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EADERS DIGEST WANTS ME"—*Louis Aragon*

VOLUME 1, NUMBER 2

masses & MAINSTREAM

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ONE FIGHT

by SAMUEL SILLEN

WITH sickening hypocrisy the American press has for weeks been bemoaning the "death of democratic Czechoslovakia." But the loud lamentations of Hearst and Luce and the whole war camp scarcely disguise their real feelings. Theirs is the fury of frustration. For a door has been slammed in their face. This is 1948, not 1938, and the treacherous intrigues of Munich will not work again. The official protests of Washington and London merely emphasize for the people of Czechoslovakia, though no further emphasis seems necessary, the arrogance with which Anglo-American imperialism meddles in the internal affairs of a sovereign member of the United Nations.

Those in America who truly want to understand the significance of the democratic victory in Czechoslovakia will look around the world today and examine the "democrats" who are being financed and armed by our government. They include the monarchist-fascists in Greece; General de Gaulle, who aims to lead all Western Europe in a military crusade against the Soviet Union and the new democracies of Eastern Europe, provided, of course, that he be made the generalissimo of such a "Christian crusade"; the feudal Arab rulers and chieftains who realize how potent the smell of oil is to their moneyed friends in the West; General Franco, who has made a graveyard of his country; Chiang Kai-shek, who is facing defection even from his close associates in the

Kuomintang bureaucracy as the Chinese Communists mobilize tens of millions in their triumphant fight for freedom after age-old darkness and misery. These are the friends, the beneficiaries of American aid throughout the world. These are the Truman-Vandenberg "democrats."

"The new fascist international is taking shape," writes Alvarez Del Vayo, former foreign minister in the Spanish Republic. "The Marshall Plan may be free from overt 'political conditions,' but even in advance of its adoption it has hastened the emergence of Europe's fascist and near-fascist leaders." But the policy-makers in Washington, not content with loans, subsidies, gifts, bribes and every conceivable form of pressure, are now forced to go further. Their pretenses of humanitarianism have worn thin. Economic aid is "not enough" and "too late," the American people are now told. The call is raised for open full-scale armed intervention on the part of the United States, intervention in Greece, intervention in China, intervention in Italy and France should the people in democratic elections vote resoundingly for the parties of the Left. Now the Wedemeyers speak not of the cost in dollars but "the cost in blood."

Only the most naïve, surely, can any longer believe that it is possible to separate this aggressive militarism from the stepped-up tempo of repression at home. The bipartisan program for world supremacy and for defeating the advance of democracy and socialism inexorably stimulates and demands a full-scale program for destroying the people's living standards and liberties at home. Of the rapidly accumulating sectors of attack, we may here note two recent and vivid examples.

The attack of the Un-American Committee on Edward U. Condon, nuclear physicist and head of the Federal Bureau of Standards, has helped further to illuminate the real character of this Committee and its role. Many people who retained illusions that only Communists were the targets of Rankin and Thomas have learned better from the Condon episode. The most conservative scientific bodies in the country have protested the palpable smear of this man. They begin to recognize that all scientific inquiry is at stake. And yet many voices are still heard protesting merely that the Un-American Committee has "stumbled," that it is "failing to differentiate." This is, for liberals, suicidal deception. It is a rationalization for failure to fight for the outright dissolution of the Committee.

But it is impossible to divide the struggle for freedom in America

today into "differentiated" compartments. The fascist attacks of the Committee on Eugene Dennis, Gerhart Eisler, Leon Josephson, the executive board of the Joint Anti-Fascist Refugee Committee, can no more be separated from the attack on Condon than the earlier attack on Harlow Shapley can be separated from the persecution of the progressive film writers and directors of Hollywood. This is one fight. It is the fight of all true democrats for all true democrats. The Communist leaders are being persecuted for the same reason that the scientists and writers are being persecuted: that is, for their concern to prevent a fascist blackout in America, for the leadership they are offering to the progressive forces of the country.

THAT is the meaning of the sadistic, illegal deportation proceedings against John Williamson, Claudia Jones, Alexander Bittelman, Gerhart Eisler, Ferdinand Smith, Charles Doyle, Irving Potash and other anti-fascist fighters. Here the police state in the making has shown its features most nakedly. Trade union leaders, leaders of the Negro and Jewish people, Communist officials, have been summarily arrested, thrown into a cell at Ellis Island, and denied bail. The heroic hunger strike of Williamson, Eisler, Smith and Doyle dramatized for the whole world what was happening in an America whose ruling class and press were simultaneously shedding tears over "the death of democracy in Czechoslovakia." Vigorous mass demonstrations of protest helped win the elementary right of bail from a hostile government. Here again Communists were included among the first victims. But may anyone suppose that Attorney General Tom Clark, the would-be Himmler who has supervised these infamous proceedings, is concerned only about Communists? Every trade unionist, every Negro, every Jew, every progressive intellectual is threatened by Tom Clark's and J. Edgar Hoover's crusade on behalf of their political masters to stamp out the voice of opposition to the war program.

The deep concern of the American people is increasingly demonstrated in the political actions of the masses. It is this concern for peace, for civil liberties, for abundance that is powering the third-party movement headed by Henry A. Wallace. Those who counted on the apathy or fear or confusion of the common people were mistaken. The great victory of Leo Isacson in New York has pinned back the ears of the politicians in both the Democratic and Republican parties. The

amassing of a half million signatures for Wallace in California has dramatized the broad base of the third-party movement. People no longer ask themselves how many votes Wallace will get; they are asking whether he will win.

And this movement, swelling in its proportions, brings us back to democracy in Czechoslovakia. For it is an integral part of the people's movement throughout the world. The plain people here are threatened by the American monopoly capitalists no less than the plain people in other parts of the world. It is one world, and the resistance to imperialism is indivisible. The triumph of Czechoslovakia's new democracy is a triumph for the forces of peace in America. The growing strength of the third-party movement here invigorates all those who, whether in Greece, Palestine or China, are fighting for independence.

And in this country too, as everywhere else in the world, the Communists will play their part as an indispensable sector of the general democratic front. The attempt to imprison, deport, outlaw Communists is central to the strategy of the warmakers and fascists. That strategy must be defeated if the peace forces are to win.

FREEDOM FOR ALL

Four Woodcuts

by

ANTONIO FRASCONI


PROFITS
1940-1945
N.Y. STOCK EXCHANGE
FREE
I REIGN OVER ALL


I THINK FOR ALL
XXX
REDS
HATE
FOREIGN
WAR


I FIGHT FOR ALL
R. WALTERS


BUT WE PAY FOR ALL

What's happening in SOVIET MUSIC?

by NORMAN CAZDEN

MILLIONS of American newspaper readers have been treated recently to a fantastic assault on Soviet musical culture. The world-famous composers Prokofiev, Shostakovich, Myaskovsky, Khachaturian and others less well known here, so the tale went, have been "purged," ordered to "toe the line" by high officials of the Soviet government. What is more perplexing, these highly respected musicians have publicly admitted their errors in "abject surrender"; and they have thanked their critics rather than their unbidden defenders in the U.S. press.

The dispatches were carefully worded to suggest the revival of a hoary legend concocted by the lurid imaginations of journalists when Shostakovich's opera, *Lady Macbeth,* was criticized in 1936. According to this legend the new "decree," like its predecessor, is the work of a mysterious individual of immense power who creeps about unannounced to musical performances, bent upon the discovery of material to be censored. By the merest whim of his uncouth taste he then orders the composer to be shot or rewarded.

The exposure of this palpable invention twelve years ago was never adequately noted by Olin Downes of the New York *Times,* who thus describes his lack of information about the present incident: "One does not know at this end of the cable just what happened—what ignorant and powerful bureaucrat attended a performance he did not enjoy. . . ." Yet we shall discover that Downes, in the very same article, finds himself in hearty agreement with the substance of this "singularly stupid edict"! Likewise Virgil Thomson, perhaps equally well-meaning, develops a speculation to the effect that Soviet composers are forced to conform to discipline by the threat of loss of their income, thus slurring over the fact that only in Soviet society do composers enjoy

not only the right to, but also the actuality of, an income. Yet Thomson also, where he enters on the merits of the case, suggests that the action of which he complains is indeed justifiable and necessary.

But we are not concerned here with legends. Our object is to take up some of the real issues. To do this we must remind ourselves, first, that the sudden leaping into headlines of a discussion of musical matters was meant as malicious anti-Soviet propaganda and not as a serious contribution to music criticism; second, that the content of the discussion was distorted because of that purpose, and also because of ignorance; and third, that even the complete text of the now famous rebuke, not given in the press, cannot provide the full details, articles and musical scores one would like to have for a proper background.

With this setting in mind, we may state our problem in the form of two questions. One, what is the justification for the kind of political intervention in artistic matters shown in this case; what is its meaning, purpose and effect? Two, what is the validity, if any, of the specific criticisms made of Soviet composers in terms of musical techniques? To a degree we must treat these questions separately because in a musician's view the answer to only one of them may be acceptable. That is, one may decide that it is quite conceivable for a public or political body to set certain goals for his art, but that the particular criticisms made are unjust, unwise, narrow and false. Again, one may decide that the criticisms are perhaps correct and valuable to musical discussion, but that they are not the business of a political body. This last is in fact the position reached by Downes and Thomson. Actually the two aspects of the problem are far more dependent upon each other than they may seem at first glance.

Americans, of course, are not used to the acceptance of responsibility for cultural progress on the part of a political organization, and they have good reason for their suspicions were they to rely only on their direct experience. If it should ever occur to an American to look for any concern with musical art on the part of the Republican and Democratic parties which are supposed to represent his free political expression, what would he find? Only the feeble traces of barbershop-chorus patriotism and dips into nightclub life during political conventions on the one hand, and on the other hand in governmental action a running mockery at the arts as "fads and frills" to be treated with the "economy axe": in a word, sneering abuse of culture and denial to it of national support.

It becomes difficult, then, even to conceive of the totally different

setting of social action in artistic matters prevailing in the socialist Soviet Union as well as in a number of other countries. Thus the American falls prey to rumors and calumnies of obvious intent. He is led to believe that any expression of political responsibility for culture is not natural, but rather an infringement of artistic and intellectual freedom. Too often he fails to realize that the lack of such responsibility is not so much an evidence of his own freedom as it is a means of leaving his cultural guidance to the mercies of an unofficial but nonetheless all-powerful, monopoly-controlled entertainment industry, which certainly has neither his freedom nor the integrity and advancement of his cultural interests as its purpose.

FOR genuine insight we must examine in detail the document* on which the incident is based. The Resolution against formalism was the result of a discussion at a "conference of leaders of Soviet music conducted by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union." Expert musical opinion was involved, and it quickly becomes evident that the criticisms of the "formalist trend" are on a level of serious musical judgment, whether or not one agrees with the specific findings.

The one work which the Resolution mentions by name, consideration of which led to a further investigation of esthetic principles, is the opera *Great Friendship* by V. Muradelli. This work, by a composer unknown in this country, the Resolution declares "is unsound both in its music and its subject matter and is an inartistic composition."

Let us note that objection is taken first of all on esthetic rather than on political grounds—an interesting indication. Without a hearing or a score of the opera available, we cannot judge for ourselves the verdict on this particular opera, but let us see on what grounds the conclusion was drawn. The Resolution is convincingly specific:

> "The opera's fundamental shortcomings are rooted first of all in the music of the opera. The music of the opera is inexpressive and poor. There is not one melody or aria in it that remains in the memory. It is muddled and inharmonious, constructed entirely of dissonances, of combinations of sounds that grate on the ear. Into individual lines

* *Izvestia*, Feb. 11, 1948: "On the Opera 'Great Friendship' by V. Muradelli: *Resolution of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolshevik) February 10, 1948.*" Translated by Bernard L. Koten of the American Russian Institute for Cultural Relations with the Soviet Union, Inc., 58 Park Avenue, New York 16, N. Y. All further references to this text are here called "the Resolution."

and scenes having a pretense to melody, there break in, all of a sudden, dissonant noises completely alien to the normal human ear which cause a reaction of depression in the listener. There is no organic connection between the musical accompaniment and the development of the action on the stage. The vocal parts of the opera—choral, solo and ensemble singing—create a poor impression. As a result of all this the potentialities of the orchestra and the singers remain unrealized. The composer did not utilize the wealth of folk melodies, songs, tunes and dance motifs in which the creative art of the peoples of the U.S.S.R. is so rich, specifically the art of the peoples inhabiting the North Caucasus where the action depicted in the opera takes place."

Now, granting that the above description is accurate, we may say that there is sufficient reason for condemnation of the work. Were the context not given, the attack upon "inharmoniousness" and "dissonance" might be regarded as no more than a repetition of an age-old resistance to innovation in harmony on the part of conservative music critics ("philistines"). We shall return to this possibility later on. Meanwhile, however, let us observe that the point of the objection is in the main a discrepancy and mixture of styles rather than the harmonic idiom as such. And we may venture to say that the hardiest purveyor of "modern harmony" will scarcely uphold the introduction of strained or difficult harmonic techniques into an opera which presumably deals with folk images. It is easily credible that *in this setting* a failure to utilize the available idioms of regional folk melodies, and a substitution for them of sophisticated and *inapplicable* harmonic novelties, should be regarded as esthetically false. And that is what the Resolution states.

Operas have failed before; why then does the Central Committee of the Communist Party concern itself with the matter, instead of leaving it to music critics and composers? Clearly it does so in the belief that this particular failure bears on a trend of general importance to the whole of musical culture in the Soviet Union. The issue is stated very succinctly:

"The Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union considers that the failure of Muradelli's opera is a result of the formalist path taken by Muradelli, false and ruinous to the creative production of the Soviet composer. . . . The failure of Muradelli's opera is not an isolated incident, but is closely tied up with the unfortunate situation in contemporary Soviet music, with the prevalence of the formalist trend among Soviet composers."

Since few musicians in this country have been able to follow the course of critical discussions of music within the Soviet Union over three decades, an expression like "formalist trend" may appear a meaningless label. It is therefore fortunate that the Resolution describes more concretely what is meant by this critical term:

> "This trend has found its fullest manifestation in the works of such composers as Comrades D. Shostakovich, S. Prokofiev, A. Khachaturian, V. Shebalin, C. Popov, N. Myaskovsky and others, in whose compositions the formalist distortions, the anti-democratic tendencies in music, alien to the Soviet people and to its artistic taste, is especially graphically represented. Characteristic of such music are the negation of the basic principles of classical music; a sermon for atonality, dissonance and disharmony, as if this were an expression of 'progress' and 'innovation' in the growth of musical form; a rejection of such important fundamentals of musical composition as melody; a passion for confused, neuropathic combinations which transform music into cacophony, into a chaotic piling up of sounds. This music reeks strongly of the spirit of the contemporary modernist bourgeois music of Europe and America which reflects the marasmus [decay] of bourgeois culture, the full denial of musical art, its impasse."

We arrive, then, at a criticism which is at once political and esthetic, so that it becomes difficult to separate the two questions at all. For example, the reference to "anti-democratic tendencies in music" is certainly a statement with a definite political meaning, but in this context it clearly means at the same time a musical technique not readily accessible to ordinary citizens but appealing rather to a highly restricted group.

LET us examine first the political aspect of the attack on "formalism." At first glance it will strike the American musician and music-lover as very strange. For the above description, and its continuation, leave no doubt that the trend here called "formalism" is nothing else than what we know as "modern music" in its various schools.

This is something of a surprise, especially to musical conservatives. Up to this point they might have assumed that a leading Soviet political body would heartily welcome "revolutionary" changes in musical methods. And "modern music" as we know it, more specifically in the productions of the Schoenberg and Boulanger schools among others,

seems to constitute a revolution against the restrictive, philistine culture of bourgeois society. Many of the leaders and publicists of the various "modern music" schools openly avow their purpose to be a revolt against bourgeois conformity, against Babbittry that stifles both the values of art and the expression of the inner man, against the sentimental illusions of nineteenth century drawingroom music. The bold "dissonances" are flaunted in the face of the polite and sugary harmony that symbolizes smugness.

This purpose is recognized equally by the opponents of "modern music." These have castigated the trend as disturbing to the status quo and approved morality. They regard it as a flagrant denial of the "classical" artistic values of the bourgeois era, which they ever identify with "eternal" values. They judge "modern music" to be not only obnoxious but dangerous and even subversive.

The formalist trend which we know of as "modern music," then, is viewed both by its supporters and its detractors here as radical, in a social and political sense as well as in the sense of its fostering of new musical techniques. And so for many it is with dismay that they read of a denunciation of that trend by Soviet Communists.

It must be noted with care, of course, that not all contemporary writing of "art" music belongs to the movement known as "modern." Neither should we confuse the general direction of that movement as a whole with the separate goals shown by individual composers and their works, which are frequently in conflict with the general direction. For the present we may say that the Resolution which we are examining is highly instructive. It suggests to serious musicians and to friends of music, first, that we reconsider the meaning of the "modern music" movement both in social and musical terms, and second, that we look more closely at the progress of that movement under present conditions.

As to the first point, we need note merely that in its inception "modern music" stems not so much from a fundamental *revolt* against bourgeois culture as from a *revulsion* against the impact of that culture upon the isolated intellectual. Its social role is that of a protective escape for the individual sensitive artist, not that of the forward motion of musical art as a whole. It does not challenge the domination of musical culture by the entertainment trust, but on the contrary it surrenders the musical audience to that trust.

As to the second point, in the present historical situation the "modern music" movement goes further: it becomes itself an appendage to the

entertainment trust, a sort of agent for it in a special marginal area of culture. There is good evidence for this, though we must ever beware of judging the collection of numerous jarring trends as a unified whole. The various techniques of musical revulsion are today no longer under general attack; on the contrary, many of them have attained respectability and are widely heralded. The role in which modern formalism serves the entertainment trust, in which it specializes, is the turning of music to anti-cultural ends. Whether or not this is consciously intended by the composers themselves is not important: some of them are cynical enough now to be told the truth, the others are safely wrapped up in their narrow concerns with techniques. The end result is the same, namely, the destruction of culture and the delivering up of the musical audience reached by it to acceptance of that destruction.

How does musical formalism do this? It channelizes musical thought into pessimism and despair. It upholds indifference ("objectivity") as a musical ideal. It preaches a deliberate loss of perspective in relation to constructive social thought and action. It repeats endlessly a sophisticated bantering and flippant parody of folk culture as well as of the great heritage of musical tradition. It denies meanings and values as such. It fosters on the one hand a machine-like erasure of human appeal in music, and on the other hand an intense concern with the inner conflicts of the tortured individual mind. It goes off into orgies of mysticism, of neurotic and pathological experiences; into expressions of resignation, helplessness and fear, and also of inhuman cruelty and violence. It glorifies complexity, disorientation and disintegration of thought. It forcibly separates form from content in music, thus leading to the eventual disappearance of both.

Let us remind ourselves once more that the questioning of the social goals of "modern" or formalist music is not to be taken as a specific condemnation of each and every musical composition in which this trend is reflected, but rather as throwing light on the direction of the trend as a whole. More positive influences may dominate in a given work or in the approach of a composer, and it should be the task of the critic to point them out. Thus the ability of the critic to differentiate in these matters acquires a new importance.

Apart from the need for caution in individual treatment in critical discussion, however, the social implications of the over-all trend are not obscure. Though they may often be hidden in devious reasonings in the

special language of the craft, they are also stated openly with characteristic cynicism. At a recent conference on the arts, the composer John Cage explained his private experiments with percussive sonorities, and then went on to state the aim of the artist. This aim, he said, is the integration of a sensitive but unhealthy mind by concentrating the attention on the material weight of sounds and noises. However, Cage does not believe such "integration" can be achieved in our present "sick" society, though he continues to seek a personal salvation in Jung's psychoanalysis. Full integration, for Cage, can exist only in a "right" society; and this "right" society he finds ready-to-hand in the rule of the feudal Church in medieval Europe and in the thought-control society of pre-war Japan.

If we consider this situation carefully, we are led to understand more deeply what is involved in the Soviet attack on formalism as "anti-democratic" and "alien to the Soviet people and to its artistic taste." There is a valid and, yes, a political objection to music whose primary function is to "cause a reaction of depression in the listener." It becomes correct to predict, as the Resolution does, that the cultivation of formalist views "will bring the greatest possible harm to Soviet musical art," and that "a tolerant attitude towards such views means the dissemination among leading figures of Soviet musical culture of tendencies alien to it, tendencies which lead to an impasse in the development of music, to the liquidation of musical art."

The movement described as formalism in Soviet music is thus shown to convey an ideology not only alien to Soviet life, but more and more openly bent upon destroying it. It is a phase of the "cold war" transferred to the cultural sphere, and calculated to undermine the positive attitudes embedded in art forms, attitudes upon which rest much of the morale of any society. The Resolution, like other actions taken in the related arts in recent months, warns that the victims of this cultural warfare may be found most readily among those intellectuals and esthetes who have not availed themselves fully of the creative outlets of Soviet culture, but who on the contrary have lagged behind in the byways of technical concerns which act as a substitute for forthright artistic work. The issue is, indeed, profoundly political, and quite properly the concern of the Central Committee which adopted the Resolution after discussion with musicians.

In this connection it is noteworthy that Olin Downes, in the article noted above, finds himself *in agreement* with the "ignorant and power-

ful bureaucrat" and the "group of doctrinaires" who issued this "singularly stupid edict." Downes writes:

> "There is no doubt at all—and in this the Central Committee, accidentally or otherwise, is perfectly right—that the great Russian music, through the whole century of a genuinely national school, has evolved from folk-lore, folk-melody and the individual treatment by men of genius of its idioms. Where this principle of simplicity, directness, emotional and idiomatic expression which is recommended is concerned we heartily concur with the ideas enunciated. We also give three cheers for the condemnation of the prevailing paucity of ideas, lack of conviction, and stylistic decadence of the greater amount of all the music that the western world has been producing in the interval between the two world wars. It is music, very largely, of moral as well as artistic decadence."

Virgil Thomson also notes lightly in passing that in his view the culprits held to account in the Resolution "are good composers," and he is worried because "their music, judged by any standard, is no better than it is." Thomson even hopes, "against all reason and probability, that a similar preoccupation on the part of the Central Committee is at least a little bit responsible for the present disciplinary action." These critics would do well to ponder how it comes about that the positions taken are so "accidentally" correct.

HERE we enter also upon the second of the two questions stated at the beginning of this article, namely, what is the validity of the specific criticism made in the Resolution in terms of musical techniques? When we deal concretely with musical compositions in one or another style, it does not necessarily follow that one such style is in tune with the goals stated and another style faulty: such a conclusion must await far more detailed showings. This is important because, were the general approach given above to be taken without further thought or study, it would leave undecided our attitudes toward music which many of us accept and enjoy, in particular many works by outstanding Soviet composers. Are we then called upon to discard music we like, because of what the Resolution tells us is a weakness of its social content?

More exactly, the question arises whether the above analysis, insofar as it enters into technical characteristics, does not reflect after all a one-sided influence. With a natural suspicion, the serious musician will

ask: May it not be that a group of music critics of conservative leanings, somehow finding the ear of an official body, are seeking to impose upon musicians their own limited views of correct musical writing? Is this perhaps a new philistinism which has crept into a place of authority? The musician knows from repeated experience how conservative viewpoints tend to restrict rather than to expand the possibilities of musical composition, how they substitute the schoolbook lessons of little minds for the bold searchings of the composer, how they interpret feebly and mechanically the relics of past art forms and pervert them into a fetter on the living, how they stifle and stultify the grasp of creative problems and impede their solution.

There is no sign, however, that such is the spirit in which the present criticisms of Soviet composers have been taken, else they would have been the first to recognize and denounce its sources. One may not hastily decide that the objections taken to "dissonant noises," to "atonality" and "disharmony," to an absence of conventional melody, to "confused," "chaotic" cacophony, represent but a call for a return to an outmoded academism. For, as we have suggested, the references of these terms are to a situation involving the more basic fault of unsound handling of style. To judge of further reference we would need to have available for study the actual music thus described. We must allow that such may easily turn out to be very poor music, as the Resolution complains; for we are all too familiar with examples of unworthy music that seeks to hide its inartistic qualities behind a façade of experimental novelty in technique.

Again, the emphasis placed upon a need for study of the great classics seems directed toward the development of sound musicianship, which requires a thorough knowledge of tradition; but it does not suggest a subservience to or imitation of that tradition. The anti-"radical" viewpoint stated in the Resolution is critical of the "pursuit of falsely-conceived innovation," of the "distorted" concepts of "progress" so readily shown by composers who "have shut themselves off in a narrow circle of specialists and musical gourmands," and who have thus "lowered the high social role of music and narrowed its meaning." There is no ground in any of these statements for a counter-charge of philistinism.

Yet if it were to turn out that the stylistic position of the criticisms made in the Resolution was itself narrow and in need of correction, we should have no cause for alarm. The general outlines of the state-

ment would remain valid, though they may be expressed in terms of opinions of experts who, like other men, may be mistaken. Soviet music critics, as this writer has shown,* are as prone to error and superficiality as are the critics of any other land. We have no more reason to accept poor and narrow precepts from them, just because they are Soviet critics, than we have to ignore or to refuse to discuss the issues they raise on their merits for the same reason.

Certainly we could not accept or propose loosely a blanket condemnation of everything in the way of "modern" harmony. It is the task of the critic in taking up this problem to discriminate in concrete terms wherein one or another "modern" idiom conveys the negative content ascribed to formalism, and wherein on the contrary such an idiom may instead be progressive and truly positive. The removal of academic barriers to musical thinking in the form of rigid interpretations of diatonic melody and tonal harmony may be the first constructive need in a given situation. Only thus, for example, could a Bartok develop a new and democratic expression of the national musical traditions of the Hungarian and Romanian people. The wise reader will not blindly decide what is or is not formalism, what is or is not evidence of its alleged faults, but will think the matter through on the basis of his own experience and with the help of all available facts.

INTERESTINGLY enough, the Resolution against formalism also takes up the question of music criticism, and thus itself suggests indirectly the kind of caution to which we hold, though from a different approach. Formalism, it notes, encourages the formation of cults which lead to a decline in independent critical thought:

> "The Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union finds an absolutely intolerable situation in Soviet musical criticism. Among critics the leading position is held by the adversaries of Russian realistic music, by the protagonists of decadent, formalistic music. These critics pronounce every succeeding composition of Prokofiev, Shostakovich, Myaskovsky, Shebalin as 'a new conquest of Soviet music' and they eulogize the subjectivism, the constructivism, the extreme individualism, the professional complications of the language of this music; that is, precisely all that should be exposed by the critic. Instead of combatting the views and theories harmful

* See review of translations from the Russian: *Myaskovsky*, by Alexei A. Ikonnikov, and articles on Tchaikovsky by Shostakovich and others, in *Science and Society*, Vol. XI, No. 3, Summer, 1947, pp. 286-291.

and alien to the principles of socialist realism, music criticism itself assists in the dissemination of them, extolling them and proclaiming as 'advanced' those composers who have in common these false creative tendencies in their work. Musical criticism has stopped expressing the opinion of Soviet society, the opinion of the people, and has made of itself a trumpet for individual composers. Some music critics have taken to humoring and fawning upon one or another of the leading musicians, praising their works, in every way, for reasons of friendship, rather than criticizing them on the basis of objective principles."

Those friends of music in our country who have been taken in by the newspaper tales of bureaucratic dictation to composers would do well to consider the above taking to task of the Soviet music critics—for poor criticism, for lack of independent thought. Perhaps we will wonder then where, in our "free" culture, we are to find critical writers who speak for more than themselves or their groups; where are the critics who examine seriously the work of composers without regard to cult or school; where, indeed, are the music critics who are more than reviewers of musical events whose chief function is to provide the reading matter needed to accompany advertisements of concert activities? Let us recall that the now defunct quarterly with the appropriate name *Modern Music* had as its principal content the promotion of various private cults of the more prominent composers by their disciples. It is this kind of debasement of critical judgment which the Resolution condemns.

While we must, therefore, reserve judgment at second-hand as to the validity and application in detail of the technical matters cited in the Resolution, nevertheless the main points made regarding the general social goals of musical composition do not rest primarily on these grounds, which are no more than illustrations. They rest rather on their own grounds, on an analysis of the conditions of cultural development in a given historical situation. The political analysis merits serious thought even if the judgments of the musical experts on which it draws are to be found wanting. For the technical matters discussed are in any event problems for the composer to solve in practice, with the help, if need be, of the critic. And the basic meaning of the Resolution is an invitation to the composer and the critic to confront and solve the problems of technique in the light of the express social purposes of their art.

We may add on this score that among the positive directives of the

Resolution, obligingly minimized in the press reports, is a call for exactly such independent solution of creative problems. The formalist trend is held to block the way to individual fruitful solutions by setting limits to the activity of younger composers in particular:

> "The unsound, anti-public, formalist trend in Soviet music also has a destructive influence on the training and education of young composers in our conservatories. . . . The students are not imbued with respect for the best traditions of Russian and Western classical music. Admiration for the creative art of the people, for democratic musical forms, is not developed in them. The creative work of many of the conservatory students represents a blind imitation of the music of D. Shostakovich, S. Prokofiev and others."

The significance of this charge will not be lost on our own teachers and students of musical composition. It should hardly require a document of this kind to make them alert to the ever-present dangers of an ingrown discipline.

In similar vein, the Resolution brings forcefully to attention the positive cultural responsibility of composers and critics, individually and through their organizations. It calls upon them to develop

> "a realistic trend in Soviet music, the bases of which are a recognition of the great progressive role of the classical heritage, especially the traditions of the Russian school of music; the use of this heritage and its further development; the co-ordinating in music of high content and artistic perfection of form, structure and musical realism, its deep-rooted organic ties with the people and their musical and vocal creations, the high professional mastery and at the same time simplicity and accessibility of musical productions."

THESE positive goals are the very opposite of the supposed "suppression" of free artistic effort. The problems of musical creation are being met by a straightforward analysis of the historical setting of the composer's activities, related to the technical lines of thought through which the historical trends assert themselves. The solution of these problems requires the best efforts of the composer himself. And it is the composer who has most to gain by the clarification of these issues in public discussion, by the challenge of his audience for a rigorous and continuing study of technique and a thinking through of its content. He is enabled to justify his work, and to accept correction of his weaknesses as well as encouragement, by learning of its full human effect, rather than through the hazy action of his private caprice. It is thus

neither an accident nor a surprise that composers worthy of the title should have openly avowed their gratitude for a frank analysis of their direction of work, as Prokofiev and the other Soviet composers have done in this case. For that is how, in the conditions of their musical life, they may understand and meet more effectively the creative needs of the people of whom and for whom they write. Not limitation of their efforts, but constructive aid, is the effect of such criticism; and the doors are opened wide to fresh achievements in new and more fruitful directions as well as on a higher artistic and social level. Such is the ultimate purpose of the Resolution:

> "In these last years the cultural demands and the level of artistic taste of the Soviet people have risen extraordinarily. The Soviet people expects from the composers works of high quality and high ideals in all genres—in the field of operatic and symphonic music, in the creation of songs, in choral and dance music. In our country composers have limitless possibilities for creation at their disposal. All the necessary conditions for a genuine flowering of musical culture have been created. It would be unforgivable not to utilize all these rich possibilities and not to direct one's creative efforts along a correct realistic path."

And so the Resolution calls upon Soviet composers

> "to permeate themselves with a consciousness of the high demands made of musical creation by the Soviet people, and, having cleared from their path everything that weakens our music and hinders its growth, to insure such a rise in creative works as will quickly move Soviet musical culture forward and bring about the creation of fully worthwhile musical works in all fields, of productions of high quality, worthy of the Soviet people."

The Resolution against formalism in Soviet music thus aims at a synthesis of democratic accessibility and high musical quality. In condemning what is evidently a shoddy opera, and in exposing what appear to be the ideological sources of its inartistic qualities, the Resolution may be taken as a much-needed and timely expression of cultural leadership in a difficult area. It is to be hoped that, given serious thought rather than the sly journalistic carping which is now the fate of all matters Soviet in our press, the official rebuke may encourage in our country also a deepening of discussion of the problems of musical creation and understanding, and that it may encourage fruitful solutions of the problems raised, first of all in the practical form of new and fine musical compositions.

The Alien Cantata

by HANNS EISLER

1.

Early morning, and a gray fall day.
Birds were singing idiotic tunes,
and I could no longer deny
that a new day had arrived.
In my old green bathrobe I went to the garden.
Between flower and weed a newspaper lay
tossed there as in disgust
upon the damp earth.

2.

Slowly I bent down to see
what the mighty ones of this country
were concerned with today.
When I saw,
on the front page,
my own face looking back at me,
I knew
that this day they were concerned with me.

3.

After that morning
elderly business men
much concerned with the spiritual purity of this country,
started to question me.
Dismissed,
I looked into their faces
and saw
that they did not like my answers
and had no love for me.

4.

They accused me of being for the poor ones:
(I come from the poor.)
They accused me of hating oppression:
(I am myself oppressed.)
They accused me of hating their wars:
(I fought in their wars and saw destruction.)
And with disgust they pointed their fingers at me
and accused me of loving my brother.
And they called me an alien,
not desired by them,
an undesirable alien,
and they arrested me.

5.

Ever since that early fall day
I have had no rest;
ever since that early morning,
when, in my old green bathrobe,
I slowly bent down
to lift a newspaper from the damp earth
and saw my face looking back at me.

THE DIAMOND

A Story by RUTH STEINBERG

LABEL ANTONOFSKY was a runner for a numbers runner. A dime and a number whispered or written carefully on a slip of paper propelled him in the direction of the cafeteria on Second Avenue, between Sixth and Seventh, where his boss, the silent Maxie, collected the bets. He collected about three dollars for Maxie every day, and his pay for this important work was in presents: a pack of Luckies, a sandwich, sometimes a new shirt or a tie. Once Maxie personally went with him to A. S. Beck's where he bought a pair of new shoes, and at the last minute Maxie paid for the shoes. The memory of this act warmed and flattered.

His desire to work for Maxie was passionate. It never occurred to him that he could sell his labor for wages elsewhere. Sitting in Maxie's sanctified company in the cafeteria, where he could listen to the easy talk of Maxie's patrons, he was supremely comfortable. He loved the way Maxie sent him on errands, the way he bought him food, the perfect way Maxie looked at him every morning when he took his place at the cafeteria table, transforming that table into office and home at once.

And this Label, so docile and obedient with Maxie, was a rebel at home. For his own family he had nothing but the highest disregard. A bunch of stinking paupers, that's what they were, who had no understanding of smooth talk and miraculous bets that brought in winnings. Their scrounging for a living, their stubborn stupid honesty, their unimaginative darkness and stark fears gave them no ability to love and understand their very good Label who brought no live money to the maw of the family till. And he was bothered, bothered, bothered! Until this day.

This day was different from all other days. It was Saturday, but

like no other day that ever was since time began for Label Antonofsky. He was changed. Life had changed. Night had turned to day, and black to white, hatred to love, and meanness to wild, overwhelming generosity, enough to bring the tears to one's eyes.

He dressed quietly, without putting on the light. It was early, but he would not sleep. A new Label was this, ambitious to be out in the spring sunlight. An undefined plan of action was agitating the hitherto somnolent parts of his brain. He was wishing for the goal and end of a nebulous plan around a gift he had received. A lovely gift, calculated to make him ——! God in heaven, O God, he could not even think.

Again he reviewed and reworked the secrets of the past twenty-four hours:

At six o'clock, yesterday morning, his mother detached her enormous bulk from her enormous bed where she slept with Yashy and left the house. Yashy, who had been born without the ability to speak, six years old and already dignified with a noble title, the Dumb One, made a whine with his nose and slept on.

Then his mother went as usual to the store of her friend who sold remnants, dragged her pushcart out to the curb from the store and detached the little sack which she had tied underneath. In this sack she kept her wares: costume jewelry, rings and brooches and broken watches, lavaliers, bracelets, monocles and cigarette holders. She took the milk box which she kept for the purpose from the top of the cart and sat down. Then she loosened the string of her sack, turned it upside down, tied the empty sack underneath the pushcart, spread her wares with her two hands, put her head down on the counter, and died.

At seven-thirty the loud pounding on the door wakened Label. His sister, Bessie, with the kinky hair standing up straight, answered the knock in her nightgown. She saw the policeman and screamed, loud and long. Her husband, Izzie, in his B.V.D.'s, came running to the door, with a "What, what, what?" spilling from his mouth as he came. Bessie's three little daughters set up a howling to imitate and rival that of their mother's. And Yashy fell out of the high bed, his nose began to bleed, and he began a terrific running from the door to Label's room to his mother Bessie, in whose nightgown he finally buried his head. The sight of the blood on Yashy and on her night-

gown, together with the presence of the policeman, confirmed Bessie's pre-knowledge of disaster, and she fainted.

Label scrambled into his pants and arrived at the door to find the ever-ready neighbors bellowing their "What, what, what's!" The policeman had backed to the stairs, unwilling or unable to state his business in that din. Yashy was doing a macabre dance of hysteria. His face was covered with blood. He was frightened of the policeman and tried to cling to everyone in turn, who in panic withdrew from him and his super-human attempt to scream. More and more terrified he tried to run upstairs to the next floor which was the roof, was blocked by a box on which he stubbed his toe, fell down the stairs, wet his pants and also fainted. Label, horrified by what was happening to his family, angry at the noisy neighbors and realizing that the policeman's business still hung over them, yelled, "For God's sake, what's the matter?"

That coherent sentence settled the noise to panting and moans, and the policeman, overcome with nervousness, stuttered in a surprisingly musical tenor voice, "D-Does Mollie Antonofsky live here?" The silence turned to blackness for a moment, and Label's rheumatic heart sighed and boomed.

"Yes," he whispered. "That is my mother."

"Well, son, I'm sorry to have to tell you that Mollie Antonofsky died. . . ."

Label was strangely affected. He heard nothing more, but he accepted from the hand of the hard-pressed policeman an important slip of paper.

And on that very same day Mollie Antonofsky was buried in a cemetery on Staten Island. Izzie became the genius of the moment. All latent, forgotten powers came into play to see to it that his mother-in-law was laid to rest before the Sabbath. He became kind and patient and very busy; and his mother-in-law's tremendous pine coffin was carried by six pallbearers, into the hearse and away. All was accomplished. She was buried deep down in the earth of Staten Island. Obediently she went to her grave while her flesh was still cooling, as obediently she had lived. (Mollie Antonofsky, age seventy-seven, a big fat woman, mother of seven, two living, dealer in discarded jewelry and trinkets on Orchard Street, New York City.) And on the day that

she died without warning and was buried, she said not one word to anybody. Goodby, Mollie Antonofsky!

THAT night Label lay down on his bed in a state of physical and emotional exhaustion. He had not been able to swallow any food during the day and knew that sleep would not come easily. Waves of emotion assailed him. Compassion for the silence of his mother, fear and awe of what he had seen that day—that ugly, obscene open grave —played havoc with him. The first relaxation of his body in bed caused grief to ride unchallenged, and fear to play a fierce game. He rolled from one side to another as exhaustion departed and he became the pursued. Maybe it was I who was buried, oh my God! Never sleep with your feet toward the door because you will surely die. But my feet are not facing the door, oh yes, my God, I have been turned around! No, no, not true, silly fears. He pinched himself. I am alive. And he twisted and he turned and got no rest.

He may have fallen asleep and dreamed that someone was coming into his room from behind, through the door, a woman dressed in black, the blackness of his room, for him! He sweated and his hair crawled on his head. There was someone in the room. Yes, yes, no dream. Someone's in here! He jumped up from the bed as if kicked from behind and put on the light.

"Aie-ee!" he yelled briefly. There stood Yashy, right by his bed and looking at him.

For a few moments they blinked at each other and that was all. Then, "Get outta here!" Label threatened, hysteria fighting anger for first place. He lifted his hand as if to strike. Yashy moved out of the way of the hand and still stood stubbornly, not getting out.

"What do ya want?" Yashy moved his little body like a suggestive dancer. His face said nothing, but his body said, "Let me sleep with you." His face said nothing, but fast tears fell.

"Ah, nothing doing," said Label. He looked at his silently crying nephew with the tragic thought bouncing in his head that Yashy had lost more than he had. Every night he had slept with all that flesh in her big bed and he was hugged and held. He had lost himself in her flesh. And now he had lost her, lost his wife, maybe the only wife he'll ever have. "Get out," said Label.

Yashy shook his head wildly, and tears flew from his face suddenly twisted into a gargoyle, the mask of tragedy carved into the walls of the Jewish Theatre.

A hot wave of grief flooded Label's head. Pity for the little Dumb One, for himself, for his mother, pushed at his chest to make it burst. "OK," he whispered, "get in."

For a moment Yashy didn't move. Not knowing what had contrived to win him his sudden victory, he was hesitating. Then, with slightly audible squeak, overflowing, grateful and full of love, he threw himself upon his uncle and kissed him on his cheeks and found his lips, and his tears flowed faster and wet Label, and rolled around Label's neck. Label pulled him under the cover and began to cry. He held the little boy close and cried with him. He sobbed and cried and couldn't stop, for the loneliness of a man in the world is unbearable. For a little child of six who cannot speak and ask things for himself is unbearable, and to see one's silent mother lowered into her grave is unbearable, for she bore me and gave me life and she suffered all things for me, and alone I let her be lowered and covered so that no living soul can see her and forever more.

Alone, alone. *Allein, allein, will Labele steh'n.* Alone, alone, Label will stand alone. So taught his mother when he could not walk. She made a little circle around him with her arms and said, you will stand alone. And the little one stood, for those arms were there. And he stood alone and success made him smile into that suddenly remembered big face. Mama, I am standing alone! Clasp to you your youngest son, your first child born in America, conceived in Europe, who never saw his father and who learned to stand and then to walk and to play in the shade of a pushcart on Orchard Street of America.

So Label cried because he couldn't find his way through that whole world of memory and in such a tiny room there was nothing but the noisy prattling past, of kittens once his friends, and the memory of a worn toothbrush on a precious green handle, a lovely grape in the gutter, and a small smooth stick that looked as if it came from the country.

Yashy sat up and looked at his uncle with sad and grateful eyes. And at once he knew what would make him happy, as if someone had whispered and told him what to do. He climbed over Label and ran back to his own room. There he groped for the little valise under the bed and took out an old lady's shoe. A long, long shoe that was

Illustration by Saul Lishinsky

fastened by buttons. And he dug his hand into this shoe until almost his whole arm was concealed and at last he felt the velvet package that he and Grandma would find every night when he was a good boy. It was still there, and the hard core of it was there. With his left hand he threw the shoe back into the valise and gave a vast push to the valise and ran back to Label.

When he came back Label was weeping into a large handkerchief. Yashy shook him.

"Mm mm," he said, excitement glistening in his face like the sun after a storm. Label looked at him. And then the miracle happened, and there were no more tears.

YASHY'S hand shook as he untied the string that held the little velvet package together. And when he spread the velvet to lie flat on the bed there glistened from its luxurious depths, the beautiful, the rare, the warm, the powerful almighty diamond! It sang as it lay there, as big as a pecan, with blue lights and tiny tongues of red flame.

Bewildered, Label gazed at it and then at Yashy. Yashy picked it up and put it in Label's hand. "Here, here, take it," said the gesture.

"Gramma give it to you?"

Fast nods with the head.

"Is it a diamond?"

Fast nods with the head.

"Real?"

No answer. Slow nods with the head.

Label looked at it again. It told no secrets. It lay like a queen on velvet.

"Oh, *boy!*"

Label grabbed the whole package in his fist and held it tight. He pulled Yashy in beside him and turned out the light. For a while he said nothing, then started up a whispering into the boy's ear.

"Baby, what a diamond this is, baby!"

He snuggled down under the covers and pulled the boy down with him. The boy lay with his eyes wide open and listened as his uncle improvised a dream.

"Just promise me something. I don't want you should tell anybody about this here diamond. Maybe you don't know, kid, how it is to be rich, but I could tell you. I could tell you. Just supposing, I'm not saying it's true, but just supposing this was a real diamond. You know what I would do? Maybe it isn't, but maybe it is, and we don't know one way or the other. And I'm not saying nothing until I know. But just supposing it was real. It probably isn't. And supposing that next week already I get the money for it that it's worth!"

Label stopped, breathless. Pictures flashed before his eyes. In spite of his caution the pictures radiated a glitter that was hard to deny. He tried not to be childish, not to dream the old dreams of the dispossessed. He wanted to dream dreams worthy of a large and limited amount of cold hard cash, but the habits of years intruded irresponsibly and invisible hands held up shiny red automobiles, silver cocktail shakers and neon lights.

"Don't think," he said, "that I want the moon. Just to be comrtable and we should have what we want. That's all I would ask." Label, amorous on the beach, the cool arms of the smiling beauty ound his neck. She has such a good-hearted expression. Everything r Label!

"It's not so much to ask that a man should have a little business and e should have a little money in his pockets and be able to treat a iend sometimes. Not to be a piker, to have a little dough, that's all. o do a favor for a friend. I wouldn't ask for more."

He pressed the little boy close to him. "And you wouldn't have to orry about your future or anything like that. You'd go to a private hool, and if they wouldn't be able to teach you maybe how to talk, ll right, they'd teach you how to type and you could write notes. ou'd wear good suits and you'd look like somebody."

And when Yashy fell asleep Label talked to himself and told himelf some wonderful things.

That's why this morning was like no other morning. It was a nice ay. He could smell spring in the air. He put the diamond in his ants pocket and was putting his jacket on when a strange thing appened. It made him stop with his arm in mid-air. He remembered he lullaby his mother used to sing when he was very small. The elody was sweet and painful, the words were hers who never made a comment on anything, who never voted in elections, who could not ead or write, and the words translated themselves from the Yiddish:

And when, my child, you will grow older
Swear, my baby, do
You will rend your chains asunder
Ai lu lu lu, lu.

You will tear the chains
From your hands and feet away
Better to lie among the dead
Than to live in an ugly way.

He asked no questions, buttoned his jacket, walked softly out of the house, down the stairs and into the spring morning.

READERS DIGEST WANTS ME

by LOUIS ARAGON

I HAVE RECEIVED THE FOLLOWING LETTER:

Jacques Chambrun, Inc.
745 Fifth Avenue, New York
Wickersham 2-9464-9465-9466
Cables-Chambrun New-York

December 16, 1947

Dear Sir:

The Readers Digest, *whose European edition,* Sélections, *you may know, would like very much to have an article from you, either on the most interesting character you have known or a drama of daily life. Mr. DeWitt Wallace, the editor-in-chief, has asked me to tell you that he would be happy to give you $2,000 for the article; and that, if you would send him a résumé, he would tell you immediately if the subject would be interesting to his readers.*

As you will see by the enclosed samples the "character" does not have to be a known person, but a noble-minded and charitable person who gave "a good example" to others in daily life. Many anecdotes would be desirable.

It would be necessary first of all to submit a résumé of about a page. If this résumé is accepted, Mr. Wallace would give you a guarantee of $300 to compensate you for your work in the event the finished article was not accepted by him. Once the article is definitely accepted, you would be paid $2,000.

I am a literary agent here representing André Maurois and Somerset Maugham; and if the thing goes through I will limit myself to taking the regular ten percent commission.

With the personal expression of my best regards,

Sincerely yours,

Jacques Chambrun

The enclosed samples were a piece by Vincent Sheean: "My Own on" in the series: "The Drama of Everyday Life," and a text by Pearl Buck: "The Most Unforgettable Person I Have Met," belonging apparently to the first category proposed by Mr. Chambrun. The first article runs to about three and a half typewritten pages. The second, written by Mrs. Buck, winner of the Nobel Prize, author of *The Good Earth* and other novels, is a little longer: nine to ten pages. I remember Vincent Sheean. I saw him in Paris a little more than twenty years ago. And in 1939, in New York, I found myself sitting next to him on the platform at the Congress of American Writers. Mrs. Pearl Buck is too well known for me to say anything about her; she recently received some publicity because of her sharp sentiments against "the Reds" around the time of the Hollywood investigation by the House Un-American Committee.

I must add that $300 amounts to 36,000 francs (for one typewritten page of a résumé that is accepted), and that $2,000 (for an article of four to ten pages) amounts to 240,000 francs.

Well here's my story: The most interesting character I have known entered my office one day. I was then editor of an evening newspaper, and my office was papered in white with white curtains and metal furniture upholstered in leather . . . but that is not really the question, nor is it important that M. Daladier's police, who two years later struck against "the Reds" in this office, stole the furniture.

The interesting character in question was, as I recall, a tall, blond, quite good looking fellow, with a dapper little moustache, who was on the staff of a movie magazine and whom I had not seen for several years. He did not tell me what had impelled him to pay me a visit, but I understood that very quickly because for three days my paper had been carrying on a campaign against German Nazi movies and the UFA Film Company. Although he was Jewish, he told me that he worked for UFA, had his office on the Champs Elysées, and went from time to time to Berlin where he was received by Dr. Goebbels. "You cannot imagine," he told me, "the satisfaction I get when my name is called in the waiting room and I turn my face in profile to show my Jewish nose to the doorman who takes off my overcoat. . . ."

But of course, he had not come to tell me that. He was surprised that I had never written for the movies. Wouldn't I like to have a try at it? I replied that it was not my line, and that I only did the things I

knew how to do. "Oh! don't worry about that," he told me. "You'll get help. All you will have to do is to write down an outline, three or four typewritten pages, just enough for a movie idea. Then we have people to develop the idea, write the dialogue. . . . We pay 300,000 francs for that kind of an outline. I am ready to give you an order for three outlines right away. . . ."

I declined this offer, and very politely showed this interesting character to the door, saying to him, "You think you'll find your way? It's a little complicated. . . . You cross the big room, go down the stairs, then turn to the left—there, you will find the staircase. . . ."

To tell the truth, it was only in 1945 that I understood what an interesting character that interesting person had been. At Paris a "resistance" film was being shown, although right after liberation all the serious people had said that one could not risk making resistance films, because God knew what the government in 1945 would be! It was a "resistance" film which did not fall into any of the "banal" examples of that category: heroism played down, no scenes of people loudly singing the Marseillaise in the prison or before firing squads. All that isn't very interesting, but the interesting fact was that the author of the scenario was my interesting visitor of 1937. That's all.

I DON'T know if a résumé of one typewritten page of this story of everyday life would be accepted by Mr. DeWitt Wallace (for $300) and if, blown up four or five times its original size, it would be worth $200 in commission to Mr. Jacques Chambrun, and consequently to me, $1800 net. But I am quite sure that a certain similarity between the 1937 anecdote and the proposition made to me in 1947, between the UFA films and the *Readers Digest,* as far as the moral side of the story is concerned should make the whole thing extremely interesting to Mr. DeWitt Wallace and really touch his heart strings.

It is quite certain that if I had accepted the proposition of UFA I would have had to halt my newspaper's campaign against that firm. And if now I accept the offer from *Readers Digest* it would be difficult for me to share the point of view of the men in my country whose attitude is sufficiently un-American for them to be considered "Reds," not only by the Daladiers but also by every self-respecting Thomas-Rankin un-American committee.

That is why, it seems to me, my blond visitor with the little moustache, with his fur coat and his profile, is more suited to the role of

"interesting character" for *Readers Digest* than many noisy people I have known who had the bad taste to sing the Marseillaise in front of guns held by fellow citizens of the UFA firm. He is, indeed, a noble-minded and charitable type (300,000 francs for three typewritten pages), and has undoubtedly furnished a "good example in daily life" to others, that is to say, to Mr. Jacques Chambrun who recommends himself to me in the name of André Maurois and Somerset Maugham. The first, very well known for the continued nobility of his sentiments with regard to Marshal Pétain, and the second for the no less noble part he took in spying on the "Reds" in 1917 for the British Intelligence Service.

However, there is one difference to be noted: nothing proves to me that my visitor in 1937, who was French, would have taken only ten percent on the price of my soul. Mr. Jacques Chambrun, who is a real American, knows the legitimate profit that can be made on my honor: $200.

Money is a great and beautiful thing. It is a solid base for everyday morality. It allows one to buy a writer, his conscience, his very sense of noble-minded and charitable things. When all is said and done, the most interesting character in daily life I have met, with or without moustache or fur coat, is money. I shall not write this story. I shall write another: but without a one-page résumé for Mr. DeWitt Wallace. A little "Red" story, an un-American story.

That Kinsey Report

A PSYCHIATRIST'S VIEW

by FREDERICK S. HEWITT

THE Kinsey Report has created quite a stir. Already the source of much conversation and a fair amount of humor including such telling remarks as, "If it's OK with Kinsey it's OK with me," the volume has been widely heralded as the first really scientific work on sexual behavior. The study, based on a questionnaire of 5,300 white male inhabitants of the United States, has rapidly gained prestige and authority. For this reason it is essential that the values, defects and contradictions of the volume be considered carefully.

Kinsey's work divides the population on the basis of educational training into three groups: elementary school, high school, and college and post-graduate levels. These educational levels are equated with social and class levels and are repeatedly and quite unscientifically used interchangeably.

The population is further divided as to occupational categories and religious background (Catholic, Protestant and Jewish) with subdivisions dependent upon active or inactive relationship to religious practice. A division is also made between urban and rural fractions. In the occupational categories, the manual workers are placed, in accordance with Kinsey's marked bourgeois proclivities, at the bottom of the scale, the white-collar workers in the intermediate group, professionals one short step above and, at the top of this hierarchy, the business executive group and the extremely wealthy group respectively. Two generations are studied in the occupational category and a comparison made between occupational groupings of fathers and sons in relation to their sexual behavior. Where a son falls into a "lower" occupational group than the father, the word used to describe this "descent" is retrogression!

Utilizing the orgasm as the cardinal expression of male sexual

ctivity, the author orients his study around the frequency of this henomenon and the variety of techniques that accomplish this end. eminal ejaculation is taken as a manifestation of orgasm, in itself a ighly arbitrary criterion. The total sexual outlet then becomes equivaent to the total number of orgasms per individual per unit time.

This total sexual outlet and the techniques utilized to achieve rgasm are analyzed for each of the three educational groups already efined. The techniques include heterosexual intercourse, pre-marital, narital and extra-marital, masturbation, homosexual relations, petting o climax, a variety of oral techniques, nocturnal emissions and animal ontacts. A special analysis is devoted to the "outlet" obtained with rostitutes.

A consideration of the validity of the work's general approach must oncern itself with the author's background. Before this present study Dr. Kinsey, a taxonomist, was occupied in measuring the wing lengths of 150,000 gall wasps. What in this background entitled him to pursue n investigation of human sexual behavior without a thoroughgoing ppreciation of the already accumulated body of knowledge in the ield still remains unexplained. There is much in his theoretical approach nd conclusions that makes such an appreciation highly questionable. gnorance of a subject is not the basis for scientific objectivity.

Long before Dr. Kinsey decided to investigate human sexual behavior an immense body of facts on the subject, based on the study of many thousands of individuals, had been accumulated. Such studies have led psychiatrists to a very definite idea of what normal sexual behavior is like. A normal sexual adjustment by no means ends with the capacity to come to ejaculation. It includes the capacity to consummate a love relationship, a monogamous socio-sexual relationship characterized by regard, respect and full emotional expression manifested in its sexual aspects not merely by ejaculation but by the most intense orgasms unaccompanied by anxiety or neurotic defenses. The relief of anxieties achieved in successful psychoanalyses leads to such goals.

Promiscuity in our culture occurring in individuals past their early adolescent experimental stage is by no means a manifestation of virility. The Don Juan character, classical in psychiatric literature as a manifestation of sexual anxiety and pathology, would rank very high on Dr. Kinsey's virility curves. So would a group of pre-psychotics and psychotics who resort compulsively to excessive sexual expression either

to relieve somatic tension or feverishly to overcome the walls of sexual inhibition. The orientation of a sexual study around the frequency of ejaculation can at best be limited in its rewards and at worst lead to grotesque distortions.

THE Kinsey Report does not, as it pretends, proceed without a preconceived theory. Actually it follows the premise that the sexual function is a biological attribute with which most human males and fewer human females are natively endowed; that this attribute varies quantitatively from individual to individual in a graded series from zero to extreme virility (the latter judged per number of ejaculations per unit time); and that the cultural sexual mores determine sexual behavior by conditioning this attribute in what is practically a one-to-one causal relationship. That cultural mores are powerful factors in conditioned sexual behavior no one will question and to the extent it is so the conclusions are valid. Human sexual behavior, however, is an inordinately complex function. It is a resultant of a constellation of forces. Any orientation around a single determinant will of necessity lead to naïve conclusions.

In the human, all things that determine man's relationship to man and men's relationships to women play a significant role in ultimate sexual behavior. These include a man's relationship to his source of subsistence, whether he owns the tools of production or does not, what the nature of his relationship with his employer is, his material expectations and how he hopes to achieve them, his state of nutrition, his general stress and strain, the extent of his leisure time—in short, innumerable factors that the Kinsey Report does not begin to reflect.

In this regard it is pertinent to recount my own military experience when I had the opportunity to examine psychiatrically about fifty American prisoners of war who had shortly before been released from prison camp. The average period of incarceration was about one year. The nutritional problem was severe. None of the men could recall any sexual desires either in his conscious thinking or in his dream life during imprisonment. Dreams and thoughts were preoccupied with food.

It is especially interesting that as a biologist Dr. Kinsey does not concern himself with the competitive aspect of male sexual behavior since in mammalian orders other than man such factors are easily

observable. Competitive sexual attitudes and behavior are much in evidence in the American male, and such factors cannot be disregarded. Nowhere in the Kinsey questionnaire is there provision for investigation of the individual's relationship with his father or other men. One of the really cogent problems in psychiatry is whether the easily discernible sexually competitive attitudes existing today are the products of prohibitive sexual mores or are the result of other factors. Unfortunately the report throws no light on this problem.

The name of the book, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male,* is misleading. The author early indicates that he is speaking of the sexual behavior of white male inhabitants of the United States, more especially of the northeastern states, and not of the human male in general. He recognizes that the patterns of the Asiatic male are very different. A more pertinent criticism revolves around the question of what one means by "normal." In psychiatry and especially in a consideration of sexual behavior, a sharp distinction must be drawn between what is average or usual and that which is normal. Sexual frigidity may be usual in a particular group of women but this not normal or healthy. Unfortunately, what is usual or average sexual behavior in our American culture is far from healthy.

I am not prepared to question the validity of the statistical aspects of the report. Others have, among them the British anthropologist, Geoffrey Goer. I do, however, doubt the validity of a questionnaire in the best of hands based on a single interview and largely dependent on consciously remembered material of events long past.

SEVERAL of the Report's conclusions are contrary to the findings of acceptable clinical observations. Space permits the discussion of only the most glaring of the book's erroneous deductions.

The Report finds that somewhere between thirty-seven and fifty percent of males studied had at least one orgasm through homosexual contacts. These figures are not surprising. They include adolescent paired and group masturbation, a procedure more correlated with group support for the adolescent emergence of sexuality in an inhibited culture than with what psychiatrists view as homosexual relationships wherein the so-called love object is a member of the same sex. From these figures the author concludes that homosexuality is not particularly

abnormal, which again brings up the differentiation between the usual and the normal. He infers that whether an individual is homosexual or heterosexual is in no small part a matter of preference, much the same as whether he likes strawberry or vanilla ice cream.

"This problem," says the Report, "is, after all, part of the broader problem of choices in general; the choice of the road that one takes, of the clothes that one wears, of the food that one eats, of the place in which one sleeps and of the endless other things that one is constantly choosing. A choice of a partner in a sexual relation becomes more significant only because society demands that there be a particular choice in this matter, and does not so often dictate one's choice of food or of clothing." This conclusion is at complete variance with scientific findings. Psychoanalysis reveals that *all* homosexual behavior proceeds as an escape from heterosexual relations based on the fear of such relations. This unequivocally means that all homosexual behavior is abnormal and springs from fear. Although homosexuals are frequently able to have heterosexual relations, such relations are either not pleasurable because of the inhibition resulting from anxiety or they are had with women whom the homosexual cannot value as a person. The idea that homosexuality is a preference is a complete distortion. Homosexuals attempt to make a virtue of what for them is a necessity. All homosexuals have severe personality disorders.

The author believes that the homosexual is psychically disturbed because of the cultural attitudes to homosexuality—another manifestation of his one-to-one correlation between sexual behavior and cultural mores. Psychoanalyses with civilian homosexuals reveal this to be a relatively superficial and minor determinant of the profound anxiety to be found in all homosexuals. The psychopathological structure that gives rise to homosexuality contains within its framework forces that seriously disturb all interpersonal relationships. The author accounts for the instability of homosexual "love" relationships on the premise that the culture does not demand that they stay together as it does with heterosexual individuals in marriage—again a superficial conclusion. Homosexual relationships are short lived because the predominant feeling of male homosexuals to men, including their so-called lovers, is hatred, and not love.

On another point, the Report states: "Considerable psychiatric therapy can be wasted on persons (especially females) who are misjudged to be cases of repression when, in actuality, at least some of them never were equipped to respond erotically." The idea that there are human beings unequipped to respond erotically is a quaint notion for a biologist to present. All psychiatrists can offer the author many case histories in which the patient entered treatment sexually unresponsive, worked through sexual anxieties and completed treatment with a very adequate responsiveness. Nor have any of us ever seen a human being in whom manifestations of sexual activity could not be demonstrated.

It is interesting to note that when "unresponsive" males are discussed, the qualification is made that the factors may be biological, psychological or social. The same possibilities are not granted females. Some of them are just constitutionally unresponsive. This viewpoint constitutes a definite anti-feminine bias and it is safe to predict that the projected report on women will be filled with such bias. The author believes that the human female is in general less responsive on a biological basis than is the male. This is in contradiction to his recognition that the sexual mores for women are still more prohibitive than for the male. Clinical investigation has produced nothing to substantiate any significant innate difference in the sexual responsiveness between male and female.

No better example of the fallacies inherent in this narrow biological approach and in the logic of analogy can be had than in the discussion of premature ejaculation. "Interpretations of human behavior would benefit," says Kinsey, "if there were a more general understanding of basic mammalian behavior. On the present issue, for instance, it is to be emphasized that in many species of mammals the male ejaculates almost instantly upon intromission. . . . It would be difficult to find another situation in which an individual who was quick and intense in his responses was labeled anything but superior, and that in most instances is exactly what the rapidly ejaculating male probably is, however inconvenient and unfortunate his qualities may be from the standpoint of the wife in the relationship." This is a piece of utter nonsense. Well accepted clinical experience finds that premature ejaculation is far from being a "superior" response, and that it is always determined by anxiety.

Elsewhere we find: "There are some psychoanalysts who contend that they have never had a patient who has not had incestuous relations." I cannot conceive of any reputable analyst making such a statement. The author has obviously misunderstood statements to the effect that many analysts consider the existence of incestuous wishes, conscious or unconscious, as universal—which is a very different concept from the wild remark just quoted.

TO BE SURE, a great deal of interesting material is presented, and we certainly agree with Kinsey that our present cultural sexual mores and laws are antiquated and do not correspond with the sexual behavior patterns of our time.

The essential value of the book consists in the author's having established quite unintentionally something that has long been known to psychiatrists, namely the extent of sexual difficulties which exist in our culture today. Not only was this not the author's intention but he has failed to recognize what his statistics really show, for if he did the title of this book would not have been *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* since it actually deals with sexual behavior in the American white male resulting from anxiety and inhibition. There is no question but that the prohibitive mores in our culture contribute materially to the sexual injuries that lead to such sexual problems.

If this work leads to a saner approach to sex and to much needed changes in sexual attitudes, then the countless hours consumed in this project will have been justified. We must, however, recognize that such value is essentially crusading. As a scientific work that throws any light on the more fundamental problems involved in sexual behavior it falls pitifully short.

It would be well if, in pressing forward future researches in this area, Kinsey and his associates would consult practicing experts directly concerned with human sexual behavior.

DEATH OF EMPIRE

by

Anthony Toney

Three Poems

by NAOMI REPLANSKY

SUBWAY RIDE

Blind man on the train
Caresses his girl's knee.
Knows, by the smell and sound,
That others sit around,
But, since he cannot see,
Acts as in privacy.

I, being city-bred,
Never was quite alone,
Never was islanded,
Always must turn my head
To watch the passerby
With over-careful eye,
Moody with change outside,
Quicksilver's proper bride,
Servant to circumstance,
And like a mirror to
The funeral or dance,
Easy besieged am I,
All my defenses down:
What this or that one said
Made me queen or clown.

Now not for simplicity
Nor crowd-begot privacy
Would I trade my sight:
But still, blind man,
On you my eyes alight,
My eyes, chameleon-vexed:

I take you as my text.

SALVATION, DAMNATION

There is a woman climbing a glass hill
Of clothes and dishes on a dusty floor;
Today surmounted, tomorrow towers still.

There is a woman opening like a door.
Many come in, but only she is bitch,
And at streetcorners is unclaimed once more.

Here are two women, standing, and on each
Is smiled salvation and is howled damnation,
And, saved or damned, must still stay within reach.

Until the end,
When all are served, the sermons and the omens,
The preachers served, the teachers and the parents,
And still they come,
And still demand,
And still stand on her floor and ask for more,

And still the clipped wing leans against
Her eagle of experience.

EVEN THE WALLS HAVE EARS

Even the walls have ears
the window is full of eyes

I'd better swallow my soul
as damning evidence,
swallow my soul,
swallow it whole.

You'd better swallow your soul.
Its very scars are treason.
Your soul is contraband
they will destroy
easier than understand.

We'd better scrap our skins,
a damning damning clue—
a drainpipe will do!—
if they should find our skins
we're done for, me and you.
Answer carefully.
This is the third-degree.
We're done for, me and you,
if the answers come out true.

We're done for anyway.
The trial is quick and once
and our involved defense
takes our whole lives to say.

We're damned by evidence:

exhibit A: our souls
exhibit B: our skins.

THE DILEMMA OF Tennessee Williams

by HARRY TAYLOR

TENNESSEE WILLIAMS has written nine full-length plays and some twenty or more sketches and playlets. In 1939 he won the Group Theatre prize for a series of four one-acters, *American Blues.* In 1943 the Theatre Guild produced his *Battle of Angels;* but notwithstanding the combined talents of director Margaret Webster, Miriam Hopkins and Boston's Watch and Ward Society, the management did not find it good enough to bring to New York. Williams, however, could not be denied and came to Broadway with *The Glass Menagerie,* following it in the next season with *You Touched Me,* written in collaboration with Donald Windham and based on a story by D. H. Lawrence. Now, with *A Streetcar Named Desire,* he is firmly established as one of the best men of our theatre. He is only thirty-four and presumably has a long and important writing life before him. We are, therefore, at a good point—and so is he, for reasons which will develop—to appraise his work and to cast up his accounts if only to carry them over to the next white page on which the rest is yet to be written.

Artists may be placed in many categories but for our purpose I will describe them as falling into two: the artist who uses his experience and accumulated attitudes and judgments to interpret material outside the intimate, personal facts of his life and the artist who uses this intelligence almost exclusively to interpret autobiographical material. I make no choice between these approaches: each is rich enough in content to stimulate the creative imagination of a Shakespeare or a Gorky. But the artist who uses the significant moments of his private life without re-subjecting them to the light of his total and most adult experience, limits the boldness and maturity of his art. However excellently he may depict the subjective memory of the dramatic moment, he is robbing it of force and penetration and even of truth

if he fails to let his latest maturity take the incident out of its singular shadow into the many faceted world of our common life.

And if, as in Williams' case, there was never more than a small patch of happy boyhood in a youth-time dominated by a developing family tragedy, by poverty and hard work and many menial jobs, his static stare will always give him back the same gloomy landscape in which even the small Eden seems a lying mirage and the relationship of forces remains fixed in an endless and cannibalistic assault of the insensitively powerful upon the pathetic and defenseless. The more he stares at the incidents of his life, the more they are the same. He grows older, he knocks about on his own, he writes plays, he is welcomed and acclaimed; yet, curiously, he is still the traumatized youngster inexorably re-creating the pattern of his trauma, unable to break through to adult reality. That is why the characters he hates or fears or despises always win; while those to whom his sympathy is drawn invariably go down. In such a context there can be no conflict, no human dignity which is at the same time strong and healthy, and no future except for evil. And, indeed, for all their beauty of dialogue, atmosphere and characterization, this is a just description of Williams' plays.

Moreover, his static stare prevents his taking into account the factors that have brutalized his world. It is true that he is not unaware of these factors—and herein lies hope. In *Nitchevo,* a discarded old worker names the enemy, though even here we do not see it in action; we only see its end results, its victims in interaction. I have the impression that Williams can be positive and constructive in his daily citizenship. He abominates racial discrimination and fights it. He is for a national theatre. My last information is that he understands the necessities behind Henry Wallace's campaign. And yet his artistic philosophy remains where it was before he came of political age.

Some will say: Why bother Williams with the outer world or the enlargement of his view and of reality? Surely a man who can write *A Streetcar Named Desire* may be forgiven pessimism and the repetition, itself an effect of pessimism, that comes from always seeing the same things the same way. But that is precisely the reason for this appraisal. For it is my contention that Williams has been robbing himself as well as his audience of the full possibilities of his dramatic intelligence and, as we shall see, even of perfection of craft.

LET US examine the three plays of his which I have seen performed. Their elements are repeated throughout the body of his work. Even his collaborative adaptation of D. H. Lawrence's story seems to have been undertaken because it contained the salient features of his fixed material.

We will begin with *The Property Is Condemned.* In this twenty-minute sketch, almost a monologue, we meet a girl of fifteen. The child's unceasing flow of words re-creates for us the destructive reality of a broken home, parents gone, protective older sister recently dead of a venereal disease, she herself surreptitiously living in the house since lost to the bank, trading her body for food and excitement; and all this inextricably woven through with the wild fantasies of past glories and glamorous prospects made poignant by the innate knowledge that she is trapped.

In *The Glass Menagerie,* the protagonist is again the young daughter in a mean, disrupted home, in which, while her harridan mother lies about the golden past and assails the present and her beloved brother is preparing to desert them both for a dream seemingly beyond his strength, the girl, crippled and willess, peers out for a brief scene from among the perfect figurines which she has substituted for the world of reality—and then, hopelessly, sinks back again. There is a fourth in this new hand that Williams is dealing. He is a commonsensical man on whom the girl is forced to pin her last hope of love and understanding and return to sanity. When he fails her, her little animals close in. The play is patently an extension and enrichment of the character, environment and atmosphere of the sketch; indeed, of all its ingredients except, significantly, its outlook on life. The play even has a *semblance* of dramatic conflict, though the confrontations do not spring from the main theme.

In *Streetcar,* Blanche Du Bois, parents dead, homosexual husband an early suicide, ancestral mansion lost to the bank, driven out of her home town as a menace to the morals of schoolboys, on the crumbling edge of insanity, arrives at the last chance station of her life—the slum area two-room apartment of her newly-wed younger sister, Stella, and her uncouth Polish-American husband, Stanley Kowalski. Again, then, we have the frightened fugitive from a brutal reality, diaphonously gowned in what she hopes is an impenetrable cloth of glamorous deceits, pretensions and self-deceptions; we have the power-

less sibling who wishes to love and protect her; and, in the person of one of Stanley's friends, Mitch, the stranger who may pull her to safety but fails her. To these tried elements, the author now brings a newly found craft of direct confrontation. For, seeing his home invaded by a creature utterly foreign to his experience, his routine habits disrupted, his relations with Stella assailed and endangered, Stanley ruthlessly attacks Blanche with the dreaded revelations of her existence, turns Mitch from her, criminally assaults the half-mad woman as if to prove her defenselessness before the urgent, insensitive realities of life, and, finally, having driven her clear off the edge of reason, summons the attendants of a mental institution to take her away.

UNQUESTIONABLY, this last play is the one toward which the others were heading; toward which, in fact, all Williams' work has been heading. On the way he has picked up speed and power and definition, and the story now stands at what is probably dead end. And still, for all its enhanced movement and characterization and the rest of the eloquent testimony to his deepened mastery of theatre, Williams, as a direct consequence of his socio-philosophical position, has been unable to achieve conflict. Confrontations, yes, and savage, almost animal. Elia Kazan has projected them with so much clash and claw that we are momentarily bemused into believing them the real article of theatre. But there can be no conflict in a man's methodically beating a child to death. The prisoner of a view in which the dominant reality is monstrously destructive and implacable, Williams has once more opposed it with a poor, hazy-minded being already broken in the toils and armed only with obstinate illusions rather than with reasonable will.

Streetcar is an absorbing and beautifully written play and magnificently produced, but it is not a great play as most of our critics would have us believe. Great drama cannot emerge out of flight and hysteria, but arises from genuine conflict, an element that can only be generated by the writer's conviction that the battle is vital and that the means to wage it exist. Williams will write greatly only if he can re-examine reality and emotionally recognize what his intellect may already have grasped: that the forces of good in this world are adult and possess both the will and the power to change our environment.

He needs but the merest extraversion, the briefest glance at human

history to see these forces in operation. If today we shudder at the unparalleled malevolence of the war-making class, we need to understand that its viciousness is in direct ratio to its desperation at the prospect of losing power. Natural and human history is a constant dying of the old and entrenched, even while the new is struggling to take over.

This is no special plea for social plays. But surely the absence of the socio-historic periphery in the author's mind weakens his attack even on personal drama, depriving it of the aura of larger reality and of moral conviction.

Williams once wrote: "The one dominant theme in most of my writings, the most magnificent thing in all nature, is valor—and endurance." However he may believe this to be so, it is not true of his work. Only the passionate conviction of the value of human valor, endurance and dignity, and an understanding of the historic forces that embody these qualities can springboard his next greatest leap forward of craft and artistic stature. But first of all, of simple craft: the knowledge that great drama cannot be evoked from the opposition of will with non-will but only by the firmly engaged conflict of powerful wills.

ALABAMA BIOCHEMIST

God's Chosen People

A Story by LLOYD L. BROWN

IT WAS a fine hill for sliding down in the wintertime. Five blocks long, and steep. You didn't need a Blue Streak or a Flexible Flyer; a cardboard carton was just as good after the snow got icy. And when you found a big piece of tin—it was a beer sign that was going to fall off the fence pretty soon anyway—you curled up one end and went bellyflop, just like anybody else.

The big wooden house was on top of the hill and none of the other houses on the street were as fine and fancy. That's where you lived. You and your two little sisters and Georgie and Doug and Jewell and Annie Mae and the rest of the kids and the old folks too and Mrs. Henderson. Your sisters and the other young ones were too little to go sliding, or to school either.

There was a low block of granite near the curb before you went up the steps to the front door. Carved on its street side was one word: SCHUSTER. It looked just like a graveyard stone and the kids across the street said maybe somebody was buried there, and they wouldn't ever step on it. Mrs. Henderson said that the Schuster's used to own the big house. That was a long time ago, long before the Society took the place over. Old Man Schuster owned half the timber in northern Minnesota at one time, she said, and when they lived here it was the only house on the hill. Richest folks in town. And now us—and she'd laugh.

Standing right next to the stone was a little black man in boots. That was Jim. He looked real, but he wasn't; he was made out of iron. He stood there all the time with one hand up holding a big ring in it, and he was bowing toward the street. Sometimes after a hard snow, and after the snowplow went by, all you could see was his hand with the ring sticking up. In the summertime, when the waterwagon

rolled down with the big gray horses holding back hard, their hoofs braced in the dusty road and their straw bonnets bobbing up and down as they tucked in their jaws, the sprinkler would get Jim all wet and he'd he shinier and blacker than ever. And when it stormed at night and the thunder rolled low and the rain slashed at the shingles you could look out of your window under the roof and see him way down below, a tiny little man standing under the gaslamp. All by himself, but he wasn't afraid.

When you ran down in the morning you said, Goodby, Jim, I'm going to school, and when you came home you said, Hi, Jim, here I am again.

Not all the time, though. Like that day you didn't want to talk to anybody—not even Jim. You ran all the way up the hill and up the steps and around to the back and into the carriage house where nobody could ever find you or ask you what's the matter. There weren't any carriages in the place—just a lot of broken chairs and beds and a cracked pisspot with roses on the lid and some rakes and a lawnmower and a horsecollar on the wall with straw sticking out of it.

Funny how it was. First it was just singing—all the kids in the auditorium singing I'm Forever Blowing Bubbles and Over There and Tipperary. That was after the pledge-allegiance part, with Mr. Olson standing on the stage in his khaki Home Guard uniform holding the American flag. He was the janitor. Then they had to go and sing that Li'l Liza Jane song and they sang the words funny and looked at you funny and smiled to themselves—all of them. Every one of them. Even Theresa Margiotti who was your friend, she giggled too.

You told Jim the next day you were sorry you didn't say hello but you didn't tell him why. You didn't tell Mrs. Henderson either. One time when she saw you running home like that and you told her about how Terry O'Brien called you chocolate drop and the girls all started singing it like a song—like that song they sing when they're jumping rope: *choc'lit drop, choc'lit drop, hi ho a leary ho, choc'lit drop . . .* she washed your face and said next time you just call them po' white trash, that's all, you just call them that—po' white trash! Then she held you close like she did the little ones and you felt worse than ever and wished you were back in your secret place where no one could see you.

IT WAS a big, fancy house all right. Three stories tall and there was an attic and on top there was a little tower that looked like the wedding cake at the Bon Ton Bakery. And on top of that there was a weathervane. The horse's head was broken off. Sometimes at night when you were in bed you could hear him squeaking when he turned around in the wind. Because you were big you had a room all by yourself in the attic. It was a little room but it was very nice and Mrs. Henderson had pasted up a picture of Black Beauty on the sloping wall. There was an iron bed, painted white, with tin cans filled with kerosene under each leg. That was to keep the bedbugs from crawling up. There were a lot of them and the wallpaper was streaked where you squashed them. Like shooting stars.

In front of the house there was a wide porch; it had railings with a lot of little knobs on them like the ones on the big brass bed that Mrs. Henderson slept in. All the way down in the street you could see the sign over the porch: PETER SALEM HOME FOR THE AGED. It was gold lettering and even though some of the words were faded you could read them all. And you knew who Peter Salem was, too—the black man who fought at Bunker Hill; Mrs. Henderson told you. She knew a lot of things the teacher didn't know. Miss Regan didn't know about Peter Salem for one thing.

You were seven—nearly eight—and you had started going to school the same year they brought you to the Home. It was funny at first, you and your sisters being in this place with all the real old people. But after a while some more children came, but they were little kids and you wished the Charities would bring some that were big. Mrs. Henderson said it ought to be just for old folks and they ought to start a home for colored orphans, too. But she was glad to have you just the same.

She was a nice lady, the matron, and when you had the whooping cough she made onion tea and brought it all the way up to your room even though she said the steps were killing her and it's high time they were giving her some help. She was round and fat and laughed a lot. Sometimes she would laugh so hard she'd sit down in her rockingchair and shake all over and the tears would roll down on her apron and she'd say, Law, chile, what won't you be thinkin' 'bout next—you'll be the death of me sure! And she'd

give you a piece of bread smeared with lard, sometimes with sugar sprinkled on it.

But mostly she was too busy cleaning and cooking and taking care of the sick ones like Mr. Thigpen to talk to you or the young ones much. Mr. Thigpen must have been the oldest one in the Home. His hair was white and frizzy like the top of a dandelion and he never got out of bed. He just lay there all day and never moved except to spit into the slop jar by the bed after a coughing spell. But he liked to have you come in and tell what you learned at school. And when you told him he'd want you to tell him more things. He hated everybody else and when the matron came in he'd close his eyes and pretend to be asleep. She said he was the evilest old man she ever laid eyes on—wouldn't even let Reverend Bixby come into his room when he came to call. Cuss him out something awful.

One day after school he wasn't there—he went away to his father's house. Doug—he was only five—said that Mr. Thigpen's father must be older than anybody in the world and Mrs. Henderson said that he was. Older than anybody.

THE old people didn't go out much. Mostly they sat around in the parlor where the children weren't allowed. But you could go in to take out the ashes from the big coal stove in the middle of the room and to fill up the scuttle. It had a different smell from the rest of the house, a dry brown smell like old people and old wallpaper and mouldy carpets and curtains and old tobacco pipes. Sometimes they talked, but Miss Rose never talked to anybody. Just sat in a rockingchair by the stained-glass bay window and rocked back and forth and hummed. She chewed snuff. Then there was Miss Redpath and Miss Rainey and little Miss Fowler and Mr. Rixey and Mr. Campbell and Mr. Cherry and some more too. Mr. Campbell wasn't like the others.

He had whiskers like one of the prophets and liked to sit outside whenever it was nice. He could go to sleep sitting on the porch in the summertime and not wake up when a fly walked on his nose. Mr. Campbell carried a potato in his hip pocket for the rheumatism and he could tell you stories about working on the riverboats that used

to come all the way up from N'Awlins. There's no more boats nowadays, he'd say, but one of these days, son, I'm going to pack up and take a railroad train all the way back. All the way back to Hannibal and to St. Louis and to Cairo and Memphis, and to Greenville and Vicksburg and Natchez, all the way down—plumb into N'Awlins. He'd say those names over and over like it was a song and pat his carpet slipper keeping time. And he'd blow through his hands like a train whistle: *Whoo-oo-whoo! Hannibal and St. Louis, Cairo and Memphis, Greenville and Vicksburg, Natchez and N'Awlins—whoo-oo! Yes, Miss Lindy, yes, Miss Lou, I'm a-comin' through. . . .*

I warn't one of them roustabouts neither, son, he'd say, a riverboat pilot I was—or same as one. Me'n Cap'n Bob could take you anywheres you wanted to go and didn't need much water neither. Mind the time we went clean up to Fletcher's Landing 'fore we found out that the old river'd doubled back and cut a brand-new channel five miles on the other side! Yessiree, and that's the gospel truth. That was *something*, let me tell you.

Mr. Campbell was a good singer and could sing louder than anybody those nights in the parlor. Sunday nights they were.

The singing was nice but you liked the stories better. They would open the Bible on the little round table first, but nobody would do much reading from it. Mostly they told the stories, a whole lot better ones than those Miss Regan told or the ones in Elson's Second Reader. At first the matron used to make you go upstairs to bed like the little ones, but after a while you found out that if you sat over on the corner stairs where it was dark Mrs. Henderson wouldn't notice you. Or at least she wouldn't say anything.

They'd turn the gaslight down low and when the stove was going good they'd turn it off altogether. The light came through the little isinglass windows and jumped up and down on their old brown faces and their eyes would shine and their shadows on the walls nodded and moved back and forth. Every once in a while Mr. Campbell would chunk up the stove with the poker and when nobody was looking he'd spit into the scuttle. Chewing wasn't allowed at prayer meeting time but he always did except when Reverend Bixby came around. He knew you were back there in the dark on the stairs and sometimes he'd look around and wink at you.

THE stories were mostly about the old times when there was slavery and the children of Israel were in Egypt. Some of the words were hard to understand. Like "begat." Abraham begat Isaac and Isaac begat Jacob and Jacob begat twelve sons. There were other things that were hard to figure out, too. If they weren't really children—and some of them were old men like Abraham—why were they called the children of Israel? And why were the colored people in those days called Israelites?

Some of the stories were about children and they were good ones, too. Except the one about the little boys who laughed at the old prophet Elisha and called him an old bald-head and God sent two bears out of the woods and the bears ate them up. But there was the one about little King David who took his slingshot and killed the giant. In those days the old people weren't always telling you that you couldn't have a slingshot you might put somebody's eye out with it.

Then there was Joshua—he was a *fighting* man—and Moses and Aaron and how they ran away from Old Pharaoh and got across the river just in time and the white men and all their hound dogs were drowned when the waters rolled down. And God showed them the way to go with a cloud in the daytime and a pillar of fire at night. Except for Harriet Tubman. Then there was nothing but a star that they followed and they didn't go by day at all. But they got away just the same.

That Harriet Tubman. Black as night and tall as a pine and strong as Samson and her eyes were like lightning and no man living could stare her down. Yessir, and she carried a pistol as long as that poker and when you looked down the barrel you could see Kingdom Come. But she didn't need no weapons. If a man got scared and wanted to turn back, all she had to do was ball up her fist, r'ar back and *wham!* —they'd throw him in the wagon like he was dead. Never knowed when she was comin' but when she said *git,* brother, you *got!* Never been nobody like her.

But even when they ran away from Old Pharaoh there was always somebody else to fight. There was always some old king and the Babylonians and Philistines and Assyrians and Persians who put the children of Israel back into bondage. Then there was another lady —not Harriet Tubman but another one—who set the people free by

killing the general who was leading the soldiers after them. She took the general into her tent and gave him buttermilk to drink. (You didn't like buttermilk but Mr. Campbell did.) Anyway, when the general went to sleep the lady took a hammer and a nail and hammered the nail plumb through his head and killed him and all the Israelites got away—across the river. There was always a river: the Jordan and the Ohio and some more.

But they didn't all live in tents like in that story. Those that lived in the desert—before they got to Canaan—lived in tents and ate manna that God dropped down. But the others lived in little cabins and ate hoecake, and fatback when they were issued it. Sometimes they would find a hog that got lost and it wasn't in a desert because they'd go off in the woods to barbecue it over a fire. And they used to snare wild turkeys in the woods and eat them, too. And 'possums. (Like Mr. Campbell said, folks down there will eat a 'possum quicker'n a goose will go barefoot.)

Miss Fowler told about the cabins. When she was a little girl, a long time ago when there was slavery, she lived in one of them with her mother. It wasn't much of a place to live, without any floor or a fine big stove like this one. They made a fire on the floor and the smoke went up through a hole in the roof. You could see the stars through there, too, and Miss Fowler's mother told her that maybe someday they would see the star you could follow clear through to Freedom.

But it was a long time a-coming and when it did and the others went away Miss Fowler's mother couldn't go—she was in the family way. Colonel Alcorn and the other white men went after the slaves on horseback and with their dogs. They caught some of them. Frederick was killed out in the swamp and they cut off the ears of Ephraim—that was Miss Fowler's uncle. The rest of the ones they caught just got beat. But most of the runaways never were found, and Miss Fowler said praise the Lord for that and Miss Redpath said Amen.

One night after the old people had talked about how the children of Israel were put into bondage again, this time by the Babylonians, Mrs. Henderson said God's chosen people sure had a hard way to go, didn't they? And Mr. Campbell said yes, and it's still a hard road, a long hard road. Miss Redpath said Amen and everybody else nodded and said it's the truth, Lord knows it's the truth.

letter from abroad

Paris

THIS winter almost all the former collaborators have come out into broad daylight, and without the slightest shame. It is a sign of the times. Henri de Montherlant has written a play, *Le Maitre de Santiago* (The Master of Santiago), which preaches renunciation to his audience. Sacha Guitry has lost in prison whatever wit he still had left. His play, *Talleyrand,* is a failure, as is François Mauriac's *Passage du Malin.* It is no accident that I am writing Mauriac's name together with that of Montherlant and Sacha Guitry. He himself has invited it.

Together with Jean Paulhan, the new protector of the collaborators, Mauriac has started a literary magazine, *La Table Ronde,* which brings together in a most friendly fashion writers who were in the resistance movement and a few outstanding traitors, among them Montherlant. That is why Mauriac has just been expelled by unanimous vote from the French National Committee of Writers. For he has broken the pledge taken by members of this organization to refuse to associate professionally with writers judged undesirable as a result of their collaboration with the enemy.

Others are achieving on the strictly political level what Paulhan and Mauriac are achieving on the intellectual plane. Pierre-Etienne Flandin, the man who after Munich sent a telegram of congratulations to Hitler, who protested against French mobilization in 1939, and who was a minister in the Vichy government, has also come out of the shadows under circumstances that are worth recording. During a recent banquet he made a speech in which he not only demanded an amnesty for the former collaborators but also glorified their role. He was seated between Paul Faure, a Munichite Socialist and collaborator, and Paul Giaccobi, a right-hand man of General de Gaulle. Thus we see the De Gaulle movement working closely and actively with the most notorious of the Vichyites.

The reasons why these collaborators and traitors, both in the political and the intellectual field, have come out into broad daylight are easy to understand. At present the French ruling class is trying by every means in its power to check the upsurge of the people. The ruling class thinks that the best way to succeed in this is by undermining the spirit which aroused the country during the resistance, and then by using the usual methods of repression.

As I write, we are celebrating the one hundredth anniversary of our 1848 Revolution, in which for the first time in France the organized working class went into action. That revolution was crushed by the bourgeoisie, which was then in the ascendancy, and ended with the *coup d'etat* of Napoleon III. The French capitalist class of our day has no other way out except that taken one hundred years ago: first repression, then an appeal to the Man on Horseback. But it forgets that today the situation is quite different and the relation of forces has changed profoundly.

Today the French working class is far more powerful, far better organized than a century ago. It was the driving force in the resistance movement. It initiated the national uprising which saved our honor. Even François Mauriac acknowledged this in the famous phrase he wrote during the war: "Only the working class in the main remained faithful to desecrated France." While the ruling circles grow frantic at their fundamental inability to solve the vital problems of the nation and tail supinely after Mr. Truman, the great mass of French workers realize the role they will soon play. They know that nothing can be done without them.

To crush this upsurge which comes from the heart of the people, the tottering bourgeoisie has to group all its forces. And that is why it is now appealing to collaborators and traitors.

It is not out of charity that Mauriac holds out his hand to them; it is not out of playfulness that Paulhan flirts with them; it is because of the most urgent necessity. It is a question of mobilizing everyone who can be mobilized.

For the coming hours are going to be decisive for us. The French government, representing that "third force" on which our middle classes had based so many illusions, has been forced to burden these same middle classes with arbitrary tax measures in order to save the wealth of big capital. Its action has provoked a feeling of amazement

and anger among the middle classes. The latter, ruined by those who are supposed to defend them, now have a choice between the Communist Party and the still embryonic groups that go along with it, and De Gaulle's Reunion of the French People.

If, as one may well hope, the most important section of these elements reunites with the Communist Party and those republicans who are beginning to gather around it, French independence will be saved. Otherwise a bitter struggle for freedom will be necessary.

Today in France it is clear that the defense of the Republic cannot be achieved except around the working class and the Communist Party. The Catholic group around the magazine *Esprit* has understood this: in a special number devoted to the new danger of totalitarianism, this magazine asserts that the struggle against fascism can only be made in an alliance with the Communists. More and more Frenchmen are realizing these facts of life. The hand outstretched by the enemies of the people to the collaborators and traitors of yesterday will open their eyes still further.

In this anniversary year of the 1848 Revolution, the intellectuals are turning away from "byzantine" controversies. Existentialism is no longer an issue. There are very few widely heralded lectures, as there were last year. Everyone has rejoined his camp and is fighting in the field of politics—even those like Paulhan, who hypocritically pretend that politics is the least of their worries.

Meanwhile the French government, forced to celebrate 1848, is only paying it lip-service. The poet Jean Lescure has written a play about this great event, which was to have been solemnly presented at the Palais de Chaillot. But called before an official committee, he was told that there was really too much politics in his text. "Remember," he replied, "it deals with a revolution."

At present the authorities are busy purging from the scripts which are to be recited during the anniversary celebrations all terms that are considered a little too militant, including the words of Berlioz' hymn. And—O irony!—Pierre de Gaulle, the general's own brother, will preside over the ceremony in Paris. This childish behavior is a sign of fear. And one may well imagine how panic-stricken these puppets would be if they were deprived of their support from abroad, which is the only thing that still keeps them from completely losing face.

——CLAUDE MORGAN

(*Translated by Joseph Bernstein.*)

right face

BOURBON APOSTLE

"There is nothing un-American and un-Christian in racial segregation. God expects us to preserve the color line. It is high time we Baptists concern ourselves about His business in that respect."
—Judge Horace C. Wilkinson in the *Alabama Baptist.*

"NEITHER SHALL HE EAT"

Asked by Rankin at an Un-American Committee hearing whether he had found a system of slavery rather than human freedom in Russia, Admiral W. H. Standley replied: *"Not a system of slavery, but not freedom either. You can earn only if you work."*

FOILED AGAIN!

Indignantly denying the Washington rumors that Joseph Stalin's initials had been sneaked onto the face of the Roosevelt dime by a Communist agent, Mrs. Nellie Tayloe Ross, Director of the Mint, declared: *"No American with a grain of gray matter would think this government would place the initials of a foreigner on our coins."*

OBSESSION

FEBRUARY 15, 1948 ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

OFFICIALS LOOK FOR U.S.-SOVIET CRISIS IN SPRING

Expect Relations to Get Worse in Next 3 to 6 Months, Hope They Will Ease in Year or So.

By JOHN M. HIGHTOWER

WASHINGTON, Feb. 14 (AP)—Relations between the United [illegible] and Russia are expected by [illegible] to go from bad

U.S.-SOVIET CRISIS IN SPRING LOOKED FOR BY WASHINGTON

Officials Expect Relations to Get Worse in Next 3 to 6 Months, Hope They Ease in Year or So.

By EDDY GILMORE.

MOSCOW, Feb. 14 (AP)—Russia said tonight it was forced to sign a non-aggression treaty with Germany in 1939 in a fight against time.

Furthermore, the Soviet Union asserted that Britain and France shared a prewar aim of starting a war between Russia and Germany, and that the Hitler-Stalin pact was an alternative move.

In the third chapter [illegible]

ing German aggression against the Soviet Union.

This, the Russians said, was done through negotiations with the Soviet Union while offering guarantees to Poland, Romania and certain other states.

Referring to the period when Britain and France were negotiating with the Soviet Union, the Russian document declared:

"Along with open negoti[illegible] with the U.S.S.R.

WE INVITE READERS' CONTRIBUTIONS TO THIS DEPARTMENT. ORIGINAL CLIPPINGS ARE REQUESTED WITH EACH ITEM.

books in review

THE LOGGERS

THE LAST FRESHET, *by Ben Field. Doubleday. $3.00.*

IT IS HARD to think of another author who has written as consistently as Ben Field about Americans who construct and renew America: who bring up the leaf and grain, slit the trees and shape the steel. To many writers this area of creative material is little known; to some it is simply less known than the territories in which their own growth has been experienced. And to others, in deliberate search of a "good subject," it is not a field that invites exploration. How much easier—at what less risk—to bone up on strumpets in old lace, to type the twelfth carbon of Hemingway, or to endow an endless anecdote with the trick dimension of a poetic surface. Yet Field has shown us in his novels and short stories—especially in their vigor and honesty—how rich this little-worked area can be. *The Last Freshet,* which deals with loggers in upstate New York, reveals it further.

While the story of *The Last Freshet* can be easily summarized, it is far from simple in the actual telling—and certainly far from familiar. Field's choice of a hero may be unique. What other novelist would dare select for his protagonist a man of fifty whose life would seem to have been exhausted emotionally by the loss of his entire family? When Virge Doggity appears in the first chapter, his invalid wife has died, his two sons have been killed in the Second World War. To the other loggers he is still "that shot of fire," one of the tough Doggitys, a fiercely able worker and a redhead with matching spirit. Actually he is occupied with only one plan for himself: to achieve at least a completeness of "freedom" by getting rid of his sons' widows who have attached themselves to the kindly duty of making his life comfortable for him. One of them does marry again and leave; it is the other, Ellen, the outwardly timid and homely one ("timidity and homeliness in a woman repelled him as much as fat in a man"), who slowly impresses upon Virge the subtle strength and intensity of her personality and offers him, finally, a way of return to living emotion.

This love motif, involving a man and his daughter-in-law, is another unusual aspect of the

book, demanding a rather special skill and understanding from the author. However, it is not the entire story of the book. *The Last Freshet* is about loggers, about workers, of whom Virge is the most conspicuous without being unrepresentative. It is about a community in the uneasy dawn of peace, when the light still seems strange and the wounds left by war throb under the surface. The uncertainty, the new soreness of old problems are conveyed in the overtones of the loggers' conversation in the opening chapters.

While they talk of things that are large only within the village boundaries — their work, their chiseling boss, the supposed or actual sex lives of acquaintances, neighborhood affairs — a pervading mood comes through in allusions and in the very way the conversation tends to fly off in all directions. There is a wide range of intonations — mocking, harsh, laughing, sardonic, sometimes wild —which add to the impression of separateness and private pain, yet all together create a total atmosphere to which each man contributes.

It is one of Field's achievements that he can suggest a deeper and wider potential unity of the group than their common resentment of the boss, which appears at first as the one specific cohesive of disparate outlooks. And when the potential approaches the actual in battles for decent roads and better schools, one is left with the feeling that this unity also has a meaning that extends beyond the families involved and the local issues at stake.

A novelist who did not understand these characters might have written a different finish. He might have been tempted to compose a sterile tragedy, beginning with the separateness and private pain and ending with twice as much of the same. And the materials for such a tragedy are not lacking. Virge himself, although he is a leader so far as the other loggers will permit leadership, longs at times to hole in from the future as well as the past. Forthright and clear about small, present problems, he often loses direction in a crisis and goes off every which way. Jim Hinch, who relies "on his own teeth and wind to bring down the world's meat," and deliberately lives in the most forsaken spot of the neighborhood, has the possible makings of an anarchist. And Slim the wild boy, gay, irresponsible, bitter, whose only serious conviction is a boiling hatred of army brass, nearly ends as a runaway.

Each one of the characters, the women as well as the men, is strongly stamped with an individuality that does not yield easily to the demands of a common struggle. But with it, even part of it, is a certain steady, stubborn assertiveness against forces that

cheat and oppress the individual. In a sense, Virge and Ellen typify these two qualities of their people—he by the rough vigor and fire of his temperament, she by an underlying stability and clarity in working through problems.

Because Ellen's role has such an importance, I wish that the author had made her a more vital person. To the end she seems rather more intense than genuinely passionate, and it is difficult to throw off completely the original picture of her—seen through Virge's eyes—as awkward, uncertain and somewhat irritating. One or two of the other characters struck me as having been slighted for less absorbing persons. I should certainly have liked more than a few tantalizing glimpses of the doctor (who is also justice of the peace), a personality so remarkable and compelling that he snatches all the reader's attention the moment he enters a scene. And Ray Wilson, the boss's son-in-law, an aspiring little *fuehrer,* is depicted with flashes of psychological brilliance that, again, tantalize the reader with an expectancy of a deeper exploration than the author actually provides.

A more serious criticism concerns the novel's structure. While the characters represent, in complexity and depth, an advance over the author's previous book, *The Outside Leaf*, the formal design of this latest work does not

come near that of Field's short stories which are models in this respect. One misses a consistent, central drama of action involving the community as a whole — a strong, brightly colored thread to hold together naturally the multi-colored beads of incident, conflict and motive. As it is, many scenes appear as anecdotes, deprived of their full meaning because they cannot be referred to an encompassing framework. This weakness tends to dilute the symbolism as well as detract from the fine craftsmanship of Field's work.

These flaws, however, do not cancel the fact that *The Last Freshet* offers us a slice of America which is rarely presented in literature and almost never with the comprehension it demands. In Field's writing the presentation is in terms of people without intrusion from the author, who has enough faith in his characters to let them speak and act out their own stories instead of submerging them in stage directions, program notes and a moralizing chorus or two for anyone who might just fail to get the point. The flavor of the dialogue is indescribable. It is not the sort of thing that is done by a writer who carries a notebook. Ben Field has done more than listen and remember; he has lived and worked with these people. His recreation of them is both accurate and imaginative.

BARBARA GILES

Love, Inc.

THE GREAT ONES, *by Ralph Ingersoll. Harcourt, Brace. $3.00.*

IT IS A fairly common practice for alumni of the Luce empire to purge their former irritations and frustrations by writing books about their previous condition of servitude. The latest to join in is Ralph Ingersoll — more widely known as an extremely able war writer and the former editor of *PM* than as the ex-publisher of *Life.*

But where others have poked fun at the bureaucracy of Time Inc. or have bewailed their lot as upper-bracket wage slaves, Mr. Ingersoll, like the good reporter he is, objectivizes whatever feelings he may have had and transmutes them into a scathing study of the Big Boss and his glittering consort.

Like the little boy who dared to look at the emperor, he discovers they have nothing on. They have so completely disciplined themselves—he in his drive for self-justification and she in her drive for the wealth and power that spell super-security — that there are few of the usual, human aspects of personality left for the author to write about. Not that Mr. Ingersoll is opposed, either emotionally or because of economic theory, to the acquisition of great wealth. Nor is his thesis that the pursuit of power corrupts the pursuer: his protagonists, Sturges Strong and Letia Long, were fairly insecure to begin with. But by contrasting the splendor of their position with their emotional immaturity, the author punctures once again the Old-Testament-bourgeois-Protestant connection between the Lord's favor, showered down in material benefits, and the righteousness of the recipient.

Yet Mr. Ingersoll is a moralist in his own right. His book veers away from drama to a satire of contrasts. The emptiness of the protagonists confronts their wealth. The young Sturges searches for God; the millionaire publisher finds God by becoming Him. Letia's desire for love is always frustrated, not by objective defeat, but by the realization that it is not profitable for her, that it will not get *her* anywhere. This survival of the fittest ends in self-destruction.

Letia is beautiful; she is intelligent; but whether as rich man's wife, fashion designer, painter or writer, not for one moment does she relax her constant campaign for money and power. When she meets Sturges it is for both of them the second romantic lapse toward humanity. But even in the attraction of the two people there is the ironic attraction of hostile forces. These two individuals who have become their own carefully constructed façades dazzle one another. Yet while the façades re-

main in place for the world to admire, Sturges and Letia fail each other as thoroughly as they have failed in all other relationships not involving money or personal gratification. They continue as lonely in their united lives as they had been separately.

Perhaps because Letia and Sturges have never grown beyond an infantile self-absorption, it is difficult for the reader to achieve a sense of identification with them. They are too much like people one hears about or reads of in the papers. Ingersoll's novel is closer to a case history than the "love story" his subtitle promises. He is interested in the progress of his protagonists and tells that story ably. But he seldom shows them in action. If there were more scenes like Sturges' embarrassed leavetaking of his college sweetheart, or Letia's fear and rage as she drifts in a hurricane she cannot individually control, we might better understand how a man comes to invent the American Century or a woman tries dominating everything from Congress to organized religion. But the factual values remain the more important in the book.

If you are a handsome and intelligent young woman and would like a blueprint of how to parlay no dollars into five million, you will find *The Great Ones* full of helpful hints. If you are interested in magazine financing and promotion, Audit Bureau of Circulation

figures and their relation to advertising revenue, you will find thoughtful analyses of these phenomena. Indeed, so thorough and readable is the reporting in the novel that one hopes that Mr. Ingersoll will use his research as the basis of a non-fiction study of the Luce organization and its personalities.

SALLY ALFORD

Oppressed Majority

PEOPLE IN COLONIES, *by Kumar Goshal. Sheridan House. $3.50.*

THERE was a crying need for the kind of book that Kumar Goshal has written in *People in Colonies*. It tells succinctly and forcefully what imperialism has meant in the lives of peoples the world over from the dawn of the industrial revolution to the present time when the choice lies between a U.N. world and a U.S. world.

The author asks the reader to "Ponder this carefully: In the twentieth century three-fourths of the world's population are as destitute as their ancestors were a thousand years ago." Why is this so? How many of us (who regard ourselves as politically literate) know the explanation in more than a theoretical, abstract sort of way? Is not our limited understanding perhaps one of the

major reasons why the anti-imperialist campaign in America has hitherto taken the general form of fighting on numerous battle-fronts more or less isolated from one another and with strategy in each case more or less limited to the immediate objectives in each battle sector?

"To understand world politics today," says Goshal, "to really plan for world peace, it is essential to understand the colonial problem. Consider the following figures: Seven imperialist powers, with a home population of less than four hundred million, directly or indirectly control the destinies of nearly one and a half billion people living in colonial and semi-colonial countries."

Using the historical method—developed in full detail in his *The People of India* but necessarily more condensed here — he tells why and how colonial peoples fell under foreign domination, what wealth was extracted from their labor and resources and how this affected their lives, and how their struggles for economic and political freedom have been thwarted and crushed. This is the story of the people of India, China, the whole of Africa, Indonesia, Indo-China, the Middle East, the Philippines, the Caribbean and Latin America.

This global perspective illuminates the basic characteristics of imperialistic aggression and domination. It lays bare the full measure of hypocritical cant which spokesmen for imperialism have been broadcasting for more than a century. Moreover, the historical perspective uncovers the full meaning of the liberation movements now visible (even if not much publicized) throughout the colonial and semi-colonial countries.

The goal of these struggles, Goshal repeatedly emphasizes, is not simply political independence as an end in itself. Colonial peoples everywhere want, above all else, to rise out of their miserable poverty-ridden existence which is the direct and inevitable result of the foreign control of the resources and total economy of their countries. They can only raise themselves by altering the conditions under which they labor, and they can only accomplish this by wielding political power. No amount of paternal "tutelage" or "trusteeship" can or will bring them genuine freedom.

Speaking of the lies and myths of imperialism, one of the biggest of them all is currently being dinned into all American ears: the necessity of "protecting" the world from "expanding and aggressive totalitarianism." This is the justification for bolstering up decadent feudal regimes, colonial empires, monarchies and fascist dictatorships with American guns, loans and Marshall Plans. To what end? For the sake of an expanding and aggressive American capitalism. As the crusading Henry Luce (*Fortune*, June, 1947) ex-

presses it: "Americans with the needed knowledge and resourcefulness must go over the earth, as investors and managers and engineers, as makers of mutual prosperity, as missionaries of capitalism and democracy." Surely, the colonial peoples have had enough of missionaries!

As for the European imperialists, they welcome American aid in maintaining domination over their overseas empires, but they do *not* welcome American economic penetration in those empires. Bevin and Mosley and Smuts all agree that "European civilization" must be saved by the intensified exploitation of Africa —the one continent where European imperialism remains relatively strongly intrenched. The difficulty is that the schemes of the Bevins for squeezing the colonies to the limit in order to rescue Europe from bankruptcy cannot be realized without American dollars and machines—and the economic concessions which must be granted in return.

In his concluding chapter, "Future of the Colonies," Goshal warns that

"Force will not be sufficient for long to keep these [colonial] people docile enough for profitable exploitation. . . . The only peaceable way out of this dynamite-laden situation is to dovetail the economic needs of the retarded and the highly industrialized countries in a constructive manner. This will require an end to monopolies, the distribution of raw materials, agricultural products, capital goods, and credits and loans in such a manner that those whose living standards must be raised receive their necessary share. Obviously, the United Nations offers the only medium through which such a program can be put into effect."

Goshal makes some very thought-provoking proposals as to how the U.N. can serve the cause of colonial freedom and remarks, in conclusion, that "Henry Wallace's suggestion that the United Nations undertake a gigantic project for economic rehabilitation and advancement of the world . . . is the only way to bring lasting peace to this tortured planet."

If widely read and studied, as it deserves to be, *People in Colonies* should contribute programmatically, as the third-party movement headed by Henry Wallace is contributing organizationally toward strengthening and unifying the anti-imperialist fight in America.

ALPHAEUS HUNTON

Inside F.E.P.C.

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tices Committee—and not gone off on a historical side-jaunt generally marked by over-simplification and even, at times, by amateurishness (Garrison's *Liberator*, for example, is twice called the *Vindicator*!)

Ross served on the F.E.P.C. during its entire tortured existence, and was chairman of the committee during its last eighteen months. The volume he has produced is a transparently honest and refreshingly lively account of the highlights in that understaffed board's efforts to resolve the issues raised by 14,000 individual workers' complaints of racial discrimination.

Notwithstanding niggardly appropriations, insufficient powers, a hostile Congress and an unfriendly press, the F.E.P.C. was able to attack with considerable effectiveness the Jim-Crow and anti-Semitic pattern that prevailed in American wartime industry. This effectiveness was the result very largely of the same forces that brought the committee into existence—mass, organizational pressure, particularly from the Negro people, and the critical labor-power needs of a nation at war. An additional healthy factor was the support of President Roosevelt, particularly as this expressed itself in the selection of able men and women to implement the committee's purpose.

The fact of the F.E.P.C.'s over-all effectiveness, and Ross's book demonstrates this fact in detail, is of the utmost practical significance. It proves that those who argue that racial prejudice cannot be attacked by legislation but must await "education" are either conscious supporters of the status quo or uninformed, albeit well-meaning, folk.

Ross shows that effectively administered law is a most powerful educative influence. He understands that Jim Crowism itself is bulwarked by legislation and that therefore one of the necessary means of assault upon it is counter-legislation. He sees, too, that while the enforcement of anti-racist legislation is educative and serves to attack prejudice in that way, it also and simultaneously has immediate concrete value in that it attacks the *manifestations* of prejudice, the actual practices that constitute the living realities of chauvinism. This not only means bread and butter for human beings; it also constitutes in itself the most effective method of real education, namely, the alteration of habits, patterns of conduct and associations.

Two points of criticism may be offered which touch the central subject of the book. Mr. Ross feels that "the ancient argument over Negro capabilities" is still open to question. It is not. The weight of all evidence—historical, sociological, economic and psychological—(as well, incidentally, as the experiences stemming from his own

F.E.P.C.) is preponderantly on the side of those who insist upon the fallaciousness of the idea of Negro inferiority.

And the author shows a certain naïveté when he refers to the South Carolina law forbidding the employment of skilled Negro textile workers in the same plants with whites and asks: "What would you say, then, that that South Carolina law is protecting—white workers from association with Negroes, or white jobs at the looms at white wages?" Mr. Ross picks the second of these alternatives, but the choice is faulty because of an unmentioned alternative. The South Carolina law is in existence as one of the results of and one of the props for that state's system of divide and rule. The law does not guarantee "white wages," but South Carolina wages—low wages.

This particular failing is cited as indicative of a certain shallowness that marks much of Mr. Ross's analysis, but as a sheer description of the actual operation of the F.E.P.C., his book is, within its space limits, definitive.

HERBERT APTHEKER

"Philosophy reporting, sir!"

The Art of Eisenstein

by JOSEPH FOSTER

THE word genius has been so abused by Hollywood publicity hacks that its use in connection with Sergei Eisenstein may seem offensive. Yet there is no lesser word to describe his talents. He was easily the most important figure in the history of cinema art, and that includes Melies, Griffith, Chaplin and Pudovkin. His ideas on film form touched off disputations which, because of the range of arguments, gave rise to a thorough examination of the film art and provided it with an esthetic base.

Eisenstein constructed his formal esthetic out of folk materials. He preserved and perfected the pantomime. He retained those small cruelties that men practice upon one another with humor and good nature and which are rarely absent from folkways. He developed the closeup to bring out the inner feelings of the actor in such a way that harmony would be created between these feelings and the actor's outer movements. He retained, even in his most formal work, the humor, the heroes and villains, the social virtues and evils, that comprised the folk elements in the early films. In addition, he freed film makers from the tyranny of the camera. When the pivots, swivels, and dollies were invented to produce the modern mobile camera, writers and directors quickly became dominated by the new camera possibilities. They permitted the scope and flexibility of the instrument to determine the design of the film. Eisenstein and the Russians, by working out designs of their own to which the camera was subordinated, reduced the camera to its normal function.

Eisenstein's esthetic purpose was to produce the "intellectual film," whose function, he explained, was "the restoration of emotional fullness in the intellectual process." This type of film included all movie forms from the newsreel to the abstract strip, and synthesized all the arts—painting, writing, music, architecture, dancing and acting. Harry Alan Potamkin, Marxist film critic of the late Twenties, defined the intellectual film as one "having intellectual appeal, and intellectual appeal is one that is socially inferential." A film is socially inferential when it permits the closest scrutiny from the viewpoint of realism. When you have all this you have mature

cinema. "The intellectual film," said Eisenstein, "could not be achieved so long as the cinema was used for private profit. . . . Art is responsive only to social aims and demands. . . ."

The spine of the Eisenstein technique was montage. As he defines it, montage is the juxtaposition of elements of a theme in such a way as to produce a complete image of the theme. For instance: You see a Negro in closeup, his expression grim, barring his cabin door. In two successive shots are shown first, a group of men riding in a car, and second, a closeup of a hand of one of the men clutching a rope slipknotted at one end. These three shots, all elements or representations of a larger theme, immediately create an image of that theme, the lynch spirit of the Bourbon South and the struggle of the Negro to defend himself. Any of these shots taken separately might have different meanings, but in juxtaposition they have only one meaning, the one the film creator wants to impart.

What is essential to Eisenstein's art is that each of these elements must itself be true. One false sequence distorts the true image of the theme no matter how honest the rest of the film. On this point Eisenstein quotes Marx: "Not only the result but the road to it is also part of the truth. The investigation of truth must itself be true, true investigation is unfolded truth, the disjointed members of which unite in their result." Here is a masterful synthesis of Eisenstein's credo which he expressed creatively in the selection of shots and angles, technically in the cutting and editing.

Montage, Eisenstein claimed, had long been present in other arts, notably in poetry. The weakness of film men in the past was their failure to learn from these arts, to take advantage of the rich imagery, both audio and visual, for the benefit of the films—the most audio-visual of all the arts. He supports his arguments by quoting liberally from Pushkin, Milton, Mayakovsky and a dozen others.

The battle between the hosts of Satan and the Heavenly hosts in *Paradise Lost* is one of his favorite examples. In the description of the rigid bristling forest of spears, the richly caparisoned horses, the bellying heraldic standards, the trumpet blasts, one can easily see the inspiration for his own epic battle scenes in *Nevsky*. For a total schooling in film production, he insisted, "masters of the film art should not only study dramaturgic-literary writing and the actor's craft, but also and equally must they master all the subtleties of cultural montage writing."

EISENSTEIN, who was born in Riga in 1898, came to the films by way of engineering, architecture and the theatre. Once in films, he felt that his ideas could best be worked out in historic themes, for in the true representation of historic events the realism of social struggle could be most dramatical-

ly caught. The ideas, symbols, images, themes, all properly integrated in a given film, produced what he called the film sense. When only twenty-five, he completed *Potemkin,* a film that demonstrated his theories of film making. In this film, hailed as a revolution in film techniques, the film sense, or the sense of history, evolved out of the point of conflict in the class struggle. Here, as in *Ten Days That Shook the World,* the protagonists were not individuals but the two opposed classes. Thus what was dominant in the film were the characteristics of each class—the heroism, strength and sacrifice of the working class, contrasted with the decadent, cruel, selfish enemy.

In *Nevsky* and *Ivan* he recaptures the historic moment through individuals. The masses are still important, but in these films they are reduced to a supporting role. This formal shift from class to individual required a shift in concentration. Instead of dwelling on the characteristics of the class, it became necessary to chart the impulses of individuals, with all the personal motives responsible for their behavior. Individuals are conditioned by history, of course, but people differ from one another within the same historic milieu. The weakness of *Ivan* is the failure to make this shift. But of this more later.

Potemkin and *Ten Days That Shook the World* brought Eisenstein international renown, so in the normal course of events Hollywood made him an offer. He came to Paramount in 1930. The first theme to which he was assigned was the influence of the Jesuits on early California history. For Hollywood this was a blunder, since the Jesuits had tortured, starved and beat to death the local Indians who rebelled against working twenty hours a day in the vineyards of the missionaries. The film, naturally, was never completed, nor was *Sutter's Gold* nor *An American Tragedy,* Eisenstein's other American assignments. The scripts for all these films revealed too strong a sense of history for the stomachs of American producers.

Thus Eisenstein's stay in Hollywood highlighted, as did nothing else, the contrast between the film as a work of art and the film as a commercial article. The Americans, who had introduced the film form to the world, had created the elements of a folk art in the early days of the movies. At that time the big money was disdainful of it because it did not realize its industrial potential or its possibilities as a propaganda medium. In those early days the heroes, by and large, represented the common people; the villains were often the traction trusts, banks, loan sharks and mortgage holders. The humor was rough, earthy, inelegant, and needed no help from the gag writer. But when Eisenstein came to Hollywood, all that had become part of the past. The First World War, and after that the sound track, had

elevated the film into big business —an expanding giant in the hands of the banks. Instead of the qualities of folk art that Eisenstein had so carefully nurtured in the Soviet cinema, he found here false and shallow ideas, people replaced by stereotypes, humor by joke-book platitudes. The film art, taken over by reactionary finance capital, had been beheaded before it could get started.

Although Eisenstein left behind only six completed films (*Strike, The Old and The New* and the four films previously mentioned), many critics feel that he had exhausted himself creatively. His "formal-esthetic," they say, had reached its climax in *Nevsky,* while *Ivan* merely served as a show window, a summary of a completed technique. Eisenstein disagreed with these critics. Striving for an intensification of the film sense, he saw in *Ivan* a historic theme full of power and grandeur. He sought for a "monumental means of presentation" in which everything was subordinated to the struggle to make sixteenth century Russia a great and unified power.

To the argument that he had overlooked character and human qualities in his attempt to relive the titanic clash of wills, he answered that he wished all characters to be taken together as the instruments of an orchestra. If each character was incomplete in itself, the aim was to present in the sum of all the characters the total menace to Ivan's historic objective. "The meaning of individual actions is dissolved only in their interactions."

Eisenstein's explanation of his handling of character in *Ivan* fits well within his definition of the film sense so long as he treats the members of the cast as an undifferentiated mass enacting a historic event. But his technique breaks down the moment he begins to single out individuals to carry the action. You cannot concentrate for long periods on special people, and then ask audiences to accept them as impersonal agents of history. For when you do such people become dehumanized, and end up as mechanical figures, willess and purposeless, except as they are moved about by the producer. In the end, they become so unacceptable as people who once lived that the historic sense itself becomes weakened.

Nevertheless, in the light of his total work it seems shortsighted to conclude that Eisenstein had reached a dead end. All evidence is to the contrary. No one recognized the formal problems of the film art more keenly than he. In fact he had no equal in working out film techniques. He was constantly altering and improving his methods to better achieve his film sense. His reports are full of references to this striving. There can be no doubt that failing to reach his goals by methods that were no longer adequate he would have evolved new techniques to solve his formal problems. His death is a great loss to the film art.

art

PAINTERS *with* IDEAS

by JOSEPH SOLMAN

DURING February the Artists League of America held an important exhibit of tempera paintings and mosaics by Helen West Heller at their own gallery at 77 Fifth Avenue. The show was, in effect, a tribute to a very remarkable artist, for Miss Heller has encompassed a range of work in her lifetime that would require a museum to set off her full creative stature.

Born in western Illinois of pioneer ancestry, this artist showed her work as early as 1921 in Chicago and was immediately dubbed a "modernist." Her art at that time was as independent and original as it is to this day, and if her work never really "caught on" it may be due to its rare freedom from all prevailing fashions. Like Charles Ives in American music, her native, expressive idiom, her independence of vision, the variety of her forms (embracing tempera, oil, mosaic and woodcut) have never been too easy to pigeonhole. C. J. Bulliet, Chicago art critic, once compared her to Blake.

Her great gift in the woodcut medium was immediately acknowledged, but this circumstance had the unfortunate effect of placing her equally important paintings into a secondary position. Time will surely regain for her work a properly balanced estimate.

Her subjects range from allegory to pastorale, from intimate aspects of farm life to the complexity of city scenes. Simple, direct drawing, vigorous design motifs to break up her picture planes accent the movement of people, animals, trees and machinery which fill her work. Cubism's unfolding of planes, aspects of decorative expressionism, even suggestions of interplay of images are so much grist to her mill as she seeks the clearest form for her communication. Possibly her deep kinship with country life places this category of her work in a special niche. In her art, however, love of the soil is always deepened by a philosophical humanist content and outlook.

Miss Heller may finally be coming into her own, thanks to no gallery or museum. Oxford University Press recently published an excellent edition of new blocks

entitled *Woodcuts U.S.A.* which is practically a summing up of her lifework in this medium. As John Taylor Arms noted in the preface, "that spiritual quality, that affinity between the artist and the mood of the subject, which raises a print above the level of a sound piece of craftsmanship or a bit of intellectual objectivity and endows it with the spirit of true art, is present in every one of Helen West Heller's woodcuts. . . ."

In her show at the Artists League, there were temperas like "The Bird Hops Along the Wall" and "Bottle Casting" equal to her best work in this medium, filled with spirit, imagination and keen observation. Her mosaics, though, are probably the triumph of her creative career. In style, clarity and expressiveness they surpass any contemporary work in this medium. Bold, graceful decorations like "Pigeons at Fountain" and "Ford's End" were flanked by severe, monumental studies like "Ballot Box" and "A Quote From Martha Graham." Helen West Heller's art is a deep revelation of the American spirit. The neglect of her work is an indictment of a commercial gallery system which so often places whimsy before substance.

ANTHONY TONEY, a painter who fought in World War II and with the Loyalists in the Spanish conflict, has come back to his art with a deep desire to fix on canvas the multiple-imaged

world he has experienced. For this large scale purpose Toney has added to his earlier phase of richly ornamented cubism, elements of montage and surrealism to compete with the novelist's art of narration in time. This exploration into the realm of complex subject matter by means of welding together and broadening certain features of modern painting constitutes an almost heroic undertaking. In a picture called "Studio," for instance, the calm of an artist's room is splintered by bitter reminiscences, among which are Greek women mourning, a lewd face, an old-fashioned New York street and, set in a studio canvas, a sudden image of an affrighted horse. The color scheme is made up of a subtle variety of reds, from the deep velvet drapery associated with the romantic idea of an artist's studio to the ivory pinks of certain half-suggested images. The design, by a delicate adjustment of rectalinear planes, creates a suggestive unity, despite the variety of associations.

Toney's best canvas, "Four Corners," which he exhibited last year, presents a strongly simplified street scene over which swarm the larvae of prejudice, bigotry, injustice and other warped aspects of society. A textured blue and purple surface contains and unites the many expressive images in the picture.

The dangers of a profuse imagery, however, cannot always be warded off by the painter. There are canvases where the heap of images gets out of control and a multi-faceted confusion results. In "Fascist Surrender" the main figure is broken up by so many symbolic gestures that no unified impact remains. In "Survivor," the war-torn, montaged figure, dramatic in itself, is too isolated from the general framework of the picture, resulting in something akin to illustrative reportage. But Toney's chief weakness is his use of rich, spangled color schemes for dramatic or morbid themes where such color seems out of place. The beautiful fanfare of greens in "Mansion" is excellent for capturing the exotic elements of a Spanish villa, but so colorful a palette casts a spurious splendor over such grim subjects as death and hallucination. Toney, I think, should experiment with sparser tonalities now and then, to match the skeletal force of certain of his ideas.

His "Crematorium" picture must be singled out as a bold solution of Toney's plastic problems. The large masses of gray hold the vivid reds and yellows in their place and help create the impact of one terrifying moment the artist is trying to convey, human bodies being hurtled through trap doors.

Toney has posed an important problem, both for himself and for other painters of today: that of widening the artist's language rather than narrowing it down

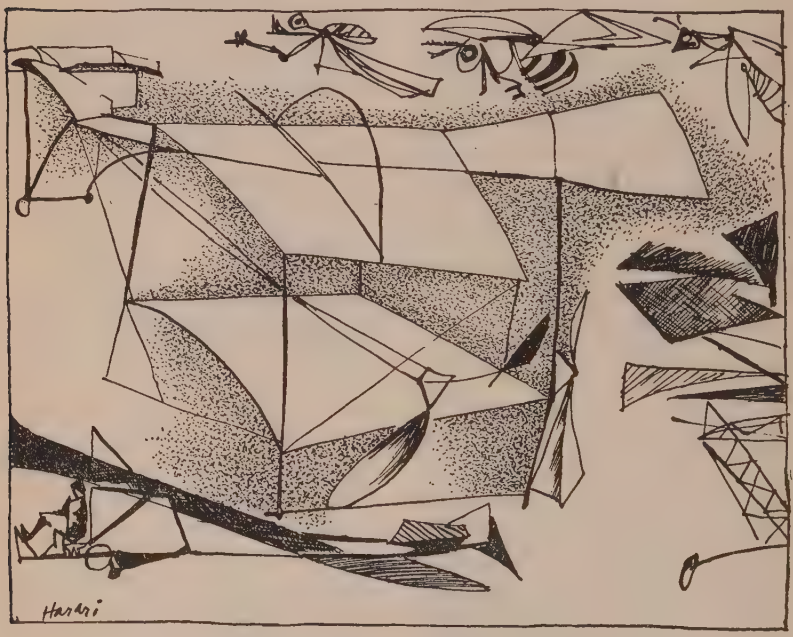
to a Morse code of dots and dashes. This possible germination of a new movement will bear watching. The painter's exhibit runs to April 2 at the Artist's Gallery, 61 East 57th Street.

SOME of the problems we have been dealing with in the work of Toney crop up in the paintings of Hananiah Harari shown last month at the Laurel Gallery. Harari tackles ambitious themes, combines abstract and symbolic forms and utilizes an extraordinary technical equipment in his work. Harari is equally at home in painting a *trompe d'oeil* still life or in working out a sensitive abstraction. In his present work he gives full reign to his technical and abstract motivations in a series of sky paintings, full of planes, gliders, figures and constellations.

In some of the smaller canvases where Harari shows a curious assortment of skyplanes, he paints eloquently a fine series of intricate forms set within a strange, portentous atmosphere. But the larger canvases like "Warm Night" are Baroque inventions, where three or four paintings seem crowded into one and the variety of plastic idioms defeats its own purpose. It is possible to mix even such disparate elements as realism, abstraction and surrealism in the same picture (as Chirico, Ernst, Chagall and Picasso have done), but it takes a dominant, deeply-urged concept to forge them into

a unified vision. In Harari, each subject is strikingly painted, but the parts are greater than the whole. The work becomes diffused and scattered.

This brilliant painter needs one concentrated motif and a closeup lens to focus his ideas. His collage diagrams, featured as "On Safari With Harari" in many issues of *New Masses,* contained as much art as irony. Only in a fine painting called "Balloons Aloft" did he utilize this stimulating influence. I think he could use a lot more of it. It would give more bite and clarity to his work.



FLYING THINGS, *by Hananiah Harari*

HANNS EISLER

by SIDNEY FINKELSTEIN

WHEN these words are read, Hanns Eisler may be somewhere in Europe, teaching or composing or both, "home" for the first time since Hitler made Germany a place in which neither music nor any form of living culture could exist. He was deported by a State Department which must have spent some puzzled hours wondering exactly what Hanns wanted to do, so that it could confidently do the opposite. About his brother, Gerhart, there was no such doubt. Gerhart made the mistake of indicating too plainly that his place was with the German workers, continuing the struggle he had taken up both before and after the brown bestiality took over Germany. And so Gerhart is, at this writing, behind bars, an "undesirable" whom it is equally undesirable to send home. German Nazis, still unpunished, and German industrialists who backed the Nazis, still running their industries, would agree. Hanns, however, is "deported."

Hanns Eisler's years in America were not unhappy or unfruitful. He was loved by a great many people. His penetrating mind, exposing whatever came his way of bad thought and bad art, expressed itself in so open-hearted and jolly a manner, so completely without egoism or malice, that one could hardly know him and not love him. He applied himself to the films, raising immeasurably the standards of Hollywood film composition. He composed a great deal of other music, of high quality, as the New York concert devoted to some of it disclosed.

Eisler wrote *Composing for the Films,* a textbook, under the auspices of the Rockefeller Foundation. The book itself must have embarrassed the Foundation, for in showing the possibilities in cinema music, Eisler also showed its limitations, proving wittily that great art was incompatible with capitalist domination of the art form. Yet productive as he was on these shores, there is no doubt that Europe will welcome his talents gratefully, and that he will be glad to be home.

But whether the State Department read Hanns Eisler's mind rightly or wrongly, this "deportation" was a degrading proceeding, besmirching not Eisler but our

own traditions of liberty and a free people's culture. That is why the concert of Eisler's works given at Town Hall, February 28, assumes so great an importance. It was sponsored by seven leading American composers: Leonard Bernstein, David Diamond, Roger Sessions, Aaron Copland, Roy Harris, Walter Piston and Randall Thompson. People in America are getting angry. There is a parallel too close for peace of mind between Eisler's first deportation and his second, the first by Hitler, the present one by the officials of Mr. Truman. The audience gave notice that the fight over here, "in praise of learning" and in restoration of American democracy, has just begun.

The music they heard was strangely delicate, sweet sounding, made up of understatement, almost fragile in its textures. Eisler was known in Germany not only as a "proletarian" composer, but also as one of the foremost students of Arnold Schoenberg. Seven major works were presented: two septets, a string quartet, a violin sonata, a set of piano pieces for children, a piece of film music called *Fourteen Ways to Describe Rain,* and a group of songs, all but one to poems by Brecht.

All of the music was atonal, some of it completely within the "Twelve-Tone System." Whether this kind of music writing is a satisfactory system for the handling of every type of human

image or emotional and dramatic theme in music will be touched on later. But it is good to hear a composer regarding himself as "of the people," and so completely fine and polished a master of his craft. For one must remember that although the working class brings a culture of its own into being, it is also the discriminating inheritor of the best through the centuries.

Both the powers and limitations of atonal music were apparent in the Eisler concert. It is wonderfully concentrated; probably no other kind of music gets so complete a feeling of throbbing with intense emotional life, of musical sound itself becoming emotion. This is due probably to the fact that this system has made a science of the tensions and relaxations created by the various musical intervals and their interplay.

It may be described as a contrapuntal music, of interweaving melodic lines, the value of which rests less in the melodic lines than in the harmonies they create between them. Eisler brings to this music feelings quite different from the psychoneurotic horrors projected in Schoenberg's music written during the First World War years and the Twenties. His music is sprightly, tender, laughing, sometimes positive in feeling and sustained in line, as in the string quartet and the violin sonata.

It is music too subtle to be mastered in one hearing, yet some limitations can be noted. Stated negatively, there is a complete absence of the qualities found in folk dance or song, which means there is an absence of the varied human presence that can be brought to music only through such an idiom, beloved by people and characteristic of them. Sometimes he uses nursery tunes, as in the "kindergarten" septet, but these are quaint quotations, given an over-precious character by the atonal fabric.

And since a composer must get the roots of his idiom from somewhere, Eisler, like the other atonalists, gets his from nineteenth century romantic music. It is made up of phrases from Schubert, Schumann, Chopin, Wagner and Wolf, the intervals stretched out of their original shape, the movement more chromatic. It is music of subtle texture and finely worked pattern, but lacking in cumulative architectural power, in dramatic contrasts. Eisler, unlike Schoenberg, does not adhere rigidly to a self-contained system. But atonal music still does not seem to have enough flexibility in it to supply images of the breadth and variety of human experience necessary in a people's culture.

This criticism does not mean that atonal music is totally lacking in value. Many findings in the arts of our times are decadent when they are advanced as complete "systems," but may be valuable when they are studied for additional tools. Atonal music can be compared to the symbolist and "stream of consciousness" style of literature.

Both developed out of the anguished self-probing of the individual mind in the days of rampant imperialism before, during and immediately after the First World War; out of terror, disgust with society and premonitions of doom. Both left out of their imagery any presence of the working class and peasantry, except in the most distorted manner. Both created "systems" which in their present-day "pure" form represent the abandonment by the intellectual of the problem of portraying the real world at a time when masses of people are building a society in which men can live with the freedom they never enjoyed under capitalism.

Yet can we say that "stream of consciousness" is wholly decadent or useless? Undoubtedly, realistic writers will find many uses for it, to attack certain psychological problems, just as they will use other styles and methods for other problems. Similarly, atonal music has given the composer important tools.

Eisler is one who has added positive qualities to the system of Schoenberg, as may be seen in the sunny and radiant quality of much of his music, often taking on genuine melodic strength. With the increased opportunities to compose for the people which he

will have in the new Europe, his great gifts will undoubtedly develop still further. Our loss will be his gain. But even more important than the loss of his talents here, the stigma of his deportation remains. It reveals the inroads that the reactionaries have made in our culture. Every moment that we waste in not fighting back, as people who realize that cultural life and human decencies become mortally sick when Trumans, Marshalls and Rankins run our politics, sinks us deeper in the quicksands.

RECORDS

The Vox Company deserves compliments for recording the pianist Leonard Shure, who has one of the most penetrating musical minds among American pianists, and a style both robust and sensitive. He has made three albums: the Beethoven *Variations, Op. 34,* one of this master's most experimental and beautiful early piano works; the Schumann *Sonata in F Minor, Op. 14,* a work of mixed value but with many passages characteristic of Schumann's genius; the lovely cappriccios and intermezzos of Brahms' *Fantasien, Op. 116.* The same company also offers Brahms' *Quartet in B Flat, Op. 67,* perhaps his greatest work in this medium. The performance by the Guillet Quartet is unsentimental, full of finesse, beautiful in instrumental color and in general excellent.

It is typical of the vagaries of recording companies that Handel's *Messiah* has been done complete three times, all of the versions highly satisfactory, while none of the other great Handel oratorios are so much as touched. The latest version, done by Beecham for Victor, is the best. Columbia offers a profound musical treat in the six Bach Sonatas for violin and harpsichord, done by Alexander Schneider and Ralph Kirkpatrick.

S. F.

theatre

THE PACE THAT KILLS

by ISIDOR SCHNEIDER

HAVING had its staples—the melodrama, the spectacle, the farce—taken over by Hollywood, all that is really left to Broadway of its old domain is the big musical, and the serious drama with which it had always felt stuck rather than enriched. Out of sheer competitive necessity the theatre now has to offer higher satisfactions, for it cannot meet the Hollywood bids for the big name or match Hollywood's resources for gilding dross. Thus its losses were offset by certain limited, new opportunities which, unfortunately, have gone virtually untaken.

For economic pressures have gone on with results unobserved or unacknowledged by literary trend gazers. Where are the Robert Edmond Joneses, the Gordon Craigs? Have they gone down before a triumphant new esthetic? No. They have gone down, principally, before rising production costs, before a hopelessly irrational speculative system, before a playhouse monopoly that exacts exorbitant weekly guarantees, compelling frantic resort to the sure thing that so seldom proves sure.

Production costs have risen from an average of $5,000 in the Twenties to over $50,000 today. The guarantee demanded by the theatre monopoly is from $3,000 to $3,500 weekly. There is small likelihood of producers being artistically bold at such an ante, or resisting the protection of the often miscast Big Name or the corn for which there is presumed to be an insatiable appetite.

High production costs, which have virtually standardized the one set play, have also affected the character of the single set. Experience has proved that, without costly lighting and other expensive accessories, the symbolic set is not as convenient an all-purpose set as the realistic. This has strengthened the hand of the theatre conservative. Off Broadway, however, where the budget has to be ninety-nine per cent imagination, the symbolic set, with props from Woolworth's, continues in the ascendant.

No public announcement has been made by the producers restricting scripts to one set and a small cast; but the playwright knows very well that his chances are improved by working his play

into the one-set mold. Thus the pressure begins at the point of basic production, the playwright at his typewriter.

There are those who see more gain here than loss. They argue that compacter and swifter playwriting has been stimulated by these challenges. But the compactness is usually gained by plotting and contrivance and sometimes even by violation of organic structure.

Let us now turn to another set of pressures, those exerted in the variously interpreted "audience demands." To one, the demand for "escapist" entertainment, producers continue to react readily, though it accounts for most of the flops that litter each season. To the other demand, for the good play that is significant for our time, producers react more hesitantly.

For the good play tends to be "controversial" in content and unconventional in technique. It almost always breaks rules. This may partly account for the recent upswing in the production of theatre classics—the good plays that are beyond controversy, whose rule-breaking has been amnestied by time.

In addition there is the large complex of negative demands. There is the implicit reactionary *verboten* which at moments like the obscene Thomas Committee hearings becomes explicit: "No progressive thinking!" euphemized, in transmission, as "no controversy." There is a sick-minded part of the public (manipulated today mainly by the reactionaries in the Catholic Church) that cannot take physiological, usually sexual, realities. Still another part of the public has become habituated by radio, the press and other public purveyors, to doses of sadism; and the current scapegoat (for many years the same one, the Red), is offered up to them by opportunist producers.

Producers and directors may yield to these pressures in such indirect ways as not to sense it when they do. They may yield by over-consideration of the suburbanite, the out-of-town visitor and the night clubber. This means squeezing the playing time into about two hours. The one time standard four act play has been squeezed into the three-acter which, in turn, is being squeezed into two. With it has developed the directorial fetish of "pace."

"Pace" should, and sometimes does, mean change of tempo, pause as well as acceleration. Such well-directed plays as *Streetcar Named Desire* and *Mister Roberts* are recent examples. Generally, however, "pace" has come to mean speeding the action to fit the play between the leisurely dinner and convenient train, or the midnight turn at the night club. Directors may deny that and say they go for pace as a dramatic value in itself. Pace for pace's sake.

Life itself refutes the hurry up "pace" theory. Action in the mind

is the decisive action and physical movement is chiefly valuable as the outer summaries of the larger and deeper conflicts and decisions. If the outer movement is to express this inner movement it must be suppler than "pace" usually is.

An example of a play that was virtually raced to death was Michael Sayers' *Kathleen.* Moods and savory lines in it required pauses and modulation for their relishing. The play never got them. Everything was at the top of the voice and at top speed. That pace got the audience out of the theatre before ten-thirty, and the play itself out of the theatre in two days.

Finally there is the demand to cut and trim to what is conceived to be the public's uneducable, twelve-year-old mind. That old, unkillable exploiters' faith in the vulgar and moronic, taken over by Hollywood but still prevalent on Broadway, often infects people of good will and good judgment. This infection, I am afraid, accounts for the disappointments in one of the most important ventures of the current season, the excellent company that gave three bills at the City Center. It was important because such a venture may lead to the establishment of a municipal theatre.

The infection was to be seen both in the choice of the plays and in their presentation. One of the choices was a revival of the old thriller, *Angel Street,* played not in its own terms but spoofed in one of the main roles, an attempt to lighten something already light enough.

Another of the choices was a group of Chekhov one-acters, the work of his apprenticeship days. Had there been anything like a Chekhov season in town, putting them on would have been understandable as a means of rounding out the Chekhov representation. But, since this was the only Chekhov of the season, that explanation cannot serve. The acting was overaccented with heavy lines as if the intention was to produce a set of stage "funnies."

The third production was Ben Jonson's *Volpone.* No more sardonic indictment of the corruptions of money getting, in lines more pungently witty, exists perhaps in all literature. Reduced here to slapstick and bawdry, the satire disappeared and the magnificent ironic poetry went unheard.

One need not go to the Soviet theatre audiences or the English audiences of Old Vic to prove that popular audiences require no such sops. The Federal Theatre packed the house at a fifty-cent top with unsugared productions of "difficult" plays like *Coriolanus, Macbeth, Murder In The Cathedral,* with an unconventional musical play like *The Cradle Will Rock,* with outright social commentary like the *Living Newspapers,* proving that audiences do not need to be seduced into the theatre.

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