JANUARY
1950

masses & MAINSTREAM

n this Issue:

SOVIET CULTURE:
EPLY TO SLANDER
by
SIDNEY FINKELSTEIN

ne Two Van Goghs
by
ILLIAM THOR BURGER

CALIFORNIA'S
COTTON PICKERS
by
VIRGINIA GARDNER

Da Vinci's World
by
HN HOWARD LAWSON

THE FUGITIVE—a poem by Pablo Neruda

VOLUME 3, NUMBER 1

masses & MAINSTREAM

January, 1950

Drawings by Irving Toorchen and Charles White.

MASSES & MAINSTREAM *is published monthly by Masses & Mainstream, Inc., 832 Broadway, New York 3, N. Y. Subscription rate $4.00 a year; foreign and Canada: $4.50 a year. Single copies 35 cents; outside the U.S.A., 50 cents. All payments from foreign countries must be made either by U.S. money order or by checks payable in U.S. currency. Re-entered as second class matter February 25, 1948, at the Post Office at New York, N. Y., under the Act of March 3, 1879.* MASSES & MAINSTREAM *is distributed nationally by New Century Publishers, 832 Broadway, N. Y. C.*

AMONG THE CONTRIBUTORS

VIRGINIA GARDNER is the Los Angeles correspondent of the *Daily People's World.*

JOHN HOWARD LAWSON, one of the Hollywood Ten, is the author of *Theory and Technique of Playwriting and Screenwriting* and a number of plays and movie scenarios.

PABLO NERUDA'S poem in this issue is from his new book, *Canto General de Chile.* The first 200 copies of this volume, illustrated by Diego Rivera and David Alfaro Siqueiros, will be autographed by the author for readers of *Masses & Mainstream.* The 500-page book is in Spanish and may be obtained by sending $15 to Maria Asunsolo, Reforma 137-8, Mexico, D.F.

DAL STIVENS is a leading Australian writer. Many of his tales, like the one in this issue, are based upon the folklore of his country.

• •

COVER: by William Gropper

All manuscripts should be addressed to The Editors of MASSES & MAINSTREAM, *832 Broadway, New York 3, N. Y., and be accompanied by stamped, self-addressed envelope for return. Payment is made on publication.*

Stalin's Birthday

As we write, hundreds of millions throughout the world are preparing to celebrate Joseph Stalin's seventieth birthday. This demonstrates once again that of all living men Stalin is the most widely honored and loved. And in the face of this incontestable truth the agonized whinings of his enemies seem feeble and futile.

The capitalist press has dinned a ludicrous refrain—"Stalin's star is setting"—into the ears of a whole generation of Americans. Two weeks after the Nazi invasion, the New York *Times* predicted editorially that Hitler was "bound to weaken" Stalin's leadership of the Soviet Union.

Stalin at seventy is above all a symbol of strength—the strength of the socialist country he leads, the epic advance of the working class on a world scale, the power of Marxist-Leninist science, the granite will of the forces of peace and national liberation. As Henri Barbusse noted in his biography of the Soviet leader, "Stalin's history is a series of victories over a series of tremendous difficulties." These are not simply personal victories. In the victories of Stalin one traces the forward movement of humanity in this epoch.

Have the plain people of other countries gained from the leadership of Stalin in his own country and in world affairs? The workers and peasants of China, who have at last won the long battle for their country's independence, recognize in Stalin the foremost fighter for national liberation. The people of Europe's new democracies, at last in possession of their own economy, understand that Stalin's leadership of the working class in the world's first socialist country has opened their road to socialism. In France, Italy, and in scores of other lands men and women link their aspirations for peace and people's democracy with the name and policies of Stalin.

And what of the masses in our country? What have we profited? We are told by our rulers that Stalin and the Soviet Union are our mortal enemies. When the Soviet Army and Navy went into battle

with the cry, "For Stalin! For our country!" they were also fighting, let us never forget, for us as well. Above all, we Americans have gained from Stalin's leadership of the world struggle against fascism and for peace.

Peace is the keynote of the world-wide celebration of Stalin's birthday. For it is he, more than any other individual, who has stressed the imperative necessity of peace and shown how it can be won. His call for peace finds a resounding response in the hearts of millions.

In our country the source of the attacks on Stalin is to be found among those who want war, the monopolists who want not only to tighten their oppressive hold over the American people but who aim, like Hitler, to dominate the world. The attempt to whip up hatred and fear of Stalin is an inseparable part of the attempt to prepare the ground for fascism and war. The most devoted fighters for democracy and peace are those who celebrate this occasion, those who are a part of the anti-imperialist camp headed by Stalin and the Soviet Union.

Friendship between the American people and the people of the Soviet Union is the urgent need of our time. Stalin has repeatedly called for such friendship. He has repeatedly emphasized that peaceful co-existence of the different social orders is possible and necessary. Certainly, friendship with the Soviet Union is in the vital interests of our own people, whose enemy is not the U.S.S.R. but the warmakers and would-be fascists at home. The seventieth birthday of Stalin is for us an occasion to re-assert our determination to work for such friendship.

Stalin has always referred to himself as a pupil of Lenin, whose death in January, 1924, we commemorate in this issue with Maxim Gorky's vivid recollections. In the spirit of Lenin, Stalin has enriched Marxist theory and practice. He is, indeed, the Lenin of our day. We extend warm congratulations to him and to the Soviet people.

—THE EDITORS

The FUGITIVE

by PABLO NERUDA

I

THROUGH the tall night, through all of life,
from tears to paper, clothes to clothes,
I wandered in those oppressive days.
Fugitive from the police,
in the hour of clarity, the denseness
of solitary stars, I passed through cities,
woods, small farms, ports,
from the door of one human being
to another, from the hand of one being
to another, and another.
Night is somber, but man provides
his brotherly signals;
blindly I was led by roads and shadows
up to the lighted door, to the small
star-point that was mine, to
the scrap of bread in the forest
that wolves had not yet devoured.

One night I came to a house
in open fields, and before then
no one had seen or even surmised
about those lives.
All that they did, their hours,
were new knowledge to me.
I entered, they were a family of five:
all had risen as if awakened
by a fire in the heart of night.

I took one hand
then another, I saw one face
then another, and they told me
nothing: they were doors I had never glanced
at in the street, eyes that did not
recognize my face, and
in the high, newly arrived night
I stretched out my weariness,
to hold the grievous vigil of my land.

While waiting sleep, earth
with its numerous echoes,
its hoarse clamor and tendrils
of solitude, continued the night,
and I thought: "Where am I?
Who are they? Why do they take care of me
today? Why do they, who never saw
me until now, open to me their door
and protect my song?"
No one replied,
except the murmurs of a leaf-stripped
night, fabric knitted by crickets;
the whole night seemed to tremble
lightly in its foliage.
Nocturnal earth at my window
you brought me your lips
so that I might sleep gently
as if falling upon thousands of leaves,
from season to season, nest
to nest, from branch to branch
until soon I would lie asleep,
at rest like the dead among your roots.

II

IT WAS autumn in the vineyard.
The innumerable grapevines quivered.
Their veiled white clusters
wore frost on sweet fingers,

and the black grapes filled
their small taut udders from
some secret circular river.
The master of the house, lean-faced
artisan, read to me from this pale
earthy book of twilit days.
His kindliness knew every fruit
every trunk, the way to prune
and leave the tree its bare
goblet form.
He spoke to his horses
as if to enormous children,
the dogs and five cats of his household
followed him about,
some arched and slow,
others running wildly
beneath cold peach-trees.
He knew every branch,
every scar on his trees,
and his ancient voice instructed me
while he stroked the horses.

III

ONCE again I sought darkness.
Crossing the city, the Andean night,
the prodigal night, opened its rose
against my suit.
It was winter in the South.
Snow had mounted its high
pedestal, the cold burned
with a thousand frozen spikes.
The Mapocho River was black snow.
And I, going between one silent street
and another of the tyrant-stained city,
Ah! I was like the silence itself,
watching love and more love pour
through my eyes into my breast.
Because this and that other street

and the snow-capped lintel of night,
the nocturnal aloneness of human beings,
and my own dark submerged people
in their tenements of the dead,
everything, the last window with its small
twig of false light,
the crushed black coral
of dwelling against dwelling-place,
the unwearying wind of my land,
all was mine, all
in the silence uplifted to me
an abundant mouth of love.

IV

A YOUNG couple opened another door
that was also unknown to me.
She was as golden
as the month of June, he
a tall engineer. From then on
I shared their bread and wine,
little by little
I reached their unknown intimacy.
They told me: "We had
separated,
our misunderstanding was for ever;
today we joined each other to receive you,
today we waited for you together."
In that small house
we united to make
a silent fortress.
Even in sleep, I kept
silence.
I was in the very palm
of the city and could almost hear
the Traitor's steps; next to the walls
dividing us, I listened
to the jailors' filthy voices,
their robbers' roars of laughter,

their drunken syllables intermixed
with bullets within my country's body.
The belchings of Holgers and Poblete*
almost grazed my soundless skin,
their dragging steps all but touched
my heart and its fires:
they sending my people to torment,
I guarding the sword of my health.
And again in the night, "Adiós Irene,
adiós Andrés, adiós new friend,"
adiós to the scaffoldings, the star,
adiós perhaps, to the uncompleted house
in front of my window that seemed
inhabited by linear phantoms,
adiós to the soaring mountain peak
which drew my eyes each afternoon,
adiós to the green neon sign
whose lightning announced
each new night.

V

ANOTHER time, another night, I went
further on; along the coastal mountain-range,
the wide margin near the Pacific,
then among twisted streets,
lanes and alleyways: Valparaíso.
I entered a seaman's home.
His mother was waiting for me.
—"I didn't know until yesterday, she said.
My son told me and your name
rushed through me like cold fire.
But I said, What comforts, son,
can we offer him?—He belongs
to us, to the poor, he replied.
He will not look down upon nor mock
our poor life, he upraises

* Collaborators of González Videla, fascist dictator of Chile.

and defends it.—I told him,—so be it,
and this is his home from today on."
In that house, none knew me.
I looked at the clean tablecloth,
the water-jar limpid as those lives
which rose from the deepest night
to reach me on crystal wings.
I went to the window: Valparaíso
opened its thousand tremulous eyelids,
the nocturnal sea air
flowed into my mouth,
the lights on the hills,
the shimmer of nautical moon
on the water, the darkness
like a kingdom ablaze
with green diamonds,
all the new repose which life
bestowed on me.
I looked about: the table
was set: bread, napkin, wine, water,
and a fragrance of earth and tenderness
misted my soldier's eyes.
Beside that window in Valparaíso
I spent my nights and days.
The seamen of my new home
daily hunted a ship
which would take them.
Time after time
they were deceived.
The *Atomena*
could not carry them, nor the *Sultana.*
They explained to me: if they gave a bribe
to one or the other official, others
paid more.
Everything was rotten
as in the Palace at Santiago.
Here the pockets of a corporal
or Secretary open not so wide
as the pockets of the President,

but enough to gnaw
at the skeletons of the poor.
Unhappy republic, dog thrashed
by thieves, howling alone
on the highways, flogged by police.
Unhappy nation, Videla-ridden,
flung by sordid gamblers
to the vomit of informers,
sold on broken street corners,
dismantled at foreign auction.
Tragic republic in hands of a man
who sold his own daughter,
and delivered up his country
wounded, mute, and manacled.
The two sailors came and went,
to haul sacks, bananas, food,
while hungering for the salt of waves,
marine bread, the tall sky.

During my lonely day the sea
withdrew; so I turned
to the hills, vitally aflame
with their overhanging houses,
the pulse of Valparaíso:
high hills overflowing
with lives, doors painted
turquoise, scarlet, pink,
toothless staircases,
clusters of poor doorways,
dilapidated shacks,
the fog, its vapours casting
brackish nets over everything,
trees desperately gripping
the cliffs,
wash hanging from the arms
of inhuman houses,
the sudden hoarse whistle:
offspring of embarkations,
the marine voice compounded

of crashes and whispers,
all this enveloped my body
like a new terrestrial garment,
as I inhabited the high mist,
the lofty town of the poor.

VI

WINDOW in the hills, cold
tin-ore Valparaíso, shattered
into stones and cries of the people!
Watch with me from my hiding-place
the gray harbor ornamented
with vessels, the moonlit water
barely heaving,
the motionless deposits of iron.

At an hour long past
your sea, Valparaíso, was populated
by slender sailing-ships, proud
five-masted clippers rustling
with wheat, dispensing saltpeter,
coming to you from nuptial oceans,
heaping your storerooms.
Tall schooners of nautical high-noon,
merchant craft, banners
swollen by oceanic night,
bearing ebony and smooth clarity
of ivory, aromas of coffee
and nights beneath other moons,
Valparaíso, they approached your
perilous peace, enfolding you
in perfume. The *Potosí*
with its nitrates shuddered
as it advanced over the sea:
fish and arrow, blue turbulence,
delicate whale, towards other
dark harbors of the earth.
All the southern night above

the furled sails, above the
stamen-nipples of the bow,
when, over the Lady of the figurehead,
face of those plunging prows,
the whole Valparaisan night
the world's antarctic night, descended.

VII

It was dawn of saltpeter on the pampas.
The nitrous planet shook
until Chile was loaded like a ship
with crystallized holds.
Today I saw what remained
of all those who had passed
leaving no trail on the Pacific sands.
Look at what I see,
the derelict debris that slung around
my country's throat, like a necklace
of pus, the rainfall of gold.
Traveler, let my immobile stare
accompany you, inseparable
from the sky of Valparaíso.
The Chilean lives between
garbage and antarctic winds,
dark son of a harsh land.
Cracked window-panes, broken roofs,
demolished walls, sunken door,
leprous whitewash, clay floor
clinging to thin
hillside soil.
Valparaíso, impure rose,
tainted marine coffin!
Wound me not with your thorny
streets, your crown of sour
alleyways, don't let me see
the child maimed by misery
in your deadly swamp!
In you I suffer for my people,

for all my American fatherland,
for all they have scraped from your
bones, leaving you covered with scum,
a wretched ruined goddess
upon whose sweet ravaged breast
ravenous dogs urinate.

VIII

VALPARAISO, I love all that you enclose,
all your irradiations, ocean-bride,
even beyond your quiet nimbus.
I love the violent light you shed
for the sailor on a night-sea,
then you are luminous, naked,
flame and mist, lemon-blossoms
in shape of a rose.
Let no one defend you, nor
advance with furious hammer
to strike what I love;
none but myself for your secrets:
none but my voice for your opalescent
strands of dew, for your worn stairways
where the salt maternity of sea
kisses you, none but my lips
against your cold siren's crown
aloft in the air of your summits,
my oceanic beloved, Valparaíso.
Queen of the world's sea-coasts,
central hub of ships and waves,
you are inside me like the moon,
or slant of air through a grove.
I love your criminal alleys,
your blade of moon above the hills,
and your plazas where sailors ashore
reclothe the spring in blue.
I beg you, my harbor, understand
that mine is the privilege to write you
about good and evil,

for I am like a merciless lamp
illuminating broken bottles.

IX

I HAVE traveled celebrated seas,
hymeneal wreaths of many islands,
I am the sea-faring poet,
journey to journey I reached
the farthest foam,
but you, pervasive marine love,
were moored in me as none other.
You are the mountainous capital
of the vast ocean,
along your cerulean flank of centaur
your outskirts glow
with the red and blue paint
of toyshops.
You would fit into a nautical bottle
with your small houses and the cruiser *Latorre*
like a grey flatiron poised on a sheet,
were it not that the wild storms
of the mightiest sea,
the green gales
of glacial winds, the torment
of your battered lands, the subterranean
horror, the surf of all the sea
surging against your upheld torch,
made of you a magnitude of shadowed
rock, a hurricane-wrought cathedral
of ocean spray.
I declare my love to you, Valparaíso,
and will return to live at your crossroads
when both you and I
are free again. You
upon your throne of wind and wave, I
upon my humid, philosophical lands.
We will watch liberty uprise
between ocean and snow.

Valparaíso, lone queen,
alone in the solitude of the solitary
austral ocean,
I discerned every yellow crag
on your highlands,
I felt your torrential pulse,
your longshoreman hands embraced me
as my soul required
in that hour of night, and I remember
you regnant in the brilliance
of blue fire scattered
by the spray-sparks of your reign.
There is no other like you upon the sands,
southern albacore, queen of the waters.

X

So night after night
in that long somber hour darkening
the whole littoral of Chile,
I went from door to door,
a fugitive.
Other humble houses, other hands
in every furrow of our land
waited for my footsteps.
A thousand times
you passed that doorway, and it told you
nothing, that unpainted wall, those
windows with wilted flowers.
This secret was for me;
pulsating for me; it was
in the coal mining regions,
impregnated with martyrdom;
it was in the coastal ports
close to the antarctic archipelago;
listen: perhaps it was along
that clamorous street, amid the
noonday music of street-sounds,
or in that window next to the park

indistinguishable from other windows,
but awaiting me
with a bowl of clear soup
and its heart laid on the table.
All doors were mine,
all said: "He is my brother,
bring him to this poor house"
while my country was like
a bitter wine-press, stained
by so much torture.
The little tinsmith came,
the mother of those young girls,
the ungainly farmer,
the soap-maker, the gentle
woman novelist, the young boy
nailed like a bug to his dreary
office, they all came and their doors
held a secret signal, a key guarded
like a tower, so that I might enter
abruptly, night, day or afternoon
and without knowing anyone could say:
"Brother, you know who I am,
I believe you were expecting me."

XI

WHAT can you do, Traitor, against the air?
What can you do, Traitor, against all
that flowers and flourishes, is still
and watchful, that waits for me
and condemns you?
Traitor, those bought by your betrayals
must constantly be showered with coins.
Traitor, you may capture, exile and torture,
and hurriedly pay off
before he who sells repents;
but you can barely sleep
surrounded by your bribed rifles,
while I live in my country's lap,

a fugitive of the night!
How sad your small and slippery
victory! While Aragon, Ehrenburg,
Eluard, the poets of Paris,
the valiant writers of Venezuela,
and others, others, many others,
are with me; you, Traitor
are encircled by Escanilla, Cuevas,
Peluchonneaux and Poblete! *
Up ladders raised by my people,
down cellars concealed by my people,
upon my country and her dove-wing
I sleep, dream, and smash your borders.

XII

TO EVERYONE, to you
silent night-beings, who grasped
my hand in the shadows; to you
lamps of immortal light, star traceries,
bread of life, my secret brothers,
to all, to you I say:
there is no gratitude,
nothing can fill your cups
of purity or embody the sun
on banners of invincible spring
like your quiet dignity.
I can only believe
that perhaps I may have merited
such simplicity, a blossom
so immaculate, that perhaps
I am one with you, the self-same,
that particle of earth, flour and song,
that natural dough, that knows
from where it comes, and
where it belongs. I am
neither bell so distant

* Collaborators of González Videla.

nor crystal so deeply buried
that you cannot decipher me,
I am simply people, hidden door,
dark bread, and when you receive me
you receive yourself, that guest
so many times struck down
and so many times
reborn.
All things, all people,
those I do not know, all
who have never heard my name, those
who live along our lengthy rivers,
at foot of volcanoes, in sulphuric
shadow of copper, fishermen and farmers,
Indians, blue beside the shores
of lakes that flash like windows,
the cobbler who asks for me at this moment,
as he nails leather with ancient hands;
you, unknowing, who waited for me
I recognize, to you I belong
and sing.

XIII

AMERICAN sand, solemn planted
field, red mountain-range,
sons, brothers threshed by
the old misfortunes,
let us collect all the live grain
before it returns to earth,
and may the new corn yet to be born
have heard your words and repeat
them, and be repeated.
And sing by night and day,
and bite and devour,
and propagate throughout the earth,
and fall swiftly silent,
to sink below stones
discover nocturnal doors

and once more emerge in birth,
to divide and conduct themselves
like bread, like hope,
like the air that circles ships.
The corn will carry you my song
risen from the roots of my people,
to be born, to build, to sing,
and to become seed again
more numerous in combat.

Here are my lost hands,
invisible still, but you
can see them across the night,
across the invisible wind.
Give me your hands, I see them
above the harsh sands
of our American night,
choose yours, and yours,
this hand and that other,
the one raised in fight, and the one
that returns to be sown anew.

I feel no loneliness at night
in the obscurity of earth.
I am people, the innumerable people.
In my voice is the clear strength
that can traverse silence
and germinate in darkness.
Death, suffering, shadows, frost,
suddenly descend on the seed.
And the people seem entombed.
But corn returns to earth.
Its red implacable hands
thrust through the silence.
From death comes our rebirth.

(*Translated from the Spanish by Waldeen*)

A letter from the EDITOR

DEAR READER:

Entering its third year as a cultural monthly, *Masses & Mainstream* must again turn to its readers for help to carry on. We had hoped to avoid another appeal for financial support, but the response to last year's appeal did not cover our minimum needs. We are therefore carrying over into 1950 the accumulated deficit of the past two years.

On our part, we have done everything to prune expenses in the face of rising printing costs. During 1949, we cut our editorial staff by one-fourth. We halved our payments to contributors. These and other economies were undertaken reluctantly, but we are determined that the magazine, despite all odds, must continue to play its part in the critical struggle against fascism and war.

In the vital cultural arena, *Masses & Mainstream* stands almost alone, keeping open the channels of progressive expression. Against reaction's efforts to corrupt, intimidate, regiment every phase of American culture, our pages are a rallying point for those decent and courageous artists like Howard Fast, Paul Robeson and John Howard Lawson—all contributing editors of *M & M*—who represent our hopes for peace and democratic culture.

M & M is indispensable. It must not be stymied for lack of financial support. And certainly not at a time when its prestige and influence are growing, and when it is bringing to American readers the best of Neruda and Aragon, Nexö and Fadeyev, Mao Tse-tung and Anna Seghers.

The magazine urgently needs your help in raising the $10,000 that we require to carry us through 1950. We know of the heavy financial de-

mands on all of us these days. But we are convinced that our readers recognize the vital role *Masses & Mainstream* performs, and the great potential force it represents on the cultural front.

That is why we do not hesitate to ask you to give generously to our magazine—and yours.

Sincerely yours,

SAMUEL SILLEN,
Editor

AN ANNOUNCEMENT

In observance of Negro History Week, our February issue will include a number of outstanding features on the Negro people — articles, stories, poetry, art, criticism.

We ask our readers to help in our special effort to extend the circulation of that number, to reach additional individuals and groups, to enlist new recruits in the struggle for equal rights. You can do that by ordering extra copies, by introducing *M&M* to your friends and organizations. We remind you that our Negro History Week issue last year was sold out a few days after publication.—*The Editors.*

BACK TO THE Cotton Patch

by VIRGINIA GARDNER

LOS ANGELES.—*Before daybreak, loaded with their human freight, the old trucks rumble out of this city on the four-hour drive to the vast cotton fields of Bakersfield. They will not return until after night-fall. . . .*

California this year is fourth in the production of cotton—the state's biggest cash crop—and Los Angeles county is aping the rural counties in its relief policies. Industrial workers who have exhausted unemployment compensation benefits, particularly if they are Negro or Mexican-American, are denied relief so long as there is a demand for cotton pickers.

To learn how the Negro industrial workers who came here from the South 300,000 strong during the war, are reacting to this forced return to the cotton patch, I went to Bakersfield as a picker. My story was accepted by everyone from California State Employment Service officials to the old lady, Vi, with whom I shared a bunk. I told them I had grown up in Arkansas, and had picked cotton in my youth—true, but I did not add it was only for a day, on a relative's farm, to earn a dollar for the Red Cross.

OUR truck was the last of a dozen to leave a downtown C.S.E.S. office, while others carried pickers from other truck loading stations. Estimates of the total number leaving here daily range up to 2,000. Many of the trucks were full when I arrived at 4:30, but when we roared away over city streets at 5 A.M., our truck held only twelve pickers, and we jolted and swayed and rattled about the massive old truck, seated on backless planks.

"Why did they lie to me?" I asked. "Why did the Farm Labor Bureau man tell me I could get a free truck if I got here at 4:30?"

"They always say there'll be some free ones, and there never is," answered one man who had been picking the week before.

"And they told me," said Vi, the old lady, who was huddled in a corner hugging a cotton sack around her against the damp chill, "I could get me a cabin, that there'd be a camp. Now the driver says there isn't any, all the camps are full." She had brought a quilt and extra clothing in a suitcase and wanted to stay at least a week. "I figure I can get the money by then to get me my teeth," she said, smiling and showing completely toothless gums.

In the gloom of the truck's interior, surrounded by canvas except for the rear, we peered at each other, a little shyly at first, soon losing our shyness, though, with the urgency of finding out everything we could about our prospects for pay and conditions in the fields here. Of next importance was an exchange of information on who had picked, and where.

"They told me at the C.S.E.S. that I could pick two or three hundred a day," one woman said. "But I never picked before—I never even saw it grow, though I've lived right here in Los Angeles since I was two years old."

"Listen at her," said the man next to her, who was wearing a pea jacket. "You never even seen cotton, and you going to pick two-three hundred right off? What's your name? Mary? Well, Mary, they been tellin' you fairy tales. I picked plenty cotton in my day, though it's a long time ago, and I know I won't pick 200 my first day or my second."

A man about fifty, with a pleasant, open face, the one who had been there last week, spoke up. "You won't in this field," he said. "It's thick, but I never did see such cotton. You have to stand on your head to pick that cotton. It's tall, but the bolls are so heavy they weight down the branches, and they're all over the ground. And is that ground hard!"

The strike had been successful, and that day they were to begin paying $3.00 a hundred pounds. But the older man had been a machinist in an aircraft plant during the war, and since then owned a series of business enterprises, his last a filling station which wasn't paying. So here he was, a Pittsburgh, Pa., Negro who had never picked before, although he had seen plenty of cotton. And he'd been making about $3.00 or $3.50 a day.

"WHY don't you come back here? Ladies should sit on the back row, nearest the engine, it isn't so rough," the man in the pea-jacket, who had been in shipyards during the war, said to me. They made room for me between Mary and a silent young man. He was slight, with handsome, chiseled features and a nervous gesture of smoothing back his hair. I asked him if he'd picked before. He showed me his hands, pointing to a great gash in one finger. "The prong of a boll. They're very sharp. I picked with him last week," he said, indicating the ex-business man. "I'd picked in Alabama as a boy."

I smiled. "That couldn't be too long ago."

"Oh, yes," he said seriously. He was twenty-four now. He'd gone through high school in Los Angeles, into the Army from here, and served at the end of the war in the Pacific. "I started studying plastics at the university under the G I Bill. . . . They used to say in high school I had artistic talent." He said it shyly.

"Why didn't you go on?"

"Wife and three kids, three, two and three months old. So I went to work for him," he said nodding toward the older man, and lighting a cigarette with quick nervous fingers. "He had a business then, renting electric washing machines. We did pretty well for a while, then there were too many in the field. They rent them now for twenty-five cents an hour. He went broke. He's an expert machinist, but can't get a job anywhere." He had picked 175 pounds the last day he'd worked. That was $4.36. But one dollar out of that for the round trip on the truck made it $3.36. He was buying a cotton sack, paying fifty cents a day on it, until he'd paid the $3.75 it cost. So that brought it down to $2.86. Of course you could rent them—for fifty cents a day.

Mary and I were dismayed. We had been told nothing of having to rent or buy cotton sacks.

"Yes, and by the time we got back one night it was 9 o'clock, another 8:30. Then a long ride out to his house," said the older man, "and a shower, and dinner—because he won't eat anything during the day or he'd not have enough left to feed the kids—and it was 1:30 A.M. when we got to bed. And had to get up at 4 to make the truck."

"Well," said Mary with composure, "all I can do is try, and if I can't make anything, it just means Jesus didn't mean for me to pick cotton."

"I don't think He did, Mary," said Tom, another vet, sitting in front of us. "You too pretty and sweet to be a cotton picker, nohow."

Mary laughed, blew smoke from her well-rouged lips, and regarded him both archly and critically. "You're too ready with those compliments," she said. "They come too easy-like. It's when they come hard that you know a man means 'em." Mary told us something about herself. She had worked in waste products plants, eleven years in one, seven in another—and then they'd cut out the department where all the Negro women were employed. She lived alone with her father. Her sister still had her job, same one for fifteen years. Mary had used up her unemployed benefits.

The only other non-Negro on the truck except me was a Mexican-American of forty, one of a minority group that in Los Angeles is discriminated against as much as Negroes. He had never picked cotton before, but since his foundry job ended, had gone up to Oregon and picked pears. He had an engaging way of laughing at himself, and told us of his greenness and awkwardness when he first hit the pear orchards.

THE fog began to lift and the sun broke clear as the truck started to climb through the mountains. Tom had gallantly wrapped his Army blanket and some cotton sacks around the iron pipe in back of us, so that our spines took less of a beating. Trying to talk against the constant jarring and lurching had tired us, and we fell silent. We could only see what was behind us, but we felt the pull of the truck, the steepness of the grade—and for my part I began to get jittery about the homecoming trip, driving through these mountains at night in this old rattle-trap. I began to urge Mary to stay with me and Vi overnight, and surely with three of us we could find a cabin somewhere. But Mary couldn't. "I like to have fresh underwear to put on every morning, and I didn't bring a change with me," she explained.

The bare parched mountains rose on either side of us now, their only vegetation the dry stalks of last year's yucca flowers, and a coarse low-lying shrub and dun-colored grasses. We climbed more slowly. Would we make it? Or would we get close to the hump and then roll backwards. I remembered a headline over a paragraph story in a newspaper of a year ago. "Cotton pickers in Fatal Crash"—merely an item saying twelve pickers were killed. They were anonymous—just cotton pickers. If we went rolling down the mountain now—but all at once Tom broke into my morbid day-dreams.

"Whatsa matter with everyone? Sittin' here like this is a funeral," he

sang out. "Ain't you-all happy? Ought to be happy, goin' back to the cotton patch. Yeah," he said in his sardonic gaiety, "back to the cotton patch! Alabama here," he said, pointing to the younger vet, "Louisiana here—" to the ex-shipyards worker, "Arkansas here for you and Vi," he pointed to me, "and me, I picked in both Texas and Oklahoma." He hunched his big shoulders forward, drooped into bitter reverie.

The men exchanged rather sheepish smiles. Up to now we had skirted about this business but hadn't really come out with it—and now Tom had put his finger on the galling spot. I couldn't look at the men. Up to now they had all talked about the jobs they had had, what they had done in the war. Gonzalez' stories about himself and the pears, even the mild beefing of the ex-business man and machinist, had obscured the one thing that none of them wanted to admit, even the buxom young woman who sat apart from us with a boy friend, and had worked as a waitress in a shipyards cafeteria. Tom had come perilously close to it, though. I decided I would risk it, and now leaned over to him and asked him in a low tone, "Do you figure that—it's going to be this from now on out, or nothing, Tom? I mean," I floundered, as I saw the hurt in his eyes, "do you think things are going to keep on like this for us, and that it really is back to the cotton fields for good?"

"No—until the cotton harvest is in—and then—until another war," Tom said bitterly, looking at me hard. "That'll fix things up."

"Here we go, we're at the hump," said Mary. "I do hope Jesus takes care of us going down that mountain," she added conversationally.

We couldn't see the Valley ahead, but part way down the mountain we could see the Tehachapi hills stretching out on either side, lying in folds and curves, bare of vegetation. Overhead were billowy white clouds, so that one lay in deep shadow, the next in dazzling sunlight.

A grinding jarring bump woke up Vi, who threw off her cotton sack and one layer of the shapeless coats and sweaters she wore and showed her toothless gums in a smile. Looking at us with her one straight eye —the other veered off slightly under a peaked eyebrow, which gave her a perpetually surprised expression—she lisped that we were going to be pretty sore by the time we began picking. "If you get sore you can have some of this," Tom said, producing from a shopping bag serving as a suitcase a bottle of rubbing alcohol.

"Oh, I've got some," said Vi. "Don't forget, I knew all about a cotton patch before you were born."

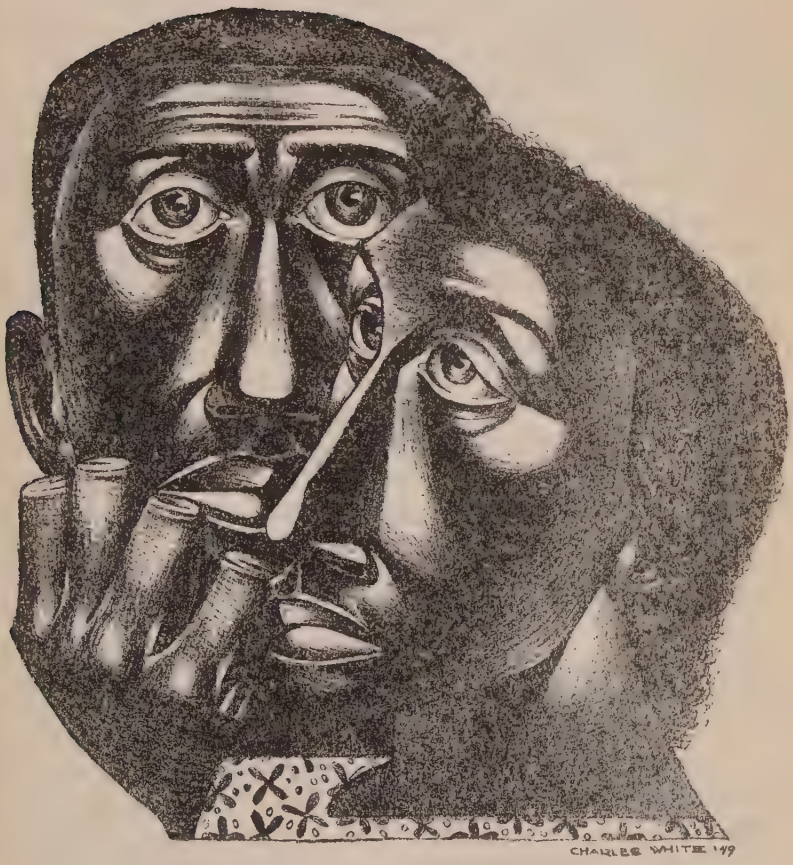
"Aw, Vi," said Tom, "I thought for sure you couldn't be even fifty, and I'm thirty-six—anyway, my mamma looks lots older than you."

Maybe it was because it made him feel good just to look into that sweet toothless old face with its baby-innocent, surprised expression, and hear her peal of delighted laughter at the compliment, but Tom threw off his sardonic mood. And his next words, addressed to me, revealed that he, like the rest, still was struggling against the admission that his new status of field hand, was anything more than temporary. Possibly I had hurt his pride, too, and he was anxious to believe, and convince me, that when he came out of the fields at the end of the harvest his pockets would be full.

"I'll tell you," he said, while Mary turned tranquil but somehow skeptical eyes to him, "I used to make good money, driving an interstate truck—and I'll make it again. I'll make it in the cotton patch, too, soon's I get my fingers limbered up. It's all in knowing how to come at that cotton—I come at it from underneath, grab off that cotton clean, and I can pick—I mean, man, I can really pick cotton. I can do 500 a day when I get goin'. Before I leave here in December I'll be doing $10-$15 a day, every day, and $17-$18 some days.

"You see," he went on, "I got off the track after my wife left me. Picked up and left me when I was down sick—and when I was foolish over her. I loved her, and I mean love. I come home from the war, and borrowed money, paid $2,000 down, and bought us a nice home in Oklahoma City. She's got it now, I got nothin'—but my daughter, she still writes me." He took out a wallet, with careful motion, and showed us his daughter—a pretty, slender child who smiled confidently out of the dog-eared photo.

BEFORE we reached Bakersfield we turned off the highway, and onto a road that wound through the cotton fields, stretched as far as one could see. The truck ground to a stop, and leaving our suitcases and sacks and jackets and sweaters in the truck, we climbed stiffly out. We didn't have to pay our dollar to the driver until our return trip, and we now were given cotton sacks to be paid for at the end of the day. It is assumed that pickers arrive with no cash. They are paid as each sack they bring in is weighed, and not until the day is over do they have to part with cash for the various little rackets like paying their truck-driver—who collects two ways, getting twenty-five cents a head from the grower, too.


CHARLES WHITE '49

I chose the small sack—10 feet long, and looped it over my head and one shoulder. Vi and Tom and those who picked with both hands at once slipped theirs around their waists, to stuff the sack with both hands from behind. We began the long, tedious walk to the end of the rows, walking through picked cotton and then turning at a point specified by a young white overseer. Almost all of the crews here were Negro, except for two Italian women I saw, and two men from one of the Displaced Persons camps established by the big growers in some counties. Before we had gone far we were stumbling painfully over the long green branches, which are tough as rope and lay choking the space between the rows. The ground felt like iron underfoot, and the irrigation had created crevices which made walking a perilous matter.

"If you think this is bad," said the former business man, "wait until you start back with a sack of cotton around your neck. Takes you half an hour to get out to pick and forty-five minutes to get back. Did you ever see such ground?"

Already, at 9 in the morning, the sun beat down unmercifully. Bakersfield is hotter than any place in San Joaquin Valley. I was dripping wet by the time we began picking, and after stooping for half an hour my head reeled. Tom was picking on his knees, cursing himself for not having brought knee-pads. I saw slim girls with heavy leather knee-pads over their slacks. Some of the men had bits of sponge on the brims of old felt hats. These, I learned, contained oil for their fingers. I tried kneeling but the ground was like rough stone. Ben, the ex-shipyards worker, seemed as awkward as I, but he advised: "Pick clean, it's better, for you and for the grower, too. You're missing the bolls on the ground." To get at them, I sat on the ground, even lay on it on my back, tussling with the tough green branches, pulling with both hands when I could. My chief concern that morning was not to be revealed as completely green when I had said I'd had some experience, so I worked feverishly, careless of the slashing and pricking of the sharp prongs of the bolls.

Snatches of song and conversation and laughter floated across the field, tantalizing because I could catch only phrases. A militant young woman was talking about the union, the A.F.L. Farm Labor union. "Don't believe in working on Sunday," I caught. "The Lord made the Sabbath day to rest in. Besides, we've left slavery. We're not on no plantation." "Yeah?" a man retorted. "My leg muscles don't know the

difference." Her voice again: "Huh, the union got you a fifty-cent raise. You're making three dollars a hundred today, don't forget." I heard a voice behind me saying something about "atom bomb" and "gettin' ready for another war." Then, "Our race don't want it. Won't benefit us none."

Amazingly, my "short" cotton sack of 10-foot length began to feel fairly full. I decided to take time out to see how Mary was doing. I found her in the next row but far to the rear. The overseer had put her to work cleaning up the row after one of the white men from the Displaced Persons camp had skimmed off the top cotton. "Don't do it, you don't have to clean up after anyone else, get yourself another row," I urged her. But Mary was pliant. "He told me to," she said.

The sun was getting unbearable. Mary suggested we pick 15 minutes and go in. The way back with my cotton sack over my shoulder and around my neck was a nightmare. Long before I reached the road I stumbled, fell, and was panting, trying to get the sack up on my shoulder, when Tom came back, tossed it on his own and carried it to the scales. Then he went back to help Mary with hers. In three hours I had picked only thirty-two pounds. A Negro superintendent called out the weight, and a Negro woman seating before an adding machine on a table by the roadside counted out the money. Pickers carried their sacks over to the trailer and dumped the cotton onto the heap, but the men did this for us.

"FORTY-NINE pounds," I heard them call for Mary's sack, and then I left, making a bee-line for the lunch-wagon which had arrived for the noon period. I drank two bottles of pop quickly. Mary came up next. "I'm dizzy I'm so thirsty, but they say not to drink too much," she said. My thirst was far from quenched, though, and I carried an empty pop bottle over to the barrel of ice water and filled it. Then I got up in our truck, and, hidden from view, skinned off my soaking wet long-sleeved smock and put on a fresh short-sleeved blouse. I would risk any amount of scratches on my arms to be rid of those long sleeves. I brought out my lunch and, stopping for another drink of water, made my way to the shade of a truck where most of our crew sat in the road.

I couldn't eat much, so I passed my lunch around. Vi, who I noticed bought nothing but pop at the wagon, gratefully accepted a piece

of apple pie, saying it was soft enough for her gums. A handsome Negro youth in a white cap, who had driven up in a roadster as we arrived, and spent his first morning picking, munched crackers and tinned sandwich spread. "Eighteen cents for this little bit of lousy canned junk, worse than K-rations we got in Italy, and ten cents for these few crackers—and no choice, unless you want cheese and crackers. No milk, either," he grumbled. He had picked only thirty pounds, Gonzalez only thirty-five. Vi surprised us with sixty, and Tom had hit seventy-seven. Stretching out full length on the ground, Tom lazily asked Mary how much she made.

"Let's see, I forgot to count it," said Mary. "I only had a dime in my purse, figuring I wouldn't need—why, they cheated me!" she ended in amazement. She dumped the coins into her palm, counted again. Except for her dime, she had only ninety-six cents. "Those dirty—wait, wait until I tell that superintendent off." Tom jumped up. I went with him. I had heard them call out forty-nine pounds. Soon Tom was engaged in angry debate with the superintendent, but we returned to the group without the forty-two cents owed to Mary.

An older, heavy-set woman in glasses, who was a 300-pound a day picker, came over to us. "You have to watch them every time, go around and watch the scales, then count your money, or they'll cheat you," she said quietly, picking up her sack and going on. We sat there fuming. On top of the racket of paying $1.00 transportation, the added rent for cotton sacks, the expensive, inadequate food on the lunch truck, the heat and the prospect of the long trip back, this was too much. Gonzalez was sure now he had been cheated. "I used to lift fifty-pounds of sand sacks in the foundry that weren't as heavy as that sack of cotton," he said, kicking angrily at a truck tire. The lad in the white cap said it was enough for him, he was leaving, they could take their damn cotton and stuff it, bolls and all.

Mary looked deeply hurt. "That's so little and mean," she said. "They probably all make a practice of it," said Ben. "Figure we're dumb ox or we wouldn't be picking cotton, I guess." Another mimicked a C.S.E.S. official. "Oh, there are lot of jobs to be had, folks —yes, you just take a ride up north a little way, and you can make real money picking cotton." I recalled the C.S.E.S. statistician who in giving me a story had said families went up to pick "for a lark" and made $25 a day.

"Yeah, this is what I come home to, after fighting in Africa, and Italy and then Germany," said Tom. "Sure, they're going to do everything for veterans, Negro and white." He spat furiously. "Well, when they get ready to drop those atom bombs, here's one Negro vet ain't going."

"You have to go, when Uncle Sam puts the finger on you. What's a colored boy goin' to do but go?" Mary asked.

"Let 'em lock me up, I don't give a care," said Tom.

I was not surprised at Tom, but Mary was the one who surprised me, Mary, the docile, the one who wouldn't say no to the white overseer who made her clean up someone else's row, who wouldn't protest the cheating she had had. A little frown appeared on her serene brow and she said: "Seems to me like the President of the United States would think more about the shacks and tents poor people living in right here at home, and all the hungry, and less about telling other countries what to do—yes, and less about his atom bombs." Ben spoke up now, and said that Russia had the bomb now, and so maybe "the white men won't be so soon about using ours." We heard a low chuckle then from Tom, who was carefully peeling the paper from a nickel candy bar he'd paid ten cents for at the wagon. "I was just thinkin' about that Paul Robeson," he said. "They don't scare him none, do they? He come right out and say, well, let 'em treat the colored people here as good as they treat all colors in Russia, didn't he?"

"Well," said Mary enigmatically as she arose and smoothed her hair, "the Bible say a dark race goin' to rule the world some day. And Jesus said when he divided the fishes and loaves so everyone got all alike, that that's what should be done. Now I got to get back and pick."

THE heat as we picked that afternoon was even more oppressive. On either side pickers stooped and worked almost in silence, compared to the morning's laughter and talk and song. Having established that I was not much worse than some of the men who were new to picking, I made no great effort to fill my sack, but even at my now desultory pace my arms were a mass of scratches, my head ached from the shimmering heat. My throat and mouth were parched and I couldn't resist thinking of water, pitchers of it, with ice tinkling.

Suddenly we missed Vi, who had set out earlier than the rest. I volunteered to go back and find her. There she was, stretched out on the unyielding ground, her little black hat still miraculously on her head, her eyes closed. She opened them as I came up, though, and weakly asked for water. I shouted to the rest, and Gonzalez said he would get some.

I stayed with Vi while the others went back. When she sat up, I asked her what I should do—I had drunk too much water that noon. "You just go on back a bit in the cotton patch and squat. No one'll see. I tell you, though, I think I got sick because I couldn't move my bowels out here." I did as she directed, cursing the necessity of slacks in a cotton field. When I returned the amazing old lady was picking again, going at it with both hands. "I threw up, I feel better now. You go along, or you won't weigh even thirty pounds," she warned. I told her I'd meet her at the truck going to Bakersfield, that I had wangled a room from the driver of our truck, who said his wife had a spare room.

Back in my own row, I heard one of the union women talking. "The A.F.L. goin' to make 'em put in toilets out here," she said. Another answered: "It's all right now. But what we goin' to do when choppin' time comes? Won't be anything to squat behind."

I had been picking only a short time when Tom went down—the doughty Tom, who had boasted he could pick 500 a day. "What is it, Tom?" I asked, when I saw that he, too, was stretched on the ground. It was a cramp in his leg. I went over to him. "Muscles not used to it," he said, wincing with pain. Sweat trickled down his face. Lying there in his threadbare pants and cracked shoes, his great body looked even more helpless somehow than Vi's had. Mary shouted to the young overseer. "This man's got a cramp in his leg. Hurts him bad."

"What do you expect me to do, massage him?" the overseer asked curtly. He came over where I knelt by Tom, trying to massage the great knot I could feel in the otherwise limp leg. Not stooping down, he told me the way to do it—little chopping motions with the edge of my palm. Then he stalked away.

Ben and the young vet from our truck came up, asked if Tom wanted them to try to help him to the road and shade. "No, I can't move now. Just let me be, I'll get all right," Tom said between clenched teeth. Soon he said to me: "There, it's gone. You go back to your

pickin' or you won't have anything to weigh." He tried picking again, too, but soon it had him again. Limping, he shouldered his sack and went to the road to lie down.

At four, I gave up and went in. My sack weighed only twenty-eight pounds. I watched others come up. A big Negro woman watched them closely as they weighed her sack. She had totalled 250 that day. The two Italian women had picked just sixty pounds all day. "Got to feed the kids," one explained. "Maybe we'll get better." Gonzalez figured he had cleared just fifty cents after paying transportation and sack rental. I watched many others and questioned them. Two hundred was the average for the men.

THE Bakersfield truck was crowded when Vi and I approached. I counted thirty-eight persons in it. But they squeezed together and made room for us without reproach. The twenty-seven-mile drive began. We were jammed in on the long benches which ran lengthwise of the truck. The road ran through the cotton fields, and we jolted roughly along as the driver tried to pick up speed. Dust hung in heavy clouds in the late sunshine, trailing behind us, filling our mouths and noses. I tried to hear the talk, to see what it was they laughed so gaily at. But I was too tired. I gave myself up to weariness, absorbed in my aching neck and muscles, only glad I did not have to make the long trip back to Los Angeles that night.

Dusk came, and dark, and finally I roused myself enough to be the reporter again, and try to see what the "New Addition" of Bakersfield around Cottonfield Row looked like. There seemed to be no street lights, but as the truck stopped at the mean little dwelling and the door opened to let in a tired picker, I got a glimpse of the squalor they lived in. The militant union woman, who had kept up with the banter and laughter unflaggingly, got out at a tent, waved goodby. The pretty little girl with the slim husband, a former longshoreman from San Pedro—both of them quick and graceful in their movements, like dancers—lived in a shack as fragile looking as themselves. Another house was a home-made affair whose walls were of boards that didn't quite meet, so that light shone out between them.

Compared to them the bungalow where Vi and I were taken looked sumptuous, although, once inside, we saw the plaster peeled away and the rafters showing through in most of the rooms. This was the

boss-man's house, where a couple of other pickers already had rooms. But the stocky young woman, wife of the man who drove us from the city, said she would give us a bed to share, for $3.50 a week each.

On the way back the truck had stopped at a market so that the pickers could buy groceries for supper. As is the custom in the little homes shared by pickers, we waited our turn in the kitchen. The woman of the house, after picking 300 that day, had cooked herself a pan of cornbread and pork chops. The delicious smell of the cornbread filled the house. Another roomer, who dug potatoes, was in the bathroom when we arrived. Then he took his place at the cookstove, and Vi insisted she would wait. Hot water was plentiful, and never so welcome. The bathroom was immaculate, as was the rest of the house.

When I came out Vi was rummaging through her suitcase getting out a fresh gown and voluminous robe. As her shoes were broken down old bedroom slippers she kept on with rubber bands, she had no need of others for now. Smilingly she went into the bathroom and I showed her how the faulty hot water faucet worked. I felt a pang of regret that I was too weary to try to find out more about the life story of this dear old lady forced into such hard labor that she might buy her teeth. We sat over our milk and bread and tuna fish talking to the potato picker, who offered us fried potatoes and sausage and tomatoes. We took the tomatoes, and Vi opened her fruit salad—easy on the gums.

When I was settled in our three-quarters roll-away in the living room, on a mattress the potato digger had offered, made by himself, and clean sheets, Vi lingered over her prayers. It was 10 o'clock. Then she rubbed alcohol on her aching old muscles. Half dozing, I asked her: "Vi, how much cotton will it take to get your teeth?" They cost her $60. That was 2,000 pounds of cotton. But then there were her expenses, and I felt mean, knowing I would leave her to return home next night, although to get the room I had said I would stay a week and paid $1.50 down.

"Vi," I asked, "doesn't this bed feel good? And look, you can see the moon out the window."

"I sees it," she said. "Moon shines even in shantytowns. You ought to have let me give you some alcohol. You goin' to be sore in the morning."

right face

ROAD BLOCK

"Vishinsky's insistence on Russia's unrestricted right to manufacture and use atomic energy for peaceful purposes, most delegates now conclude, has made an international agreement impossible."—New York *Post.*

TWO-YEAR PLAN

"Secretary of State Acheson and E.C.A. chief Hoffman declare that our objective in Europe is 'to get back to 1910 *by* 1952'."—Joseph and Stewart Alsop in the New York *Herald Tribune.*

DANGEROUS THOUGHTS

" 'When the student reads about the Post Office, free education and such things, he'll think they're good and he might think socialism and communism are good,' said Mr. Werlein, member of the Houston, Texas, school board in voting to ban the textbook, *American Government* by Professor Magruder."—New York *Times.*

WHADDYA READ?

"I hate communism so much that I have avoided even reading about it."—Premier Yoshida of Japan.

COMFORTING

"I find something curiously comforting in McCoy's success story. Only in America, I think, could a convicted robber and killer graduate cum laude from the penitentiary. Especially with the warden on his board of directors, his lawyer keeping the books and the pleasant prospect of a million bucks to comfort him in his old age. If the Russians can top that one, I will go there to live."—Robert C. Ruark in the San Francisco *News.*

We invite readers' contributions to this page. Original clippings are requested.


ON SAFARI WITH HARARI
Consolidated Scientific Institute of
DIVIDENDS
EXPANSION
COMMUNISM
MME. HARPY TEA LEAVES READ


earch, ANALYSIS & Annual Forecasts for
Free Enterprise, Inc.
Central Bureau
COLD WAR
ALY AND RITA

VAN GOGH:

Two Paths of an Artist

by WILLIAM THOR BURGER

NEW YORK'S Metropolitan Museum of Art is now showing a large exhibit of paintings and drawings by Vincent Van Gogh. The exhibit, which will continue through January 15, is very successful, as one would expect, since it has been clear for the last ten years that Van Gogh has become the most popular of modern painters.

On the one hand, his later, Post-Impressionist pictures have been lauded not only by esthetes but by the general public, and reproductions hang in homes throughout the country, in some cases next to pin-up girls, on walls innocent of any other modern art. On the other hand, his early representations of peasants have been discovered by the public of the Left, which has taken Van Gogh to its bosom as a working-class artist.

Certainly one component of his popular appeal is the macabre interest, whether romantic or clinical, in his life story—the lurid incident of the cut ear, and the final attacks of madness, incidents widely circulated by Irving Stone's best-selling biography, *Lust For Life*. At the exhibit one overhears people seeking symptoms of madness in every picture. And in the short movie on his art which one can see in the museum, it is his madness which is stressed. The implication seems to be that these are works miraculously emerging from a blind frenzy.

In view of the intensity of feeling, and the divergency of opinions about Van Gogh, it is pertinent to examine more specifically the content of the early works, to question how miraculous, or singular, his art is; to ask in what way, after all, Van Gogh may have been not a fascinating freak, but a man of his time. Here, in capsule, is the story that emerges.

Vincent Van Gogh, when he decided to be an artist at the age of

twenty-seven, had it clearly in mind what kind of an artist he wanted to be. He would be a "peasant artist." It was the working people whom he loved and was concerned with. It was their hard lives he would record, their work-driven forms he would define. His sympathy with the people had been absorbed from the current liberal opinions that had seen a resurgence after the defeat of Louis Bonaparte in 1870, and then a modification after the defeat of the Commune and the establishment of the Third Republic. This sympathy, ripened through much reading, had been tested previously in Van Gogh's earnest, though fruitless, attempt to enter a divinity school in order to help the people through the Church, and then his selfless, over-zealous work as a lay-preacher in the Borinage, the coal-mining section of Belgium.

It had been more than his failure to learn Latin which stood in the way of his joining the Church. He could not accept its dogma nor its imposition of an inflexible institution between the people and the Christian ideal. He ended by rejecting the Church and much of its dogma. He wrote to his brother Theo: "That God of the clergymen, He is dead for me as a doornail." His favorite reading on the subject was Ernest Renan, most picturesque and popular of the nineteenth-century heretics, who had left the Catholic Church to proclaim the mortality of Christ. In his *Life of Jesus,* he had written the first realistic account of Christ, whom he considered not as the deity, but as the "incomparable Man." However, neither Renan nor his disciple Van Gogh was a materialist. On the contrary, both insisted on the spiritual basis of human life and on a mystical universe. Van Gogh, humble and ardent, had hoped to live in imitation of Christ.

He also admired in his early years the works of Michelet, the French historian who was one of the leading propagandists for the Revolution of 1848. Himself something of a religious mystic in the "advanced" sense of the nineteenth century, he was always, more consistently and actively than Renan, a militant democrat. Like Michelet, Van Gogh longed for a better life for all people. But unlike Michelet, he did not think in terms of militant action. He wrote, ". . . I haven't any humanist plans or projects for trying to help everybody. . . ." His attitude was simply that he loved the workers and wanted personally to help them—to comfort, clothe and nurse them. He wanted them to be kind to each other. He thought people should live co-operatively.

This was the attitude underlying the various aspects of the Christian Socialist movement which had begun earlier in the nineteenth century, and was broadening again in the time of Van Gogh. Its humanitarianism, its acceptance of the poor as the especially beloved of Christ, and as brothers in Christ, had already found wide expression in art. This ideology lies behind the international school of "peasant painters" which was led by Millet and found hundreds of disciples in most of the countries of Europe. Millet was Van Gogh's most revered artistic master. He admired all of Millet's artistic followers, including even the most banal, even, for example, Bastien-Lepage. He also valued the men whom he considered to be the landscapist equivalents of the others, those who had painted nature with a new realism, a new intimacy and humility and love—the Barbizon painters Corot, Diaz and Daubigny. He admired Daumier and Gavarni too, but with reservations. As militant political democrats, they were too critical and activist for him. He wrote that while "Gavarni and Daumier . . . seem to consider society with malice . . . men like Miller, Breton, de Groux, Israels, chose subjects that were as true as those of Gavarni or Daumier, but that had a more serious sentiment."

In Van Gogh's native Holland there was a very active and numerous group of painters in both the peasant and landscape categories, and to them Van Gogh gravitated—to Israels, Maris, Mauve. It was to Mauve in The Hague that he went first, for advice and help, and from whom he received, briefly, his first artistic instruction.

VAN GOGH was clear about his audience. He wanted to make pictures for the common people, including the workers, who might recognize themselves in his works, and find an exaltation and a beauty they had not recognized in their lives before. He would learn to draw, rather than paint. He would make his living by drawing illustrations for periodicals and books, which were being read by the progressive section of the petit bourgeoisie. And he even dreamed of making pictures for workers' homes. Once he had a plan for a society of artists who would make lithographs, because they were cheap, of peasants, and sell them to the peasants themselves. (Peasants who could not always keep themselves in bread!)

So Van Gogh taught himself to draw. These early drawings in the exhibition are a revelation. The sensation-seekers who come looking

for signs of madness are simply on the wrong road. Of course Van Gogh was a quite neurotic young man. He was hyper-sensitive, hyper-intense, and hyper-stubborn. He threw himself into projects more violently than others did. However, what we find here are the painstaking endeavors of a very earnest student.

He was certainly never graceful or chic. Making no compromise with his convictions, he did not have the softening sentimentality of the other peasant painters. He seems to have identified himself more fully than they with the working people he drew and painted. Very likely he was influenced by some of the more positive attitudes that he was familiar with—those of Michelet, Daumier, and the novelists Dickens and Harriet Beecher Stowe, whom he greatly admired. In any case, his presentation is more positive than Millet's or Israel's, his indignation seems sharper, his pity deeper.

In his representation of peasants, it was always their strength that he insisted on. Some of these drawings are rather clumsy and crude, as "A Young Peasant" or "A Woman Sewing." But on the whole he succeeded remarkably well, especially for a man who started so late, and had such short experience with the technique. The "Veteran with an Umbrella" is sharply seen; "Peasants Digging" is strong and well drawn; and "A Woman Cleaning a Pan" is a magnificent, monumental piece. In his landscape drawings the mood is usually more tender, the drawing more delicate. "Vegetable Gardens near the Dunes" is an adept and lovely study; "Behind the Schenkweg" and "Garden of the Nuenen Vicarage" are more carefully and deliberately drawn, and they establish the feeling of rather empty, frugal living; "A Road near Loosduinen" is lonely and gaunt; "The Ditch" has a melancholy lyricism.

Because he intended to make his living by drawing illustrations, he started painting rather later and painted a good deal less than he drew during his years in Holland. His painting technique, in the early pictures that are exhibited, is not always entirely under control. His *chef-d'oeuvre* of this period, the picture he himself considered the summary one, "The Potato Eaters," is even today a rather terrifying picture in its uncompromising strength, ugliness and pity.

Thus, in 1886, after six years of art activity in Holland, Van Gogh was well on his way to the goal he had set himself—to learn skill in technique in order to capture the strength of the peasants at work

and an almost anthropomorphic translation of the mood of landscape.

Yet in 1886 he found himself near collapse, and he was now eager to take his brother Theo's offer to escape from Holland and try to make a new beginning in Paris. He had not been able to earn any money by his art, an unbearably bitter circumstance to him; he had wanted so much to give people an art that would be "consoling" to them, but no one seemed to want it; he was tortured by the necessity of accepting continued sacrifices from Theo, who supported him; he suffered from the loneliness that his own difficult, irascible personality imposed on him, and his health was threatened by the malnutrition and irregular habits that his poverty and his driving ambition forced on him. His constant refrain in his letters to his brother was, "Tell me why my pictures do not sell!"

In Paris, Van Gogh entered a new world. His brother Theo, an art dealer, brought him into the group who called themselves the "Impressionists." The group included the old generation of veritable Impressionists—Monet, Pissarro, Renoir, Degas among them—who in 1886, when he arrived, were having their last joint exhibit, and were just beginning to catch on. In the Nineties they would be selling quite well. The group also included the next generation which was then ripening—the Neo-Impressionists Seurat and Signac, and the Post-Impressionists Toulouse-Lautrec, Gaugin and Bernard.

In their company, Van Gogh fell into the singular, segregated and picturesque habits of Parisian bohemian life, which revolved in an orbit only tangentially related to the central historic events of the time, whose characteristic activity was the esthetic discussion and whose habitat, outside of Theo's dealer's chamber, was the café. His art fell in first with that of the Impressionists, whose esthetic, realistic as it was and rooted like his own in the Barbizon painters, was not entirely alien to him.

There were others in Paris at this time who were following more directly Van Gogh's own earlier inclinations, Forain and Steinlen for example, who indeed were doing the very thing he had hoped for, illustrating books and periodicals. And it was only a few years later, in 1891, that Kaethe Kollwitz in Berlin began making her prints of the poor. The road on which he had started still went on, but Van Gogh left it for another.

In accepting impressionism, he changed from working-class content to the representation of the sunny spectacle of the streets and boulevards of Paris and environs, and the idle pleasures of its bohemians and bourgeois. He changed from the grim, heavy coloration and forms of his earlier subjects to the high, bright impressionist palette and the light impressionist touch. He turned from the psychological and social realism that had been established by the generation of 1848, led by Millet and Courbet. This he sidestepped, as the Impressionists (and indeed Courbet himself) had done during the reactionary and repressive Second Empire of Louis Bonaparte, to concentrate instead on visual realism, centering on the physics and physiology of light.

He painted very pretty impressionist pictures. The exhibit has two attractive semi-mural scenes of "Montmarte," a more urban "Corner of Montmartre" and the sunny and lovely "Restaurant at Asnières."

Soon he began to turn to the younger men in the group, to the newer ideas. First he turned to Seurat's style, which conventionalized nature in terms of a pointilliste architecture. For the span of a few pictures he too tried to be a pointilliste, as in "A View of the Butte Montmartre." But he did not have the temperament for it, and he turned instead to a corollary development of the Eighties, in the movement called "Symbolism," of which he learned from Gauguin.

WHY Symbolism in the Eighties? The bourgeois ideals which had sustained and excited earlier generations had long been exposed by the crass and disenchanting facts of bourgeois rule. The most progressive sections of the people had not yet recovered from the murderous setback of the destruction of the Commune. Capitalism itself had reached a critical point, and was entering its imperialist phase. Then a number of its intellectuals reached a limit of pessimism and disillusion. Not all, of course. Many painters, like Cabanel, Meissonier and Sargent continued to serve the upper bourgeoisie, and to be paid well for doing it. Some, on the other hand, turned to the working class, and more and more to the proletariat rather than to a sentimentalized peasantry—Meunier, for example, as well as Steinlen, Freidrich and Forain. But there were those now who reacted by rejecting the last remnants of a social orientation, to retreat into themselves. Rejecting the objective fact, they concentrated on their indi-

vidual, private sensations and on the intrinsic forms of their art with an intensity of desperation.

They did not, however, change their class alignment. Not at all. They found the bourgeoisie Philistine, but they had no plans whatsoever for eliminating it, and obviously for them the working class had not even reached the level of being Philistine; it was simply brutish. They were delicate, esthetic and introverted. They despised the dirtiest central facts of bourgeois society, but they did not want to change those facts. They just wanted personally to leave them for an esthetic, enclosed, restricted area on the periphery. When they developed a patron group, it was characteristically among the scions of wealth who were a generation or two removed from the dirty job of accumulating money but had become sensitized by the refining process of having money. And their key ideal, even in their esthetic retreat, was identical with the bourgeoisie's key ideal—rugged, irresponsible individualism. Within this group were the Symbolists.

In the Eighties the Symbolist poets led by Mallarmé and the Symbolist painters led by Gauguin made a complete rupture with the realist movement, even in its Impressionist phase. They rejected the goal of imitating nature. They developed instead suggestive rather than representational forms, and used words or shapes to evoke mental images or emotional connotations. While the Impressionists put faith in science and fact, the Symbolists hated nothing more, and leaned rather to mysticism and emotion. The Impressionists had achieved a delicate balance between their objectivity and their insistent individualism. The Symbolists wanted only the personal and introverted.

To this movement Van Gogh responded, in his own way. In this vein he created his pictures during the latter part of his stay in Paris, and later. In the letters he wrote to Theo from Arles, after leaving Paris in 1888, he speaks in entirely new terms. He is now the esthete. "I believe," he says, "in the absolute necessity of a new art of color, of design, and—of the artistic life." He describes his pictures in terms of the colors he is combining. He writes of making designs like those of the Japanese prints which Gauguin and he loved and from which they learned. And, like a Symbolist, he writes of emphasizing the expressive outline, of exaggerating the essential and intensifying the color in order to "suggest the emotion of an ardent temperament," and of using his forms for their interpretative value. He writes of

the "savage combination of incongruous tones" in the portrait of a zouave. He is trying "to get at something utterly heartbroken and therefore utterly heartbreaking" in a view of the Rhone. He intends his "Night Café" to express "The powers of darkness in a low wine-shop, and all this in an atmosphere like a devil's furnace of pale sulphur." The painting of his bedroom, "giving by its simplification a grander style to things, is to be suggestive of rest or of sleep." He made a Sower to symbolize Life; a Mower to symbolize Death. "I want to paint men and women," he said, "with that something of the eternal which the halo used to symbolize, and which we seek to give by the actual radiance and vibration of our coloring."

Generalized emotions have taken the place of the very specific meanings of the Dutch period, for example of the "Potato Eaters," of which he once had said, "I have tried to make it clear how these people, eating their potatoes under the lamplight, have dug the earth with those very hands they put in the dish; and so the painting speaks of manual labor, and how they have honestly earned their food."

HE HAS a new orientation toward the audience also. Now, he thinks exclusively in terms of the art market, of selling through the dealers. He writes to Theo: "If we dare believe that the impressionist pictures will go up, we must paint plenty of them." Another time he writes that he has made a series of paintings "that would do for decorations for a dining-room or a country-house." And again: "Nothing would help us more to place our canvases than if they could get general acceptance as decoration for middle-class houses—the way it used to be in Holland." Quite clear, and not a word any longer about art for peasants.

He also has new artistic gods now. Whenever he mentions Millet it is still with respect, but he does not mention him often. He writes of Japanese prints, Delacroix, whose palette is more to his taste than the Impressionists', and Monticelli, an expressive colorist now almost forgotten.

Thus, in his later years also, Van Gogh is not to be understood as a mad visionary. He was one of a group who, in touch with one another, through discussion and joint effort, quite rationally worked out a new doctrine and a new style.

This new attitude submerged his humanitarianism, but it did not entirely destroy it. It still finds expression, and indeed it seems very likely to us that just this infusion of the modern forms with human warmth has been an important part of the reason why he is more popular than his fellow-modernists. For example, the very content of his symbols is different. He is not delicate and erudite like so many of his contemporaries who base themselves on esoteric references or exotic titillations or nuanced sensations. He writes: "What a mistake Parisians make in not having a palate for crude things." He himself deals with deep, elemental human emotions. His humanitarianism is revealed also in his constant search for models, his persistent desire to be a "figure painter," which was frustrated by his poverty, since he could not afford models. But those figure studies he did—the postman Roulin, who was a friend of his, Roulin's son Armand, the "Berceuse," the splendid old peasant in a straw hat which is not in the present exhibit, are as suffused with sympathy as with rich color. And throughout this time, a fragment of his dream of co-operative action remains, the hope of a community of artists who might work together and help each other, an idea which itself can hardly be considered an idiosyncrasy in a century which had already produced such organizations, including the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood.

It is his personal tragedy that he was finally overwhelmed, during the last seven months of his life, by intermittent attacks, whether of madness, or epilepsy, or pseudo-epilepsy is still undetermined. He continued to be distracted by the fact that his art was not accepted, that he could earn no money, that he could not repay Theo but always had to be a burden to him. He continued lonely, hungry, poverty-ridden beyond endurance, broken in health through fasting and neglect. For ten years he had been making the choice between food and paint in favor of the latter. From Arles the plaintive cry went up to Theo that he had had to give up life in order to create art. When the attacks recurred even after he entered the asylum of St. Rémy and then placed himself in the care of Dr. Gachet in Auvers, he shot himself.

The degree of intensity of his expression is no doubt a personal element, to be explained by his high-keyed nerves. When he first arrives in Arles, in "The Drawbridge" and the series of blossoming orchards, he is lyrical and joyous. Then he becomes more intense. Before and during Gauguin's visit with him, he leaves the technique of broken

color for more and more solid tones, in the manner Gauguin also had been developing, heavily outlined, the colors reaching the maximum of their vividness and intensity. Thus, "The Sunflower," "Van Gogh's House in Arles," "Café de Nuit," "The Sower," "L'Arlésienne," and more. Later, he writes from the hospital in Arles, ". . . to attain the high yellow note that I attained last summer, I really had to be pretty well strung up."

After his renewed attacks in the asylum of St. Rémy, he rejects the flat tone for broken color once more. The colors themselves become more muted, after the Arles crescendo of sunshine, but the brushstrokes swirl with an irresistible disquiet in "Cypresses," "An Olive Orchard," "The Starry Night." At Auvers, he is sometimes more distracted, as in "The Auvers Stairs" or "The Town Hall of Auvers," sometimes more sombre, as in "Chestnut Trees in Flower" until he makes his final stark, horror-filled statement in his last painting, "Crows over the Wheatfield."

VAN GOGH himself saw his problems, and even his illness, not as personal problems but as social problems. When Gauguin suffered a physical collapse, Vincent wrote to Theo, "Shall we ever see a generation of artists with healthy bodies?" And from the asylum he wrote, "In existing society, we artists are only the broken vessel." There were around him a generation of artists who had been first disenchanted and then disinherited.

If then, as earlier stated, two groups of the public have found two different Van Goghs to admire, it is because there were, indeed, two strongly divergent phases in his career. They correspond to the two major paths which art took in the nineteenth century. And if attitudes are partisan about him now, it is because the same two paths continue today.

Both tendencies were impelled by revulsion against the grossness and materialism of the bourgeois rulers. One way led to the common man, examined his problems and asked for justice. On this path Van Gogh started his career. On it, however, he did not travel with those militant democrats, associated with the petit bourgeoisie, who spearheaded the Revolution of 1830, and joined with the working class to make the Revolution of 1848 and to defeat Louis Bonaparte in 1870, a group including Daumier and Courbet. Rather, it was a much

vaguer, more docile band that he joined, those mystical "advanced" Christians who preached the brotherhood of man, and nostalgically glorified the peasant as the archtype of non-industrial, simple, rustic virtues. He left this path at a time when some of its artistic wayfarers were beginning to align themselves with the proletariat. The other path led to individualism, and asked only for a sheltered glade in the suburbs of bourgeois society, where one could commune not with the "rabble" but with oneself, where one could develop artistic sensibilities and express one's unique personality. On this path Van Gogh finished his days.

However, he was not an entirely orthodox member of either group. In his first period, he did not share the often flaccid sentimentality of his fellow peasant painters. His art is considerably more positive and strong than theirs. He stood, so to speak, between Millet who painted "The Man with the Hoe" in 1863 and Edwin Markham who, in 1898, still from a Christian and idealist position, transformed its meaning into a revolutionary call. In his second period, he carried his popular sympathies too much with him to be as precious and delicate and self-centered as his fellows. And therefore even his Symbolism is imbued with a warmth and love and humanity, a wholehearted vigor and strength which sets him apart.

SOVIET CULTURE:
A Reply to Slander

by SIDNEY FINKELSTEIN

REACTIONARY abuse of Soviet cultural life reaches a new low with the publication of *The Country of the Blind,* by George S. Counts and Nucia Lodge (Houghton, Mifflin). The book consists of quotations from the recent criticism by the Soviet Union of its own cultural and scientific work, put in a framework of virulent lies about Soviet history. Professor Counts, a professional anti-Sovieteer who is known to New York teachers for his attempts to break the Teachers Union, employs in this cultural discussion the technique of the prosecution in the recent trial of the Communist leaders. Every quotation from Soviet sources—cut and out of context—is presented with a warning not to read it, since it means something quite different from what it says.

Counts' is the kind of "scholarship" which will discuss a mass of criticisms of works of music, literature, drama and philosophy without the slightest hint of what these criticized works are, or of the real cultural and scientific life of the Soviet Union. In the entire book there is no discussion of an actual poem, story, play, work of music; not one fact concerning the actual reading, the theatres, the musical life of the people. Ignoring this context, Counts presents one vast falsification. I will try to sketch here some of the material necessary to an understanding of the Soviet discussions.

The government's interest in the cultural life of the Soviet Union is a sign of the fact that culture is considered a necessity, not a luxury. In socialist society the people themselves, through their government, take over the tasks which in the United States are reserved for the backrooms of the trusts and the blind destructiveness of the market-place. Respect for culture is shown by building the material base in which culture can grow. No country and people

in world history has approached the Soviet Union in the speed, enthusiasm and sheer numbers with which it built theatres, printing presses, schools, libraries, opera houses, scientific laboratories and symphony orchestras.

In Moscow alone there are seventy-six publishing houses, not counting those which put out newspapers and magazines. An average edition of a new book is from fifty to a hundred thousand copies. The works of Alexei Tolstoy have sold a total of 11,300,000 copies; Sholokhov's works have reached 16,334,000. Even poets, the step-children of bourgeois society, here sell in figures of from a half million to a million and a half. In Moscow there are thirty-three theatres open eleven months of the year; there are 1,000 such theatres over the length and breadth of the Soviet Union. Plans were laid immediately after the Second World War to build 300 new theatres, train thirty-nine new symphony orchestras and 3,000 new actors.

Counts cannot afford to give any hint of such facts, for they would destroy his entire thesis. He says of past history, "One will find also that ruling cliques and classes, priests and lords and monarchs, have fostered ignorance and prejudice, and manipulated dogma for the purpose of consolidating and maintaining power and privilege. The Russian example therefore is not unique." The first sentence is true. But how have these ruling cliques "fostered ignorance"? There is no evidence in history of any that multiplied theatres, that destroyed illiteracy, that created thousands of schools. Rather, the way of a reactionary class is always to close down the area of cultural work. Let us suppose an American government were to build theatres all over the country, train permanent acting companies in cities and towns where the drama, thanks to the "free market," is now dead, and then were to issue a statement like the following (I quote from Counts' own translation): "It is imperative that all writers capable of creating dramatic works enroll actively and creatively in the urgent cause of the development of a theatrical repertoire qualitatively worthy of the contemporary spectator." Would this be regarded by American theatrical people and the public as a dire blow to the theatre?

Counts ignores in this book, ostensibly devoted to cultural life in the Soviet Union, the cultural growth and independent life of the national republics and non-Russian peoples. Among them literacy in Tsarist days was less than three per cent; it is now close to 100 per cent. And this

literacy program took the form of creating grammars, dictionaries, and even written languages where none existed before. Schools are built, government and education carried on in the native languages, folk arts encouraged and new kinds of art developed. More than half the members of the Soviet writers' union are of the non-Russian peoples.

Counts must bypass these facts, for by no stretch of the imagination can they be fitted to the analogies and myths he draws from the past to frighten the reader. Never in history has any government—certainly not the reactionary ones of the past, and not even the liberal governments of rising capitalism—ever fostered the language, schools, culture and national development of other peoples.

THE role of the Communist Party in the criticisms of Soviet culture is one of leadership. Counts speaks in awed tones of the horrible word-specter he himself creates. He says, "Under this system of control there can be no public discussion of grand policy, either foreign or domestic." It is the "function of the other members of this political army to carry the policy to the people, to explain and argue, to persuade and cajole, to secure the adoption of resolutions of approval, and to prevent the emergence of any kind of organized opposition." How do they "argue" and "explain" without "discussing"? This is surely the prize trick of the year. "The Soviet citizen reads and listens in vain for the slightest criticism of any policy adopted by the central organs of the Party." But Counts' book is full of examples and excerpts of a most thorough-going public discussion, criticism and self-criticism of almost every aspect of Soviet life, including foreign and domestic policy, the arts, the sciences, the needs of the people, the behavior of the Party. Everything is tested by the living experience of the people.

The writers, musicians, scientists, have been repeatedly told to move closer to the real life of the Soviet citizens. Zhdanov says: "The level of the demands and tastes of our people has risen very high, and he who does not want to rise or is incapable of rising to this level will be left behind." And again Zhdanov says: "Where there is no criticism, mould and stagnation take root and there is no room to move forward." Truth to life, high quality, realism, respect for humanity, are what the open Party criticisms educate the public to expect.

The Party is the guardian of progress. A special role which it took up in these criticisms was to break down cliques, coteries, the hardening

of hide-bound ways of thought. The area of music, so distorted by Counts, well illustrates this. No "orders" were given to Soviet composers to write in one style or another. However, they were told not to create cliques that would attempt to impose themselves upon all of Soviet music. A "mutual admiration society" atmosphere had been growing among leading composers and critics. The resolution of the Party says, "The creative work of many of the conservatory students represents a blind imitation of the music of D. Shostakovish, S. Prokofiev and others." As for criticism, it "has made of itself a trumpet for individual composers. . . . A musty atmosphere has been created in the Organizational Committee; creative discussions have been lacking. . . . Composers priding themselves on their 'innovations,' their 'arch-revolutionism' in the field of music, have been speaking out as champions of the most backward and musty conservatism in their activity in the Organizational Committee. . . ."

One of the ways formalism shows itself is in the dominance of laboratory methods over living practice, in the attempt of one limited style or composer-approach to prevail over all of music; in the fact that, as is predominantly the case in the United States, composers such as Schoenberg, Stravinsky, Hindemith, Milhaud, turn out little echoes of themselves; in the fact that the tendencies which once seemed in a one-sided way to be so "arch-revolutionary" have become the conservatism and academicism of today, so that now every composer to be "accepted" must be polytonal and neo-classic, every painter must be an abstractionist or symbolist and abhor real subject matter, every poet must be an imitator of the seventeenth-century English metaphysical poets and admirer of Ezra Pound. The entrance of the Party in the cultural discussions in the Soviet Union was to nip in the bud such arrogant, stagnating tendencies, to let in the fresh air of reality.

The Party is the guardian of devotion to truth and reality. It asks of those who would enter public life that they turn to the new, that they do not dabble with myths that humanity and man's conquests of nature have long put into the discard. Soviet culture is not *laissez faire.* Anti-Semitism, racialism, slavery, feudalism, a reversion to the jungle law of capitalism, the "impotence" of man, the "savagery of human nature," are no longer fit subjects for discussion. They are closed not by decree but by the experiences and advances of humanity itself, just as the Adam-and-Eve theory of the creation of man, astrology, alchemy,

the flatness of the earth, are no longer generally taught in American public schools. These indicate what is meant by bourgeois ideas, which are continually exposed: ideas of chauvinism, of pessimism, of "eternal warfare" between the "individual and society," of the "unknowability of reality," of war as inherent in human nature, of man's mind as the eternal slave of mysterious subconscious forces. Such concepts spring from the life and needs of capitalism, which explains its exploitation of man by man as the "law of nature," and tries to impose the ideas springing from its life as eternal truths of mankind, past, present and future.

THE freedom to be ignorant or to see solvable problems of human destruction as "insoluble" is not a tenable freedom for those who enter public life and have the moulding of other people's minds as their responsibility. It actually means the enslavement of the mind to the most terrifying frustrations and fears. Only when the mind has mastered what the history and achievements of humanity have made it possible for man to know, can the mind be free and enter boldly into as yet uncharted areas of human progress. Counts says derisively of the Soviet Union, "In this materialistic religion there is no play for doubt or skepticism. All must believe!" But even Counts should know that there is no such thing as an abstract doubt for doubt's sake. It is always doubt of something, belief of something.

Counts sneers at Soviet statements like the following: "The world evolves according to the laws of the movement of matter and stands in need of no 'world spirit.'" He says that to the Soviet people these are "sacred words." But they are sacred words to all science from ancient Greek times to today. This present cult of skepticism, which applauds the "search for truth" so long as it is only a "search," and denies the very concept of truth itself, is necessary to monopolists who like to pretend that the wars by which they profit, the exploitation of masses of human beings by which they live, otherwise indefensible, are "insoluble" problems.

Soviet life is based on the principle of active, unceasing investigation of reality, which is linked with the principle of criticism and self-criticism. This is effectively expressed in Zhdanov's "On the History of Philosophy" in which he attacks the tendency of scholars to withdraw to the quiet waters of the distant past (where American

Irving Toorchen

scholars generally flee for their own safety from boards of trustees). He argues that "Philosophical views and ideas long slain and buried should not merit much attention," and asks that philosophy be "directly linked with the tasks of the present." He asks that scholars take up, "the struggle between the old and new, between the dying and the rising, between the decaying and the developing. . . . In our Soviet society, where antagonistic classes have been liquidated, the struggle between the old and new, and consequently the development from the lower to the higher, proceeds not in the form of struggle between antagonistic classes and of cataclysms, as is the case under capitalism, but in the form of criticism and self-criticism, which is the real motive force of our development, a powerful instrument in the hands of the Party."

It is not surprising that Counts completely ignores this great document by Zhdanov, although it has been available in English for nearly two years.* There can be no better statement of the need of men's eyes to be constantly opened, to constantly examine the old in the light of the demands of the new. This is advanced publicly in a land which Counts calls "the country of the blind"!

WHAT is the function of criticism? The very word strikes terror in the mind of countless American writers, musicians and painters, because it stands for the brutal voice of the press, the key to the market, to "publicity," to sales; the word stands for irresponsibility and destructiveness. Every artist is in deathly competition with every other for a "good press."

In the U.S.S.R., where the creator knows that he is needed and wanted, that a first edition of a book may be a hundred thousand copies, that a new play may open in fifty theatres, criticism performs a different role. It is not carried on by critics alone. The Soviet criticisms of music, literature, drama, took the critics themselves over the coals. Criticism and self-criticism are a give and take, a collective discussion, a clearing of the air, a means of improvement. In a market-place culture the greatest crime a creator can commit is to change a style or pattern that has made a success. Producers and agents plead with him to repeat himself to the point of nausea. In the Soviet Union a creative artist is encouraged not to repeat, but to look critically upon what he has already done, so that he can wrestle

* A translation of the article appeared in the April, 1948, issue of *Political Affairs.*

with new problems. Criticism is the pathway to creative growth.

Zhdanov writes, "Comrade Stalin frequently points out that a most important condition of our development is the necessity for every Soviet person to take stock of his activity each day, to check himself fearlessly, to analyze his work, and to labor continuously on his own improvement. This applies to writers as much as to any other workers. He who fears criticism of his own work is a contemptible coward, not worthy of the respect of the people."

The importance of this criticism to the growth of the artist is a matter of record, as in the realm of Soviet music. Counts babbles of these criticisms in terms taken from medieval Catholic mythology: "heresy," "faith," "confession," "absolution" and the like. He quotes this answer of Shostakovich to a criticism of his own work, and calls it a "recantation":

> "When we look back on the road which our art has travelled, it is entirely clear to me that every time the Party has corrected the mistakes of this or that artist, pointed to deviations in his creative work, or condemned severely certain tendencies in Soviet art, it has always benefited all Soviet art as well as the work of individual artists."

This is a most direct factual statement, and can be verified. For Shostakovich was the subject of sharp criticism in 1936, and then, as now, the American press sang requiems over Soviet music, declaring that composers were being forced to write nothing but folk songs. What, however, were the actual results? Before this criticism the work of Shostakovich, like that of many other Soviet composers, was manacled by its own super-leftism, its suspicion of all positive emotions as "bourgeois," its over-emphasis on striking but too easy burlesques of bourgeois waltzes, polkas and operatic arias, or skillfully written factory noises offered as "workers'" music.

The criticism cleared the air, broke the manacles. It pointed up the need for composers to study the great dramatic and epic forms of the heroic days of the concert-hall, to recreate these forms with the content of today. The result was a series of remarkable works. Nobody could have told Shostakovich how to write his Fifth Symphony, Sixth Symphony, "Leningrad" Symphony, Quintet and Trio. They bore his

own signature. They were a logical flowering of his early work, but with a new maturity. And along with them came such works as Prokofiev's "Romeo and Juliet" ballet, "Alexander Nevsky" cantata, Fifth Symphony, Miaskovsky's late symphonies, Khachaturian's "Gayne." These works have become beloved by music audiences of the entire world, offering an experience bursting with life that could be found in little other contemporary music. It is plain that these past Soviet criticisms have not only helped Soviet composers to see the path to their own growth more clearly, but have also given world music precious possessions. But Counts will discuss music apparently without ever having listened to a work of music.

WHAT is meant by socialist science, socialist music, socialist realism? Counts jibes at these terms: "The Soviet order is founded on a world outlook known as dialectical materialism and on a conception of history called historical materialism. As the years have passed, this body of doctrine has congealed into dogma whose authority cannot be questioned, even by the most gifted scientist." Counts trusts heavily on the ignorance of his readers, for these are no dogmas. They represent scientific method itself, applied to all of human thought and society, and whose content is the eternally growing discoveries of science.

The sharp emphasis of the criticisms on the new is a sign of the fact that socialism is leaving the capitalist world far behind. The features of Soviet scientific effort are well described by A. I. Oparin:

> "The network of research institutions and experimental stations is being complemented by the network of thousands of peasants' laboratories, experimental and demonstration lands of collective farms and state farms. Any good undertaking of scientists in our country is supported by thousands of skillful hands who correct, complement and define more accurately this undertaking in accordance with the concrete conditions of the district or village. This makes it possible not only to solve rapidly a number of important economic problems but at the same time this is of inestimable benefit to theoretical knowledge."

Similarly, music can now move into realms far beyond the concert hall and the virtuoso performance, the highest form of music under capitalism. Soviet music has its symphony orchestras, solo recitals,

and concert halls. No Soviet city is without them. But at the same time there is a phenomenal rise of amateur singing and instrumental performance. Such groups in the Soviet Union now number about 90,000. The resolution on music criticizes "a scornful attitude towards such genres as opera, choral music, popular music for small orchestra, for vocal ensembles, etc." Here we have a clue to a real transformation. The composer has not only the old kind of guidance, but a new kind, reaching far beyond concert-hall walls. In fitting his form and instrumentation to new needs, he has an opportunity really to educate masses of people in the art of music.

Counts laments that "Contact with the outer world is gradually being lost also by the passing of the pre-revolutionary generation. The members of the intellectual class of old Russia were renowned for their knowledge of the languages, literatures, arts, sciences and philosophies of other lands." He is, as usual, not telling the truth. In the past thirty years, works of Balzac have been printed and sold to the extent of over two million in the Soviet Union; Shakespeare, a million and a half; Dickens, over two million; Cervantes, over a half million. There are enormous editions of works by Stendhal, Anatole France, Mark Twain, Maupassant, Dante, Sterne.

Counts may complain that this list, a very partial one, is "selective." Kierkegaard, Sartre, Little Orphan Annie, will not be found there. But how can he explain the fact that so "blind," so "regimented" a people are reading vast editions of precisely those "Western" writers who speak most critically of oppressive authority, who stand for the opening of light in the mind? In drama as well, the new Soviet plays constantly rub elbows with the great realistic and poetic classics, for the Soviet theatres are repertory theatres. And a constant refrain, in the literature, drama and music criticisms is to raise the level of contemporary work to match and surpass these great models.

Novels like Sholokhov's *The Quiet Don,* Leonov's *Road to the Ocean,* Ehrenburg's *The Storm* are examples of socialist realism. They are partisan against the forces that would destroy human beings; and by thus participating in history, they throw a searchlight upon it. They are the novels of our time which truly carry on the traditions of a Balzac and Tolstoy. Such realism is possible only to those who share the world view of the working class. Today the bourgeois world is no longer interested in the public exploration of reality; it lives in the past; it

prefers either no art at all or an art of a dream world. It fears change, tries to contain and prohibit change. It fears any honest analysis of itself, or of its ties to fascism. Only the working class can afford to know, welcome and fight for the full picture of reality in motion.

Soviet culture is on a sound path and, in fact, it is the knowledge of its soundness that causes frantic attacks like those of Counts to be written. Like the other arms of the cold war, such attacks on the Soviet cultural criticism are really attempts to create a hysterical atmosphere in which the American people will be driven to destroy themselves. If the Soviet people believe in science, it now must become "patriotic" for the American people to place their faith in spiritualism and magic. If the Soviet artists place their faith in the human being and the real world, it now becomes "patriotic" for American artists to renounce the human being and the real world.

COUNTS talks of "freedom" but never defines what he means by it, for to do so would be disastrous to his argument. But in describing the capitalist world as "free," it is clear that he has in mind the freedom of the market-place, the buying and selling of creative minds, the unwritten but ever-present law that nothing has a right to exist unless it contributes to the struggle for investors' profits.

This "freedom" of the market-place is actually a fierce, destructive competition for the few cents in the public pocket which can be spared for luxury, since all the arts have become "luxury." As a result, the great mass of people are bereft of the arts, and entire arts are in bitter competition with one another. The film destroys the living stage, although they are two different and equally needed arts. Symphony, opera, poetry, die away not because they are unneeded, but because they are unprofitable. Not an American composer, not a poet, hardly a painter, can make a living out of his art. Radio competes with spoken drama, television with the reading and buying of books. The art world resembles a battlefield, with the victims the public and the creative artists. There is widespread unemployment and poverty among actors, writers and musicians on Broadway and in Hollywood, while fabulous sums are thrown into salesmanship, advertising, public-catching devices. In the meantime the monopolies extend their control over the content of what they put out.

There are profound lessons to be learned from the Soviet criticisms

and self-crticisms; lessons in how a people can participate in the life of science and culture on a scale unprecedented in history. Such lessons may indicate to the American people how to break the prison walls closing in upon their own cultural life. The torrent of abuse and lies by Counts and similar uncultured, ignorant and corrupt minds, seemingly aimed at the Soviet Union, is actually aimed at the American people. Counts' pretense of concern over culture in the Soviet Union is sheer hypocrisy in the face of his approval of the very processes by which culture is being destroyed at home. He attempts to create a smoke-screen between the American people and what they can learn from the progress of socialism, which makes its most searching and critical self-examinations a public possession.

Days With Lenin

by MAXIM GORKY

I CAN still see vividly before me the bare walls of a wooden church on the outskirts of London, absurdly unattractive; and the lancet windows of a small, narrow hall which might have been a classroom in a poor school.

Any resemblance to a church stopped at the outside of the building. Inside there was no trace of anything ecclesiastical and even the low pulpit, instead of standing at the far end of the hall, was placed at the entrance, midway between the two doors.

I had never met Lenin before this,* nor read as much of him as I should have. But what I had managed to read, and above all the enthusiastic accounts of those who knew him personally, had strongly attracted me to him. When we were introduced, he shook my hand heartily, and, scrutinizing me with his keen eyes and speaking in the tone of an old acquaintance, he said jocularly: "So glad you've come. I believe you're fond of a scrap? There's going to be a fine old scuffle here."

I did not expect Lenin to be like that. Something was lacking in him. He had a jaunty way of standing with his hands somehow poked up under his armpits. He was somehow too ordinary, did not give the impression of being a leader. As a literary man, I am obliged to take note of such little details, and this necessity has become a habit, sometimes even an irritating habit, with me. . . .

Before me now stood a baldheaded, stocky, sturdy person, speaking with a guttural roll of his "r's," and holding my hand in one of his, while with the other he wiped a forehead which might have belonged to Socrates; he beamed affectionately at me with his strangely bright eyes.

* Gorky is referring to the Fifth Congress of the Russian Social-Democratic Labor Party, held in London in 1907.

He began at once to speak about the defects of my book *Mother*—evidently he had read it in manuscript. I was hurrying to finish the book, I said, but before I could say why, Lenin with a nod of assent himself gave the explanation: Yes, I should hurry up with it, such a book is needed, for many of the workers who take part in the revolutionary movement do so unconsciously and chaotically, and it would be very useful to them to read *Mother*. "The very book for the moment." This was the single compliment he paid me, but it was a most precious one to me.

Then he went on to ask in a business-like way if it was being translated, whether it had been much mangled by the Russian and American censorship. When I told him that the author was to be prosecuted, at first he frowned, then threw back his head, closed his eyes and burst into his peculiar laugh. . . .

ROSA LUXEMBURG spoke eloquently, passionately and trenchantly, using irony with great effect. But now Vladimir Ilyich hurried to the pulpit, and cried "Comrades!" in his guttural way. He seemed to me to speak badly, but after a minute I, like everybody else, was absorbed in his speech. It was the first time I had heard complicated political questions treated so simply. There was no striving after eloquent phrases; every word was uttered distinctly, and its meaning was marvelously plain.

His arm was extended with the hand slightly raised, and he seemed to weigh every word with it, and to sift out the remarks of his opponents, replacing them with momentous arguments for the right and duty of the working class to go its own way, and not along with the liberal bourgeoisie or trailing behind it. All this was unusual, and Lenin seemed to say it not of his own will, but by the will of history.

The unity, completeness, directness and strength of his speech, his whole appearance in the pulpit, was a veritable work of classic art. He gave a shorter speech than the orators who spoke before him, but he made a much greater impression. I was not alone in feeling this. Behind me was an enthusiastic whispering: "Now, *he* has got something to say." It really was so. His conclusions were not reached artificially, but developed by themselves, inevitably. The Mensheviks made no attempt to hide their displeasure at the speech and more than displeasure at Lenin himself. The more convincingly he showed the

necessity to the Party of the utmost development of revolutionary theory so that the practice might be thoroughly surveyed in the light of it, the more exasperatedly did they interrupt him. "A Congress isn't the place for philosophy!" "Don't act the teacher with us, we're not school-boys!"

One tall, bearded individual who looked like a shopkeeper was especially aggressive. He jumped up from his seat and stuttered: "Little p-plots—p-playing at little p-plots! Blanquists!"

Rosa Luxemburg nodded her head in approval of Lenin. She made a neat remark to the Mensheviks at one of the later meetings. "You don't stand on Marxism, you sit on it, rather lie down on it."

HIS free minutes or hours Lenin spent among the workers, asking them about the most petty details of their lives. "What about their wives? Up to the neck in housework? But do they manage to learn anything, to read anything?"

Once in Hyde Park a group of workers who had seen Lenin for the first time at the Congress was discussing his conduct there. One of them made a striking remark: "For all I know there may be other fellows as clever as he in Europe on the side of the workers. But I don't believe you'll find another one who could get you on the spot like that fellow!"

Another one added with a smile, "He's one of us all right."

"Plekhanov's just as much one of us," some one replied. The answer I heard just hit the mark—"You feel that Plekhanov's always teaching you, lording it over you, but Lenin's a real leader and comrade."

THERE was, in Capri, another Lenin—a splendid comrade, a light-hearted person with a lively, inexhaustible interest in everything under the sun, and strikingly gentle toward people. He had a certain magnetic quality which drew the hearts and sympathies of the working people to him. He did not speak Italian, but the Capri fishermen, who had seen Chaliapin and many other outstanding Russians, by a kind of instinct put Lenin in a special place at once. His laugh was enchanting—the hearty laugh of a man who, through being so well acquainted with the clumsy stupidity of human beings and the acrobatic trickery of the quick-witted, could find pleasure in the child-like artlessness of the "Simple in heart." One old fisherman, Giovanni

Spadaro, said of him: "Only an honest man could laugh like that.

We would go rowing sometimes, on water blue and transparen as the sky, and Lenin learned how to catch fish "with his finger"— using the line alone, without the rod. The fisherman explained to hin that the fish must be hooked when the finger feels the vibration of th line. *"Cosi: drin, drin. Capisce?"*

A second later he hooked a fish, drew it in and cried out with child like joy and a hunter's excitement, "Drin, drin." The fishermen roare with laughter, gay as children, and nicknamed the fisherman "Signo Drin-Drin." After he had gone away, they continued to ask: "Hov is Drin-Drin getting on? The Tsar hasn't caught him yet?"

IT WAS his clearly expressed will to live, his active hatred of life' abominations, which attracted me to him. I loved the youthfu eagerness which he put into everything he did. His movements wer light and agile, and his rare but powerful gestures were in full harmon with his speech, sparing as it was in words, in thought abounding. O his slightly Mongolian face glowed and sparkled the keen eyes of tireless fighter against the lies and sorrows of life—now glowing an burning, now screwed up, now blinking, now ironically smiling, nov lashing with anger. . . .

It was an unusual and extraordinary thing to see Lenin in the par at Gorky,* so much has the idea of him become associated with th picture of a man sitting at the end of a long table and expertly an skillfully guiding the comrades in their work, with the observant eye of a pilot, smiling and beaming; or standing on a platform with hea thrown back, casting clear distinct words to the hushed crowd, befor the eager faces of the people thirsting for truth.

He was fearless by nature but his was not the mercenary daring the gambler. In Lenin it was the manifestation of that exception moral courage which can be found only in a man with an unshakab belief in his calling, in a man with a profound and complete perceptio of his connection with the world, and perfect comprehension of h role in the chaos of the world, the role of enemy of that chaos.

With equal enthusiasm he would play chess, look through *A Histo of Dress,* dispute for hours with comrades, fish, go for walks alon

* A country place near Moscow to which Lenin would retire for rest, whe he spent his period of illness and where he died January 21, 1924.

the stony paths of Capri, scorching under the southern sun, feast his eyes on the golden color of the gorse, and on the swarthy children of the fishermen. In the evening, listening to stories about Russia and the country he would sigh enviously and say, "I know very little of Russia—Simbirsk, Kazan, Petersburg, exile in Siberia and that is nearly all."

ONCE, in Gorky, when he was caressing some children, he said: "These will have happier lives than we had. They will not experience much that we lived through. There will not be so much cruelty in their lives."

Then, looking into the distance, to the hills where the village nestled, he added pensively: "And yet I don't envy them. Our generation achieved something of amazing significance for history. The cruelty, which the conditions of our life made necessary, will be understood and vindicated. Everything will be understood, everything." He caressed the children with great care, with an especially gentle and tender touch.

Once I came to him and saw *War and Peace* lying on the table. "Yes. Tolstoy. I wanted to read over the scene of the hunt, then remembered that I had to write to a comrade. Absolutely no time for reading. Only last night I managed to read your book on Tolstoy."

Smiling and screwing up his eyes, he stretched himself deliciously in his armchair and, lowering his voice, added quickly, "What a Colossus, eh? What a marvelously developed brain! Here's an artist for you, sir. And do you know something still more amazing? You couldn't find a genuine muzhik in literature until this Count came on the scene."

Then screwing up his eyes and looking at me, he asked, "Can you put any one in Europe beside him?" and replied himself, "No one." And he rubbed his hands, laughing contentedly.

I more than once noticed this trait in him, this pride in Russian literature. Sometimes this feature appeared to me strangely foreign to Lenin's nature, appeared even naive, but I learned to perceive in it the echo of his deep-seated, joyful love for his fatherland. In Capri, while watching how the fishermen carefully disentangle the nets, torn and entangled by the sharks, he observed: "Our men work more quickly." When I cast some doubt on this remark, he said with a touch

of vexation, "H'm, h'm. Don't you think you are forgetting Russia, living on this bump?"

He was a Russian who lived for a long time away from his native land, and had examined it attentively—from afar it appears brighter and more beautiful. He estimated accurately its potential forces, and the exceptional talents of its people, which were as yet feebly expressed, unawakened by a monotonous and oppressive history, but which gleamed everywhere like golden stars against the somber background of the fantastic life of Russia.

Vladimir Lenin, profoundly and greatly a man of this world, is dead. His death is a grievous blow to the hearts of those who knew him, grievous indeed.

But the darkness of death only emphasizes the more strongly to the world his great importance as the leader of the working class of the world.

And if the dark cloud of hatred, of lies and calumny, were even denser than it is, it would matter not at all. There is no force which can put out the torch which Lenin raised aloft in the stifling darkness of a mad world.

And no other man has so well deserved the eternal remembrance of the world.

Vladimir Lenin is dead. But the inheritors of this thought and will are alive. They live and carry on a work which is more victorious than any other in the history of mankind.

Liebknecht Dead

by RUDOLF LEONHARD

His dead body lies over the whole city,
In all the yards—in all the streets.
All the dwellings
Are pale from the flowing of his blood.

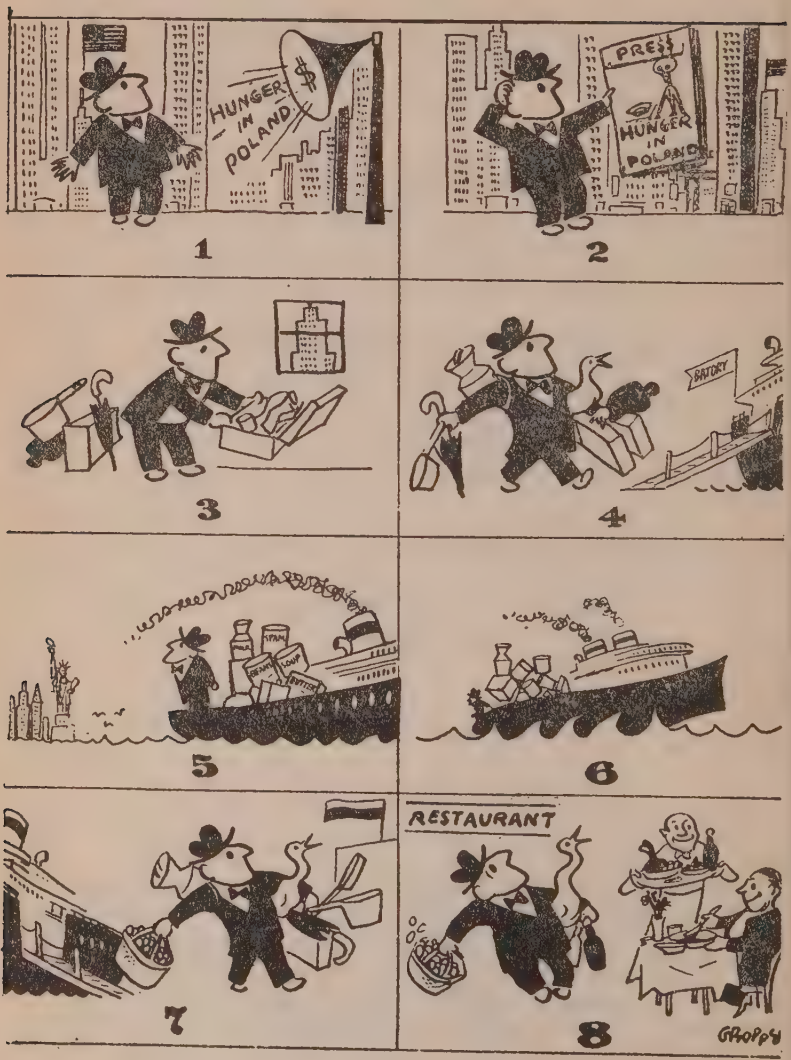
Now the factory sirens start
Their long unending roar,
Gaping
Over the whole city
Their hollow shrill.

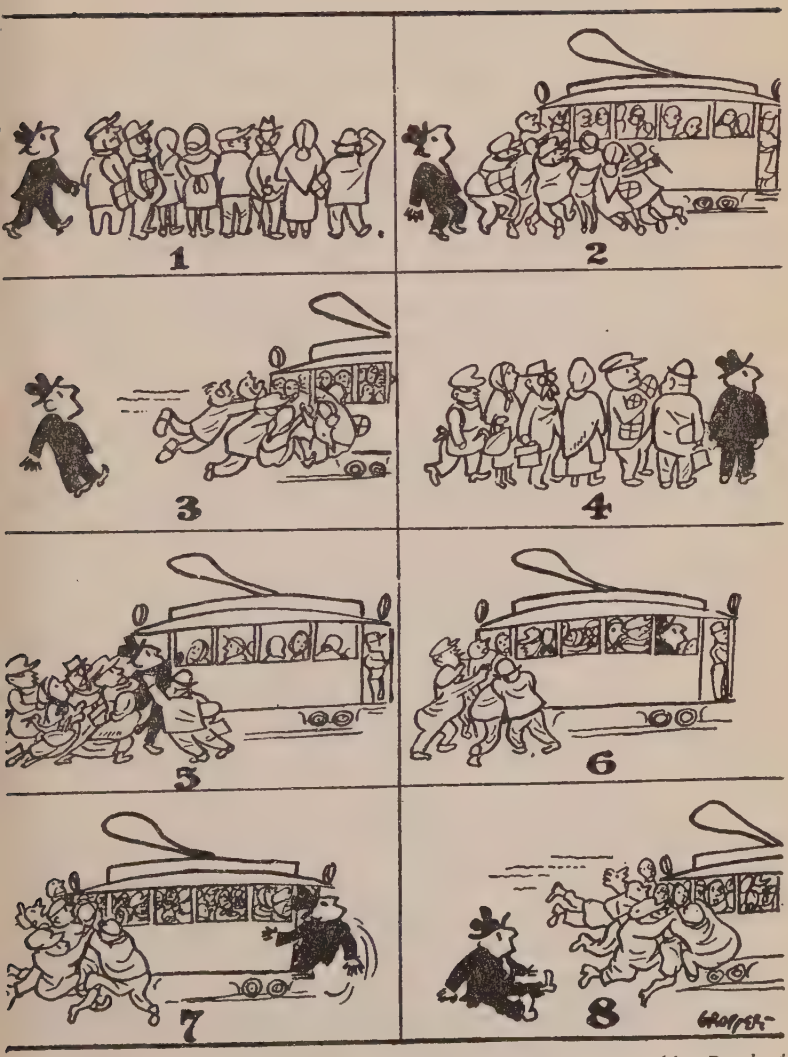
And with a gleam
On bright
Stark teeth
His dead body begins
To smile.

(*Translated from the German by V. J. Jerome.*)

NOTE: Karl Liebknecht, a militant German anti-imperialist, was the only Socialist in the Reichstag to vote against the war budget at the outbreak of World War I. Co-founder with Rosa Luxemburg of the Spartacus League (forerunner of the German Communist Party), Liebknecht together with Luxemburg was murdered, on January 15, 1919, by counter-revolutionaries abetted by the Social-Democrats in power.

GROPPER IN POLAND





From the Warsaw weekly, *Przekrój*.

MONA LISA

by JOHN HOWARD LAWSON

This article is based on a section of Mr. Lawson's forthcoming book, Tap-Roots of Our National Culture: in the Soil of European and World History. *The book is to be published in the fall of* 1950. *"It deals," writes Mr. Lawson, "with cultural history as an integrated movement of social, economic and political forces. The method links the past and present, tracing dominant traits in our contemporary culture to their origins."*

WHILE Columbus made his last attempt to find Asia across the Atlantic, and Europe began to read the fictitious voyages of Amerigo Vespucci, Leonardo da Vinci painted the portrait of the woman known as Madonna Lisa. The artist worked on the picture intermittently from 1502 to 1506.

It is hard to measure fame, and there is no statistical evidence to prove that "Mona Lisa" is the most famous painting in the world. But there are certainly few pictures which are so closely associated with a symbol or idea in the popular imagination. Millions who have never even seen the original, knowing it through reproductions or only by reputation, associate Mona Lisa's smile with the "eternal" mystery of woman.

The picture exhibits a new approach to portraiture, which is far more than a development of technical virtuosity or psychological subtlety. We can define the change in terms of the artist's growth by comparing "Mona Lisa" with the "Madonna of the Rocks," painted by Leonardo two decades earlier. Even in the 1480's, Leonardo had begun to humanize the fifteenth-century conception of the Virgin: he placed her in an intimate group with two naked children and a youthful angel. But there is a psychological leap from the "Madonna of the Rocks,"

with her downcast eyes and her irreproachable innocence, to the Lady Lisa, with her eyes carefully smiling and her irreproachable "mystery."

Lisa, the wife of Francesco del Giacondo, was twenty-three when Leonardo began the painting. She had been married for seven years, coming to Florence from Naples as Giacondo's third wife in 1495. When one looks at the portrait, one is apt to think of Lisa as a mature woman. We know very little about her, but we may suspect that her apparent maturity is related to the circumstances of her life. At all events, Leonardo depicted her with the most perfect physical realism. Working from black-and-white sketches, and using other sitters for the hands and the body, he brought to the task a prodigal concentration of his accumulated knowledge of paint, texture and anatomy.

Lisa is "inscrutable," in the sense that a personality completely seen in its external aspect is not completely known in its inwardness. Lisa's enigma is that of the upper-class woman who has learned to conceal her emotions. She may have depths of character; she may be capable of passion and sacrifice. But the depths are guarded, the passion is stilled. With her eyebrows carefully plucked in the fashion of the time, Lisa has the physical poise of good breeding, the tranquility of the flesh richly attired. One may assume that she is following Agnolo Firensuola's advice to the lady of fashion, to open the mouth a little "at the left side, as if you were smiling secretly . . . not in an artificial manner, but as though unconsciously—this is not an affectation, if it is done in moderation and in a restrained and graceful manner and accompanied by innocent coquetry and by certain movements of the eyes."

One can regard Lisa as the forerunner of the heroines of the novel and the drama of the next four centuries. She is the arch-type of Balzac's and Ibsen's women; of the frustrated, dreaming, scheming women caught in the net of bourgeois property relationships. However, in order to place the picture in an understandable historical setting, we must consider Leonardo's life and the social forces that shaped his artistic and personal development.

THE discovery of America was a phase of the commercial expansion of Europe and the breakdown of the Catholic-feudal structure of power. The dissolution of the medieval order was accompanied by social struggles, which continued from the fourteenth to the sixteenth cen-

tury revolutionary movements of the peasantry and the lower classes which occurred in every part of Europe—the Jacquerie in France and the Wat Tyler rebellion in England; the Hussite War in Bohemia; the risings of craftsmen and laborers in Flanders and Italy; the movements in Central Europe that were to culminate in the German peasant war in 1525. These revolts were to a considerable extent responsible for the disintegration of the Catholic-feudal structure. The mass protest helped the rising bourgeoisie to wring concessions from the rulers of church and state; and fear that the people would achieve wider organization and make more radical demands was a potent factor in determining various compromises between the old aristocracy and the more influential representatives of commerce and industry.

Leonardo's life-span, from 1452 to 1519, covered the period of social ferment and class conflict that preceded the Reformation. The breakdown of the medieval structure, with its impressive ideological superstructure, was well advanced. But the forms of organization that would replace the old order had not yet emerged. The uncertainty encouraged the Utopian view that the human energies released from medieval restraints would have a continuing freedom of development. In defying the authoritarian priesthood, the artist and the thinker dreamed that *their* values—the values of a vague but deeply felt humanism—would become the property of the whole society. The illusion, which is still preserved by the custodians of culture, was a vital force in a period when the class relationships of the epoch of capitalism had not crystallized. This is the key to the apparent "universality" of Renaissance culture, embodied in its most creative form in the work of Leonardo.

The specific circumstances of Leonardo's life were an integral part of the larger pattern of social change. He was the illegitimate son of a prosperous notary. At about the age of eighteen, he was apprenticed to Andrea del Verrochio. In 1472, when he was twenty, his name was entered in the Red Book of the painters of Florence. Ten years later he left Florence, established himself in Milan. In order to understand the reasons for his departure, we must turn from art to a more prosaic commodity—alum.

Florence was under the dictatorship of the Medici family. The Medici operated three manufacturing establishments, one making silk and two engaged in the production of woolen cloth. Their financial inter-

ests spread across Europe. They had branch banks in Bruges, London, Avignon, Geneva, Venice, Rome and Milan. The economic expansion in the middle of the fifteenth century led the Medici to join with the papacy in one of the earliest cartel arrangements: an attempt to corner the European supply of alum. Since alum was indispensable to textile production, being used as a mordant in dyeing cloth, the plan envisioned control of the whole European cloth trade. Alum was imported from the Levant, but in 1459 rich deposits were discovered in Civitavecchia in the Papal territories. In 1466, the Medici reached an agreement with the papacy for the exploitation of the mines, forming a company which paid a royalty to the Vatican.

THE projected cartel caused vast political repercussions. In order to enforce the monopoly and raise the price, the pope prohibited the importation of Turkish alum, demanding that laws to this effect be passed in the three great areas of cloth production—England, Flanders and Venice. There was bitter and effective protest, especially in Flanders, where compliance with the pope's demand disrupted the textile industry and brought the cities to open rebellion. Meanwhile, the Medici pushed the monopoly by securing control of other Italian mines, either by agreement or by military conquest. Frightened by the widespread protest, and fearing that the Medici were gaining international power at the expense of the church, Pope Sixtus IV reversed the Vatican's policy, entering into an alliance with the rival Florentine banking house of Pazzi—who, by a not so strange coincidence, were interested in the importation of Turkish alum.

The result was the Pazzi conspiracy, which shook Florence in 1478. The attempt of the Pazzi to seize power failed, but it undermined the position of the Medici. The pope used the occasion to break his contract with the firm; he took over the alum mines in papal territory and excommunicated Lorenzo de Medici. Superficially, the conflict was the sort of thieves' quarrel that is common in the world of high finance. But such quarrels are often symptomatic of deep fissures in the structure of power. The Vatican was desperately seeking to consolidate its hold on the European economy; but it could not control the expanding forces of commerce and craft production. The Medici bank, entangled in the net of ecclesiastical interests, was also unable to maintain its old supremacy.

Thus the quarrel was a sign of weaknesses that were to affect the destiny of Italy. In Florence, the Medici dictatorship could no longer claim even a semblance of popular support. It rested on naked force. The dissatisfaction of the middle class and the increasing exploitation of small craftsmen and laborers pointed to the imminence of a revolutionary outbreak.

The social history of Florence in these years may be traced with painful simplicity in the art of Boticelli. The man who had been engaged in painting the enchanting "Primavera" on the walls of one of the Medici villas was given a sordid propaganda task in 1478; he was ordered to paint the effigies of the Pazzi conspirators, hanging by their necks, on the walls of the Palazzo del Podesta. As the class conflict developed, Boticelli's work moved toward anger and frustration, reaching a climax in the distorted, bent and struggling bodies of his final period.

LEONARDO was a greater and more complex figure. Like most thoughtful Italians, he hoped that Italy would unite under a strong national ruler, following the course of development that had already been indicated in England and France. Ludovico Sforza, master of Milan, had the apparent strength and vigor to make him a potential national leader. Leonardo entered Ludovico's service in 1482. One may assume that Leonardo was thinking of Italy's national hopes when he wrote to Ludovico reciting his qualifications as an inventor of instruments of war. He said he could make engines for attack or defense, on land or sea—"armored cars, safe and unassailable . . . cannons, mortars and light ordnance . . . catapults, mangonels, trabocchi and other engines of wonderful efficacy. . . ."

Leonardo seems to have come to Milan with strong hopes that he would be able to perform important civic services, both in revolutionizing the city's military organization and in developing irrigation projects and improvements in municipal planning which would contribute to the safety and welfare of the people. Leonardo found the protection and encouragement which he required for creative activity and scientific investigation. But Ludovico's patronage did not bring the acceptance of any of the artist's ambitious proposals. The Sforza dictatorship was as oppressive and unpopular as the rule of the Medici in Florence.

The intrigue and corruption of Italian politics reached a climax when

Roderigo Borgia secured the papal tiara in 1492. As Pope Alexander VI, Roderigo's conduct was not much worse than that of some of his predecessors. The passions and crimes that made the Borgia family notorious revealed the moral sickness of the age. It was revealed more strikingly in the political policies of Ludovico; in encouraging a French invasion of Italy, he played a role which was somewhat similar to that of the collaborationists who welcomed the Nazis to Paris in 1940. Instead of uniting Italy, he became his country's executioner, securing temporary immunity for himself and hoping to snatch advantages from the devastation of the land.

The French armies—in which there were almost no Frenchmen, for they were composed of Swiss and other mercenaries—were entertained at Milan when they crossed the Alps in 1494. As they marched south to conquer and loot, the Medici prepared to surrender Florence and pay a large indemnity to protect their property. The threat brought the long-delayed revolution against the dictatorship. The Dominican monk, Savonarola, spoke to multitudes gathered in the cathedral. The ancient cry, *Popolo e Liberta,* rose in the streets. In a few hours, everything that the Medici had built over a century crumbled, and Piero and Giuliano de Medici, with a small army of retainers, were in flight.

THE period of Savonarola's leadership in Florence is of extraordinary interest, as an example of the changing class relationships at the beginning of the epoch of capitalism; it represents one of the earliest attempts to establish a structure of state-power in the interests of the middle class. Savonarola purported to speak for *everyone,* for the people as a mass, and especially for the exploited journeymen and laborers. But it soon became apparent that the "democratic" aspects of his preachments, his attack on the evils of wealth and his call for simplicity and brotherhood, were designed to secure support for measures which were actually in the interests of merchants, enterprisers and the privileged group of skilled craftsmen.

Savonarola opposed the attempts of the wealthy oligarchy to re-establish a dictatorship on the Medici model. But instead of rallying the people to defend the city, he made an agreement with the French invaders on approximately the same sordid terms as those that caused the Medici to be driven from Florence. He insisted on a constitution that followed the Venetian model, vesting all power in a Grand Council

that represented only the well-to-do citizens. He stopped a move to exempt the *populo minuto,* the small people, from taxation. He thundered against *parliamenti,* the assemblies of the population that gathered in the Piazza.

Savonarola was a representative of the rising bourgeoisie—but it was a bourgeoisie corrupted by the instability of the Medicean period, greedy for opportunity but incapable of statesmanship. Savonarola's attack on the pope and the whole church organization prepared the way for the Reformation. But there was none of the stern metal of Calvinism in the men who surrounded him. His emotional religiosity was an attempt to hold the wavering support of the crowd, but it was also an appeal from the human impossibilities of the moment to a mystic certitude.

As his moderate program met increasing obstructions, as his support melted away, his emotional violence increased. He represented what may be described as the *hysteria of the middle way*—a phenomenon that was to characterize many of the later apostles of bourgeois reform. The party of the aristocracy seized power in March, 1498. They hesitated to move against Savonarola, in spite of the papal demand for his destruction, for the monk had not completely lost his popularity. But they hit on a grimly appropriate jest: the man who had promised miracles was called to stand before the multitude and perform a miracle. When Savonarola failed to appear for the ordeal, riots and demonstrations led to his arrest. Trial, torture and execution followed.

The contradiction in Savonarola's position extended to his cultural influence. He demanded simplicity and holiness in art, a return to the devout fleshless painting of Fra Angelico, with its carefully draped figures and ascetic visions. Yet the Popular Party seemed to offer the only hope of progress to the discouraged Boticelli and the youthful Michelangelo. The latter, who was nineteen when Savonarola assumed power, was deeply affected by the Florentine events, adopting the patriotic, anti-clerical side of the Popular Party's program as the guiding principles of his life and art.

WE HAVE no record of the full impact of these troubled years on Leonardo's thought. The most profound statement of his intellectual experience at the time may be found in the somber drama of the "Last Supper": the betrayal of Christ is the betrayal of man; the terrible certainty of the approaching catastrophe is inherent in the mood of the

picture; yet it also has a dignity and faith which transcends the tragedy and foretells the ultimate triumph of humanity.

For a time, Leonardo was safe in Milan. But Ludovico's betrayal brought its inevitable reward. The French invaders had caught a glimpse of the Sforza wealth when they visited Milan as friends in 1494. When Louis XII came to the throne of France in 1498, he formed an alliance with the Vatican; entering Italy as the pope's ally, he captured Milan. Ludovico fled.

The classic tragi-comedy of the collaborationist was played to an appropriate conclusion. Early in 1500, Ludovico purchased an army of Swiss mercenaries, which recaptured Milan. Ludovico's employees faced another Swiss army under the flag of France. The issue was decided, not by force of arms, but by a strike of one body of mercenaries. On the eve of the battle of Novarro, Ludovico's troops refused to fight, not because they had any compunction in regard to killing their compatriats, but because their pay was in arrears. Defeated, Ludovico retired to a French dungeon.

This movement of events forms the historical setting for the "Mona Lisa," and defines its significance as the first and greatest example of the psychological portraiture that was to flower in the art and literature of the epoch of capitalism. Leonardo had fled from Milan when his patron was driven out in 1498. The artist went to Mantua and Venice, finally returning to his native city. He was fifty years old when he started the picture in 1502. In that year, the last vestiges of free government were eliminated in Florence. The artist painted a woman carefully smiling, against a formal landscape that disclosed nothing of the country's agony. The woman revealed nothing of her own experience; she had been only sixteen when she came to Florence, in the first year of Savonarola's rule. She had seen the revolutionary striving of the people, listened to the tumult in the streets, waited with other women of her class to hear the news of the monk's execution and the return to power of the wealthy oligarchy to which she belonged.

There was nothing especially sensational in Madonna Lisa's life, in contrast to the career of her famous contemporary Lucrezia Borgia, who was the daughter of a pope, married in the Vatican at the age of thirteen, and then divorced and remarried four times before she was twenty-one, in order to advance the tangled political fortunes of her family. This melodrama of intrigue, murder and possible incest, sug-

gests another aspect of the "eternal mystery" of womanhood—the degradation of woman in the period when the bourgeoisie in the words of the *Communist Manifesto,* began to "put an end to all feudal, patriarchal, idyllic relations," resolving "personal worth into exchange value," drowning sentiment "in the icy waters of egotistical calculation."

Then as now, the problem of rational social organization was most dramatically expressed in the irrational "inevitability" of slaughter, and Leonardo spoke of war as the "most bestial madness." While he painted the portrait of Lisa, he was at work on the mural for the Palazzo Vecchio, in which he intended to depict the fury of battle with uncompromising realism. His notebooks show his determination to portray the true face of war:

> "Make the dead, some half-buried in dust, others with the dust all mingled with the oozing blood and changing into crimson mud . . . Show others in the death agony grinding their teeth and rolling their eyes, with clenched fists grinding against their bodies and with legs distorted."

In planning the mural, Leonardo decided to use a new method of applying the pigment to the wall. The experiment was a failure, and the picture was ruined. We have only the artist's fragmentary sketches of galloping horses, convulsed figures, strained faces, to suggest the impact of the completed work. The mess that might have been Leonardo's greatest painting remained untouched in the Palazzo Vecchio for fifty years, the space finally being covered with frescoes by Vasari. The ruined wall, blotted with paint that had run or scaled, was like a barrier on the road of Leonardo's life—a mess of broken colors where he had tried to see an ordered universe.

THERE was no abatement in Leonardo's creative energy. He travelled, made sketches, notes, observations on philosophy, anatomy, astronomy, optics, mathematics. But he knew that the hopes of Renaissance humanism had failed. The world was not moving along the road of peace. It was marching to greater wars and more brutal exploitation.

In 1512, a Spanish invasion brought the Medici back to Italy. Giuliano de Medici took over the government of Florence, and in 1513 Giovanni de Medici became Pope Leo X. Giovanni undertook

impressive architectural and artistic projects in Rome. The profit on these projects—the difference between the amount of money collected and the actual cost of the work—was enormous. Indeed, the collection of tribute for the building of St. Peter's was the direct cause of the German protest led by Luther which inaugurated the Reformation.

Leonardo was one of the eminent painters who came to Rome under papal patronage in 1513. Other men adjusted themselves to the demands of the Vatican: Raphael became the chief architect of St. Peter's in 1514. Michelangelo, who had been having difficulty collecting his pay for the decoration of the Sistine chapel, and who regarded the return of the Medici as a political catastrophe, swallowed his pride and accepted Leo's commissions. But for Leonardo, with his broad scientific interests, the intellectual atmosphere of Rome was stifling. He was given an apartment in the Vatican, but his experiments and anatomical drawings caused the suspicion that he was meddling with witchcraft. When Francis I invaded Italy in 1515, he invited Leonardo to return to France with him. The artist complied, taking the "Mona Lisa," which was sold to the French monarch for 12,000 francs.

Leonardo spent his last years in comfortable exile in central France, where he died in 1519. But he was a wanderer, a man without an intellectual home. The gold of the Americas was beginning to reach Europe; Balboa had seen the Pacific and Cortes was preparing to conquer Mexico. In his "Prophecies," Leonardo foresaw the course of Europe's colonial expansion. He wrote "of the precious metals":

> "There shall come forth out of dark and gloomy Caves that which shall cause the whole human race to undergo great afflictions, perils, and death. . . . It shall bring to pass an endless number of crimes; it shall prompt and incite wretched men to assassinate, to steal and to enslave. . . ."

Was this the answer to the promise of the Renaissance, the revelations of science, the new knowledge of man and nature? Was this the secret of Mona Lisa's eyes? Was the majority of mankind condemned forever to conflict and toil, while art and truth were dedicated to the texture of rich fabric, the beauty of the flesh, the enigma of a careful smile?

The Hellfire Jack

A Story by DAL STIVENS

WE WERE working shorthanded and about to begin shearing when a leathery-looking cove with a swag and a fierce-looking kelpie bitch turned up looking for a job. The boss got all over him and started pitching a tale about how good he was to work for, but all the bloke said was, "When do I start?"

"Well, there's some wood that wants cutting, but I was thinking of —" says the boss, and before he had finished the leathery cove had whipped off his coat and was running to the woodheap. He picked up the axe on the run and the chips started flying. The heap of logs was fifteen feet high, but the chips were eight inches by six, and in next to no time the heap was all chopped up and the bloke came running back and stood in front of the boss.

"Got another job?" he asked.

"Well," said the boss, "there's a dam down there that wants cleaning out, but I was thinking of—"

Before the boss had finished the bloke was beating it in a cloud of dust down to the wrong dam, and the boss had to yell to him and set him right.

The leathery cove rounded up the horses on the run and in next to no time he had flung the harness on their backs and had hitched forty horses on to three scoops and was scooping great hunks out of the dam. Before you could say Jack Robinson the job was done and the bloke came back at the double and stood in front of the boss again and said:

"Got another job?"

"There are a few lambs that want marking, but I was thinking of—" said the boss, and before he could finish the bloke was running to the paddock and pulling out his Jno. Baker knife. He jumped the fence and before his legs had hit the ground he had grabbed a lamb by the leg and set to work.

The boss started walking over to the bloke and five minutes later, when he got up with him, he said, "Don't you want to have them rounded up?"

But the bloke only muttered something about not liking to waste time, and before you could think of your name he had marked six hundred lambs and had run up to the boss and said, "Got another job?"

"Well," said the boss, "I tried to tell you before, but I was thinking of starting shearing."

Before the words were out of his mouth the bloke had snatched a pair of shears out of his swag and was off in a cloud of dust. Before you could blink he was nearly out of sight in the big paddock. I tell you without a word of a lie that that paddock was so big you would need twenty fresh horses to gallop round it in a day and it had more sheep than you would see people on Easter Monday at the Royal Show in Sydney.

The leathery cove gathered the sheep in at the double and before long there was a pile of wool as high as a silo. The shears ran hot and the bloke had to keep running to the dam to dip them in the water and a cloud of dust and steam spread out over the paddock. The pile of wool got higher and higher until it was soon as high as the top of the Harbor Bridge and the dam dried up, what from the sizzling hot shears, but the bloke kept on clipping away.

In next to no time the paddock was full of sheep running around with the short wool smoking on their backs and wondering what the hell had happened to them and the mountain of wool got twice as high as the Harbor Bridge and so wide and long you would have had to saddle a horse to travel round it.

The bloke was setting off for the second paddock when the boss grabbed him.

"Don't you think you've done enough?" says the boss. "You ought to call it a day."

Before the boss had got the words out of his mouth the bloke was pulling on his coat and was off up to the house and the boss yelled to ask him what he was doing, but the bloke kept on going and yelled back over his shoulder:

"Give me my check. I ain't working for any boss who is always interfering."

He ran up to the house and grabbed his swag and called his dog.

The boss tried to argue but the bloke wouldn't listen and danced from one foot to another, so the boss said:

"I ain't one to stint. It was two hours' work, but call it half a day."

He held out half a note and the bloke snatched it on the run, and before long all we had to remind us of the leathery bloke was a cloud of dust settling on the road, a heap of wool as high as a dust storm, the dried-up dam, and the bleating of the sheep who didn't settle down to what had happened for three days.

We had reckoned on the shearing not cutting out for six weeks, but it was only a week after that that the boss handed us our pay. We went to ten shearing sheds looking for work and everywhere it was the same where this Hellfire Jack had been with heaps of wool as big as clouds and sheep still getting their breath back, and if ever you are about to begin a job and you hear there's a leathery cove around with a fierce-looking kelpie bitch, don't bother to start, jump the rattler and put three States behind you and then you might be right.

books in review

Marxism and Art

SOCIAL ROOTS OF THE ARTS, by Louis Harap. *International.* $2.25.

IN THE wasteland of bourgeois thought, a particularly arid region is reserved for esthetics. It is a realm intensely jealous of its sovereignty, where philosophers speculate abstractly about the nature of beauty. The specific forms of anti-materialist esthetic theory range from Benedetto Croce's "lyrical intuition" to Clive Bell's "significant form." But the function is always the same—to remove art from the problems of living people. This is supposed to exalt art, but instead, of course, it mutilates art by lopping off its social roots and purposes.

For the Marxist, esthetics is a science. Based on historical materialism, it is the science of the laws of artistic development and of the principles of artistic creation. Marxist esthetics restores art to history, and like all scientific theory it has practical human significance. For esthetics is also a guide to action; a guide, that is, to the production of art that advances the well being of the people, and, in so doing, raises the stature of art. Moreover, without sound esthetic theory all criticism of the arts is bound to be arbitrary and subjective.

Because Marxists in this country have lagged behind in the development of this science, we should especially welcome the signs of serious work in the field, the most recent of which is Louis Harap's *Social Roots of the Arts.* Dr. Harap, who is at present managing editor of *Jewish Life,* has for many years devoted himself to the philosophy of the arts. His book represents a conscientious grappling with knotty problems of theory that press for solution. His aim here is modest; it is "to present certain known principles of Marxist esthetics and to suggest problems for further examination through collective effort of many scholars and thinkers."

This intention is fulfilled in a number of important respects. The

keynote chapter, "Production as Foundation," is especially useful because it presents briefly and clearly the basis of the Marxist approach to esthetics. Harap here examines the significance for art of Marx's discovery that "The mode of production in material life determines the social, political and intellectual life processes in general."

Emphasizing that the history of art can be adequately grasped only by tracing its links with the economic structure of society, Harap at the same time heeds Engels' caution against a schematic interpretation of historical materialism. Using a wide range of examples drawn from primitive, Greek, Gothic and American art, the author richly illustrates the essential though complex relation between spiritual and material culture. He continues through the book to chip away the idealist illusion that art is independent of social forces as well as at the bourgeois sociologist's theory that the sources of art are to be found vaguely in an undifferentiated society.

The understanding of "production as foundation" implies a class understanding of art, and this unfolds in the book, culminating in the chapters on "Art Under Fascism" and "Art Under Socialism." Harap stresses the fact that in class society the artist necessarily reflects class modes of thought and that "the content of art simply cannot be perceived in its full reality except as a product of class struggle." With convincing scholarship he shows that the artist is not placed above classes "like a god sitting in judgment on human affairs or as a conveyor of permanent, abstract values."

Thus, a stimulating chapter on "Class and Audience" briefly shows the effect of historically developing audiences on the work of Shakespeare, Mozart, Hogarth. A chapter on "Molding of Form," citing the example of the novel and the film, indicates that the development of form is influenced by "technological change, shifts in the scheme of values brought on by class struggle, prevailing social, political, economic, and scientific thought."

In other chapters dealing with such problems as "Flux of Taste," "Music and Ideology," "Art and Social Action," Folk Art" and "Mass Art," Harap specifically traces his theme that the social roots and goals of culture must be understood if esthetic theory is to have any relation to reality. And in the last chapters he contrasts the deliberate degradation of art and of the people's taste under monopoly capitalism with the new creative relation between the artist and the people in the Soviet Union.

Within the compass of a short book (it is less than 200 pages) Harap has therefore touched on a number of basic problems. This

is a pioneer effort that provokes thought and study. To further the discussion that Harap calls for in his preface I should like to indicate a few of the questions the book raises in my mind.

Harap's treatment of bourgeois modernism in the arts (abstractionism, Futurism, Eliot, Joyce) seems to me faulty. He notes that "Art . . . grows moribund in the stages of imperialism and fascism because this system of ultra-reactionary ideas is enforced as the ideological basis of art." But he fails to apply this truth with real sharpness. He shares a widespread tendency in discussions of art to forget that we have been in the epoch of imperialism for half a century.

Thus, a persistent theme of the book, derived from Plekhanov's *Art and Society,* is that "The philistinism of industrial bourgeois society repelled the artist and he resorted to technical experimentation as one escape from the repellent content offered by his society." This thesis needs careful examination. It has validity up to a point, though it should be noted that even in the pre-imperialist epoch of capitalism the "repellent content" included the working class.

But to treat T. S. Eliot in terms of this principle is wholly invalid. Harap writes: "Artistically Eliot rejected the fruits of industrial capitalism, but in practice he supported it by Toryism in politics.

The crucial determinant of Eliot's traditionalism was the impact of philistinism and, more deeply, a sensitive perception of the sterility of bourgeois life."

Setting aside the false contrast implied in Eliot as artist and Eliot "in practice," I think it is wholly wrong to regard Eliot as a rebel against bourgeois philistinism. He represents capitalist culture in decay; his alleged sensitivity is in fact insensitivity to the savage cruelty of an oppressive social order whose values he champions—and they are philistine values.

Harap declares that scientific and technological advance has given rise to "abstractionism based on scientific principles." I believe that abstractionism is basically anti-scientific in its ideology. The example of the theosophist Kandinsky, a leader of the school, is not untypical. "Kandinsky identified representative painting with the dominance of science and materialism to which he was profoundly hostile," writes F. B. Blanshard in *Retreat from Likeness in the Theory of Painting.*

And Piet Mondrian, whom Harap calls "one of the most important of recent experimenters," advanced the highly scientific principle that "The expression of pure vitality which reality reveals through the manifestation of dynamic movement is the real content of art" (See Mondrian's essay on "The New Realism.")

In discussing the "dialectic of tradition" Harap falls into an eclectic position. Of Joyce's *Ulysses* he writes, "The dialectic of tradition is richly illustrated in his work," and the novel is described as "the culmination of centuries of literary development. . . ." Had Harap described *Ulysses* as the brilliant negation of the realistic tradition of Balzac and Tolstoy, a negation which must in turn be negated by writers with a working class outlook, I should have understood the dialectic process.

As it is, I am afraid we are led to an eclectic conclusion: "Our many-faceted culture can be approached from many technical directions," with the corollary advice to social artists not to abandon "the tradition built up in the years of declining capitalism, for it is in part a rebellion against the philistinism of these years. It is rather an adaptation of the viable features of this tradition to the new content that the vital artist will express."

The borrowing of the form without the content, indeed the very fact of being bedazzled by the form, implies a theory of art which is difficult to reconcile with Harap's assertion that "separation of form from content is in the last analysis impossible. . . ." I believe that progressive art is being held back by illusions and rationalizations concerning the "viable features" of modern decadence, and that it can advance only by unequi-

vocal rejection of every art tendency that embodies in both content and form a contempt for the people, futility, solipsism and all the other features of what Robinson Jeffers has proudly called "Inhumanism."

Harap's concluding chapter on "Art Under Socialism" is also weak in several important respects. The heart of Soviet artistic theory and practice is socialist realism, and failure to discuss this method leaves a serious vacuum. It follows that the basic principle of partisanship is much too inadequately examined. While noting the fact that in the Soviet Union "culture is for the people and by the people," Harap falls into extremely poor formulations.

"The Soviet audience," he writes "is growing into the cultural tradition of humanity." The truth is that the Soviet audience is not "growing into" but is the most advanced protagonist of the cultural tradition of humanity. The concrete importance of this truth was demonstrated in the Soviet discussions of art during the the past three years.

There are other points with which one might take issue in Harap's book. But it is a work that merits careful reading and discussion. One hopes that it will stimulate the collective thought and study which, as the author says, is necessary for further development.

SAMUEL SILLEN

More Dilemma

KILLERS OF THE DREAM, by Lillian Smith. *Norton.* $3.00.

THERE is a great deal of torture in the South, Lillian Smith tells us in her new book. In fact *Killers of the Dream* centers upon those agonies — of the "tortured southern liberal," "tortured young liberals," "the South, a tortured fragment of Western culture." So moved was the *New Republic* that it titled its review, "Pity the Whites."

And it is a tortuous book, probably inevitably so because:

"Tobacco Road is a long dark journey . . . leading from eroded little cotton and corn and tobacco patches through the South to Washington, on to Wall Street, to Europe, to Israel, to India and China, to the days of medievalism and back to slavery, to state capitals, to Main Street, to Moscow, to ballot box, to the bank, to church and courthouse, to a man's childhood and his deepest fears . . . curving and twisting from one to another endlessly."

(Maybe not endlessly, but for 250-odd pages, anyway.)

It is all an attempt by Miss Smith "to find the answer to that old question that gnaws on every [!] mind: Why has the white man dreamed so fabulous a dream of freedom and dignity and again and again tried to kill his own dream?"

More accurately the quest — through autobiography, parable and essay—is undertaken to verify in terms of the Southern white people the "answer" given by Gunnar Myrdal in his famous *Dilemma*: that the source of the Negro question lies in the hearts of all Americans.

Miss Smith is an embattled liberal of the Vital Center type. She deplores lynching, segregation, white supremacy—but she hits hardest at the main enemy: communism. One of the most distressing ideas in the South, she finds, is the Marxist teaching that the "cause of racial prejudice is economic." This benighted concept could never have seduced the people had they not instinctively shied away from the real answer taught by psychoanalysis: "hostility and self-destruction, and guilt and anxiety, and love and hate. . . ."

Through her own method ("more concerned with fears than with figures, more with the curve of an idea than with dates . . . more with the quality of feeling behind a fact than with the fact itself") Miss Smith achieves an easy triumph over Marxism on this score and establishes to her own satisfaction that "The white man's burden is his own childhood."

But even with this crucial question tidily cleared up, Miss Smith must still reckon with the "confusion of the liberals." Wherein lies the source of that confusion? "The spurious thing called *equal-*

ity." Gene Talmadge may never have dared to go quite so far as to charge that the concept "all men are created equal" is Communist propaganda — but then he was not a liberal Georgian like Lillian Smith, or a member of the Vital Center.

She's quite emphatic about it.

"We in America—and men across the earth—have trapped ourselves with that word *equality* which is inapplicable to the genus *man.* I wish we would forget it. Stop its use in our country. Let the Communists have it. It isn't fit for men who fling their dreams across the skies. . . ."

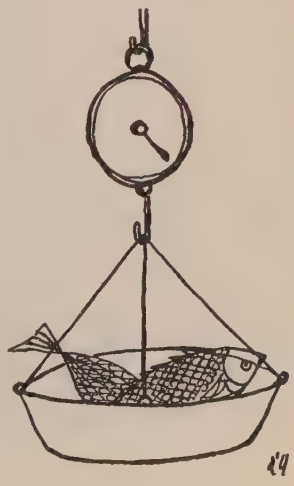
At first glance one might see a paradox here: Miss Smith is against both white supremacy and equality. She can't be, of course, and in fact she isn't. There is no evidence in the book to show that she is not entirely sincere in ceding to the hated Reds the sole rights to the "lie that all men are equal." But there is much striking evidence here that Lillian Smith is a white chauvinist.

To begin with, her basic premise that freedom, dignity, democracy—the Dream—is "the white man's" is rooted not in history but in the ideology of white supremacy. This idea which underlies the whole concept of the Negro question as the white man's "dilemma" denies to the Negro people any dynamic role in the solution of the problem (which is insoluble anyway, we are told).

Stripped of its mystical psychosemantic trappings, Miss Smith's thesis can be seen for what it is: the traditional Bourbon tenet of white supremacy. This is clearly revealed in a chapter in which she tells a child how the "trouble" all started.

It begins with a "bad war" and the "terrible Reconstruction" which followed, and continues through the eighty years since the Civil War—years of soul torment for the "whole white South." The Negroes?

". . . they drew a little circle around their small personal lives and tried not to look beyond, for there were too many sinister sounds and shadows outside. They filled these small lives with work . . . and dancing and razor fights and dreams and laughter. . . . But a few angry bitter ignorant Negroes did fight back and in the only way they knew how: by assaulting white women."



Elsewhere in the book Miss Smith professes to scorn the idea that lynchings are motivated to protect Southern White Womanhood. That is the Liberal Miss Smith, author of *Strange Fruit.* But here she is a camp counsellor, explaining things straight to a young girl who is troubled by the Negro question.

The vicious enormity of the lie about Negro resistance given here is staggering. If one were to chronicle the story of how Negroes did and do fight back against their oppressors—not taking the whole South or nation but merely Miss Smith's state of Georgia—it would take many volumes. And in fact there *are* many volumes which tell this story and she knows it . . . but all that is in the realm of "figures," "dates" and "facts" which are not a part of her psychoanalytic method.

Miss Smith does more than restate the classic myths of white supremacy. By now some of them are badly in need of refurbishing, the one about the Negro as a contented slave for example. It seems that the slave mothers "knew intuitively . . . the psychosomatic truths that we whites are groping awkwardly toward today." But nowadays, because of education that does not fit their psychosomatic needs, the Negroes are becoming "restive . . . as aggressive and bitter a people as are many of the white group." Which is to be deplored, of course.

But Miss Smith is painfully aware that something is rocking her dream boat: "the Communists are winning the race for the hearts of men . . . Communists the world over are saying, 'Comrade, just call me by my first name'." This poses another terrible dilemma:

> "The dilemma is symbolized in this matter of what we call one another: communism levels all men down to the anonymity of first names; democracy raises all up to the dignity of *Mister;* but white supremacy says, 'You call me *Mister* and I'll call you *boy.*' And the colored people of the world are remembering."

Not only remembering, but acting—and not only the colored people.

If the tortured liberals of the Vital Center would only be content to sit on their well-padded dilemmas, viewing all this with gentle flutterings, one could well ignore them. But that too is only a pose. They have a job to do and they are working at it with all their energy. That job, as this book again makes clear, is to combat not the nebulous killers of the dream (who are "all" of us) but the very real killers of the nightmare. For that reason such books are hailed by the capitalist press and made into bestsellers.

LLOYD L. BROWN

theatre

Odets, Strindberg, Anderson

by ISIDOR SCHNEIDER

FOR an exciting evening of theatre, I heartily recommend the Jefferson Theatre Workshop's revival of Clifford Odets' *Awake And Sing.* One of the outstanding dramas of the depression Thirties, the years that have passed since its first production have in no way dated it. *Awake And Sing* remains a moving, realistic and warmly sympathetic depiction of life in a Bronx Jewish family victimized by an economic system whose mutilating grip only superficially relaxes in non-depression years. It is not only the best of Odets' plays but one of the best of our time.

Awake And Sing is a tragedy of the lower middle class. Its dominating figure is the Bronx mother on whom the burden falls of maintaining the family status after economic failure has reduced her husband to semi-idiocy. She fights to preserve the family's respectability at all costs; but the costs include the incarceration of her daughter in an impossible marriage, the depersonalization of her son and the suicide of her father, a jobless barber, whose interest in music and in Marxism she has done everything she can to thwart, considering them both disreputable.

The characterizations of these and other figures — the helpless, tricked son-in-law, the gambler boarder, the vulgarian manufacturer uncle, the janitor—are remarkably true except in the two characters on whom Odets pivots the symbolism in his play. In this symbolism the grandfather represents the older generation that had brought the revolutionary seed to America, the grandson the new generation in whom they are to bear fruit. But Odets has concentrated so much on their victimization that it is hard to believe in the will and, in the case of the boy, in the intelligence called for in these roles. Similarly the dialogue falters when it leaves the realistic level where it is true, alive and, in its racy way, eloquent. Directed upon its symbolic function the dialogue becomes rhetorical and unreal.

Finally there is some confusion in its social thinking. Two concepts clash in the play, the naked assertion of the individual's right to whatever brings delight, from

the raptures of love to the pride of ownership of a pair of black-and-white summer shoes; and the vision of a better life for all in revolutionary struggle. Certainly such a clash exists but in the framework of the play a resolution of the conflict is expected. Instead we have the boy, in the consciousness of being heir to his grandfather's revolutionary ideas, encouraging his sister to abandon her child and run off with the gambler boarder —an encouragement, in that particular context, not to revolt but to anarchic rejection of responsibility.

But I want to emphasize that these are the shortcomings of a play that otherwise reaches notable heights. Al Saxe has directed it with the sensitiveness and resourcefulness that has marked all his work. In acting that was generally vigorous and effective Stanley Swardlow as the gambler boarder, Doris Lawton as the mother, Sam Hersh as the manufacturer uncle and Marian Valen as the daughter stood out.

I CAN ALSO recommend the two productions of Strindberg now on view, the Raymond Massey-Mady Christians production of *The Father* at the Cort Theatre and the off-Broadway On Stage company's production of *Creditors* at the Cherry Lane Theatre.

The Father has already been commented upon here in a review of an earlier off-Broadway production. In the new Broadway presentation Raymond Massey and particularly Mady Christians give more finished and effective performances but the other characters are reduced to such supernumeraries that, in recollection, superiority in ensemble performance must be granted the earlier production. Seeing the play again, however, emphasized its extraordinary power and its insights and made clearer how Strindberg came to influence such masters as Ibsen and Shaw and, in our own time, O'Casey and O'Neill.

In *Creditors,* nicely staged by Frank Corsaro and effectively acted by Beatrice Arthur as the wife and De Witt Drury as the second husband, but with over-sinister accents by George Hill as the vengeful first husband, Strindberg carries on his neurotic version of the relation between the sexes. Again it is represented as a campaign of conquest on the part of the woman; and again she is shown remorselessly exploiting man's chivalrous and protective impulse and fastening upon his every weakness to turn it into a point of disintegration, particularly the ever-hovering urge of a man to subordinate himself to the woman as mother.

The castigated woman of *Creditors* becomes a literary success by inveigling her two husbands into voluntarily sacrificing themselves to her career. She flourishes while they wither; she feeds upon their

encouragement, their abnegation and the flow of advice and ideas that they pour upon her as they drain themselves. The action of the play turns on the shock to the second husband when he is made to see what a heartless and mindless woman he has sacrificed himself for. The exposure is part of the revenge of the first husband whom she has turned into an object of public ridicule in her transparently autobiographical novels (something that, incidentally Strindberg did to his wives in his plays and his own novels). The first husband's vengeance is an application of mental torture as terrifying as the psychological murder in *The Husband.*

Strindberg's presentation of the relationship between the sexes is, it must be repeated, neurotic. Reflecting his own conflicts through three unhappy marriages it has the quality of a monomania. It leaves out of the picture the social system that has crippled both his man and woman and filled them with the embittering frustrations out of which they torment each other.

Yet Strindberg's plays are indubitably works of genius. Until Shaw did it in another medium—comedy, and with a different aim—social enlightenment, no playwright had so vividly dramatized ideas, albeit obsessive ones. And the writing of few playwrights has shown such sustained and unrhetorical eloquence.

AS FOR CURRENT productions not recommended, I begin with *Lost In The Stars,* Maxwell Anderson's adaptation of the novel, *Cry The Beloved Country.*

Alan Paton's novel had two major themes. One was the per-

sonal reconciliation between Negro and white, brought about symbolically by mutual tragedy. This, the weaker part of the book, was the part chosen by the adapter.

The other major theme, far more convincingly expressed, the issue of economic and political oppression of the Negroes, is virtually ignored by the adapter. Yet what distinguished Paton's novel was its forceful presentation of the particularly hideous trap-pattern of Negro oppression practiced by the white masters of South Africa. Though outnumbering the whites several times over, the Negro population is squeezed into a fraction of the land area with the least productive soil. The young men must leave the land if the bulk of the population is to live. Virtually their only resource is to go into the mines on the Rand with its inhuman labor contract system.

This is the pattern that the book reveals as it leads the gentle Negro pastor, Stephen Kumalo, from his church in the parched and starving hills into Johannesburg in quest of his vanished son. Participation in the bus-boycott, an organization of the Negro workers, brings Stephen Kumalo to an identification with his people, an understanding of a truer brotherhood and goals more rewarding than patience and prayer. All this was told with a poetic spontaneity, indignation and pity that gave the book a special literary distinction.

With that in mind one can understand how offensive is Maxwell Anderson's devitalized adaptation. The bus-boycott is omitted entirely; the manly Kumalo is reduced to mawkishness; a hot spot of the tourists' Harlem is put on the stage as a representation of squalor and vice in Johannesburg's Shantytown.

Kurt Weill's score is little better than Anderson's script. Except for the railroad station song it is quite unrelievedly monotonous and banal.

With an anemic character to impersonate and dull music to sing, Todd Duncan's talents are wasted. Some of the minor parts, however, are magnificently played, particularly by Warren Coleman as the pastor's cynical brother, Julian Mayfield as the pastor's son and Sheila Guyse as the girl Linda.

Another squandering of talent occurred in Katharine Cornell's production of *That Lady,* a vacuous dramatization of a vacuous historical novel concerned with one of the more intimate tyrannies of Philip II of Spain. Just what purpose or artistic aim anyone imagined was served in putting this thing on is a mystery to me. The writing is without a trace of imagination or wit and the conception without a trace of social or psychological insight.