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# LEFT REVIEW

JULY 1937

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**Spain:** The People's Army

JAMES HAWTHORNE

**The Nazis** and Culture

ALEXANDER HENDERSON

William  
Shakespeare  
JACK LINDSAY

★  
SIDNEY WEBB  
STEPHEN SPENDER  
MONTAGU SLATER  
DOUGLAS GARMAN  
SIMON BLUMENFELD  
SYLVIA TOWNSEND  
WARNER

DRAWINGS by BOSWELL

# LEFT REVIEW

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No. 6

JULY 1937

Edited by  
RANDALL SWINGLER

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# EDITORIAL

## The Assault on the Basques

AS this goes to press, we learn that the Italian tanks have at last smashed their way into Bilbao. The noble resistance of the Basques has focussed our attention for the last six weeks. Not because upon the fate of Bilbao depends the outcome of the war in Spain, or anything like it: but simply that in this campaign we have been able to see just what Fascism is aiming to do to Europe. There is no question here of any section of the population desiring an alternative form of government. It is simple invasion, more savage than any inroad of the Huns, by an almost exclusively German and Italian force. The tactics employed are a wholesale devastation. The Non-Intervention scheme operates efficiently to prevent the Madrid Government giving any help to its Basque allies in the matter of aviation and artillery, so that Hitler may enjoy the spectacle of the unopposed triumph of his aircraft in the massacre of undefended cities and roads packed with civilians fleeing from the barbarity. It is evidence of capitalism's obliteration of the imagination that at the very thought of the agony inflicted upon the civilised Basque people, the general public in every European country do not rise up as one man in a fine indignation determined once and for all to kennel those two mad dogs of war. But hand in hand with this gentlemanly scheme which the British Government has been so solicitous to maintain, has fallen an almost universal silence of consent upon the British Capitalist press. The B.B.C. even found it expedient to make no mention of the Basque President's courageous appeal. With the disappearance of Baldwin from the front line, much of the sheep's wool has been lifted from the backs of the National Government. There are many small indications that in its home policy also the wolf's teeth will become increasingly apparent.

## Britain and Fascism

Baron von Neurath, German Foreign Minister, had been invited to visit London. That is the clue to the obsequious indifference of the British Press to the rape of Bilbao. Every diplomatic nerve was being strained in London and Berlin to effect an Anglo-German alliance. The German temperament, German characteristics are featured everywhere, in travel bureaux, in topical journals, on the films; it is an argument of subtle irrelevance. For the basis of this projected alliance is no more and no less than the favourable impression made on General Blomberg by British rearmament and the 'strong imperialist sentiment' of the British nation. In other words, he went home assured that the National Government would support and encourage Hitler's next war exploit. Now, on the pretext of the fantastic Leipzig incident (which nobody makes any pretence of believing), Hitler has pettishly called off Von Neurath's visit. The British

Foreign Office is taking its well-known 'fake' strong-line: and by the time this issue is being read, we shall know what Germany's 'independent action' amounts to. In the meantime we are not deceived. To-day the Basques are being wiped out because they stand between Krupp and Thyssen and the iron-ore of the Bilbao mines. And the iron-ore of the Bilbao mines is wanted to equip a new drive of devastation into the east. And upon these projects our Government for the moment discreetly hides its approving smile.

### **The Christopher St. John Sprigg Ambulance**

A meeting will be held at the National Trade Union Club, 24, New Oxford Street, W.C.1, on Wednesday, July 14th, at 8 p.m., to organise support for the fund that has been opened in memory of Christopher Sprigg. It is hoped that A. J. Cummings will be in the chair. Douglas Garman will speak on Sprigg's last completed book, *Illusion and Reality* (reviewed in this issue).

LEFT REVIEW is organising this meeting, and we ask our readers to gather all possible support from among their friends.

## **CHARLES DONNELLY**

CHARLES DONNELLY, a poet and a contributor to LEFT REVIEW, a member of the Irish (James Connolly) Company of the American (Lincoln) Battalion in Spain has been reported missing for several weeks, and is believed to have been killed. I remember clearly one day in 1935 when I met Donnelly for the first time. He had come over a short time before from Dublin, where he had been at University College. His joining the Communist Party had given offence both to his parents and the college authorities, and he had abandoned his studies. In London he supported himself at first with the sort of jobs young Irishmen usually get hold of. I think he was either a barman or a dish-washer. He must have been twenty-one. He had already made a great impression on audiences at Marx House lecturing on the building of capitalism in the Free State. He saw affairs in his own country with such a fresh eye that conversation with him was a voyage of discovery. He had the critical judgment of political questions of the sort one sometimes finds in very young people, confident and flexible and what used to be called in children 'old-fashioned.' I had never met in anyone so young the same boldness of political vision, and I remember wondering whether it was what we ought to expect in the new generation now coming of age, though I hadn't found it in the run of his contemporaries. It was no chance flash as some readers of LEFT REVIEW will know for themselves. Two of his articles in LEFT REVIEW are well worth looking up again, the first, *Portrait of a Revolution*, Vol. II, No. 1, October 1935, is an account of a meeting with one of the

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exiled German leaders. In it Donnelly pays a modest and imaginative tribute to one who had gone through the furnace, and he tries to look with the eye of a novelist into the subject's character. The second is one in which we collaborated, an article on Casement and Connolly (Vol. II, No. 7, April 1936), consisting of a résumé of Bernard Shaw's draft speech in defence of Casement with Casement's annotations, and an historian's judgment written by Donnelly of James Connolly as a revolutionary and as a man. It is a fine piece of eloquence, and had what I thought was, for us, a new note. He wrote regularly at this time in Irish Congress papers and Irish left-wing papers generally, and had some very good articles in *International Press Correspondence*.

It is the natural history of many of us for the emotional life to find it hard to catch up with the intellect. Latterly, Donnelly wrote about politics less directly, was writing verse, began a novel and studied military science with a sort of romantic enthusiasm. He was moving from one to another of comparatively short-term jobs, as journalist, office-worker, and so on, going through the usual struggle. When the Fascist rebellion broke out in Spain he plunged into all available material, particularly Napier's *Peninsular War*, and produced a memorandum on strategy in Spain which I have not seen, but I believe it was shown to military experts whose interest was roused. When the International Brigade was formed, he said that it was ridiculous to spend all this time on military theory without experiencing the practice, but he waited till the Irish company was ready, saying he could only fight beside people he knew. He went to Spain just before Christmas, and in his last days here wrote a great deal of verse in which his emotional and intellectual life were beginning to find a fusion. Some of this may be rescued. I am reminded of something Upward says in *The Mind in Chains* that only 'in revolutions and major wars do fundamental realities come to the surface of life.' For Donnelly public and private living had come together and were to be fused in dying.

I have said enough to show that I believe a mind of rare delicacy has been sacrificed. The lessons of history are not cheap, and the price this time was the maximum. Donnelly paid with cool understanding and all the letters from Spain speak of his gallantry in the fighting.

MONTAGU SLATER

## Summer Reading

- In this issue—Poetry, Fiction, Criticism and Commentary.
  - For August we announce a special Short Story number.
- Also: articles by John Allen, G. D. H. Cole, etc.

The next issue of FACT will also contain examples of Socialist fiction, edited by A. Calder-Marshall, Storm Jameson and Stephen Spender.

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# Soldiers' Hearth

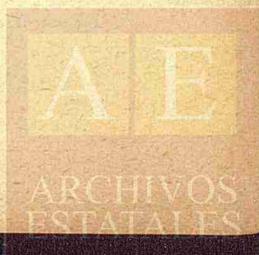
JAMES HAWTHORNE

MADRID May 2nd, 1937

THE neat invitation stated that the undersigned (A. Barral, Brigade Commisar, and A. Serrano, Chief of the Brigade) would be honoured if the recipient of the invitation would attend a festival organised by the 43rd Mixed Brigade at 10.30 a.m., May 2nd. The event would be a dedication of the Brigade's Hogar del Soldado (Soldiers' Hearth), and at the same time a banner would be given to each of the battalions composing the Brigade. It didn't sound exciting, to tell the truth, but for my part I was anxious to find out just what these new institutions were. This new world. . . .

The Hearth of the Soldiers of the 43rd Brigade was not dedicated at 10.30 a.m. on May 2nd, 1937, one hundred and twenty-ninth anniversary of the great Madrid rising against Napoleon's invading army. But anyone whose optimism brought him there at 10.30 would have been privileged to see the 43rd Brigade, uniformly equipped in new summer outfits, executing smart movements in which one noted that the Brigade was properly supplied with stretcher bearers, sappers and miners, communication units, officers and non-commissioned officers. 'Privileged,' because in August there had been no Brigades, in September no uniforms, in October few arms, in November no non-commissioned officers, and it is only now that a real army based on universal conscription emerges. Days in August and September of heartbreaking disorder on the Talavera Road; one awful Sunday in Toledo when under heavy shelling assault guards reluctantly abandoned the Hospital de Santa Cruz because there was not an officer, not a non-com., to say 'Do this. Do that.' May 2nd, 1937, a regular army forged in the heat of war, welded in the hard flame of a patriotism that saved Madrid and turned back Italian troops in the Alcarria.

After a while a group of officers from visiting brigades entered the building where at 10.30 the dedication was to have taken place. I joined them for a tour of inspection, but soon found I could move faster alone. In the basement a neat dining-room with small tables, cloth-covered and brightened by flowers, occupied one-half the floor space. At the other side were the showers. In the dressing-room a hamper in the corner was signalled out by a huge red sign: 'Comrades, throw your dirty clothes in this corner.' Small white cards, here and there, admonished, 'Soldiers, take care of your personal cleanliness as you take care of your rifle.' On



the first floor, besides the auditorium, were a rest room, a library, and a game room. On the floor above, small dormitories.

When I came down the auditorium was filling up. The building had been a convent. The Gothic vault with its soft stained-glass high wall-lights somehow seemed a perfectly natural setting for this gathering with its strong red tones. At one end the stage made a little dark pocket in the rude scarlet drops reaching to the peak of the vaults. On each side of the room and in back, a red banner spelling out a slogan. The church-like sense of the setting should have been shocking, or incongruous, or funny. But it wasn't. There was a simple seriousness, not too heavy, about the whole crowd and the ceremony that made the matter very proper. Reverence may have been lacking, but respect was there.

The slogan running along the back said, 'Long live General Miaja; Viva Comrade Anton.' Along one side a May 2nd touch: 'Soldiers, to-day as in 1808 we must throw out the foreign invader; never forget, comrade soldier, that we are fighting for the independence of our country.' At the foot of the stage a wall newspaper caught my eye. I went down to have a look at it. A very good one, that is, bright with newspaper illustration and neatly arranged, but rich in original typewritten contributions. A poem cut from a newspaper, in an inconspicuous corner, dominated the board spiritually: 'Aparta, Madre, y no impidas.' (Step aside, mother, don't hinder [your boy].) A war forced on a people, but still a war, and mothers feel . . . but if you had seen the women of Madrid under fire for six months you would wonder that they need be reminded.

By the time I turned back to my seat the hall was packed, and from the stained windows above khaki figures of seventeen-year-old veterans and white-smocked girl attendants of the building gave a curious note to the Gothic arch. On the stage sat the Staff, a very student-like type, and the white-haired Lieut.-Colonel catching the eye. Behind them, eight girls holding as many banners.

Through a haze of speeches and 'Vivas,' I caught my very first hint of what the matter was about. It arrived when the third of the girls was introduced as a 'Stakhanovist' from a given factory, godmother of the third battalion. Each of the girls, it seemed, came from an industrial plant, and had won the honour of sponsoring the presentation of a banner from the plant to a given battalion; had won it by voluntary extra labour or self-sacrifice in the interest of 'super-production.' That wasn't exactly what gave me the clue. It was the fact that factory workers were deliberately establishing ties with one certain unit of the Army, making friends, and comrades . . . and perhaps marriages. It was more than a clue.

It was the heart of the matter. The Combatants' Hearths are established precisely for that purpose, to give the Army friends and comrades and wives from among the workers! The Soldiers' Hearth is a place for him to rest and read and get clean; but it is more than that. It is a place



for him to resume, in part, and for moments, his place as an ordinary citizen, communicating with, intercommunicating with, other civilians who have not been in the trenches.

That doesn't seem a very world-shaking discovery? But stop and think of the armies you know. Do they encourage soldiers to be citizens, or do they deny them the right to vote? Do they find ways of facilitating the fraternisation of soldiers and civilians, or do they dread fraternisation? Do they beg officers and soldiers to remain comrades, or do they treat comradesly relations between officers and men as obvious evidence of subversive activity? Can you imagine what would happen in England or America if a given regiment established permanent relations with the workers of a given factory?

So my discovery of the purpose of the Soldiers' Hearth wasn't in itself world-shaking, but it was a discovery of a world-shaking change. A regular army has grown up in Spain out of that heterogeneous mass that went to the Sierra in July, but it is an army that maintains no life apart from the people, and can therefore never be used as the weapon of a privileged minority against the people. The Hearth of the Soldier is one of the many devices for keeping soldiers just 'people,' and elevating the cultural level of that people.

Once this much was clear, the speeches hammered home the point. One godmother read her lines; another recited them as fast as she could go for fear of forgetting. But there was an intense consciousness of the malignance of the old-style army as an institution for use against the people. Every speech had something to say about that, and you became aware that the new soldiers, and their new sponsors, were consciously dedicated to building an army that could be used only for national defence, never for 'police' purposes.

Everything didn't move with absolute smoothness. The very rough edges added to the popular character of the meeting. One of the godmothers, a blonde girl of perhaps sixteen years, pronounced her message, as she presented her banner, with fire and conviction, but with such haste that one recognised the strain of memory involved. When she had concluded she delivered her 'Vivas' without pausing to permit the audience to respond to the separate cheers.

'Viva el General Miaja! Viva Espana! Viva el Ejército Popular! A minute of silence for our dead. Long live the People's Front! Long live the Republic!'

Someone of the Staff whispered to her with a significant touch of his watch. Obviously he had suggested that she now call for the aforementioned minute of silence. 'A minute of silence for our dead!' she cried, but then the lines as memorised assumed control and she went on without waiting: 'Long live the People's Front! Long live the Republic!'

When the last banner had been delivered and accepted, a signal from



the stage to the band called for the national anthem: Riego's Hymn. But before the band could swing into action the figure of a typically small Spanish soldier stood up in the front row of the balcony. 'Pido la palabra! (I ask for the floor.) He had quite obviously never addressed an audience in his life. It frightened him, but he was deeply moved and felt he must say something. The minute of silence had been no formality for him—there were dead friends, dead members of his family, to think of. 'I ask,' he said simply, 'that with these new banners we leave here and that we make the Fascists pay for every drop of blood.' He floundered a moment while the hall waited quietly. Then suddenly, 'That's all.'

There is always something more than clumsy—pathetic—about these meetings in New Spain. People learning to speak, to express their thoughts for the first time. The old world had never cared whether they thought or not. The old world hired people to think, and paid them to speak the 'right' thoughts. The new one sets up wall newspapers where illiterates are inspired to learn their letters, and literate men acquire the discipline of writing for others.

Near the Hogar (the Hearth) is the Glorieta de Bilbao. On one corner of the Glorieta is a triple wall newspaper set up by a Communist section. Cross the street you look up above the street sign on the wall and find three posters forgotten since February 1936. One of them shows a velvety herald blowing a long trumpet. The girlish herald doesn't grope for words like the sturdy little soldier in the balcony. He speaks smoothly and easily: 'Spain calls us to save her. Vote for the Monarchists and the Rightists.' Standing at the curb is an Italian army truck, a Fiat, bearing the canvas legend: 'Captured from the enemy.'



## German Universities and National Socialism

by **E. Y. HARTSHORNE**. A scrupulous examination, by an eminent American sociologist, of the changes wrought in German academic life by the Nazi regime; particularly eloquent are his statistics of dismissals, and also of the percentage of those dismissed who have found employment in other countries. 6s. net.

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## George Allen & Unwin

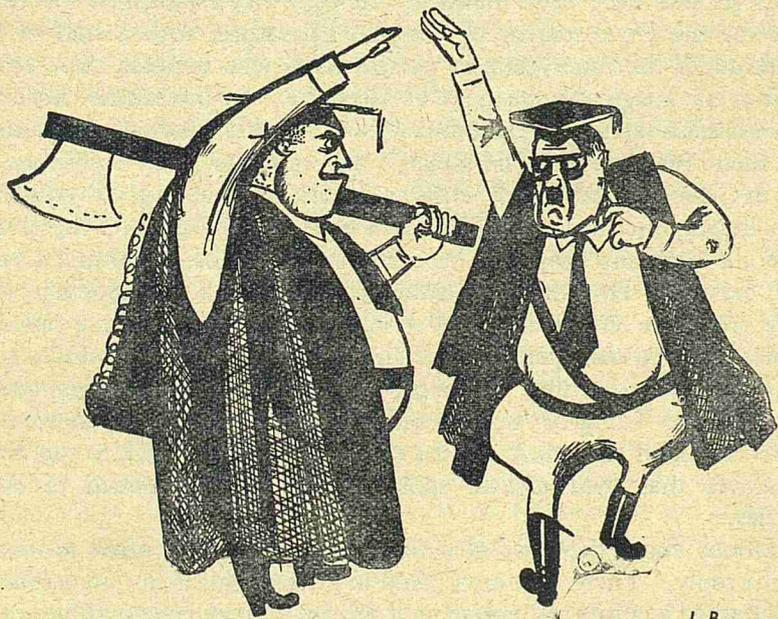
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# WHAT THE NAZIS have done for CULTURE

ALEXANDER  
HENDERSON

NAZI Germany is desperately, almost pathetically, anxious to earn a good mark in culture from the rest of the world. In hardly any other field is the inferiority complex of the Nazis so marked as in this. An uneasy awareness that the burning of books outside Berlin University in the Spring of 1933, and the exiling of hundreds of intellectuals, have caused other countries to regard *Nazi* as a synonym for barbarian, has gradually leaked into the minds of the Nazi leaders, and they are making frantic efforts to win admiration for their cultural achievement.



J. B.

In German there is a concept expressed by the word *Kulturstaat*, literally 'culture-state.' Originally, the word would seem to have meant no more than 'civilised,' as used of European states in contrast to, for example, the Polynesians. But in Nazi usage the word has gradually been given a new significance. The word now is used as a discriminatory one against the U.S.S.R. 'Oh, but Bolshevist Russia,' say the Nazis, 'is not a *Kulturstaat*. England is a *Kulturstaat*, and so is Germany, but Russia is not.'

Very significant is this word, and the frequency with which it is met in the writings of Nazi cultural apologists. Behind the appeal to the concept *Kulturstaat* lies an uncomfortable recognition of the cultural poverty of present-day Germany. The attempt is therefore made to raise Germany's status by lowering that of the country towards which progressive intellectuals look with increasing admiration—Soviet Russia. By saying that the U.S.S.R. is *not* a *Kulturstaat*, the implication is that it is a country of savages. Culturally, Nazi Germany has hardly anything in common with the Western democracies, but by transposing, as it were, the fundamental distinction between the Socialist economy of the U.S.S.R. and the capitalist economy of the rest of Europe into the cultural key, Nazi Germany endeavours to claim a place on the cultural plane equal to that of France and Britain.

In the attempt to justify this claim the Nazi Party and the Government have made tremendous efforts of organisation. In order to build up a specifically Nazi culture prizes have been established for poetry and science, various reviews have been founded. In 1933 was established the Reich Office for the Development of German Literature, with a staff of 830 readers under the supervision of 45 specialists who between them represented every imaginable category of literature. An institution called the *Kulturgemeinde* arranges exhibitions, book weeks, readings by authors from their own works. The Reich Film Institute gives certificates of merit to German films in such terms as 'politically valuable' or 'culturally and politically meritorious.' There is a fund to help unemployed artists. Above all, Germany has, what other nations have not, a Cultural Leader in the person of Dr. Alfred Rosenberg, a fanatical little gentleman with cloudy grey eyes and an involved style. Finally, Hitler, having failed to become an artist, considers himself an expert on art. He spends a good deal of his time designing buildings, uniforms, badges and flags, and at the 1936 Party Congress he devoted a long speech to the question of culture. With all this effort it must come as a painful shock to the Nazis to discover that their artistic apologists are little esteemed in other countries.

Questions about the state of culture in Germany are often dismissed with the reply, 'There isn't any.' And in a sense, this is not unjustifiable. When I asked a cultured German civil servant if there *was* anything worth



reading among the books of the Nazi writers, if he could recommend anything, he replied, with a sympathetic smile: 'I don't read new books any more.'

That remark was symbolical of what has happened to German literature since 1933. The man who made the remark was well versed in bourgeois culture, had a large private library, knew the literature of France as well as that of his own country. He was the sort of man to whom books are a necessity. But: 'I don't read new books any more.'

The number of people in Germany who do read new books steadily diminishes. The first reason is that the general lowering of the standard of life makes it impossible for all but a minute percentage of the population to afford books. This has been admitted here and there by the Nazis themselves. The *Berliner Tageblatt* of November 1st, 1936, in an article on publishing, refers to 'the so-called upper class which can still afford to buy books.' The second reason why new books are not read is the badness of the writing. Nazi literature is so poor, even by bourgeois standards, that it simply cannot find readers. Most German publishers try to recoup their losses on native writers by publishing a large number of translations of good foreign works. For instance, out of eight books advertised by one of the leading German publishers in an issue of the *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, two only are by German authors, the others being by Francis Hackett, William Faulkner, Peter Fleming, Jules Romains, Thomas Wolfe and Halliday Sutherland.

But having admitted the cultural poverty of Nazi Germany, it none the less remains worth while to examine the productions of the Party poets and other writers, because of the valuable light these shed on the psychological workings of Nazi-ism. A study of Nazi literature helps one to understand how Hitler was able to come to power.

Nazi-ism has exaggerated and made predominant the characteristics of the German petty bourgeois class which had, to some extent, become obscured during the Republic, but which had long existed, and had frequently been expressed in German literature.

Nazi-ism is not very different from that 'German Socialism' which Marx and Engels attacked in *The Communist Manifesto*: 'The robe of speculative cobwebs, embroidered with flowers of rhetoric, steeped in the dew of sickly sentiment, this transcendental robe in which the German Socialists wrapped their sorry "eternal truths," all skin and bone, served to wonderfully increase the sale of their goods among such a public.'

German National-Socialism claims to have a peculiar 'spiritual' content of its own. I shall endeavour to show that this content is, in fact, nothing more than the universal appeal of Fascism to the irrational, expressing itself in specifically German forms which have their roots in the past of the German petty bourgeoisie.

Let us begin with a young writer who is regarded as the Poet Laureate

of the Nazi Party. His name is Heinrich Anacker, and at the 1936 Party Congress he was awarded the National-Socialist Party Prize for Literature. He joined the Nazis in 1923, and his books are issued by the official Party publishers.

Two of his volumes of verse are entitled *The Drum* and *The Fanfare*, and they live up to these titles for noisiness. As one might expect, the verses are written in a blunt, sing-song metre of which this is typical:

‘ Was gilt dein Glück und meines?  
Und was gilt unser Leid?  
Wir kennen nur noch eines:  
Marschtritt im Ehrenkleid!’

Here is a prose translation of the poem from which the above is quoted:

‘ What matters your happiness or mine, and what matters our sorrow? We know but one thing—to march in our dress of honour! Sunk and forgotten is everything that oppressed us when our fists clasp on the shining buckle of our belt. Shall we live to-morrow? Will death strike us to-day? We hardly ask, we raise our heads in the cool light. This is the sharp consecration which glorifies our path, the magic of the ranks of four when the drum beats before us.’

In that poem is expressed much of the ‘mysticism’ of Nazi-ism. The individual’s welfare doesn’t matter. Then what does matter? Nothing, apparently, except the thrill one gets from putting on a brown shirt and a belt and marching in a crowd.

Nazi-ism based, not like Marxism, on a rational explanation of history, but on the glorification of irrational nationalistic urges, right from the beginning made great play with ‘the magic of the ranks.’ And Nazi literature again and again expresses this urge to get into a marching crowd.

Another of Anacker’s poems clinches its argument with the line: ‘You too must join the rank and file.’ Gerhard Schumann, a twenty-six-year-old poet who is Cultural Secretary for Württemberg in the Propaganda Ministry, and another Nazi prize-winner, writes in his *Creed of a Young Poet*: ‘We are soldiers marching in the vanguard.’

From the submergence of the individual in the marching ranks to his submergence in the Nazi state is but a step, and this latter conception finds frequent expression in Nazi literature, as when Anacker in another of his poems writes:

‘ Once the ego seemed the hinge of the world, and everything turned upon its sorrows. But gradually came discerning tidings and turned our glance upon the whole. Now the “I” joined the greater “We,” and became a small wheel in the machine. Not whether it lived, but whether it willingly *served*, determined the value of its own self.’

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Or in Gerhard Schumann's words:

'And I was one. And the whole flowed. And lo: the new tide swept upwards. And with its streaming, I was good and great. . . . I lost myself, and found the folk, the Reich.'

The desire of the individual to abandon his self-responsibility, to submerge himself in the mass, expresses itself in the political field in the enthusiasm which has greeted the unification and centralisation of the Reich by the Nazis. The urge towards *Gemeinschaft*, community, has two necessary correlatives: love for the orders, rules which tell the mass what to do, and love for the man or organisation that gives those orders. This is the source of the worship which Hitler inspires.

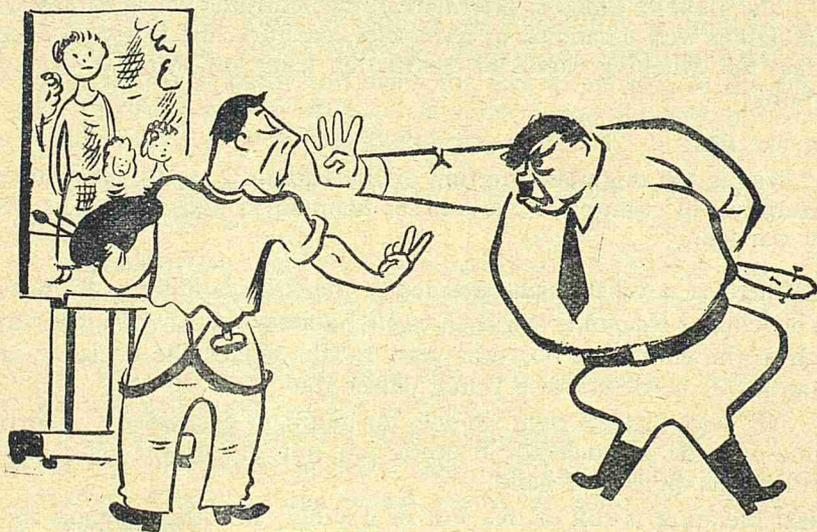
Poems about Hitler display an amazing extravagance. Quite typical is such a poem as this by Fritz Nölle, published in *Das Schwarze Korps*, organ of the S.S.:

'There were the uprooted masses, surging, wild,  
A chaos of thoughts, a volcano  
Of passions—and before them stepped a Man.

They laughed, threatened, shouted.  
He spoke, and looked upon them,  
And the loyalty of his eyes, the heart's blood  
Of his words gripped them, so that they listened

And became still in the wide circle,  
And it seemed as though above them  
God himself looked down and said:

Let there be one Nation!'



(Measures taken to encourage the growth of population in Germany include the decree that artists of the Third Reich in painting scenes of family life must depict at least four children in each family group.)

Gerhard Schumann puts a halo round Hitler like this:

‘Thus came his day. Millions of hearts turned to him and knew their duty. The clouds rolled asunder. The fire of morning burned. Great stood he there, and round him stood the light.’

Anacker expresses the psychological need for a leader:

‘He gives us trust, he carries us with him,  
He makes of us men of steel and granite.’

Much more could be quoted to illustrate this characteristic of National-Socialism—the deification of the one man in the state who is God, father, medicine-man and Great White Chief.

The desire to become simply a cog in a machine, and the desire to have an all-powerful master quite naturally and easily find their most complete satisfaction in army life. An army has necessarily a professional interest in war, and that means, in any state but a socialist one, an interest in Nationalist war. It is therefore hardly surprising that the Nazis give every encouragement to the production of war books—of the right kind. But the depths to which these war books sink is, I think, hardly realised in this country.

Among the authors most useful to the army is Ernst Jünger, known in England for his *Storm of Steel* which appeared a few years ago. What has not been translated is a book of his which is quite the most savage glorification of war I have seen. Called *The Inner Experience of Battle* (*Der Kampf als inneres Erlebnis*), it contains chapters entitled *Blood, Horror, The Grave, Fear*, and passages like this:

‘The thirst for blood is, after horror, the first thing which flames over the fighter with a cataract of red waves, the fury, the thirst for blood when the twitching clouds of destruction hang low over the fields of wrath.’

Or like this:

‘War is the mightiest meeting of the nations . . . all freedom, all greatness, all culture . . . are either maintained and spread, or lost, by war alone.’

Another war novelist much esteemed by the Nazis is Wilhelm Kohlhaas. In a novel (*Der Hauptling und die Republik*) portraying the volunteer corps which in the immediate post-war years fought against the Socialists and Communists, he describes a young officer thus:

‘His voice had the right tremolo for midnight excitement. A fortissimo of pride and defiance of death rang out, of jubilant joy in death with a weapon in one’s hand.’

Nazi literature is full of this sort of writing. No other opinion about war can find expression in Germany. This militarist spirit and its allies in nationalism and super-heated patriotism have had a disastrous effect on

German culture which has always reached its highest levels only when it has been least consciously nationalistic.

It is from this point that I want to turn back to Germany's past and show the precedents in her history for many of the characteristics of National-Socialism.

One of Germany's greatest artists has written:

'And really we have got to such a point that soon we shall see the whole German people turned completely into fools. The national tendency towards inertia and stolidity has been led astray into a fantastic mania of self-complacency. Already the greater part of the German people is taking part in the shameful comedy, and the thinking German mind can only feel horror when it turns to these idiotic celebrations and assemblies, with their theatrical processions, stupid speeches, and wretched, shallow songs, with which the attempt is made to impress on the German people that it is something extra special, and has no need at all to want to become something first.'

This striking passage which might have been written by a German exile of the present day, was actually written in 1878, and its author was no less a person than Wagner, now one of the 'Nordic' heroes of the Nazis.

Nazi poets, we have seen, write about Hitler in hysterical terms. That is an old tradition of the German petty bourgeois writer. After Germany had defeated France in 1871, Hoffmann von Fallersleben, the author of *Deutschland über Alles*, apostrophised the German people about their Kaiser in this way:

'Who in the bloody battle has conquered for thee our bitterest foe?  
Who has made thee great and strong and joined thee in brotherhood?  
Who, whenever an enemy threatens, is thy best shield and weapon?  
Who goes through battle and death for thee in defiance of the whole world? Noble Germany! Rejoice! It is thy King, high and chivalrous, it is thy Wilhelm, thy Kaiser Wilhelm!'

Are the Nazis excited about national unity? Nearly a hundred years ago Emanuel Geibel wrote:

'O sacred stream, may God preserve thee! O German Reich, be strong and be united; as far as the German tongue is spoken, as far as the German wine is drunk, hold fast together!'

Enough has been quoted to show how Nazi-ism reaches back to the aggressive nationalist urges of the past century.

That is one achievement of the Nazi dictatorship. The other is to have destroyed the enlightened internationalism of Goethe, the passion for social justice of Schiller, the lyrical beauty of Hölderlin, Mörike or Rainer Maria Rilke.

So far, I have spoken only of literature. It would be wearisome to have to tell the same story over again as I should have to were I to deal with the



theatre, the cinema, painting, sculpture, science. The accomplishments of National Socialism in the field of culture are really well known. Reinhard and Piscator, world-famous producers, live in exile; Heinrich Mann, Thomas Mann, Ludwig Renn, Ernst Toller, and many others—all the finest writers of post-war Germany, live in exile, and with them almost every actor, painter, sculptor and architect of significance. Even science, which one would have thought might have escaped, because of its practical uses, has been treated in the same way. Einstein is in America. The greatest scientist left in Germany, Max Planck, originator of the quantum theory of light, was savagely attacked only a few months ago in the monthly journal of Dr. Rosenberg, the Nazi leader for culture. He was attacked because he had defended Einstein's theory of relativity in academic discussions.

I mentioned earlier the Reich Office for the Development of German Literature. That institution read three hundred manuscripts a month. But in August last year the Reich Office for the Development of German Literature itself announced:

'Our three years' work has shown that there are practically no authors in Germany with manuscripts of any consequence who do not find their way to a publisher by themselves. The manuscripts sent to the Reich Office were, with few exceptions, unusable.'

Let me give a few more figures to show what is happening to culture in Nazi Germany. The figures are the Nazis' own figures. The Berlin Municipal Statistical Office in August last year announced that at the present time there were published in Berlin 1,584 newspapers, magazines and periodicals, as compared with 2,633 in 1928. In that year there were 147 daily newspapers. Now there are 83.

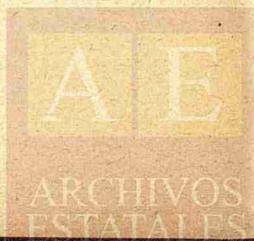
Since 1932 the number of students at the German universities has declined by 50 per cent. Thus, commented the *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, 'the National-Socialist state has avoided the danger of an intellectual proletariat.'

If we want a definition of the position of the writer in the Nazi State, let us turn to Dr. Goebbels' remark in a speech at the German Publishers' Congress in Weimar last Autumn. He said:

'Just as the soldier cannot be allowed to choose when he shall shoot, nor the peasant when or where or what he shall sow or reap, so, too, the writer cannot be allowed to live his individual life to the full.'

Or consider the statement by Herr Baldur von Schirach, Reich Youth Leader, at a 'politico-cultural labour camp' at Heidelberg in July 1936: 'We shall apply even to the greatest artists the strictest military standards.'

In conclusion, one cannot better define what the Nazis have done for culture than in the words of Herr Hanns Johst in his play, *Schlageter*: 'When I hear the word culture,' said Herr Johst, 'I cock my revolver.'



# WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

By Jack Lindsay

**M**ORE than any other author, Shakespeare raises the question of the nature of objectivity in a work of art. Therefore, to relate his work to the epoch from which it came is a critical job urgently needing to be done. One cannot expect to treat the subject worthily in a small essay, yet one can perhaps indicate some of the main lines of approach.

We must not look for any conscious perception of history as process in Shakespeare. Like all thinkers before biology and sociology became serious sciences, he is aware of change only, of vicissitude, but not of progress, not of the constructive mass-movements of history. Not till the petty-bourgeois world moved towards international cohesions could the idea of progress disentangle itself from the sense of repetitive change—change as a mere rearrangement of given elements of 'human nature.' In the Roman Empire the Stoics had come near the idea of historical process, but receded (as it became clear that their world was held up by the barriers of slave-economy) to the idea of Eternal Recurrence.

Shakespeare, then, is petty-bourgeois in that he can only represent the movements of history as developments taking place within the individual. Yet his insight is so profound that he enlarges the definition of the individual to a degree which emotionally transcends the limits of the individualist conception. His great characters so powerfully reflect the historical tendencies of his age that if we take his work as a whole we can trace through it the pattern of forces making and breaking his world. To understand the strange way in which he carries the individualist outlook to such an intensity that it inverts itself, revealing all its own inner flaws and symbolising the objective historical currents of his day, we must understand the peculiar nature of the decade in which he matured his work.

He stood on the watershed between medievalism and capitalism; in a moment of tremendous tension which seemed to embody a new harmony, but which, in fact, was the lull before the storm. The bourgeois were rapidly advancing, but it was not yet evident that they must come into collision with the Crown. Roughly, throughout the years of late medievalism, the interests of Crown and bourgeois had been identical. The bourgeois needed to have the infinite obstructions of Feudalism removed; they therefore supported the Crown against the barons and the Roman Church. With the Tudors this movement for a strong central authority triumphed. The nobles were put in their place and the church-lands expropriated.

A E

ARCHIVOS  
ESTATALES

But at once the bourgeois began to come into collision with the Crown. In England the bourgeois defeated the paternalist absolutism of Charles I, and thus cleared the ground for their triumphant advance into industrialism. In France, and other Continental countries, absolutism won, and the bourgeois had to wait for 1789 and Napoleon before they could start off effectively to compete with England.

The sign of conflict between Crown and bourgeois was the dispute over enclosure of common land. The bourgeois had to grab the land, to raise the rents, to dispossess the peasantry, and to obtain a proletariat. (Not that they took a long view, but every little impulse of greed worked in the same direction: the creation of a proletariat to be enslaved as 'wage-plugs.') But the absolutist Crown did not want the triumph of the bourgeois any more than it had wanted the triumph of the barons; it wanted to keep a 'balance' of classes. It wanted yeomanry to balance the merchant-class, and, most important, to provide good soldiers. Hence the long series of depopulation laws that the Tudors kept enacting to curb the land-greed of the bourgeois, but never put effectively into action.

The dilemma of the Crown was perfectly expressed by the Jack Ket rebellion of 1549. Here half England rose to enforce the very laws that the Crown had enacted for many years, and that the Protector Somerset had re-enacted only the previous year. And the Crown had to crush, bloodily crush, the peasants who were standing up for its own anti-enclosure laws; it had to act on behalf of the bourgeois who were flagrantly, admittedly, breaking these most important laws, the laws that the Crown was most anxious to make effective.

The reason for this contradiction was the fact that the Crown could not act against 'private property' even when the latter was entirely illegal; its own basis in class oppression made it act, when the crisis came, against its own principles of 'balance.'

When the final clash did come, in 1642, it came as the clash between two kinds of private-property: the Crown-monopolies (the natural growth of absolutism) and the impulse to free trade of the (then young and productive) bourgeois.

After 1549 the Crown ceased to press overmuch about the enclosures, yet kept a certain control. The result was that the growing antagonism between Crown and bourgeois (which comes out in some of Elizabeth's later parliaments) was to a large extent masked; the collaboration between Crown and bourgeois against the feudal remnants and the Catholic Church remained the predominating factor in the social scene. The fact that the Crown still held intact its paternal absolutism masked to a large extent the great change from medievalism. Money values, money fetichism, were not yet felt as supreme.

That was why Shakespeare was still able to touch something of the medieval 'solidarity'; for under medievalism, though oppression and



cruelty were everywhere, yet the fact that money was not the supreme arbiter of values created an amount of give-and-take, of direct contact between classes. There was a stronger physical sense of kin, despite the vast differences in status; the abounding animality of the medieval outlook did embrace all men in a way that the capitalist world could not conceive. Chaucer and Langland, antithetical as they are in many ways, yet both possess a sense of human solidarity that became impossible under capitalism.

Shakespeare stood at the point where this solidarity was still real, though on the edge of dissolution.

The expression of the closed world of medievalism was the 'just price': a concept that could only appear within conditions of practically static productivity. For centuries before Shakespeare's day the emerging capitalism had been gnawing at the 'just price,' but not till the very decade in which Shakespeare's work started maturing do we find the advance to the commercial basis of outright competition.

We can best understand this important fact by considering the prices of corn. From 1401-1540 the average price was just under 6s. From 1603-1702 it was 41s. In 1554 freedom to export was restored if the price fell beneath 6s. 8d. In 1562, if beneath 10s. In 1593, if beneath 20s., in 1604, if beneath 26s. 8d., in 1623, if beneath 32s. Henceforth, we go on with the competitively established price. These figures will make clear that 1593 was the year when corn shot ahead and capitalism definitely came into its own in England. That collapse of the 'just price' really expressed the end of medievalism and the inevitability of war between the paternally absolutist Crown and the bourgeois.

1593 was a most important year. It saw for the first time the deliberate dropping by the Crown of the depopulation laws. It was a moment of great harvests; corn was very plentiful; and the Crown (probably in part demoralised by the plague outbreak) gave in to the wish of the landlords to turn to pasture. Hence four years later Elizabeth had to re-enact laws against depopulation; for the landlords had taken advantage of the Crown's relaxation of the law to grab much more land and turn hordes of peasants adrift. So Elizabeth's own law states.

And this year 1593, the year of the triumphant bourgeois, of seeming plenty and collaboration, was the year in which Shakespeare first got into his stride. In 1594 he wrote *Romeo and Juliet*, with its theme of love's harmony transcending social strife. His sense of advancing life-forces he communicated to the comedies of the next half-dozen years.

In his chronicle plays he sought to deal with the problem of the relation between centrality of power and the confused rivalry of feudal nobles. That is, he sought to mirror in the medieval struggle the struggle of his own day. He could not satisfactorily define the issues thus. For the centralising Crown had been socially constructive when matched with the

barons, but now it was holding back the industrial advance. Yet how could he sympathise with the forces of diverse rivalry when he saw the increasing confusion and suffering that they were bringing about? He sought to resolve the dilemma by his picture of the democratic king, Henry V; but the touch of coldness and priggishness that we feel in the king shows the lack of conviction in Shakespeare himself.

The reason for this lack of conviction is beautifully exposed by the famous speech in *Richard II*, in which a panegyric of England is given. 'This happy breed of men, this little world. . . .' The phrases have been hackneyed by 'patriotic' declaimers. But look at the speech again and see how it ends. 'This dear, dear land'—

Is now leased out, I die pronouncing it,  
Like to a tenement or pelting farm,  
England, bound in with the triumphant sea,  
Whose rocky shore beats back the envious siege  
Of watery Neptune, is now bound in with shame,  
With inky blots and rotten parchment bonds.

He says more than he means to say. He means only to produce a metaphor for misgovernment; but the metaphor that rushes to his pen reveals what is in his mind. His England has been bought up, sold away. It is not possible that he could have penned this metaphorical picture without realising its implications. The pamphlet literature of the day abounded with denunciations of the lease-mongers who were rack-renting in country and town, as part of the whole process of enclosure whereby the landlords were expropriating the peasantry.

Robert Crowley, the indomitable exposé of capitalist practices, had detailed at length 35 years earlier the methods by which lease-holders and rack-renters were driving masses of people to destitution:

In the country we cannot tarry, but we must be their slaves and labour till our hearts burst, and then they must have all. And to go to the cities we have no hope, for there we hear that these unsatiable beasts have all in their hands. Some have purchased, and some taken by leases, whole alleys, whole rents, whole rows, yea whole streets and lanes, so that the rents be raised, some double, some triple, and some fourfold to that that they were within these twelve years past. Yea, there is not so much as a garden ground free from them. . . .

. . . What universal destruction chanceth to this noble realm by this outrageous and unsatiable desire of the surveyors of lands.

Or thus Thomas Lever:

I hear say that within a few miles of London an honest gentleman did let his ground by lease unto poor honest men after 2/4 an acre; then cometh a leasemonger, a thief, an extortioner, deceiving the tenants, buyeth their leases, put therein from the grounds, and causeth them that have it at him now to pay after 9/-, or as I heard say, 19/-, but I am ashamed to name so much.



And remember that the passage of Shakespeare was written about 1595, when Elizabeth's own preamble states that depopulation had made another big spurt.

Shakespeare was not writing these chronicle plays of his to express any fixed point of view; he was interested to trace out what analogies lay between the feudalist and contemporary struggles, to see if his redefinition of the past struggles would throw light on the present. (The direct stimulus was the war in France, involving English troops, throughout the years of these chronicle plays.) And when he found that the chronicle method cramped him too much, he turned to half-legendary themes, *Lear* and *Macbeth*, in which he could express fully his sense of the discords and complexities of his world.

That his contemporaries felt the direct reference of his chronicle plays is witnessed by the part that *Richard II* played in the Essex Rebellion. In August, 1601, Lambard, Keeper of the Records, was in attendance on Elizabeth, and she remarked, in speaking of the propaganda-use of the play, 'I am Richard, know you not that.' And she added, 'This tragedy was played forty times in open streets and houses.'

When Shakespeare let himself go in *Lear*, about 1605, he showed how strongly he felt the miseries and injustices which men like More, Latimer, Crowley, had exposed. His indictment of 'authority' is exactly in their key. The indignation which had been restrained into a metaphor in 1595 had now become a dominant emotion explicitly stated.

In *Macbeth* he continues the theme. He is no longer concerned, as in the chronicles, to find out how order and unity may be actualised; he has gone so deep into the causes of his social world that he dismisses the question of unity as unobtainable and asks instead what are the elements that necessitate disunity and cruelty. *Lear* and *Macbeth* are his two pictures of the individual destroyed by the 'usurpation' of power. In *Lear* he deals with the blind arrogance of the possessor; in *Macbeth*, with the murder and frustration involved by the gaining of power. The brimming tide of his youthful optimism has been turned back on itself; he is emotionally dominated by the contradictions of emerging capitalism.

In *Antony and Cleopatra* he utters a kind of swan-song over the values that had originally satisfied him. Antony (whose 'humanity' represents the sense of medieval solidarity which was Shakespeare's starting-point) is betrayed by his own inner weakness and falls before the ruthless advance of the cold-hearted Octavianus, who embodies the puritan conscience of the triumphant bourgeois.

Shakespeare was now rapidly approaching breakdown. In 1607 there occurred the great insurrection of the midland counties against the enclosures; the outburst of the people against all that Shakespeare had denounced in *Lear*. In that year Shakespeare wrote *Coriolanus* and *Timon*.

In *Coriolanus* he shows the futility of the would-be strong ruler. He

has seen the collapse of collaboration between Crown and bourgeois; the glamour of kingship has gone for the author of *Lear* and *Macbeth*. No longer does he believe that any strong central authority can solve the discords of what is now manifestly capitalism. He shows that the frustration of the 'noble' Coriolanus is as great as the frustration of the usurping murderer Macbeth. He realises that his world is inescapably non-medieval, and that the medieval solutions no longer apply. Coriolanus seeks to base himself on the medieval concept of 'honour,' and at once becomes a national traitor.

The torment of it all becomes too great. In the face of the 1607 rebellion of the Diggers, how can he maintain hope and trust in humanist values? Money has conquered. In this mood he wrote *Timon*. But now his emotional recoil, his disgust and horror, have become stronger than his power of aesthetic creation. *Coriolanus* is dry and deliberate next to the tumultuous energy of *Lear* and *Macbeth*; *Timon* simply breaks to pieces, shaken by a colossal rage against the universal corruption that commercialism has brought about.

Take some of the phrases from these two plays and remember that they were written in the year of the great Midlands insurrection. 'Our sufferance is a gain to them. . . . Let us revenge this with our pikes ere we become rakes; for the gods know I speak this in hunger for bread, not in thirst for revenge. . . . Make edicts for usury, to support usurers; repeal daily any wholesome act established against the rich, and provide more piercing statutes daily, to chain up and restrain the poor. . . . There is thy gold; worse poison to men's souls, doing more murders in this loathsome world. . . .' Compare these utterances with the outcry of the Diggers of Shakespeare's own beloved Warwickshire. 'Encroaching tyrants,' they cried, meant to 'grind our flesh upon the whetstone of poverty.'

Is it to be thought that Shakespeare, the devoted Warwickshire man, the author of *Lear*, could have followed the fortunes of the rebellious Diggers unmoved? His heart was wrung, and yet he felt more strongly than ever the fact that the people were politically immature, unable to help themselves by insurrection. What else, at that time and place, was left to him but the anarchist fury of *Timon*?

He had either to give up writing, to become a political publicist, and hazard his neck to no apparent purpose, or to change from objective reflection of his age to mere exploitation of his acquired technique for 'amusement' and 'art.' He chose the latter course, and wrote *Cymbeline*, *Winter's Tale*, and the *Tempest*, in which he grows increasingly subjective and fantastically symbolic; adapting himself to the fashionable mode of Fletcher and court-romanticism. Thus he showed his cleavage from the advancing bourgeois forces; but it was a retreat that could not satisfy the man who had once written with the whole tide of history surging behind

him. Again he came to a dead-end; his passionate powers drove clean through the romantic properties; in the *Tempest* for the first time in history we have a work of art in which the psychology of creation becomes the subject-matter of the creative act. So rapidly did his retreat from reality come to a divination of the whole inverted basis of romantic escape. He gave it up. He decided to write no more, and retired with his competence to Stratford.\*

Here, briefly, is a sketch of the way in which one can relate Shakespeare to his period. His greatness lies in the way in which he responded to contemporary social process, growing in power and subtlety as the crisis of his day deepened. Therefore, though he dealt only with the questions of achievement and frustration from an individualist point of view, the intensity and the truth with which he followed the expanding social pattern of his age made his work equally an expression of historical process.

And this balance was possible only at that moment. Imagine him born twenty years earlier or later than he was, and one realises how precisely bound he was to that peak-moment of harmony between bourgeois and court, in which medieval solidarity, renaissance humanism, and the new spirit of productive energy for a moment coalesced. He expressed the richness and delight of that moment, and the frustration that immediately overwhelmed it; he thereby spanned the whole capitalist epoch, linking medieval solidarity to the infinitely higher quality of unity that lies beyond the capitalist discord.

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\* To understand Shakespeare's struggle in its entirety we must not forget that his intuition of contemporary social forces was bound up with his personal struggle into a respectable position in the bourgeois world. As part of the complex discords that were tearing him we must note that the man who had written *Lear* owned property in the commonfields, and was interested in the enclosures proposed at Welcombe near Stratford in 1615. The despair to which he was led by his relinquishment of the struggle, his relapse into inert acceptance, is perfectly shown by his death: an attack of fever following a drinking bout with men who represented 'poetry,' the effort of revaluation which he had abandoned.

# A Welsh Girl

Sombre valley, Rhondda valley  
Walking there to go,  
Drearly, drearily the Welsh wastes,  
Drearly and slow.

We own the cold air,  
Idle the pit head stands,  
Oh, we own hunger and despair,  
But not the work of our hands.

Caves of London, Caves of London  
Who are your denizens?  
They are the young, they are the young,  
Caught in dead ends.

I had a job in a laundry,  
I had a job in a shop,  
My hands were caught in a factory  
Till I thought that I should drop.

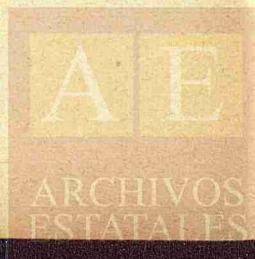
Get out into the fields,  
Get into the clean air,  
Take a day in the country  
Where spring buds, and there's no despair.

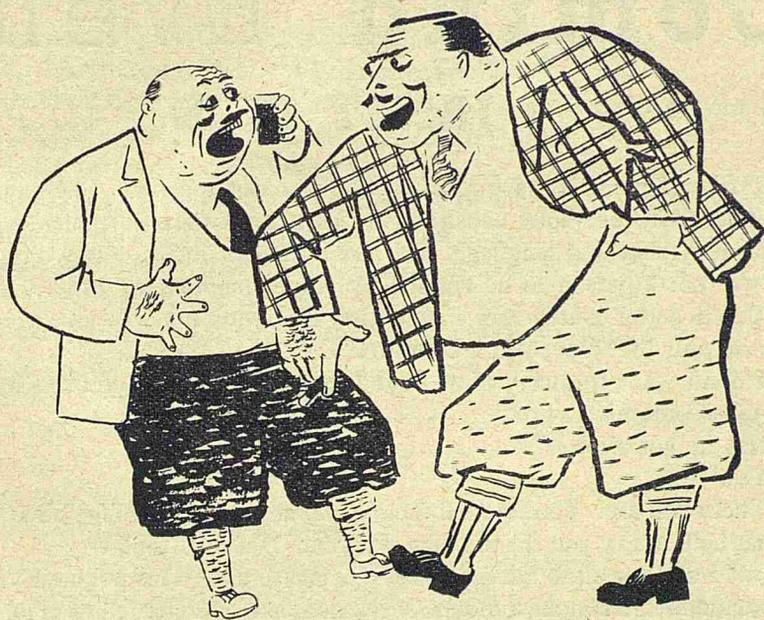
Friday hunger comes  
Across the wastes of the week;  
Oh have you brought your wages home,  
My daughter, speak!

I spent my wages in the country,  
Oh, mother, hear my cry,  
I spent my wages in the country,  
For I would escape or die.

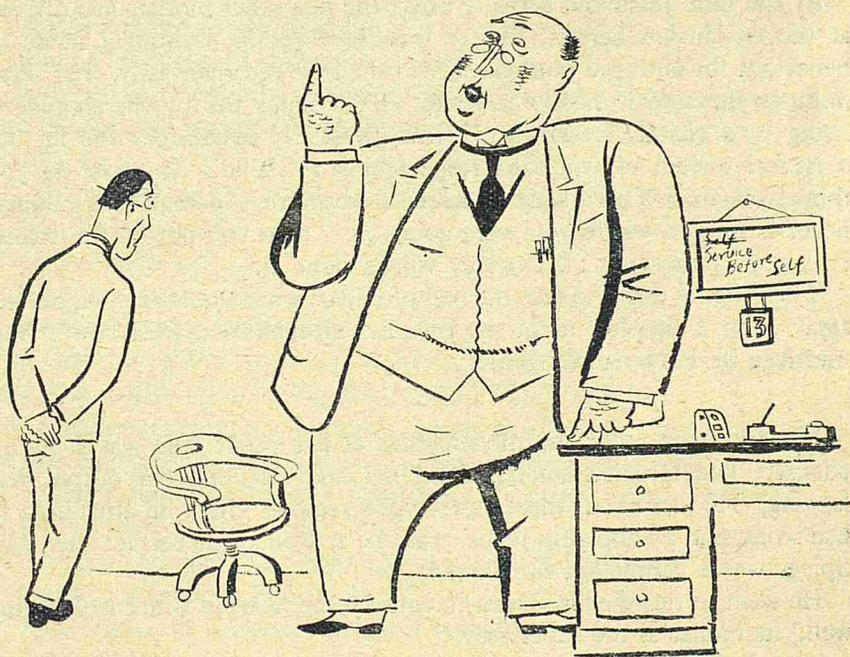
But all the trees grew tall with guns,  
The trees bent down with the bombs,  
The hills are running with our wounds,  
And the woods are white with our tombs.

MAURICE CARPENTER





Backbone of England



Service before Self

# Coming Event

By **JANET REID**

JESSIE was going to have a baby. She was not married. She confided in Violet first, for Violet had been in many shocking predicaments, used desperately shocking language, and had a fund of lousy stories. In fact, she was not a person to be winded by Jessie's announcement.

'You'd better marry him if you can, else your ma will give you the time of your life. My, you are a mut!'

'I don't want to marry him,' said Jessie. 'He's got a crooked mouth and talks something awful.'

'Has he got a job?'

'Yes.'

'There you are. You just tell them at home, and they'll take on at him, so that he'll marry you for the sake of quiet. You're all right.'

'But I don't want to tell ma.' Jessie began to cry. This irritated Violet, who demanded a certain standard of reasonableness in her fellow creatures.

'I suppose you think you can just go away for a holiday and hide the baby up a chimney. You are a one!'

By the time Jessie did actually break the news, her mother had arrived at the conclusion herself. There was, however, a traditional mode of behaviour for outraged mothers, which she followed rigorously. For three minutes she stared glassily at Jessie. Then shook her by the shoulders, rising to a vicious crescendo. When physically exhausted, she let out a typical torrent of wounded respectability: 'Who's daughter do you think you are? Can't keep yourself to yourself. So high and mighty, never letting on where you were going . . . turn you out on the streets . . . your father say . . . talkies what's done it.'

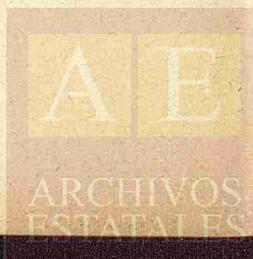
Then she sat down to face the real problem: what would the neighbours say? After a sleepless night she gave her ultimatum at breakfast: it was marriage or I'll not own you.

\* \* \*

Jessie became more and more listless at her work. She was a biscuit packer. The foreman stood behind her and saw that her output was lagging. He had about three stereotyped reasons which he attributed to bad work, and by applying Jessie's case he arrived at the correct one. Mr. Spicer was a competent foreman.

He went to the Welfare Department. 'Jessie Watson is not looking too well,' he informed the supervisor.

'She had better have a tonic,' said the supervisor, and beamed, because her salary included beaming at everyone.



'It's not exactly that.' Mr. Spicer shifted from foot to foot.

'Oh,' said the supervisor. 'I had better see her.'

Jessie walked defiantly into the office. A week's nagging from her family had given her the swagger of a hardened sinner.

'What is it, Jessie?' said the supervisor.

('Thinks I'm going to cry, the bitch. Got on her holy voice for the occasion.') 'Baby, that's wot it is,' she said aloud.

After a stilted conversation piece, she was sent to the almoner of the local hospital with a note.

'You want to book for your confinement in May, is that so?'

'Your name?'

'Jessie.'

'Surname?'

'Watson.'

'Are you married?'

'No.' It was as simple as that.

'You will be in hospital from ten days to a fortnight. You will previously attend the ante-natal clinic in the usual way. Are you willing to contribute anything towards the cost of your maintenance in hospital? The full weekly charge is three pounds.'

'Wot?'

'Can you afford to pay anything?'

'Well, I get eighteen shillings at the works.'

'And you will be getting maternity benefit from the State, two pounds.' Here the almoner paused before she put the question that always made her nervous.

'Can you tell me the young man's name, because the State has a claim on him, you know?'

'Tom Matthews.'

'He won't marry you?'

'He may not get the chance.'

'It might be better for you, economically, you know. Perhaps you will leave your contribution to the discretion of the committee?'

Not understanding the question, Jessie said 'Sure.' As she walked away her spirits rose. It was so easy to have an illegitimate baby. You just let someone fill in particulars on a piece of paper. And she wouldn't marry, not she.

She felt a little different when she saw her mother.

'Do they know at the works yet?'

'Yes. Going to a hospital when it comes.'

'Are you sacked?'

'Not so long as I can work. Blimy! you'd think I was the first with a baby coming unwanted-like.'

'Hold your tongue. Isn't it enough to have everyone talking? However, your pa was on at Tom to-night. He says . . .'

'I'm not going to set up house with Tom, if that's what you're meaning.'  
Uproar.

This protracted itself into February.

\* \* \*

Then Tom appeared one evening. He walked possessively into the room, and Jessie gathered a situation was pre-arranged, especially as her mother did not start on a line of feline invective. Instead, she swayed out to the washhouse.

Jessie scrutinised herself in a picture of the late king. Yes, her hair was tidy, her eyes were bright and her figure was not unduly large. Tom was all right, except for his crooked mouth and toughness. They wouldn't make a bad-looking couple, and, after all, a girl couldn't pack biscuits indefinitely.

Tom said, 'Wot about it?' and Jessie said, 'Wot about wot?' and giggled. Lor, he was a scream! It was all rather a scream. They amused themselves on the sofa for two hours.

'Now, you two, stop love-a-ducking,' said Mrs. Watson, coming in, and there was a luscious glint in her eye. Evidently, thought Jessie, she was regarded as betrothed.

\* \* \*

Jessie began to attend the Ante-Natal Clinic. The doctor examined each woman as a case; married or unmarried, it was not his business.

'Tell your husband you're going fine.'

'Haven't got a husband. Ought I to have?'

'That depends on your code of ethics.'

'Oh.'

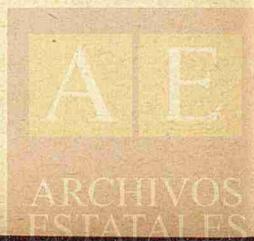
'Now, in an ideal state every woman should be allowed to have one child before she is thirty, even if she dispenses with an official husband. Numerous people suffer from a disease called sexual starvation, which we give polite names like neurasthenia. I look forward to the time when the present codes of morality and respectability are overhauled.'

'The rescue worker says I'm immoral,' said Jessie, clutching a word she recognised among the intellectual driftwood.

'My God! Did she say it's immoral to marry someone you don't care for?'

'Don't get you.'

The doctor warmed to the subject. He cited early tribal customs. He quoted Greek. He waved his delicate surgical hands. Jessie opened her mouth a little. She compared the cultured inflections of his voice to Tom's monosyllabic grunts. Tom be damned.



The time passed. Every fortnight or so she went to the clinic and asked some leading question.

‘What about money? People can’t have a baby on nothing.’

‘Yes, the whole system is absolutely mad. The State gives a married mother four pounds, and a single one two pounds, as if the baby were going to be half the size. Now, in Russia. . . .’

Once she interrupted his flow to say: ‘Have you got a wife?’

‘My dear child, do try to regard this problem with detachment.’

Jessie looked down at her figure. It was an eloquent reply. Stirred with new ideas, Jessie would go home to resist her family, and Mrs. Watson wondered what had got her now, and planned fresh forms of attack.

But it was Violet who finally made up Jessie’s mind, Violet, the musty-haired, with red stamped awry on her lips. She suddenly announced, a trifle too suddenly for the suspicious, that she was going to get married. She had made such a catch that she could leave the biscuit factory on the strength of it.

The etiquette on such occasions was to call for one’s wages on the Friday after marriage, wearing the wedding garments. Violet had a pink art-silk coat and skirt and a fox fur. She minced past the conveyor, smiling at her friends in their grimy overalls. Jessie tried to hide her bulk behind a pile of biscuit tins.

‘My,’ said Mr. Spicer. ‘Thought she was a mannekewin.’

That was the last straw. Jessie asked for her cards. She told everyone she was going to get married, and people were pleased, because respectability in the factory depended only on a marriage licence, however late. The Labour Exchange were duly notified that she was ‘leaving to be married.’ Had she gone on until she was forced to leave the reason would have been given as ‘employee in a certain condition,’ and between these two there was an appreciable difference.

‘I’m married,’ Jessie told the doctor.

‘Why?’ He was blank, scornful.

‘Why, because mother took on awful, and the foreman looked down his nose, and Violet was a sight in pink silk and fox fur.’ Aloud, she said: ‘It’ll be better for the baby.’

She was relieved to see the doctor look quite sympathetic. It was clever of her to think of saying that. Come to think of it, she hadn’t considered the brat. No one had.



# The New MOSCOW

MICHAEL BEST

MOSCOW IN THE MAKING, by Sir E. D. Simon and others. *Longmans* : 7s. 6d.

**T**HIS book brings with it into our heated atmosphere of struggle and despair conflict and pessimism, servility and revolt, a breath of the enthusiastic and triumphant spirit with which the Russians are building a new world. Again and again this spirit breaks through the cold, measured, rather academic tones of the authors, sweeping them on despite themselves, despite their numerous hesitations, doubts, misunderstandings.

The authors are dealing with subjects which in this country are regarded by the general public as of interest only to the 'specialist,' and not fit for popular discussion unless seasoned with a liberal spice of sensation. Yet in their Russian setting, these topics become most vividly interesting and colourful, the very stuff of which life itself is made.

Mr. W. A. Robson, English authority on local government, expertly examines the mechanism of the Moscow City Council, the Mossoviet, showing how much superior, more efficient and more democratic it is than the administration of any other city in the world. As he remarks himself: 'The flavour and atmosphere of the social environment in which the building up of Moscow is taking place can only be captured by the personal experience of a visit. The impact of these forces almost takes away one's breath by its tremendous strength.'

One may judge of this atmosphere by the sidelights thrown on the Moscow scene by comparison with London. Imagine a city council of 2,116 elected deputies, instead of the 120-odd in the London County Council, the majority of them young people between 26 and 40 years of age, comprising 1,372 workmen, 159 higher employees, 321 engineers and technicians, 55 students, 66 soldiers, and 143 others; the whole 'permeated by a desire to secure the participation of the masses on a wide scale in the city government, and this is accompanied by an attempt to encourage criticism and suggestion from below.' And what to Mr. Robson was 'one of the most surprising results' of his enquiry was 'the gradual realisation that this vast assembly of delegates does, in fact, play an important and active part in the city government.'

Freed from pettifogging intrigues and the demoralising small and even large-scale graft, both open and underhand, associated with almost every city council in capitalist countries, Soviet Russia has vigorously blown

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away the cobwebs which had settled on the term democracy and has given it living expression. 'Every industrial, commercial or service unit in U.S.S.R. (records Mr. Robson) has a trade union in which all the workers of every rank and grade are included. At the periodic meetings of the union every worker, down to the humblest charwoman or floor-cleaner, is free, not merely in theory but in practice, to ventilate his or her grievances against the management; and it is a very serious offence to try to stop a worker from exercising this right. To do so may lead to dismissal or demotion of the person responsible.'

Couple with this the fact that 'Mossoviet is conducting a far wider range of functions than the council of any English or American city, and in that sense there is far more local government in Moscow than in Manchester, or London, or New York,' and also that 'the love of money appears to be notably absent among the directing heads and to be regarded with some contempt,' and one can picture something of the administrative background against which Moscow is planning and constructing its future.

Mr. Robson has given a very faithful and impersonal account of Moscow's government which the other authors of the book would have been advised to study more closely before embarking on their occasional captious expressions of doubt about how decisions are made in Soviet Russia.

Professor Jewkes' fragment on Industry and Finance, with its 'It is impossible to discern . . . ' 'Why was the decision made . . . ?' and 'How is it that . . . ?' attitude is more revealing of the narrow rut in which traditional economics is floundering, than of any of the real economic problems which the Russians must be confronting, and which they are so successfully solving. If there is any question on which intelligent economists here would like more information, it is how the 'dove-tailing' of the various parts of the plan is achieved in practice, especially, over a period, between consumption goods and capital equipment, and how prices are arranged as between the different commodities. (For have not those great economists, Professor Mises and Professor Hayek, demonstrated incontrovertibly that it cannot be done and that, therefore, presumably, Soviet Russia does not exist?) On these matters, the Professor sheds no light. Having discovered on one occasion that 'it became apparent that I was discussing the question of prices in terms which were strange to the officials,' he seems to have enquired no further into this, and devotes his energies instead to showing that Manchester spent 47s. 6d. per head of the population in 1936, as against Moscow's 23s. 6d., under-estimating the colossal effect on the Manchester figure of the cost of land, which is entirely absent from the Moscow figures, and estimating the value of the rouble as measured by 80 roubles to the £, apparently without allowing for those 'imponderables' such as free health services, the shorter working day and other such factors, which he would no doubt

be the first to point out to his own students in Manchester in making the difficult comparison of the value of money in two different currencies.

Lady Simon, with twelve years' study of education in Manchester behind her, adds a fascinating chapter on Education in Moscow. What emerges from it is that, inspired by Lenin's maxim, 'without books there can be no knowledge; without knowledge there can be no Communism,' Soviet Russia has stimulated 'a widespread enthusiasm for learning that has probably had no counterpart since the Renaissance.' (I cannot refrain from quoting this passage in full.) 'Middle-aged men and women attend courses after the day's work in the factory and office. Working hours are only seven a day, in some cases six, so that there is time and energy to spare for education. Crèches and kindergartens enable working mothers to attend classes. It is considered of first-rate importance that children should live in a literate home, otherwise their own progress at school would be hampered. For the first time in the history of mankind, one hundred and seventy millions of men, women, and children are given the opportunity of the best education that the nation can provide—free, universal, and with complete equality of opportunity.'

Her dislike of the fact that Soviet education is biased, that the learning is 'not for its own sake, nor for the pleasure or profit of the learner, but strictly subordinated to a determined common end,' will not, I think, cut much ice with those numerous teachers and educational administrators in this country who feel themselves to be held fast in the straitjacket of the English educational system, and who are not unaware of a certain bias, both deliberate and unconscious, in the teaching here. How any comparison can be made with our system, in which the large majority of children are turned out of school at the age of fourteen with a literacy only one step removed from complete illiteracy, is difficult to understand.

I have before me a *History of Feudalism*, described as a 'Textbook for Middle Schools' in Soviet Russia. If I had had this to read at school instead of memorising so many useless dates about royalty, which is so large a feature of history teaching in English schools, I feel I should have been receiving education in the real sense of the term. Lady Simon's question, after expressing her admiration for the courage and imagination of the educational system in Moscow where 'children really count, where their physical and mental welfare is a matter of the utmost importance and not merely an occasion for the payment of lip-service at the time of a general election,' her remark, 'It is magnificent—but is it, after all, education?' is an anti-climax. It seems to be a criticism for the sake of criticising, especially when, by contrast with England, she expresses her belief that 'Those who are responsible for directing and practising education in England do not concern themselves with the next stage in the evolution of our society, still less do they profess to know what the ultimate form of civilisation will be; but they all have a profound inward conviction

that a satisfactory state of society will only be reached as the result of the full and free development of individuals.' I call to mind the headmistress of the 'Junior Mixed' section of the elementary school in which I received my 'education,' and the shadow of the terror which her well-drilled, martial figure, with her constant resort to caning for such lapses as failing to walk in step, whispering on the stairs or inattention to petty rules, struck in the hearts of the children, still sends through me a spasm of that revulsion that I used to feel so much more bitterly for the whole of my schooling. The 'profound inward conviction' that most of the teachers of my acquaintance seem to share is that it is difficult to teach at all in elementary schools owing to the size of the classes and the home conditions of many of the children, and that they themselves, in spite of the lip-service paid to their importance as rearers of the future generation, are a most downtrodden, despised and neglected section of the community. The few who have any real conviction at all are those who attempt, in spite of the unfavourable conditions in most schools, to teach precisely along the lines likely to lead to the 'free development of individuals' and are often penalised for so doing.

The rest of the book is Sir Ernest Simon's, whose chapters on Housing, the Building Trade and the Ten-Year Plan and the concluding comments on whether the Mossoviet is (a) democratic and (b) efficient, are at once both highly exhilarating and disappointing. Disappointing chiefly because Sir Ernest will not, or cannot, see the background to the very achievements he describes so well; exhilarating because the Ten-Year Plan itself, its breadth of vision, its technical quality and, above all, the advantages which the Mossoviet possesses over any other town in the world for townplanning are such that they should make every English town planner, frustratedly toying with the 'development' of an acre or two of some English town, with the vested stranglehold of private landownership choking the way at every step, turn green with envy. There is enormous overcrowding in Moscow, frankly admitted by the officials, and provision is made for its gradual and steady removal as the population is stabilised and the building programme fulfilled. Overcrowding is so big a problem, chiefly because Moscow's population has swelled out from one million in 1920 to over three and a half millions in 1936. Sir Ernest testifies to the cleanliness of even the overcrowded homes, and the pride taken in the care of the houses. It should be remembered, too, that rents cannot by law exceed 10 per cent. of the income of the chief wage-earner, and, as Sir Ernest points out, 'generally speaking, it seemed to vary between 2 and 7 per cent.' The overcrowding there is a physical necessity, forced on them by their circumstances. It is not, as here, accompanied by the horrible degradation which living in a slum implies, the high rents that often go with even the most overcrowded quarters and the intimidation of bullying landlords. The shame that Sir Ernest confesses to have felt at 'living in

a comfortable suite in the hotel and to wonder whether one ought not to ask two or three families to share it,' might well be transferred to his native Lancashire, where George Orwell in his recent book, *The Road to Wigan Pier*, reveals conditions of overcrowding of which even Sir Ernest, expert though he is on housing, was probably ignorant. It would serve, too, perhaps to cause him to revise the basis of his comparisons between the overcrowding in Moscow and that of this country.

'Optimism was universal,' he reports, and asks: 'Is it the way that Russians talk? Or is it the kind of faith that moves mountains?' The description of the Ten-Year Plan (1936-1945) with the shorter, more immediate, Three-Year Plan, by now well under way, makes an answer unnecessary.

Compare the two maps of Moscow included in the book, one of the existing town and the other of Moscow at the end of the reconstruction now under way. The area of the town is being increased from 70,000 acres to 150,000 acres; a protective belt of forests and parks up to ten kilometres in width is being created beyond the limits of this territory to serve as 'a reservoir of fresh air for the city and a place of recreation for its inhabitants'; the careful development of residential, industrial, administrative and social districts, building out from the existing historical radial and circular system of street, with broad avenues, widened roads, and the planning and designing of central squares and approaches to all buildings of importance. We have to go back to Wren's excellent plan for London, which was shelved because the burghers were so anxious to get back to business, and never resurrected, before we can find some analogy in the rest of the world to hold up against the breadth of vision and the regard for the well-being of the population which characterise the plan of new Moscow.

Sir Ernest aptly quotes an article by Mr. Herbert Morrison, in which he outlines what he would like to do in London, but concludes that 'this is not practical politics for to-day: it is a vision of the London of my dreams.' Sir Ernest comments that 'In Moscow it is not only practical politics; much of it is already done.' Town-planners, whether socialist or not, will agree that the greatest obstacles to any intelligent and widespread planning is the private ownership of land and private decision over the disposition of industrial and dwelling centres. In these two respects alone Moscow has advantages with which no 'capitalist' town can hope to compare.

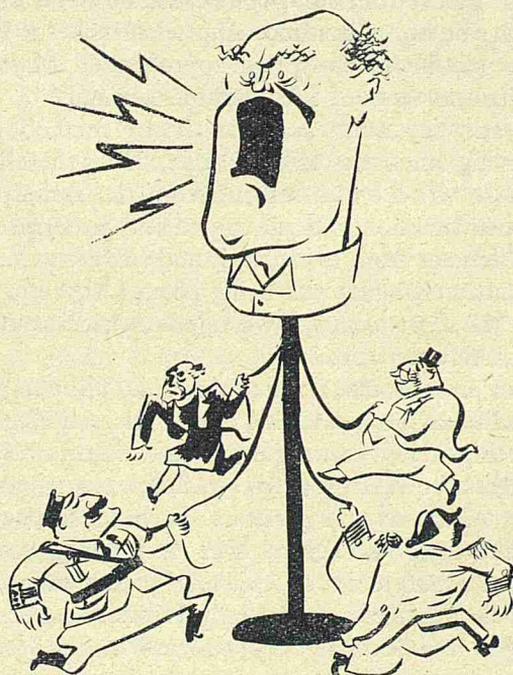
'I believe,' says Sir Ernest Simon, 'that they have the best constitution yet devised for effective city government, that their leaders are men of integrity, enthusiasm and ability,' and cautiously concludes: 'If there should be no great war, if the population of Moscow does not exceed five million, if the government maintains its present integrity and strength of purpose, I believe that at the end of the ten-year plan Moscow will be well on the way to being, as regards health, convenience and

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amenities of life for the whole body of citizens, the best-planned great city the world has ever known.'

At a time when the capitalist world seems to be on its last feverish legs, when the whole structure threatens to collapse dangerously about our ears, when so many countries are viciously repressing any sign of progress or initiative or fruitful human expression, the knowledge of the vigorous and successful achievements of Soviet Russia will be a life-giving inspiration, a vindication of the ideals and dreams for whose fulfilment so many of our fathers died and so many more of our own generation are struggling.



● What James Boswell puts in this picture, **George Audit** reveals in words—in the Left Review pamphlet

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# Testament of a Revolutionary

(CHRISTOPHER ST. JOHN SPRIGG)

## DOUGLAS GARMAN

It is important to stress the fact that *Illusion and Reality*\* is the work of a revolutionary. I say this not merely because Sprigg was killed in Spain fighting against Fascism, nor because he wrote as a Marxist. Both these facts must be borne in mind. But what makes it specifically revolutionary is the way in which Sprigg apprehended Marxism, firstly as an essentially dynamic view of life, capable not only of explaining but of changing it; and secondly, as a consistent method, applicable to all functions of living, all modes of knowledge. He is therefore at the opposite pole to all those writers who set out from the assumption that art is a separate, isolated function to be discussed only in terms of itself. For him it is a force which, far from being static and subject to immutable aesthetic laws, is constantly changing and being changed by life, by social activity. As he says in the *Introduction*, 'We reject from the outset any limitation to purely aesthetic categories.'

This view of art as social activity and thus, ultimately, as a product of economic conditions, permeates his book. At each stage of his argument, and whatever the subject that argument leads him to discuss, the criterion by which he tests the validity of his conclusions is whether it is consistent with the unity of theory and practice. Such consistency of outlook is in itself distinctive in an age given over to jittering eclecticism and will probably prove a bar to its acceptance by conventional literary critics. Even a would-be Marxist such as Philip Henderson fails to understand its significance, and in a peculiarly inept review in the *Spectator* mistakes its profundity for 'an intricate elaboration of the obvious.' Yet it is precisely this consistency of approach that enables Sprigg to bring to his central theme a wealth of knowledge which, far from diverting the attention, serves continually to deepen and strengthen his argument.

Clearly, then, his book is not just another essay in aesthetic appreciation. It is an attempt to give a scientific account of the origin of poetry, to trace its gradual modifications, and then to state the problems it must solve if it is to survive. It is his central thesis that the source of poetry—and by implication of all artistic activity—is to be found in the world of illusion which, as a result of the conflict between man's instinctive, biological

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\* ILLUSION AND REALITY, by Christopher Caudwell. *Macmillan*: 18s.



desires and the necessity imposed on those desires by conscious social activity, he projects upon reality. These are the illusion and reality to which his title refers, and one could wish that he had chosen another pair of words to express this relation of opposites. For on the face of it it might appear that he conceived of reality as something exclusive of illusion, a dualistic, idealistic conception the very reverse of what he intends. To make his meaning clear he is continually obliged to qualify reality, but even so the qualification is not entirely satisfactory. 'What in fact is the emotional complex of tribal poetry? Is it material reality or completely ideal illusion?' he asks. And the answer is: 'It is neither. It is *social* reality.'

But if his terminology is confused, his meaning is nevertheless clear. By reality, or, as he sometimes calls it, 'external reality,' he means the objective world, and by illusion the sphere of subjective desires and hopes, the individual 'I.' But these two fields of experience, far from being exclusive, are in a continually changing relationship of which art is an expression. Since the ultimate source of all poetry is 'illusion,' it has this constant characteristic. But because the nature of that illusion is determined by the variable objective conditions of which it is a projection, poetry itself changes as these conditions are transformed by economic development. In primitive authors this illusory world is undifferentiated and so finds expression equally in mythology and poetry. But when as a result of the division of labour society begins to split into classes 'religion and art cease to be the collective product of the tribe, and become the product of the ruling class.' Mythology continues to exist as an undergrowth of superstition and legend, but the highest consciousness of society, centred in the dominant class, is expressed in religion and art. Gradually, however, as religion ceases to provide an adequate explanation of reality, it becomes, in the hands of the rulers, merely an instrument used consciously in support of authority. It loses its living quality and ossifies into dogma, and the function of expressing illusion devolves upon poetry. At such periods, as may be seen by reference to the Elizabethan age, poetry flourished. But though the form that poetry takes must continually be modified in order that it may adapt itself to the changing social relations, its function remains substantially the same. 'Not poetry's abstract statement—its content of facts, but its dynamic role in society—its content of collective emotion is therefore poetry's *truth*.'

It is impossible, however, in a few pages to do justice to the scope and brilliance of the argument, or to follow out its application to modern, i.e. post-feudal, or capitalist, poetry. It must suffice to say that the problem which he finds to be central to this period in life as in art is that of freedom. This is the substance of the 'bourgeois illusion,' the source of its poetry. But 'freedom itself is not a state, it is a specific struggle with nature . . . the very act of living and behaving like a man in a certain state of society.' So long, therefore, as society remained at a level of economic development

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at which the bourgeoisie was unfree, its illusion retains a vital and energising meaning; and its poetry was vigorously alive because it was expressing that illusion. Gradually, however, with man's progressive conquest of nature, the nature of freedom has changed—'the productive forces released by capitalism have developed to a stage where they are no longer compatible with the limitations which engendered them.' If poetry, therefore, is to retain its vitality, its significance as a social force, it is necessary for it to tear itself away from the 'bourgeois illusion.' Yet so long as we remain subject to bourgeois ideology, as long as we reject the possibility of achieving the new and higher form of society that objective conditions make possible, we cannot do this, and in consequence art, progressively divorced from social reality, becomes increasingly devitalised.

This is the crisis which confronts poetry to-day. In examining it and the conditions necessary for its solution, Sprigg turns to the consideration of the specifically modern characteristics of poetry. Having, in a chapter called *The World and the 'I'*, given a vivid exposition of the subject-object relationship as it is resolved by dialectical materialism, he proceeds to criticise the philosophical confusion underlying psycho-analytic theory. This I believe to be the most masterly account that has yet been given by a Marxist of modern analytical psychology. It enables him to separate from much that is fallacious its positive content, which he is then able to apply constructively in a chapter called *Poetry's Dreamwork*, to his central theme. Reverting to his earlier argument, he points out that by 'freedom' the psychoanalyst means freedom of the instincts, but as he cogently adds, 'the instincts, unadapted by society, are blind and therefore unfree. . . . Man's freedom is obtained by association, which makes it possible for him to acquire mastery over Nature through becoming actively conscious of its necessity and his own.' He thus differentiates sharply, and conclusively, between the 'free' association of dream and the directed feeling of poetry. 'The neurotic is deluded because the complex is in his unconscious; he is unfree. The artist is only illuded because the complex is in his conscious; he is free.'

Finally, in a chapter written with the eloquence of profound thought passionately experienced, he sums up his argument and expresses his belief in the future, not only of poetry but also of society. 'All art,' he writes, 'is conditioned by the conception of freedom which rules in the society that produces it; art is a mode of freedom. . . . In bourgeois art man is conscious of the necessity of outer reality but not of his own, because he is unconscious of the society that makes him what he is. He is only a half-man. Communist poetry will be complete, because it will be man conscious of his own necessity as well as that of outer reality.' That so inspiring and confident an utterance should have proved to be Sprigg's testament, brings home to us the full tragedy of his death.

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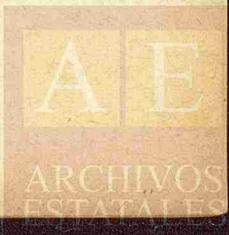
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SOVIET DEMOCRACY, by Pat Sloan. *Gollancz* : 6s. (Left Book Club May Choice : 2s. 6d.)

Review by SIDNEY WEBB

This is a new sort of book about the U.S.S.R. It is quite different from the 'tourist' books, whether enthusiastic or vituperative. Again, it is equally unlike the comprehensive analysis of the formal structure of the Soviet Union, comparable with that of Lord Bryce on the American Commonwealth. Mr. Sloan has done more than visit the U.S.S.R., even repeatedly. He has lived there for six years on end, earning his living in a succession of salaried jobs; and 'chumming up' with his co-residents in a block of flats, or joining with his co-workers in games and pleasure trips. Thus, instead of giving us laws and decrees and statistics, he describes how the Soviet worker lives and talks and works and plays. He gives us the 'feeling' of Moscow's inhabitants, in crowds and as members of families, as trade unionists and as co-operators, in factory meetings and at elections. I have read no book better fitted to make the reader understand what it all amounts to. In three successive parts, Mr. Sloan tells us what it means to live 'A New Life,' in 'A New State,' and as participants in 'A New Democracy.' And in these easy talks, without Marxist pedantry or tiresome erudition, he contrives to answer quite a large number of the questions that occur to every Briton about this puzzling novel phenomenon of Socialism in practice. He knows, too, how to be quietly and effectively critical, both of some of the shortcomings of the Soviet Union, and of some of the animadversions expressed in works of greater pretension. This is emphatically a book to be read.

## Who's Who

ALEXANDER HENDERSON has just returned from a long stay in Germany. Published a book on Aldous Huxley some time ago, and his first novel, *Freedom's Crooked Scars*, is to be published shortly.

JACK LINDSAY. Well known to LEFT REVIEW readers. His forthcoming books include an *Anatomy of Spirit* and a study of Bunyan.

JAMES HAWTHORNE is a newspaper correspondent in Madrid, contributor to *New Masses*.

JANET REID. Born 1912. Lived in England and South America. Past student of the London School of Economics. Engaged in Industrial Welfare. Printed achievements confined to verse and book reviews, but her literary intentions are unlimited.

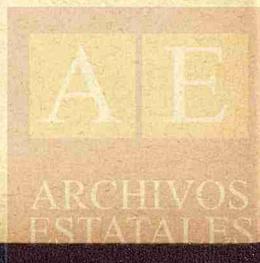
MAURICE CARPENTER. A young poet who is on the Editorial Board of *Challenge*.

SIDNEY WEBB, when 'approaching his ninth decade,' together with his wife wrote the most considerable commentary on the U.S.S.R. in existence, *Soviet Communism: A New Civilisation?*\* He had previously written, over a period of fifty years, numerous standard works of social investigation, one of which, *The History of Trades Unionism*, was translated by Lenin and his wife in the last years of the nineteenth century. He has twice been a cabinet minister. His best-known pupil is Bernard Shaw.

M. BEST is an economist and member of the Architects' and Technicians' Association.

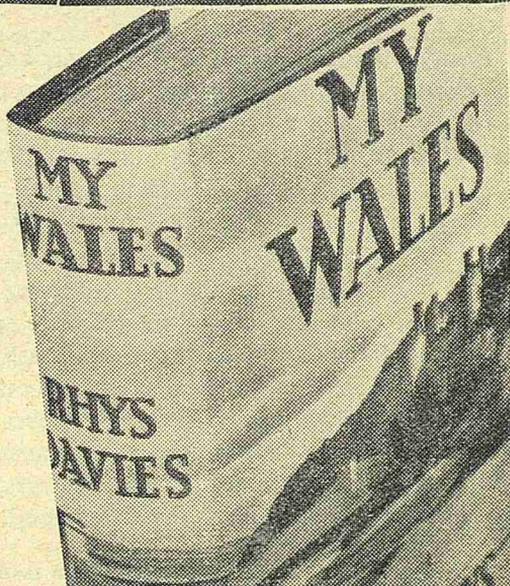
STEPHEN SWINGLER has written an Outline of Political Philosophy from the French Revolution to Marx, which will be published shortly.

\*Longmans Green, 35s. Two important sections have been published as pamphlets by LEFT REVIEW, price 3d. each.



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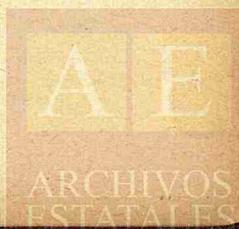
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# New Poetry

CALAMITERROR, by George Barker. *Faber & Faber* : 5s.

POEMS, by Rex Warner. *Boriswood* : 5s.

THE DISAPPEARING CASTLE, by Charles Madge. *Faber & Faber* : 6s.

SPAIN, by W. H. Auden. *Faber & Faber* : 1s.

THE FIFTH DECAD OF CANTOS, by Ezra Pound. *Faber & Faber* : 6s.

By STEPHEN SPENDER

George Barker is the least politically conscious of these poets, he has by now been told by most of the critics that he is too absorbed in the private crisis of his own personality, yet I find that his poems give me a far deeper sense of the confusion and frustration of European civilisation than do Charles Madge's quick-change muse, Rex Warner's severely willed political puritanism, or Ezra Pound's vast cocktail of old-world beauty and Douglas economics.

Rex Warner is serious, honest, observant, passionate (and an important prose writer, to judge from what I have seen of the *Wild Goose Chase*), but he does not seem to trust sufficiently either his own intuitions or his own perceiving eye: he has the schoolmaster's habit of hammering in his moral with prodigious anvil strokes. His poetry is unsatisfactory because, although it is competent and sincere, his verbal sense and technical skill do not conceal the fact that he is always shifting from a poetic meaning back to a prose meaning. There are good lines and sharp observation—

'What I watch most is moss  
or leaves in alleys of air,  
the rasping blade of grass,  
tiny berries on a huge moor.'

A few more verses like this, and then Rex Warner's social conscience takes up the pen and we are told how 'What most moves my mind is torture of man by man':

'How love is made to lose,  
and those who are high hate;  
how truth is taught to please  
and freshness finds defeat.'

In this stanza, excellent as is the intention, there is a failure of imagination, because the poet instead of referring, as he does in the first stanza, to the world of his unique inner experience, is drawing on a world of text-books and economics which he endeavours to translate back into the

language of his own authentic inner experience. The process of translation is not convincing, as, indeed, it never could be. The poet is committed to what he can really feel with his imagination, whether he likes it or not, and if the paths of imagination do not lead back to his social conscience there is nothing to be done about it.

Rex Warner's poetry suffers from the excess of the poet's conscious will. He never looks at a bird or a berry or cracks a joke without one feeling behind his lines the pressure of a conscience determined to draw a moral and exploit a meaning. Yet this willed quality has in poetry exactly the opposite effect from that which it has in political action: in disciplined political action, the will makes the individual merge his individuality in the purpose of the whole movement. In poetry the will emphasises the education and particular social background of the individual and makes it impossible for him to forget his own individuality; whereas without the exercise of the conscious will he would draw on sources of his consciousness which are communal and not individual.

No poetry could be more arrogantly individualist, more the product of a Public School and Oxford education, with holidays on the moors, than Rex Warner's. Because he puts his will before his imagination, he never succeeds in breaking down the barriers of a social class and special environment, as Auden has sometimes done. For example, where Auden's buffoonery is nonsense appreciable by anyone, Warner's humour is patronising and embarrassing:

' You who adore  
don't do it any more.  
Give it right up  
and don't be a pup.'

Yet one of these poems, 'Nile Fishermen,' is an extremely successful piece of Marxist writing, and many of the poems about birds will please those who like close observation.

*Calamiterror* is the very opposite of Warner's *Poems*, it draws no moral, preaches no sermons, and has the minimum of reference to external theory, statistics, or even to a coherent material reality. The whole poem, rather than being plotted and arranged, springs from one centre and has no development, it is a firework, not an organism. The experience at the centre of the fire is the death of the poet's child.

I cannot pretend that George Barker's attitude to politics and to Spain in particular (the Civil War puts in an appearance in the last two cantos), is correct or even constructive. But he is prodigiously and genuinely 'aware' of what is going on. It is a matter of far greater poetic significance that Irun has broken into George Barker's poetry than that Rex Warner has

translated his political views into poems which, one cannot help thinking, would be better if confined to what he sees. If I read in the newspapers about an air raid in Valencia, I am oppressed by the weight of the actual and menacing which may seem to obtrude for a moment on my own environment: if I dream about an air raid in Valencia, I realise that this part of contemporary reality has become, as a symbol, part of my own mental environment, with a special significance which I cannot elude. The difference between politics in Warner's poetry and that of Barker is the difference between the air raid which for a moment interrupts the process of my inner world, with the weight of an unpleasant obligation, and the air raid which has broken right into the centre of my dream and become one of the symbols of my mental life—in fact, the air raid which I have poetically 'experienced.'

The obscurities, the formlessness, the redundancy, the occasional vagueness of Barker's poetry, are all due to his enormous ego-centricity as a writer. The situation of the poet in *Calamiterror* is described in his own words:

'The centre of the heart like a red tree  
Shoots forth a hand pointing towards mirrors.  
And when I look I see myself embroiled like  
The Egyptian corpse in images of self.'

Occasionally the external world is so clamorous that it forces itself into the whirlpool of the poet's private world:

'Continually the women weeping in Irun's ruins  
Call in distress with voices like swans;  
I hear that cry which breaks the womb or room  
Wherever I stand and forces me to go.'

George Barker's world is obsessed, over-sensitive, hysterical, and perhaps, in the last resource, too passive towards experience. Yet ego-centric as he is, he is not surrounded by the hard shell of a determined 'character' which seems to make it so difficult for Rex Warner to experience anything in the sense that it becomes part of himself and not just a deeply felt intellectual concept. 'Irun's ruins' would speak to Warner with the voice of conscience demanding the voice of protest: they become part of Barker's spiritual habitation, and therefore Barker is capable of development, because he is capable of imaginative experience to the degree to which it is only possible to the true poet, the degree by which an imagined experience modifies the poet's whole being.

Charles Madge is more talented than either Warner or Barker; he has none of Barker's deplorable lapses into meaninglessness, he is not over-rigid, like Warner. Yet his poems mean far less to me than the other two volumes, because Madge's talent appears to me to be exclusively directed

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towards enabling him to slide from one elusive mental position to another. Two things are symptomatic of this elusiveness: firstly, the unsimilarity of each poem in this book to any other (excepting the eight *Delusions*, here printed separately, which were originally one long poem); secondly, a steady falling-off in the interest of the poems (they are printed in the order in which they were written) as the book proceeds. The later poems are concerned far more with attitudes and effects and less with saying anything than the early ones. Charles Madge has extraordinary virtuosity; and his imitation of Gray's *Elegy* in *Delusions* is as masterly as it seems to me pointless. Perhaps I may misunderstand him completely, and in case I am doing so, I shall hasten to enumerate what seem to me his virtues. His achievement is a negation rather than an affirmation, and perhaps that is to the good: it is an astonishing impersonality. His poems have no rhetoric, they say little or nothing, they have a clear, exact imagery, a beautiful music, and they leave often the impression of something colourless and transparent. Technically, his poems seem to stand midway between the imagists and the surrealists. He very often succeeds in constructing an extremely successful 'word picture' with a poem. Possibly Madge has withdrawn his interest from writing poetry lately, in order to concentrate on other things. In any case, everyone seriously interested in *Modern Poetry*—especially in the writing of it—should read these poems. Technically it is of more importance than the other volumes.

Auden's *Spain* is an occasional poem in the same sense as are the poems by Wordsworth, Byron and Landor on the struggle of the Spanish people against Napoleon, and it is worthy of a great tradition. The poet has confined himself to an abstracted view of the fundamental motives of the struggle and a bird's-eye view of Spain:

' On that arid square, that fragment nipped off from hot  
Africa, soldered so crudely to inventive Europe;  
On that tableland scored by rivers,  
Our thoughts have bodies; the menacing shapes of our fever  
Are precise and alive.'

Within these limits, in which the element of personal experience and direct emotional response is rigorously excluded, the poem is a remarkable interpretation of the issues and implications of the struggle in Spain.

Ezra Pound goes on and on and on with his *Cantos*. If one imagined a person called Rabbi Ben Ezra £ writing an immense poem suggested by the antique flavour of his own first name plus the sense of a money civilisation suggested by the second—well, that poem might be very like the *Cantos*. In these *Cantos*, as in the early ones, there are passages of classical beauty inserted amongst great tracts of the Social Creditor looking at history and life. A certain dullness weaves together these divergent interests and ages into a sort of whole.

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# Prometheus Unbound

THE MIND IN CHAINS, edited by C. Day Lewis. *Frederick Muller* : 5s.

Review by MONTAGU SLATER

I am not sure that a more accurate title for this volume of Marxist essays would not have been 'The Imagination Unchained,' for while there are essays on science and on morals, the products of the imagination are its contributors' chief concern. The impression it has left with me (varying, it is true, from essay to essay, and in some of them disappearing altogether) is one of a discovery of the actual world. Here is a peak commanding the new country, and these writers, like stout Cortez and his men, look at each other with a wild surmise: then begin to move down into an intelligible society.

The editor says this book would not have been written if its authors did not believe that while for us the mind is in chains, the chains have been broken in the Soviet Union. The new country these writers have sighted is certainly a world that includes the Soviet Union—but also France, Spain, China, India, Britain, and Hollywood as well. Arthur Calder-Marshall, who has been given the last place to attend to, sees there a capitalism without weakness or division, of unsurpassed cunning and evidently invincible. When the enemy appears to retreat it is only to ambush the rash intellectual worker.

Charles Madge is the opposite. (His essay was published last month in *LEFT REVIEW*.) He has discovered by experience that even the most cynical proprietor of mass newspapers is in the nature of things resisted by the mass he works on; and this resistance is the desire for poetry, life, progress. It is only by ceaseless effort that it is perverted towards reactionary or, at least, neutral ends. Every issue of a newspaper represents a struggle between the few and the many, and the journalist is in the thick of it. Madge is so thrilled by his discovery that he has not had time to arrange his impressions, limiting himself rather to a prolonged 'Oh!' 'Oh that the mass could speak, could become articulate in a never-ending stream of postcards, each telling the truth.'

The only fault I have to find with Edward Upward's *Marxist Interpretation of Literature* is that he does not make enough of the delight in this discovery of a world to live in. He prefers to put it negatively. The writer 'must be told frankly' that 'going over to Socialism may prevent him, but failing to go over *must* prevent him from writing a good book.' Madge has felt obscurely and delightedly that the new world is here—somewhere: Upward has found words to explain. He tells of a society which exists as movement, movement that would be meaningless unless we felt its direction—direction that can only be apprehended by those who make a part of it. I believe that his essay on Literature and Rex Warner's on

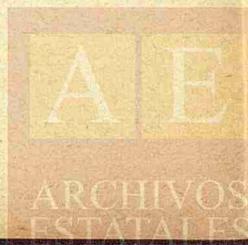
Education will last long, and that they are the most valuable essays in Marxist criticism the movement in England has yet produced.

Upward's negative point comes out interestingly in J. D. Bernal's *Science and Civilisation*. Bernal quotes with reserve an argument of Professor Langevin, 'one of the most respected of French scientists.' It runs: 'the scientific work that can be done to-day by any scientist can be, and would be, done if he could not do it by another scientist within a few years, but anything the scientist can do to secure the possibility of carrying on science at all may help to save not a few years in a particular field, but decades and perhaps centuries for science as a whole.' The point here seems to me to be expressed mechanically. Certainly there is a conflict as Upward has seen. The writer *may* be silenced by the reshaping of his consciousness, the distraction of his attention, the demands of politics on his time. But Langevin has gone farther and contemplates a deliberate sacrifice, the bequeathing of unperformed experiments to the heirs of our struggle. But isn't this opposition dialectical, too? The scientist, like the writer, must sacrifice time he would give to his own pursuits and devote it to working, fighting, even dying, for the general welfare of mankind. It is a way of saying a specialist is also a man. *Solvitur ambulando*. The solution is in living. Nothing is gained by denouncing the conflict. On the contrary, the more it is heightened, the more we gain. The higher the tension between these two terminals, the better a man lives. That is to say, the more working time the scientist or writer sacrifices, the more energy must he concentrate into the shorter period. But he can make progress as a Marxist, as a politician, only so long as he makes progress as writer or as scientist. Let him not peter out like a spent battery, but die if necessary in a lightning flash!

I feel Bernal and Professor Langevin may not be giving the best advice to the rest of us. Both are men famous in their chosen discipline. I suspect that they are both at a stage in purely scientific work where progress for them is away from the intense specialisation of the earlier phase towards a synthesis which is, of course, social and political as well as scientific. If I am right, they have made the leap to a higher plane, and the difficulty, the conflict between life and letters that troubles us tyros down here, is expressed for them in another terminology. For the rest of us who have not reached that eminence, there is still intensive specialising to do, and we shall still find between the poles of the particular and the general a world to fight in, and a tension that makes life worth while.

The point recurs in another way in Anthony Blunt's *Art under Capitalism and Socialism*. He says:

'It is sometimes suggested that the socialist realism that is growing up in the Soviet Union is the result of conditions which make the production of great art impossible. In his last book, Mr. Herbert Read wrote: "It may be that the actual circumstances of the moment—



the revolutionary urgencies to which most intellectuals and artists subscribe—demand a temporary supersession of the primary conditions of a great art; that art, like much else, must be sacrificed to the common good.” This is never the case. If an art is not contributing to the common good, it is bad art, and therefore to talk of sacrificing it is incorrect.’

That is well said. But Anthony Blunt immediately goes on to give his case back to Herbert Read, for he writes: ‘We in the West may not *like* the painting produced in the Soviet Union, but it does not follow that it is not the right kind of art for the Russians at the present time.’ But surely the fact that painting is valid for its own society is what makes communication by means of works of art possible between different societies as well as between different centuries? If there is no communication, there is very strong doubt of the validity. But I think Anthony Blunt has swept Soviet painting back into Russia with a too insular broom.

There are many excellent essays I have not touched on: Alistair Browne’s *Psychology and Marxism*, T. A. Jackson’s *Communism, Religion and Morals*, Edgell Rickword’s *Culture Progress and English Tradition*, Barbara Nixon’s *The Theatre*, and Alan Bush’s *Music*. The volume as a whole is an event, and has very great significance in the intellectual movement in which LEFT REVIEW has been an important agent. The little biographies in front of each essay are a good idea, and there is a pleasant juxtaposition between an F.R.S. and an ex-member of the Central Committee of the C.P.G.B.

A quotation from Rex Warner seems to draw the moral: ‘Nowadays, as has often been pointed out, one need not be a Marxist, one need only be an ordinarily decent person, to approve the immediate practical aims of Marxism. There is no longer, then, any need for us in our propaganda to adopt that aggressive attitude which is appropriate to one who drags people from great darkness into the light. The light is much nearer than it was.’

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# Underlying Morality

NEW WRITING III: Spring 1937. Edited by John Lehmann. *Lawrence & Wishart* : 6s.

Review by SYLVIA TOWNSEND WARNER

The third volume of *New Writing* is dedicated to the memory of Ralph Fox. It is good to find that it is so closely in keeping with his outlook on literature, his insistence that the cultural heritage is a useful, not an ornamental, possession, a weapon in the hand, not a ring on it.

For the stories and poems and articles in *New Writing*, extricating themselves from the slough of Art for Art's sake, have gone back to the better foundation of Art for Man's sake, to a time when people wrote to express their convictions rather than their feelings. The last story in this volume, Panteleimon Tchikvadze's *Road to Affluence*, might almost have been written by the authoress of *The Shepherd of Salisbury Plain* (who herself, through some unrecorded contact, must have learned so much from the author of *Candide*). Solid, with its affable feeling towards human nature and its foursquare moral, it employs all the method of the best tract writers. The difference is that the method (which was always pretty good) is now attached to the right moral.

Traditional, too, in the best sense, is G. T. Garrett's *First Hunger March*. It is an account of men in earnest and a practical joke. The narrative, dry, detailed, and with that art-concealing artfulness which one sees on the serious blank faces of proletarian humorists, joins on without a hitch to the narrative style of Defoe (another tract writer). And whether Garrett is conscious of Defoe (or even whether Defoe was conscious of Defoe) does not appear to be of much importance. The one and the other are exponents of that admirable tradition of a straightforward story with good sense and good feeling behind it—an underlying morality, in fact, a serious outlook upon mankind.

Indeed, to readers who do not like underlying morality, this book will be torment. I do not see where they will be able to repose themselves, unless it be on Yuri Olyesha's *Love*, a story which makes no appeal whatsoever to the moral sense, and whose appearance in this volume is agreeable but slightly embarrassing, like the appearance of a Bird of Paradise on a battlefield. Obviously, our world in prospect will include a great many Birds of Paradise and no battlefields; but with the world as it is, stories with an underlying morality, a resolute understanding and intolerance of social conditions, are likely to be the best stories. *New Writing III*, accepting this necessity for underlying morality, contains, as one might expect, a great deal of very good writing. And it contains one masterpiece,

Jean Giono's *The Corn Dies*, a story with the rhythm and strong lyrical colour of a Van Gogh canvas.

Another thing about *New Writing III* calls, finally, for praise: the very high standard of translation. Even the poems give every appearance of having been translated by human beings, instead of the usual trained monkeys with dictionaries.

# Four Novels

ROSE FORBES, by George Buchanan. *Constable* : 7s. 6d.

STAR-BEGOTTEN, by H. G. Wells. *Chatto & Windus* : 6s.

A BRIDGE TO DIVIDE THEM, by Goronwy Rees. *Faber & Faber* : 7s. 6d.

REX v. RHODES, edited by Bruce Hamilton. *Boriswood* : 8s. 6d.

## Reviewed by SIMON BLUMENFELD

More novels are being churned out now than at any other period in the world's history, yet the intelligent section of the reading public reads fewer than ever it has done. To paraphrase Anatole France, it feels that life is too short and too urgent, and novels are too long and too many—far too many. Of all the thousands of works of fiction unloaded annually by optimistic publishers, it is a vintage year if three turn out to be first class and another half a dozen very good. A first-class novel, like any other artistic achievement, adds something to our appreciation of life. It heightens the senses and stirs the emotions and communicates the vision of the creator to the reader. It must do with the written word what *Turksib* and the *End of St. Petersburg* have done on the films and that little gem, *Waiting for Lefty*, on the stage. At least, that is how I feel about it, and once every year or so I find a novel that does the trick. Last year it was Ralph Bates's *The Olive Field*, this year I am still waiting for a novel to approach in excitement and readability *Man's Worldly Goods*.

Of course, this is not to say that the batch of books under review are duds—on the contrary, they are each of them far above the average in design and execution. *Rose Forbes* traces the life story of an Irish girl who, after a succession of unhappy love affairs, tries to settle down in London as a suburban lady, wife of the local big-shot in the drapery line. Her shopkeeper is happy with her, but Rose pines for fulfilment and thinks she has discovered it in a clandestine affair with one of those revolutionaries who wear bright red ties, flannels and sandals in town, and open-necked shirts, shorts, and the same sandals in the country. She leaves her husband only to discover that her lover is more interested in a pretty dark woman in a green hat, and we leave her at the end undecided whether to return to her anxious spouse or take another chance in the big city. The writing is excellent, shrewd and compact with the brilliant economy of phrasing of Somerset Maugham at his best, but for all Mr. Buchanan's ability, *Rose* does not come to life. She is not created in the round, but her career is treated impressionistically in a series of brightly focussed episodes. This method is as good as any, and preferable to most, providing that all the episodes are in key and that every facet illuminates the central character. There are several contradictions in the treatment of *Rose*, and because of them, by a very small margin, this novel doesn't quite come off.

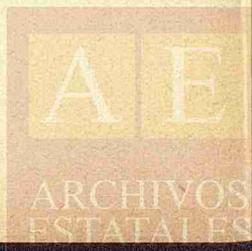


By way of contrast to the ordinary people in *Rose Forbes*, the old maestro Wells trots out another of his pseudo-scientific biological phantasias, *Star-begotten*. None of his people are real, and he scorns even to pretend to make them so. Like his fellow Fabian, Bernard Shaw, he uses his characters to air his own opinions of the shape of things to come, but while Shaw's puppets are worried about the omnipresent life force, Mr. Wells's marionettes seek for the clue to the hereafter in interplanetary space. Briefly, this book is the fable of a tired historian who discovers that the Martians, inhabitants of a planet much older and more highly developed than ours, are seeking to undermine our civilisation by reproducing themselves in our very midst. By bombarding innocent embryos smuggling in their mothers' wombs with ingeniously harnessed cosmic rays, they impregnate the hormones and vary the genes to such an extent that our children become not our own but star-begotten. It really is a shame that the apostles got in a long time before Mr. Wells with the heavenly birth idea in the New Testament, but for them at least there is the excuse of a beautifully told and highly convincing tale. Mr. Wells has degenerated as a story-teller. He scorns now the common stuff of life, the Kipps's, the Mr. Pollys the creators of Tono Bungay, and glorifies the scientist and the superman like a literary Ziegfeld. Gone is the intimate simple style of the born weaver of yarns: instead he apes the patrician Huxley with descriptive sentences like—

'The scar ran as a dark red suture from the middle of his forehead across the left brow, where an overhanging exostosis thrust his eye into a deep and sinister cavern.' A sense of humour, however, he still retains. He gets in some sly digs at contemporary politicians and public figures, and even at himself. Talking of Utopias, he writes: 'What do you find in these visions of yours? The same stuff over and over again . . . caricatures of current novelties—sky-scrapers five thousand feet high, aeroplanes at two thousand miles an hour, radio receivers on your wrist-watch. . . . But . . . they have apparently made no advance whatever in subtlety, delicacy, simplicity. Rather the reverse. They never say a witty thing, they never do a charming act. The general effect is of very pink, rather absurdly dressed celluloid dolls living in a glass lavatory.'

It is pathetic to follow the septuagenarian Wells trying to harness the spirit of the future like dear old Uncle George twittering like a bulky frock-coated black dove between Hitler and Mussolini with an olive sprig tucked between the leaves of his Bible. Mr. Wells seems to have outlived his creativeness like his old comrade Shaw.

*A Bridge to Divide Them* is a novel by a Welshman with a Welsh setting. Johnny, the hero, starts off by working in the pits, and the description of his life in the first section of the book holds promise of interesting developments. He has an attack of evangelical fervour, leaves the mines to study



for the ministry, drops that in turn, marries Annie, an unusual type of domestic servant, and gets a job as a stoker on a ferry boat. Then the novel goes to pieces. The author turns his attention to the lives of a rich set of idlers with whom Johnny comes in contact, and studies the impact of the same sequence of events on the stoker and his new friends, but loses himself en route plotting variations on a theme by D. H. Lawrence. The conversation is tiresome and in the last four sections of the book interminable, and the mixture of symbolism and dark Lawrentian blood and body brooding into which it develops destroys the clear-cut realism of the early and only noteworthy part of the novel.

*Rex v. Rhodes* is the account of the trial sometime in the nineteen-forties of the Communist James Bradlaugh Rhodes, who is framed-up on the charge of murdering the Fascist district leader Hayward at a South Coast seaside resort. The recorder, chronicling the facts in a Soviet Europe, reconstructs the events leading up to the trial. Austria has gone Fascist without a blow, Spain and France only after a terrific struggle, and in England the B.U.F. has been succeeded by a specifically British brand of Fascism, the National Youth Movement. If one can grant the premises established in the foreword that a Europe where Fascism has established itself firmly in Spain and France in the nineteen-forties can go completely Communist less than seven years later, then those pages have some value, but they seem to me to have been written hastily with an eye on the newspapers at a time when the braggart De Llano was promising to have a siesta next day on the Puerta Del Sol, some time after the book was completed. It adds nothing important to it, but shows rather a lack of political clarity. On the whole, however, it is a competent and extremely clever piece of work with some shrewd knocks at masterpieces of contemporary legislation like the Sedition Bill, and in its building up of the case, the exciting presentation of clues, it exercises the mind of the reader with all the ingenuity of a good detective thriller. What it lacks is humour and variety, and even the greatest and most spectacular trial of the age—that of Dimitrov at Leipzig—was not without its leavening of wit. Written more or less in dialogue form, it needed the skilled hand of a dramatist to break the prevailing flatness of characterisation. Everybody is made to talk in exactly the same fashion, without any peculiarities of dialect or repartee, from the solicitors on both sides to the detectives, butcher boys, dustmen, prostitutes, moneylenders and bank clerks who fill the pages with their testimony.

# Diderot: a Living Force

DIDEROT: INTERPRETER OF NATURE. Selected Writings, edited by Jonathan Kemp. *Lawrence & Wishart*: 10s. 6d.

Reviewed by STEPHEN SWINGLER

Too many British Marxists are content to take their knowledge of pre-Marxist philosophy, and especially the immediate precursors of Marx, from the writings of Marx, Engels, and Lenin. A bad fault; and partly the reason why we have so far failed to re-discover and popularise our British revolutionary tradition in the way our French comrades are revitalising theirs, the Jacobin spirit. One of the finest writers in that tradition was Denis Diderot (1713-1784), the moving spirit behind the Encyclopaedia and a central figure in the intellectual ferment of pre-revolutionary eighteenth-century France amongst such great thinkers as Helvétius, d'Holbach, and Voltaire. Jonathan Kemp and Jean Stewart have here selected representative passages from his philosophical, scientific, and literary works, with an introduction and notes explaining the social background and Diderot's place in the revolutionary tradition and showing how the founders of Marxism drew upon his work.

Many points deserve mention. The extraordinary modernity of Diderot's views on, for example, such diverse things as evolution, dreams, social responsibility for children, empire, marriage and property, makes him a definite living force. The vigorous style of his attacks upon ecclesiastical dogma and conventional morals is exceedingly refreshing to read compared with some of the arid productions of to-day. Progressive thinkers cannot fail to be enthralled and impelled to action by the *Supplement to Bougainville's Voyage*. The rationalists, in their revolt against feudal authority, contrasted the natural community-life of 'uncivilised' peoples with the artificial conventions of 'high society,' the teachings of biology with the rigid dogmas of the clerical metaphysicians, and finally saw how the people were being degraded. Cries Rameau's nephew: 'What a devil of a system! Some men enjoying a superabundance of everything, while others have a stomach as insistent as theirs, a hunger that renews itself like theirs, and nothing to get their teeth into. Worst of all is the constrained attitude that want imposes on us.' (P. 323.) Therefore they fought for equal political rights, for the scientific conquest of nature, and for free thought.

For us to-day these writings—and this is the first satisfactory selection published—constitute a challenge to preserve and to extend what the 'philosophers' achieved. A few passages bearing more directly on political reaction might have been included, and there is a certain amount of unnecessary repetition in the commentary. But the book shows not only how a great thinker used his gifts, despite the Censor, in the historical struggle for free culture, but how this heritage still lives in our struggle



against Fascism and for Socialist civilisation. Perhaps it will inspire someone similarly to unearth, from the canonisations of official historians, the writings which did for British thought and culture what the Encyclopaedia accomplished in France.

## Anthropology begins at Home

MASS OBSERVATION, by Charles Madge and Tom Harrison. *Frederick Muller*: 1s.

Review by DEREK KAHN

This pamphlet gives further details of a scheme of social investigation outlined by Charles Madge in the February number of *LEFT REVIEW*. The group of 'Mass-Observers' sets out to apply methods of empirical research to modern English life, to examine and record the behaviour of our own people in its social setting, something after the fashion in which an anthropologist investigates the ways of life of a native community. The value of such attempts is evident: for although we take for granted a good deal, we know, in fact, surprisingly little about the mechanisms of our own social life, and until this knowledge is developed and systematised, conscious control of that life cannot be obtained.

The first pamphlet issued by Mass-Observation is well written, interesting, and suggestive. I think, however, that the authors should attempt to integrate their plans for research, if the results are to be more than scrappy. There is a certain frivolity about the random assortment of subjects which are proposed for inquiry. (Why do you watch birds? What is on your mantelpiece? What do you mean by Freedom?) In a sense, perhaps, this haphazardness is due to the very concept of Mass-Observation, which does not seem to be the happiest of terms for social investigation. The Mass implies something quite formless, whereas society as we know it consists of individuals in certain relationships, the principal of which are institutionalised. The statement of aims for research in a modern society compares unfavourably with the outlines quoted from *Notes and Queries in Anthropology* for research in primitive society. You will meet no one who says he belongs to a mass, but most people will admit their sex, family, occupational group, religion, etc. It is only when the field-worker understands the operation of the major institutions that his information about mantelpieces, depilation, or whatnot can fit into place—however much the modern intellectual may have learnt, chiefly through Surrealism, to value the irrelevant as a means to the relevant. I think the authors are right in choosing anthropology as their model, since its scope includes so many aspects—magical, sexual, and symbolic—which have been neglected in accounts of modern society such as the social surveys. At the same time, they should not allow their activity to be construed as a mere search for the picturesque, even when it is dignified as the Collective Unconscious.



# Monetary Utopias

TO-MORROW'S MONEY, by various writers. *Nott* : 5s.

POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC WRITINGS, by C. V. Orage. *Nott* : 6s.

PROPERTY AND IMPROPERTY, by J. A. Hobson. *Gollancz* : 4s. 6d.

## Review by ANTHONY GOLDSCHMIDT

Capitalism has for long been displaying the symptoms usually associated with the habitual drunkard. The career of Capitalism has consisted of a series of debauches, or periods of intoxicated buoyancy, alternating with a series of reactions, or periods of extreme depression. Lately, as normally happens in the more advanced stages of alcoholism, the moods of exhilaration have tended to become wilder, while the bouts of depression have grown correspondingly more severe. The last time Capitalism was in her cups, as it were, was in 1928-1929, when inebriation reached a pitch of frenzy previously unsurpassed. The reaction, or hangover, that set in in 1930 was, not unnaturally, of unexampled severity. The morning after prolonged itself far into the afternoon; for nearly four years Capitalism remained on the brink of dissolution. In vain did the 'orthodox' economists, who are paid to tell the old hag she is looking as young as ever, attempt flattery and reassurance. It was not until nearly five years after the fatal orgy of 1929 that the victim began to show signs of life and was finally able to set out on what may prove to be her farewell party. Recently recovery has been rapid, and at the moment she is well on her way to an intoxication wilder than the last. All the symptoms are there—the optimism, the reluctance to think ahead, the cheerful drawing of cheques on posterity. But there is a sinister difference between this debauch and the last. The time has arrived when the addict no longer gets a kick out of such comparatively harmless infusions as foreign loans and building booms. In order to stir herself to some form of activity she has been driven to her last resort—the fiery and lethal stimulant of armament building. An orgy of battleships can only have one end. The ultimate attack of 'the horrors' will not be long delayed and is likely to take the form of destructive mania of the most dangerous type. The effect resembling that of John Betjeman's 'Varsity Students' Rag:

'And then we smashed up ev'rything, and what was the funniest part, we smashed some rotten old pictures that were priceless works of art'—the only difference being that the destruction in this case would include a great part of the human race.

Socialists have long been convinced that the dipsomania of Capitalism is both incurable and dangerous, and that the only hope is for those who have remained sober to put the old sot forcibly under restraint. But there remain many honest reformers who believe that the state of Capitalism, although bad, may be remedied, and who recommend the application of some form of economic Turvey Treatment. Among these followers of compromise are the contributors

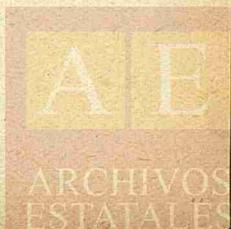
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to *To-morrow's Money*, a collection of essays on monetary reform, and the late C. V. Orage, whose posthumous *Political and Economic Writings* are a critique of modern capitalism, with proposals for reform on social credit lines. These writers realise that Capitalism is a failure, but they suffer from the illusion, common among middle-class radicals, that you can introduce a new social order without interfering with the comfortable existence enjoyed by middle-class radicals under the present system. The trouble, they tell us, is purely monetary; the whole economic problem can be solved by a simple manipulation of the currency. Establish a Commodity Dollar or a National Dividend and the Age of Plenty will be brought in, without violence or expropriation or any of the crude vulgarities of the class struggle. Naturally the U.S.S.R. is barely mentioned. None of these economists thinks it worth while to consider the claim of the Soviet Union to have solved in practice the problems which they attack in theory. G. D. H. Cole, in an admirable article, puts forward a monetary system almost identical with that at present in use in Russia, without apparently being aware of the fact. Orage, after a reference to 'the victims of Marxism,' expresses the view that Russia has now become an Imperialist 'Great Power,' in no way distinguishable from the Russia of the Czars. This tendency to ignore or disparage the Socialist state gives to the reformatory proposals of these two books an air of academic unreality, which is enhanced by the fact that none of the reformers has much idea how his proposals are to be carried out in practice. There is a conspicuous deficiency in revolutionary technique, and these ardent spirits seem to be prepared to overthrow the British banking monopoly, armed only with an A+B theorem and a quotation from Silvio Gesell.

More valuable is their destructive criticism. Not being 'orthodox' economists, they are not blind to the tragic absurdities of the capitalist system. Professor Kitson gleefully records the more notable mistakes for which economists of international reputation have been responsible in recent years. He tells how Professor Cannan foretold the bankruptcy and ruin of the country if the convertibility of notes into gold were to be suspended; how Professor Pigou pressed for the ruinous deflation of 1921, and how J. M. Keynes encouraged the return to the gold standard in 1925. C. V. Orage is no less entertaining on the subject of the gold-fetish, as worshipped by the City of London. (In the last month the City has for the first time begun to respect the U.S.S.R. This respect is not due to the social and economic achievements of the Soviet Union, but to the fact that that country is said now to possess the largest gold reserve in the world.) But, in spite of some compensating qualities, these books leave the reader with a sense of disappointment that so much intelligence and critical ability should have been diverted into the backwaters of academic Utopianism.

Professor J. A. Hobson's *Property and Improperly* falls into a somewhat different category. Hobson is a veteran Socialist, and he analyses the present world situation with admirable shrewdness and pungency. He shows with great clarity, by reference to the Spanish rebellion, how the owning classes in all countries are prepared to tolerate democracy only so long as it does not interfere with property. But Hobson's distinction between property, as the legitimate product of labour and 'improperly' as prey won by force or fraud, has more verbal than economic aptness, and leads him to bring forward as a solution of our present problems a scheme of partial Socialism which is wholly impracticable.



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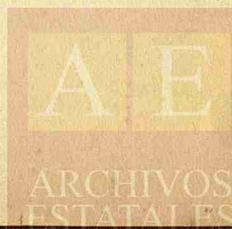
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