THE EUROPEAN

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POLITICS BOOKS TRAVEL

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ANALYSIS

WE are moving slowly but inexorably towards the dissolution of a society. The only relevant question is whether the old system can now be replaced in time by a new idea and a new civilisation. All things now discussed are merely symptoms; the same disease underlies them all. It can be met and overcome only by an altogether different order of mind and will. More than ever is it true that "the world is character," and the necessary character is very unlikely to be found among the rulers responsible for the present situation; they have had it too good for too long still to possess the requisite resolution, and if they had any answer they would have produced it before now. Long ago some of the best among them had knowledge of hard things, and their subsequent administrative experience even in the period of ease and orthodoxy may yet make valuable contribution to the future, but the centre of the storm can be met only by those who have lived with storm.

A comprehensive policy.

We have long since advanced a new way and method of political thought in fundamental challenge to the established system. It ranges from the practical detail of a new economic and fiscal system (too much detail, perhaps, without the research facilities which government with far greater resources alone can command) to regions which some may regard as perilously near to a new meta-

physic, although at no point do we clash with the mission of the churches or with any of the great spiritual urges of humanity; we seek synthesis not fresh division, harmony not discord among those who resist the anarchic materialism which threatens all bright hopes of this age with a death that is dark, dull and totally unnecessary.

At the present moment the application of that policy to the economic situation should be the subject of these notes. We will discuss before the close some of those intricacies of demand inflation and cost inflation with which this basically simple problem is currently obscured, but will begin in the sphere where a clear decision of mind and will is needed to meet the prime reality of the economic future; a decision of principle, a decision of character. We believe that the conscious, deliberate and resolute working of the wage-price mechanism by government is now a necessity, but it requires character; "the world is character."

New system or collapse, long before "fifteen years" are up.

We came to the wage-price mechanism purely by a process of empirical thought, when confronted with the urgent necessity for the Union of Europe; the age-old dream, the deep desire of the modern European had become an imminent need which speedily required a practical solution. The arrangements made by the old world to meet the new demand of history seemed almost entirely jejune, except for some interesting pieces of research work which the resources of existing government enabled. Nothing seemed less probable than time permitting the fifteen years of slow and cautious adjustment which in their plan preluded the full Union of Europe; the break-up of the old system was practically certain to occur long before that. The real question then was, how the Union of Europe could be speedily implemented when the collapse of the old made plain the need for the new.

It was at once obvious that the immediate economic Union of Europe would create insupportable difficulties for individual industries owing to the wide disparity of wage levels, hours of labour, and of social services which imposed unequal tax burdens. Nearly everything opponents of European Union, the obscurantists, the reactionaries say is true, if this egregious problem is not met; Union without organisation means chaos. It was these difficulties which persuaded the old world to move very slowly to the objective of European Union, which its abler minds were at length compelled to

admit was unavoidable. We on the other hand responded to the same challenge with a decision to find the means of moving very fast towards an objective which was not only ardently to be desired, but must be rapidly attained if Europe were to survive and live greatly. The system we called the wage-price mechanism was the result of this thinking.

Common Government must precede Common Market?

It is plain that the rapid Union of Europe must mean power to level up wages, hours and conditions of labour in the low standard areas if chaos is to be avoided in the high standard areas, and that power can only be wielded by government. Common Government must not only accompany but must precede Common Market, when circumstances impel a rapid and decisive movement to European Union; in short, the full policy of Europe a Nation will not only become a desideratum but a necessity.

It was always a quaint anachronism in modern times to believe that government should trot quietly behind economic events, slowly adjusting itself to what had already occurred in the sphere where everything is rarely settled (*Marxian alzu marxian* in an inverted Manchester fashion). The modern problem is primarily an economic problem, and in that sphere government must either lead or abdicate.

What then are the means of leadership, as opposed to the universal and tyrannous control of labour, capital resources, and life itself, which communism imposes, and social democracy also envisages in its dream programmes but shrinks from in its impotent reality? Our answer is the wage-price mechanism: the power to determine wages, and also prices in any sphere where monopoly conditions exclude the normal price corrective of competition. We believe that by this method a government elected by the whole people can lead the economy in whole and in detail in the direction which is desired. Without power of free leadership so exercised, or power of tyranny as exercised by communism, government becomes a nullity in face of economic problems, as British Governments of both right and left have become today.

The essential advantages of the wage-price mechanism.

The idea of this new form of economic leadership by government was thus reached pragmatically, under stress of the need to find means for the rapid Union of Europe when the necessity became

plain. Here was a practical method to prevent the unfair competition within Europe which would smash the Common Market if it were speedily completed. European Government must have the power to procure similar wages, hours and conditions of labour in similar industries; without that power, nothing would work.

This is the first purpose of the wage-price mechanism. However, once the necessity for this power and action in government is conceded, other advantages clearly follow. For example, the motive power of British industry today fades away as the differential between skilled and unskilled labour disappears beneath an ultimately self destructive pressure of mass. When the rewards of skill and responsibility are lost, the main incentive of industry is lost as well. This occurs inevitably when government abdicates in favour of the big economic battalions. The wage-price mechanism in the hands of government can be used effectively also for the second and vital purpose of securing due reward for skill and responsibility.

In fact through the whole region of economics and industry—which today is the field of decision—the wage-price mechanism can restore effective leadership to government. It is only necessary, perhaps, now to mention one further example. The immobility of labour in face of new developments and of the problems of obsolescence and redundancy, is a factor which sometimes threatens the miracle of modern science with paralysis and frustration. Men are conservative and cling to the old ways, the old occupations, habits and dwellings. Communism meets this problem with an abrupt command to shift themselves to new work and new regions, or suffer a penalty which is all too clear. Our method would not drive men, but would draw, attract and lead them. A government which can determine wages can provide a wage incentive for new developments which can be decisive.

But, of course, all such methods to be fully effective must operate within an area large enough to be independent of world markets and world supplies, because it contains both its own market and its own supply of foodstuffs and raw materials; in short, a viable economic unit in modern terms. A system which is entirely commanded by the price level of a chaotic world market cannot through its own government fully command its own economic destiny by the wage-price mechanism or any other method. Europe needs the power of Europe a Nation, and the room of Europe-Africa.

Siege economy and wage-profit freeze, if collapse comes.

It is clear that neither the wage-price mechanism nor any other method will long work in tolerable conditions within the restricted space of an island which is abnormally dependent on world markets. If Britain waits too long the transition to the economy of a United Europe may not be accompanied by any method so constructive and humane as the wage-price mechanism, but by the full rigours of a siege economy. Imports may have to be reduced to the minimum necessary to life owing to industry's inability to pay for them by exports sold in open competition on world markets, and that means a standard of life reduced to the minimum as well.

Already a wage and profits freeze is being discussed; it is an essentially negative method in strong contradistinction to the constructive positive of the wage-price mechanism which continuously leads industry in the desired direction for an expanding economy, and persistently raises the standard of life as science increases the means to produce. In fact, government in Britain which has hesitated to enter Europe until the moment of collapse, may be obliged to go beyond even a wage and profit freeze; all purchasing power may have to be frozen above a bare subsistence level. Let those who think this possibility exaggerated explain how the sale of British exports in open competition on world markets can maintain the present standard of life in a moment of world depression, when, in addition to the present and continually growing competition of such countries as Germany, Japan and other cheap labour economies of the East, we shall have to face in every market the dumped surplus of an American economy whose home market is saturated, and the deliberate market-breaking dumping of the Soviets implemented by the simple process of allocating a proportion of Russia's production to be sold on world markets at ten per cent. below the lowest tender of any capitalist rival. A country with so large a home market as America can dispose of a relatively small margin of surplus production at practically any price in a moment of stress, and the Russian mass by reason both of habit and of geographical circumstance can be squeezed to a degree inconceivable by Western standards, for the final and decisive operation of providing a disposable surplus in competition of an extent and severity sufficient to smash the market economy of world capitalism.

Wage-price mechanism and trade unions.

It is certainly better to consider positive and constructive action in time, than to wait until disaster imposes a negative action which must be destructive of all existing standards.

What then are the objections to the wage-price mechanism? If government gives decisive leadership by determining wages, will the trade unions object? Not if they see the necessity, and if they are an integral part of a far greater economic process than exists today. A phrase has recently been used which describes the trade unions as another estate of the realm. In the present system the words remain empty; within the new system they would become a fact. At every stage we would seek the advice and co-operation of the trade unions in a new and complete partnership between government and the organisations of the workers. As the developing situation makes clear the necessity for a new system, and the effective propaganda of a new political movement makes equally clear the immense advantages for the mass of the people, one of two things will occur; either the existing trade unionism will co-operate, or a new leadership of new men will emerge by free elections within the unions to enter into that complete partnership with a government capable of the leadership which is the first duty of government.

The right to strike.

What of freedom; for instance, would strikes be permitted?—these questions will come pelting in, and none of them seem very difficult to answer. Within a United Europe there would be no valid reason, whatever, to withdraw the right to strike, for the simple reason that economy would be so large and so strong that even a protracted strike in a key service would cause no more than temporary inconvenience. No one but a fool would withdraw any basic freedom—such as the right to withhold labour—without a really vital necessity.

But those who talk so much about the right to strike may find that right withdrawn by their "own Labour government" in a moment of harsh necessity within a beleaguered island, where any severe strike may mean real starvation if it impairs the export trade and consequently destroys the last means of buying foodstuffs in the final dissolution of the British economy, whose present steady approach will be hastened when the Labour Party succeeds for a brief reign the present nullity in power.

The motive power of a new industrial psychology.

It remains always true, of course, that a change of spirit must precede any enduring improvement in material circumstances; this is the first and immediate task of a movement of renaissance. But apart from the fact that the coming hard experience combined with the upsurge of a new political doctrine and new trade union leadership (if existing leadership cannot read the lessons of that experience in terms of the reality which the workers will then demand), may sharply change the present psychology in the mass of the workers, some very practical reasons occur to suggest a very different outlook in the new system we describe. Men will not strike against themselves; they will not withhold their labour when the first effect is not only to deprive themselves of jobs and wages, but also to destroy their own profits. For the policy of European Socialism envisages an ever increasing take-over by worker-ownership as industries lose the initial impulse of the industrial pioneer, and become in effect bureaucracy managed in the interests of shareholders to whom the drawing of profit is their only interest in the industry.

Mandarin socialism or workers ownership.

The Labour Party has recently calculated that some five hundred large firms control about half British industry, and that the shareholders play no practical part whatever in the management of these concerns. They propose that the state should gradually acquire shareholding in such firms which would eventually be controlled from Whitehall; a gradual extension of the mandarin socialism whose results can already be observed in nationalised industries. We on the other hand have long suggested that the ownership of such industries should progressively be acquired by the workers in them. No industry would be affected which can be individually managed by the industrial pioneer who has created it, or by his family or by other individuals still capable of giving effective industrial leadership; on the contrary, such private enterprise would be freed from the restrictions and from the burdens of repressive taxation which impede it today. Workers ownership would be gradually introduced as the individual leadership in industry yielded to bureaucratic management. The present nationalised industries would immediately be put on that basis, and it would be the interest of the workers themselves to secure efficiency and to draw the

reward of profit, subject to the overriding right of government to determine wages and, also, in monopoly conditions, to fix prices; an operation which must be conducted with fairness and wisdom if key industries are to retain and draw an adequate supply of labour in competition with others. Under these conditions it is inconceivable that workers would strike against themselves, and very unlikely, also, that they would strike in other industries which were in process of being built and developed to a point where they would become ripe for workers ownership; the workers would not be much more disposed to strike against their own future than against their own present. The whole basis and the whole psychology of industry would be changed. We describe the conditions of a new era.

The great rewards of the new private enterprise.

We therefore envisage a system in which government exercises economic leadership by the wage-price mechanism over the whole field of industry. By this method government can secure fair competitive conditions throughout comparable industries, can procure differential rewards and consequent incentive for the skilled and the responsible, can draw labour by the attraction of wage in the direction which will most benefit an expanding economy, and, above all, by an increase of wage, salary and reward as science increases the power to produce, can equate the general level of production and consumption and thus permanently eliminate any reversion to slumps. Profits must be fair both to workers-ownership and to private enterprise, or workers will not be attracted to the first category and energy and capital will not be attracted to the second. Profit would, also, be virtually determined by the level of wages in any particular industry, and it is certainly in the power of government to determine it within an internal market which is independent of any external factors. If it were desirable at any time, profit could be directly determined in the same way as wages, and a differential profit could be worked out to draw capital in the desired direction in the same way as differential wages. In principle, nothing exists to prevent it, and, if necessary it would certainly be done; but, in practice, it would probably always be found for the reason given, that the wage-price mechanism would be adequate to provide effective economic leadership by government both in the fields of wages and of profits.

The shareholders in industries where workers ownership was introduced would gradually be placed in a debenture position which secured their existing interest; it would be the future of an expanding equity which constituted the workers' interest and consequently provided a direct incentive to efficiency and to expansion. Capital would have to be creative in order to survive and to develop its interest. A man could grow richer by constantly constructing new enterprises, not by sitting on the backs of old concerns; the creative individual would not be grudged a reward far beyond his dreams of today, if his exertions thus enriched the community as well as himself.

We harness the dual incentives of private enterprise and workers ownership under the leadership of a government in possession of the decisive means of rapid action over the whole industrial field, which is the wage-price mechanism. The contrast between European Socialism and mandarin socialism (which proposes very slowly to acquire stocks and shares for the purpose of giving bureaucrats further means to interfere in industry) is the difference between the jet-propelled aeroplane and a stage coach; a stage coach too with its wheels missing, for they will be lost in the morass of world market chaos. After the present, and still more after the coming experience, it will not much longer be necessary to discuss the system which never even starts; the field of inertia which is known as Conservative Governmnet.

The intricacies of inflation reduced to basic simplicity.

No system works which is not conducted with decision and courage. Sound money is the only possible basis of a durable economy, and sound money needs decision and courage in government. It is these characteristics which have been so conspicuously lacking in Conservative Government, with the result that we now have inflation. At first ministers suggested that it was the fault of everyone but government; everyone must do his bit, but the bit of the government was only to exhort. In fact, of course, government is entirely responsible for the present inflation. As we previously noted, the government either directly or through the Bank of England is completely in control of the supply of money, and without an increase in the supply of money a demand inflation cannot occur. The new complication of a cost inflation is equally the fault of government. It appears to be the fact that recently a

demand inflation—caused by an increase in the general supply of money without a corresponding increase in the general supply of goods—has not occurred. Wages, however, have been increased sharply in particular industries without a corresponding increase in production, within a system which had a constant supply of money. The consequent cost inflation is, therefore, in effect, an abrupt transfer of purchasing power from the general community to a particular section. This economic process is particularly disastrous because it leads immediately to an increase of costs in export trades on which the life of the whole country depends under the present system. Yet the process was directly caused by the government, because it financed the deficit of the nationalised industries by a creation of credit, and consequently touched off another round of wage increases without a corresponding increase in production. At the same time they balanced this operation by the general credit squeeze, and thus prevented any general increase in the supply of money. The government in this way transferred purchasing power from the general community to a particular section, and thereby saved themselves immediate economic troubles in the form of labour disputes at the expense of an ultimate economic, or at least exchange disaster, in the shape of a cost inflation in industries which are the basis of our hard struggle to compete in export markets. If this is not an exact statement of a deliberately obscured position, in plain, clear language, we invite correction from anyone competent to supply it.

"The world is character."

At first the speeches of ministers denied any responsibility except the duty to exhort everyone to be good. But the last parliamentary speech of the Chancellor contradicted this position completely. He threatened an "old-fashioned No," if exhortation did not work. How can a government say No, if it has no control over the problem? He now admits that previous ministerial statements were complete nonsense, and that the government had not the guts to say No before. It remains to be seen whether they have even now acquired that very necessary faculty.

No sound system can endure without sound money, and we can only have sound money if government has the courage to say No to any increase in reward without an increase in production. Government can control the situation completely through its control

of the supply of money. What has happened recently is that government has in reality abdicated in favour of government by a few trade union leaders. The power of the latter rests in their temporary control of a section of the community which can hold up the rest to ransom, because it can destroy the export trade to world markets on which this crazy obsolescence of a system makes the life of the whole island dependent. They have used that power ruthlessly not only in pursuit of a sectional economic interest, but also in pursuit of their own political inclinations. They have used it to a point where the life of the whole community is threatened. This, however, can be said for them; when a ship sinks without leadership from the captain or principles of any kind among the crew, it can easily become a case of every man for himself. When government abdicates, we should not be too hasty in blaming trade union leaders either for looking after their own people or for following their own prejudices.

The lesson of it all is that economics are today the field of decision, and that government must either lead in that field or abdicate, with results we are beginning to see. It is not the government which now rules, but other people who command a powerful sectional interest, and they are ruling in a manner which can bring starvation. This situation will never be met by a negative—not just by a No, however old-fashioned—it will only be met by a great positive. Government must have a constructive policy, must know what they want and explain it with a clarity and force that will make the mass of the people want it too. In short, government must have clear minds, firm wills and courageous hearts; "the world is character."

EUROPEAN

INDIVIDUAL IRRESPONSIBILITY

The Curse of Our Time

by DR. ERNST FELLNER

"*It is natural to believe in great men . . .*"

Ralph W. Emerson.

"*Salvation will come from great men.*"

Renan.

THE continual reference to man as a 'political animal,' a 'social animal,' a 'herd animal,' has had a strange effect upon men: they no longer desire to develop in an upward direction towards the level of higher and nobler men, but wish to return to the herd. They become more and more like animals in the true sense of the word—creatures in many ways similar to a herd of cows or sheep. They feel happy only when in a crowd; wish to be left in peace, and desire to be led when in danger—by anyone less of a sheep than the rest.

The teaching of philosophers and politicians that the whole is superior to its parts; that the community alone matters; and that the individual is only a part of that whole; helped to produce powerful machines. Such machines, often perfect in every detail, were dangerous for that reason: they were not made of dead matter, but of pulsating life. The parts of the whole were not mere cogs in the machine, but vital energy which demanded assertion in activity. This energy, by its very nature, had to set the machine in motion (as in war) or burst it (as in revolution).

But the new creation was dangerous for yet another reason; it lacked two essentials: the engine-driver and the destination — the

ruler and the ruling thought. A self-driven vehicle without driver and destination will destroy everything in its way, and lead its passengers and cargo to death and destruction. The teaching of the ideal community produced the herd morality: 'to serve and to obey' became the highest virtues, and freedom was interpreted as a 'desire to be led.' The idealist followers of the new ideal attempted to live up to the new virtue—they all wished to serve and obey. But if everyone wishes to obey, there will be no one to whom they can be obedient. The new teaching produced many excellent servants, but never a single master worthy of their services. All too many wished to be ruled; amongst them even those most capable of ruling. And if the rulers themselves regard it as their highest duty to serve, who is to rule and who is to produce the ruling thought?

Philosophers soon found a way out, and provided an ideal to explain an ideal. Hegel invented the *Weltgeist* that ruled from behind the scenes, and was made responsible for all movements of the 'robot.' And Rousseau created the General Will, which was always right. Many other such phantasies were devised to bear responsibility for man's actions, subterfuges which were often given the name of god, but were really symbols for one and the same desire: individual irresponsibility.

In the ideal nation, state or class, no one is responsible for any action, for everyone serves an ideal and the first man who pretends to embody it. In the ideal democracy the god is called 'Will of the People,' and the majority vote is to bear all responsibility which individual men no longer wish to assume. Why the majority vote should—like Rousseau's 'General Will'—be regarded as right or good in itself may at first appear difficult to explain. Plato says: "A good decision is based on knowledge and not on numbers."* And Alcuinius ridiculed the idea of the infallibility of the voice of the people many centuries before Rousseau preached it. "Nor should we listen to those who say 'The voice of the people is the voice of God' for the turbulence of the mob is closely allied to insanity" was his cutting remark.† The blind trust in the 'Will of the People' can, however, be explained in the same way as the trust in the symbols of the ideal state. Modern man's dislike of bearing individual responsibility is so great that he willingly shuts his eyes and entrusts anyone or anything with leadership. He has

* *Laches IX.*
† *Epistolae CLXVI.*

become a herd animal in the true sense of the word; he wants to be free to be led, free from individual responsibility, free from Freedom. This is indeed the freedom of the slave.

Yet modern man's desire to return to the herd is only a sign of tiredness and weariness in a tired age. The sick man must not become the basis for the understanding of man, nor must we interpret Aristotle's dictum 'that only Gods or animals can live alone' as a command for *all* men to give up individual thought and responsibility to merge into a more or less equal herd. 'All sick and diseased people' says Nietzsche, 'strive instinctively after a herd-organisation, out of a desire to shake off their sense of oppressive discomfort and weakness; . . . by an equally natural necessity the strong strive as much for *isolation* as the weak for union.

Does not 'modern' man's desire for a herd life, free from want and fear, *postulate* responsible leaders? In times of danger every herd flocks round the leading animal. And as long as there is life, there will be danger. Modern herd-man also requires leaders. Are there born leaders? Are there, by nature, men who will rule and men who will serve? Or do all men alike desire to live in the herd? Modern psycho-analysis seems to disprove a universal desire to return to the herd, even in modern man. 'Although it is a biological dictum,' says Jung, 'that man is a herd animal and is only healthy when he lives as a social being, yet the first case we observe may seem to upset this statement, and to prove that man is only healthy when leading an abnormal and unsocial life.'*

Man cannot live alone; but neither can he live a healthy life amongst unequals. The wish-dream of equality, generated by exhausted man's aversion to strife and desire for existence *without* a fight, must not confuse the issue. Men are not equal,† and the more man differs from the rest the unhappier will be his herd-life in the herd. For only in the company of others like himself — friends—will he feel healthy. Only like understands like, and by being understood man will be able to develop his individual self and thus find real happiness. His friends are his link with the outside world. Being out of step with the many, his spiritual loneli-

* Jung. *Problems of Modern Psychotherapy, Man in Search of a Soul* (Kegan Paul).

† Compare Emerson's remrak "If men were equals, the waters could not move, but the difference of level which makes Niagara a cataract, makes eloquence, indignation poetry in him who finds there is much to communicate (immortality).

ness will be accentuated, and he will wish to flee the herd. But this desire to flee from society is merely the result of the perverted teaching of our age. The unusual man, held in esteem by past generations, is now taught to believe he must be wrong because he is the exception—". . . society is upside down, and its best men are thought too bad to live," in Emerson's words.

The exceptional man, the misfit in an age where the majority is divine ruler, begins to accept the new order. The exceptional men of the Renaissance or of Greece and Rome believed themselves to be superior because they were different from the many. Such men thought it their duty to lead and shine. Proud of their unusual individual qualities, they wished to develop the gifts which they alone seemed to possess, and they rose like crystals from the amorphous mass of men. They would say with Michael Angelo "to confide in one's self and become something of worth and value is the best and safest course."

The higher man was an aim, for he was the highest expression of life and its symbol. Throughout the ages such men have been looked up to; for amongst them were often the leaders, protectors and lawgivers of the community. "It is natural to believe in great men," says Emerson, "Mankind have, in all ages, attached themselves to a few persons, who, either by the quality of that idea they embodied, or by the largeness of their reception, were entitled to the position of leaders and lawgivers . . . These men correct the delirium of the animal spirits, make us considerate, and engage us to new aims and powers. The veneration of mankind selects these for the highest place. Witness the multitude of statues, pictures, and memorials, which recall their genius in every city, village, house and ship."*

The average man benefited from the superiority of the great, for if the great men enjoyed the privilege of ruling, mediocre men enjoyed the privilege of an easy life. "Let us not underestimate the privilege of the mediocre," says Nietzsche. "Life always gets harder towards the summits, the cold increases, responsibility increases. A high civilisation is a pyramid."

A man who is miserable at heart will detest the mere thought of joy; a tired wanderer will hate the sight of mountains, however glorious their mighty peaks, and even if he need not climb them. The exhausted man abhors contrasts of any sort; even sunshine will irritate a fundamentally depressed man. When man approaches

* Emerson, *Representative Men.*

despair he will dislike the very thought of life, and hate it wherever it appears in its highest, strongest and most beautiful form. To him the higher man is like a red rag to a bull. Modern man, weak-willed, supersensitive, uprooted, is also irritated by the exception. He cannot 'postulate aims from the prompting of his own heart.' He wishes to find new roots by serving some purpose, and as he cannot find a purpose the means must turn into the end. Serving becomes an end in itself. By declaring the service of 'others' a good in itself, man freed himself from all individual responsibility and thought. He could now do without a goal or purpose; he felt rooted again, and free through serfdom.

If all men continue to accept an ideal, and worship an ambiguous myth—race, nation or people—as a substitute God, there is little hope for the future of mankind. Only if we try to develop our own individual gifts may we be able to produce once again men who 'consider themselves as aims,' and lead those who cannot find one in themselves, to greater heights. "There are but few persons, in comparison with the whole of mankind," says John Stuart Mill, "whose experiments, if adopted by others, would be likely to be any improvement on established practice. But these few are the salt of the earth."* And Renan regards "the production of great men . . ." as the object of humanity; for "salvation," he says, "will come from great men."†

If modern herd-man is only healthy when he lives in the herd and desires to be led, the exceptions must develop their individual qualities and regard it as their sacred duty to take upon themselves the responsibility of ruling, teaching and leading mankind. Emerson wisely remarks that "the imbecility of man, is always inviting the impotence of power."‡ If the best will serve, then petty tyrants will rise from the masses to assume power, or the mass-tyrant will become the divine leader, guided not by a ruling thought but madness, intolerance and fanaticism. For where men are lacking, the mob and petty tyrants will assume the role of gods, and beasts will pose as supermen. "All beings hitherto have created something beyond themselves, and you want to be the ebb of that great tide, and would rather go back to the beast than surpass man?"**

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* *On Liberty.*
† *Dialogues et Fragments Philosophiques.*
‡ Emerson, *Representative Men.*
** Nietzsche, *Thus Spake Zarathustra.*

WHERE THE BUSINESSMAN RIDES HIGH

An Evaluation of His Role in American Ideology

by G. E. W. JOHNSON

EVERY age and every country tends to produce a social type that holds a pre-eminent position, and serves as a pattern to the whole population. In medieval Europe it was the knight. In England, from the sixteenth century almost to our own day, it was the gentleman. In Germany, under the hegemony of Prussia, it was the army officer. In Latin countries it is the professional man or intellectual: advocate, professor, writer, or academician. The United States is the only great country to have elevated the businessman to the position of a national type that sets standards for the whole population.

The rise of the American businessman was coincident with the enormous expansion of population and industry that marked the United States after the close of the Civil War in 1865. During the first two-thirds of the century the national type was the pioneer, the man who plunged into the Indian-infested wilderness and carved a homestead for himself out of the trackless forest or prairie. Daniel

Boone, Davy Crockett, and Kit Carson became the symbolical folk-heroes of that era; and the continuing popularity of stories and films that recreate 'the epic of the West' testifies to the nostalgic feelings with which Americans look back upon that heroic age. But the completion of the first transcontinental railroad in 1869 foretokened the eventual disappearance of the pioneer and his covered wagon: he was soon supplanted by the dynamic businessman, eager to make money by bringing staple goods and new mechanical gadgets within the reach of every American in every part of the country.

Soon after 1870 names suggestive of enormous wealth began to resound in American ears: Vanderbilt and Harriman the railway kings, Armour the meat king, Carnegie the steel king, Rockefeller the oil king, and, a little later, Duke the tobacco king, Hearst the newspaper king and Ford the motor king. These 'tycoons' of course did not furnish the norm of the businessman. They bore much the same relationship to ordinary businessmen that dukes bore to ordinary squires in eighteenth-century England.

In 1870 the United States had a population under forty millions. By 1950, eighty years later, its population had multiplied fourfold. This enormous expansion implies a society that was not stable in the eighteenth-century English sense, but neither was it unstable in the modern European sense; rather it was intensely fluid and dynamic, forever undergoing transformation, expanding geographically, economically and statistically in every direction without any sense of limitation; the kind of society that was ready to welcome the businessman with open arms, to challenge his utmost ingenuity to meet its voracious appetites, and to reward his bold speculations with enormous profits. And though here and there there was an occasional bubble that burst, in the main his speculations took the concrete form of railroads, factories and skyscrapers that were a net social gain regardless of the enormous profits he garnered in managing them. Henry Ford may have amassed wealth beyond the dreams of Rothschild, but no Marxist could deny the existence of millions of cars chugging over the highways and giving pleasure to millions of ordinary folk. The Marxian analysis of capitalism, whatever relevance it may have had at particular times or places, reads like puerile nonsense when set against the realities of the American scene of today. American society has erected the businessman's standard of values and code of ethics, suitably idealised, into a national pattern for all to follow.

In the latter half of the nineteenth century the most popular writer of boys' stories—the American analogue of Henty—was Horatio Alger, whose name has entered into American legend. A comparison of Alger's stories with Henty's furnishes an instructive commentary on the contrasting social values of the two countries. The typical Henty hero follows the career of a soldier, and by the close of the story it is clear that he is being groomed to settle down as a country gentleman. The typical Alger hero, when we first meet him, is a penniless farm lad of sixteen. Valorous exploits in battle, adventures in strange lands—such profitless activities play no part in his life. He dedicates himself earnestly to a business career, beginning in a humble way as a door-to-door book salesman, or something of the sort. Four or five years later, when we take leave of him, he is an up-and-coming young businessman who has never deviated from the path of strenuous activity and Puritan virtue, and who has earned his reward by becoming engaged to the boss's daughter. There is, however, no suggestion that he is marrying for money—that method of acquiring wealth is regarded by Americans as akin to cheating, a violation of the rules of the game; 'our hero' has already proved his sterling worth by precociously amassing his first hundred thousand dollars (in his more expansive moments Alger makes it two hundred thousand); and we—or at any rate the American boy-readers—have the comfortable assurance that he will never relax his money-making efforts, as virtuous as they are energetic, and will unquestionably make his million before he is thirty. Alger's books fell out of favour about the time of the First World War, when boys began to demand stories that recognised that the motor age was upon us; but almost every American man over the age of fifty was brought up on them, and it is clearly their morality that informs what is now called 'the American way of life.'

Thanks to Alger, every American boy starts life convinced that he carries a millionaire's cheque-book in his pocket; and if of the many that are called but few are chosen, the belief is none the less potent in its impact on the American social and political scene. The perceptive reader of American popular magazines will note that the 'success stories' of businessmen—and even of business women—are one of their favourite themes, and usurp the place accorded in other countries to accounts of political leaders and military commanders. In American eyes business activity and money-making wear an aura of 'romance' and 'glamour' that they have never acquired in any other country. 'The one thing Ahrens wanted

more than money was appointment as general manager of Cadillac,' we are told in a recent such article. Needless to say, Mr. Ahrens has attained his heart's desire, and is now a General Motors vice-president—the equivalent of an earl in Victorian England: 'Ahrens talks, looks and lives success.' His daughter's ecstatic comment at the sight of the throngs attending her sumptuous wedding reception —'My God, dad must be rich!'—must have warmed the cockles of his heart.

In Georgian and Victorian England other social types — the barrister, the soldier, the clergyman, the writer, to say nothing of the businessman—sought to assimilate themselves to the gentleman. They all took pride in being 'gentlemen,' and in having the education and manners of gentlemen. The businessman's pre-eminence in to-day's America is testified to by similar phenomena. The lawyer, the soldier, the clergyman, the writer, even the trade-union leader, eagerly assimilate themselves to the businessman. President Eisenhower has sunk his military past without trace: his friends, recreations and general mode of life are such as are appropriate to a top-flight businessman. The politician instinctively visualises himself as a salesman: 'We have a great product to sell!' was the enthusiastic comment of Leonard W. Hall, Republican national chairman, when President Eisenhower announced his intention of running again. The clergyman, indistinguishable by his garb from the businessman, points with pride to the efficiency of his 'plant' and the steadily increasing value of his 'assets': he longs for the day when he will be able to demolish his church and build a better. ('Paul considered it just as spiritual to talk about finances as he did about the Resurrection' is a sentiment that bears the imprimatur of Mr. Billy Graham.) The writer keeps a watchful eye on his rising curve of production: that way lies the possibility of promotion to Hollywood script-writer. The trade-union 'executive,' drawing a salary of twenty-five or fifty thousand dollars a year, installs himself in a sumptuous skyscraper office and occupies the finest hotel suites when he travels 'on business,' he feels that rank-and-file union members will have little confidence in him, and the businessmen with whom he negotiates little respect for him, if he does not exude an aroma of 'success.' Almost all will be more readily provoked to earnest soul-searching by a charge of inefficiency than by an accusation of dishonour. The ancient Gordian knot of the philosophers—'What is truth?'—has been cut by the sword of American pragmatism: a belief is true if it results in a profit.

A 'successful' intellectual prudently disguises himself as a minor businessman. Those intellectuals who claim for their bread an independent and honourable status comparable to that enjoyed by their *confrères* in some European countries are looked upon at best as harmless and amusing Dickensian eccentrics — absent-minded professors and so on—and at worst as mentally lopsided security risks, like Dr. Robert Oppenheimer. By the man in the street the politically active intellectual is contemptuously dismissed as an 'egghead.'

Well may the British businessman look with envious eye on the happier lot of his American rival. Down to the end of the nineteenth century the British businessman had to play second fiddle to the gentleman, whom he either envied and decried or envied and imitated. Then the structure of aristocratic society that had supported the ideal of the gentleman began to crack and crumble, and for a brief period it looked as if the businessman were at last coming into his own. In the Victorian age Samuel Smiles glorified the achievements of self-made British businessmen and engineers in true American style. In the twentieth century three successive Conservative leaders and prime ministers, Bonar Law, Stanley Baldwin and Neville Chamberlain, sprang from the ranks of businessmen. But the British businessman never succeeded in imposing himself as a national type and elevating his way of life to a national ideal. The decline of the aristocratic ethic, which viewed the businessman as a social bounder, was concurrent with the rise of the socialist ethic, which viewed the businessman as a social exploiter.

In the United States it was only in the South that a landed gentry for a time overshadowed the businessman; and its influence was narrowly regional and is today only vestigial. In the Northeast, in New York, Philadelphia and Boston, the sons and grandsons of wealthy merchants were the nearest thing to aristocracy. In the Middle West and the Far West, in Detroit, Chicago and Los Angeles, the rising businessman had an absolutely clear field, without an already entrenched rival of any kind. Socialist criticism of the businessman's morality, unsupported by a powerful political party, has fallen flat.

Yet, despite the high esteem in which the businessman is held, the enormously rich monopolist is mistrusted. It is laudable to make a million dollars, and still more laudable to make ten millions; but the man who pushes his fortune above a hundred millions is thought to be rather overdoing it. The hundred-million-aire's

angriest critic has usually been not the socialist but the comparatively proletarian one-million-aire whom he crowds to the wall. It was the frightening success achieved by Rockefeller, operating through the formidable combine known as the 'Standard Oil Trust,' in putting his smaller competitors out of business and bending even railroads to his will that provoked the enactment of the Sherman Anti-Trust Act in 1890. President Truman's dim view of big business reflects the prejudices of a small haberdasher who went broke before he turned to the greener pastures of politics. Almost the only multi-millionaire who has been widely popular was Henry Ford. There was something rather mysterious, and therefore sinister, about the way in which railroad magnates and steel magnates and oil magnates made their fortunes, but there was no mystery about Ford's way. Millions of families had one of his cars in the garage, and a very good buy they thought it, too. And Ford endeared himself to the common man by always retaining the folksy ways and provincial outlook ('history is bunk') of a small-town mechanic. Even after he had become one of the two richest men in the world he sponsored a magazine that specialised in unmasking the nefarious machinations of Wall Street bankers and financiers. In the United States that sort of activity has no necessary connection with Marxism.

The only multi-millionaire businessman who persistently sought elective office was the press magnate William Randolph Hearst. Although his newspapers were credited with plunging the United States into the Spanish-American War of 1898 and with contributing powerfully to American repudiation of the League of Nations in 1920, they were less effective when their master sought to use them for his personal ambitions. Aside from a brief and inconspicuous sojourn in the House of Representatives, Hearst's political crusades consistently fizzled; and, though he diverted his leisure by buying a Spanish monastery, a Welsh castle and a Hollywood film company, and by filling a warehouse with packing-cases containing miscellaneous *objets d'art*, and spent his declining years in ducal splendour in his California stronghold, 'the lord of San Simeon' died a frustrated and embittered man.

Multi-millionaires who have yearned to play a part in politics have, with rare exceptions, had to forgo elective office. Some have been powers behind the throne in the Republican Party, though their precise role has not always been so sharply defined as that of the famous president-maker Mark Hanna, who managed the election of McKinley at the turn of the century. More usually they have

taken appointive positions as cabinet members or ambassadors. The most distinguished of the breed was the banker Andrew W. Mellon, acclaimed by a Republican administration in the booming twenties as 'the greatest Secretary of the Treasury since Alexander Hamilton,' and prosecuted by a Democratic administration in the disillusioned thirties for evasion of income tax—a predicament from which he adroitly extricated himself by presenting to the American people a National Gallery that is one of the glories of Washington.

Whence the social ideology that has exalted the businessman in the United States? Marxian philosophy holds that religions, ideologies and other beliefs are predetermined by the economic organisation of society. But what about the economic organisation of society? Is it in its turn predetermined, or at any rate influenced by religions and ideologies? Does the cult of the businessman in America derive from the enormous expansion of economic activity, or does the enormous expansion of economic activity derive from the cult of the businessman? That the New-World environment by itself does not generate the cult of the businessman may be inferred from the fact that nowhere in Latin-American countries has its development progressed as far as in the United States.

On this point the United States' near neighbour, Canada, furnishes us with instructive testimony. In Canada two ways of life, French-Canadian and English-Canadian, stand side by side. The French-Canadian way of life, seen in its purest form in the province of Quebec, is inherited, with modifications, from pre-Revolutionary France. In social mores Quebec has more in common with a Latin-American country like Argentina than with the United States, or even an English-Canadian province like Ontario. Among French-Canadians the educated upper stratum of the population looks upon the three classical professions—the advocate, the doctor and the priest—as the most honourable. The businessman, and his acolytes the engineer and the technician, are held in lower esteem. Business activity is mostly of the small-shopkeeper type. The bulk of the population, apart from a growing number of industrial workers, are *habitants* — small peasant-type farmers, living in remote villages, devoted to the Catholic Church, untouched by the events of the great world and placidly indifferent to them. The large commercial and industrial enterprises of Montreal and other towns are controlled almost entirely by American or English-Canadian capital.

When we turn to an English-Canadian province like Ontario, we recognise at once that its bustling way of life, with certain reserva-

tions in the political sphere, has strong affinities with the American. Everywhere, socially as well as economically, the businessman dominates.

The standard of living of French-Canadians, measured by such obvious indices as *per capita* income, motor car ownership or general level of education, is markedly below the English-Canadian standard, which approximates to the American. One suspects that the differences between Quebec and the rest of Canada would be even greater—as great perhaps as those between the United States and Latin-America—were it not for the equalising tendencies that inevitably operate in two regions forming parts of the same country.

We are led to the conclusion that the American way of life, though obviously influenced by the New-World environment, is not the automatic result of it, but is partly conditioned by an antecedent social outlook.

What is the source of this social outlook? Unquestionably, the English Nonconformist chapel. In the chapel the most important member of the congregation was not the squire but the successful self-made businessman. In England Nonconformity was always overshadowed by the Established Church. Transferred to the virgin expanses of North America, the Nonconformist sects proliferated and quickly became the dominant forms of religion. The Methodists and the Baptists are the most numerous and the most characteristic of American Protestant sects. The Nonconformity of England has become the conformity of America. The American way of life is the issue of a marriage between English Nonconformity and the boundless opportunities of the American environment. Where, as in Latin America, the driving force of English Nonconformity has been absent, the influences of the physical environment have not sufficed to produce the same result. The cult of the businessman and the high standard of living are alike wanting.

In *Culture and Anarchy* Matthew Arnold quoted, to illustrate the outlook of the English middle-class Nonconformity that he deplored, a sentiment of John Bright's spoken to a popular gathering in 1866: 'See what you have done. I look over this country and see the cities you have built, the railroads you have made, the manufactures you have produced, the cargoes which freight the ships of the greatest mercantile navy the world has ever seen! I see that you have converted by your labours what was once a wilderness, these islands, into a fruitful garden; I know that you have created this wealth, and are a nation whose name is a word of power throughout

all the world.' Transfer this outlook to the transatlantic scene: is it not precisely the outlook that we have today come to regard as the hallmark of the American, and especially of the American businessman? Bright's expansive sentiment, with its self-complacent emphasis on material accomplishment, is the sentiment that inspires the typical Fourth-of-July oration. This is the outlook that in its English Victorian manifestations Arnold condemned as 'Philistinism,' a 'fashion of teaching a man to value himself not on what he *is*, not on his progress in sweetness and light, but on the number of railroads he has constructed, or the bigness of the tabernacle he has built,' an outlook that had served to 'debauch the minds of the middle classes.'

Arnold's passing comments on the America of 1869, when it stood on the threshold of its great forward surge in material wealth, are not without interest: 'America is just ourselves, with the Barbarians quite left out, and the Populace nearly. This leaves the Philistines for the great bulk of the nation.'—in other words, in America there is no aristocracy, no mass of impoverished and illiterate town-dwellers, but it is predominantly composed of self-complacent middle-class Nonconformists who value material well-being above all else.

If Arnold were to repeat his criticisms of Philistinism in America today, he would be given low marks. The values of Philistinism are everywhere triumphant. How, asks the average American, can we value a man on what he is except by knowing what he has done —how many railroads he has built, how many motor cars he has put on the road, how many times around the world the cigarettes or bars of soap he has made would reach if placed end to end? The merit of the salesman is determined by the volume of his sales, and he is rewarded accordingly; the same standard is extended to the whole population, and the size of one's income, as long as it is not obviously derived from inherited wealth, is the measuring-rod that determines one's precedence in the scale of social esteem.

Even university professors, though necessarily content with humbler rewards than businessmen or trades-union leaders, derive some benefit from the system, for unmistakable fame is equated with high productivity and entitles them to an enhanced emolument. When Einstein was appointed to the faculty of the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton, he was asked how much he wanted: he suggested $3,000 a year. Dr. Flexner, the director of the Institute, was appalled: he prided himself on having obtained the world's most illustrious

scientist for Princeton, but what American would accept such an estimate of Einstein if he worked for so ridiculous a sum? Einstein was given $16,000 a year—more in keeping with his eminence, even if not so much as some football coaches, whose productivity, in terms of matches won and tickets sold, is easier to measure.

Worship of material accomplishment has doubtless manifested itself, in one form or another, in every civilisation and in every country. But those who so worshipped have either done so covertly or have been subordinated to a class that, sincerely or not, professed some other value as the supreme good—holiness, chivalry, virtue, clan loyalty, inherited rank, learning, equality, and so on. In the United States worship of material accomplishment is the supreme secular cult, and the businessman is honoured as the priest who knows how to work the magic rites.

Doubtless some elements which conduce to make a worship of material accomplishment obnoxious are not in strong evidence in America. Self-complacency grounded on one's material well-being is most repulsive when seen in contrast to the poverty and degradation of the masses—Arnold's *Populace*—and that particularly is what made Arnold disgusted with the Philistines of his day. It is the contrast between the bounding prosperity of America and the dismal poverty and degradation of some other countries, especially those of Asia and South America, that provokes foreign critics to decry American Philistinism today. But within the United States this painful dichotomy between progress and poverty is wanting, or nearly so. Some poverty, even some degradation, there undoubtedly is, but it is marginal rather than massive, and may with plausibility be attributed to the subnormal intelligence of those who suffer it: it is as much their fault as their misfortune. When a majority of the population attain the Philistine level of prosperity and are able quite spontaneously to share in the Philistine outlook, it acquires respectability, and it vehemently counter-attacks its critics. None the less, in the international field, the popular conception of Americans as Philistines is their greatest weakness in the ideological struggle that racks the world today.

The Republican Party may be taken as the businessman's party *par excellence*. It is the party that believes, to quote President Coolidge's epigram, that 'the business of America is business.' Not that the Democratic Party is ideologically inimical to profit-making enterprise with the dogmatism of the British Labour Party. The Democratic Party disclaims any hostility to 'legitimate'

business. It professes not to destroy business but to reform it, to favour the small businessman against the big, the wage-earner against the corporation. It recognises that others besides big businessmen have votes. William Jennings Bryan, the Democratic leader at the turn of the century, claimed to speak for 'the wage labourer, the country lawyer, the cross-roads merchant, the farmer and the miner.' The Democratic Party draws to itself trades-unionists, reformers, socialistic liberals, 'soak-the-rich' enthusiasts, welfare-state planners, and others who for one reason or another are critical of many aspects of the business world. The electoral fortunes of the two parties may be taken as a rough index of the American people's confidence in the leadership of the business community at any given time. Between 1869 and 1933 the Republican Party held the presidency for forty-eight years, against sixteen for the Democratic Party. The presidencies of Grover Cleveland and Woodrow Wilson —each of eight years—were the only Democratic interludes during this era of Republican ascendancy. And Wilson's election in 1912 was a fluke occasioned by the split of the dominant Republican Party into rival factions headed by President William H. Taft and ex-President Theodore Roosevelt. Bryan, at once the most colourful, the most popular and the most naive of the radical leaders of that era, who saw in the gold standard a symbol of privileged wealth and aspired to replace it with a more democratic silver standard, was conspicuously unsuccessful in his three hard-fought crusades to attain the presidency. He ended his life the laughing-stock of the educated world from his efforts to suppress by law the teaching of Darwinian evolution.

The bursting of the Wall Street bubble in 1929 heralded the depression of the early thirties — the most calamitous event in American history since the Civil War. The prestige of the American businessman was knocked edgewise. That prestige had been grounded on his ability to 'deliver the goods.' and he was no longer delivering. Would the blow prove mortal? For a time it seemed so: unemployment, despondency and unrest on all hands seemed to presage that an 'un-American' socialist ideology vowed to the destruction of the businessman might take root in American soil. The presidential election of 1932, held when American economy was at its nadir, was a veritable tidal wave. Out went the Republican Mr. Hoover with his 'rugged individualism.' For Franklin Roosevelt, with his Democratic 'New Deal.' it was 'Hail to the chief who in triumph advances!' Lower still in 1936 sank the

Republican fortunes: the party lost forty-six of the forty-eight states —the most crushing defeat in its history. From a Marxian revolution, or at any rate from a grave socialist challenge, the businessman was saved by Roosevelt's Keynesian remedies. Roosevelt got small thanks for his pains: not since Lincoln had any president been so detested by the opposition. Had not 'that man in the White House' hoisted taxes to unheard-of heights? Had he not forced the loathsome castor oil of trade-unionism down the businessman's throat? Had he not debauched the American working man, hitherto proudly independent, by putting him on the dole and buying his vote with bread and circuses? But the hatred of the business community was more than compensated for by the devotion of the masses to their Great White Father: in effect they made him president for life.

For twelve years under Roosevelt's 'New Deal,' and for eight more under Mr. Truman's 'Fair Deal,' the Democrats held the presidency firmly in their grasp. For twenty years the Republicans wandered and wept in the wilderness. The popular recollection of the 'Hoover depression'—so with unkind astuteness the Democrats nicknamed it—hung about the neck of the Republican Party like an albatross. Contemptuously ignoring the Republican candidate of the moment, whoever he happened to be — Landon, Willkie, Dewey — Mr. Roosevelt and Mr. Truman continued to campaign vigorously and victoriously against the unfortunately unforgotten Mr. Hoover. Even Republicans began to fear that the Democrats might be right when they asserted that the day of the Republicans was done, and that the time had come to sweep them, like the Whigs of a century ago, into the rubbish dump of history.

The presidential election of 1952 was looked forward to as decisive. If the Republicans lost that, the disintegration of the party might well be in sight. The era of the businessman's ascendancy would indeed be over. The election was held and the Republicans won a smashing victory—or did they? Election returns, like Delphic oracles, sometimes give ambiguous answers to our questions. Had the Republicans nominated their 'logical' candidate, the late Senator Robert A. Taft, and had he led them to victory, there would have been no doubt about what had happened. But the rank-and-file Republican politicians, though in their hearts preferring 'Mr. Republican' above all others, feared that to the American electorate he would be merely a reincarnation of Mr. Hoover, ready to spring another depression on them at the first opportunity. So, recalling the traditional partiality of the American people for successful

military commanders, they nominated the non-political General Eisenhower. The result we all know.

The civilian who cherishes a boyish admiration for victorious soldiers is a familiar figure. Mr. Eisenhower is the reverse type: a soldier who cherishes a boyish admiration for successful businessmen. In him the American tendency to idealise the businessman exists in its simplest and purest form: sincere, profound, undisguised, enthusiastic (and naive, unfriendly critics would add). When on his inauguration in 1953 Mr. Eisenhower named his cabinet, professional politicians, even of his own party, gasped in dismay. Their dismay, understandably enough, was partly because the cabinet contained not a single professional politician; but it also reflected real alarm at the dangers supposed to be inherent in a cabinet composed, with but a single exception, of businessmen or men who shared their point of view.

The single exception merely underlined the rule. In a friendly gesture to the trade unions, the late Martin Durkin, president of the plumbers' union, was appointed Secretary of Labour. He found the atmosphere stifling. He was sent to Coventry by his cabinet mates, and after eight months he resigned in a huff. He accused the President of 'double-crossing' him in the matter of relaxing laws that restricted trade-union activity. Mr. Eisenhower was characteristically surprised and pained by the 'misunderstanding.' Into Mr. Durkin's shoes stepped Mr. James P. Mitchell, former vice-president of a big department store, and the internal serenity of the cabinet has since been unmarred by persons unsympathetic to the businessman's point of view.

Mr. Eisenhower regarded the elephantine, money-devouring Department of Defence, consuming 65 per cent. of the national budget, as one of the most important in the government: what more natural than that he should appoint to 'streamline' it the head of America's greatest manufacturing company—Mr. Charles E. Wilson, $600,000-a-year president of the General Motors Corporation? What more natural than that to straighten out America's foreign difficulties he should appoint as Secretary of State Mr. John Foster Dulles, 'the world's highest-priced lawyer,' who had devoted his life to straightening out the legal difficulties of great American corporations? Mr. Eisenhower's other cabinet appointments struck the same big-business note.

Communist propaganda loves to paint a dark picture of the sinister capitalistic bosses who are said to manipulate democratic

political parties from behind the scenes—and here were those very bosses, so confident of themselves that they were taking over the American government without any disguise whatever, unless Ike's folksy grin be considered such. Even some Republicans murmured: the President, they feared, had committed a serious political *gaffe*. But though Democrats inevitably labelled the cabinet the ' millionaire club,' it was pointed out in rebuttal that these big businessmen had made heavy financial sacrifices to give their services to the public. Anyhow, the American people have been reassured by the disclosure that the President and his cabinet begin their every meeting with a period of silent prayer, that their minds, as Mr. Eisenhower explains, may be cleansed of all selfish thoughts. Mr. Stevenson's plea in the 1956 election—' Get the government away from General Motors and give it back to Joe Smith '—fell on deaf ears. Mr. Eisenhower's triumphant re-election with a massively increased majority shows that his personal prestige still avails to carry all before it.

But does the Eisenhower regime and its cabinet of millionaire businessmen represent a genuine revival of the Republican Party, and of the cult of the businessman? Or is it merely the accidental though remarkable result of two inter-locking factors—the profound admiration of the American people for victorious generals, and the profound admiration of Mr. Eisenhower for successful businessmen? We shall have to wait for the election of 1960, when Mr. Eisenhower will no longer be available as a candidate, to get an answer to this question.

SMOKING AND CANCER

by MARTIN PRESTON

ALTHOUGH the cigarette is a killer, and warrants its nickname of "coffin nail," it is undeniable that it has an important place in the lives of probably half the people of these isles. Which makes it difficult for the Government to take the steps it must take. It will be a test of the courage of Parliament to see whether it will be content with a couple of posters and a campaign to tell the kiddies how wicked smoking is—as if that will make the slightest difference. Smoking is a sign of adult status, and as long as fathers smoke, their sons will do so as well.

Most smokers refuse to believe cancer and smoking are directly linked. None are as blind as those who won't see. Of course, there are some smokers who accept the danger and are willing to take the risk. Others make excuses. There are philosophers, who say they are more likely to die in a road accident than from lung cancer.

They are wrong. One in every 18 deaths last year was from lung cancer. And deaths from other diseases are higher among smokers.

There are the diversionists, who say they are sure the rising lung cancer rate is due to the increasing air pollution in our cities. From the published results of research, here and in the United States, it appears that air pollution does cause lung cancer to a certain extent, but that is quite beside the point. Motor and factory fumes are probably another danger to be tackled, but it is in no sense an alternative to the menace of smoking. A non-smoker in town is a good deal less likely to get lung cancer than a smoker in the countryside. The brave and the philosophical smokers at least accept that smoking is dangerous. The diversionists and the plain unbelievers don't.

No one is sure what causes cancer of any kind, let alone lung cancer. Research in this field has been most extensive in the United

States, both into the nature of cancer itself, and the relationship between smoking and all disease. It is well-known in statistics that the wider the cast of your sample, the more accurate the result, and it is in the United States that the largest sample has been taken. Over four years 188,000 men between the ages of 50 and 70 were scanned by two American Cancer Society researchers, Dr. E. Cuyler Hammond and Dr. Daniel Horn. The results of their research are so startling that their report, published in June, cannot be too widely known.

They found:—

Death rates from *all* causes were 68 per cent. higher among smokers than among non-smokers (whenever I refer to "smokers" I speak only of cigarette smokers).

Smokers were ten times more likely to die of lung cancer than non-smokers.

Danger was directly related to the number of cigarettes smoked; the death rate for ten or fewer cigarettes-a-day smokers was 34 per cent. higher than for non-smokers; among 40 or more cigarettes-a-day smokers, 123 per cent. higher.

The death rate for pipe-smokers was only 12 per cent. above that for non-smokers; for cigar smokers it was 22 per cent. higher.

Smokers have a higher death rate from cancer at other sites besides the lungs; 50 per cent. higher for cancer of the pancreas, 61 per cent. higher for cancer of the stomach, 352 per cent. higher for cancer of the liver and gall bladder. But no relationship was found between smoking and leukemia or cancer of the brain.

Smokers' death rate from lung diseases other than cancer was twice as high as non-smokers; almost four times as high for deaths from pneumonia and influenza.

Smokers are much more likely to die from heart diseases of all kinds than non-smokers, in fact heart diseases are a much bigger killer among smokers in numerical terms than cancer of all kinds.

Researchers Hammond and Horn checked their figures for lung cancer deaths in towndwellers and countrymen of equal smoking habit—found deaths for the towndwellers were one-third higher.

Only in one respect, from accidents and suicide, did smokers have a lower death rate than non-smokers, and the difference was marginal.

These figures could not put the truth in harsher terms. Although scientists are not yet certain why smoking is dangerous, the relationship between it and disease is undeniable. It is irrelevant to quote

sensationalist newspaper reports suggesting that only American cigarettes are cancer-causing. Less extensive research by British scientists on British cigarettes has produced the same type of answer as the Hammond-Horn investigation.

Results are now conclusive enough for the Government to act on smoking. It has several alternatives; the prohibition of tobacco as a dangerous drug, extensive campaigning and various repressive measures to discourage or cut down smoking, or the replacement of the normal cigarette by a "safe" cigarette. The first alternative is impracticable. The Treasury could not bear the sudden loss of the hundreds of millions of pounds which the tobacco tax brings in annually, and in any case an unenforceable law is a bad law; since smoking is so widely practised, and usually habitual, a smoking ban would be even more unenforceable than a liquor ban. But the latter two alternatives are quite practicable, and should be operated together by the Government. In addition to extensive propaganda to make quite clear how dangerous smoking is, the tax on cigarettes should be heavily increased, and further restrictions imposed on smokers in cinemas, theatres, public transport and restaurants. The smoker has no cause to complain in this respect. Smoking is banned in most of the above-mentioned places in most of the European countries. The smoker gets four-fifths of the accommodation on the main lines of British Railways. In most European countries nearly half the train accommodation is reserved for non-smokers. Apart from the health aspect, smokers do not realise the discomfort they cause to non-smokers in public places. The above restrictions would still leave the smoker perfectly free to puff away at home or in the open air—provided he be willing to pay for his cigarettes.

Meanwhile the Government should ensure that researchers into the link between smoking and disease are given all the funds they need. An all-out effort should be made to develop safer cigarettes. In the interim period pipe-smoking should be encouraged, by propaganda and tax measures, as an alternative to cigarette-smoking. When safer cigarettes are developed these, too, should be encouraged at the expense of normal cigarettes by similar means. The "safe" cigarette seems quite feasible. Scientists believe that pipes are much safer than cigarettes because the tobacco in a pipe burns at a lower temperature (around 767°C compared with 800-880°C). Tars extracted from tobacco burned at high temperatures have produced many more cancers in mice than tars from tobaccos burned at lower temperatures. Scientists have also found that natural waxy sub-

stances in tobacco produce cancer-causing tars. A "safe" cigarette might be produced either by lowering the burning temperature, possibly by altering the cut of the tobacco, or by extracting cancer-causing substances from the tobacco. A third alternative is to produce an effective filter. Present filters are almost useless in excluding cancer-causing substances.

You may ask why the Government should take any such measures at all. Firstly because smoking is evidently costing the nation's health services a lot of money and imposing a greater strain on them. Secondly, because a cut in the national tobacco consumption of 250 million lbs. a year is ultimately in the country's interest—60 per cent. of our tobacco comes from the United States and costs us dollars we can ill spare. Thirdly, because it is an established principle that the State has a limited right to protect the individual from himself; thus dangerous drugs are strictly licensed and suicide is an offence. Fourthly, because each individual is an integral part of the nation, and it is the Government's duty to improve the health of its citizens and build a basis for healthier generations to come.

MEN AND BOOKS VI

Cocteau: The Last Imagist Poet

by DESMOND STEWART

I should like the name 'Imagisme' to retain some sort of a meaning. It stands, or I should like it to stand for hard light, clear edges.

—Ezra Pound to Amy Lowell. 1st Aug., 1914.

IMAGISM, once the bond between such fiery 'modern' spirits as Hulme, Pound, Wyndham Lewis and Eliot, will soon be fifty years old. Its birthdate, just before the Great War, is significant: because the war, and after it, the depression, and the Second War, and then the Cold War—these external factors were to make it difficult for the poets to concentrate on the image to the exclusion of the system, or the idea. Pound himself cannot be called an imagist poet in the *Cantos*, where the battle between the man who wants to do a good job and the man who wants his rake-off from usury fight an implacable battle. Images remain, with hard light, clear edges; the humming-bird is not absent from the sombre groves; but the urgency of his theme has imposed a mass of logopoeia which would have been dismissed by the Imagist poet of those days before the Somme, when Imagism was the last development of pure poetry. The pure poets of the 19th century had aimed at a sensuous self-justifying experience: their interior motive was frequently disgust with their ugly, complex age; and their aim was often as inaccurate as their effects were imprecise. The young Pound wanted a hard clear image: but the image itself would be enough. It would not mean anything more than itself; it would say nothing about usury or politics or religion. As Hulme, his friend, said: one image, to create one precise image in a lifetime, that was worth volumes of

poetry. And Hulme's image comparing an evening moon to a farmer leaning over a fence is not easily forgotten.

Pound for reasons of economic theory, Eliot for religious, were incapable of repressing from their poetry logopoeia: the Waste Land, like the *Cantos*, has memorable images with hard light, clear edges: but the poem's importance to Eliot lies in the idea behind the images, rather than the images themselves. And the poets of the next generation, Auden, Spender, MacNeice, Roy Campbell and Day Lewis, while in a sense deriving from the Imagist Movement—Pound had done his job as a schoolmaster; no one* could write in the flaccid way of the Georgians and get away with it—yet were concerned most with what they were saying: such 'palpable truths' as that men must love one another, or die.

Imagism had been the cult of the 'is' rather than the 'ought': and from an 'is' no 'ought' can ever be inferred. The 'ought' comes from the operation of prejudice, or reason, not from the contemplation of sense data.

Pound's sympathies have been as wide in his century as were Swinburne's in his (whose catholicity extended to Whitman, FitzGerald, Gautier and Beaudelaire). But Pound's special liking for Jean Cocteau (whose genius E.P. once characterised to me as being of the humming-bird order) must be due, I think, to a recognition by the poet of money that in Cocteau an aspect of himself which he discarded has continued to thrive. (The earliest reference to Cocteau in Pound's letters is an April postcard in 1921: "Paris. Find Cocteau and Picabia intelligent. Fools abound but are less in one's way here . . ." And 15 years later he is telling Agnes Bedford: "Read Cocteau (I suppose you do anyhow); read some more if you haven't all of him.")

In 1947, while still new to his imprisonment, Pound urged the young poet Alan Neame to translate into English Cocteau's long poem *Léone*.† Ten years later, in 1957, the finished work was dedicated by the translator to the first Lady of Lebanon and was presented to her on a public occasion. In his letter of dedication Alan Neame wrote: "Since 1947 the world has changed much, and I believe for the better. Resentment has died down. Those held responsible for the war of 1939-45, even those whose hands had shed most blood, are for the most part either dead or pardoned. But alas, Madame, my master, who was neither a murderer nor was ever formally

* I exclude, of course, Ministers of Education.
† Gallimard.

condemned, has not yet been set free, although now over seventy, but like another Tasso still lingers under the ban of the law. I make bold to beg you, as you condescend to accept this poetic tribute, to pity the wretched lot of Ezra Pound and to ask at the hands of the President of the United States the release of a poet whose greatness has only increased with his misfortunes . . ."

If Madame Chamoun intercedes, and if her intercession avails, the world of letters will remember her with gratitude for ever.

Cocteau's poem is an imagist poem, but unlike most imagist poetry, immensely long: 120 stanzas that vary in length from one line to sixteen. And there is a connecting theme: a dream.

> Leoun I dreamed on the night of the 28th.
> Padding with lioness paws across the night
> She walked, Leoun, between the burnt-out fires.
> Greek actors walk in clogs with comparable poise.

But as with much Arabic poetry (a poetry where Imagism could strike stronger roots than in the Parnassus of Milton and Shakespeare, perhaps) the dream is a thin thread on which plump beads are strung. The beads are exciting in themselves: images of our time: our time's reflection in a bright unemotional mirror. Which is not to say that grief is not *behind* the images of war and occupation:

> Like sovereign states the stars hate their neighbours

or

> Iron Maid of Nuremberg* pointedly barbed
> Madonnas radiating Spanish daggers
> Sebastian and his tree shot down in arrows
> Strands of barbed wire, cactus, briar:
> Leoun travels armed as you are.

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* Iron Maid of Nuremberg: Pound himself contributes a footnote:

"Vurry early and *vivid* memory, thoroughly gloomy she—German custode (long a family joke) with dialect, as she spuk some englische. At each instrument a description of how it worked with the finale: 'und dey killed him, *dead*. Und dey sbliddt him in tdow, und dey killed him, *dead*.'

"Various pincers. the bar over which the split, and the, how how *long*? 7 or 8 inch spikes

"I trust it is clear that this refers to Nuremberg Museum, I suppose about 1898."

Few poets, even the lucid French, know from adolescence what they are destined to create: false starts are the rule: we remember Plato writing tragedies. (Sadder are false finishes: we cannot forget Wordsworth on capital punishment, or Burns writing in English.) And for much of his life Cocteau, at all things the brilliant amateur, has liked to practise arts wherein to achieve greatly was not his. The theatre, for example: where his *Orphée* is dull when it tries to be intelligent: a crysallis which only burst into its destiny of big-winged night-moth in his conversion of the austere drama to image-filled cinema. Who, who once saw them, can forget his rulers of the underworld, neat businessmen in tidy executive suits sitting in bomb-ruined cellar; or the Rolls Royce of Death? Or again, *l'Eternal Retour:* the thought is puerile, and has been done better, in full, by Wagner. But who will forget the flames behind the lovers at the great hearth, as they drink the potion, or the bronze mask which Jean Marais's head turns to on the upturned boat, at the conclusion?

Cocteau joins the Coleridge of Kublai Khan in Leoun: and while in places one can guess where the poet broke off, to wait for fresh inspiration next "bedworthy dawn," there was no stranger from Porlock to scythe the whole into a fragment.

Has there been a better translation of a French poem into English in this century? If there is, I have not read it.

And the poem is the most difficult of all poems to translate: a poem which lives in itself, not for what it means, nor for the message which it symbolises: for it symbolises no message, any more than a crystal does, or an orchid: but lives for its own self: a procession of images sharply wrought, clear, firm-edged: here disaster must have been nearer the translator's path than the dreaming poet's: for him to sleep would be ruin.

Stanza XXII, for example:

> That was Leoun's manner, arrogant lady,
> Death walks like her, so does Antigone
> Flouting the law in insolent disdain.
> So pass the Coronation, kingly train,
> Children college-bound in crocodile,
> Deer on the forest moss. Leoun the same.
> And the young murderer down dead man's mile
> The Great Bear likewise, move and the wood-louse,
> Water as it boils and quicksilver.

(Only my waking could disrupt her course.)
I must sleep on and to the uttermost help her.

Ainsi se comportait la superbe Léone
Ainsi marche la mort ainsi marche Antigone
La hautaine insolente inaccessible aux lois.
Ainsi marche le Sacre at la traîne des rois
Ainsi marche au collège une troupe enfantine
Ainsi marche le cerf sur la mousse des bois
Ainsi de la prison jusqu' à la guillotine
Marche un jeune assassin pour la dernière fois.
Ainsi va le cloporte ainsi va l'eau qui bout.
(Mon réveil seul pourrait interrompre sa course.)
Il faut dormir la suivre et l'aider jusqu' au bout.

Reading this poem, listening to this translation, one shares the dream images of a clear-eyed poet. One learns nothing. One does not look at a guillotine in a new light, nor at barbed wire; nor does Leoun herself become a symbol of anything. There is verbal beauty and a procession of pictures: melopoeia and phanopoeia, but no structure of thought. The mind becomes one of those most modern cinemas one has heard of, circular, with a screen round all the walls and oneself in the centre. The pictures are alarming or beautiful, sombre or gay (the poem was written between 1942 and 1944): the very lack of an explicit connection (beyond the slow step of Leoun whose ' veils were the sails of a schooner ') makes the experience of this poem both profound and honest. We are inside a cinema: the head of a great poet: honest, open, clear. And if we cannot be in a great theatre, where else would we prefer to be? Alone on a mountain top? Oh, yes; *if* our minds rival the poet's. Undoubtedly. But if not?

HYPERTOPIA

and

LINES ON THE EDGE OF A MENTAL VACUUM

Two Poems by ROY MACGREGOR-HASTIE

HYPERTOPIA

It came to me, suddenly,
like rain after a drought,
like a night out in the West End of London
ending—
it had been tending to articulation
for years I suppose, though I dread
to think how long it had lurked in the angry labrynth
I call my mind, forcing the tilt of my supercilious nose
to an unbelievable angle of quite deplorable pride
in my loneliness;
it was like learning to dress again, learning to tie
a loose bow, or pulling the fangs of a butterfly clip
until, it, too, achieved negligence.
This, my confession is prima facie evidence
of unguilt . . . and here it is,
for all those with a social conscience—
of all those for whom our politicians in the past
have built stability, security, the Welfare State,
I, unclassifiable worm, broken,
I do not *want* to *earn* my daily bread.
It must be a bitter blow to a planner
to see an idle mouth like mine, open,
hoping and waiting for manna.

LINES ON THE EDGE OF A MENTAL VACUUM

It may well be
that beer and cigarettes, a woman and a car
are all the Common Man requires
to fence his field, keep out the strays of thought,
maintain his insularity intact;
without doubt
a cow would be extremely stupid to aspire
to be an elephant—
or so it seems to me,
for eccentricity is really not a matter of degree
but one of fact.
They say the population of the world
is more or less divisible in two—males and their females,
yet neither category admits the intellectual;
there is no place for him in the normal human catalogue,
he is a prologue and an epilogue
with nothing in between.
He is the Third Programme: quite seldom seen
he must confine himself to being heard
in the sad song of an exquisitely lonely bird . . .
Of course, no one obliges you to listen to their lives;
a mental switch can turn them off as easily
as the cocktail cabinet is opened with the key
in the hand of the wife of the Common Man next door,
and that, so they say, is a Good Thing—
the way, when wise men broadcast protest and prophecy
we can ignore them, drowning the sound of their words
in the noise of the glasses clinking,
watching the sky drinking in greedily, credally,
the mushroom clouds smoking above the bombs and tobacco.
There is nothing rococco
about the walls of the Average Temple.
The Man-in-the-Street thanks his own gods for this.
They have done well
to make sure that it is too dark to read in Hell.

A DIARY

LAST month, as I imagine most of its readers will have noticed, *The European* changed its print from Times Roman to Plantin. A change in everyday things, such as bread, or coffee, is often a good idea. It must not be a change for the worse; nobody would would wish to exchange French pain to ménage for the tasteless white English loaf, or, to be fair, nasty French coffee for the coffee you can buy in Wardour Street which, strangely enough, is called Bourbon. To do so would be equivalent to printing in a sans serif type, and making the magazine as unpleasant to read as English bread and French coffee are to eat and drink.

★ ★ ★

Several newspapers and magazines have lately altered their type and make up. The *New Statesman* front page has become bleak, black and dull; it looks cheaper, and less authoritative. The *Spectator* is full of dreadful little drawings, supposed to illustrate the text; it appears that many people like these. The *Economist* has illustrations of another sort—sentences on the cover describing the salient points made in its articles, which are extremely useful.

The queen of newspapers from a typographical point of view is the *Observer*. The *Sunday Times* has become too fat; who wants

the great indigestible articles it bulges itself out with? Perhaps the advertisers; or possibly travellers on slow Sunday trains suffering an extremity of boredom. The English Sunday papers are very enjoyable, however, and nobody in their senses would swap them for those of any other country.

★ ★ ★

The winter collections, shown in August, and the new motors a few weeks later, are the terrible twin temptations for women and for men to indulge in dis-saving (as Mr. Roy Harrod called it in an article in the *Financial Times).* Most men think it unnecessary to dis-save on a new winter coat when last year's is as warm as ever, and most women think it absurd to want a new motor when the old one still runs along. If women follow the fashion this time their spindly legs may be cold, but their heads will be beautifully warm. Anyone wishing to steal a hat will have quite a job to hide even one; to take five at a blow, as in the days of Nina hats, would be an impossible feat.

★ ★ ★

At the Théatre Mogador, in Paris, where they are giving *The Merry Widow,* the scenery and dresses reminded me of a pantomime I saw in one of the cotton towns during the depression. The Prince and the Widow had rather good voices and sang in tune, but, presumably in order to level them down to the general poverty of the performance, second rate and totally unnecessary amplifiers were used, so that the music, like the sound track in a cheap cinema, was both deafening and blurred. Surely amplifiers are meant for conveying the crooner's whispers to every corner of the theatre, not for the full-throated roar of comic opera?

In the audience there were people of ninety being helped into their seats by people of seventy. I hope they were deaf enough not to have minded the distortion of the music. *The Merry Widow* is perfection in its kind; I imagine it would still run for years, given a chance.

★ ★ ★

There is a little song about Route Nationale 7 which says that happy days begin when this holiday road to the South is taken.

Since several of the eight million Europeans who cross their frontiers each summer drive along Route N.7, as well as millions of French people bound for their own seaside, the lyrical mood is inclined to give way to exhaustion as the hooting, jostling traffic dashes towards the coast. Hotels and restaurants cleverly advertise "calme" in their roadside posters; calm and peace become more desirable than food, drink or lodging.

There are not nearly so many posters along the road as there are in Italy; they are about equally divided between advertisements for wines and spirits, and those of the anti-drink campaign. "Un verre de plus, des vies en moins" is one of the slogans, on a huge brandy glass. Mr. A. J. P. Taylor says that, except in lorrydrivers' bistros, the food in wayside restaurants has become commonplace. This sounds wonderfully egalitarian and new statesmanish; but it is not true.

★ ★ ★

Pavel Tchelichew, who died recently in Rome, was a great painter. He was also an incomparable companion, clever, charming, strange, funny, unique. There is nobody in the least like him.

When I first knew him he spoke no English; since the Russian revolution he had lived and worked in Paris. When he learnt English he talked just as fast as he did in French; his talk rushed along full of ideas and oddities; it was talk of genius, and his letters were exactly like his speech. He was always in a tearing hurry, in tearing spirits, wearing himself out. Except when he painted, then his patience and concentration were complete. He made dozens of studies before beginning a picture.

His latest work was abstract and difficult; he said himself that the best thing written about it was the article by a French critic which appeared in this magazine* at the time of his last London exhibition. He became an American citizen a few years ago, many of his best paintings hang in American galleries. But Paris was his real home, and although he died in Italy he asked that his ashes be buried at Père Lachaise.

★ ★ ★

A great friend of Tchelichew was Dame Edith Sitwell, of whom

* *The European* No. 19, September, 1954.

he painted an extraordinary portrait. They wrote to each other for years. Almost the last time I saw him he spoke of this correspondence, which he said was to be published in (I think) the year 2,000. We talked of various things, and some time later I happened to tell him that someone whom he had painted years ago as a little child was now a father. "This baby!," he cried, "*He* will see the letters."

★ ★ ★

According to the *New York Herald Tribune*, Lord Strathmore said that if he had a gun he would shoot Lord Altrincham.

What are we coming to, when a Scottish landowner, in August, has not got a gun?

D.M.

ENTERTAINMENTS

Life and Length in Ballet

by SONIA ROBERTS

AFTER fifty years of favour from artists, audience and critics alike, the one-act ballet is suffering a recession. The truth of this trend is confirmed by no less an authority than Dame Ninette de Valois, who sponsors such ballets as *Prince of the Pagodas* and the eagerly awaited Ashton's *Ondine.*

Changes in taste are inevitable in any art, yet this phase in the cycle of artistic supply and demand could be a dangerous one for British ballet unless our choreographers realise the magnitude of the task they set themselves in the composition of the full length work.

At the turn of the century Ibsen, Shaw, and even in his own way Pinero, had proved to the theatre-going public that the medium of the drama could provide a platform for serious discussion of people and politics. Diaghileff utilised this newly forged bond between the intellectual and the theatre, and attracted the greatest artists and composers of the day to take an active part in his productions. As meeting place of the arts and the showroom for the latest artistic trends, he made ballet instead of the drama the centre of attention.

The climax of this ballet boom came in the immediate post-war years, when among our first visitors was Roland Petit's youthful company, mirroring perhaps unconsciously the blend of exhuberance and despairing fatalism that epitomised a generation grown up in the shadow of world war. (It is significant that *Oklahoma,* the first phenomenal smash hit of 'after the war' and the pattern for all

subsequent American-type musicals, should have ballet as an integral part of its structure.)

This was the decade in which the ballet of ideas, originated by Diaghileff's ruthless removal of non-essential elements, such as the divertissement ending, was supreme.

In the three-act ballet, however, the physical problem of giving the star artists breathing space necessitates the use of the divertissement. The English style of dancing, with its emphasis on good manners rather than 'showing off,' precludes the kind of bravura competition which endeared the divertissement to the old-style Marinsky audience. Moreover, having fully explored the possibilities of the *pointe* during the heyday of the romantic ballet, and of the hands and arms during the nationalistic dance ballets of Diaghileff, the choreographer has literally extended himself upwards and outwards to the limits of his medium, the human body. There are no new steps left for him to invent, and even the enchantments of old ones, are, if he is working within the classic formula, by now familiar to the greater part of the audience. Unless, then, he has, as well as choreographic talents, the flair for seizing like a caricaturist on the physical idiosyncracies of the dancers with whom he works, the resulting sequence will become dull and repetitive.

The alternative solution to the question of breathing space, and that used by the Soviet ballet, is to link the danced passages with mime interludes, thereby producing a drama which is three-quarters mime and one-quarter dance. This might have been possible when, in the early days of British ballet, to combat their technical weakness British artists developed a style of story-telling by sincere continuity of mood. Ballets conceived in this style are the perpetually fresh *Rake's Progress* and Andree Howard's poignant *Little Mermaid*.

However, today when school standards have risen so much that there is a yearly crop of young dancers each with a well turned out stance and a fine sense of line available to the professional companies, the characterisations which endeared their more amateur brothers and sisters to us have disappeared. We have sacrificed what used to be our national style in exchange for classicism, but we have not yet achieved the brilliance in the formal mime that matches the classic dance of the Russians or the Danes.

Therefore, if we are to produce more three-act ballets, we shall have to find a new way of filling the two and a half hours, without resorting to the pantomime devices of flying fairies on wires, or linking three unattached one-act ballets by a feeble resemblance in theme, and pretending they are a unified whole.

The answer could lie in better conceived scenarios. No one would expect the composer to supply designs for the scenery and costumes,

yet we expect the choreographer, who must think almost entirely in terms of movement, to supply a well-written plot.

Leaving the choreographer to write his own scenario usually means that he falls back on a well-known fairy tale, or its modification. It is true, of course, that both fairy tale and dance have the same root, being as psychologists tell us, the essential wish-dreams of humanity compounded into a form sufficiently stylised to be palatable in polite society. However, the choreographer must take care to concern himself only with the inner feeling that the tale conceals, and not become entangled merely in its outer trappings. The ghouls, ghosties and good fairies of Grimm were real beings to the people who invented them, but for us to continue using them is as spurious as a fake antique armchair. Throw away the paper pagodas and the cardboard royalty who inhabit them. Mental or physical maladjustment, the colour bar and an hysterical fear of The Bomb are the bogies which beset our era.

Yet no James Deans or Jimmy Porters can claim admission to the scenario of a modern ballet, for when a choreographer takes time off to examine his psyche, he does so through a miasma of heavy symbolism, most of which went out of fashion with ostrich plumes on the heads of debutantes.

It is in this connection that the writer can be of such service to ballet, for it is his vocation to disentangle the truth and then re-state it in contemporary terms.

Dancers are almost always young people, and contrary to the belief of the lunatic fringe of their public (surely no other art suffers so much from the smother love of the faithful) they have hearts and stomachs. Therefore let them, in the stylised manner of their training, occasionally interpret the world as they know and understand it.

Michael Charnley's *Symphony for Fun* and Kenneth MacMillan's *Solitaire* were attempts to capture this feeling, but because of their lack of outside written direction, they wandered away unfinished into the blind alley of the abstract; while Cranko's *Bonne Bouche* scratched at the surface of quasi-realism and then, frightened at its own boldness, retreated once more into the safety of satire.

The choice of subjects for the ballet must be wider and bolder. For example, a building site seems to exercise an almost hypnotic appeal over nine-tenths of the adult population of Great Britain. If people will stand literally for hours even in the rain, to watch men digging a hole, then it is conceivable that they will sit in a comfortable plush seat seeing the same subject in a stylised form, in the theatre. There could be a Cranko corps de ballet whose swaying spiky arms and fingers represent the cranes which in every direction bisect the London horizon. Set the work to the clash and clamour

of Benjamin Britten at his angry best and command John Piper to paint a back cloth whereon the form of a new office block embodies all the towering presence and evil majesty that we have come to expect when this artist paints a moorland crag.

When the swishing sabres of *Schéhérézade* cut through the dead-wood of the divertissement type of dancing, Diaghileff showed that the magic of the ballet lies not in the mere prettiness of a tarlatan clad fairy waving an electrically lit wand in a canvas glade, but in the skillful purveyance of emotions so fundamental that only the sensuality of the human body in motion can convey them.

Therefore in expanding ballets to the three-act length, make certain that this is because there is so much to say that it cannot be compressed into twenty minutes, or we shall be throwing away the one-act ballet, one of the greatest inventions in the history of the dance, without having anything better to replace it.

CINEMA

A Man Escaped, The Shiralee, The Prince and the Showgirl, Funny Face, Silk Stockings

by VINCENT MURRAY

WHEN the most uncompromisingly individual film for many years was shown some months ago at the French Film Festival who would have thought we should soon have the opportunity of seeing it on a West End run? Well, believe it or not, Robert Bresson's **Un condamné à mort s'est échappé** has brought it off, broken through, however temporarily, the commercial barriers; for once the artist has triumphed. The English title, **A Man Escaped,** successfully conveys the tone of the film: restrained, laconic, unemotional. It can give no idea of the force of direction, the integrity of the artist. Those familiar with Bresson's previous work in the cinema will know more or less what to expect, for the development of style logically follows from *Le Journal d'un Curé de Campagne* (1950). There for the first time in Bresson's work the action narrowed to embrace a single character. *Les Anges du Péché* (1943) dealt with an isolated community of nuns; *Les Dames du Bois de Boulogne* (1944) had but four protagonists in a basically conventional drama. Film by film, the number of characters studied is reduced, and *A Man Escaped* comes

as near as is possible in the cinema to the study of one man's mind in abnormal circumstances. The story is based on fact. A Major Devigny actually did escape from Montluc prison (where the film was shot) and we are assured that he was present on the set while the film was being made, to ensure authenticity. Not that strict observance of facts leads inevitably to an artistically true story, but in this case the action is so limited, the emphasis so much on the day to day life of the prisoner, that actual fact fits in perfectly with Bresson's artistic needs. His camera seems to bore into the very soul of the man in his mental agony, just as it stripped bare the workings of the young priest's mind in *Le Journal.* But here all is confined, compressed, restricted, until the tension becomes unbearable as in a Clouzot thriller. The comparison, though, is inapt. This is no thriller, psychological or otherwise, relying on flashy cutting and sadism for its effect. The remarkable (and for the cinema, significant) fact is that Bresson creates tension out of a more detailed analysis of character than has been attempted since the days of the mature silent film. It has been argued (and there have been so many examples to point to) that the study of character kills cinema stone dead, which shows how limited is the distribution of the type of film where just the opposite can be proved. It is a rarety, granted, for it takes singlemindedness of purpose to achieve, but it is worthwhile seeking out.

I notice the second Ealing-M.G.M. production **The Shiralee** has now reached the West End. It is interesting in that the American production influence is entirely absent, a fact one hardly dared hope for when Ealing was taken over. The film is as firmly rooted in the Australian scene as the Australian *Smiley*, reviewed here some months ago. Perhaps this impression is due more to the finely-photographed, unfamiliar settings, and to the performances of Peter Finch (as the swagman) and Dana Wilson (as his daughter) than to the plot which, given a native background, might have appeared more artificial and episodic. Nevertheless, the story of the wanderings of the swagman and his daughter is told with real gusto and verve. I regret the intrusion of the music-hall comedy from Tessie O'Shea and Sidney James, and the vagueness of most of the secondary characters, but in general the film is likeable and worth seeing.

Oh for the touch of a Lubitsch in **The Prince and the Showgirl,** which Laurence Olivier directed for Marilyn Monroe. Has that been said before? Maybe, but it is true nevertheless. Olivier as actor has created a splendid character in the Regent, but as director he fails to adapt his rather heavy style to the featherweight material. The result is an excessive emphasis on scenes which a few light strokes would have adequately sketched in. The superb playing, though, almost carries it off. The wide-eyed sophistication of Marilyn Monroe beautifully balances the grim figure of the Regent and, if the inserts of the Coronation are too factual to be true in Terence Rattigan's fantasy world, they are the only serious blunder in a most entertaining film.

Can it be that the days of M.G.M.'s superiority in musicals are numbered? Of late, at any rate. there has been a sharp falling-off in quality from the studio that has virtually pioneered the film-musical. **Funny Face,** the most satisfying musical this year, was made at Paramount, while **Silk Stockings,** the worst for many months, came from M.G.M. The Paramount film is sheer delight. It is a happy combinatoin of Astaire and Hepburn, Doren and Loring, with Gershwin providing one of his most attractive scores. The story we have surely seen before (a fashion photographer 'making something' of an unknown young girl), but here it provides a splendid peg for song and dance all over Paris—with many a side-long glance at *On the Town* and the later Kelly-Doren musicals. The colour photography is exquisite. The only jarring note is the attempt to satirise Existentialism which falls as flat as some of the tenets of this philosophy. *Silk Stockings,* on the other hand, lacks the quickening touch. Directed by Rouben Mamoulian (remember his wonderful *Summer Holiday*?) the film is a re-make of Garbo's *Ninotchka* (which, unfortunately for *Silk Stockings,* I have been lucky enough to see just recently). Apart from the obsolescence of the theme today, the film's lack of an actress with personality enough to form its centre-piece ruins any effectiveness it might have possessed. The musical numbers — when they come — are well done (Astaire teamed with Janis Paige this time) and the Cole Porter score is attractive.

At the Astoria, Mr. Todd takes three hours to go *Around the World in 80 Days.* Was his journey *really* necessary?

PARIS NOTES

Notes on a Summer's Viewing

by VINCENT MURRAY

WHEREVER you go the summer months add up to the silly season as far as the Arts are concerned, and in France where one is always aware of the complete acceptance of cinema as the equal of other art-forms, it is no less true. There are very few new films running at the moment. Of these, three are French thrillers, two are American, one is Franco-Italian and one is Russian. The French ones, Jacques Becker's **Les Aventures d'Arsène Lupin,** Julian Duvivier's **l'Homme à l'Imperméable,** and Yves Allégret's **Méfiez-vous Fillettes** entertain adequately enough, but, beneath the dexterous, stylish direction, there is little to relate the stories to contemporary French life. One thing at least: they have definitely not been made simply for an easy international success, which, as far as I can see, is the sole *raison d'être* of Ricardo Dredda's Franco-Italian **Château des Amants Maudits** which has colour, Cinemascope and Micheline Presle in an attempt to bring to life the story of Beatrice Cenci.

The new American films have not been seen in England at the time of writing. Billy Wilder's **Love in the Afternoon** (I rather like the neater French title **Ariane**) is in the sentimental-comic vein that this director likes to have a shot at now and again, with

the same result that all German-born directors (with the notable exception of Lubitsch) have had. In spite of excellent playing, the lightness of touch that would carry this fable of moderately-poor-girl-loves-rich-man to the heights is notably lacking.

Seven Men From Now is very good Western with a nicely-turned script, taut direction from Budd Boeticher, surprisingly attractive Warnercolor photography and reasonable playing (Gail Russell and Randolph Scott). It is often difficult to assign credit for the success of an American film, but here I should say honours are even.

The Russian film **The Forty First** I was lucky enough to find in an original version (the curse of Paris as far as films are concerned is the encroachment of dubbing on foreign productions), and a superb film it is. There is more poetry in this simple narrative of the revolution than in most Soviet films of the last decade. In itself it must be considered revolutionary, for its emphasis on the individual, on his feelings, on his right to love and be loved, is something fresh in Soviet cinema and should be seen before the party-line changes.

Aside from the main course, as it were, there are some good pickings: Hitch's *Wrong Man* is here, Steven's *Giant*, Vidor's *War and Peace*, Ray's *Rebel Without a Cause* — even Ford's classic *Stagecoach* — are going the rounds. Renoir's demi-échec *Les Bas-Fonds*, Clément's *Gervaise* and Lampin's *L'Idiot* whet the appetite more than the new ones. I need hardly mention that *Cinerama* is displaying its second programme and *Around the World in Eighty Days* has arrived. Although *Son et Lumière* suggests immediately a filmic connotation I must leave this attraction, for as a live, open-air presentation it belongs to another department of this magazine.

NEW BOOKS

D'un Château, l'Autre by L. F. Céline (Gallimard).

IT is possible that Louis-Ferdinand Céline may be the greatest French writer of our time. That this cannot be stated with absolute certainty is due to the form he has adopted—the very mirror of the spoken word miraculously transposed into writing. All that is expressive of life, action, movement in the speech of ordinary people has been conserved by Céline in his style in a way unequalled since Rabelais. But can such a style endure, is the question that must be posed. For writing is meant to last; a book has no other *raison d'être* except to conquer time. And it is by no means certain that Céline's style will ensure his writing the lasting quality which is the foundation of real greatness. Not that it is difficult, or eccentric and outside tradition: quite the contrary. In Céline's prose we find the very essence of the French language, and the breathless flow of talk where images and interjections tumble over each other, interspersed with dots and dashes, is very easy to read. But in this talk, so familiar yet so deep, in this style which combines the everyday with the wittiest inventions, the allusive quality is such that it will be almost impossible for our descendents to understand what it is about.

At the moment, Céline's prose appears to achieve a miraculous balance between the alive and the actual on the one hand, and the noble rhythm which can guarantee its lasting, on the other. But in fifty or a hundred years? I greatly fear that our descendents, in order to understand *D'un château, l'autre*, will be obliged to have recourse to dictionaries, glossaries and commentaries, and that the 2057 edition of this book, or of *Voyage au bout de la nuit*, will have to include explanatory notes, made indispensible by the obscurities

of the text, that are longer than the text itself. However that may be, it is quite certain that this edition will be published. Because even if we hesitate to say that Céline is the greatest French writer of our time, it is beyond doubt that he is the most *significant* writer of any nationality in our era. Between 1900 and 1950 the Occident has undergone the most dramatic upheavals in its history, and if, as seems likely, we are watching the end of a world, it must be admitted that nobody else has felt and described this apocalypse with as much genius as has Céline.

In *D'un château, l'autre* a man chants his story to the acompaniment of a guitar, which he strums softly. He tells his own story, and the world's. He proceeds by evocation rather than by straightforward recital; by curious, unusual images, repetitions, digressions, regrets. Often he complains, sometimes he accuses, or else he mocks, protests, vituperates. But he never departs from the same manner, of chanting a sort of recitative, in which he jeeringly oscillates between irony and indignation. As we listen he leads us into lyrics, into pure poetry. Make no mistake; the man who sings as he plucks at his guitar is Tasso, is Daniel at Babylon.

In even greater degree than *Le Voyage* or *Bagatelles, D'un château, l'autre* demonstrates that Céline resembles the prophets who combine the truth of witness and the strength of accusor. From the far off days when pallid Parisians from the Passage Choiseul went on Sundays to take the air in the Bâteau Mouche at St. Cloud until the time when a thousand haggard Frenchmen walked round the yard in Siegmaringen, a whole era of bewilderment and terror is described to us in a blending of memories and dreams, which gives its inimitable quality to Céline's art. He has no equal when it comes to discovering, behind the description of a trivial fact, a visionary's truth; of relating the banal gestures of a poor creature dying of cancer to the movements of society in its death throes.

Every generation gets the memorialist it deserves. Céline is really our Saint-Simon. This may seem a surprising analogy, nevertheless I think it is a true one. The works of both men spring from dissatisfaction; in his own way, each of them is a rebel. Saint-Simon, however, consumed with pride, expresses himself with bitterness, while Céline, whose fundamental good-nature no disappointments or misfortunes have succeeded in undermining, sends us a message which rises above ruins and despair, and contains more of comfort than of melancholy.

Jules Van Erck.

LEOUN

A Poem by JEAN COCTEAU

Extracts from a translation by

ALAN NEAME

who dedicates his translation: *A Son Excellence Madame Zalfa Chamoun, Présidente de la République Libanaise.*

. . . I dwelle in the signe of the Leoun.

I

Leoun I dreamed on the night of the 28th.
Padding with lioness paws across the night
She walked, Leoun, between the burnt-out fires.
Greek actors walk in clogs with comparable poise.

II

Leoun went forward until bedworthy dawn.
Skilfully walking on the night went Leoun.
Leoun walked on the night itself, I mean.

III

The dream hung in my head and Leoun in my dream.
Hearse and mutes were hard put to keep up with her
The roundabout twisted its corded copper
The robot scanned her shepherded footfall
All seemed to turn yet nothing moved at all
For, expert in the properties of mirrors, Leoun
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IV

She straddled the bodies of showmen asleep.
Halted. Counted her enemies. Thought deep.
Under her cloak hid the Head of Holophernes
(You see, this head was the lamp for her journeys
Deaf blind frightful with its brilliant beam)
And resumed the course designed by my dream.

V

That's how she walked, relentless Leoun,
For Leoun walking was chameleon,
Taking form and colour from everywhere she trod
Moving with the grace of a thief on the job.

VI

She walked on the fringe of the Dew's eye-lash.
Her undertaking was unspeakably rash
For at the jetty-corner and from cardinal points
The soldiery of morning patrolled the battlements.

VII

Monuments on the ages drifting
Sported their light rig of scaffolding.
History was marking houses with an X.
The queen was at the chymist buying a portpest.
Lurid in mauve patches between the bridges flowed
The virgin-seeming waters, often enough widowed,
And Leoun Leoun at the foot of the quay wall
Went on her way with disguised footfall.

VIII

Where the streetlamps were out painted women were towed
By stark naked cyclists to the pretty crossroad
While heedless of its human cattle the city held
Its great palm open under a sky ciphered with gold.

IX

Avoiding camper sleeper and false swan
Leoun followed the lines traced on that palm.

X

The cyclists went walking down by the water
Girls in one hand and bike in the other.
A whizz of dragonflies and insect flutterings
Paced these angels who had no wings
Who put a like warmth and equal zest
Into guiding the handlebars and squeezing a waist.
Just so at the fair you find the wretched shack
Alongside signs of chance and of the Zodiac.

XI

So walked Leoun so did the lioness walk
Under an inkblue sky spattered with milk.
Lovers suckled on these garret-skies
Laughed at night's gates and monitoring eyes.
They twined together under the eaves.
Their crushed pollen takes the bloom off the seasons.
Everywhere tramps above the city riddles
The frantic gallop of motionless couples.
But Leoun attuned to a rhythm other than man's
Knows nothing of this love armed with two pairs of hands.

XII

In the shadow theatre on its fly-over bridges
Light slit the throats of the cocks and pigeons.
The Antigone was showing. Leoun on her road
Saw actors draped in mantillas of blood.
The bloody shadow twined round the incest tree
Trickling from each twig of heroic poetry
And Leoun saw (or could she?) far below her the light
From projectors crossing swords with the swords in the fight.

XIII

Could she pierce up beyond the heaven of patriots
To the winged triumph of its anagogues?
Thousands of angel dancers, wings golden and lush,
Swelled the opera with marble and plush.
Leoun's veils were the sails of a schooner.

XIV

Herodias Elsa Thais Iseult Elvira
Clinging to the shipwreck of a solo-number
Trailed their seaweed hair through the armorial lumber.

XV

But for those Leoun was already out of sight.

★ ★ ★

CXVI

Sirs, what you write is a fraud.

CXVII

Mirage Lady with uplifted scythe
Entering my theatre through the looking-glass
Will you take liberties like those astral tarts?
Will you torment me to catch me alive?
And if such be your plan, what warning will you give?
Dreaming is monstrous. Waking monstrous too.
Can I hope to find true peace of mind with you?
Shall I have to follow you through some worse complex?

CXVIII

Sleeping and waking have played me too many tricks
I long to break off and put paid to their rancour.

CXIX

If you are plotting an ingenious torture
Can I sleep at the end untroubled by any dream?
You write? And your books are read, may I ask, by whom?
Does a world exist where I shall not have to speak?
Need I tremble there at Leoun and her panther-feet?
Need I tremble there at the Muse with claws like a lion?

CXX

Need I tremble there at the sky with its thousand million
Eyes intent on pulling our whole world down?
Your forbidden city is truly an open town
Where I can evade the shame of offering fight?
Someone is watching me.
Look out.
Keep quiet.

These verses from Alan Neame's translation of Jean Cocteau's poem are published by kind permission of "Edge," an Australian magazine which is publishing the whole poem.

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ANALYSIS
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