity as a Constitutional principle. And in Plessy it held that "if one race be inferior to another socially, the Constitution of the U S. cannot put them on the same plane." "In determining the question of the reasonableness (of a Jim Crow law) it is at liberty to act with reference to established usages, customs and traditions of the people, with a view to the promotion of their comfort, and the preservation of the public peace and good order."

In *Plessy* the Court completed its job of wrecking the Fourteenth Amendment and the Civil Rights Acts. It converted into legal principles the ideology of white supremacy. The Court was back to where it was in the days of slavery when it held that "the power over slavery belongs to the States respectively. . . . The right to exercise this power is higher and deeper than the Constitution."[27] When the Court employed the old usages, customs and traditions as the basis for determining the reasonableness of segregation statutes, it superimposed the law of slavery on the fiction of the Negro's "freedom."

THE RECENT DECISIONS OF THE SUPREME COURT

> *"Segregation of white and colored children in public schools has a detrimental effect upon the colored children. The impact is greater when it has the sanction of the law; for the policy of separating the races is usually interpreted as denoting the inferiority of the Negro group. . . . Segregation with the sanction of law, therefore, has a tendency to retard the educational and mental development of Negro children and to deprive them of some of the benefits they would receive in a racially integrated school system."*
>
> Justice Warren, Opinion in Brown case.

THE Supreme Court has declared segregation in public schools unconstitutional. The Doctrine established in *Plessy* "that if one race be inferior to another socially, the Constitution of the U.S. cannot put them on the same plane," and "in determining the question of reasonableness (of a Jim Crow law) it is at liberty to act with reference to established usages, customs and traditions of the people," is *partially* overruled.

"We conclude," said the court in *Brown v Board of Education of Topeka,*[28] that *"in the field of education,* the doctrine of separate and equal has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal."

The reasoning applied in the school cases is equally applicable to the whole system of Jim Crow. If children are psychologically affected by segregation, so are their parents! But the court did not expressly override the principle laid down in *Plessy.* The Court has left the matter of segregation to be worked out by piecemeal adjudication.

Did the justices of by gone days err in their "careful search for the correct rule to be applied in a given situation"? And has our present Supreme Court, "imbued with a deeper sense of justice, mercy and equity" discovered a new rule "more in harmony with the ever advancing standard of justice"? Or must we look elsewhere for the causes behind the limited changes in our law?

Each case reaching the Supreme Court for decision is the result of long arduous legal battles. The Court does not pass on moot or theoretical principles of law. The fact is that in the school, as in other cases, the opinions and decrees of the Court have been limited to the parties and schools involved in the actual litigation. On a rehearing of the *Brown* case to decide the nature of the Court's orders, Justice Warren called for "practical flexibility in shaping its remedies and a facility for adjusting and reconciling public and private needs." The law of an old established society is never a revolutionary instrument.

But the Negro people have refused to "acquiesce" to the conditions forced upon them. They have followed John Marshall's advice and have challenged the white man's law based on his "customs and usages." They have gained limited victories against segregated housing, i.e., against restrictive covenants,[29] against Jim Crow in elections,[30] against exclusion from juries,[31] against segregation on interstate busses,[32] against segregation in colleges.[33]

That the law must not distinguish between Negro and white persons has been proclaimed in a number of cases, some in dissenting opinions. Justice Stone characterized racial distinctions as "odious to a free peo-

ple."[34] Justice Jackson referred to race and color "as constitutionally an irrelevance."[35] Justice Douglas considered discriminations based upon race, creed and color as "beyond the pale."[36]

But the decisions of the Supreme Court are not self-executing. With or without restrictive covenants, Negroes are segregated in housing. The jury decisions have led only to "token acceptance." Segregation on public conveyances still persists where the Negro people have not established new conditions of equality for themselves.

The Supreme Court has never forthrightly decided that all segregation laws are immoral and illegal. It has not overruled the doctrine of white supremacy established in *Plessy*. In the school cases it reversed *Plessy* only "in the field of education." In the *Sweatt* case it held that the separate and equal law school established for Negroes by the State of Texas, was *in fact* unequal. In the *Morgan* case it held that only segrebation on interstate busses was illegal,—jim crow *intrastate,* where the state is anti-Negro is still legal. Witness the imprisonment of the Freedom Riders in Jackson, Miss.!

The victory in the school segregation cases is an important one, but a very limited one. It does not cover all forms of segregation and it provides for "gradual desegregation." Gradual desegregation defeats its own purpose because the "time provided for adjustment is availed of to build hostility to the change."

"Judicial enforcement, however enlightened it may become, must always remain a severely limited instrument for carrying out the intentions of the framers. It is limited by its essentially negative character. It can frustrate an injustice in a particular case, but it cannot lay down general affirmative requirements for future conduct. It is limited by the planless and piecemeal development inherent in the case by case approach. It is limited by the months or years of delay which intervene before a case reaches decision in the Supreme Court and by the myriad technicalities, a fumble on any one of which may cause the federal question to be lost in transit."[37]

JUSTICE MARSHALL'S DOCTRINE OF ACQUIESCENCE

> *"Contact on equal terms is the best means to abolish caste. It is caste abolished. With equal suffrage, 13,675 black men come into contact on equal terms, for ten minutes once a year, at the polls; with equal school rights, 15,778 colored children and youth, three hundred days in the year, and from six to ten hours each day.*

And these children, in a few years, become the people of the State."

Frederick Douglass, *Douglass' Monthly,* March, 1959.

IN 1825, Justice Marshall laid down the principle of action for the Negro people to follow in the *Antelope* case.[38] In that case an American ship, flying false colors, captured slaves from Portugese and Spanish ships. The *Antelope* was caught trying to land the slaves and taken to Savannah. The Portugese and Spanish owners claimed their "property." The Negroes in opposition set forth that "they were not slaves but free Africans who had been wrongfully kidnapped and taken aboard to be sold as slaves."

Chief Justice Marshall, himself a slave-owner, rendered the opinion. He began by placating the people who intervened to help the Negroes. The slave trade, he said, was "abhorrent." "That it is contrary to the law of nature will scarcely be denied. That every man has a natural right to the fruits of his own labor is generally admitted; and that no other person can deprive him of those fruits, seems to be the necessary results of that admission."

But, Marshall went on, "from the earliest time war existed, and war confers rights in which *all have acquiesced."*

Solicitor General Key, arguing for the Negroes' freedom said: "Negroes are no longer acquired by capture in war; but free persons are seized and carried off. The persons enslaved are clandestinely brought away, under circumstances of extreme cruelty, aggravated by the necessity of concealment, and smuggled into every country where the cupidity of avarice creates a demand for these unhappy victims."

Marshall ignored the argument that the Negroes were not involved in any war. He turned over the Negroes taken from the Spanish and Portugese ships to their "rightful owners" because, under the law of Spain and Portugal, the slave trade was legal. But he freed the Negroes taken on by the American ship because "the status of slavery had not attached to them"—they had not yet been subjugated in production. American Negroes were slaves because they had *acquiesced* to their slavery; their status had become effective.

Every legal decision has to have its ideological justification and Marshall justified slavery as follows. "Slavery has its origin in force; but as the world has agreed that it is the legitimate result of force, the state of things which it thus produced by general consent, cannot be declared to be unlawful. Among the most enlightened nations of antiquity, the right of the victor to enslave the vanquished existed. This,

which was the usage of all, could not be pronounced repugnant to the law of nations, which is certainly to be tried by general usage. That which has received the assent of all, must be the law of all. . . . Whatever might be the answer of a moralist to this question, a jurist must search for its legal solution, in those principles of action which are sanctioned by the general usages, the national acts, and the general assent, *of that portion of the world which he (the judge) considers himself a part.*"

Acquiesce to the conditions of segregation, to the conditions constituting the special status of the Negro people, to the special customs and usages of the time, and the law will sanctify them. Change those usages and conditions through continuous struggles against them, and the law will be compelled to sanctify the newly established relationships. This has been true for all of the so-called rights of labor and is also true for the Negro people.

In the *Lamistead case*[39] decided in January, 1841, the Supreme Court freed the Negroes who revolted and killed the captain of the ship which was carrying them to slavery. The Spanish owners claimed the Negroes as their property. The Negroes were not tried for murder; the only question before the court was whether they were the lawful property of the claimants. Justice Story rendered the opinion of the court freeing the Negroes because by their revolt they proved that "they had not acquiesced to the status of slavery sought to be imposed upon them."

Before the beginning of the Civil War, the free Negroes of the North challenged segregation in the schools and on public conveyances. In 1849 Benjamin Roberts brought suit against the City of Boston because his daughter was illegally excluded from the public schools in her neighborhood. Senator Charles Sumner pleaded the case arguing that "In thus sacrificing one class to the other, both were degraded—the imperious Spartan and the abased Helot."[40]

Having lost the case, the Negro people and their abolitionist friends refused to acquiesce. They pressured the Massachusetts legislature and finally, on May 20, 1855 a bill was passed "prohibiting racial or religious distinctions in admitting students to public schools."

In New York, Negroes formed *The Legal Rights Association* and deliberately violated the laws and practices imposing segregation. In 1854 a Negro school teacher was forcibly removed from a segregated street car and was successfully defended by Chester A. Arthur, later President of the United States.[41]

The struggle against segregation continued in the other Northern states, and some states sought to overcome the increasing agitation by

correcting existing abuses. When Frederick Douglass's daughter entered Seward Seminary in Rochester, the school authorities assigned her to a separate room and appointed a teacher to instruct her. Douglass protested and withdrew his daughter. On the eve of the Civil War Western Reserve, Oberlin, Amherst, Princeton, Union College, and many others admitted Negroes.

CONCLUSION

LEGISLATION, whether by Congress or the courts, is not the prime mover of social change. Changes in the law are usually a belated response to the changes which have taken place in the womb of society.

Law is superstructure expressing the social relationships existing in society. It is the result of the "customs and usages," the prevailing conditions of life, and in turn, influences the foundation upon which it rests.

Our society must be viewed as a developing process, a dialectical process. Only thus can one understand the changes in the law. Contradiction between our law, *which is static,* and its economic and social function, *which is dynamic,* is the key to the understanding of both law and society. Changes in our society transform the law, although our jurists pride themselves in the law's "immutability."

In recent times, the Negroes in Montgomery, Alabama, refused to ride Jim Crow busses until the bus company was nearly bankrupt. The removal of Jim Crow prohibitions by a local ordinance was meaningful because a change in the substructure of daily life had taken place. Negro students and their white allies are everywhere challenging segregation on busses, in restaurants and at lunch counters. They are defying the law, and when by that defiance they will have established new conditions for themselves, then the belated arrival of the new legal principles will be effective.

In the North, Jim Crow practices were broken down, not because of a change in heart by the restaurant, hotel and theatre owners, not because of a more enlightened capitalism, but because of the change effected by the Negro people themselves. Abstract and meaningless civil rights statutes were on the books long before the Negro people established conditions of equality for themselves.

The separate but equal doctrine in education has been challenged. But a full victory for the Negro people depends upon their continued mass struggles against segregated schools,—against segregation in all spheres of life. The Negro people are heeding Marshall's advice. They are refusing to acquiesce to the "old usages" and are establishing new

conditions of existence for themselves. Only then will the law "arrive" to *effectively* sanction the transformation that has taken place in the substructure of American life.

1 Goodell, *The American Slave Code*, page 323.
2 State v Caesar (A Slave), 9 Iredell 391 (1849), N. C.
3 *Ought Our Slaves Be Taught to Read?* Cited in Nye, *Fettered Freedom*, p. 71.
4 Aptheker, *American Slave Revolts*, pp. 107-108.
5 Goodell, *The American Slave Code*, Chpt. VI, Education Prohibited.
6 Statutes of South Carolina, 440.
7 Stroud, *A Sketch of the Laws Relating to Slavery*, p. 62.
8 Douglass, *A Narrative of the Life of Frederic Douglass*, p. 32-33.
9 Johnson, *Ideology of White Supremacy*, p. 151.
10 Van Evrie, *Negroes and Negro Slavery, the First and Inferior Race, the Latter its Normal Condition.*
11 Randle, *Characteristics of the Southern Negro*, p. 51.
12 Millner, *Ku Klux Klan*, p. 6.
13 Foster, *The Negro in American History*, p. 337.
14 Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, p. 692.
15 Simkins, *Pitchfork Ben Tillman*, pp. 395-399.
16 Kirwin, *Revolt of the Red Necks*, p. 146.
17 Johnson, *Ideology of White Supremacy*, p. 151.
18 Aptheker, *A Documentary History of the Negro People of the U. S.*, p. 303.
19 Kendrick, *Journal of the Joint Com. of Fifteen on Reconstruction*, p. 41.
20 Marx, *Capital*, p. 147.
21 Marx, *Capital*, p. 323.
22 Slaughterhouse Cases, 83 U.S. 36 (1873).
23 U.S. v Cruikshank, 92 U.S. 542 (1876).
24 Civil Rights Cases, 109 U.S. 53, (1883).
25 160 U.S. 583 (1883).
26 163 U.S. 537 (1886).
27 Groves et al v Slaughter, 15 Peters 449 (1841).
28 Brown v Board of Education of Topeka, 347 U.S. 483 (1954).
29 Shelley v Kraemer, 334 U.S. 1 (1948).
30 Nixon v Condon, 286, U.S. 73 (1932).
31 Hill v Texas, 316 U.S. 400.
32 Morgan v. Virginia, 328 U.S. 373.
33 Sweat v Painter, 339 U.S. 629 (1950).
34 Hirabayashi v U.S. 320 U.S. 81, at p. 100 (1943).
35 Edwards v Calif., 314 U.S. 180, at p. 185 (1941).
36 Smith v Peters, 339 U.S. 276, at p. 278 (1950).
37 Frantz *Enforcement of the Fourteenth Amendment*, 9 Lawyers Guild Rev., p. 129 (1949).
38 Antelope, 10 Wheaton 79.
39 U.S. v Lamistead, XV Peters, 518.
40 Roberts v City of Boston, Catterall, Judicial Cases, IV, p. 513.
41 *N. Y. Daily Times*, May 29, 1855.

KENNETH FEARING: 1902-1961

KENNETH FEARING despised cant, hypocrisy, cruelty: and the poems he wrote mainly during the decade of the Thirties vibrate with the profound hatred of his gentle soul for the American ruling class and all the illusions it spread among the people. Fearing invented a new form in which to pour his scathing irony—a form that admirably suited his content, and was dictated by the content of his verse. Though he traced his literary ancestry from Walt Whitman, through Carl Sandburg and others, his gift was his own, his talent was unique. His contribution to American culture is a modest one, perhaps (it is not for us to say); in any case it was a genuine and lasting one and it has influenced more than one poet who came after him, among them the so-called "Beatniks," who inherited his discoveries but not unfortunately his vision and passion.

It is not accidental that he came to full flowering in the Hungry Thirties and that his major work appeared in the *New Masses,* of which *Mainstream* is a descendant. If his later verse lacked the pungent and acid quality of the *New Masses* work, and found itself more or less adapted to the rather genteel demands of the *New Yorker,* this is not in any way to depreciate his real contribution, in spite of the fact that a tendency to "correct" one's "indiscretions" of that time (under the prodding of all the thought-control forces let loose upon the country) became what amounted to a mass movement among writers who first made their names under *New Masses* auspices.

Kenneth Fearing never backtracked, even if he never transcended his high-water mark. He wrote detective pot-boilers to make a living. But, essentially, he never compromised with the neanderthalian forces of our times, and he did not ask that his poems be removed from the libraries

because what he wrote in the Thirties became absolute truth in the Fifties. He did not fear his own prophetic vision and remained true to it. We salute him in this issue by republishing several of his poems from the old *New Masses.*

MR. JESSE JAMES WILL SOME DAY DIE

Where will we ever again find food to eat, clothes to wear,
a roof and a bed, now that the Wall Street plunger
has gone to his hushed, exclusive, paid-up tomb?
How can we get downtown today, with the traction
king stretched flat on his back in the sand at Miami
Beach?
And now that the mayor has denounced the bankers,
now that the D.A. denies all charges of graft, now
that the clergy have spoken in defense of the home,
O, dauntless khaki soldier, O, steadfast pauper, O, experienced
vagrant, O, picturesque mechanic, O, happy hired
man,
O, Still unopened skeleton, O, tall and handsome target,
O, neat and thrifty, strong, ambitious, brave prospective
ghost,
is there anything left for the people to do, is there
anything at all that remains unsaid?
But who shot down the man in the blue overalls? Who
stopped the mill? Who took the mattress, the table,
the birdcage, and piled them in the street? Who
drove teargas in the picket's face? Who burned the
crops? Who killed the herd? Who leveled the walls
of the packinghouse city? Who held the torch to the
Negro pyre? Who stuffed the windows and turned
on the gas for the family of three?

No more breadlines. No more blackjacks. No more Roosevelts.
No more Hearsts.
No more vag tanks, Winchells, True Stories, deputies,
no more scabs.
No more trueblue, patriotic, doublecross leagues. No

more Ku Klux Klan. No more heart-to-heart shake-
downs. No more D. A. R.
No more gentlemen of the old guard commissioned to
safeguard, as chief commanding blackguard in the
rearguard of the homeguard, the 1 inch, 3 inch, 6
inch, 10 inch, 12 inch,
no more 14, 16, 18 inch shells.

(1934).

SUNDAY TO SUNDAY

Unknown to Mabel, who works as cook for the rich and snobbish
Aldergates,
the insured, by subway suicide, provides for a widow and
three sons;
picked from the tracks, scraped from the wheels, identified,
this happy ending restores the nation to contact with its
heritage: A Hearst cartoon.
Meanwhile it is Infant Welfare Week, milk prices are up, child
clinics closed, relief curtailed,
the Atlantic and Pacific fleets in full support off Vera Cruz,
in court, sentence suspended, Rose Raphael dispossessed of a
Flatbush packingbox,
Jim Aldergate in love with Mabel, but unaware she has been
married to Zorrocco the gangster.
An envoy bearing again an after-luncheon wreath to the tomb
of the patriot dead,
stocks firmer, meanwhile, on reports of drought,
and Zorrocco, not knowing Mabel loves Jim, has returned to
use her for his criminal schemes; but in a motor crash he
is killed, Mabel winning at last to happiness in Jim's
arms,
as hundreds, thousands, millions search the want ads, search
the factories, search the subways, search the streets,
search to sleep in missions, jungles, depots, parks, sleep to
wake again to gutters, scrapheaps, breadlines, jails—
Unknown to the beautiful, beautiful, beautiful Mabel; un-
known to the deathray smile of president or priest; un-
known to Zorrocco, Jim, or the unknown soldier;

unknown to WGN and the bronze, bronze bells of
Sunday noon.

(1934).

AMERICAN RHAPSODY

He said did you get it, and she said did you get it, and they
said did you get it,
at the clinic, at the pawnshop, on the breadline, in jail,
shoes and a roof and the rent and a cigarette and bread
and a shirt and coffee and sleep—

Reaching at night for a bucket of B & O coal among
B & O flats in the B & O yards,
they said there's another one, get him they said,
or staring again at locked and guarded factory gates; or
crouched in a burglarproof loft, hand around a gun;
or polite, urgent, face before a face behind a steel-
barred cage,
All winter she came there, begging for milk. So we had the
shacks along the river destroyed by the police. But at the
uptown exhibit a rich, vital sympathy infused the classic
mood. When muriatic acid in the whiskey failed, and
running him down with an auto failed, and ground
glass failed, we finished the job by shoving a gastube
down his throat.
Next year, however, there might be something definite,
Mountains or plains, crossroads, suburbs, cities or the sea,
did you take it, was it safe, did you buy it, did you beg
it, did you steal it, was it known.
Name, address, relatives, religion, income, sex, bank account,
insurance, health, race, experience, age
out beyond the lunatic asylum on the city dump; on the
junkheap, past the bank, past the church, past the
jungle, past the morgue,
where the rats eat the crusts and worms eat the satins and
maggots eat the mould
and fire eats the headlines, eats the statements and the
pictures, eats the promises and proofs, eats the rind

of an orange and a rib and a claw and a skull and
an eye.
Did you find it, was it there, did they see you, were they
waiting, did they shoot, did they stab, did they burn,
did they kill——
one on the gallows and one on the picketline and one in
the river and one on the ward and another one
slugged and another one starved and another insane
and another by the torch.

(1934).

IN CONCLUSION

You will give praise to all things.
Idly in the morning, bluntly at noon, cunningly with the
evening cigar, you will meditate further praise.
So will the days pass, each profitable and serene. So will
your sleep be undisturbed. So you will live.
No faith will be difficult, rising from doubt. No love will be
false, born of dread.

In the flaring parks, in the speakeasies, in the hushed academies,
your murmur will applaud the wisdom of a thousand
quacks. For theirs is the kingdom.
By your sedate nod, in the quiet office, you will grieve with
the magnate as he speaks of sacrifice. For his is the
power.
Your knowing glances will affirm the shrewd virtue of clown
and drudge. Director's-room or street-corner, the routine
killer will know your candid smile. Your handclasp,
after the speeches at the club, will endorse the valor of
loud suburban heroes. For theirs is the glory, forever
and ever. . . .

Always, more than wise, you will be with the many against the
few.
But you will be a brother, on second thought, to all men.

The metropolitan dive, jammed with your colleagues, the dere-
licts; the skyscraper, built by your twin, the pimp of

gum-drops and philanthropy; the auditoriums, packed
with weeping creditors, your peers; the morgues, tenanted
by your friends, the free dead; the asylums, crowded with
your cousins, the mad; the prisons, jammed with your
brothers, the venomous doomed—upon all of them you will
find means to bestow praise.

And as you know that all of this will be,
As you walk among millions, indifferent to them,
Or stop and read the journals filled with manufactured bliss,
Or pause and hear, with no concern, the statesman vending
public alarm.

You will be grateful for an easy death,
Your silence will praise them for killing you.

(1930).

NINETEEN THIRTY-THREE

You heard the gentleman, with automatic precision, speak
the truth. Cheers. Triumph.
And then mechanically it followed the gentleman lied.
Deafening applause. Flashlights, cameras, microphones.
Floral tributes. Cheers.
Down Mrs. Hogan's alley, your hand with others reaching among
the ashes, cinders, scrapiron, garbage, you found the
rib or sirloin wrapped in papal documents. Snatched
it. Yours by right, the title clear.
Looked up. Saw lips twitch in the smiling head projected
from the bedroom window. "A new deal."
And ran. Escaped. You returned the million dollars. You
restored the lady's virginity.
You were decorated 46 times in rapid succession by the
King of Italy. Took a Nobel prize. Evicted again, you
went downtown, slept at the movies, stood in the bread-
line, voted yourself a limousine.
Rage seized the Jewish Veterans of Foreign Wars. In
footnotes, capitals, Latin, italics, the bard of the Sunday
supplements voiced steamheated grief. The RFC

expressed surprise.
And the news, at the Fuller Brush hour, leaked out.
Shouts. Cheers. Stamping of feet Blizzard of confetti.
Thunderous applause.
But the stocks were stolen. The pearls of the actress, stolen
again. The bonds embezzled.
Inexorably. The thief pursued. Captured inexorably. Tried.
Inexorably acquitted.
And again you heard the gentlemen, with automatic precision,
speak the truth.
Saw, once more, the lady's virginity restored.
In the sewers of Berlin, the directors prepared, the room dark
for the seance, she a simple Baroness, you a lowly millionaire,
came face to face with John D. Christ.
Shook hands. His knife at your back, your knife at his.
Sat down.
Saw issue from his throat the ectoplasm of Pius VIII.
"A test of the people's faith." You said amend, voted
to endorse but warned against default, and observed
the astral form of Nicholas II. "Sacred union of all."
Saw little "Safe for democracy" Nell. Listened to
Adolph "Safety of France and society" Thiers.
And beheld the faith, the union of rags, blackened hands.
stacked carrion, breached barricades in flame,
no default, credit restored, Union Carbide 94 3/8, call
money, 10%, disarm, steel five points up, rails rise,
Dupont up, and heard again,
ghost out of ghost out of ghost out of ghost,
the voice of the senators reverberate through all the morgues
of all the world, echo again for liberty in the catacombs
of Rome, again sound through the sweat-shops, ghettos,
factories, mines, hunger against repealed, circle the
London cenotaph once more annulling death, saw ten
million dead returned to life, shot down again, again
restored,
heard once more the gentlemen speak, with automatic
precision, the final truth,
once more beheld the lady's virginity, the lady's decency,
the lady's purity, the lady's innocence,
paid for, certified, and restored.
Crawled amourously into bed. Felt among the maggots for the

mouldering lips. The crumbled arms. Found them.
Tumult of cheers. Music and prayer by the YMCA. Horns, rockets. Spotlight.
The child was nursed on government bonds. Cut its teeth on a hand grenade. Grew fat on shrapnel. Bullets. Barbed wire. Chlorine gas. Laughed at the bayonet through its heart.
These are the things you saw and heard, these are the things you did, this is your record.
you.

(1933).

ON UPDATING SHAKESPEARE: Part II

SIDNEY FINKELSTEIN

MEASURE for Measure seems to represent a different problem, taking up presumably more personal matters of love, morality and hypocrisy, rather than social issues. But it too suffered drastically when the Stratford production updated it a few centuries. By comparison, the Joseph Papp production in Central Park, with no "name" actors and more primitive stage conditions, but with also a much deeper respect for and insight into Shakespeare, was far superior.

The play is a comedy—a very bitter one—and does not take up great historical events. Yet here too, Shakespeare puts the personal and psychological problems in a social-historical framework, and ties the two together. Again, there is both an "outer" or social problem, and an "inner" or psychological drama. What is offered here is no intensive analysis, but an outline of these issues.

The "outer" problem is introduced—exactly as in *Julius Caesar*—in the very first scene, and it also provides the great climax at the end of the play. The setting is Vienna, presumably near Shakespeare's time. The city-state is ruled by a Duke, who is an absolute monarch. The laws and their execution are in his hands. He has power of life and death over his subjects. He wants the people to be ruled well, so that there is public justice and morality. Vienna, when the play opens, has become morally lax. As part of a plan to remedy this, he pretends to be going on some secret diplomatic mission, and picks a young protege, Angelo, a man of sterling, almost puritannical character, to be his deputy ruler in his absence. Angelo is given all the Duke's unchecked powers.

As the plot develops, the Duke does not leave Vienna at all, but dis-

* Part I of this article appeared in last month's issue.

guises himself as a friar, to see what is really doing in the city. And, in the course of the play, a crucial question rises with cumulative intensity; granted that a ruler wants to be a just one, how can he ever know enough to dispense real justice? How can he discern truth from lies, look into people's minds, penetrate the hypocrisy which clothes itself in the robes of high office and disguises itself with the most brilliant eloquence and argument? How can he tell the connivers from the honest people? And the pageant-like closing scene, when he takes off his disguise, and dispenses justice in case after case, tearing off the veils covering liars and hypocrites, disclosing what really happened under the tissue of clever and seemingly ironclad falsifications, bringing back to life those who were unjustly condemned to death and are presumed to have been executed, the ironic thought emerges, can any human being be so wise and knowing? Only God could know so much. The scene is a parody of the "Day of Judgment." This is a comedy, and in a comedy, all problems are solved according to people's yearnings. But in real life, kings and dukes are not gods.

It was a perfectly real and legitimate problem in Shakespeare's own time. There were absolute monarchs. In fact, this seemed to be a progressive step, after the atomization of feudal society, with each lord and baron a law to himself. The thought was current that an absolute monarch could really rule justly, because he stood above rival factional and self-interested claims. But transported into a setting of a few centuries later, the situation becomes utterly incredible. There have been revolutionary changes. There is a powerful bourgeoisie. There are democratic institutions, or at least, democratic currents. Even the presumably absolute monarchs who still hold their thrones, cannot act in this arbitrary and unchallenged way. Some knowledge has been gained of the class forces behind any kind of rule. Shakespeare has his Duke say about Angelo, in the opening scene:

> For you must know we have with special soul
> Elected him our absence to supply;
> Lent him our terror, dressed him with our love,
> And given his deputation all the organs
> Of our own power: what think you of it?

"Lent him our terror" is perfectly understandable, with no repellent connotations, in a setting of 16th century society. "Terror" means the sternness of just rule, with no bowing to private interests. A ruler, clothed in such "terror," can be loved. But in a setting of the 19th cen-

tury, when absolute rule, even when it appears to exist, is a relic of the past, a backwardness, what sense does this statement make? No European ruler could talk this way. His "terror" is exercised against insurgents who want to overthrow him and bring about some progress. And so by taking Shakespeare's problem out of the milieu which gave birth to it, we lose the fact that he was addressing himself, and very questioningly and critically, to a very real and live social question. We lose touch with Shakespeare's courage in raising such an issue, at a time when the fact of absolute monarchy is so real. We miss the deep insight with which he puts his finger on a social contradiction that after his time would result in revolutions. From a bold and critically realistic mind, he is transformed to a writer of pleasant fairy tales. And all this is called "appreciating Shakespeare," "making Shakespeare more meaningful," "bringing Shakespeare up to date."

Let us turn to the central moral and psychological drama of the play. An impatient gentleman, Claudio, has gotten with child a young woman, Juliet, whom he loves and intends to marry. For certain practical reasons, involving a dowry, the marriage is postponed. But there is an old, unused law on the books, which makes what he has done a capital offense, in the interest of public morality. The stern Angelo, the Duke's deputy, sworn to remedy the dissolute practices in which the city has fallen, revives the law, has Claudio arrested, and prepares to have him executed.

Claudio's sister Isabella, a saintly young novice in a nunnery, is called upon to help him. She appeals to Angelo to have mercy on her brother. The straight-laced Angelo refuses, but obsessed by her purity and beauty, goes through an inner struggle, and then tells her that he will save her brother if she will consent to be his, Angelo's mistress. She furiously repulses Angelo, and goes to the prison to tell her brother indignantly of this offer, so impossible to accept. And one of the most touching scenes in the play takes place when Claudio, at first agreeing with her, begins to see things differently. "Death is a fearful thing," he says. She turns on him passionately and curses him.

> Die; perish! might but my bending down
> Reprieve thee from thy fate, it should proceed:
> I'll pray a thousand prayers for thy death—
> No word to save thee.

AS IT HAPPENS, had Isabella yielded to Angelo, it would not have saved her brother, since Angelo planned to kill him anyway, to de-

stroy the evidence of Angelo's own misdeed. As Shakespeare shows more tragically in *Macbeth,* one crime leads to another. And the disguised Duke, prowling about, discovers the real situation and in the end puts everything right. But a contemporary audience, seeing the play in an updated setting—and in fact, even seeing it in an Elizabethan setting without a proper, historical-minded and illuminating performance—is likely to find Isabella unbelievable and somewhat repulsive, an awfully self-righteous person, cold-hearted, prudish, parading her own purity. Thus one of Shakespeare's profound insights into a changing society is lost.

For in the setting of Shakespeare's times, Isabella is a perfectly credible and admirable character. She has been brought up in a nunnery, and plans to become a nun. She has absorbed completely and made her own the system of thought dominating and pervading the Middle Ages. Life on earth is a short interlude, compared to eternal life in heaven. The joys of the flesh on earth are traps, to rob the soul of immortality. And so, Angelo is offering her and her brother a very bad bargain. As she tells Angelo, when he says, "Then must your brother die";

> And 'twere the cheaper way:
> Better it were a brother died at once
> Than that a sister, by redeeming him,
> Should die forever.

To her brother, she says that Angelo wears "The cunning livery of hell." The point is that she believes this, heart and soul, and she is speaking not for her personal predilection alone but, more important, for the teachings of an entire social order that it at the same time, passing away.

It is a play of remarkable contrasts, for along with the constant discussion and argument of law, justice, morality, heaven and hell, in the "higher" social circles, there is a running picture of the brothel milieu, like a continuous counterpoint, with its madams, whorehouse keepers, servants, bawds and "tapsters," and its clientele including the city's gentry. It is as if the play were indicating how unworkable so other-worldly morality must be, only engendering corruption. This is brought out in many bits of dialogue, such as the following, between the old and honest official, Escalus, and the servant in a brothel, Pompey:

> Pompey: Truly sir, I am a poor fellow that would live.
> Escalus: How would you live, Pompey? by being a bawd? What do you think of the trade, Pompey? is it a lawful trade?

Pompey: If the law would allow it, sir.

Escalus: But the law will not allow it, Pompey: nor it shall not be allowed in Vienna.

Pompey: Does your lordship mean to geld and splay all the youth in the city? . . . If you head and hang all that offend that way but for ten year together, you'll be glad to give out a commission for more heads. If this law hold in Vienna ten year, I'll rent the fairest house in it, after threepence a bay.

The argument of the play is not that there should be no laws enforcing morality, but that the old strictness is unworkable, and that better methods must be found, in tune with life's realities. It argues this out here, on the practical level of the "streets." And in its main line of plot, it argues this out on the highest level of principle and moral systems, or systems of right and wrong themselves. Claudio's cry, "But death is a fearful thing," is not the appeal of a coward, or of a selfish person. It is the answer of the Renaissance to medieval theology, which claimed that death was life, and that it was the open door to eternal bliss. The new thought is that a human life is precious, and not to be thrown away. This is echoed in the revulsion that every personage in the play but Angelo feels, and the audience itself feels, at the thought that Claudio must die, even though he has broken the law. It is echoed in the universal appeal that all the people whom Angelo has wronged make, at the end of the play, for Angelo's life to be spared. Yet he has plotted both adultery and murder. Thus a woman Mariana, whom Angelo had treated scurvily before the opening of the play, who is now married to him, and who stands to inherit his estates when he dies, begs the Duke to spare him.

Duke: For his possesions,
Although by confiscation they are ours,
We do instate and widow you withal,
To buy you a better husband.

Mariana: O my dear lord,
I crave no other, nor no better man. . . .
Isabel
Sweet Isabel, do yet but kneel by me;
Hold up your hands, say nothing—I'll speak all.
They say, best men are moulded out of faults;
And, for the most, become much more the better
For being a little bad: so may my husband.

O Isabel, will you not lend a knee?

THUS what Shakespeare presents, at the heart of the drama, guiding its course, is the clash of two moralities; one, that of a dying society, which still in his time has a powerful grip on the mind, and the other, that of a rising society, still in its Renaissance and Elizabethan dawn, with changed views of life. On the one hand, there is the demand to be with God, to fight the devil, to reject worldly pleasures, to avert the punishment of eternal hellfire and reap the reward of heavenly bliss. On the other hand is the cry that life is to be relished, that its pleasures are not sins, that human lives are precious, that people have contradictions within them and should be regarded with tolerance. And so the great truth, the "universal" which Shakespeare here gives to a later age and to "all time," when the play is properly presented, is that there is no eternal, absolute, unchanging moral system. When an age radically changes its social structure, opening up new possibilities for life, then its human relations change as do its views of life, and its moral concepts.

These are but sketchy outlines of two great plays. But they are enough to indicate what clouds settle down on Shakespeare through this process of updating his settings, putting them into some age long past his own. The theoretical basis for such an approach is the doctrine so widespread in our time, and so damaging to the artistic talents which come under its influence. It is that the artist never bothers to look at real life, for to do this would be a dull process of "copying nature." Give him any subject, or any thought, or no subject at all, and he will adorn it with "form," with "emotional intensity," with mellifluous or striking sounds and images. This approach confuses subject matter with artistic content. It does not see that content, the discovery of what is new in life, both "outer" and "inner," may not coincide with subject matter, but nevertheless flows out of it. At best, it says, an artist deals only with "universals," which are eternal, unchanging "truths" of birth, love, death, immortality, the supernatural (or as the Freudians and Jungians would say, the Oedipus Complex, the "Death wish," the eternal unchanging primitive "unconscious" and its myths). It confuses style, or language, with form. But form is not language elegance, although it uses this. It is actually the product of the way in which the artist's discoveries of what is new in life, in conflict against old, guide every step in the structure of his work of art.

And so we see how this approach, fostering the most anti-social, self-centered, and self-destructive attitudes in creative art today, also assists in

damaging the heritage of past art. In regard to Shakespeare, the thought is simple. Change the subject matter—that is, the setting—and the "content" becomes more timely and interesting. What really happens is that the content gets lost. The form likewise weakens and evaporates. For Shakespeare builds his dramatic structure with living human images and portraits, in their inter-relations, conflicts and changes. When the character of these portraits change, the form loses its integrity. Even the language suffers. For with an updated setting, the tendency is to cut those passages and scenes which jar with the new setting. (Jack Landau, the director at Stratford, gives a sleazy argument for such cutting; that "Shakespeare says everything more than once.") Furthermore, the tendency of the actors is to speak their lines in tune with the new characterization, instead of with justice to what Shakespeare put in them.

WHAT will happen if, as the advance publicity announces, *Troilus and Cressida* is updated to suggest, in its costumes and settings, the American Civil War? Will the victorious Greek army in the Trojan War be replaced by the victorious Union Army in the Civil War? Will Ajax, Agamemnon, Achilles, Diomede, Ulysses, Menelaus, be replaced by General Grant, Sherman, Sheridan, Meade, Thomas? One of the main themes of *Troilus and Cressida* is that here is a bloody war being fought over a woman who has found a new lover. It is a silly, stupid war, fought mostly by corrupt, stupid, arrogant, lecherous, noble lords who make a profession of fighting. The play criticizes such wars, expanding on a theme touched on in one of Hamlet's soliliquies. Hamlet sees a body of men going off to fight, and asks what the war is about. He is told:

> We go to gain a little patch of ground
> That hath in it no profit but the name.
> To pay five ducats, five, I would not farm it.

Hamlet exclaims:

> I see
> The imminent death of twenty thousand men,
> That for a fantasy and trick of fame,
> Go to their graves like beds.

(Incidentally this scene was not thought fit to use in the current—at this writing—Phoenix Theatre production of *Hamlet.*)

Troilus and Cressida expands on this thought. The war is fought for

nothing. As Thersites, the sharp-tonged servant of Ajax, puts it, a cuckold, Menelaus, is fighting a cuckold-maker, Paris. And so, good men must die. "Lechery, lechery; still wars and lechery; nothing else holds fashion: a burning devil take them," Thersites cries. And one of the continuous motifs of the play is the way in which Thersites, the servant, even while he is being kicked around and beaten, tells off the "noble" Greek heroes, the leaders, for what they are: stupid, crafty, proud of their muscles and weak on brains, arrogant, vicious, in love with their prowess, capable of every kind of duplicity and dirty trick. Cressida, the Trojan maiden, betrays her lover, the Trojan Troilus, to consort with the Greek Diomede. Achilles, the great fighter, discovers Hector unarmed, and so has his men assassinate the Trojan. Is this the implication that will be given to audiences now about the American Civil War? Was it fought for nothing? Was it simply fashionable to make war, along with carrying on lechery? Had the attack of the slave-holding owners, trying to force slavery, and an undemocratic oligarchy, both on the poor whites of the South and upon the entire country nothing to do with the war? Did the heroic struggles of the Negro people for freedom from slavery, have nothing to do with it? Did preserving the Union, and making it more democratic, have nothing to do with it? Will Lincoln's Gettysburg Address be supplanted in people's minds by "Lechery, lechery; still wars and lechery?"

A work of past art is a precious possession, given to us by the genius of a past age, making his discoveries of life our own. It is not to be idolized, or mummified, but to be used. To use it properly, we have to see it in terms of the real life and problems which gave birth to it. Thus it takes on "universal" or lasting meaning. For it tells us of a stage in our own development, in what helped make our society what it is and what helped make us what we are. It may give us issues and realities that are still alive among us today. But its illumination is that it gives us these problems in the conditions and situation in which they first rose, and thus enables us to trace their development. Shakespeare's genius was capable of many great things, but what he could not do was to write our plays for us.

A TRUE LEGEND: A Radio Play

GYORGY SOS

Radio play

by

GYORGY SOS

CAST

MOLNAR,
Chairman of the village council
Reverend TORDAI
"Uncle" SKORKA,
coach-driver of the village council
SEBES
A CARPENTER
A SHOPKEEPER
MRS. BAKOS
MRS. DAVID
ZSUZSIKA

This play has won the third Prize in the International Radio Play Competition of 1960 and has been broadcast several times over Radio Kossuth, Budapest

(*A small bell tolls in the distance*)

A VOICE: Earthquakes never end suddenly. Their unchanged forces continue to twist and rumble underground and send repeated tremors through the walls of distant cities. Wars too, do not end when the last shot is fired. Even after the passage of many years the aftermath of the tragedies of the past again and again, overwhelms us with its resurgent waves.

(*The sound of the small bell dies away, and there is a few seconds' pause, be-*

fore the noise of a barnyard can be heard. A few geese are cackling, and there is the frequent crowing of a cock)

MRS. BAKOS: *(A woman of about thirty)* Chick, chick, chick, chick . . . chick, chick, chick, chick. Come and get your breakfast!

(From very near by comes the sound of poultry running up to the farmer's wife)

Off with you! Shooh, you gander! Why, he'll be knocking the basket from my hands. *(The cock's crow is heard from nearer by)* All right then! What are you so het up about? Do you think you were the first to get up? You dumbhead! Why, the men out there have cut a couple of rows at least by now. Shooh, you cheeky creature!

MRS. DAVID: *(From next door)* Good morning, neighbour!

MRS. BAKOS: Good morning! Look at that cheeky cock. He won't let the hens be long enough for them to peck up the bit of corn I gave them. Shooh, you beast. Has your husband gone over to Old Hill too?

MRS. DAVID: Yes, he has. They say the combine harvester can't manage the steep parts. I'll be going up there too, I'm only waiting for the herd to get going.

MRS. BAKOS: We can go up together then. I'll just tend to the chicks first and get some food packed up because my husband didn't take any with him. Come and call me when you go.

MRS. DAVID: All right. What's up with the old woman? I havn't seen her yet today, though she's usually up early enough.

MRS. BAKOS: She must be asleep. Yesterday she complained that she wasn't feeling well. I brought her a bit of chicken broth last night. I killed that speckled hen, it wasn't able to lay for three days, you know. Shooh, there's nothing more, go and scratch for yourselves now. Will you call for me then?

MRS. DAVID: Yes, I will.

MRS. BAKOS: I'll just pop into the shack and have a look at what the old woman's doing.

(The cock crows)

Get away with you, you old rascal! You know you mustn't come into the back garden, or you'll scratch out all Auntie Róza's flowers. That's not what the poor old woman planted them for. Shooh!

(The creaking of a small gate is heard, while the cock's crow gradually fades into the distance)

Auntie Róza! Auntie Róza! . . . Seems as if the house were empty. . . . The window's open. *(She calls in through the window)* Auntie Róza, how did you like the chicken broth? Did you eat it? *(Aside, to herself)* The devil can make out what's inside in that darkness.

(The sound of a few steps, then the opening of a door which stays open. In surprise)

Wonder why the door's unlocked? She always locks it, she's so timid, poor thing. My János has told her time and again not to be afraid. A thief would take us first, with all we've got, before he got round to her. Who would guess that there was a shack in the back garden? *(Gaily)* Aunt Róza! Did you have someone to sleep with you last night,

is that why you've left the door open?

(Suddenly she stops talking. There is a grave silence, with the crow of the cock from very far off. There is the sound of Mrs. Bakos taking a few steps on the boards. Then, quietly)

Good Lord!

MRS. DAVID: *(From far off, outside)* Mrs. Bakos! Are you coming, neighbour? Let's get going or we'll never get out there for lunch! . . . Mrs. Bakos! Where are you?

(She comes in. Then, more quietly)

Auntie Róza isn't ill, is she? . . . *(Her voice trails off completely towards the end)* . . . poor creature . . . God rest her soul. . . .

MRS. RAKOS: Her door was open. She must have felt it coming. . . .

MRS. DAVID: Look, there's a lamp set out here and this white dress beside it.

MRS. BAKOS: She showed it to me once. It's her burial dress. . . . She's put everything ready. . . . She had six children and nine grandchildren and yet she's died all alone here. Nobody noticed when she passed away.

MRS. DAVID: She looks just as though she were asleep. Her face is quite smooth now.

MRS. BAKOS: For all that she had such deep furrows on her brow. . . . Her six children and nine grandchildren all died before she did. . . . Her husband passed away a couple of years ago, too. . . .

MRS. DAVID: What shall we do now?

MRS. BAKOS: I don't rightly know. . . . My János is sure to be able to tell us. . . .

MRS. DAVID: We ought to tell the Council.

MRS. BAKOS: So we ought—that they can see to her funeral. I'll just close the window.

(She closes it)

MRS. DAVID: We ought to light the lamp at her head.

MRS. BAKOS: Yes, but won't something catch fire from it?

MRS. DAVID: We'll pour some water in a saucer and put it in the middle.

MRS. BAKOS: Here's yesterday's broth. She hasn't so much as touched it. Though it really was a fine broth. . . . You just go to your husband while I run along to the Council. Tell my husband I'll come as soon as I can, but I can't leave her alone, poor thing, can I?

(A short interval, then, very quietly, while she crosses herself)

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, Amen.

MRS. DAVID: Did you cross yourself?

MRS. BAKOS: *(A little frightened)* Why, oughtn't I have?

MRS. DAVID: Maybe she wouldn't have liked it.

MRS. BAKOS: *(To encourage herself)* I hope I've done no harm.

*

MOLNAR: *(On the phone)* Hello! Hello! That Nagykaránd? Put me through to the District Office of the Agricultural Coop please. No, I don't know the number. I'm the chairman of

the Village Council at Vidács. Please, do put me through to the District Office, even though I don't know the number. . . . Yes, I'll wait. . . .

SKORKA: (*Shouts in through the window from outside)* Comrade Chairman!

MOLNAR: What is it, Uncle Skorka?

SKORKA: I've been standing under the window here with the trap, waiting for you for half an hour.

MOLNAR: I'll be coming right away, I've only got one more phone call to make. I've set out three times already, but something always happened. I don't care who comes now, whoever it is, I'll get rid of him and we'll set off.

SKORKA: Shall we be away for long?

MOLNAR: We'll nip round to the three cooperative farms and have a look at the tractor-station. We'll be away till lunch-time, I'm sure.

SKORKA: In that case I'll take a couple of bags of oats, for if the Comrade Chairman says lunch, we'll be lucky to get back for supper.

MOLNAR: *(Speaking through the phone)* Hello! Yes. That the Coop office? Hello! This is Council Chairman Molnár of Vidács speaking. Look comrade, the manager of the coop store here has just been to see me. He complained that they had not been sent all the pork they had asked for. I don't know how this could have happened, but here we are in the very midst of the harvest, and you've chosen this moment to make things hard for us with the meat. . . . No, don't have a look, just see to it that they send it today! This is the first time the people in our three coops are harvesting together, we've got worries and troubles galore. We don't want any ill feelings about that darned meat. . . . You say the order was late. . . . I don't know, I'll ask the manager and believe me, he'll get what's coming to him. But comrade, you really can't punish the whole village by depriving it of its meat! . . . All right. . . . Have a try! So long, and don't be so bureaucratic. *(He slams down the receiver.)* I'm coming, Uncle Skorka!

MRS. BAKOS: *(After knocking)* Good morning.

MOLNAR: Good morning. My dear woman, I cannot possibly receive people at eight in the morning. Anyway, I'm in an awful hurry.

MRS. BAKOS: Yes. . . .

(A short pause)

MOLNAR: *(Somewhat perplexed)* Are you sure it is me you're looking for?

MRS. BAKOS: The Comrade Chairman. . . .

MOLNAR: That's me. But perhaps someone else at the Council could see to your business. You don't have to come running to the Chairman with every little trifle, you know. . . . Well, all the best, and don't be angry, for I've a host of things to do.

MRS. BAKOS: People say the Comrade Chairman is the only person. . .

MOLAR: Are you dead certain that it's very urgent?

MRS. BAKOS: Well it is urgent like.

MOLNAR: Come along in the afternoon, I must get off now, we ought to have set out an hour ago.

MRS. BAKOS: Yes. . . . They said you'd be in a great hurry, but I did hope you'd listen to me.

MOLNAR: *(Heaves a deep sigh and calls out through the window)* Uncle Skorka, wait a bit, will you?

SKORKA: *(From outside)* I knew it.

MOLNAR: Tell me quickly what it's about.

MRS. BAKOS: Poor Mrs. Steinberger.

MOLNAR: Who is Mrs. Steinberger?

MRS. BAKOS: She lived in our yard. You know we have a room and a kitchen in a shack in the back garden. That's where she lived.

MOLNAR: *(Impatiently)* I am not the one to see about housing. If there's something wrong you'd better see the Housing Office.

MRS. BAKOS: It's not about housing.

MOLNAR: What is it then?

MRS. BAKOS: You see Mrs. Steinberger died last night.

MOLNAR: Deaths must be reported to the Medical Officer and the Registrar's Office. Don't be angry but this is really none of my business.

MRS. BAKOS: I've been there. It's they who sent me to you. You see there's something else about this case.

MOLNAR: What?

MRS. BAKOS: Mrs. Steinberger, you see, was as lonely as my little finger. She's got no one to bury her.

MOLNAR: We've had cases like that before. I really don't know why they sent you to me. The village will have her buried in the usual way.

MRS. BAKOS: Only . . .

MOLNAR: Only what?

MRS. BAKOS: Only, are you sure it will be the right sort of burial?

MOLNAR: Why shouldn't it be right? Do leave off, my good woman, I've got plenty to attend to as it is. You just run along home and the Council will see to it. Good-bye.

MRS. BAKOS: Good-bye . . . But Comrade Chairman, please don't be angry with me, I know my husband always says that nowadays there's nothing after you're dead and all that, but you see. . . .

MOLNAR: Well, what is it?

MRS. BAKOS: You see this Mrs. Steinberger, she was always such a devout soul and she wanted to have a priest to bury her, with the prayers of her religion. That's why I've come to the Comrade Chairman to see to it please, because no one else can do anything about it. My neighbour and I, we washed her, put on her burial clothes and lit a lamp by her, but we didn't dare do any more, lest we spoil things. . . . You see my neighbour's a Lutheran. I'm Catholic and poor Mrs. Steinberger was a Jewess. . . . There's no one in the whole village whom we could ask what we should do, for Mrs. Steinberger was the last Jewish person left here after the war. Now that she's dead, there's no one who could bury her according to her religion. May she rest in peace.

MOLNAR: *(With sincerity)* . . . in peace.

MRS. BAKOS: The other day she showed me her burial dress. That was when she said "Dear Mrs. Bakos, you're such a good woman. Promise me that when I die you'll have me buried by a priest, according to our Jewish faith. I had six children who died and nine grandchildren, and there was not so much as a prayer by the coffin of a single one of them, nor even a coffin to put them in. . . . Promise me you'll call a priest to my side." I promised her, poor thing, after all, that was her will. I don't know how the Jews say

things are after death, but she, poor woman, suffered quite enough in her life and I thought her last wish ought to be fulfilled. If you'd please call a Jewish priest from somewhere. . . . For if there's no life after death, we wouldn't be doing any harm, and if perhaps there should be after all, she'd think well of us up there, with that kind heart of hers. . . . Well, that's what I've come about.

MOLNAR: Yes. . . . Well you really are a good woman . . . but as for me, I wasn't appointed here to organize ceremonies. . . . That's certainly not my business.

MRS. BAKOS: Where am I to go then, now? My husband always says the Council's the sort of place where they see to everything.

MOLNAR: *(In confusion)* Ah . . . yes, yes. We'll try and do something about it. . . . Yes, we'll have a look and see what we can do. You just go home now. What is your name?

MRS. BAKOS: Mrs. Bakos. My husband is János Bakos. It was your brother-in-law, comrade Chairman, who persuaded us to join the coop last winter. . . . He certainly knew how to persuade a body. You'll get a priest for her, won't you?

MOLNAR: We'll straighten this business out somehow.

MRS. BAKOS: Thank you very much. Just send him along to 23 Kapás street. I've got an awful lot to do and I should have taken his dinner out to my husband, only Mrs. Dávid said she'd take it. But I'll have to sit up by her bed all night. Even if I can't pray for her, at least she won't be alone. Perhaps my neighbour'll come in too. 23 Kapás street, don't forget. János Bakos's house. Good-bye, Chairman.

MOLNAR: Good-bye, Mrs. Bakos. *(Heaves a great sigh)* Well, Bálint Molnár, what are you going to do now? You ought to telephone to Nagykaránd and ask the Chairman of the District Council to send a Jewish priest if they have one. Is that really what I ought to do?

(He turns the handle of the telephone)

Please put me through to Nagykaránd. . . .

SKORKA: *(From outside)* Shall we get going Comrade Chairman?

MOLNAR: Straight away, I've only got one more call to put through.

(Over the phone)

Hello! Give me the Chairman of the District Council. . . .

(A short interval then, to himself)

They'll think I've gone mad. I still haven't sent in last month's report, the repair jobs are going slowly at the tractor-station, there are two few machines in the coops, the seed is scattering, we should discuss investments for the third quarter, I ought to convene a meeting of the Council, and yet I, the No. 1. man in the village, have nothing better to do than find a Jewish priest. . . . They'll think that Molnár at Vidács either isn't up to his job or else the heat wave's addled his brain. . . . Hello! *(Embarrassed)* This is Chairman Molnár of Vidács. Hello, Comrade Chairman. . . . You know, I called you because . . . well, you see, I'll be sending you last month's report at the end of the week. We've got so much work to do here, I haven't had much time.

. . And then there are always a host of trifles. . . . That's why I called you. . . . I want some help. You see . . . The fact is . . .

(From here he speaks without inhibition)

that the District office of the coop there at your place is making a fuss about the pork, because of some paper or other. It's run out in the shop here, and they absolutely must send us some. Please give them a ring and tell them to shelve their bureaucracy for once. . . . All right, thank you. *(He puts down the receiver and gives a loud puff)* It'll be terribly hot again today. . . . I really ought to have asked him about that minister. . . . Never mind, I'll do it when we get back.

SKORKA: *(From outside)* Comrade Chairman!

MOLNAR: I'm coming! We can get started straight away.

(A two-wheeled trap rattles on the cobbles)

SKORKA: Look how nicely the roan's leg has recovered!

MOLNAR: Yes. . . .

(A short pause)

SKORKA: She'll be able to trot around another couple of years with this here trap.

MOLNAR: So she will.

(A short pause)

SKORKA: But the piebald pulled better, all the same.

MOLNAR: Yes. . . .

SKORKA: You're not very cheerful today, Comrade Chairman. Or is it all your worries?

MOLNAR: Well, there's plenty to be had, Uncle Skorka.

SKORKA: Yes . . . responsibility, I suppose, is a big thing. Just take it from me, Comrade Chairman, there are enough cares on my shoulders too. Suppose I had not cured this poor nag's leg. . . . There's a lot of value in a horse like this—and you're in the soup before you can say Jack Robinson. For the trap must always be ready to go. This is not the sort of place where I could say "the horse is lame, I can't go." Once the word's "go," why there's nothing but to get up and go. In the State's interest. There's many that don't even know all the responsibility that rests on a driver, such as me. . . . True, I've had plenty of practice here. . . .

(A short pause, with only the trap rattling on)

MOLNAR: *(just to himself, quietly, with no echo or any other technical trick)* Still, I ought to have done something about this burial business. But what? The devil take it! The hard thing about this chairmanship is that here you always have to be clever in advance. How much easier to be clever after the event. For that poor woman it makes precious little difference by now, how she's put into the gave. Funerals are, after all, always conducted for the living and not for the dead. But what will the living say? Shall I have the loudspeaker announce that the last Jewish woman in our village has died? What would happen? How many people would feel a shiver running down their backs, as it did down mine this morn-

ing? Would they understand that this is really still part of the Second World War, which obliterated so many in our village, simply because they had their Sundays on Saturdays? And what if there're some who'll snear and grin? And anyway, should I, the Council Chairman, be the one to organize a Church burial? It's true that they suffered a lot, yet isn't it odd for me one day to lecture on the origin of the belief in God, of religion and of the Churches, and to explain why we don't agree with such things, and then for me, of all people, to run around for a priest to officiate at a religious ceremony? Who's to puzzle this out? Maybe I'm about to stir up something that it would better not to touch again . . . ? Yet what if I leave something in the dark, that had best be brought out into the open? I ought at any rate to do something. . . . One way or the other. . . .

(He suddenly gives a stare)

What's that you're saying Uncle Skorka?

SKORKA: *(Somewhat offended)* I'm asking for the third time now, whether we're to go to the tractor-station first, or to the Golden Ear Farm.

MOLNAR: To the tractor-station, Uncle Skorka.

SKORKA: Then I'll turn down here.

(The traps runs off the cobbled road and continues on a dirt track)

We'll go by the back way, behind the Jewish Temple, so we'll get there faster.

MOLNAR: All right, Uncle Skorka.

(For a short while, only the rattle of the trap can be heard)

SKORKA: (*Without any malice*) Now there's a place that God's moved out of.

MOLNAR: *(Though he knows full well, nevertheless he asks)* Is this the Jewish Temple?

SKORKA: That's what is was, but then . . . Look, there's so much grass and weed between the steps, that the geese go there to graze. It'll be coming on fifteen years now that no one's set foot inside. Though you know at one time, when I had a handsome cab of my own, before my two horses were called up for the Army, I used to spend a lot of time at the stand here. In the autumn, when they had their lent, I would always take away old Mr. Klein from the Temple after the fast. He was a good customer because he lived close by and I could turn back for another passenger. . . . But in vain did the poor man fast, he died of starvation somewhere all the same. . . . You know Comrade Chairman, it's not as though I had ever been the church-going kind, a cabby's always got so much to do, he hasn't time to go to church. But I do think it's a sad thing, when a church is all overgrown with grass, like this one. Not because they don't use it, but because the people have gone who used to go to it. . . . They've been exterminated. . . . Why? For nothing. . . . Jews? Gentiles? As though they were not all the same. . . . Even with horses, look how many kinds there are. Brown, black, grey and white. And yet they're all horses, and their worth is set by how well they pull. . . . Isn't that right?

MOLNAR: Yes, you're right, Uncle Skorka. By the way, did you happen to know the Steinbergers?

SKORKA: József Steinberger? Of course I knew them. They lived in a

back yard in Kapás street. Of the whole family, only the old couple survived by some accident. I heard the old man died a couple of years ago. I used to go to their place because on the main holidays each autumn all their sons, daughters, daughters-in-law and grandchildren would come home, and I would bring them in from the station. Sometimes my cab would be so full up, there would be eight or ten people sitting in it, all on top of each other. I never could make out how they could all get inside that little house. . . . Since the war I haven't had to take anybody there. Why did you ask?

MOLNAR: This Mrs. Steinberger died last night.

SKORKA: She's dead? She was a short little woman. . . . She brought up a lot of children with a lot of trouble, but she never said a nasty word about anyone. Everybody around there liked her. If someone's goose had a grain of corn stuck in its windpipe, they always took it to Auntie Róza. She'd take it out, something wonderful. And she never took a penny for it. . . . When I went to fetch her children from the station I always asked her: "Won't you come for a ride Auntie Róza?" "I will sometime, only you'll have a lot of passengers now on your way back. But one day I'll come along and then you'll take me for a ride all the way through the town, alone, by myself." But she never came for that ride. Though I know she would have loved to come. . . . And who's to bury her now?

MOLNAR: The Council, of course.

SKORKA: It ought to be in the Jewish cemetery.

MOLNAR: That's right, of course.

SKORKA: And who's going to pray over her?

MOLNAR: She was the last Jewish person in Vidács.

SKORKA: So she's going to be buried without a prayer?

MALNAR: She won't know anything anyway, poor woman.

SKORKA: They said she was a very religious person.

MOLNAR: Do you think, Uncle Skorka, that we ought to call a priest to bury her?

SKORKA: All her children and all her grandchildren were buried without a priest.

MOLNAR: And what do you think people would say?

SKORKA: Well, maybe they wouldn't all say the same. . . . Some would say one thing, others another. . . . I don't know much about politics and things of that sort, but if you were to ask me, I'd say she ought to be buried with Jewish prayers. . . . Not because of God and religion and her seeing it from above, but as a matter of humanity.

MOLNAR: Somehow I feel like that myself. Yes, that's what we ought to do, and that's what we shall do. Thank you for your advice, Uncle Skorka.

SKORKA: *(Seriously)* Glad to be of some help, Comrade Chairman. And if you ever again get into a jam over something, don't you be afraid to ask me.

MOLNAR: *(Smiling a little)* Right! Just give that horse a nudge, will you. . . . They've got a phone at the tractor-station, and I'll try and phone for a priest from there.

(The rattle of the trap gets louder, then slowly fades away)

■

(After a short interval, the puffing of a stationary tractor is heard, as it runs idle in the repair shop of the tractor-station)

MOLNAR: Good morning.

SEBES: *(A young man of about twenty-five)* Good morning, Comrade Chairman. Though it's nearer tea-time for me, than breakfast.

MOLNAR: Were you that early today, Comrade Sebes?

SEBES: Today? Why, we got going at dawn yesterday.

MOLNAR: So that's why you look as haggard as though you had been to a ball that lasted three days on end. Not that a young man like you shouldn't take it in his stride.

SEBES: A bit of overtime pay comes in handy.

MOLNAR: Where are the others?

SEBES: They've gone out with the two combine harvesters. The director is also with them. We fixed both machines during the night. In the morning one went off to the Golden Ear Farm, the other to Kossuth Farm. By now they're busy on the wheat.

MOLNAR: That was a tidy bit of work you did. Are you keeping watch here now?

SEBES: Yesterday afternoon we fitted a new engine to this tractor. We've been running her all night. I'll go and stop her now, to give her a rest. I think she'll be ready to start tomorrow afternoon and then I'll be able to get some sleep.

MOLNAR: But when you go to sleep, you take off that red cap, of yours, don't you?

SEBES: Comrade Chairman, you're always at me about my cap.

MOLAR: Well, I'd have thought that a knitted red cap, especially with a dangling tassel like that, was more fit for girls to wear. Don't you think so?

SEBES: It's for him to wear that wears it. At any rate, it keeps my hair from becoming oily.

MOLNAR: Take care, or one fine day a bull will knock you off the tractor.

SEBES: It's not the bulls but the girls that usually go for it.

MOLNAR: Is the office locked? I'd like to put through a phone call.

SEBES: I've got the key here. But I'll go and open it for you, because the lock's a bit stiff.

MOLNAR: Sure, where else would a lock be stiff, if not at a repair shop, eh?

SEBES: Here you are.

(Lock being opened, door opens)

MOLNAR: Comrade Sebes, you came to us from Nagykaránd, didn't you?

SEBES: Yes.

MOLNAR: Then you know the place well, don't you?

SEBES: Fairly well. But it's a big town, you know.

MOLNAR: You don't happen to know whether there's a Jewish priest there, do you?

SEBES: *(With a little chuckle)* What do you want him for?

MOLNAR: I need one.

SEBES: *(Tries to be witty)* For you, Comrade Chairman? *(Laughs)* I wouldn't have thought a man with a handle-bar moustache like yours would be wanting a Jewish priest.

MOLNAR: *(Reprovingly)* It's not for my moustache that I need him. An old Jewish woman has died in our village and I need him to bury her.

SEBES: A relative of yours?

MOLNAR: Why should she be a relative?

SEBES: Because of the fuss you're making over her.

MOLNAR: She has no more relatives left. It's the Council's duty to have her buried.

SEBES: *(Shrugs his shoulders)* I don't know whether there is a Jewish priest at Nagykaránd or not. Go ahead and ask them, the phone's over there.

MOLNAR: If you were in my place, wouldn't you look for a minister?

SEBES: I'm in my place here and that's all there is to it. I'm not the slightest bit interested in a Jewish woman I've never even set eyes on.

MOLNAR: Perhaps it wouldn't do any harm if you were a little bit interested.

SEBES: Is it going to be such a big, pompous funeral?

MOLNAR: No, it won't be particularly pompous.

SEBES: *(Jocularly)* If I were paid overtime for it, I might go and have a look at it.

MOLAR: *(Angrily)* This is no joke!

SEBES: O. K., it just slipped out of me.

MOLNAR: Is it so hard to understand that here we have an unfortunate creature whose relatives were all exterminated during the war and that we must pay her the last honours?

SEBES: I didn't say we shouldn't.

MOLNAR: But . . .? Tell me frankly.

SEBES: There's no "but." . . . It's really all the same to me. . . . Only . . . I don't want to say anything against that Jewish woman, because I don't bother about anybody's race. But this was the sort of war in which the Jews got it in the neck. I don't say that it was a decent thing to do, but surely it's time we should forget about the whole business. They had bad luck, so what are we to do about it? It was bad alright, but we can't change it now—it's over and why should we keep warming up the old stew? She's dead. Let her rest in peace, at least we can be certain there won't be any more anti-semitism at Vidác. . . . What are you looking at me for? Do you mean I'm not right?

MOLNAR: *(Quietly, with consternation)* This is horrible. . . . "There won't be any more anti-semitism at Vidács?" Is that all it means to you? Look, how red my palms are, from the way I clenched by fists while you spoke. This morning I still hesitated whether to arrange for this funeral for fear there might be someone who would talk the way you've been talking. And now that such a person has turned up, I know we must arrange for it. Even though you only come along if you are paid overtime.

SEBES Comrade Chairman, you said yourself that I was to speak frankly, and now here you are, trying to stab me with your glances. I'm the sort of person who says what's on his mind. Now you tell me why I am wrong.

MOLNAR: Because there are things of which we cannot say that they are all the same to us, even though it may not be pleasant to remember them because our own conscience pricks us a bit. Everyone has suffered from the war, that's true, but why? Because the Second World War began somewhere, slowly, with the persistent spread of this evil thing that infected people like rust infects the wheat—this idea that the Jews. . . . We blush for shame now, when we remember that this was all that was given to us in place of work

and bread and land and everything else, and that we often accepted it. We even thought there was nothing we could do against it. We were blind, for we believed that it was only the Jews they were hitting, and meanwhile we too were nearly beaten to death by it.

SEBES: You, Comrade Chairman, can hardly say that you did nothing against it, after all. . . .

MOLNAR: Sometimes one's conscience troubles one just because there are fewer of us for some task than there should be. We'll arrange for this funeral. It's not that woman that needs it, but rather we who are here. Perhaps you too.

SEBES: *(With little conviction)* Yes. Well, I'll go and get that engine running, because I want to have it ready by noon tomorrow.

MOLNAR: *(To himself)* How much harder it is to remove the weeds than to sow a new crop. *(Turns the handle of the telephone)* Hello! Put me through to Nagykaránd please. Hello! The Chairman of the Council! Hello! Hello!

(His voice slowly fades away)

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(The noise of the barnyard is again heard, but it is now much more drowsy than it was in the morning. The cock no longer crows, only a duck quacks and a hen clucks industriously. For a moment all this is heard from nearby, then it gradually grows more distant into Mrs. Steinberger's room)

MRS. DAVID: Here I am.

MRS. BAKOS: Wasn't my husband angry because I had you bring out his lunch?

MRS. DAVID: No. All he said was: "All right." Hasn't the priest come yet?

MRS. BAKOS: No one's come, but I suppose the Chairman will see to it.

MRS. DAVID: It would be best to bury her tomorrow.

MRS. BAKOS: I don't even know what we should do with her bits of property. She used to get a little money from her Church every month, from somewhere in Budapest. Perhaps we ought to write to them.

MRS. DAVID: The Council will see to that. What's this?

MRS. BAKOS: I found it in the cupboard. It's her prayer book. I often saw her reading it, so I've put it under her hand.

MRS. DAVID: What if the Chairman's forgotten all about it?

MRS. BAKOS: If no one comes by evening, I'll go and see him again. You'll stay here by her the while, won't you?

MRS. DAVID: All right. I'll run home now, but after the milking I'll be back.

(The trap rattles)

SKORKA: How about a piece of bacon, Comrade Chairman?

MOLNAR: Well, I must admit I'm pretty hungry.

SKORKA: I knew we wouldn't be home for lunch. There goes the five o'clock train, off to Nagykaránd. Just unpack that parcel will you?

MOLNAR: So you didn't bring fodder only for the horse?

SKORKA: Many people have no idea that in a job like mine you have to think of a lot of things. They imagine that my job consists only of sitting in the driver's seat and saying gee-up! But

if a man's to rise to his responsibilities he must think of other things too. After all, the Chairman can't be expected to think of everything. Just carve a slice for yourself, there's plenty there.

MOLNAR: Thank you. This is fine. Then I'll hold the reins a bit, while you eat your share.

SKORKA: Gee-up! We'd better hurry, for that priest might arrive by the five-thirty from Nagykaránd.

MOLNAR: I don't know. *(Eats as he speaks)* At first the Chairman just couldn't make out what I wanted. I suppose he was somewhat puzzled himself, about what he ought to do. He hummed and hawd a bit, but finally promised he'd see what he could do and then phone me about it. His message is sure to be there by the time we get back. And if he can't come by train, they can always send him along by car. We'll see. . . .

(The rumbling of the trap fades away)

ZSUZSIKA: He said he'd be back about lunch time. I'm waiting for him too, because I've got a lot of messages and some papers for him to sign.

MRS. BAKOS: If I may sit down here I'll wait for him. I've been here once already, only you weren't here then.

ZSUZSIKA: What's it about? Won't it do tomorrow?

MOLNAR: Here I am. What's up, Zsuzsika?

MRS. BAKOS: Don't be angry please, but I've come again. Do you remember? I was here this morning about Mrs. Steinberger.

MOLNAR: Don't worry, everything'll be all right. I've spoken to the Chairman of the Council at Nagykaránd. Zsuzsika, didn't he phone?

ZSUZSIKA: Yes, he did. He left a rather odd message. I was to tell you he had seen to the pork and it would be here tomorrow. But he can't send a Jewish priest, because he hasn't got one either. He also said he had tried to ask for one from Budapest, but couldn't get through on the phone.

MRS. BAKOS: What are we to do then? She ought to be buried tomorrow.

MOLNAR: *(Puzzled)* Yes, she ought to be buried tomorrow. . . .

MRS. BAKOS: I found a prayer book in her cupboard, but who on earth can read it?

(The tolling of a small bell comes from afar)

MOLNAR: Wait here a moment! I've thought of something.

(The distant sound of the bell gradually comes nearer. For a few moments it is heard from quite nearby, then it stops. A garden gate is opened)

MOLNAR: Good evening.

TORDAI: Good evening.

MOLNAR: Please forgive me, Reverend, for butting in on you like this. My name is Molnár, I'm Chairman of the Council.

TORDAI: I'm Gáspár Tordai, at your service. Perhaps we'd better go inside.

MOLNAR: I wouldn't like to disturb you for long.

TORDAI: Oh, not at all. This is just an old man's pastime you know. I water my little garden every evening,

but I've just finished for today. Please come in.

MOLNAR: We could sit down on this bench here, the earth's got such a good, fresh smell.

TORDAI: Make yourself comfortable then.

MOLNAR: I've come with a strange request, sir. At one time I used to go to your services, but that was a long time ago. Of course you don't remember, I myself hardly do. But I have preserved the conviction that you were a good man, always.

TORDAI: *(Humbly)* God created me to be such as I am.

MOLNAR: I need your help.

TORDAI: I don't know of what help a Lutheran pastor could be to the Chairman of the Council, but I shall gladly do what I can and what my conscience permits me to do.

MOLNAR: I would like to ask you, if possible, to conduct a funeral service.

TORDAI: There's nothing to prevent my doing that.

MOLNAR: But maybe there is. You see . . . I've heard that Christian clergymen are also required to study Hebrew.

TORDAI: So they are.

MOLNAR: Do you know some too, Reverend?

TORDAI: Just a little. I can read it and I know a prayer or two. Why?

MOLNAR: It's a Jewish woman that requires burial.

TORDAI: A Jewess?

MOLNAR: Does your religion forbid you to do it?

TORDAI: No, it doesn't forbid it, but it's the sort of thing that rarely happens. . . .

MOLNAR: Last night a Jewish woman called Mrs. Steinberger died. She has no one to bury her, except us. You know, Reverend, that I'm not a church-going man, because I take a different view of the world and I have my own opinion of religious ceremonies, too. But now I somehow feel that we ought to bury this woman according to some sort of rite. Even though we may not be able to do it in exactly the way that they do, it ought to be something like it. Are you perhaps versed in these things, Reverend, and would you undertake to do it?

TORDAI: You and I, we look at the world in two different ways, but now we are sitting together side by side here on this bench. In this matter our thoughts, too, are one. You've asked me to discharge a sad duty, but I'm glad you asked me, for this is a just cause. Who would have thought that the Chairman of the Council who "takes a different view of the world" would think of things like this? If a man chooses humaneness as his weapon, I shall, in my own way, always be his ally. We'll bury the woman tomorrow. Thank you for letting me help.

MOLNAR: It won't be a big funeral, for we're in the middle of the harvest. Everyone's out on the fields.

TORDAI: It would be good if there were at least ten men present. According to their Law you must have at least ten men for prayer.

MOLNAR: I'll call that many together. One or two people are sure to be able to come from each of the cooperative farms and from the tractor-station. I'll organize it by phone tomorrow morning. It would be best to bury her as soon as possible.

TORDAI: Could we gather by, say, one o'clock?

MOLNAR: Yes.

TORDAI: Is the coffin at her house?

MOLNAR: Heavens, we haven't even got one yet! We ought to have a fine coffin made.

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(Sounds characteristic of carpenter's workshop)

TORDAI: We don't want a beautiful coffin, Mr. Répási, that's not in line with their tradition. Just simple, rough boards.

CAREPTER: I know sir, I remember making them.

MOLNAR: Send the bill to the Council.

CARPENTER: All right. There'll only be the price of the wood on the bill. . . . That's the way I'd like it. I'll get it fixed up during the night.

(There is the sound of sawing for a few moments, followed by a brief silence; later, first from afar, then ever nearer, the sound of the coffin being nailed to)

*

SKORKA: Good morning.

MRS. BAKOS: Good morning.

SKORKA: I see the coffin's ready.

CARPENTER: Yes. I've just nailed it too. She didn't need much wood, poor thing.

SKORKA: The pastor's sent this black cloth to spread over the coffin, so it shouldn't stand here bare, before we take it out to the cemetery. The funeral will be one o'clock. I'll be here by noon with the Lutheran hearse; the Chairman and the others will be going straight to the cemetery. We'll harness the Council's horses to the hearse, that's why I'll be driving them. Because I know those horses. I've only just cured the roan that had a sore leg . . . and it's a very responsible job, driving a hearse. You have to take care not to go too fast or too slow. A clumsy tug at the reins, and the trouble's already there. Oh, and here's another lamp; if you need it, light it. Well, at the best, I'll be here at noon.

*

(The sound of the noon bell tolling—a larger bell than before. Afterwards there is a short interval)

MRS. BAKOS: Have you come here too, Reverend? I thought you'd be going straight out to the cemetery.

TORDAI: I've come here. I'd like to accompany the hearse.

MRS. BAKOS: You know sir, I'm a Catholic and I don't know, but I hope we didn't do anything with her that we oughtn't to have. We just washed her and dressed her.

TORDAI: You did well. You did everything as you should have.

MRS. DAVID: We kept vigil by her together last night. We wanted to say a prayer for her, but we didn't dare. So we just put her Book in her hand, we thought it'd be better than nothing.

TORDAI: So it was.

SKORKA: Will you really be coming to the cemetery on foot along with the hearse, Reverend?

TORDAI: Yes.

SKORKA: As you wish. I'll drive slower then.

*

(A short pause. The creak of the hearse's wheels is heard from afar, then ever nearer)

Whoa, brown'un, slow there. You're not used to that black spread over you. Whoa there . . . Whoa . . . You see, Aunt Róza, how oddly things have turned out. Now who'd have thought the time would come when I'd really be taking you for a ride. You're alone in the cab, all alone, and we're going right along the length of the town. . . . The Council's horses are drawing you and the Chairman himself has arranged for the funeral. That's a great honour you know. . . . It's true that there's not much of a crowd following us, only the old Lutheran pastor trudging behind the hearse and a couple of women after him. For the men who helped you up have hurried back to the harvest. . . . But you mark my words, Auntie Róza, if it were winter and people had more time, all the people of Vidács, every one of 'em would be here. . . . We wanted to call in a Jewish priest but we couldn't get one. . . . Never mind, everything'll be fine all the same. The Reverend Tordai also knows his job well, you can take it from me. When we put you up on the hearse, he read some Jewish from the Book, fluent as a brook. I listened well, Auntie Róza, because our Chairman's only coming out to the cemetery and when he's not around, I have to watch and see that everything happens as it should. . . . Slow there, brown'un, the pastor can't come after us as quick as that. . . . There'll be a bell too, Auntie Rósa. It's not a Jewish custom, to be sure, but the pastor has allowed the bell ringer to toll the bell when your coffin is lowered to the grave, so that those who are not with us in the cemetery should be there in their thoughts.

(The creak of the hearse is heard for another few moments, then fade away)

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MOLNAR: I see we're all here. Let's get started then. Comrade Sebes, are you representing the tractor-station?

SEBES: They sent me, because I'm going off to sleep right after.

MOLNAR: You might have brought some sort of hat, you know that's how they do it.

SEBES: It's here in my pocket, only I didn't dare put it on before.

MOLNAR: Would you have had the nerve to come out to the cemetery in that tassled cap?

SEBES: That's all I've got, so what am I to do about it? Can I help it, if I don't have a hat?

MOLNAR: You could have asked someone to lend you one!

SEBES: But who's to fix the engine while I run around for a hat?

MOLNAR: Go home!

SEBES: But . . .

MOLNAR: Go home! Get out! Quick! *(More quietly)* Let's get going, comrades.

*

(A short interval, then the sound of a man's footsteps is heard on the cobbles)

SEBES: *(To himself)* Who'd have thought he'd puff himself up like that? He looked at me as though it had been my fault that Hitler didn't like the Steinbergers. . . . Fifteen years ago I was just a kid of ten, so what business of mine is it all? . . . I don't say it

wasn't a pity to provoke him with that cap. I wouldn't for the life of me have thought they'd take this whole funeral so seriously. . . . Am I really such a bad fellow then? How could I know they'd all come in their Sunday hats? Now they'll think I wanted to play a joke. . . .

SHOPKEEPER: Can I serve you?

SEBES: What's that you say?

SHOPKEEPER: I've been watching you for some time staring at the shop window. . . . Please come in. We've got everything here, shirts, ties, handkerchief. During harvest time like this, our service is even better than usual. That's why I'm standing in the doorway, you see, trying to read the customers' thoughts even before they enter the shop. Would you like an elegant pair of swimming trunks?

SEBES: No thanks, I don't need anything, I was just looking round. . . . Do you have any hats?

SHOPKEEPER: Of course we have. The cheaper kind or a better one?

SEBES: But I haven't any money with me.

SHOPKEEPER: Sorry, I can't let you have anything on credit.

SEBES: You see I should be going to a funeral. I never wear a hat, but this Mrs. Steinberger is being buried, perhaps you've heard.

SHOPKEEPER: Please come in. I'll lend you a lovely dark hat. Be very very careful with it and bring it back to me after the funeral. Will that do?

SEBES: Yes. Thank you. But let me have it quickly. If I run I can catch up with them.

(A short pause, then fading footsteps)

•

MOLNAR: We have assembled in this cemetery today for a strange funeral. It would not be fitting to argue over an open grave about how we should view the world. Most of the people here today consider that man can only prosper during his life here on earth—that it is here that we must bring about well-being and peace. This is our conviction, yet we have gathered to honour according to her beliefs a fellow human who has passed away but who, during the greater part of her life, was not allowed to feel that she was indeed a human being. It was deep compassion, not so much over her death as over her life, that has brought us here today, to do as she wished us to do by her. We have not brought a wreath, because that is not the custom, and we have all donned dark hats, as required by tradition. We are filled with shame, for it is an old story that those who despise crime are the ones that show shame, and not the criminals. Even though fifteen years have passed since the war, we are again seized with horror, for it is always those who bury the dead who are horrified, and not the murderers. Today we bury not only you, but also those who should be standing here around your grave. It can no longer prove a consolation to you, but it can console us who live, to know that we are now to some extent making amends for something that was not of our doing. We only looked on, helpless, while it was being done. Not everyone is here, for not all of us could come. Life cannot stop, but we who are here have come in their stead, on behalf of those who are working out in the fields and by the machines. We did not know you, Mrs. József Steinberger, but we felt we could not pass by your grave with a shrug of the shoulders, saying,

"it means nothing to me." We felt it was our duty to come, because we wanted to tell you and to tell everyone who still doesn't understand, that our world is incompatible with hatred, with even a flicker of the hatred that led to your sad fate. May you rest in peace!

TORDAI: My brethren in mourning! In the place of her tearful children, grandchildren and relatives, of a congregation in prayer, of a priest of her own faith, I stand here in the name of contrite humanity, by the open grave of Mrs. József Steinberger. I am a servant of God, but how good it is to feel that those who have assembled round this grave did not ask each other who was whose servant, for here we are all of us now serving the cause of humanity. I feel that we are engaged in something that is truly good, something that would not have occurred to people in other eras, under a different social order. And now let the earth from which you were taken and from which we were all taken, cover you. *(Clods of earth thump on the coffin)* Rest in peace, and may your God bless you, with this my prayer that is that of your own faith. And if I should not read it well, forgive me, for I am an aged servant of the Lord and my eyes are weak and the tears of my sad office. . . . *(A few sentences earlier a small bell has started tolling far away and now grows stronger as the voice fades away. For a few moments the bell is heard from nearby, then it becomes more distant, while)*

A VOICE: *(From very nearby)* Do not say this is mere legend. For thus did it happen, thus was Mrs. József Steinberger buried. May she rest in peace, and may those who buried her live in peace.

WE WILL WIN

by MANUEL NAVARRO LUNA

This translation is from the volume, Las Poemas Mambises *published in Havana, 1960. Manuel Navarro Luna is the author of numerous volumes of prose and poetry. He was born in the town of Jovellanos, province of Matanzas.*

We are a strong people,
A united people that courage augments!
We are a great people,
Because we fear neither hunger nor death!

The perverse giant may have many daggers;
But we are a people erect and brave,
A people heroic and firm that does not want to be serf,
That does not want to be slave!

Let the lazy go,
And those who are human refuse;
Let the traitors flee in disgrace;
Let the cowards hide their helots' heads.
No grebe ever fought the storm!
The gulls always fled from thunder!

But not the albatross that hurls to the storm
Its cry of victory and joy
Like a clarion call of hope.
It knows that the clouds will not hide the day!

Cuba, like the albatross that faces the hurricane
Opening its powerful wings,
Stands erect before danger like a violent shaft
Of light and victory.

WE WILL WIN!

The imperialist monster, whose rotten entrails
Are fed with the blood of his brother peoples,
Will know how the Cuban insurgents defend
Honor and life!
And we will not be alone in the formidable fight
Against the dirty giant!
The peoples rise against the monster, who hears
Their defiant clarion call.
To all difficult and hard roads,
To all martyrdoms for our Fatherland we will go.
But we will go sure
That in the end we will win!

And if suffering and hunger lie heavy upon us,
If our land is made flames,
We will implant the star* in the center of the crime,
And we will lift the Fatherland above death itself!

We will not retreat!
We will not retreat before anything!
Before anything!
And we will win in the bloody fray.

WE WILL WIN!

Translated by *John W. Stanford*

*The lone star of the Cuban flag.

POEMS ON PUERTO RICO

PUERTO RICO—PUERTO POBRE

It is late, in this age, for a beginning;
And yet, this is my feeling.
Here one time, like other times, I come out
To sing or to die: here I begin.
And there are no forces that can silence me,
Save the sad magnitude of time
And her ally: death with its plow
For the agriculture of bones.
I have chosen a theme warm
With blood, with palm trees and silence.
It is of an island surrounded
By many waters and infinite dead.
There the pain of those who wait grows,
And there is bled a river of laments.
It is a poor island imprisoned.
The ashen days go and come;
Light flies and returns to the palm trees;
Night travels in her black warship;
And there she is, there is the imprisoned,
The island surrounded by suffering.
And on it our blood is shed,
Because claws of gold separate her
From her loves and her kindred.

MUNOZ MARIN

There is a fat worm in these waters
In these lands a rapacious worm.
He ate up the flag of the island,
Raising the flag of his masters.
He fed himself on prison blood
Of poor buried patriots
In the corn crown of America
Grew the breeding place of the worn
—Prospering in the shadow of money,
Bloodied with martyrdoms and soldiers,
Inaugurating false monuments,
Making of the country bequeathed
By his fathers a mound enslaved,
Of the island transparent as a star
A small tomb for slaves.
And this worm lived among poets
Cast down by their own exiles.
He handed out stimulus to his professors.
Paying Pythagorean Peruvians
To advertise his government.
And his palace was white without
And inside was infernal as Chicago,
With the mustache, the heart, the claws
Of that traitor, of Luis Muñoz Worm
—Muñoz Marín, for those here present—
Governor-in-a-yoke of his country,
Governor of his poor brothers,
Bilingual translator for the hangmen,
Chauffeur for North American whisky.